



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Austria

2020

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

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AUSTRIA

OVERVIEW

Youth Policy in Austria

Youth policy-making falls under the responsibility of the **national government**. At the federal level, the **Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery** ([Bundeskanzleramt, Sektion für Familie und Jugend](#)) is primarily responsible for youth policy, with particular emphasis on the upbringing of young people outside the school sector.

Youth promotion and youth work outside the school sector is primarily the responsibility of the federal states. The **Provincial Youth Departments** ([Landesjugendreferate](#)) located in the provincial governments have the task of **implementing** the youth policy measures of the province in youth work outside the school sector.

Additionally, it has to be mentioned that Austria is strongly depending on **private associations and NGOs**, that have not been initiated by the state, but are at least partially funded by the federal government or the federal states governments.

The Austrian Federal Ministries Act ([Bundesministeriengesetz](#)) determines what ministry is responsible for youth-related issues. Even though a former ministry might be mentioned in youth-related laws, issued in previous legislative periods, the institution determined in the recent Austrian Federal Ministries Act is actually responsible.

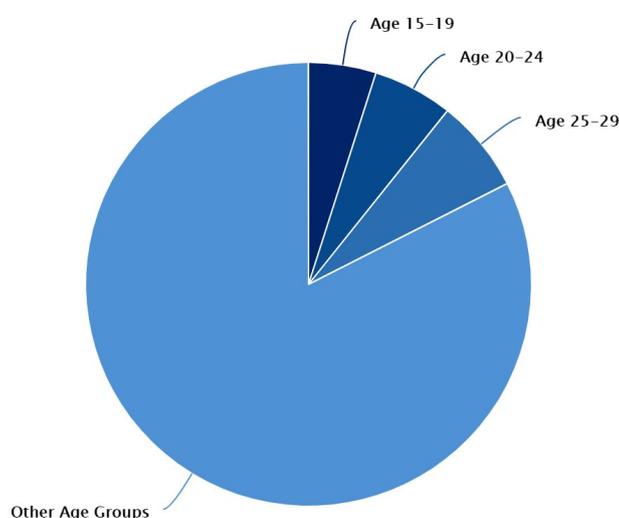
Youth related Data

As of early 2020, the **percentage of adolescents in the total population** amounts to **17.5%**, the largest fraction of which corresponding to 25 - 29 year olds.

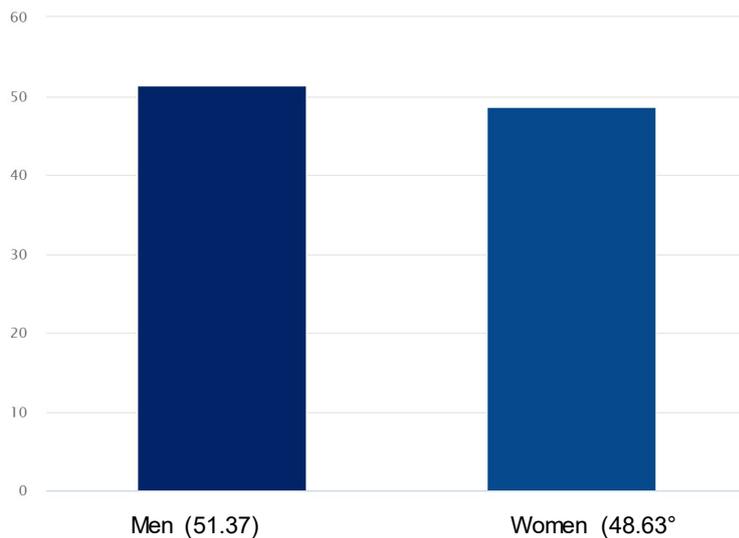
Similar to the data from the years before, the **percentage of males** within the youth population is **slightly higher** than the female percentage.

In absolute numbers, **1,557,027 young people aged 15-29** live in Austria in 2020. As of now, data illustrating the figure or percentage of young immigrants from non-EU countries in Austria is unavailable, explaining the 'Missing data' notice.

Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



Ratio of men and women in the youth population



1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

General Information

There is **no common definition of youth** ([Jugendbegriff](#)) in Austria. Some youth protection laws ([Jugendschutzgesetze](#)) define the age range for youth from 14-18 years. The main target group of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) is the group of **14 to 24 year olds**. Several youth related laws and strategies explicitly define age ranges they are applying to. The regulation on the assessment of impacts on young people ([Verordnung über die Abschätzung der Auswirkungen auf junge Menschen](#)) of regulatory and other projects defines 'children' as people who have not yet reached the age of 18 and '**young adults**' as **all people who have reached the age of eighteen but not 30**. This definition of young adults is also upheld in the Federal Youth Representation Act ([Bundes-Jugendvertretungsgesetz](#)) and the Federal Youth Promotion Act ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)).

Competencies in the field of youth policy in Austria

Due to the federal structure of Austria, the competencies are **divided between the Federal Government (central organ) and the Federal States**. The general clause in Article 15 of the Austrian Constitution ([Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)) assigns all competencies which haven't been conferred to the Federal Republic (in the comprehensive Articles 10 - 14b) to the Federal Provinces (fallback clause). Within the Federal Government, the **Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery** ([Bundeskanzleramt, Sektion für Familie und Jugend](#)) holds the main responsibility. However, as a cross-sectional matter, youth policy is co-designed by the other Ministries. In the Federal Provinces, the **Provincial Youth Departments** ([Landesjugendreferate](#)) determine youth policies.

The areas of state action are clearly assigned to either the federal government or the federal states with regard to the legislature and implementation.

The competencies of the provinces in the field of youth policy

Youth promotion and youth work outside the school sector is primarily the responsibility of the provinces. The **Provincial Youth Departments** ([Landesjugendreferate](#)) located in the provincial governments have the task of **implementing the youth policy measures** of the province in youth work outside the school sector and coordinating cross-sectorial provincial youth policy. Their most important **fields of activity** are as follows:

- **Lobbying** measures in the children's and youth sectors

- **Promotion and support of children's and youth institutions**, particularly of open youth work. Youth centres, mobile youth work and youth information bodies of the provinces as well as initiatives at regional and municipal levels belong to the latter category.
- **Services for children and young people** as well as for work with children and **youth work** etc.
- The training and further **training of staff** involved in youth work
- **Public relations** work
- **Youth welfare**: the tasks of youth welfare include all measures involving maternity, infant and youth welfare, which serve the well-being of the child with the aim of strengthening the ability of families to bring up their children
- **Youth protection**: Risk situations included in youth protection legislature are, for instance: staying in public places, spending the night in hostels or at campsites, attending public theatre or film performances, visiting public houses, consuming alcohol and nicotine, hitch-hiking etc.

Competencies in the youth sector

At a federal level, the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery \(Bundeskanzleramt, Sektion für Familie und Jugend\)](#) is primarily responsible for youth policy, with particular emphasis on the **upbringing of young people outside the school sector**. It leads and coordinates the cross-sectoral youth policy carried out by all Ministries. The tasks which have to be fulfilled in this area are:

- **Legislation and its implementation** in this domain
- **Basic legislature in the youth welfare** sector
- **Expert advice** function for draft bills
- UN Agreement on the **Rights of the Child**
- **International agendas** including EU youth programme
- The **financial support of youth organisations**, youth initiatives, associations and youth projects
- **Youth information**
- Initiation and promotion of **youth research** and
- Initiating, promoting and **dealing with priority themes** such as violence against children, health promotion and preventive healthcare, new media, participation, sects, youth information, training youth leaders etc.

1.1 Target population of youth policy

There is **no common definition of youth** ([Jugendbegriff](#)) in Austria. Some **youth protection laws** ([Jugendschutzgesetze](#)) define the age range for youth from **14-18 years**.

The **main focus of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) is on the 14 to 24 years old** age group, though the youth strategy extends further to encompass **young people under 30 years** of age. Its main concerns are to ensure the well-being of young people and to provide them with opportunities for the future by pooling knowledge and optimising measures in the field of youth policy.

The regulation on the assessment of impacts on young people ([Verordnung über die Abschätzung der Auswirkungen auf junge Menschen](#)) of regulatory and other projects defines 'children' as people who have not yet reached the age of 18 and '**young adults**' as **all people who have reached the age of eighteen but not 30**. This definition of young adults is also upheld in the Federal Youth Representation Act ([Bundes-Jugendvertretungsgesetz](#)) and the Federal Youth Promotion Act ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)).

Thus, **every person up to the age of 30 in some form legally belongs to the defined range of youth** (or 'children and young adults'). The main target group of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) is the group of 14 to 24 year olds. Several youth related laws and strategies explicitly define age ranges they apply to.

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

There is **no single youth law** in Austria, but **several laws** for different youth-related topics. Furthermore, a **Youth Strategy** ([Jugendstrategie](#)) is in place. There is currently no discussion on a single comprehensive youth law.

Laws relating to children and young people

The most important regulations of the legal system are **a system of protective provisions and rights of co- and self-determination graded by age**. The protection of minors is of particular relevance in this regard. These laws regulate significant fields of youth policy:

- **9 provincial youth protection laws** ([Jugendschutzgesetze der Länder](#)) in the nine Federal States (recently aligned but not fully harmonised)
- **Federal Youth Representation Act** ([Bundes-Jugendvertretungsgesetz](#))
- **Federal Youth Promotion Act** ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#))
- **Regulation on the assessment of impacts on young people** ([Verordnung über die Abschätzung der Auswirkungen auf junge Menschen](#))

Protection of minors

The laws for the protection of minors are there to beware young people from difficult situations. In practice, this includes age-specific regulations relating to the access to certain places, hitch-hiking, theatre, cinema and pub visits, the use of arcade/ gambling machines and the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes.

The Federal States are responsible for the specific age-related grading system. The **territorial principle** applies, according to which young people are subject to the regulations of the Federal State they are currently in.

As of January 2019, the youth protection laws have been **harmonised, however there are still 9 different laws**, one for each Federal State. While details differ, generally young people under 16 can't buy and (publically) consume alcoholic beverages, and distilled alcohol ('hard liquor') and tobacco can't be bought (consumed) until the age of 18.

The Austrian Youth Information centres provide an [overview](#) for young people of these regulations on the Website of the Austrian youth portal ([Österreichisches Jugendportal](#)). A general overview is also provided on [österreich.gv.at](#).

Young people come of age upon reaching the age of 18, which means that the laws on the protection of minors then no longer apply.

Further age-related regulations

Upon reaching the **age of 6**, children have the **obligation to attend school** for nine years ([Schulpflicht](#)). After completion of compulsory schooling, all persons under the **age of 18** permanently residing in Austria are obliged to pursue further education or training ([AusBildung bis 18](#)).

From the age of 10, a **guardianship court** must hear children in **matters of custody, care and education**, such as divorce cases (§105 [Außerstreitgesetz](#)). **From the age of 14**, young people have **limited legal competence and the right of sexual self-determination** ([Geschäftsfähigkeit von Kindern und Jugendlichen](#)). They have the right to choose their religion and to be a part of the decision-making process regarding vocational and school education.

Young people of 14 years are subject to **criminal responsibility** ([Strafbarkeit von Jugendlichen](#)). Young people are allowed to enter **full-time employment from the age of 15** ([Arbeit und Jugendliche](#)). They are allowed to **vote from the age of 16** on ([Wahlrecht](#)). All citizens who have reached the age of 18 by the day of the election have the right to be elected. At the **age of 18**, young people come of age and thus gain the **full capacity to act and full legal competence** ([Geschäftsfähigkeit von Jugendlichen](#)). The right to be elected as Federal President is dependent on the right to vote in the National Council and on having reached the age of 35 on the day of the election.

Scope and contents

Federal Youth Promotion Act (Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz)

The Act is in force since 2000 and was last modified in 2018. Its objective is the **promotion of measures of extracurricular youth education and youth work**, for the purpose of furthering the development of the mental, psychic, physical, social, political, religious and ethical competencies of children and young people. The federal youth organisations applying for basic promotion are **obligated to conduct continuous quality assurance** ([Qualitätssicherung](#)) according to § 6 para. 1 Z 6 of the federal youth promotions act and § 13 para. 4 respectively of the federal youth promotions act's guidelines. Self-evaluation is proposed as the mode of action.

Federal Youth Representation Act (Bundes-Jugendvertretungsgesetz)

The Act is in force since 2000 and was last modified in 2001. The measures provided in this Act are to ensure the representation of young people's concerns before the political decision-makers on a federal level. **It legally establishes the Austrian Federal Youth Representation** ([Bundes-Jugendvertretung](#)) **as the representation of interests and political lobby for people up to 30 years** of age in Austria. In matters that may affect the interests of Austrian youth, the Federal Youth Council is set on an equal footing with the statutory interest groups of employees, business people, farmers and the Austrian Senior Citizens' Council. The organisation encompasses, among others, both Youth associations and open youth work.

The National Youth Council is thus the **statutory representative body for young people in Austria**. The 56 member organisations and three extraordinary members range from those based on political parties and churches to representatives of open youth work and ethnic groups and minorities and also include the provincial youth advisory committees. It is tasked with lobbying for young people and promoting greater involvement of young people in political decision-making processes, bringing 'young' topics to public attention, representing youth policy-related interests vis-à-vis the National Council, the government and the public, enabling an information flow between member organizations, and representing the interests of Austria's youth on the European and International level.

Regulation on the assessment of impacts on young people ([Verordnung über die Abschätzung der Auswirkungen auf junge Menschen](#))

In force since 2013, the law establishes the **'Youth Check', an impact assessment, for all new laws**. It obliges all ministries to systematically review legislative projects in advance with regard to their impact on children and young people. This raises awareness for the special concerns and needs of children and young people. The Youth Check is intended to broaden the adult perspective and enable an even more child-friendly society in Austria.

The 9 provincial youth protection laws (Jugendschutzgesetze der Länder)

As of January 2019, the youth protection laws have been harmonised, however there are still 9 different laws, one for each Federal State. While details differ, **generally young people under 16 can't buy and (publically) consum alcoholic beverages**, and distilled alcohol ('hard liquor') and tobacco can't be bought (consumed) until the age of 18. **Unaccompanied youths are** - with some differences between Federal States - **allowed to go out from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m/11 p.m. for youths under 14**, from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m. for youths between 14 and 16, and unlimited for youths 16 and older.

Juvenile Court Act (Jugendgerichtsgesetz, JGG)

The Act is in force since 1988 and was last modified in 2019. It **adjusts the formal criminal law relating to young offenders**.

The sentencing ranges are in many cases lower than for adults. Juveniles within the meaning of the Act are persons between 14 and 18 years of age. Essentially, the maximum of threatened custodial sentences for juveniles is reduced to half and a minimum is omitted. The maximum fine is also reduced by half.

For **young adults between 18 and 21 years of age**, the **minimum term of imprisonment is generally the same as for juveniles**, and the sentence may not be more severe than 15 years. However, since 1 January 2020, young adults are subject to the general threats of punishment if the offence is punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of at least five years and the offender has committed one of the following offences: a criminal offence against life and limb, an offence against sexual integrity and self-determination, an offence under Section 25 of the Special Part of the Criminal Code (genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes), a punishable offence as

a member of a criminal organisation, or the leading and participating in a terrorist organisation. However, a **maximum of 20 years' imprisonment** may be imposed in these cases.

In terms of the proceedings, juveniles between 14 and 18 years of age who are accused of a criminal offence are **mandatorily assigned a defence counsel** in proceedings before the regional courts for the entire proceedings as well as in proceedings before the district courts, if this is necessary or expedient in the interest of the administration of justice, in particular to safeguard the rights of the juvenile. Moreover, their **legal representative also has the right to be heard and to be present** at investigations or hearings of evidence. The **public is also to be excluded from the main hearing** in the criminal proceedings ex officio or upon application if this is in the interest of the juvenile. In criminal proceedings for a criminal offence committed by juveniles, the **appointed jurors must have a professional relationship with juveniles** (e.g. as a teacher, educator or have worked in youth welfare).

Child and Youth Employment Act (Kinder- und Jugendlichen-Beschäftigungsgesetz)

The Act is in force since 1987 and was last modified in 2018. It implicates, that **children up to the age 15 as well as up to the end of their compulsory education are not allowed to work**, not even in course of an apprenticeship. There are only very few exceptions to this. For young people up to the age 18, **particular rules for working hours and off-times** exist, as well as provisions on which work they may not yet be entrusted with.

Youth Education Assurance Act (Jugendausbildungs-Sicherungsgesetz)

The Act was in force from 1998 to 2011 and was last modified in 2008. It **regulated additional offers of apprenticeships in terms of a safety net for young people** seeking an apprenticeship training position after graduating from compulsory education.

Federal Child and Welfare Act 2013 (Bundes-Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz 2013)

The Act is in force since 2013 and was last modified in 2018. Based on the Austrian constitution, legal regulations for child protection and welfare are set up by the federal government (guidelines) as well as by the provinces (implementing law). In 2013 the Federal Child and Youth Support Act) was adopted, which sets up new guidelines for child protection and welfare. If a child is in need of care and protection and is unlikely to receive it at home local Youth Services (*Jugendamt*) has a duty to ensure they receive appropriate care and may place the child in care by way of a voluntary care agreement with the parent(s)/guardian(s) or through a court order.

Revisions/updates

Revisions and updates are to be found at [Scope and contents](#) for each law respectively.

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

The [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) ([Österreichische Jugendstrategie](#)) is an ongoing process to strengthen and develop youth policy. The aim is to **bundle measures for young people, to systematize them and to optimize their effectiveness**. The youth strategy should also **identify new fields of action and cooperation, identify further need for action** and underpin this with concrete measures. Four major fields of action serve as the framework. An essential feature of the Austrian Youth Strategy is the **active involvement of young people and professionals** at all levels. Through a permanent screening and the proximity to the target group - thus in constant exchange with youth representatives and young people - the youth strategy can respond to changing challenges and act in a trend-setting manner.

As of 2020, the **Strategy defines 4 fields of action**, namely education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, life quality and social cooperation, and media and information. Corresponding to each of these fields of action, **Youth Objectives** ([Österreichische Jugendziele](#)) have been established. Based on the EU-Youth Strategy 2019-2027, these objectives have been linked to the European Youth Goals with the aim of contributing to their implementation.

On a national level, '[Reality Checks](#)' serve to **ensure youth participation in the development of objectives and measures** relevant to the Austrian Youth Strategy.

Continuous development of the youth strategy

As an **ongoing process**, the Austrian Youth Strategy is subjected to **continuous development**. In order to strengthen the establishment of youth policy across sectors and to better take into account the realities of life of young people, the Austrian Youth Strategy will be expanded in terms of content during this legislative period. The youth strategy was anchored in the government program 2017-2022 ([Regierungsprogramm 2017-2022, Page 103](#)). 'Ongoing development of the Austrian Youth Strategy and the expansion of the Competence Center Youth, in order to **coordinate interministerial measures in the field of youth and to support them in terms of content and methodology**.' Based on the fields of action of the youth strategy, Austrian youth goals were developed from 2019 onwards and measures are geared to these goals or newly developed. By resolution of the Federal Government of September 2020, the **Austrian Youth Goals** ([Jugendziele](#)) were adopted by all Federal Ministries. Each youth goal is assigned to a field of action of the Austrian Youth Strategy. In 'Reality Checks', these youth goals were reflected with young people and considered whether the youth goal contributes to the implementation of a European Youth Goal.

Scope and contents

The four fields of action

- Employment and Learning
- Participation and Initiative
- Quality of Life and a Spirit of Cooperation
- Media and Information

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) ([Bundeskanzleramt – Sektion Familie und Jugend](#)) considers itself to be the impetus behind this initiative. The implementation of these measures is the task and responsibility of those involved in shaping social policy and it must be supported by a **broad youth policy consensus and a cross-sectorial approach**.

At the same time, the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is aware of numerous existing measures – in the area of employment, among others. The **Austrian Youth Strategy should, therefore, offer an additional impetus to shift the focus more strongly toward the perspectives of young people** or to incorporate still inactive yet relevant stakeholders.

Employment and Learning

Education secures young people's futures and the widespread prosperity in Austrian society is largely predicated on the skills and qualifications of Austrian workers. Austrian youth policy is therefore geared towards helping young people develop their talents as best they can. **High-level qualifications** make it possible for young people to meet current and future challenges in the working world and to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them in the best way possible.

The **labour market situation for young people in Austria is very favourable** in an European comparison. **Demographic trends** lead to lower numbers of entrants into the vocational education system and therefore also to decreasing numbers of diploma holders. For this reason, the number of people in the employment system is also continually on the decline. Qualified young people are therefore extremely valuable to the labour market. It is in this context, the Youth Strategy **evaluates the employment perspectives and the actual employment situations of young people in Austria, with the goal of full employment among 15 to 24 year olds**. The focus of the recommendations lies on improving vocational and practically oriented learning. This means more opportunities for young people and ensures that Austria will have the qualified workers it needs to face the future.

While all Federal Ministries are collectively working on further developing the Austrian Youth Strategy, the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) ([Bundeministerium für Digitalisierung und Wirtschaftsstandort](#)) has a notable influence on the section Employment and Learning.

Corresponding National Youth Goals:

- Every young person in Austria without an educational qualification above compulsory schooling level can complete **further education and training irrespective of their place of residence**

and thus get off to a good start in working life. ([Federal Ministry of Labour](#) and [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#))

- **Pupils leaving the education system have at least central basic competences** due to compulsory education. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- **Support young people in their career choice** and vocational training in a competence-oriented manner. ([Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#))
- Support young people in building knowledge and competences in the field of **international business** and ensure access to information in this field. ([Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#))
- To **teach young people to think and act economically** and to support them in implementing their ideas. ([Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#))
- The BMEIA engages in **dialogue with young people on foreign policy and international relations** and supports them in developing their interests, talents and qualifications in the international context of a global world. ([Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs](#))
- Supporting young people in acquiring **financial literacy**, which is an essential factor for success in employment and economic self-determination. ([Federal Ministry of Finance](#))
- **Making the apprenticeship system of the Federal Ministry of Defence more attractive**, especially for young women in technical professions. ([Federal Ministry of Defence](#))
- We meet future societal challenges with the help of **agricultural and environmental education**. ([Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#))
- We provide information on perspectives and **career opportunities in the Federal Civil Service**. ([Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#))
- **Increasing young people's interest in scientific, technical and transport-related topics** and strengthening their chances in these occupational fields. ([Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#))

Participation and Initiative

It shall pay to take the initiative. **A thriving democracy needs ambitious people who want to take the initiative and participate and the conditions that support this initiative.** This is especially the case for young people. They should be able to speak out, offer suggestions and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

With its **voting age set at 16 years**, Austria is a pioneer in Europe with regard to participatory democracy among young people. Studies have shown that early inclusion in institutionalised participation systems such as elections generally results in a stronger desire to participate in political decision-making processes.

Besides elections, there are **numerous forms of participation in Austria**, of which only a portion are actually used by young people. It must therefore be clarified whether existing forms of participation truly meet the needs of today's youth and how **barriers to participation can be lowered**, especially for groups from disadvantaged backgrounds. The potential for youth to take the initiative is great: In Austria there is a long and – compared to other European countries – **pronounced tradition of volunteering**. One-third of young people in Austria participate in some form of voluntary work, an above average number. The recognition of skills acquired from volunteering by the formal education system or by employers is still in its infancy.

In this field of action, the established Youth Objectives are specifically influenced by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#)) as well as the [Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#) ([Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport](#)).

Corresponding National Youth Goals:

- Facilitate **access to youth-relevant support measures** ([Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#)).
- Expanding the participation of young workers in **co-determination in the workplace**. ([Federal Ministry of Labour](#))
- Contributing to the political engagement of youth and young adults through **civic education and education for sustainable development** in the classroom. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- Children, youths and young adults are empowered through **participation in science and research** (Citizen Science) and they actively participate in science and research. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))

- We use the commitment and energy of young people to **achieve our climate and energy goals together**. ([Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#))
- In order for young people to **recognise and use voluntary work** as a component of their qualification, the job exchange of the Republic of Austria takes this qualification into account when applying for apprenticeships. ([Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#))
- Young people have the opportunity to **actively participate in the design of sports policy measures** in the form of a dialogue process. ([Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#))

Quality of Life and a Spirit of Cooperation

'Let's work together on the future' is the motto of this field of action. **Changes in many different areas of life require active planning**. Young people must be adequately supported and challenged so that they are ready to assume responsibility for their futures. Austrian youth policy therefore **provides young people with the tools they need to live independent and self-reliant lives** without being overly intrusive.

The goals encompass the creation and maintenance of public spaces for adolescents, the facilitation of young people's integration and the encouragement of development of qualifications regardless of an individual's migration or non-migration background; however, with a focus on young women.

Being satisfied with their lives is an important concern for young people. The yearly international [UNICEF overview of child well-being in industrialised countries](#) shows that the life satisfaction of young people in Austria is comparatively improvable. A league table of countries in the study shows Austria in 16th place out of 38 countries with regard to how Austrian girls and boys rate their satisfaction with their own lives. At 15 years of age, 77% of young people in Austria show high life satisfaction. (UNICEF 2020).

Youth policy requires a comprehensive evaluation of the objective situation AND the subjective appraisal of young people. This helps clarify which areas require the most immediate attention so that young people can **successfully navigate the passage to adult life with the necessary optimism**.

Corresponding National Youth Goals:

- Maintaining and creating **space for young people in public life**. ([Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#))
- Young people with or without a migration background are supported in their **successful integration** and their **potential in society is promoted**. Particular attention is paid to **empowering young women**. ([Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#))
- Increasing psychosocial health by **promoting young people's health and life skills**. ([Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#))
- Promoting **social-emotional competences** and making **school a safe** place to learn supports the psychosocial health of young people. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- Parts of the **law of parent and child will be reformed** to ensure that **child maintenance, custody and contact rights** are in line with the times. (Federal Ministry of Justice, [Bundesministerium für Justiz](#))

Media and Information

Young people shall be enabled to **seize the modern opportunities** safely and competently. It is particularly important for youth policy to actively see the digitization of our information society as an opportunity. In many ways, young people are at the forefront of digitization and the acquisition of new technologies and media, such as streaming or social media applications. For this very reason and because of their life phase, young people are also exposed to special risks. With this new field of action, the Austrian Youth Strategy pays special attention to all those **measures aimed at strengthening the media literacy of adolescents, families, youth workers and other educational practitioners**. This also includes the positioning of youth policy in the information society and the strengthening of information literacy as well as the **provision of youth-oriented and youth-relevant information**.

On the part of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), the measures focus on mediating media literacy. The aim of the **Media-Youth-Info Centre** (MJI) is to develop new **media education workshops and seminars** for young people, parents and educational professionals. These are then offered in part at the location of the MJI in Vienna, but also and above all in the federal states through and with external organizations. In addition, the MJI works with other institutions and professionals to produce brochures and publications on media literacy.

The Youth Objectives that have been formulated so far place a focus on **media literacy, the risks of the internet and safe navigation in a digital environment**. Moreover, these goals aim to **strengthen adolescents' digital competences and qualifications to encourage participation** in societal discourse.

Corresponding National Youth Goals:

- Participatory and **target group-oriented processing and dissemination of information**. ([Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#))
- Develop **media and information literacy** among young people in order to strengthen participation in social dialogue. ([Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#))
- Enhance young people's **digital competences and qualifications in the classroom** and strengthen their media literacy so that young people leave the education system with those competences that enable them to use technology. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- To provide young people with the **knowledge and skills that will enable them to move consciously and safely in the digital environment**. ([Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#))
- The Internet and its dangers - supporting young people in the **responsible use of digital media**. ([Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs](#))

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

As Austria is a Federal State, the **responsibilities are shared between the Federal Government and the federal provinces**. This also applies to the most 'traditional' area of youth policy: extracurricular youth work.

Implementation at the Federal level

In order to **implement youth policy in an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary way, all Ministries have their own youth policy campaigns** and initiatives. This cross-sectorial approach is showcased in the Youth Strategy, where every Ministry was asked to take the lead responsibility on at least one Youth Goal.

Acting specifically for youth policy is the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). Essentially, its tasks are to **coordinate, to guide and**, in the field of extra-curricular activities, to **provide stimulus**. Its other major focus is European and international youth policy. On the national level, the Federal Chancellery acts as a coordinator, under the supervision of various **working committees**, which consist of representatives from all Ministries and the provinces, social partners, including the statutory body Bundesjugendvertretung (National Youth Council), experts and NGOs. Its tasks are to **observe the implementation of all measures relating to the fulfilment of the Youth Pact**, to coordinate the various initiatives in their relation to each other and to **propose and strengthen sustainable youth policy measures**. (Inter-Ministerial Working Group, 'European Youth Pact').

The competencies of the provinces in the field of youth policy

In the Federal Provinces, the **Provincial Youth Departments** ([Landesjugendreferate](#)) determine and implement youth policies and thus participate in the implementation of the Youth Strategy.

Youth promotion and youth work outside the school sector is primarily the responsibility of the provinces. The Provincial Youth Departments located in the provincial governments have the task of **implementing** the youth policy measures of the province in youth work outside the school sector. Their most important fields of activity are as follows:

- **Lobbying measures** in the children's and youth sectors and public relations
- **Promotion and support of children's and youth institutions**, particularly open youth work. Youth centres, mobile youth work and youth information bodies of the provinces as well as initiatives at regional and municipal levels belong to the latter category.
- **Services for children and young people** as well as for work with children and **youth work** etc.
- The training and further **training of staff** involved in youth work
- **Youth welfare**: the tasks of youth welfare include all measures involving maternity-, infant- and youth welfare, which serve the well-being of the child with the aim of strengthening the ability of families to bring up their children

- **Youth protection:** Risk situations included in youth protection legislature are, for instance: staying in public places, spending the night in hostels or at campsites, attending public theatre or film performances, visiting public houses, consuming alcohol and nicotine, hitch-hiking etc.

Revisions/updates

Revisions are made continuously and at least once every legislative period. In 2018 the major objectives have been renamed to fields of action and have been supplemented with the field Media and Information. Based on the fields of action of the youth strategy, Austrian youth goals will be developed from 2019 onwards and measures will be geared to these goals or newly developed.

Previous Development of the Youth strategy

In 2012 a **development group** was established, that collected the first portfolio of goals and measures on basis of the 8 fields of the youth strategy. Based on this, the **first publication** on the Youth Strategy was presented. First steps were prioritised and with **'youth strategy on tour' young people were directly involved in the development** of the first youth strategy.

In the beginning of 2013, a **conference** took place and the second **publication** on the Youth Strategy including goals, achievements and plans was presented. 8 core areas were appointed within this publication: youth participation, youth screening, non-formal and informal education, youth check, media competence, youth research. In May 2013, the **Competence Centre Youth** has been installed to further strengthen the organisation of youth work. A **second youth strategy on tour** was realised and later that year an updated strategy paper was published, that included strategic objectives until 2020.

This strategy has become the [Austrian Youth Strategy \(Österreichische Jugendstrategie\)](#) in 2019. With 2020, the Austrian Federal Government has decided to **continue the Youth Strategy**. Building on the fields of action of the Youth Strategy, youth goals were developed to which **measures are now being aligned or newly developed**.

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of Decision-making

Due to the federal structure of the Republic of Austria, the **competencies are divided between the Federal Government (central organ) and the Federal States**. The general clause in Article 15 of the Austrian Constitution ([Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)) assigns all competencies which haven't been conferred to the Federal Republic (in the comprehensive Articles 10 - 14b) to the Federal Provinces (fallback clause). The areas of state action with regard to legislation and the executive are clearly assigned to the federal government or the federal states.

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is in leading charge of Austrian youth policy at the national level. However, in acknowledgement of the subject's cross-sectorial nature, **all Ministries coin measures of youth policy and consider young people's position in all new legislative projects** as part of the 'Youth Check'. To chaperone the development of the Austrian Youth Strategy, a working committee has been established in 2012. This working group ensures to imply the extracurricular youth work, their expertise and support. The **Competence Centre Youth** as a unit of the Federal Chancellery's Youth Department, is responsible for the long-term planning and overall coordination of the Austrian Youth Strategy.

Furthermore, the **National Working Group on Youth Dialogue and Youth Participation** brings together federal and provincial authorities and other youth policy actors to implement the youth dialogue and for the further development of youth participation. The working group is made up of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) (Youth Competence Centre and Department for European and International Family and Youth Policy), the [Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#), the Federal Network Austrian Youth Information Centers ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)), the [Federal Network of Open Youth Work \(bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit\)](#), the Austrian European Youth Delegates, the Youth departments of the federal states ([Landesjugendreferate](#)), the National Correspondent to the European Knowledge Center for Youth Policy (EKCP), and the Austrian National Agency Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps ([OEAD](#)), and the [Office for Youth Work of the Autonomous Italian Province of Bolzano - South Tyrol](#).

The **competencies assigned to the federal level**, include the primary responsibility for youth policy, with particular emphasis on the upbringing of young people outside the school sector. The tasks to be fulfilled in this area include:

- **Legislation and its implementation**
- **Basic legislature in the youth welfare** sector
- **Expert advice** function for draft bills
- UN Agreement on the **Rights of the Child**
- **International agendas** including EU youth programme
- The **financial support of youth organisations**, youth initiatives, associations and youth projects
- **Youth information**
- Initiation and promotion of **youth research** and
- Initiating, promoting and **dealing with priority themes** such as violence against children, health promotion and preventive healthcare, new media, participation, sects, youth information, training youth leaders etc.

The nine Federal States hold the primary responsibility for youth promotion and youth work outside the school sector. The Provincial Youth Departments ([Landesjugendreferate](#)) located in the provincial governments have the task of implementing the youth policy measures of the province in youth work outside the school sector and coordinating cross-sectorial provincial youth policy. Their most important fields of activity are as follows:

- **Lobbying** measures in the children's and youth sectors
- **Promotion and support of children's and youth institutions**, particularly of open youth work. Youth centres, mobile youth work and youth information bodies of the provinces as well as initiatives at regional and municipal levels belong to the latter category.
- Services for children and young people as well as for work with children and youth work etc.
- The training and further **training of staff** involved in youth work
- Public relations work
- **Youth welfare**: the tasks of youth welfare include all measures involving maternity, infant and youth welfare, which serve the well-being of the child with the aim of strengthening the ability of families to bring up their children
- **Youth protection**: Risk situations included in youth protection legislature are, for instance: staying in public places, spending the night in hostels or at campsites, attending public theatre or film performances, visiting public houses, consuming alcohol and nicotine, hitch-hiking etc.

Youth representation and decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic

Even in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, specific support for youth representation bodies and youth organizations is available. In order to **encourage the participation of young people in decision making processes in the context of the COVID-19 crisis**, the Austrian Federal Youth Promotion Act provides the federal youth organizations with financial support, technical support and training to adapt activities.

Moreover, the **initiative 'Coronabusters'** enables adolescents to be actively involved in the process of developing and contributing ideas to counteract the pandemic.

Apart from financial and technical support, an additional focus is placed on **digitalization and youth participation through information and communication technologies** and social media of public administration, as well as efforts to adapt and maintain regular youth participation mechanisms.

Furthermore, programmes such as the [EU Youth Dialogue](#) and the so-called '[Reality Checks](#)' regarding the Austrian Youth Strategy by young people enable young people to discuss and exchange views on global issues with national and international policymakers.

Main Themes

Youth policy has the task of **shaping the life situation and life perspectives of young people** and helping them to cope with the demands of the youth phase of life and the transition to adulthood. The **objective** of youth policy is to **protect children and young people** and to **promote their development as independent personalities** in order to lead independent and responsible lives and to use their productive and creative potentials for community and social engagement. Successful youth policy is understood to always have to **take the needs and concerns of young people themselves into account** - the aim is not a 'policy for' but a 'policy

with' young people - and to take into account **all policy areas** rather than being concentrated in one department alone.

The [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) identified **four topics of strategic importance** for youth policy in Austria and defined them as fields of action, which indicate the direction in which the common effort shall lead. These are:

- **Education and employment**
- **Participation and involvement**
- **Quality of life and togetherness**
- **Media and information**

Furthermore, **youth protection, children's rights and international cooperation** are highlighted as part of the youth agenda by the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

Most efforts of Austrian youth policy are geared towards youth in general, therefore **specific target groups** are rarely individually addressed. Youth policy does however take into account the specific needs of disadvantaged youth as well as the need for **inclusion**.

The basis of effective youth policy

Previous **national action plans** have been screened in order to get an overview of youth relevant perspectives of these documents. Most youth relevant perspectives were found in the field of **general and vocational education**. Every educational institution is meant to be a major starting point for any measures to promote and support young people. The national action plan on a **balanced diet, on health and well-being**, targets young people as well.

Due to the high significance of youth participation within the establishment of a Youth Strategy, various options of **youth engagement** as well **adolescence research** are included. There is also a close discourse with the [National Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#) and the [Federal Networks for Open Youth Work](#) and [Youth Information](#).

Moreover, results from Austria will be included in the [Structured Dialogue](#), foreseen in the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. The Structured Dialogue is a process designed to guarantee rightful inclusion of adolescents in decision-making aspects of youth politics.

A further instrument of the Youth Strategy is the **Youth Screening** initiative. It **draws attention to the concerns of young people in all areas of politics** and the bureaucracy. Within the different administrative departments, the 'Knowledge – Transparency – Latitude' process provides for stable structures. A summary of the KTL model is as follows:

- **Providing knowledge about the situation, needs and diversity of young people** as well as about important youth policy stakeholders at the various levels.
- **Providing transparency about important youth policy measures, activities and services** of the individual administrative departments as the necessary foundation for youth policy coordination efforts.
- **Engendering innovative and creative cooperation between elected officials, government agencies, young people and other stakeholders** give everyone involved a new kind of latitude.

The **Youth Competence Centre** ([Kompetenzzentrum Jugend](#)) located within the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) supports administrative departments as they make use of this process.

Active cooperation with the provincial governments is a decisive factor in the success of the [Youth Strategy](#) in a federally structured country like Austria. With the resolution of April 2013, ranking officials in the individual provincial governments initiated the **Youth Offensive 2020**. In the wording of the resolution, they declared that 'the goals of the Youth Strategy set forth by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy are in their entirety [commensurate with] their own goals.' The Youth Offensive 2020 in the provincial governments stipulates that numerous structural elements of the Youth Strategy be incorporated in the work of the individual provinces.

The National Agency for Youth

Youth Competence Centre

The operating unit for the Youth Strategy is the Youth Competence Centre ([Kompetenzzentrum Jugend](#)) located within the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

Established in May 2013, the centre **coordinates key activities, offers knowledge and skills, and establishes contact** with experts. The goal of the centre is to **develop a stable network** between a diverse group of youth policy stakeholders. However, the political responsibility for the implementation still lies with the province of the individual government departments and institutions.

Together with the [National Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#) and the [Federal Networks for Open Youth Work](#) and [Youth Information](#) and in collaboration with the **provincial youth departments (Landesjugendreferate)**, this competence centre acts as a **National Agency for Youth**.

Development Group

A development group was **established to guide the Youth Strategy** in its efforts to integrate the Youth Council and extracurricular youth work and maintain the expertise and support of these organisations.

The Youth Strategy development group meets monthly and is comprised of

- the [National Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#)
- the **'nationwide network Open Youth Work'** ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit, bOJA](#))
- the **Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres** ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)),
- the **National Correspondent to the European research networks** and
- Employees of the [Department for Families and Youth and the Youth Competence Center at the Federal Chancellery](#).

The development group **discusses policy focuses for the Youth Strategy and develops recommendations for relevant measures**. Based on this core group and the impulses it creates, working groups and roundtables with additional stakeholders on specific topics are organised.

Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

The **Austrian Institute of Economic Research** ([Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung](#), WIFO) conducts a **regular progress evaluation** with regard to Austria's national **Europe 2020 targets** as well as the implementation of country-specific recommendations issued to Austria. The most recent evaluation report states that Austria is at a more favourable level than the EU average in all areas.

As of 1 January 2013, a new impact assessment system (**result-oriented impact assessment**) was introduced in Austria as part of the 2013 Federal Budget Act. In nine areas of policy (so-called impact dimensions), the **effects of draft legislation** will have to be presented in a systematic and obligatory way for every draft law (e.g. the financial, overall economic, social and environmental policy effects, and also the effects on women and men, children, consumers and administrative costs). The impact dimension 'social affairs' is sub-divided into five core areas. One of these is intended to illustrate the effects of planned legislative measures on the group of persons at risk of poverty or exclusion as defined in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In order to make it possible to implement this, a **web-based social reform micro-simulation tool (SORESI)** was developed which facilitates a quantitative estimation of the impact of specific planned legislative measures on the income situations of the Europe 2020 social target group.

Apart from the issues related to the Europe 2020 social target group, there is also the opportunity to simulate various measures in the field of cash benefits, social insurance and other contributions and income taxes, and to calculate their effects on the risk of poverty, the distribution of income, and their fiscal consequences. These services are free of charge after registration on the internet.

Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

Reforms within the youth guarantee implementation plan with **explicitly mentioned monitoring strategies**:

- Further development of the quality-focused subsidies and supporting instruments within the **apprenticeship system** (including different measures).
- Increasing the number of **skilled workers**
- Strategy on **Early School Leaving** and further decrease of the ESL rate
- **New upper secondary level** in schools (*Oberstufe NEU*)

- Further **decrease of grade repetition**
- **Educational statistics**
- Introduction of **educational standards**
- Improvements in **educational outcomes**
- Improvements in **Career Counselling** (IBOBB)
- Improvements in **transitional process between lower and upper secondary level education, between school and labour market**
- **Youth Coaching** (Jugendcoaching)

Youth related labour market policy objectives 2015:

- **Increase advertisement** on the labour market
- Acquisition of **skilled positions** (at least apprenticeship)
- **Keeping youth unemployment periods short** (unemployment no longer than six months)
- Get **labour market distanced persons** into jobs
- **Increase training effectiveness** (proportion of job take-ups within three months after training)
- **Post-qualification job take-up in selected sectors:** women and migrants in crafts and technology, intensive skilled worker training or intermediate-level secondary technical respectively vocational schools

Research

The Austrian Institute for Family Research ([Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung](#)) [Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy](#) ([Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, ibw](#)), Austrian Institute for SME Research ([KMU Forschung Austria](#)) and the [Institute for advanced studies](#) ([Institut für Höhere Studien, IHS](#)), and other research institutions **frequently conduct studies on behalf of public authorities**. Within those studies, important **stakeholders are interviewed**. External evaluations are also carried out by these institutions.

Recent studies and study projects on employment and entrepreneurship:

- [Success factors for the Dual VET System.](#)
- [Postsecondary vocational education and training in Austria.](#)
- [Muddling through' and historical institutionalism – Explanatory devices for the long-term development of the dualistic Austrian VET system \(IHS\).](#)
- National education report ([Nationaler Bildungsbericht](#)).
- AusBildung bis 18

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

The Federal cross-sectoral approach: collaboration and impact assessment

As of 2019, to establish youth policy as a cross-sectoral issue, **each Federal Ministry had to develop national youth objectives within its sphere of competence**, according to the 4 fields of action of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) (Learning and Employment, Participation and Initiative, Quality of Life and a Spirit of Cooperation, and Media and Information). While the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) holds the main and coordinative responsibility in youth politics, **all Ministries coin measures of youth policy and consider young people's position in all new legislative projects** as part of the 'Youth Check' ([Verordnung über die Abschätzung der Auswirkungen auf junge Menschen](#)). With youth policy as a cross-sectoral matters and youth relevant agendas spread out across all ministries, linking these approaches has become a major task of the Austrian Youth Strategy coordinated by the Federal Chancellery.

All parties to the parliament have established a **youth representative**. On the national level, the [Federal Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) acts as the **lobby for all children and young people** with the duties stated in the Federal Youth Promotion Act ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)) and measures to be implemented by the Federal Chancellery.

Youth Competence Centre and National Working Group on Youth Dialogue

The operating unit for the Youth Strategy is the Youth Competence Centre at the Federal Chancellery ([Kompetenzzentrum Jugend](#)). Established in May 2013, the Centre **coordinates key**

activities, offers knowledge and skills, and establishes contact with experts. The goal of the centre is to develop a stable network between a diverse group of youth policy stakeholders. The **political responsibility for the implementation is however still the province of the individual government departments** and institutions.

The **National Working Group on Youth Dialogue and Youth Participation** brings together federal and provincial authorities and other youth policy actors to implement the youth dialogue and for the further development of youth participation. The working group is made up of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) (Youth Competence Centre and Department for European and International Family and Youth Policy), the [Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#), the Federal Network Austrian Youth Information Centers ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)), the [Federal Network of Open Youth Work \(bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit\)](#), the Austrian European Youth Delegates, the Youth departments of the federal states ([Landesjugendreferate](#)), the National Correspondent to the European Knowledge Center for Youth Policy (EKCYP), and the Austrian National Agency Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps ([OEAD](#)), and the [Office for Youth Work of the Autonomous Italian Province of Bolzano - South Tyrol](#).

Furthermore, the **Youth Strategy Forum (Forum Jugendstrategie)** provides an **informal platform of exchange** with Ministries and other relevant stakeholders.

Federal states

Each head of a provincial youth department is responsible for the implementation of the youth policy and promotion of extracurricular youth work in the particular Federal province. As far as matters are not explicitly assigned to the federal legislation or execution, they belong to the autonomous fields of action of the provincial states. Thus, different laws in each province are possible. The **heads of provincial youth departments and representatives of the Federal Chancellery meet up on a yearly basis at the conference of provincial youth departments** to exchange and update further co-ordination issues. **Provincial youth advisory boards counsel** the provincial governments in the field of youth policy.

According to the conference of provincial youth departments **core tasks** have been defined:

Youth promotion

- **Promotion and guidance of youth organisations, youth information centres**, youth clubs, youth meeting points, local authorities, cultural facilities, private initiatives, etc.
- **Quality management**
- **Gender budgeting**
- **Results-based management**

Competence centre

Research and evaluation for knowledge-based planning and decisions

Knowledge and analysis of the diversity of young people's living environments, challenges and situations.

The **espousal of concerns and for the future of all young people** in Austria.

Youth in all parts of politics

- **Guidance and active participation in politics and administration of all areas** affecting young people.
- Linking and forcing a **dialogue with system relevant partners outside of the public sector** and the civil society.

Participation

- **Actively take part in the organisation of the living and social environment** of young people on a local, regional, national and international level.
- Develop **offers for various areas and fields of action**.

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

With establishing of the principle of effect-oriented administration, **all 35 subdivisions of the federal budget define their targets for the corresponding competence area**. These aims describe what kind of short and long-term outcomes for the society are envisaged. Therefore, they are the basis for several working programmes of public authorities.

Incorporating the goal of gender equality is obligatory for all areas. Based on this, but not obligatory, cross-sectorial targets addressing young people are defined.

Youth research has been acknowledged as a central foundation of evidence-based youth policy.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

Youth research is **an interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of young people** that combines different methods with various emphases. Therefore youth research relates to different fields of research such as education, youth work, social services, the labour market, transitions, health and wellbeing or justice. Youth policy can only offer convincing solutions when it is well acquainted with the reality of young people. It is therefore supported by **continuously updated analyses**. Research work serves as a **basis for the development of a varied and open youth policy**, which recognises and attempts to deal with the challenges of a world which is becoming ever more complex.

Several studies concerning youth are collected at the [Austrian Institute for Family Studies](#). A **youth report has been issued each year** by the former Ministry for Families and Youth. The [Federal Chancellery](#) has to present a youth report during each legislation period. Aside from this report, the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) authorises specific research projects. With the **youth monitor**, data on young people's opinions and attitudes is collected on a regular basis. Frequent enquiries of key youth figures serve to measure the result-based orientation of politics and administrations.

National Statistics and available data sources

[Statistics Austria](#) reliably collects and expertly analyses political, social and economic information in Austria and thus provides both politics and the public with important statistics, including such relevant for youth policy. A **whole range of institutions conducts research on matters of families and youth**, a comprehensive list of them is provided by the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery ([Jugendforschungsinstitutionen in Österreich](#)). Furthermore, **participatory youth research** is encouraged ([Partizipative Jugendforschung](#)). The Austrian Institute for Family Studies documents all data on youth that has been collected by various institutions on its Website and produces the publication 'Focus on Youth - An Overview in Numbers' on behalf of the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery ([Jugendspezifische Daten](#)).

Austrian Institute for Family Studies (AIF)

The Austrian Institute for Family Studies is a **scientific Department of the University of Vienna** for application-oriented, interdisciplinary studies to examine the structure and dynamics of families. It was founded as a non-profit organisation in 1994 to carry out social research and in April 2006 into a third-party-funded project at the Vienna University which is a legal body under public law. The AIF **conducts research and application-oriented research to examine the structure and dynamics of families, generation, gender and partnership**. Its interdisciplinary approach allows a broadly differentiated analysis of family issues on theoretical and empirical levels, using qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The **multidisciplinary team** represents a wide variety of disciplines, among them psychology, sociology, demography, history, economics, statistics and social education, thus ensuring multidisciplinary in its everyday work. The Institute analyses all issues relating to generations and genders as well as in partnerships to study the wide variety and changes in familial relationships and structures from the perspective of children, women and men. Focal research areas are family and gender relationships, reconciliation of work and family life, psychosocial health, the socio-economic situation of families and political family issues.

To obtain socially and politically relevant findings, the Institute thoroughly studies and evaluates pertinent issues, develops models, does reliable projections, and collaborates with other research

institutions. Besides expanding and systematising available basic knowledge on the family, the Institute acts as a consultant, advises politicians and offers education and training courses.

Documentation and Communication

The Institute fulfills another specific task, the **centralised documentation of family research data and studies**, by obtaining socially and politically relevant findings for a permanent information policy. Besides expanding data on families, the Institute acts as a **consultant, advises politicians and provides reliable facts on family issues for the public** and journalists. Another key area is to provide reliable data on families' living situations in order to raise the awareness for family topics in the media, among politicians and practitioners.

To build up networks and ensure knowledge transfer to the public, the institute distributes a **monthly national information service "beziehungsweise" and a newsletter, a Website, hosts lectures and workshops on a regular basis and co-operates with federal ministries, provincial governments, local authorities and private organisations** involved in family policy. This approach allows a broad yet differentiated analysis of family issues and constitutes a challenge in the Institute's research orientation. AIF endeavours to contribute to **establish the field of 'family science' as an independent discipline**.

The 7th Youth Report on the situation of young people in Austria (Jugendbericht)

On the basis of a resolution passed by Parliament on 28th September 1988, the (then) Minister of the Environment, Youth and Family Affairs, was requested to 'ensure that **research work on the situation of young people in Austria is consistently continued**' and that 'an **up-to-date report on the situation of young people in Austria is presented to Parliament during every parliamentary term**'.

The [7th Youth Report on the situation of young people in Austria \(2016\)](#) focuses on three major aspects that are explored in three different sections. Section A aims to convey a **statistical overview** on figures regarding young people in Austria, which are primarily based on the European Collective Statistics for Income and Living Conditions. Section B concerns itself with the '**Better-Life-Index of Youth**' (Better-Life-Index Jugend) and focuses on the **inclusion of young people**. Its aims to determine life quality among youth in order to create transparency about its current state and strives to evaluate ways to improve it. Section C deals with the **Austrian Youth Strategy** (Österreichische Jugendstrategie). It showcases exemplary provisions by the federal ministries, Austrian National Youth Council (Landesjugendreferate), federal representatives of youth (Bundesjugendvertretung) and the federal network for youth employment (Bundesnetzwerke der Jugendarbeit) that enable the execution of the Youth Strategy's framework objectives.

Former Youth Reports

- The **6th Austrian Youth Report (2011)** presents a comprehensive perspective of the processes and demands of growing up in Austrian society. Section A of the Sixth Report on the Situation of Youth includes scientific expertise that analyses the **living conditions of young people and draws conclusions** for responsible youth politics. Based on their experience and their know-how in the specific areas, practitioners describe the **situation of youth work in Austria** and evaluate the chances and perspectives for development resulting from them for young people in Section B. This section clarifies what is already effective for – and with – today's youth, how this has been achieved, what has become political reality for young people and **where there is still a need for action** in order to make the most positive use of the dormant potential for development for the benefit of Austria and the young people themselves.
- The **5th Youth Report** on the situation of young people in Austria has concerned itself with the topics of '**Gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive youth work** in Austria'. The report was presented in summer **2007**.
- The Parliament was informed about the **4th youth report** in November **2003**. As part of this youth report, young Austrians were asked in a representative survey about the most important features of their life situations, but also about their **general attitudes**. A second part of the report deals with the topic of **prevention in youth work outside schools**.
- The **3rd Youth Report** on the situation of young people in Austria (**1999**) mainly dealt with three focuses: the **leisure-time** situation of Austrian young people, **quality assurance and self-evaluation** in youth work and a portrayal of **participation opportunities** in the youth sector.
- The **2nd Youth Report** was published in **1993** and contains analyses of the life situation of young people in Austria.

- The **1st Youth Report** was published in **1987** with the title 'Beautiful Bird of Youth' and contains analyses of the life situation of young people in Austria.

Other reports and studies

[Report](#) on **extracurricular child and youth work**: The report provides a compact overview of the situation of extracurricular child and youth work and their supporting organisations.

A [study](#) on the **preventive role of open youth work** was published in 2010.

Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field

There is **no common budget explicitly designated to youth research** by the federal government. The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery \(Bundeskanzleramt, Sektion für Familie und Jugend\)](#) provides a **yearly budget** for youth research, which predominantly funds representation in international networks (e.g. European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy). The outcomes of these networks are integrated into the Austrian youth strategy and the implementation of structured dialogue in Austria.

Furthermore, this **budget is assigned to provide a report on the situation of youth in Austria** once per election period ([Bericht zur Lage der Jugend in Österreich](#)). Without an allocated budget, strategies and measure are conducted at the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery \(Bundeskanzleramt, Sektion für Familie und Jugend\)](#).

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

A graphical abstract of the overall **federal budget 2020** ([Budget Report 2020](#)) is provided by the Federal Ministry on Finances.

Resorts define their own targets and aims. The Federal Chancellery provides an overview of all **youth relevant aims** ([Wirkungsziele](#)).

Booklets in German on the subdivisions of the federal budget give a more detailed description of the respective budgets. [Partition 25 \(UG 25\)](#) regards the **budget for families and youth**. Budget-li25.02.02. is dedicated to youth policy measures.

What is funded?

The **funding focus for 2015/2016** was on

- Career start
- Digitalisation/media competence
- Peaceful coexistence

The **funding focus for 2017/2018** was on

- Diversity - Integration - Inclusion
- E-Youthwork
- Generational Dialogue

As for **2020/2021**, the **funding focus** ([Förderschwerpunkt](#)) is placed on

- Competences and Qualifications
- Digitalization/Media Competences/E-Youthwork
- Generational Dialogue

Financial accountability

The budget against long-term unemployment among young people

According to the [Youth and Work report](#), the federal government had a budget of €920 000 000 available to spend on **labour market policy for young people** in 2019.

Of this, a sum of €579 000 000 was used in the form of **subsidies and benefits** distributed via the Public Employment Service (AMS).

€230 000 000 were used to **promote apprenticeships** in companies.

€111 000 000 were available for corresponding **programmes** run by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

An additional sum of €53 000 000 was available for **further extensions** of the offers included in „**AusBildung bis 18**“ in 2019. As for the implementation of these developments in 2020, approximately €57 000 000 were available.

Use of EU Funds

The Federal Ministry of Families and Youth itself did not use any EU-funds.

Main policies/programmes:

Erasmus+: Youth in Action

The [evaluation](#) of **youth in action** 2014-2020 was performed by the **RAY** network.

Structured dialogue: national co-financing by the Federal Chancellery.

European Social Fund in Austria

In Austria, the European Social Fund ([Europäischer Sozialfonds](#)) provided a budget of approximately €876 000 000 for the period 2014-2020. The **priorities** of the funding are laid down in the Operational Programme for Employment.

The [Federal Ministry for Labour](#) is responsible for the overall coordination of the ESF in Austria.

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

There are **no special programmes, but frequent work meetings** with European representatives (e.g. Netherlands, Czech Republic, etc.). The major share of cooperation with other European countries is organised through **EU Programmes** and institutionalised cooperation.

International cooperation

- Austria engages in the **Council of Europe's** youth policy cooperation. In this Framework, **European Youth Ministers' Conferences** have taken place on different topics (e.g. the 9th Youth Ministerial Conference in St. Petersburg, Russia, under the theme 'Youth rights: developing innovative youth policies') and the '**No Hate Speech Movement**' (launched in 2013) aimed to jointly enable young people to combat hate speech online and to campaign for respectful coexistence online.
- Within the UN Framework, Austria has since 2013 each year sent **one Youth Delegate to the UN General Assembly**. In Austria, the National Youth Council ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) is responsible for the programme. Every country may send youth delegates to the General Assembly in order for them to represent the interests of children and young people worldwide. Austrian youth delegates are tasked with obtaining input from Austrian children and young people by means of a participatory process.
- The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) attends **work meetings with international representatives** (e.g. Canada, Japan, etc.).
- Bilateral activities with **Russia**: attendance of the Russian-Austrian Forum of Youth in Moscow and St. Petersburg as well as an additional youth forum in Uljanowsk as part of a [youth exchange program](#)
- Bilateral activities with **Japan**: [youth exchange program](#) 'AUSTRIA GOES JAPAN 2019'

1.9 Current debates and reforms

Developments

On 1. Februar 2021, the **responsibilities of the former Federal Ministry for Labour, Families and Youth** have again been **relocated to the Federal Chancellery**.

As of January 2019, the **youth (protection) laws were largely harmonised**, but there are still 9 different laws, one for each Federal State.

The current debate is centered around the **adequate consideration of the needs of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic**, particularly with regard to lockdown measures that take a toll on young people (e.g. opening of schools, universities, youth work spaces, and sports

facilities; psychological support; curfews and reduction of open leisure activities; work and apprenticeship opportunities).

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Voluntary engagement as a meaningful contribution to society (and supplement to regular paid work) holds a **high social value in Austria**. The country thus holds a very strong position in the field: according to the most recent **Volunteering Report** ([Freiwilligenbericht](#), 2019) by the former Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 46% of people aged 15 and above volunteer. Participation in volunteering is high among all age groups. **43% of young people below the age of 30 engage in formal or informal volunteering**. Similarly, of young people aged 15 to 24 around 43% are involved in community service. Around three out of ten are active in **organisations**, while about a quarter provides (additional) **neighbourhood assistance**.

To promote voluntary work, **the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection** ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) **ensures attractive basic conditions**. The legal basis is provided by the Federal Act on the Promotion of Voluntary Work / Voluntary Work Act ([Bundesgesetz zur Förderung von freiwilligem Engagement / Freiwilligenengesetz](#)). Inter alia, it regulates programmes such as the **Voluntary Social Year and Peace and Social Services abroad**. The Voluntary Work Act came into effect in 2012 and was last changed in 2018.

The [Freiwilligenweb Website](#) (German only) by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) provides all relevant information to (prospective) volunteers.

2.1 General context

Historical developments

The social cohesion of a society is fundamentally based on a developed and safe social welfare system with legal entitlements for its citizens. If there is a need to obtain help, voluntary work is a meaningful supplement to paid work involving compulsory social insurance contributions. This **culture of voluntary engagement, solidarity and mutual support is an important part of our social capital**.

Volunteer and honorary services can look back on a great and **long tradition** in Austria. The commitment to such activity is **deeply rooted in wide sections of the population**. Austria owes its high quality of life not least to volunteers working in the areas of welfare, health, culture and sports, disaster relief as well as rescue and ambulance services. An enormously large proportion, namely **46% of the population** over 15 years of age engage in volunteer work. This corresponds to more than **3.5 million people** in Austria who help in providing voluntary services.

Approximately **2.3 million people** work for free in different **organisations and associations**. More than **2 million people** are active in the area of **neighbourhood assistance**. This means that voluntary services offer our society added value, but this must not be regarded as a substitute for paid work. The time input for voluntary work is considerable: seven out of every ten persons engaged in voluntary activities devote **up to 30 days a year** to these tasks. The majority of volunteers commit themselves to performing such functions on a **regular basis**. Many of them – often over and above – co-operate in specific finite projects.

Voluntary engagement is indispensable for Austria - but not taken for granted. To make sure that as many people as possible carry out voluntary work in the future, the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) ensures that the **basic conditions are attractive**. Innovative projects and measures to promote voluntary engagement are developed and implemented together with representatives of voluntary organisations.

Volunteers and voluntary organisations benefit from the **national and international transfer of expertise** and from the **motivation of companies and institutions to support** voluntary engagement.

The aim of all this is to **ensure that invaluable voluntary engagement remains affordable** for those carrying it out. [Statistik Austria](#) carried out the first national data collection (2006,

[Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich](#)). The Ministry implemented **centres for voluntary workers in the federal states** ([Freiwilligenzentren](#)), an **internet platform in order for honorary members to communicate** ([Freiwilligenweb](#)), and **guidelines for the training of voluntary workers and coordinators** (were established. A **voluntary pass** ([Freiwilligenpass](#)) including a definition of voluntary work was introduced. However, not all of the above-mentioned steps have caught on in all areas. The reason could be that they are **non-binding** and that further political prioritisation could be needed. Apart from the strictly organised larger institutions such as the Red Cross, Caritas, or voluntary fire departments, volunteers still mostly work according to their own structures.

Youth volunteering

Voluntary engagement is **especially important on a local level** in Austria. A **great number of organisations and projects** are active in a large variety of fields, e.g. emergency aid, culture, nature, religion, social issues, politics, community, education or sports. **Many associations of voluntary work offer specific programmes for youth**, such as for example the Fire Departments ([Feuerwehrjugend](#)) and the [Youth Red Cross](#) ([Jugendrotkreuz](#)). Voluntary engagement allows becoming a responsible part of the society. It **offers the opportunity to gain attractive competences**.

Voluntary engagement among youth - as in other age groups - is widespread in Austria. The country thus holds a very strong position in the field: according to the most recent **Volunteering Report** ([Freiwilligenbericht](#), 2019) by the [Federal Ministry of Labour, Health, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection](#), **43% of young people below the age of 30 engage in formal or informal volunteering**. Similarly, of young people aged 15 to 24 around 43% are involved in community service. Around three out of ten are active in **organisations**, while about a quarter provides (additional) **neighbourhood assistance**. The participation quote nearly meets the adult's quote of 46%. In numbers, **more than 500.000 young people are voluntarily active**.

Main concepts

General Definition

Volunteering is done if a natural person provides:

- **voluntary merit for others**
- within an **organised framework**
- **non-paid**
- with the **purpose to promote the community or mainly driven by social reasons**
- **without** this being achieved in the course of an **employment or vocational training**

Furthermore, the term voluntary engagement applies to **measures for personal or professional training necessary for volunteer organisations** and the implementation of voluntary activities. Additionally, the term volunteering applies for taking part in **projects of the European voluntary service**.

With the financial support of youth organisations, regulated in the federal law of youth promotion, an appropriate infrastructure for volunteering is provided.

In accordance with the youth strategy, processes and [laws](#) have been installed to guarantee the improved quality assurance of voluntary engagement.

Formal voluntary work refers to activities which are carried out within the framework of an **organisation**, a club, or an institution: such as disaster management, emergency medical services, environmental or animal protection, work in the church, in social services and the health area, political work, citizen initiatives, education, and last but not least the broad area of art, culture, entertainment and leisure time.

Informal voluntary work, often also called **neighbourly help**, occurs out of **personal initiative without the framework of an institution**. In the year 2001 (the national year of honorary work), the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Health, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection took steps in order to clarify and improve the unstructured basis for voluntary work in Austria.

There is **no particular legal form for organisations working with volunteers in Austria**. Most of them are **associations or clubs**. They are founded relatively easy and there are comparatively little formal requirements. Generally, organisations that work with volunteers are assigned to a sector called **third sector or non-profit sector**. This sector is the counter pole to the state and market, respectively an independent factor between these. Especially in an EU-

context, the term **social economy** was established within the last years. As a part of the economic system, it shows various characteristics. Less common are terms as **Freiwilligenorganisation** (a voluntary organisation) and Freiwilligensektor (voluntary sector). Thus, the application and delimitation are by far neither distinct nor consistent.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) are responsible for governing, funding and promoting youth volunteering at the national level. An [online platform \(Freiwilligenweb\)](#) has been established to provide guidance for volunteer organisations and volunteers. The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection maintains this platform. **Volunteer organisations** are either to be found at **national or at the local level**.

Within the last years, **measures were taken at various levels to support and promote voluntary engagement**, thus, to further improve the framework for volunteering.

With the **Federal Law to promote voluntary engagement (Freiwilligengesetz)**, a regulatory framework has been established in 2012 to support this socially important and invaluable contribution.

Furthermore, the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is responsible for [youth volunteering](#) specifically. The **strategic goal aims for 50 % of young people** taking the initiative on their own to do voluntary work. Voluntary work plays a large role in Austria at the **communal level**. As of the 3rd Report on Voluntary Engagement in Austria (2019) ([3. Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich](#)), 46% of the population over the age of 15 are involved in formal or informal voluntary labor. There are **numerous organisations and projects involved in different areas** such as emergency relief, culture, the environment, religion, social work, politics, local communities, education and sport. Volunteering makes it possible to experience being in a position of responsibility for society. It offers people the chance to acquire valuable skills that could be relevant in the workplace.

With the **Federal Youth Promotion Act (Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz)**, the financial support of youth organisation is given and thus, an **appropriate infrastructure for voluntary engagement** is provided. Particularly the organised youth work is managed by volunteers.

In accordance with the youth strategy, processes for an improved quality assurance in youth work have been launched. [aufZAO](#) certifies training courses for people working in extracurricular youth work.

Four main governance actors regarding youth volunteering

1. **Federal government**
2. **Austrian Council for Voluntary Work (presented in the Section cross-sectoral cooperation)**
3. **Regional Level: federal state's youth units**
4. **Non-governmental actors**

Federal government

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), responsible for youth affairs, and the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#), responsible for voluntary engagement, are the main actors responsible for voluntary activities on the federal level. Their **cooperation with each other and other Ministries and actors** of youth and voluntary affairs sets the foundation for a successful youth volunteering policy.

Regional Level: federal state's youth units

Youth volunteering is furthermore co-determined and promoted by the competent Departments of the Federal States.

- **Vienna**: Federal state government - MA 13 (Education and extracurricular youth services) – Department of youth and education
- **Lower Austria**: Federal state government – Department of youth
- **Upper Austria**: Federal state government – Department of education and Society

- **Burgenland**: Federal state government – Department 2
- **Styria**: Federal state government – Department 6A (youth, women, family and generation)
- **Carinthia**: Federal state government – Department of youth
- **Salzburg**: Federal state government - Department 2/07 (youth)
- **Tyrol**: Federal state government – Department of education, culture and sports – JUFF
- **Vorarlberg**: Federal state government – Department of youth and family

Non-governmental actors

There are **many different nongovernmental actors in every field of voluntary activities of young people** in Austria, which range from emergency response to sports. The main youth NGOs are **member organisations of the Austrian Youth Council** ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)). A list of these youth NGOs can be found on the webpage of this umbrella organisation.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The **cooperation of the main actors responsible for youth volunteering** depicted above is critical to enhance youth volunteering in Austria. In an institutionalised form, this takes place within the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work.

Austrian Council for Voluntary Work (Österreichischer Freiwilligenrat)

The Austrian Council for Voluntary Work pursues the aim of **eliminating the hurdles and barriers that obstruct voluntary engagement**. It develops **recommendations for measures** so that people of all age groups will continue to carry out voluntary work in the future. The establishment of the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work in 2003 fulfilled one of the main demands of the International Year of Volunteers in 2001. It meets at least once a year. The Volunteer Council, which forms part of the Ministry of Social Affairs, pursues the goal of **upgrading voluntary work as a supporting pillar of society and further improving the conditions for volunteer activities**. Pursuant to the Federal Volunteer Act, the Austrian Volunteer Council was established by law on December 14, 2012.

It represents an **institutionalised forum for an ongoing dialogue** and serves as a body for counselling, networking, representing stakeholder interests and developing further volunteer policies. The Council consists of **delegates of the federal government, the federal provinces, the association of Austrian cities and towns and the association of Local Authorities, the social partners** (employers' and employees' organisations, farmers' representatives), **the political parties** as well as **volunteers' organisations from all areas of voluntary engagement**. In total, the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work has 53 members, whose period of office is five years. Its Management is the responsibility of the Department of Senior Citizens' Policy, Population Policy and Voluntary Work Policy in the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#).

Further tasks of the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work are:

- Making **recommendations** on questions which affect voluntary work and the interest of volunteers themselves
- Making **proposals for the development of a modern model for voluntary work** and unpaid engagement
- Making **proposals for networking among volunteers' organisations** and on specific projects for voluntary work
- Involvement in the **setting of priorities and the conception of the Austrian Voluntary Work Report**, which has to be presented to Parliament once per legislative period
- Issuing **statements on draft bills and regulations, which affect the interests of volunteers' organisations** and volunteers themselves.

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

The **youth volunteering strategy is part of the Austrian Youth Strategy**, which is both an official policy and an ongoing process that has been introduced in 2012. One of the four fields of action, **participation and engagement** particularly promotes voluntary activities of young people. Under the motto 'Commitment pays off', both participation in democratic processes and voluntary engaging are to be promoted. The Youth Goals ([Jugendziele](#)) for this particular field of action include youth-relevant support measures in the field, the contributing to the political

engagement of youth through civic education and education for sustainable development, utilising the commitment of young people to achieve our climate and energy goals together, and recognising voluntary work as a component of young people's qualification,

There is **no stand-alone law** on youth volunteering, but **several paragraphs within the Federal Act Promoting Volunteer Work** ([Bundesgesetz zur Förderung von freiwilligem Engagement, Freiwilligengesetz](#), Federal Law Gazette, Nr. 17/2012 as amended in 2016) only address young people. The Act came into force in 2012 and was last updated in 2016. A clear strategy, an appropriate legal framework, smart co-operation, a broadly based dialogue as well as readiness for action have created a solid basis and a favourable climate for general voluntary commitment in Austria. In this regard, the Federal Ministry implements the Federal Volunteer Act. This federal act stipulates the framework conditions for formal voluntary activities serving the public interest with a view to promoting such activities and fostering participation in voluntary work.

Scope and contents

Voluntary work is widespread among young people in Austria. At **43%** the rate of youth participation is nearly equal to that of adults, which means that more than 500,000 young people are engaged in voluntary work. Specifically, 30% of young people are formal volunteers (in organisations, societies) and 26% of young people are informal volunteers (in neighbourhood associations, for instance). A number of these young people (11.4 %) are active in formal and informal volunteering.

The **Federal Act Promoting Volunteer Work** ([Bundesgesetz zur Förderung von freiwilligem Engagement](#), Freiwilligengesetz) contains provisions relating to the conduct of the **Voluntary Social Year, the Voluntary Environmental Protection Year as well as Holocaust Memorial Service, Peace-related and Social Services abroad**. It governs the **preconditions for volunteer work**, such as the recognition of providers (acting as placement agencies), the areas in which volunteers are engaged, the obligations of providers and institutions relying on the services of volunteers, the duration of voluntary work, the implementation mode as well as quality assurance. In addition, the Act also provides for the protection of volunteers under the social law (insurance cover), the payment of pocket money, pedagogical support and continuous assistance as well as payment of family allowances to young volunteers. With this law, a regulatory framework has been established in 2012 to support this socially important and invaluable contribution.

Since the entry into force of the amendment to the Act on **Community Services** on October 1, 2013 and 2016, it has become possible to earn credits that are counted towards the regular civil service by acting as a volunteer during the social year, the environmental protection year, holocaust memorial service, peace-related and social services abroad as defined in the Federal Volunteer Act. One of the prerequisites for earning such credits is, amongst other things, **ten months of continuous practice** for a recognized provider.

Financial funding is provided on the national level, but the organisation of voluntary activities is rather operated on to the federal state level. Most volunteer organisations are under the autonomy of the **non-governmental sector** but additionally funded by the government.

Responsible authority

The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) and the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) are mainly responsible for the Austrian Strategy on Youth Volunteering. [Chapter 2.2](#) details further relevant actors in the field.

In general, the **voluntary organisations** are responsible for evaluating technical supervision, practical supervision and educational guidance and have to present their QA reports to the Ministry either every three years or by request. The Health and Safety Executive investigates all organisations.

Revisions/ Updates

As an **ongoing process** the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) and thus the included youth voluntary strategy are subject to **continuous improvements** and updates.

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is **no national programme for youth volunteering** in form of a general, nation-wide programme that is organised, funded and monitored by the State. However, a legal basis is provided by the **Federal Law to promote voluntary engagement** ([Freiwilligengesetz](#)), a regulatory framework has been established in 2012 to support this socially important and invaluable contribution.

For **young Austrian men** who are obliged to serve a 6 month military or 9 month civil service, new opportunities have been provided with the entry into force of the amendment to the **Act on Civil Services** ([Zivildienstgesetz](#)) in 2013 and 2016, which enabled them to fulfill their civil service by acting as a volunteer for 10 months in form of a social year, environmental protection year, a holocaust memorial service, or a peace or social services abroad as defined in the Federal Volunteer Act.

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) promotes **volunteer-specific projects of nationwide importance** as well as **model projects of volunteer organizations** and supports educational, training and quality assurance measures.

The **Voluntary Social Year** ([Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr](#)), the **Voluntary Environmental Protection Year** ([Freiwilliges Umweltjahr](#)) as well as **Holocaust Memorial Service** ([Gedenkdienst](#)), and **Peace and Social Services abroad** ([Friedens- und Sozialdienst im Ausland](#)) are a matter of the national level, whereas the organisation of voluntary activities is rather operated on to the federal state level. Young people in Austria entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection status can participate in the [Voluntary Integration Year](#).

Volunteering in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, most aspects of daily life have been greatly limited. However, Austria has a remarkable tradition of volunteering and thus **'helping others' was stated as one of the four 'good reasons to leave your house' in the legal provision on personal movement restriction**. Volunteering initiatives specifically in the context of COVID-19 and its effects can be found [online](#) and are grouped into the following categories:

- services **supplying homes** (delivery and care services)
- **nationwide** initiatives (emergency aid, relief agencies for the homeless)
- initiatives for and from **businesses** (ecommerce, aid for artists and community workers)
- **internet-bound** initiatives (online culture and sports offers)
- voluntary **neighborhood** initiatives (neighborhood aid agencies)
- initiatives **for children and students** (educational opportunities and information)
- **province-specific** initiatives

Funding

There is **no national program for youth volunteering**, which is a general, nation-wide program, funded by the State.

The financial funding for the Voluntary Social Year, the Voluntary Environmental Protection Year as well as Holocaust Memorial Service, Peace-related and Social Services abroad is provided on the **national level**, but most volunteer organisation responsible for them are under the autonomy of the **non-governmental sector**.

The **total amount spent on voluntary activities cannot be estimated** since a big volume of voluntary activities is set in **NGOs** like youth organisations which are **funded and supported by different public structures**. Due to the federal organisation of youth policy, an estimation of financial support cannot be done.

Main **sources** of finance are the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) and the [Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs](#). Furthermore, sources for finance are the **departments for youth policy and for social affairs in the nine federal states** of Austria. But also big national and international **companies** and the chamber of commerce and industries fund voluntary activities. Organised on the basis of the private law relating to associations, **NGOs have special tax grants** because of their public usefulness and non-profit-making. Any compensation for voluntary activities is liable to taxes as all other income.

Regulations that are valid for all volunteers also address young people. With the **Recognition Fund for Volunteer Commitment**, established in July 2013, an additional option for supporting volunteer activities has been created. This Fund promotes activities and initiatives contributing to the development or implementation of innovative measures, especially activities or initiatives aimed at a **sustainable maintenance of volunteer commitment** in Austria. The maximum subsidy for such activities or initiatives amounts to EUR 15,000 in the case of an organisation.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

- **Official reports:** The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) periodically draws up a report on the status and development of a commitment to voluntary work in Austria ([Freiwilligenbericht](#)). [Three reports](#) have been published so far.
- **Level of participation:** 43% of people between 15 and 24 are engaged in voluntary activities in Austria; declining trend ([numbers for 2016](#)).
- One [publication](#) by the [Austrian Integration Fund \(Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, ÖIF\)](#) covers **volunteers with migration background**.
- There is **no big difference between formal and informal voluntary engagement**. The highest numbers in the formal area are in the field of sports (29%), emergency aid (27%) and conservation, nature protection and animal welfare (22%).

Support to young volunteers

Financial support for voluntary work in the field of extracurricular children's and youth work is possible according to the **Federal Youth Promotion Act**, the **EU programme ERASMUS+** and through the **federal states**.

The '**voluntary social year**' ([freiwilliges soziales Jahr, FSJ](#)) offers

- an interesting and **carefully selected job site**
- **pedagogical support** and support during the assignment
- **free meals** during the mission
- **free accommodation or travel cost reimbursement** for public transport

The FSJ is **defined** in the volunteer law **as an apprenticeship**, which is why the FSJ also offers following advantages:

- **family allowance** (provided the eligibility requirements are met)
- **seminar weeks or seminar days for preparation and reflection** of the assignment as well as for further training, a total of 18 seminar days
- a **monthly pocket money** of € 245, - net
- **cheap youth network card** of the respective **transport** association
- health, accident and pension **insurance**
- **leave days** analogous to the holiday law (23 days off for 11 months of employment, 21 days off for 10 months of use)

The Youth Information Centers: Counselling and support

An important concern of youth information is to support young people's own initiative. To this end, the Austrian Youth Information Centres **inform young people about the many different opportunities for volunteering at home and abroad**. The relevant **publications** of the Youth Information Centres as well as on-site **counselling** are to serve as a guide for young people in their search for a suitable voluntary commitment or place of work. On the other hand, the Youth Information Centres **support young people in successfully implementing their project ideas and voluntary projects** within the framework of 'Your projects' ("[EureProjekte](#)") and similar initiatives and programmes. EureProjekte enables young people between 14 and 24 to put their project ideas into practice. Young people receive **start-up funding** of up to 500 euros, for projects focusing on 'climate protection and sustainability' currently up to 750 euros, as well as advice from the local youth information office. By the end of 2018, more than 350 projects had been launched, reaching around 16,000 people.

Open Youth Work

In open youth work, **young people should be guided to take responsibility themselves** and find **professional support** in implementing their goals and ideas. Many facilities have their own focus projects, such as 'role reversal', where **young people 'take over' the facility** for a week. Furthermore, some youth centres also accept **European volunteers** who want to do their voluntary service in youth centres.

Quality Assurance

The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) is **mainly responsible for QA of voluntary activities**. In general, the **voluntary organisations are responsible for evaluating** technical supervision, practical supervision and educational guidance and have to **present their QA reports to the Ministry** either every three years or by request. The Health and Safety Executive investigates all organisations.

- In co-operation with the Austrian Volunteer Council, the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) periodically draws up a **report on the status and development of a commitment to voluntary work** in Austria. [Three reports](#) have been published so far.
- There is **no common feedback mechanism for young volunteers**
- As all organisations are responsible for QA, there is **no official report for all**
- **Surveys concerning the participation of special target groups** are undertaken.

Some **projects** were launched to especially address people with **migration background**. These projects are either initiated or supported by national authorities

- [ZUSAMMEN:ÖSTERREICH – Jetzt DU](#) (Together:Austria-Now YOU)
- [Wir sind dabei](#) (we are on)

Target groups

Apart from the [Voluntary Integration Year](#), **all young people are addressed** and no special target groups are defined.

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

Austria enables young people to volunteer abroad through participation in the EU Programmes [Erasmus+](#) ([Erasmus+, formerly Jugend in Aktion](#)) and [European Solidarity Corps](#) ([Europäischer Solidaritätskorps](#)). These programmes shall inspire active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance, and involve young people with the European Union. They encourage mobility, non-formal learning, intercultural dialogue and inclusion among young people. Since 2014, the new Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth, and sport has replaced Youth in Action.

On the national level, these programmes are implemented by the National [Agency for Education and Internationalisation](#) ([Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung](#), **OEAD**) on behalf of the Federal government, particularly the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

In terms of **evaluation**, the National [Agency for Education and Internationalisation](#) ([Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung](#), OEAD) publishes '**Numbers, data and facts**' on **Erasmus+** on a yearly basis as well as comprehensive information material, evaluations, reports and thematic monitoring ([Publikationen](#)). According to the most recent report (issue 06, 2019/20), in the term 2014 - 2020 a total of 4.061 projects was approved, 147.493 mobilities were executed, and € 270.524.560 were granted (projects amounting to a higher cost than the available EU funds were approved (overbooking) and compensated for by additional national funding from the Federal Ministry).

From 2018 - 2020 SALTO and the Intercultural Center ([Interkulturelles Zentrum](#), IZ) accompanied the implementation of the 'European Solidarity Corps' on behalf of the EU Commission ([Salto Resource Centre für das Europäische Solidaritätskorps](#)). From 2007-2013, the 'Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of the Youth in Action Programme' (RAY) took place. The then National Agency was the Intercultural Center ([Interkulturelles Zentrum](#), IZ). Monitoring was performed by the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Innsbruck, the Generation and Educational Science Institute in Austria, and the IZ.

Young people in Austria can also take part in the [EU Aid Volunteers programme](#) (soon to become 'Volunteering in humanitarian aid field'). It brings volunteers and organisations from different countries together, providing practical support to humanitarian aid projects and contributing to strengthening local capacity and resilience of disaster-affected communities. Participants must be over 18 years and a citizen of an EU Member State or a long-term EU resident.

Several **organisations are (co-)funded by the Erasmus+ programme**. An example is the international organisation [VIDES](#), originally founded in Italy by the Don Bosco sisters with an office in Austria. This organisation offers volunteer placements around the world to support young people by young volunteers.

Other Programmes

- The non-profit association [Austrian Service Abroad \(Österreichischer Auslandsdienst\)](#) is a host organisation which allows Austrians to work at Austrian Holocaust Memorial Services, Austrian Social Services or Austrian Peace Services in foreign countries. It is an organization acknowledged by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#), and receives funds by [Erasmus+](#) and the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).
- Its **Austrian Social Service** offers many different projects all over the world. Within in the framework of the international development cooperation, social servants are able to serve their civilian service abroad for 12 months. The tasks depend on the circumstances of the deployment location and may vary in a number of ways. The focus of the Austrian Social Service lies heavily, with a few exceptions, on emerging countries in Central- and South America, Africa and Asia.
- The purpose of the **Austrian Peace Service** is to support people in their endeavour against conflicts and tensions. An Austrian Peace Servant works on projects which are concerned with securing peace in conflict areas by analyzing the human rights situation, organizing workshops and trying to take measures like mediating between the conflict parties.
- The **Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service** deals mainly with victims of National Socialism. Servants work at commemoration sites of the Holocaust, museums and historical research institutes such as Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, the Jewish Museum Berlin, and the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest. The work at the various locations consists mainly of designing and organizing guided tours, editing archives, lecturing in universities and schools and interviewing contemporary witnesses to preserve their experiences for future generations.
- The independent non-profit association [Memorial Service \(Gedenkdienst\)](#) organises Holocaust memorial services placements around the world.
- The publically subsidised Austrian NGO [Grenzenlos](#) offers a large variety of programs with the main aim of promoting peace and tolerance through international non-formal education programmes that combine cultural integration with engagement in non-profit initiatives worldwide. It realises the platform [volunteering.at](#) and organises voluntary services in Africa, Asia, Anglo-America, Europa, Latin-American and Oceania. Further programmes:
 - Coordination of the [European Solidarity Corps Vienna/Austria](#)
 - Projects and work-camps for [international volunteers](#)
 - Coordination of [ICYA-Austria](#) (international cultural youth exchange);
 - [VOLONTARIAT bewegt](#) ('Volunteering moves') is an initiative of *Jugend Eine Welt* and the Salesians of Don Bosco. The organisation is supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and both private and Church initiatives, offering voluntary services in Latin America, Asia and Africa for young people.
 - [DKA Austria](#) is the development cooperation agency of the Catholic Children's Movement of Austria (Katholische Jungschar). It facilitates placements and volunteer posts in partner organisations for 3 months and longer. Voluntary placements are meant for people of at least 20 years of age interested in development cooperation.
 - [Service Civil International_- Austria](#) is part of the international organisation SCI, offering voluntary placements provided by SCI international.
 - [Voluntaris.at](#) offers volunteer placements around the world for qualified persons.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

Visas for stays of more than three months are not required for citizens of the EU, the European Economic Area (EEA), large parts of Eastern Europe, Israel, U.S.A, Canada, the majority of Central and South American nations, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, or New Zealand. All other nationalities require a visa.

A **residence permit** is issued to foreign nationals who want to stay in Austria for more than six months.

Regulations for **social services** for Employees:

- Maximum validity 1 year (no extension possible)

- If the social service is not subject to the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals and is provided by a non-partisan and charitable non-profit organisation
- If the services are not provided for pecuniary gain
- A liability declaration from the sponsor organisation the social service employee is working for must be provided

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) is the **top-level authority** responsible for [voluntary engagement \(Freiwilliges Engagement\)](#). In the field of youth volunteering, it shares responsibility with the top-level authority competent for youth affairs, the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). Both provide basic information on their websites.

Volunteering Websites

The online platform www.freiwilligenweb.at is dedicated to voluntary activities and provides **information on any topic regarding voluntary engagement in Austria**, including a list of volunteering opportunities. It is run by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#).

Furthermore, the website aktivwerden.at, developed by an initiative called 'Entscheidend bist DU' (YOU are crucial) by the former Ministry of Education and Science, provides a **list** of NGOs and NPOs offering voluntary activities placements. Furthermore, a **test** can be undertaken to figure out what kind of voluntary engagement would fit best to the person's interests.

The Youth Information Centers

The Austrian Youth Information Centres **inform young people about the many different opportunities for volunteering at home and abroad**. The relevant **publications** of the Youth Information Centres as well as on-site **counselling** are to serve as a guide for young people in their search for a suitable voluntary commitment or place of work. The Website 'Jugendportal' for example provides young people with information on how to volunteer abroad ([Freiwillig Arbeiten im Ausland](#)). On the same topic, an information brochure was published. On the other hand, the Youth Information Centres **support young people in successfully implementing their project ideas and voluntary projects** within the framework of 'Your projects' ("[EureProjekte](#)" - depicted bellow) and similar initiatives and programmes.

Volunteer Centers

The **Volunteer centres in Austria** offer **placement, counselling and continuous support** services for those interested in voluntary work. They serve as a contact point for people who want to commit themselves to voluntary activities as well as for organisations offering places for volunteer work. Together with the local GEMA (*Gemeinsam aktiv*, active together) hubs, they seek to match the supply of and demand for volunteer work. The volunteer centres offer basic and advanced **training for volunteers and volunteer co-ordinators** or organise such training programmes, support the transfer of expertise and supply information. A [list of volunteer centres](#) is available online.

Tasks of the independent volunteer centres

- **Attracting**, advising, placing and **supporting volunteers**
- **Networking** and communication
- **Regional/local pilot schemes** of local authorities and organisations
- **Training** and further training
- Voluntary engagement and the **acquisition of skills**
- Accident and liability **insurance** for volunteers
- **Lobbying** and **public relations** work

Key initiatives

The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) **promotes** volunteer-specific projects of nationwide importance as well as model projects of volunteer organisations and

supports educational, training and quality assurance measures. With the **Recognition Fund for Volunteer Commitment**, which was created in July 2013, an additional option for supporting volunteer activities has been created. This Fund promotes activities and initiatives contributing to the development or implementation of innovative measures, especially activities or initiatives aimed at a sustainable maintenance of volunteer commitment in Austria. The maximum subsidy for such activities or initiatives amounts to EUR 15,000 in the case of an organisation.

Volunteer Passport (Freiwilligenpass)

The Austrian Volunteer Passport issued by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) **documents voluntary activities**. This record of voluntary work **specifies all skills in detail**. This, in turn, offers young and/or working persons benefits in the world of work, such as, for example, in submitting job applications or career development. Information on the approval of voluntary engagement are to be found [online](#).

YourProjects (EureProjekte)

EureProjekte **enables young people between 14 and 24 to put their project ideas into practice**. Young people receive **start-up funding** of up to 500 euros, for projects focusing on 'climate protection and sustainability' currently up to 750 euros, as well as advice from the local youth information office. By the end of 2018, more than 350 projects had been launched, reaching around 16,000 people. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, time extensions for projects could be requested on the [official website](#).

In addition to the initial funding, young people also receive an **individual project consultation** with employees of the provincial youth information centres. The aim of [EureProjekte](#) is for young people to experience their own effectiveness and to put themselves to the test, with failure allowed. At the same time, young people's innovation and commitment are made visible. Funding is granted to projects or project ideas that meet the basic eligibility criteria in form and content and have been chosen by a jury in a **selection process**. Project ideas must be creative and innovative, and open up new spaces that contribute to social diversity and promote cooperation. There are no limits to the topics: art and culture, environment, health, sustainability, social involvement, society, technology, sport, and others.

[EureProjekte](#) is an initiative of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and is carried out in cooperation with the National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres ([Bundnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)).

The GEMA - Active Together idea competition

The idea competition was intended to **consolidate and extend local voluntary work cultures in an innovative and forward-looking way**. A total of 20 pilot schemes were selected by an expert jury and awarded funding for two years from the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) and the Social Affairs Department of the province of Upper Austria. In addition, these local and regional pilot schemes receive organisational support from the ULF Centre in Linz.

As part of the pilot scheme, [the independent provincial volunteer centre in Linz \(ULF\)](#) was established as an independent volunteers' centre that offers a professional infrastructure in the placement, networking, training and further training of volunteers. **Local authorities** - who are faced with particularly great challenges in terms of demographic changes - **are to be supported** in the establishment of local hubs for voluntary engagement in cooperation between the generations.

(Young) Volunteers Fair (Freiwilligenmesse)

In 2011, the association for voluntary fairs to promote voluntary work in Austria ([Verein Freiwilligenmessen zur Förderung von Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich](#)) was founded and is supported by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#). They first installed a voluntary fair in 2012, which now **takes place every year**. Together with competence centre for non-profit organisations and social entrepreneurship ([Kompetenzzentrum für Nonprofit Organisationen und Social Entrepreneurship](#)), the **first fair for young volunteers was organised in 2016** (60 exhibitors, 1700 visitors). The second young volunteers fair took place in May 2017. As of March 2021, this year's fair is expected to take place in October. Updates relevant to the COVID-19 situation and corresponding changes made to the program as well as impressions of past fairs can be viewed [online](#).

Voluntarily for Vienna (Freiwillig für Wien)

An initiative of the City of Vienna brings together offers and inquiries: **Voluntary organisations and enthusiasts who want to be involved in an honorary capacity can find each other online.** For Viennese who want to make a voluntary contribution to society, online guidance and help is provided.

'GET SOCIAL'

The **Red Cross** motivates young people to start voluntary engagement, supported by the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). It runs an own Website and programme for young volunteers.

Brochure

Furthermore, the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) published a **brochure** to give a **compact overview** of the value and importance, diversity and variety of voluntary engagement.

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy Framework

Volunteering has a **traditionally high value** in Austrian society, and has as such **always been an asset** in job applications. In its efforts to further promote volunteering, the Austrian government has sought to formally recognise the skills acquired through volunteering in order to further strengthen their value for formal career paths.

Volunteer passport (Freiwilligenpass)

For volunteering, a certificate that is recognized in the formal labour market has been established in 2005. The Austrian Volunteer Passport issued by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) **documents voluntary activities and specifies all acquired skills in detail.** This offers benefits in the world of work.

This passport was **primarily targeted at young people**, in order to promote the recognition of their voluntary engagement and to encourage the idea that it 'pays off' to be a volunteer. The passport allows volunteers to document their voluntary engagement throughout their lives. The introduction of the passport was also intended to **encourage employers to hire** employees who are engaged in a voluntary activity. The passport not only provides **information on the type and duration of the volunteering** that has been completed but also documents the **skills and competencies acquired** by the person during the course of this work. According to studies, employers appreciate the voluntary pass and both the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) and the [Austrian Employment Service](#) recommend to have this voluntary passport issued as a proof of qualification. The passport is a mere tool to present qualifications, volunteers do not receive formal ECTS/ECVET.

Digital volunteer passport

In parallel to the previous form of proof of voluntary activities and the Austrian volunteer passport, proof of voluntary activities and the volunteer passport are **now also available in digital form.** The digital volunteer passport and proof of voluntary activities are a web application, whereby **volunteers and organisations get in touch to collectively record the activities and acquired skills** of the volunteers in a digital proof or passport. The digital volunteer pass is therefore a supplement to the existing analog volunteer pass. With the digital volunteer passport, **the organisations can issue their work certificates for volunteers in electronic form.** The digital volunteer pass is available at www.freiwilligenpass.at and can be used via e-ID (citizen card) or cell phone signature.

With the digital volunteer pass, organisations and volunteers can now jointly create the previously analogous evidence of volunteering, regardless of time and location, and automatically summarize it in their personal digital volunteer pass. Registered and activated organisations or associations receive a **'checked' seal** from the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#). This is to **ensure the authenticity and transparency** of the organisations or associations, and to make it more secure to issue evidence of voluntary work, which in the future will only be possible for registered organisations or associations.

Existing arrangements

Moreover, annually the **Volunteers Award** is given for all kinds of voluntary activities, not just in the youth field. The winners of the awards are presented on the website www.freiwilligenweb.at.

WIK:I – What I can do through informal learning (Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen)

In further addition to the (digital) Volunteer Passport, WIK:I **allows young people to collate and present their informally acquired skills**. The focus lies on informal learning among peers, at leisure, within their families, in sports, in their voluntary and/or honorary activities, in their hobbies, in the context of jobs, etc. The WIK:I method is a guided **self-assessment for young people**.

Qualified WIK:I portfolio counsellors assist the young people in systematically documenting their informal learning experiences. Starting with collecting and describing personally significant activities ('what I do'), young people are eventually able to identify and describe the skills they gained in the process ('what I can do'). The description of skills is always linked to specific activities ('I can do this because ...'). The benefit of compiling a portfolio is that **young people gain an awareness of their informally acquired skills and a sense of direction** for their subsequent education and career planning. Above all, it empowers them when they are required to describe and present their skills (e.g. in the context of job interviews).

The **principles** of the WIK:I method

- to focus on **strengths and resources**,
- to **promote empowerment** and initiative,
- to encourage **self-reflection**,
- to focus on **dialogue and group processes** (peer learning) as well as a **biographical approach** to learning.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

Ongoing debates

Organisations of the volunteering sector have called upon the government that in order to maintain the high level of voluntary engagement and to attract more young people to it, **improvements in the framework conditions** may be needed. Reform suggestions include improved insurance coverage, the nationwide expansion of the volunteering infrastructure (volunteer centres), qualification initiatives for volunteers, a clear legal demarcation of volunteering from employment subject to social insurance, as well as the consideration of the relevance of volunteering during the pandemic (e.g. [Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit](#)).

During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the continuous carrying out of volunteering activities (particularly abroad) was met with severe challenges. Nevertheless, volunteering has upheld its high relevance in these times of crisis - whether young people shopping for neighbours at risk or volunteers in health care (e.g. Red Cross).

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In Austria, **anyone from age 15 on can take a job**, respectively after later completion of compulsory school. Young people from age 15 on may be employed in certain cases such as an **apprenticeship** or practical training. Children and young people up to the age of 18 years are covered by **child and youth employment legislation**. Due to the **dual vocational training system**, in Austria employment and entrepreneurship are closely related to [education](#).

In terms of **youth (un)employment**, Austria has traditionally held a comparatively advantaged position in Europe. However, not least the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the challenges for young people on the Austrian labour market and was met with a specific governmental taskforce on youth unemployment.

Social partners, such as the Chamber of Labour ([Arbeiterkammer](#), AK), the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ), and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture

([Landwirtschaftskammer](#), LKO) hold a very important and strong position in Austria. The Chamber of Labour represents the interests of 3,4 million employees and consumers and offers a large and diverse variety of services. Commissioned by the [Federal Ministry of Labour](#), the [Austrian Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) is Austria's leading provider of labour-market related services. Within the framework of the Federal Government's policy of full employment, the AMS contributes to prevent and eradicate unemployment in Austria.

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

General context

According to [Statistics Austria](#), the Austrian population shows a continuous grow since 1919. As of early 2020, Austria has about **8.901 million inhabitants**. **19.3% of the population were children and young people under the age of 20**, and 61.6% were aged between 20 and 64 years. More general information is available in [Overview](#) and [Chapter 1](#).

The [Federal Ministry of Labour](#) leads national policy on the labour market. For entrepreneurship, the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) holds important responsibilities. Concerning youth employment and entrepreneurship, they work alongside the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). **Social partners**, namely the Chamber of Labour ([Arbeiterkammer](#), AK), the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ), and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture ([Landwirtschaftskammer](#), LKO) hold a very important and strong position in Austria. The Chamber of Labour represents the interests of 3,4 million employees and consumers and offers a large and diverse variety of services. The [Austrian Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) is provides labour-market related services and contributes to preventing and eradicating unemployment in Austria.

In Austria, **labour market policy** ([Arbeitsmarktpolitik](#)) includes all measures taken by public institutions - such as the federal government, the Public Employment Service and the federal provinces - to manage the labour market. A **regulated labour market** is viewed to have positive effects on the social system and to ensure fair economic competition. According to the **Labour Market Service Act** ([Arbeitsmarktsergengesetz](#)), labour market policy has the tasks of **preventing and eliminating unemployment** and bringing labour supply and demand together as completely and sustainably as possible, while **observing social and economic principles**. The objectives of labour market policy are inter alia the achievement and maintainance of **full employment**, taking active measures for **qualification and equal opportunities**, increasing the **transparency** of the labour market, developing human resources, **activating the unemployed**, and combating long-term unemployment. **Active labour market policies** shall support a better functioning of the labour market.

Current Labour Market Situation (including pandemic data)

According to the national definition, the **total unemployment rate in Austria reached 10.7% in February 2021**. This development was largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures such as lockdowns. Similarly, the **February 2021 unemployment rate for young people under 25 was 11.0%**. This high rate is still among the lowest in the EU. **Unemployment rates are expected to decline** during spring and summer of 2021 alongside envisioned gradual opening steps when compared to the year prior, as last year's figures spiked due to a long-term lockdown.

In 2021, secondary school graduates experienced the highest relative increase in unemployment rates (+36.9%) when compared to the year prior. With an ascent of 24.0%, university graduates faced the lowest relative increase in unemployment rates out of all educational graduates. When considering youth however, **young people with a higher level of education saw a relative increase in unemployment by 36.7%** while the relative inclines for **individuals with an apprenticeship education or the maximum level of compulsory education amounted to 30.5% and 29.3%**.

Previously, the 2020 proportion of young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in all adolescents (15 to 24 years) was **8,0%**. According to a 2019 report by the Public Employment Service Austria ([Arbeitsmarktlage 2019](#)), the **average unemployment period was 121 days** and thus an average of 4 days shorter than in 2018. However, it is highly likely that the COVID-19 pandemic brought this declining trend to a halt in 2020.

With a look at the **previous economic crisis**, Eurostat data from **2013** showed the Austrian youth unemployment rate (under-25-year-olds) at **9.2%**. Even though the rate rose slightly in 2013, youth unemployment overall in Austria was declining in 2009-2013 - despite renewed turbulence in the aftermath of the international financial, economic and debt crisis. In 2012, according to the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP), the unemployment rate of 15-24-year-olds amounted to 8.7% (among the lowest in the EU). The average duration of being registered unemployed was 69 days (72 days for 20-24-year-olds and 57 days for up-to-19-year-olds). The **risk of becoming unemployed was considerably higher for those having at most compulsory education** (20.9%), while being much lower for those who finished secondary (depending on the type of school 6.5-3.4%) or tertiary education (2.7%). On average 78 700 young people between 15 and 24 (7.8%) were neither in formal education nor employed in 2012. **The Austrian early-school-leaving rate has been on a decreasing trend** and stood at 7.6% in 2012. Also, the number of persons with less than upper secondary education had fallen from 14.3% to 10.6% in a time frame of ten years, while the **share of persons with tertiary education had risen** from 21.0% to 26.0%.

Main concepts

Young people's pathway to the labour market

In Austria, **compulsory schooling** lasts for nine years ([Allgemeine Schulpflicht](#)). In 2016, the Compulsory Formation Act ([Ausbildungspflichtgesetz](#)) was passed. Everyone under the age of 18 is obliged to attend school, vocational training or a preparatory programme, even after completion of the nine year compulsory schooling period. The programme is called **Education until 18 (AusBildung bis 18)**. It shall prevent early school leaving and reduce youth unemployment, while providing all young people with equal opportunities and a good start into (working) life.

Anyone from age 15 on can take on a job after completion of compulsory schooling. Young people from age 15 on may be employed under certain conditions as an **apprenticeship** or practical training. Children and young people up to the age of 18 years are covered by **child and youth employment legislation**. Due to the **dual vocational training system**, in Austria employment and entrepreneurship are closely related to [education](#).

Youth employment policy

A **wide range of programmes** to promote the integration of young people into the education system and the labour market exists, ranging from well-developed services for **vocational information** including specialised vocational information centres, the nationwide placement service of the Public Employment Service for **apprenticeship positions**, subsidies for company-based apprenticeships, individual promotion within the Public Employment Service, to support for the transition from school to working life.

The [Youth Guarantee Plan](#) lays out the Austrian measures and programmes. In 2008, the **Training guarantee** was established in order to give all young people a chance to complete a vocational education. Further programmes and strategies have been developed that aim at **reducing drop-outs**, increasing the permeability in the education system and allowing catching up an educational qualification. A scheme of mandatory education/formation until the age of 18 called [Education until 18 \(AusBildung bis 18\)](#) was introduced to keep all youth in education or training. 'Youth Coaching' ([Jugendcoaching](#)) and the programme [AusbildungsFit](#) ('ready for training') were introduced to assist young people in finding and achieving their vocational pathway, and an inter-ministerial steering group was set up for their implementation. A nation-wide office of assistance at the interface between school and work ([BundesKOST](#)) coordinates the interface between school and work for young people. These measures are depicted in more detail in the specific sub-chapters.

Youth unemployment

In terms of youth (un)employment, Austria has traditionally held a **comparatively advantaged position** in Europe. However, not least the **COVID-19 pandemic has increased the challenges and unemployment rates** of young people on the Austrian labour market. This is likely to result from a multitude of reasons, among which is decreased rate of recruiting of new employees which especially impacts young people first entering the labour market. It was met with a specific governmental **taskforce** on youth unemployment.

Previously to this new crisis, according to the [report on the situation of youth employment and apprenticeship training in Austria in 2012 and 2013](#), the **youth unemployment rate fell from 10.0% (in 2009) to 9.2% (in 2013)** in Austria during the economic crisis. As well as the

generally relatively low unemployment rate, one major reason for this rather good integration of young people into the employment system is seen in the **highly developed system of initial vocational education and training** (apprenticeship training, VET schools and colleges). Both participation in training and VET are comparatively high in Austria. The **dual apprenticeship training**, in particular, creates a good position for Austria. Despite the relatively favourable starting position of Austria, the impact of the international financial, economic and debt crisis affected young people in particular. The youth unemployment rate rose more than the unemployment rate of older workers (over-25-year-olds). It can be assumed that the main cause for this **disproportionate increase of youth unemployment during the economic crisis** is that many companies tried, if possible, to keep their current (older) staff while the number of new recruitments (of younger people) dropped sharply.

The Austrian Youth Guarantee

The Austrian Youth Guarantee consists of two key measures: the **Training Guarantee and Future for the Youth. Every young person up to the age of 18 is guaranteed an apprenticeship position** after registering with the AMS. Young people up to 25 receive an offer in line with the council recommendation (as an apprenticeship position, employment, education or formation or subsidised employment) by the AMS within a period of three months.

In addition to this measures, a **focus is placed on outreach activities** to reach those young people not registered at the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) and help them to find (further) education or get registered with the AMS (as e.g. youth coaching and low-threshold offers). Furthermore, **strategies have been developed to ease the school-to-work transition and reduce dropouts** (e.g. ESL strategy).

[2018 data](#) shows that an average of only 28% of adolescents that registered in the Youth Guarantee (YG) preparatory phase had been waiting for a labour offer longer than 4 months which is well below the EU average of 48.6%. On the other hand, 52.9% of the young people that exited the YG during that year accepted a known offer within 4 months of registration which, once again, was better than the EU average of 46.7%.

Austria still faces some **challenges in terms of improving basic skills for disadvantaged adolescents and young people with a migrant background**, especially in the sense of ameliorating regional differences. However, as of the January 2020 government program, these obstacles are met with promising countermeasures.

Looking at the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, Austria is certain to perform very well. [Data](#) also shows that it has a **lower national average of early leavers from education and training** among adolescents aged 18-24 and a decreased NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) rate among young people between the age of 15 and 24 when compared to the EU average. Additionally, youth employment rates of the population aged 15-24 exceed the EU average.

Young people with a migration background

A **special challenge for the Austrian VET system** is the integration of young people with a migration background into the training and employment system. In general, these people **leave** their respective VET programme **more often prematurely and are also underrepresented** in the apprenticeship training sector.

Dual Training System: Vocational Training and Apprenticeships

Vocational training is provided in Austria either through an **apprenticeship** or through **school-based education** (in intermediate or higher-level secondary technical and vocational schools and colleges, which offer practice-oriented instruction). Training is offered in **approximately 200 different occupations**. Young people who take up an apprenticeship receive **on-the-job training in a company and also attend a vocational school** on a part-time basis (**dual training system**). An apprenticeship lasts between **two to four years** depending on the apprenticeship type and ends with the successful completion of a final apprenticeship examination (Lehrabschlussprüfung). The Austrian system of apprenticeships is further depicted in the [EU Apprenticeship toolbox](#).

For apprentices, the **Vocational Training Act** ([Berufsausbildungsgesetz](#)) and respective **collective agreement** are valid. Apprenticeship programs are based on standard **job profiles**. Apprentices are not paid a salary but receive an **apprenticeship remuneration (Lehrlingsentschädigung)** normally paid on a monthly basis. The amount of remuneration to be paid to the apprentice is based on collective labour agreements as well as company agreements. An **apprenticeship contract** (Lehrvertrag) must be signed the beginning of the apprenticeship

and is to be concluded in writing between the young person (the apprentice) and the authorized trainer and specifies training conditions including the duration of the apprenticeship. In the case of minors, the apprentice's legal guardian is also required to sign the contract.

Number of apprentices and training companies

As opposed to statistics from a few years prior, [data](#) shows that towards the end of December **2019, there were 109,111 apprentices** in Austria which represents a total **incline of 1,196 individuals** compared to 2018. This growth stems from an increase in 15-year-olds as well as an incline in adolescents choosing internship training. However, the Report on the Situation of Youth Employment and Apprentice Training in Austria ([Bericht zur Situation der Jugendbeschäftigung und Lehrlingsausbildung in Österreich](#)) expected a **decline in those numbers due to the measures taken to counteract the Coronavirus**.

[Statistics](#) regarding training companies show a similar trend: eventhough their decline finally came to a halt in 2018, the numerical development of Austrian training companies still shows an **overall decrease from 38,132 training companies in 2007 to 27,844 in 2019**.

Apprenticeship and self-employment

Apprenticeship training additionally offers good conditions for entrepreneurship: According to the 2013 Labour Force Survey, **35% of all self-employed in Austria have an apprenticeship certificate as their highest qualification**. Therefore, apprenticeship training is by far the most important qualification of self-employed people in Austria and also a good base for setting up a company.

Unemployment insurance and job referral

The [Austrian Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) is responsible for unemployment insurance benefits in Austria (such as unemployment benefits or social welfare benefits). It offers its services in **regional AMS offices** and is responsible for **consultation, job referral, financial support and ensuring livelihood** (e.g. through unemployment benefits and emergency assistance benefits) for persons who are permanent residents of Austria and are currently residing in Austria. The EURES-publication [Living & Working in Austria](#) by the AMS gives a detailed overview of the subject.

Forms of work and employment

In broad outlines, the **Austrian labour law** ([Arbeitsrecht](#)) distinguishes between the following forms of employment:

- **Employment contract (Arbeitsvertrag)**: concluded between an employer and a dependent employee, who thus receives extensive protection by labour law.
- **Contract for independent work & labour (Werkvertrag)** and 'employee-like' workers: includes both those employed on the basis of a contract for work and services, who require a business license, and in certain cases 'new self-employed persons'
- **Short-term contract as independent contractors**: concluded between a principal (i.e. customer) and an independent contractor.
- **Self-employment (Selbständigkeit)**: entrepreneurship

Labour Law Acts and Regulations

Austrian labour law **covers the rights and obligations of employees and employers**. This includes amongst others the following legal regulations and acts of law:

- Salaried Employees Act ([Angestelltengesetz](#))
- Labour Constitutional Act ([Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz](#))
- Waged Employees Severance Pay Act ([Arbeiter-Abfertigungsgesetz](#))
- Employment Safeguarding Act ([Arbeitsplatzsicherungsgesetz](#))
- Alien Employment Act ([Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz](#))
- Act on Continued Payment of Wages and Salaries ([Entgeltfortzahlungsgesetz](#))
- Equal Treatment Act ([Gleichbehandlungsgesetz](#))
- Maternity Protection ([Mutterschutzgesetz](#))
- Vacation Act ([Urlaubsgesetz](#))
- Employee protection ([ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz](#))
- Working Hours Act ([Arbeitszeitgesetz](#))

Social security

Registration of employees with the appropriate social security institution is compulsory ([Österreichische Sozialversicherung](#)). The payment of social security contributions is shared by the employer and employee. The **employer is responsible for paying both shares** to the responsible social security institution and for registering their employees with the appropriate social security institution. Every person and the family members are assigned a social security number at registration. The employer automatically deducts social security contributions of employees and independent contractors at source. The amount of social security contributions depends on the single contract.

Those self-employed with a business license, new self-employed, and contract assignees have to register with and **pay their social security contributions** to the corresponding social security institution.

There are **several health insurance and social security institutions** (Krankenkassen und Sozialversicherungsanstalten) in Austria. All health insurance institutions are brought together under the umbrella of the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions ([Hauptverband der Österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger](#)). The competent insurance institution is determined by the type of occupation. A free choice of insurance institution is not allowed.

Health insurance (Krankenversicherung) **covers** amongst others free treatment by medical doctors (with appropriate contracts with the insurance institutions), hospitals and sickness benefits. The prerequisite for treatment at hospitals, medical practices, and walk-in clinics is the presentation of an **electronic health insurance card (E-Card)** where all personal data of the insured person are stored. For a referral to specialists, a referral note is additionally required. The back of the e-card corresponds to the **European social security card**.

Health insurance coverage is available for

- **employed or self-employed persons** (minimum income employees receive health insurance upon application),
- persons receiving **unemployment benefit/welfare benefit** or pension benefit,
- or persons receiving a weekly maternity allowance or **childcare allowance**.

Means-tested minimum benefits are foreseen for people having no reasonable funds to pay for their living or of their family members. The amount of the means-tested minimum benefits had been uniformly regulated throughout Austria up until 2019 and amounted to an annual average across all provinces of €538.00 for single households in the same year, excluding values for Vorarlberg from the calculation. They are not a social security benefit but a reformed social welfare of the federal provinces. The affected unemployed should in particular benefit from the introduction of a uniform minimum benefit, the broad removal of recourse, introduction of an asset exemption amount and advantageous procedural law.

EURES-publication Living & Working in Austria

This brochure gives **first English insights into the Austrian labour market**, as well as a list of **further sources** of information.

Taskforce Youth Unemployment and the COVID-19 pandemic

In a recent survey on 'Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and the youth sector', the **federal government established several measures to support the current situation of young people in regard to the labour market**.

Incentives to employers to hire young people

- Apprenticeship Bonus (March 2021 – October 2021)
- A **bonus that ensures companies €2,000 for newly admitted apprentices**. Micro enterprises receive an additional raise of €1,000 and smaller enterprises receive an **additional bonus** of €500. The fundamental criterion here is the date of the apprenticeship contract. More information can be found [online](#).
- Take-over bonus
- A **one-off bonus that ensures companies €1,000 for taking on an apprentice from a supra-company apprenticeship**. More information can be found [online](#).

Measures that protect young employees

More recently, corona short-time work was also made available for apprentices in order to preserve apprenticeship positions and to support the companies. In 2020, approximately half of all apprentices (approximately 53,000) were working under short-time work conditions at least temporarily. The seemingly positive effect of short-time work for apprentices is visible when inspecting the stable development of apprenticeship numbers in training companies which is why this concept was extended until the end of March 2021.

Measures to avoid job insecurity and precariousness

To raise the number of apprenticeship positions in supra-company apprenticeships ([Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung ÜBA](#)), the **Training Guarantee was extended, and additional funds were made accessible**. Thus, the **number of apprenticeship positions in supra-company apprenticeships increased** by 3,000 to 14,500 places. This measure targets young people, willing to start an apprenticeship but unable to find an in-company apprenticeship position. More information can be found at the Public Employment Services (PES; [Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS](#)).

Measures regarding information on employment

- *Online apprentice service*

The PES has created an **online apprenticeship service, encompassing all the important information on finding an apprenticeship** for young people and transmitting that to an expert advisor. As a result, personal interviews can be arranged with a preferred appointment.

- *Information line for coaching for apprentices and companies offering apprenticeships*

Established in April 2020, this information line handles the great influx of COVID-19-induced questions concerning apprenticeships.

Adaptations in career guidance and counselling

Expansion of **low-threshold offers**: the low threshold offers - **Youth Coaching, AusbildungsFit** (core-measures) - are being strengthened in 2021.

Interministerial taskforce on youth employment

Increasing the number of public apprenticeship places.

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Distribution of responsibilities in the Federal system

Labour law is generally determined at national level, as it is predominantly a federal matter in terms of legislation and enforcement (based on Art 10 (1) 11 of the Austrian Constitution, [Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)). Exceptional provincial competences exist for matters of provincial and municipal civil servants and agricultural workers. As the provinces have little competences in the field, the legal situation is uniform throughout the country and the laws enumerated below are thus federal laws.

Main Actors

Labour market policy in Austria is characterised by a **close interaction between government and non-governmental institutions**. The **social partners** ([Sozialpartner](#)) are involved in a great variety of activities and bodies devising and implementing legislation and policy measures. The main actors involved are - on governmental level - the [Federal Ministry of Labour](#), the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#), the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the [Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS](#)), the Federal Social Office ([Sozialministeriumservice](#)), and regarding youth employment also the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), and - on level of the social partners - the [Chamber of Labour](#), the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) ([Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ](#)), the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture ([Landwirtschaftskammer, LKO](#)), and the Trade Union ([Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB](#)).

Social partners and collective agreements

Employees **automatically become members of the statutory Chamber of Labour** ([Arbeiterkammer](#)). Furthermore, they **may join the trade union** ([Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund](#), ÖGB). The Chamber of Labour, as well as Austrian trade union, are independent and democratic institutions which represent the social, economic, professional and cultural interests of employees in Austria. All trade unions (trade unions of different branches) are part of the Federation of Austrian Trade Union Federation ([Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund](#), ÖGB). The ÖGB has its own youth organisation, the **Trade Union Youth** ([Österreichische Gewerkschaftsjugend](#), ÖGJ), which consists of seven trade unions and is active in all federal states. It is the **biggest political youth organisation in Austria and takes care of young people's rights regarding employment** and professional education.

Chamber of Labour and Trade Union - alongside their counterparts on employer side, the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ) and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture ([Landwirtschaftskammer](#), LKO) - are part of the constitutionally recognized **social partnership** ([Sozialpartnerschaft](#)), in the context of which they negotiate issues related to salaries/wages and assist the government in drafting legislation and factual issues, which fall under the responsibility of social interest groups. Trade unions, for instance, **negotiate the collective agreements for various industry sectors** within the framework of the social partnership. A collective agreement (Kollektivvertrag) is a binding agreement annually renegotiated for all employees within a certain sector by the trade unions with the employers (Chamber of Commerce). It sets equal minimum standards for wages and salaries ('minimum wages') and working conditions for all employees within a certain sector and thus plays a crucial role in the Austrian labour and social security system.

Services offered to members may furthermore include amongst others:

- **free of charge legal assistance** under the Austrian Labour Act, defence and recovery representation at labour and social **courts** (Arbeits- und Sozialgericht)
- **legal advice** on labour law regulations
- **protection of apprentices and young workers**
- help in matters of **unemployment, social security** as well as wage and salary **tax**
- matters of **minimum wage and collective agreements**
- basic protection and consultation regarding **employee protection, environmental protection, and consumer protection**

The Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS)

The Public Employment Service is responsible for unemployment insurance benefits in Austria (such as unemployment benefits or social welfare benefits). It plays an **important role in labour market policies and strategies to reduce unemployment**. It offers its services in regional AMS offices and is responsible for consultation, job referral, financial support and ensuring livelihood (e.g. through unemployment benefits and emergency assistance benefits) for persons who are permanent residents of Austria and are currently residing in Austria. The EURES-publication [Living & Working in Austria](#) by the AMS gives a detailed overview of the subject.

Bodies representing youth interests in labour

- at the **enterprise level**: confidential consultative council for young people ([Jugendvertrauensrat](#))
- at **intercorporate level**:
 - [youth departments](#) in the respective trade unions
 - [Austrian trade union youth](#)
 - Youth and apprentice departments at the respective chambers. [AK young](#) is a special offer by the Chamber of Labour ([Arbeiterkammer](#), AK) for young people, providing, among others, a large variety of [information folders](#).

Legal basis of the labour market policy

The **Public Employment Service Act** ([Arbeitsmarktsgesetz](#), AMSG) regulates the duties and the organisation of the [Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS). It also forms the legal basis for the financial support granted by the AMS.

The **Labour Market Policy Financing Act** ([Arbeitsmarktpolitik-Finanzierungsgesetz](#), AMPFG) regulates the financing of the labour market policy. The major part is derived from unemployment insurance contributions of employers and employees.

The **Unemployment Insurance Act** ([Arbeitslosenversicherungsgesetz](#), AIVG) regulates the unemployment insurance duty and the conditions for the claim of unemployment benefits.

[Further laws](#) relevant for the job market include the

- **Salaried Employees Act** ([Angestelltengesetz](#))
- the **Labour Constitutional Act** ([Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz](#))
- the **Waged Employees Severance Pay Act** ([Arbeiter-Abfertigungsgesetz](#))
- the **Employment Safeguarding Act** ([Arbeitsplatzsicherungsgesetz](#))
- the **Alien Employment Act** ([Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz](#))
- the **Act on Continued Payment of Wages and Salaries** ([Entgeltfortzahlungsgesetz](#))
- the **Equal Treatment Act** ([Gleichbehandlungsgesetz](#))
- the **Maternity Protection Act** ([Mutterschutzgesetz](#))
- the **Vacation Act** ([Urlaubsgesetz](#))
- the **Employee protection** ([ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz](#))
- the **Working Hours Act** ([Arbeitszeitgesetz](#))
- the **Labour Market Promotion Law** ([Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesetz](#))
- the **Insolvency-Remuneration Protection Act** ([Insolvenz-Entgeltsicherungsgesetz](#))
- the **Unemployment Emergency Assistance Decree** ([Notstandshilfeverordnung](#))
- the **Federal Act on the Organisation of Working** ([Arbeitszeitgesetz](#))
- the **Temporary Employment Act** ([Arbeitskräfteüberlassungsgesetz](#))
- the **Special Assistance Act** ([Sonderunterstützungsgesetz](#))
- the **Interim Aid Act** ([Überbrückungshilfengesetz](#))
- **Federal Act on Corporate Staff and Self-Employment Provision** ([Betriebliches Mitarbeiter- und Selbständigenvorsorgegesetz](#))
- the **Service Cheque Act** ([Dienstleistungsscheckgesetz](#))

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Both the [Federal Ministry of Labour](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) have a wide-ranging portfolio, covering areas such as social insurance, consumer protection, long-term (nursing) care, disability, income provision and social assistance, fundamental European, international and social policy issues, labour market, labour law and central Labour Inspectorates, as well as the Federal Disability Advocate's Office. Their **cooperation with each other**, as well as with the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the [Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS), the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and the **social partners is indispensable for the further development of Austrian (youth) labour market and (youth) unemployment policy**.

As depicted above, Austrian labour market policy is shaped by the close interaction of a **large number of both governmental and non governmental actors**. As much as the competent ministries, the constitutionally recognized social partners shape the labour market with their ideas and initiatives. Policies are generally developed under the cooperation of this wide variety of actors. Particularly the social partners weigh in the practical concerns of their employee and employer members and thus contribute to a balanced set of rules. Depending on the issues raised, **the competent Ministry cooperates with other ministries, as well as with individual regional governments (provinces), stakeholder groups and other domestic and foreign authorities**. Cooperation in such cases signifies coordinating varying objectives, conducting a periodic exchange of views, creating the toolkit necessary for performing the tasks, developing new laws, initiating projects, improving service and information, etc.

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, for example, was set up in an **inter-ministerial process with other key actors** (e.g. Federal Social Office, Social Partners, the Federal Coordination Office for School to Work Transition, federal states) **involved**.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

Career and qualification barometer ([Qualifikations-Barometer](#))

The [Austrian Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) offers an **online platform with forecasts of required future skills**. It is provided on behalf the Public Employment Service by the [3s Unternehmensberatung GmbH](#) and the [Institute for Research on Qualifications and](#)

[Training](#) (ibw) and is updated frequently. The AMS qualification barometer is Austria's first comprehensive online information system on competence trends. It addresses employees of the AMS, journalists and decision makers in politics and economy as well as people, who are about to decide on their vocational future. By means of the scope of the contained data, its topicality, the prognosis function and its clear presentation, it is an indispensable instrument for everyone interested in the **developments of the job market and the qualification requirements**. The barometer is set up with two dimensions, **profession systematics and qualification systematics**.

Profession systematics is comprised of 24 superordinate profession ranges (1st level), subordinated vocational fields (2nd level), and assigned professions (3rd level). A single profession can be assigned to several vocational fields, in such cases a ranking of the allocations is provided in order for the description of the trends for a profession to be made in the 'primary' vocational field with references to the 'secondary' vocational fields provided.

Qualification systematics entail a classification of technical vocational competencies and over-technical vocational competencies, which are subdivided into qualification ranges, to which in each case several qualifications are assigned.

Job market trends are represented in detail on the levels 'profession range' and 'vocational field'. Information on the qualification requirements is particularly available on the level 'vocational field'. Both regional characteristics and evaluations on the micro level (professions) are considered. Each level also shows job advertisement data that gives evidence of the job market need of the last two years. These data, which were not previously accessible to a broad audience, are thus detailed and made available online. The **evaluation of the professions and occupational groups is based on the estimate of experts**, which can deviate from the data of job advertisement analyses, unsolicited applications, in-house staff recruitment, personal contacts, headhunting, and interviews conducted with representatives of companies, executive committees of professional associations and HR-professionals. Thus, the estimate is a prognosis of future trends (four years), whereas the advertisement data always represent a punctual stocktaking from the past. The indicated advertisement data originate from the observation of media. A high fluctuation for some professions leads to an increased number of vacancies, which may not correspond to the actual job market need.

Extensive information on the sources and descriptive explanations of over 230 qualifications (with altogether approx. 5 500 subtopics) and approx. 560 detailed career profiles supplement the comprehensive and clear presentation.

The 2015 [EU Skills Governance Report](#) inter alia analyses the Austrian system.

Skills development

Developing young people's skills

The demands on young people's education are constantly increasing. In addition to good academic performance and specialised knowledge, the labour market also demands distinctive social and personal skills. In Austria, children and young people can **acquire these competences at school, in university, during vocational training and in the context of extracurricular child and youth work** through informal and non-formal learning.

Apprenticeship: dual vocational training

The Austrian dual vocational training system **closely interlinks employment and entrepreneurship with education and the acquisition of skills**. Dual vocational education and training offers business and practice-oriented tailor-made preparation for working life for all those who have completed compulsory schooling ([Lehrberuf: Duale Ausbildung](#)). Training is offered in approximately 200 different occupations. Young people who take up an apprenticeship receive **on-the-job training in a company and also attend a vocational school** on a part-time basis (dual training system). An apprenticeship lasts between two to four years depending on the apprenticeship type and ends with the successful completion of a **final apprenticeship examination** (Lehrabschlussprüfung). Apprenticeship is a form of initial vocational training, which combines a solid basic vocational training to become a skilled worker with **numerous additional qualifications such as apprenticeship with Matura (A-levels) or the acquisition of additional competences** within the framework of training alliances. After completion of the apprenticeship, further vocational training such as **master craftsman's and qualification examinations or job-related courses** at universities of applied sciences are available. Furthermore, **international experience and internships** are becoming increasingly important

and young people can gain experience abroad during their apprenticeship. The Austrian system of apprenticeships is further depicted in the [EU Apprenticeship toolbox](#). In this context, the recently introduced programme [Education until 18 \(AusBildung bis 18\)](#) **obliges everyone under the age of 18 to attend school, vocational training or a preparatory programme**, even after completion of the nine year compulsory schooling period. It thus contributes to prevent early school leaving, a reduction of youth unemployment, equal opportunities and a good start into (working) life for all young people and the development of skills required on the labour market.

Higher education: universities

By educating a highly skilled workforce, the **Austrian universities (Universitäten)** **make an important contribution** to the innovative future of the Austrian labour market. A characteristic of universities is their **duality of excellent teaching and excellent research**. Universities train future scientists who pass on their knowledge to the next generation and at the same time advance their own research activities. The **22 public universities** differ in their size, their in some cases centuries-old history of origin, as well as in their focus. They offer a wide variety of programmes. Currently, more than three quarters of all students study at one of the 22 public universities, which form the heart of tertiary education in Austria. Universities are distinguished by the fact that they conduct teaching and excellent research at the highest level and that Article 81c of the Austrian Federal Constitution, [Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)) guarantees their **autonomy** (as separate legal entities under public law). The universities are largely **self-governing**, even though they are financed by the public sector. For this purpose, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) concludes performance agreements with the universities every three years, in which, in addition to a global budget, certain objectives are agreed (e.g. in the area of examination activity, supervision ratios or with regard to academic staff (basic research performance). **Universities of applied sciences**, on the other hand, are predominantly financed by the number of study places they offer.

Non-formal and informal learning: youth work

Youth associations have diverse offers to impart a wide range of skills and knowledge, from soft skills to technical and organisational skills, and support young people in their personal development and their civil society commitment. The [Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#) aimed to anchor global learning in extracurricular youth work through the project '[Our World](#)', which offered free trainings for youth workers on the topics of consumption & lifestyle, nutrition & environment and participation & engagement. The **Austrian Youth Information Centers**, which handle about 160,000 enquiries every year, receive most enquiries in the fields of work and education. Therefore, they provide young people with comprehensive information and tips on the various educational pathways, inform young people about non-formal education opportunities at home and abroad, support them in recording the competences they have acquired in informal settings, and offer informal learning through workshops aimed at empowering young people. Currently they particularly promote their free and interactive digital workshops on information and media competence for young people, especially those aged 12 to 15. **Open youth work** enables young people to gain competences through informal learning in order to enable young people to lead a self-determined life and co-create their own education, currently focused on political education and participation, health literacy, cultural education, gender-reflective identity development, digital education and media literacy. The **National Agency** encourages learning experiences through non-formal and informal learning through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, which enhance personal, social and professional competences of young people and help to develop a stronger European awareness.

Future for Youth Action programme

Launched in 2009, the Future for Youth Action programme ([Aktion Zukunft Jugend](#)) is a **wider-based training guarantee** for 20- to 24-year-olds **aimed at opening up career perspectives** for these young adults. In 2017, it has been extended to the age of 25. Under this programme, **the Austrian Government guarantees unemployed young job-seekers aged 20-25 offers an employment, targeted training or a subsidised job within six months**. The enhanced use of various labour market policy tools is intended to speed up integration into the labour market and open up new career prospects. Young people who are hard to place will receive individualised training support within the first six months of their registration with the public employment service, or special employment subsidies are used to help them (re-)enter the labour market.

In the 2018 annual average of unemployed 18-24-year-olds, 18 000 people had achieved the **maximal level of mandatory education, making up 43% of all unemployed young people** within this category at the time. Changes have been implemented based on federal regulations

through funds stemming from PES-Programmes (AMS-Programme) that **aim for vocational school graduation**. Moreover, the Report on the Situation of Youth Employment and Apprentice Training in Austria ([Bericht zur Lage der Jugendbeschäftigung und Lehrlingsausbildung in Österreich](#)) shows that a total expenditure approximately amounting to €120 000 000 (€98 000 000 in 2017) was used to fund and enable 12 000 adolescents (10 000 in 2017) within the scope of the Guaranteed Training till 25 programme in 2018.

Qualification promotion: personnel and organisational development

The **Public Employment Service** ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) supports companies in improving the qualifications of their employees and further developing their organisations ([Qualifizierungsförderung](#)). This includes subsidies to promote the attendance at building trade schools (Bauhandwerkerschulen), measures to enhance new digital skills (described below), and subsidies for the upskilling of employees in the field of social services of general interest. Furthermore, AMS supports the further qualification of low-skilled workers with the aim of improving their skills in order to secure their jobs and increase their income. In the COVID-19 pandemic, impulse consulting on-demand is provided to help companies overcome the specific challenges of the crisis and subsidies support the costs of qualification for workers in COVID-19 short-time work.

New skills qualification programme ([New Skills – Qualifizierung am Puls der Zeit](#))

Progressive digitalisation is rapidly changing all areas of life, including the labour market. More than 40 percent of jobs in Austria will undergo drastic changes and new job profiles will emerge. Therefore, the demands of companies towards their employees are changing. In 2019, the **Public Employment Service** ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) **focused on digitalisation** as part of the project series 'Standing Committee for New Skills'. The results of research and company workshops on the issue form the basis for targeted further training offers by the AMS and are made available to the companies as information for planning their in-company further training.

In 2009, the Management Board of Austria's Public Employment Service established a **Standing Committee on New Skills**, which consists of representatives of the Service, social partners, business representatives, training institutions and VET experts. Working groups in specific sectors (e.g. construction, electronics, energy and environment technologies etc.) were tasked with drawing up curricula for target-oriented training programmes, based on the Committee's knowledge of short and medium term skill requirements, taking into account underlying trends in the labour market, such as greening, globalisation and new technologies. Since 2011, these curricula were considered in the training programme 'New Skills'. Workshops of the Standing Committee on New Skills cluster meetings were summarised, conclusions drawn and respective recommendations were given to various addressees, such as policy makers and the education system, PES, continuing education and training (CET) providers. In the case of legislative approaches, the involvement of stakeholders is almost always secured by a consultation and review process of draft regulations.

Programmes to train skilled workers

In 2013, the programme 'professionals/skilled workers **scholarships**' ([Fachkräftestipendium](#)) has been introduced to reduce skills bottlenecks. **It supports the training of low and medium-skilled workers and job seekers in occupations with labour demand**. Also, the 'Skilled workers **intensive training**' ([FacharbeiterInnen-Intensivausbildung](#), FIA) programme addresses registered jobseekers and gives them the opportunity to complete apprenticeship training in a shortened time. A specific objective is to **qualify women for 'future jobs'** (e.g. crafts and engineering, health). In Austria, programmes of the Public Employment Service always take into account actual **skills shortages** in the labour market more or less explicitly.

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

Information on relevant educational pathways and career opportunities is of high importance to the individual planning of a young person's career.

Compulsory career guidance in schools

In order to facilitate employment-related decision-making abilities and to provide optimal guidance, **compulsory job orientation training was installed for all school types** in 1998. Towards the

end of the compulsory schooling period (seventh to ninth school year depending on the type of school), **compulsory career guidance (Berufsorientierung, BO) classes** take place. They are either implemented as a separate school subject or integrated into other subjects or projects. They inter alia aim to inform pupils on the possibilities of apprenticeship training. A fixed part of compulsory career guidance are **work shadowing days**, which aim to provide pupils with first practical experiences and insights into the world of work. The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) provides supporting material ([Material zur Berufsorientierung](#)) for teachers and pupils. It also initiated and funded the online platform [schule.at](#), which provides an overview of information on job orientation including tools, events, databanks, workshops, etc. By providing the teaching material, the web platform and by the installation of a working group on the subject, **the Ministry assures the quality of career guidance and counselling.**

'ibobb' (**Information, Counselling and Guidance for Education and Careers / Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf**) includes all measures for both educational and vocational guidance at school. Decisions on educational or training paths are to be made along the lines of talents, regardless of gender and family, social and regional background. Schools support pupils to follow their individual best educational and vocational path towards becoming young self-reliant people. **Basic competences for autonomous decisions are built in all subjects**, career orientation lessons with a focus on the 7th and 8th or 11th and 12th grades (programme '[18plus - Berufs- und Studienchecker](#)' / 18plus - Career and Study Checker), practical experience in projects, and **individual information and counselling by school and educational counsellors** as well as external experts. The Website [ibobb](#) helps teachers in fulfilling these tasks.

Services of the [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#)

Alongside career guidance offered at school level, the [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) has the **legal mandate of providing career guidance**. AMS offers information, counselling and advice at **72 career information centres (Berufsinformationszentren, BIZ)**, which are personal contact points for career guidance. The career guidance centres of AMS are equipped with **self-information areas** and offer both **one-on-one and group counselling**. Since 2009, a visit to a Career Information Centre has been part of the (in some school types) compulsory subject of career orientation for pupils in years seven and eight. In 2012, the AMS **Career Information Centres were used by** around 470 200 people (thereof **103,000 youth under 21**). During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person counselling has been partially replaced by **telephone consultation** in order to contain the spread of the virus.

Additionally, AMS **supports schools** in their information activities by offering **online information databases** - such as the online career compass ([Karrierekompass](#)), the online wages and salaries compass ([Gehaltskompass](#)), an online encyclopaedia containing over 1800 professions ([Beruflexikon](#)), an online information system providing information on skills required for different professions ([Berufsinformationssystem](#)), more than 300 videos on different professions and businesses, and a large variety of brochures on diverse professions. AMS also provides lectures for classes, sector presentations, training for job applications, events for teachers and parents, job fairs, etc. These information campaigns also promote apprenticeship training. AMS also offers an **online Youth Platform (Arbeitszimmer.cc: die AMS-Jugendplattform)** that informs on the choice of career, applications, traineeships, job search and further education. The AMS **online guide Internet-Services** provides a **collection of online services and online guides**.

Guidance by the social partners and professional associations

Other important actors in the field of career guidance are the social partner organisations, which **run their own guidance and counselling centres**. The [Austrian Economic Chambers \(Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ\)](#) run the **online portal [bic.at](#)**, which provides information on different professions, career choices, application tips, and the opportunity to **create a profile of interests**. WKÖ, alongside the Economic Promotion Institute ([Wirtschaftsförderungsinsitut, WIFI](#)) also awards a **seal of quality for job orientation (Gütesiegel Berufsorientierung plus)** to schools that are particularly committed in providing their students with career guidance. Similarly, the Chamber of Labour ([Arbeiterkammer, AK](#)) offers **information on career guidance (Berufsorientierung)** and an interest profile test on professions ([Berufsinteressentest](#)). AK provides teaching material, workshops and simulations games. and developed the **occupational orientation portfolio 'My Future plus'**. Moreover, comprehensive **information about the respective training programmes** is provided by many sectoral and professional associations, as well as by a number of training companies.

Network job-related assistance (NEBA) and Youth Coaching ([Jugendcoaching](#))

The network NEBA (Netzwerk berufliche Assistenz) is run by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz) and offers **youth coaching**. In order to improve the educational background and the job market opportunities of young people, it is necessary to **prevent early training dropouts**. Particularly in this difficult phase of taking decisions regarding further education, young people and their legal guardians need **professional consultation and assistance**. The youth coaching offer is based on the principle of the **voluntariness and is free of charge**.

Youth Coaching has been installed in 2012. It **supports young people with their transition from school to employment**. Youth Coaching therefore aims to provide guidance and support to young people, who are facing difficulties in **continuing or choosing their education pathways** or who did already drop out of the education system/labour market. It shall thereby **reduce the number of early school leavers** (ESL). Youth coaching is a support option for young people at the end of compulsory schooling to find the individually suitable occupation. Young people at risk of leaving school early receive special support. Young people with impediments or special educational needs can access this service as well.

Youth Coaching is thus a very important measure with regard to **early intervention** as well as **activation and (re-)integration**. It also co-operates with **prisons** to support and prepare young delinquents to re-enter the education system. It targets both pupils in their **last year of compulsory schooling and drop-outs up to the age of 19** (youth with disabilities up to the age of 25). Thus, suitable perspectives are indicated to young people at risk of social exclusion by counselling, guidance and case management.

'Fit for training' ([AusbildungsFit](#), previously "Produktionsschulen"):

'Fit for training' ([AusbildungsFit](#)), which was called production schools until 2020, provides an exemplary **practical approach at the interface between school and employment**. In total, around 84 different providers offer AusbildungsFit training. Their goal is to offer structure, increase motivation, and provide both basic qualification and specialist knowledge in order to **equip students with the skills necessary for their further school education or apprenticeship training**. The one-year programme targets young people between 15 and 21 (in some cases 24), as well as people with special educational needs up to age 24. The training courses **combine working in workshops and counselling with teaching** through creativity and are supported by social workers. They also provide professional orientation. An example for AusbildungsFit is 'WUK work.space' in Vienna.

Project WUK work.space:

[WUK work.space](#) is a **low-threshold labour market offer for young disadvantaged people** up to 25 years. An inter-professional team provides both individual and group coaching to young people in order for them to determine and realize their individual career goals. The participants are enabled to work in practical workshops in diverse fields such as design, crafts, media and digital, technology and greenery. **A coach assists them** throughout the programme to review their progress, assist on the achievement of their goals. **Opportunities to work** in businesses are facilitated. Skills and knowledge necessary for further training is transmitted. Diverse sportive activities offer the possibility to try something new and **a plan to offer future perspectives is elaborated**. During the COVID-19 crisis, the project has been partially moved online.

Measures to increase the number of women in crafts and engineering careers

'Women into crafts, engineering and technology' ([Frauen in die Technik](#), FIT) is a programme to **encourage young women to enter skills training in non-traditional occupations** where women make up less than 40% of the workforce. It contributes to **opening up technical career paths to a larger number of women**. It provides young women with career orientation and counselling in such fields as well as with internship opportunities in technical workspaces.

Measures for young people with a migration background

Young migrants are **disproportionately affected by unemployment**. According to the 2015 [Youth and Work report](#) by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection \(Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz\)](#), insufficient German language skills, low (recognised) skills level and a **lack of information on possible training and occupations** make it more difficult for young migrants to get a foothold in the labour market. As stated in the report, out of the average number of registered apprenticeship-seekers (6 300), 47 % had a migrant background. The large majority of migrants who have settled

in Austria and are of working age enjoy legally secure and permanent labour market access. This signifies that integration measures no longer focus on the removal of legal barriers to labour market access, but rather on assistance to **sustainable inclusion in the job market**.

Young migrants are supported with **guidance, counselling and skills training** measures adjusted to their needs. This includes tailor-made educational and vocational guidance, counselling and support services, as well as employment projects. If upon completion of compulsory education these young people cannot be placed in a formal apprenticeship programme, they will be offered the opportunity to enter an equivalent **apprenticeship programme in a supra-company training** entity including recognised final exams. Young people who have dropped out of school or training, as well as young people with learning difficulties, who require special support, are invited to join **AusbildungsFit**. Young people from migrant backgrounds benefit to an above average degree from **Youth Coaching**. Young migrants are also **encouraged to acquire basic qualifications**, such as completing lower secondary school and improving their German language skills, in order to raise their skills level. Other labour market integration policies and programmes for this group include **testing and analysing their skills, mentoring programmes and networking with and for women**.

The **Austrian Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS)** regularly invites **specialised external providers** (e.g. [Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen](#) / Guidance Centre for migrants) to its offices on counselling days for young people. Owing to their special mission and objectives, these providers ensure more detailed and comprehensive advice and assistance to adolescents. They **can address problems a case worker of the public employment service cannot address**. A special pilot project has been launched which **supports young migrants who show potential for skills development or for the recognition** of existing credentials obtained abroad. Moreover, the **Managing Diversity programme** of the Vienna Public Employment Service's office for young people is designed to **create a better framework for the inclusion of this target group both in PES measures and in the labour market**. Implementation of Managing Diversity involves several levels: measures are geared to the needs of the target group's family context, counselling takes place within a suitable framework (e.g. counselling provided by staff of migrant background), measures are implemented within training courses provided by the employment service, and employers are assisted in matters of diversity management.'

The education and career fair [BeSt³ – Job, Training, and Education Fair](#)

BeSt³ is the largest **fair for careers, study and further education** in Austria. It targets pupils, high school graduates, university students and graduates, school and university drop-outs as well as parents, teachers, people in work and those interested in continuing education. Exhibitors include **universities, providers of post-secondary courses, universities of applied science, academies, private providers of educational programs, language schools, interest groups, as well as companies** promoting jobs and in-house training programs. The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, BMBWF\)](#) and the [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) jointly organise the fair. **In March 2021, it was held digitally** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Roughly 40.000 people visited the four-day online fair. Previous regular formats have attracted **around 75.000 visitors and 350 exhibitors** (of which approximately 40 from abroad).

Career choice mentoring ([Berufsfindungsbegleitung](#)) in the province of Styria

The [Berufsfindungsbegleitung](#) (BFB) project in the province Styria offers **best practice in providing vocational orientation for young people**. In existence (first as a pilot project) since 1999, it has been extended to the whole province (with exception of the capital Graz) in 2010. It offers young people assistance in their educational and career choices, helps young apprenticeship seekers and their parents in choosing the appropriate profession and **continues to support young people at the beginning of their apprenticeship**. It **collaborates with companies, schools and other partners** and has a wide range of **offers** from individual counselling to larger events and workshops.

Funding and creating opportunities

The funding for these measures **derives from different budgets**. €6 000 000 were provided for youth coaching by **national funds, including co-funding** in 2014. €3 000 000 were provided for **apprenticeship coaching by employer funds** in 2014. €7 000 000 were provided for free of charge preparatory courses for the final apprenticeship examination by employer funds in 2014. For **AusbildungsFit** €7 500 000 were provided in 2013. In **2018, government spending on labour market integration of young people** (15 to 24 years of age) totalled **€ 921 million**

(2015: €792 000 000). An additional € 53 000 000 for **further training** was foreseen in 2019, and after its full expansion in 2020 € 57 000 000 a year are to be dedicated to "AusbildungsFit".

Quality assurance

A **nationwide standard** is guaranteed by the **central oversight over the offers by the Ministry** of social affairs. Due to the implementation on the provincial level, regional circumstances can be considered.

‘QUINORA – International Quality Assurance Programme in Vocational Orientation and Guidance Measures for Job-Seekers on the System Level

The EU project [QUINORA](#) ([German here](#)) is the response to the internationalisation of vocational orientation and career guidance. QUINORA has the goal to develop benchmarks at a European level and to disseminate best practices. It mainly consists of the development of a **quality assurance programme for training measures in vocational orientation and activation**. A comparable synthesis report identifies existing quality standards and programmes in EU countries. Based on this, international quality standards for training measures in vocational orientation and activation are developed focussing particularly on the management level of relevant labour market actors. On the basis of **common international quality standards**, an **e-learning tool** is developed offering an opportunity for actors involved in labour market policies and training measures to implement these standards in the system and meta-level step by step. An **e-library** shall provide additional information and sources in the scope of different aspects of the topic "Quality in vocational orientation". Target groups are managers of training measures in training institutions, different labour market and training actors (i.e. employment services in EU countries, training institutions) as well as trainers.'

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Apprenticeship Training - The Dual Training System

In Austria, apprenticeship training has a **long tradition and a broad acceptance** not least due to the remarkable dual training system. A short [clip](#) (in English) by IFA briefly introduces the Austrian dual system.

Legal Framework

Apprenticeships are determined by the **Vocational Training Act** ([Berufsausbildungsgesetz](#)). Apprentices within the meaning of this Federal Act are persons who, on the basis of an **apprenticeship contract** (§ 12) are trained by an **authorised apprenticeship trainer** (§ 2) to learn an apprenticeship occupation specified in the **list of apprenticeship occupations** (§ 7, [Lehrberufsliste](#)) and who **work within the framework of this training** (§ 9). The apprenticeship period may last for **two to four years**, generally it shall be three years (§ 6).

This regulatory framework establishes **clear and enforceable responsibilities of both parties**, including rules on **working conditions**, an obligation to have a written apprenticeship contract, an entitlement to **proper training, a regular wage** (apprenticeship income / Lehrlingseinkommen, determined by collective agreements of the social partners), holidays and **time off to attend vocational school**, and **full social security coverage** (sickness, accidents, pension, unemployment, insolvency, occupational pension scheme). The governmental website [österreich.gv.at](#) provides an overview on rules regarding working conditions of apprentices ([Arbeitsbedingungen von Lehrlingen](#)). Further information on official guidelines for apprenticeship training is provided by the Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs ([Lehre und Berufsausbildung](#)) and the Chamber of Labour ([Lehre](#)).

In Austria, apprenticeship training takes places at two different sites: **company-based training of apprentices is complemented by a compulsory attendance of a part-time vocational school** for apprentices (Berufsschule). Thus, the Austrian system of apprenticeship training is referred to as 'dual vocational training system' or as the 'dual system'.

Statistics

Currently, **about 40% of all Austrian teenagers enter apprenticeship training upon completion of compulsory education**. The overall number of apprentices as well as the number of those entering apprenticeship training has been going back already from 1981 until 1997, when

the number of new apprentices increased again. The percentage of female apprentices increased slightly between 1975 and 1989, but has been decreasing ever since 1990 falling to a mere 31% in 1996. The most popular apprenticeship trades among girls is the retail-trade merchant, followed by hairdresser and office clerk. Among male apprentices, the most popular occupations are the motor-vehicle mechanic, followed by the electrician. More than 50% of all apprentices are trained for the craftsmen's trades, other important sectors are commerce (16%), the industry (11%) and tourism and the leisure industry (10%). All in all, about **40 000 companies train approximately 120 000 apprentices**, which corresponds to an **average of 3 apprentices per company**. Upon completion of apprenticeship training, about 40% to 44% of all apprentices continue to work for the company where they were trained. In **2020, 108,416 apprentices** were trained (- 0.6% compared to the year before). The Austrian Economic Chambers provide further statistics on apprenticeships ([Lehrlingsstatistik](#)).

Apprenticeship trades list and flexible duration

Apprentices may only be trained in the **legally recognized apprenticeship trades**. These skilled trades (presently approximately 240) are included in the list of apprenticeship trades ([Lehrberufsliste](#)) published by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs. Moreover, there are 14 legally recognized apprenticeship trades in the agriculture and forestry sector which are not included in the list. The list contains the various occupations and informs about the duration of apprenticeship training as well as related apprenticeship trades including training time credits for already acquired vocational training.

Apprenticeship **training lasts two to four years**, in most cases, however, three years. In case of **accreditation of other educational pathways** (e.g. vocational schools, vocational training abroad) the period of apprenticeship may be reduced. Moreover, the period of apprenticeship training may also be reduced for students holding certain qualifications. This especially benefits holders of the school leaving examination (Reifeprüfung) for it increases their choice and makes it easier for them to find employment. **Training for several occupations at the same time is possible** provided certain requirements are met.

Company-based Training

Companies which train apprentices are **obliged to provide apprentices with the skills and know-how** stipulated in the occupational profile. This ensures a **uniform minimum standard** of training. Companies which are not able to provide training which covers the whole occupational profile may avail of the possibility of complementary training within a training network. Thus, even small companies may contribute their share to apprenticeship training.

Company-based training constitutes the **major part of apprenticeship training**. Apprenticeship **training agreements** stating the conditions of training within the framework of a contract of employment are signed between the company and the apprentice. Thus, an apprentice has got **full social insurance** including health, accident, retirement and unemployment insurance. The duties of a company which is entitled to train apprentices do **go beyond the usual duties of an employer** to quite some extent. Apprenticeship training agreements are **subject to the regulations of the industrial and social law and to protective labour legislation for teenage employees**. Furthermore, the apprentice is entitled to a **remuneration**, which is fixed in collective labour agreements and varies according to the different apprenticeship trades.

Apprentices spend **most of the time** of their apprenticeship **training in the real environment of a manufacturing plant or a services enterprise**. This does not only mean that they are fully integrated into the world of work but may also have a positive effect on their **social skills**, on their skills to cope with problems and on their ego. One of the major advantages of this system, both for the apprentice as well as the company, is that **apprentices may be employed as fully qualified skilled workers right upon completion** of apprenticeship training.

Part-time Vocational Schools for Apprentices

Attendance of a part-time vocational school for apprentices (Berufsschule) is **compulsory** for apprentices who have signed an apprenticeship training agreement with a company. It starts with the beginning of the apprenticeship training agreement or another training agreement in compliance with § 30 of the Vocational Training Act and lasts until its end or the successful completion of the relevant part-time vocational school for apprentices.

The aim of part-time vocational schools for apprentices is to **provide apprentices with the theoretical basics of the respective occupation**, to promote and complement company-based training and to **deepen their general knowledge**. Moreover, it has to provide interested

apprentices with **adequate preparation for the TVE-Examination** by means of differentiated measures and voluntary subjects.

Thus, regulations for practical training, which are stipulated in the vocational profiles, are complemented by a **special curriculum** defining both the key issues of the technical theory and practical training for the respective apprenticeship trade, the latter taking place in workshops and laboratories. Education in part-time vocational schools for apprentices may take on the following organizational forms:

- a **day-release system** with courses running for a complete academic year, apprentices attend school for a **minimum of one full or two half days a week**.
- a **block-release system** with courses lasting for a minimum of **eight or four weeks per year**
- a **seasonal-release system**, depending on the occupational sector classes may be held during a certain season only

Apprenticeship Leave Certificate and further education/training

An Apprenticeship Leave Certificate is of legal importance. The Apprenticeship Leave Certificate provides the apprentice with **access to two different vocational careers**. On the one hand it is a prerequisite for the admission to the **Master Craftsman Exam** and for qualification tests, and on the other hand it gives access to **higher education via the TVE-Exam or the Higher Education Entrance Exam** which are prerequisites for taking up **studies** at colleges, universities, "Fachhochschulen", post-secondary courses and post-secondary colleges.

Outlook and reform potential

The Austrian apprenticeship training system is **highly practice-oriented and esteemed** all over the country. In recent years, however, a loss in attractiveness has been observed by some. Counteraction may be found in increasing the permeability of educational pathways, counteracting the concentration of apprentices on a few occupations and, from enterprise's perspective, in increasing their willingness to provide (attractive) training facilities. There is a demand for a reformation of the apprenticeship system carried out in cooperation with all parties involved in order to **make apprenticeship trades more attractive**. Reform concepts include:

- the **creation of new apprenticeship trades** in future-oriented fields,
- **broadly defined training objectives** – more comprehensive basic training and later specialization make it easier to find out about individual skills and interests and to act accordingly (reduction of drop-outs and the rate of those who change for another occupation),
- **easier access to further education** and **facilitating transfer** from the dual system to the full-time technical and vocational education system. The introduction of the TVE-Examination in 1997 has contributed enormously to the permeability of education systems,
- **more flexible training schemes for practical training** in companies just as for education in part-time vocational schools,
- **permanent adaptation of the curricula** to the ever-changing requirements of the labour market and development of appropriate means to guarantee high quality of training,
- **financial support** for companies which train apprentices,
- simplification of **bureaucratic structures**,
- more **information on less popular occupations**.

Internships

The concept of **internship** includes different forms, such as compulsory traineeship (e.g. in the course of university) and voluntary traineeship which is neither required by a **curriculum** nor serves primarily the aim of earning money. Both serve primarily the aim of getting an **insight into a professional field**. The Chamber of Labour advises young people to be careful whenever arranging internships, because there are no as clear rules as for apprenticeships. Different legal acts regarding labour legislation and social security right apply to internships, depending on the form of the work and the contract. Basically, traineeships can be an **employer-employee relationship, free employment** or take the form of a **practical training**. Which of the contractual relationships is given has to be determined depending on the actual arrangement of training in each particular case. As there are **no legally binding restrictions specifically for internships**, the Federal Chancellery provides [information on internships](#) including a checklist (Checklist Praktikum). The trade union GPA (Gewerkschaft GPA) operates the platform [aufdeinerseite.at](#) to ease young people's entry to professional life and to prevent cases of abuse of internships. The Social Ministry Service ([Sozialministeriumsservice](#)) has published a brochure on the legal situation of interns in Austria ([Rechtliche Situation von PraktikantInnen in Österreich](#)).

An essential characteristic of an **employer-employee relationship** is the performance in [personal dependence](#) of the employee. Compulsory internships within the framework of school education or studies as well as in the tourism industry usually form an employment relationship, for which they need to predominantly exhibit the characteristics of such a relationship. An employment relationship **guarantees more rights**, such as remuneration and continued payment of wages in case of illness. Criteria are in particular the classification in the operational organisation, the given working hours, assignment of a place of work, an agreed working sequence, being subject to directives as well as to continuous control by the employer. **To such an employer-employee relationship, all regulations pertaining to labour law apply**, including the respective collective agreement as well as applicable company arrangements. In particular, a remuneration claim pertaining to labour law exists towards the employer. The **social security protection** of the intern according to the general social security law ([Allgemeines Sozialversicherungsgesetz](#), ASVG) depends on the height of the remuneration. With a salary below the marginal wage threshold (Geringfügigkeitsgrenze, in 2020: 460.66 €) only the accident insurance is covered. Above the [marginal employment threshold](#), a full insurance package (health insurance, accident insurance and pension insurance) is covered.

Internships provide a valuable opportunity of entrance into the job market, however, for interns they may pose **challenges regarding social security and fair working contracts**. On this issue, [Plattform Generation Praktikum](#) (Plattform Generation Internship), founded in 2006 as a registered voluntary association, participates in research, projects, discussions and networking events. In order to provide the public debate with tangible numbers and facts, in 2007 it published a study entitled 'Worthless Work? Structural characteristics of internship employment in the academic context in Austria' (Arbeit ohne Wert? Strukturmerkmale der PraktikantInnen-Beschäftigung im Hochschulkontext in Österreich). This was the **first Austrian survey on internships**.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

Apprenticeship promotion

Numerous offers promote apprenticeships and help apprentices, e.g.:

- The 'apprenticeship exchange' ([Lehrstellenbörse](#)) is a **platform with information on apprenticeship training and training positions**.
- Apprenticeship promotion ([Lehrstellenförderung](#)) enables providers of apprenticeship training to **apply for financial support**.
- **Supra-company apprenticeship training** ([Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung](#)) allows young people who were not able to find an apprenticeship training at a company to start a similar apprenticeship training. They receive their practical training either at the educational facility or cooperating companies.
- **Education and Training until the age of 18** ([AusBildung bis 18](#)) keeps young people under the age of 18 years in further education or training by means of an obligation.

Training Guarantee (Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25)

This guarantee originally **ensured everyone** up to 18 years and socially disadvantaged youth, slow learners and education dropouts up to 24 years **an apprenticeship position**. Since 2017, the training guarantee has been **established up to the age of 25**. The [Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) has also been focusing more on education and training as the key to sustainable labour market integration. The target group is **young jobseekers who are between 19 and 24 years old and have only completed compulsory schooling** (approx. 43 percent of all unemployed in this age group). If someone is not able to find an apprenticeship position in a company, he or she can enter into an apprenticeship programme in a **supra-company apprenticeship training** entity. This form of apprenticeship, including its final exam, corresponds completely to that of a company-based apprenticeship. The 'Training Guarantee until 25' is a **package of successfully implemented qualification measures** such as intensive training for skilled workers, supra-company apprenticeship training, work foundations or qualification close to the workplace. These measures **give young adults in Austria the opportunity to obtain a subsequent vocational qualification in order to gain a sustainable foothold in the labour market**.

As of December 2013, there were approximately 9 000 students enrolled in the supra-company apprenticeship training, which corresponds to 7.6% of all apprentices. 92.4% of all apprentices complete their apprenticeship training in a company. In 2018, a **total of around 11,400 people** (37% women) **received additional support through the programme**. The disbursements in this regard amounted to around **73 million euros**.

Youth Coaching

Apprenticeships, alongside other career pathways, are promoted in career guidance and counselling (see [Chapter 3.4](#)). Specific **Youth Coaching** ([Coaching für Lehrlinge und Lehrbetriebe](#)) measures target apprentices: they, as well as their employers, **may request supportive coaching**, which provides assistance and advice during on-the-job training. The aim of this support program is to **avoid apprentices dropping out of their formation** and to ensure a successful completion of the apprenticeship. Qualified coaches will have initial talks with apprentices in question, identify perspectives and **conduct mediation where required**. Moreover, they assist with choosing refresher, (up-)skilling or advance training programmes and support apprentices in their preparation for the final apprenticeship examination. In addition to the apprenticeship coaching, there is a broad offer of subsidies for preparatory courses for apprentices and quality-oriented measures within the training companies.

'Fit for Training' ([AusbildungsFit](#))

Some young people lack the **basic qualifications and social skills needed to change over from school to training or work**. AusbildungsFit, which was called production schools until 2020, offers an opportunity to acquire them and to get to know a range of different types of training. Across Austria, there are over 60 AusbildungsFit providers with around 3000 places for approx. 4 000 young people annually. The range of offers is being gradually extended. AusbildungsFit is an offer supplementary to youth coaching that is offered throughout Austria. The aim of AusbildungsFit is to **enable young people to gain higher qualifications by (re-)entering the training sector and thus to participate in the Austrian labour market** in the medium term. Targeted are young people up to the age of 21 or 24, with disabilities or special educational needs, learning disabilities, social or emotional impairments, who want to do vocational training, and whose career aspirations seem clear and feasible.

Supporting providers of trainee- and apprenticeships

Enterprises and education facilities which are entitled to train apprentices, according to the professional training law ([Berufsausbildungsgesetz](#), BAG) or the regional and forest professional training law ([Land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Berufsausbildungsgesetz](#), LFBAG) respectively, can **apply for financial support**.

The support is paid out as a **monthly subsidy towards the costs of the apprenticeship education** across the board. The aid is granted in each case for one practical training year. It can be granted for a maximum of 3 years. For participants in an apprenticeship education with an extended apprenticeship or part qualification, the aid can be granted for the whole apprenticeship. The support is bound to a **consultation between [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) and the enterprise or education facility** with regard to the supporting person. On regional level, different support conditions may be in place.

Promoted is the apprenticeship education of

- **girls/women** in occupations with a low share of women (€400 for the company and €453 for the education facility)
- apprenticeship seekers who are **disadvantaged** in the job market (€400 for the company and €453 for the education facility)
- participants in a teaching education with an **extended apprenticeship or part qualification** (€400 for the company and €453 for the education facility)
- **adults (over 18-year-olds) or early school leavers** whose occupation problems can be solved by an apprenticeship education (€900 for both the company and the education facility for adults with higher apprenticeship compensation/supplementary wages)

Interministerial COVID-19 taskforce on apprenticeship training

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a joint taskforce on youth employment entitled 'Ensuring apprenticeship training for all young people' ("[Lehrausbildung für alle Jugendlichen sichern](#)") was set up by the [Federal Ministries of Labour](#) (in German), [Digital and Economic Affairs](#) (in German), Education, Science and Research and Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The collaboration aims to **provide young people who have completed compulsory schooling with an in-company, inter-company or school-based training place** in order to close the gap of open places (in June 2020: a demand of 7.673 apprenticeship positions, with vacancies of only 4.962 amounts to a lack of around 2.700 positions for young people) that the pandemic has created. In a first step, **1.000 additional training positions were created**.

Recognition of learning outcomes

The Apprenticeship Leave Exam

The contract between the employer and the apprentice ends automatically after the stipulated period of time. At the end of apprenticeship training, **each apprentice may decide whether or not to take the Apprenticeship Leave Exam** (Lehrabschlussprüfung). This exam tests whether the apprentice has acquired the **practical skills and qualifications relevant to his occupation** and whether he is able to properly perform the tasks characteristic to the apprenticeship trade. The Apprenticeship Leave Exam is divided into a **practical and a theoretical part** and consists of a **written and an oral exam**. Provided that the apprentice has met the educational objectives of the last year of the respective part-time vocational school he is only required to do the practical part of the exam. An Apprenticeship Leave Certificate often is of legal importance as well. For compulsory training periods, the employer must issue a confirmation for the school.

Funding

In **2018**, the Federal Government used a budget of **921 million euros for labour market policy for young people** ([Arbeitsmarktförderung: Jugendliche und Junge Erwachsene](#)). Of this

- **620 million euros** were implemented through **subsidies and grants from the Public Employment Service**
- **more than 200 million euros** went to the **promotion of apprenticeship places in companies**
- **100 million euros** were available for the **various offers of the Social Ministry Service**

An **additional 57 million euros** have been earmarked for the **'Training until 18' programme in its full expansion** from 2020. In 2019, an **additional 53 million euros** was made available to support young people in **obtaining a secondary qualification**.

In the 2018/2019 training year, around 11,700 young people were trained in courses of **supra-company apprenticeship training** within the framework of an originally planned total budget of **around 191 million euros** (Public Employment Service and financing contributions of the Länder). In 2018, a total of around 11,400 people received additional support through the programme **'Training guarantee until 25'**, the payments in this regard amounted to around **73 million euros**.

Looking at previous years, **Ausbildungsfit** was funded by National Funds, including co-funding with a total amount of € 12 000 000 in **2014**. In **2013**, the **Training Guarantee** was funded by national funds, including co-funding with € 175 000 000 in total (of which € 150 000 000 AMS, € 25 000 000 provinces, € 25 000 000 regional/local funds).

Quality assurance

To implement and monitor the measure 'Youth Coaching', an **inter-ministerial steering group** was set up. The steering group consists of members of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research as well as the Federal Social Office. There are **steering committees for Youth Coaching and AusbildungsFit in each province** of Austria. Participants are stakeholders of the educational system and labour market. A nation-wide office of assistance for interface between school and work coordinates the interface between school and work for young people.

Any company or organisation applying for financial support by the government for apprenticeship training has to have a **quality management concept**.

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

In February **2021** (during the COVID-19 pandemic), the Austrian **unemployment rate for young people under 25** amounted to **11.0%** (among the lowest in the EU). In order to complement the already existing measures aimed at fostering the employment of young people, an **interministerial COVID-19 taskforce on youth employment** was set up.

Well-trying measures against youth unemployment in Austria include the guarantee of an apprenticeship placement and subsidies in order to encourage employers to train young people as apprentices.

Training Guarantee (Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25)

This guarantee originally **ensured everyone** up to 18 years and socially disadvantaged youth, slow learners and education dropouts up to 24 years **an apprenticeship position**. Since 2017, the training guarantee has been **established up to the age of 25**. The [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) has also been focusing more on education and training as the key to sustainable labour market integration. The target group is **young jobseekers who are between 19 and 24 years old and have only completed compulsory schooling** (approx. 43 percent of all unemployed in this age group). If someone is not able to find an apprenticeship position in a company, he or she can enter into an apprenticeship programme in a **supra-company apprenticeship training** entity. This form of apprenticeship, including its final exam, corresponds completely to that of a company-based apprenticeship. The 'Training Guarantee until 25' is a **package of successfully implemented qualification measures** such as intensive training for skilled workers, supra-company apprenticeship training, work foundations or qualification close to the workplace. These measures **give young adults in Austria the opportunity to obtain a subsequent vocational qualification in order to gain a sustainable foothold in the labour market**.

As of December 2013, there were approximately 9 000 students enrolled in the supra-company apprenticeship training, which corresponds to 7.6% of all apprentices. 92.4% of all apprentices complete their apprenticeship training in a company. In 2018, a **total of around 11,400 people** (37% women) **received additional support through the programme**. The disbursements in this regard amounted to around **73 million euros**.

Supporting providers of trainee- and apprenticeships

Enterprises and education facilities which are entitled to train apprentices, according to the professional training law ([Berufsausbildungsgesetz, BAG](#)) or the regional and forest professional training law ([Land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Berufsausbildungsgesetz, LFBAG](#)) respectively, can **apply for financial support**.

The support is paid out as a **monthly subsidy towards the costs of the apprenticeship education** across the board. The aid is granted in each case for one practical training year. It can be granted for a maximum of 3 years. For participants in an apprenticeship education with an extended apprenticeship or part qualification, the aid can be granted for the whole apprenticeship. The support is bound to a **consultation between Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) and the enterprise or education facility** with regard to the supporting person. On regional level, different support conditions may be in place.

Promoted is the apprenticeship education of

- **girls/women** in occupations with a low share of women (€400 for the company and €453 for the education facility)
- apprenticeship seekers who are **disadvantaged** in the job market (€400 for the company and €453 for the education facility)
- participants in a teaching education with an **extended apprenticeship or part qualification** (€400 for the company and €453 for the education facility)
- **adults (over 18-year-olds) or early school leavers** whose occupation problems can be solved by an apprenticeship education (€900 for both the company and the education facility for adults with higher apprenticeship compensation/supplementary wages)

Interministerial COVID-19 taskforce on apprenticeship training

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a joint taskforce on youth employment entitled 'Ensuring apprenticeship training for all young people' ("[Lehrausbildung für alle Jugendlichen sichern](#)") was set up by the [Federal Ministries of Labour](#) (in German), [Digital and Economic Affairs](#) (in German), Education, Science and Research and Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The collaboration aims to **provide young people who have completed compulsory schooling with an in-company, inter-company or school-based training place** in order to close the gap of open places (in June 2020: a demand of 7.673 apprenticeship positions, with vacancies of only 4.962 amounts to a lack of around 2.700 positions for young people) that the pandemic has created. In a first step, **1.000 additional training positions were created**.

Campaign for the Future of Young People (against long-term unemployment)

For young people, a period of six months without work is already considered to be long-term unemployment. Avoiding this situation is another important objective of labour market policy. With the Campaign for the Future of Young People, the federal government promised to **provide all**

young unemployed persons between 19 and 24 years with a job offer, a targeted training course or a subsidised job within a period of six months. The campaign is part of the Austrian Youth Guarantee. According to the [youth guarantee implementation plan](#) '§38a AMMSG ensures that every unemployed up to 25 is either offered an employment position or the possibility to pursue a further education or an integration programme (as e.g. subsidised employment)'.

By October 2015, this labour market policy priority had enabled around 48 800 young people previously registered as unemployed with the AMS to begin a training course. Around 78 700 young people were able to take on a job. **By 2017, 53.8% of young people took up an offer within four months** and an estimated proportion of 89.2% of NEETs was reached with all [Youth Guarantee](#) programmes.

Fostering entrepreneurship

In addition to these measures aiming at integrating young people into the labour market as employees, a **business start-up programme for unemployed** was set up. The programme aims at supporting unemployed workers in their efforts to enter self-employment. Taking up self-employment can help these workers **create permanent jobs** which ensure economic survival on the one hand, and increase the number of job openings on the other, as newly established businesses might expand and create jobs filled from the ranks of the unemployed. Approximately 5% of all participants are less than 25 years old.

Key initiatives

The key objectives of **Training Guarantee** ([Ausbildungsgarantie](#)) are providing VET to all young people, offering additional apprenticeship positions, helping them to complete apprenticeships or changing to a company for continuing the training respectively. The target groups are registered apprenticeship-seekers who completed compulsory schooling and are unable to find suitable company-based training slots despite enhanced placement efforts, or who dropped out of an apprenticeship; young people up to the age of 18, socially disadvantaged youth, slow learners, and increasingly also education dropouts and young adults (19 to 24 years of age). The responsible authorities for this initiative, in place since 2008, are the AMS, BMASK, BMFWF and the provinces. The yearly allocated budget is 175 000 000 €.

The key objective **of bonus for companies** which take up apprentices from supra company training entities by introducing a lump-sum subsidy of 1 000 Euro that is paid to every employer taking on an apprentice of a supra-company training entity. This shall increase the possibility to change from supra-company apprenticeship to a regular apprenticeship position. The responsible authorities for this initiative, in place since 2013, are the BMBWF, BMSGPK, WKO and LST.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

The flexibility of the job market is an important aim. The **needs of employees and employers** have to be taken into consideration and balanced, which is ensured by the social partnership. A successful flexicurity strategy is based on a **well-balanced relation between flexibility and protection** against social risks.

In general, employment contracts and laws foresee the **same degree of flexibility and security for young people** as they do for other employees ([Arbeitsschutz - Allgemeines](#)). Specific youth protection provisions exist (e.g. restrictive working hours), furthermore apprentices are subject to special provisions such as unfair dismissal protection ([FAO zur Beschäftigung von Kindern und Jugendlichen](#)). **Temporary contracts** are available, as long as they don't amount to chain contracts. **Flexitime agreements** (Gleitzeitvereinbarungen) and arrangements on **working from home** can be made in employment contracts. Contracts often include a **probationary period** of up to one month, which enables both parties to a termination at any time and without giving reasons. On the other hand, the **security of employees is highly valued** in Austria and the employee protection legislation is pronounced. Moreover, young job-seekers receive tailored support between jobs (e.g. Youth Coaching, Training Guarantee).

Advancement of early intervention

The consultation spectrum of the [Public Employment Service](#) ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) is further developed by early consultation of the enterprises, especially regarding prevention of unemployment. People shall be activated to claim services of the AMS prior to their forthcoming job loss (early jobless announcements). The **preventive labour market policy** shall sensitise employees and employers for the initiative and the use of the self-service offer of the AMS. Unemployed people have to be supported in their change readiness in reflects of a life-accompanying learning.

Youth needs chances and perspectives. Hence, a stable, future-proof, freely elective choice of career is important. The cooperation between the employment department, the education department and schools has the aim, to extensively offer and develop the **occupational orientation for youth**. Young people and their parents have to be informed on occupational fields and the linked chances and possibilities. Special attention has to be paid to the specific support of young women and girls with a choice and graduation of promising professional training.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

Protection of the Work-life Balance

Apprentices are subject to specific working hour and youth protection regulations. They are entitled to paid holidays amounting to thirty working days per annum. **Flexibility in working time arrangements and the possibility to telework**, as for all employees, have to be agreed upon by both parties of the employment contract.

According to the **Children and Youth Employment Act** ([Kinder und Jugendlichen-Beschäftigungsgesetz](#)), special rules apply. Within this law, persons up to the completion of 18 years are defined as youth, if they have already completed compulsory schooling and reached the age of 15.

Sunday work and working days

Young people have to **get off every other Sunday**. Special restrictions apply for apprentices. Young people have to **get 2 consecutive days off each week**.

Maximum working hours

The regular working hours are 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week respectively. **Extra hours are only allowed for young people older than 16 years in the frame of 30 minutes per day** and only for final papers/works.

Breaks and daily rest

With **working hours higher than 4.5 a break of at least 30 minutes** is compulsory. The daily rest has to be at least 12 hours.

Night work

Young people **younger than 16 years are not allowed to work between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.** Young people above are allowed to work **until 11 p.m.**, but only after a medical examination (each year).

Vocational school

- The **time necessary for the vocational school is to be given**, the apprentice's compensation must be paid.
- Time at vocational schools is to be **regarded as working time**.

Vacation

Young people can demand **at least 2 weeks**.

Promoting Gender Equality

Labour market integration policies and programmes for women include testing and analysing their skills, mentoring programmes, networking with and for girls, or women in crafts and engineering. Women into crafts, engineering and technology' ([Frauen in die Technik](#), FiT) is a programme to **encourage young women to enter skills training in non-traditional occupations** where women make up less than 40% of the workforce. It contributes to **opening up technical career paths to a larger number of women**. It provides young women with career orientation and counselling in such fields as well as with internship opportunities in technical workspaces.

Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

In **2018**, the Federal Government used a budget of **921 million euros for labour market policy for young people** ([Arbeitsmarktförderung: Jugendliche und Junge Erwachsene](#)). Of this,

- **620 million euros** were implemented through **subsidies and grants from the Public Employment Service**

- **more than 200 million euros** went to the **promotion of apprenticeship places in companies**
- **100 million euros** were available for the **various offers of the Social Ministry Service**

In the 2018/2019 training year, around 11,700 young people were trained in courses of **supra-company apprenticeship training** within the framework of an originally planned total budget of **around 191 million euros** (Public Employment Service and financing contributions of the Länder). In 2018, a total of around 11,400 people received additional support through the programme '**Training guarantee until 25**', the payments in this regard amounted to around **73 million euros**.

Looking at previous years, **in 2012 €430 000 000 were spent on active labour market policy for young people**. An additional € 160m were spent on subsidies for the apprenticeship system and €24 000 000 on measures for young people of the federal social office. Thus, in sum €610 000 000 are spent to integrate young people into the labour market. Defining the budget on implementing this comprehensive strategy is, however, difficult as it also concerns gradual reforms in the educational system, where no separately listed costs are available.

In 2015, the federal government had a budget of €796 000 000 available to spend on labour market policy for young people. Of this, a sum of €575 000 000 was used in the form of subsidies and benefits distributed via the Public Employment Service. €169 000 000 was used to promote apprenticeships in companies. €52 000 000 was available for corresponding programmes run by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In the **period 2014-2020**, further funds were available for particular developments. For the further development of the quality-focused subsidies and supporting-instruments within the apprenticeship system (including different measures) approximately € 170 000 000 per year were made available for employers (for approximately 125 000 apprentices). For Future for the Youth (aktion zukunft jugend), National Funds, including co-funding amounted to € 142 000 000 (for qualification and employment measures, 2013). For employment of job seekers €20 109 397 were available in the period in 2014-2020 for the offers and measures from the ESF and national funds. Moreover, more than €284 000 000 Euro were available for e.g. NEBA-measures between 2014 and 2020 from the ESF.

Quality assurance

The Austrian labour market policy has for many decades been a forerunner and model for comprehensive, innovative and high-quality work with the aim of full employment. **Benchmarks and standards guarantee a high-class level** and make achievements measurable and comparable. The available resources have to be invested in sensible and high-quality measures for the labour market. These measures have to be evaluated.

The [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) makes sure that a **best practice exchange is realised in a transparent way**. Its duties are the further development of quality standards and the pursuit of the objectives of the Austrian labour market policy. The AMS has to adjust and further develop the observation indicators. **Impact monitoring shows that reintegration is one of the major key facts for success**. For different target groups, the reintegration quote will be diverse. Hence, the AMS has to fix integration quotes for the labour market-political measures in vote with the results of the evaluation research.

To give an example, for the assessment of the initiative of further development of the quality-focused subsidies and supporting-instruments within the apprenticeship system (including different measures), **statistics on apprenticeships from the AMS** and on apprenticeship training-subsidies from data warehouse DHW were evaluated.

Support measures at vocational schools for students at risk (Verminderung der Drop-Out-Rate an kaufmännischen Schulen) are monitored at **school level**.

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

EURES (European Employment Services)

Austria is part of the EURES-programme. EURES, **the European cooperation network of employment agencies, promotes the free movement of workers** and works to ensure that European citizens can enjoy the same benefits despite language barriers, cultural differences, bureaucratic hurdles, differing labour laws and the lack of Europe-wide recognition of educational qualifications. The Austrian [Public Employment Service \(Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS\)](#) is responsible for the implementation of the programme. The publication [Living & Working in Austria](#) by the AMS provides a detailed overview of the subject. AMS Austria offers enterprise and job seekers additional services in the area of European job placement.

EUROPASS

Austria also takes part in the Europass network. Europass helps Europeans who are studying or training, starting their career or looking for new challenges to **present their competences and qualifications**. The service is free of charge and available in 29 languages. It also provides tailor-made **suggestions for learning opportunities and jobs across Europe and reliable information on working and learning in Europe**.

IFA – Young Workers Exchange (Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch)

[IFA Austria](#) is the Austrian branch of IFA consisting of all IFA members resident in Austria. It represents their interests within the IFA and helps to support the objectives of the IFA in Austria. IFA has been organizing work placements abroad for apprentices, students, skilled workers and training officers since 1995, and since 2013, also for young entrepreneurs. All the work placements organized by IFA are paid for with funds from the EU or Austria. Since its foundation, IFA has **organised work placements** abroad for more than 7,000 people. Through these projects, IFA has established far-reaching business contacts in Austria as well as with international partner organizations in Europe and beyond – an international network that is expanded with each work placement. IFA is involved in **numerous activities concerned with quality in mobility and the recognition of skills acquired abroad**, including

- the introduction and **marketing campaign for the Euro pass VET** (renamed Euro pass Mobility) to improve the transparency and comparability of qualifications obtained in Austria (from 2002 to 2011 IFA served as the central advisory and issuing authority for the Euro pass Mobility in Austria)
- the participation of IFA staff in various **working groups of the European Commission as well as on behalf of UEAPME and the EUROCHAMBRES** for promoting mobility of apprentices and
- the participation in **European cooperation and networking projects for quality development** in occupational mobility.

Two or three times a year, there is a call for apprentices to participate in a work placement abroad. IFA then selects a group of four to twelve apprentices, **organizes the entire stay abroad**, including the travel arrangements, accommodation, work placement etc. A work placement abroad during the apprenticeship is **credited towards education**. The work placement is unpaid, but the apprentice will still receive the usual apprenticeship wages and **funding is available** for the travel and accommodation expenses. The company can [apply for a refund of apprenticeship wages](#) for the time of the work placement abroad. For a three- to six-week stay abroad, the apprentice will only have to pay about 200 to 650 Euros. Among others, IFA **works with the following European funding programs**

- **Erasmus+** (formerly: Leonardo da Vinci; IFA has been carrying out projects under this program every year since Austria joined the EU) and
- **EYE – Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs**
- In addition, IFA organizes work placements for apprentices
 - as part of the 'Grant for Gifted Students Mobility of the Austrian Economic Chambers',
 - funded by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and
 - the apprentice exchange projects on behalf of the Province of Styria and the Styrian Economic Chamber.

Young IFA Network

Officially launched at the IFA Amsterdam Congress 2006, the Young IFA Network is **growing** and developing at full speed. It aims at **attracting more IFA members in the early stages of their careers, providing a forum** for the development of international relations in the tax field and for exchanging ideas on international tax matters.

Austrian Young IFA focuses on **organizing special get-togethers** of particular interest for young tax professionals in conjunction with regular IFA events. Those events serve as a great opportunity to network. To keep the target community informed about past, recent and future events, YIN Austria has been distributing a **newsletter** regularly. Furthermore, Austrian Young IFA strongly encourages YIN members to get involved not only in national YIN activities but also at worldwide level through participation at the Annual IFA Congress. For this purpose, it has arranged for several local tax consulting companies to sponsor the attendance and travel costs of some YIN members to the Annual IFA Congress.

Erasmus+

Students and recent graduates can complete **one or more funded traineeships in Programme Countries or Partner Countries worldwide**. The monthly funding amount varies depending on the host country. Graduates can complete a traineeship abroad within one year of graduating. They must apply for this during their studies at their home university. In Austria, the programme is administered by the [National Agency OEAD](#).

Legal framework

Recognition of international vocational training and vocational qualifications

The [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) cooperates with Member States of the EU/EEA and other countries on numerous initiatives and at various levels to **further develop mutual recognition and accreditation** of prior learning.

Upon application, the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) may declare vocational training credentials obtained abroad to be equivalent to corresponding Austrian apprenticeship credentials and the related **final apprenticeship examination** taken under the Austrian system. Furthermore, the Ministry may declare the admission to a 'restricted' practical examination to achieve full equivalence with the final apprenticeship examination. Based on special **vocational training agreements**, a number of vocational training credentials obtained in **Germany, Hungary** or **South Tyrol** have been declared equivalent. The [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) provides the relevant information on request.

Work experience and internships abroad of up to four months per training year are credited towards Austrian apprenticeship training periods. The IFA Association (international young workers exchange) assists apprentices, pupils and instructors in finding work placements abroad.

Incoming young workers

There is **no specific legal framework for incoming young workers**, trainees/apprentices and professionals/entrepreneurs, therefore the general rules apply.

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy Framework

Entrepreneurship education in Austria is primarily regulated through the [Austrian Strategy on Lifelong Learning](#) and the curricula of schools and prevocational school, accompanied by a set of well-established support mechanisms for implementation. Austria has developed a **diverse range of entrepreneurship programmes at the national and regional level**. Initiatives are available on different levels of education targeting students, teachers and the schools themselves.

Both, the **governmental institutions and the institutions of the social partners** play an important role in fostering entrepreneurship skills. As a cross-curricular educational goal, elements of entrepreneurship education are already taught in all school subjects.

Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® (Unternehmerführerschein®)

The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® goes back to an initiative of the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ) and is offered as a **supplementary**

qualification from grade eight in school. It is based on the firm belief that entrepreneurship and business knowledge can already be fostered during school years. Entrepreneurship education turns students into responsible and entrepreneurial individuals and helps them to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes. This successful model was recognized by the European Commission in 2006 and the umbrella association of European chambers of commerce Eurochambres in 2011 as a best-practice example of entrepreneurship education. A reliable standard, online examinations and a certificate recognized at European level caused the dissemination of the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate®. Tens of thousands of students are annually ESC® trained and certified in Austria, Germany and Switzerland.'

Entrepreneurial Skills Pass

The Entrepreneurial Skills Pass (ESP) is an **international qualification that certifies students (15-19 years old), who have had a real entrepreneurship experience** and have gained the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies in order for them to start a business or to be successfully employed. ESP includes a **full-year in-school mini-company experience**, a self-assessment of entrepreneurial competencies, an examination of business, economic and financial knowledge and the **possibility to access further opportunities** offered by small and large businesses, top higher institutions and international organisations across Europe.

One of the most innovative aspects of the ESP is the establishment of **National Focus Groups (NFG)** and the organization of **networking activities** at national level. The NFGs include individuals from a variety of public and private organizations providing input, raising awareness and supporting to disseminate ESP.'

Junior Chamber Austria - Junge Wirtschaft Österreich (JWÖ)

Junior Chamber Austria - Junge Wirtschaft Österreich (JWÖ) is an association of young entrepreneurs between the age of 18 to 40 years. JWÖ is part of the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ) and provides different kinds of **services and lobbying** for better regulations as well as **national and international networking opportunities** with more than 600 events per year all over Austria.

The organisation provides information on current entrepreneurial topics on its **website**, its **newsletter** as well as in the biannual **magazine** "die junge wirtschaft". The junior chamber with its 9 provincial organisations offers plenty of events with keynote speakers, **seminars and workshops focusing on how to improve different management skills**. Furthermore, the participants can take the chance on sharing their experiences with others and develop new business ideas.

Formal learning

Entrepreneurship is a major concern of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), which supports numerous measures in cooperation with other ministries and institutions.

Entrepreneurship Education signifies developing pupil's own ideas and imparting the skills to implement these ideas. It encompasses **all educational measures for awakening entrepreneurial attitudes and skills**, i.e. the development of certain values, attitudes and personal qualifications that enable the establishment of a business but are also essential for dependent work. In a narrower sense, entrepreneurship education means the development of specialised knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary for successful business start-up and management as well as for an independent, self-reliant lifestyle.

Cross-curricular Educational Goal and Specialised Schools

As a **cross-curricular educational goal**, elements of entrepreneurship education occur in all subjects. **Some school types furthermore teach specialised subjects** such as business administration, business accounting/accounting, economics, business and law, project management, quality management, case studies, business management exercises, personality development and social competence, practice firm, controlling and annual financial statements. Entrepreneurship Education is implemented most strongly in **commercial secondary schools**, where it is anchored in the curriculum of the commercial academy in the cluster Entrepreneurship, Economics and Management. The training focus on entrepreneurship and management is offered at more than one third of the commercial academies. Colleges at commercial academies with entrepreneurship and management offer graduates of other types of schools a post-secondary 4-semester special training.

The TRIO Model

The **TRIO model of entrepreneurship education developed in Austria** comprises three levels:

- **Level I ('Core Entrepreneurship')**: the learning of **core competences** for entrepreneurial and professional independence as well as for an independent private lifestyle takes place. **Business models** for ideas of entrepreneurial, professional and private challenges are developed and implemented.
- **Level II ('Entrepreneurial Culture')**: emphasises the promotion of a **culture of independence, openness to innovation, empathy and sustainability** as well as an encouraging culture of relationships and communication.
- **Level III ('Entrepreneurial Civic Education')**: emphasises the strengthening of a culture of maturity, autonomy and **responsibility for social challenges**.

The Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges Programme

The learning programme, based on the TRIO model, **offers learning with small and large challenges across all grades and subjects** (starting from primary to upper secondary, ages 7-19). It consists of different modules which combinedly make up the programme and aim to empower every child and young person through holistic learning. The Programme was developed as part of a cooperation between the Ministries of Education of Austria, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia, with PEEP, Danish Entrepreneurship Foundation, KPH Vienna/Krems, eesi and ifte.at.

Non-formal and informal learning

Alongside school and the social partners, out-of-school youth work plays a major role in fostering young people's entrepreneurial competences.

WIK:I – What I can do through informal learning (WIK:I - Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen)

WIK:I is a **low-threshold model on making basic and key skills informally obtained** by young people and young adults **visible and recognised**. It's a flagship project of the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and is carried out in cooperation with the Alliance of Austrian Educational Work ([Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke](#)) and the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichischer Jugendinfos](#), BÖJI).

Methods

WIK:I **enables young people to record and present their informally acquired competences**. The focus lies on informal learning among peers, in leisure time, in family, sports, voluntary work, hobbies, jobs and others. Qualified WIK:I portfolio guidance supports young people in **systematically recording their informal learning experiences**. Starting from collecting and describing personally significant activities ('What I do'), young people finally arrive at identifying and describing the competences they have acquired ('What I can do'), always keeping the link to concrete activities in mind ('I can do that because').

The WIK:I procedure is a **guided self-assessment** in which young people align their strengths and resources in a process of being empowered and stimulated to self-reflection. The work is orientation towards dialogue and group processes (peer learning) as well as biographical learning.

Benefits and results

The benefit of creating a portfolio for young people lies in **making them aware of informally acquired competences and in gaining orientation for further education and career planning**, but above all in **empowering them to present** their personal competences (for example in job interviews).

The **WIK:I competence portfolio for young people** is a folder containing the worksheets (including data sheets, checklists, questionnaires, posters) that were created during the workshop and during the participants' own work. It provides participants with a **competence profile** (naming and describing the competences), an **action plan** (indication of next steps, need for resources and support, timetable), and the competence description or **proof of competence** for job applications. The focus of the portfolio is **individually aligned with the respective goal** of its creation. The portfolio can be used as a **supplementary application document**.

Your projects (EureProjekte)

The aim of [EureProjekte](#) is for young people to experience their own effectiveness and to put themselves to the test, with failure allowed. At the same time, young people's innovation and commitment are made visible. Young people aged 14 to 24 with a **project idea can apply for grants of up to € 500** (€ 750 for projects of the annual focus). In addition to this initial funding, they also receive an **individual project consultation** with employees of the youth information centres in the Federal States.

EureProjekte is an initiative of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and is carried out by the [National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres](#).

Junior Enterprise Austria ([JA Austria](#))

Junior Enterprise Austria **offers pupils the opportunity to set up their own real company for the duration of one school year**. Students aged 15 to 19 can thus offer self-developed products and services on the real market. They independently develop their own business idea and go through all the phases of a real business project from brainstorming and team building to planning, setting up a business plan (not obligatory), production, marketing and sales to closing the deal. By working independently, the young people learn about the challenges of the working world, acquire basic economic knowledge and social skills that are important for professional life. **A junior teacher coaches each junior team**. In addition, **business people are available to advise** the pupils as experts, thus guaranteeing the project's realism and practical relevance. Junior teams can register their companies in the Junior Database each year until the end of November. The Junior Company Programme is **carried out as a school event**, often as part of an elective subject. For successfully starting their business, the **teams receive share certificates worth a maximum of € 800**, which they can sell to build up their start-up capital.

The project is inter alia funded by the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), and the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#).

Global Entrepreneurship Week

Austria takes part in the [Global Entrepreneurship Week](#). In Austrian schools, **the whole November stands in the sign of the Global Entrepreneurship Week**. The idea is to give young people the possibility to develop own ideas and to find new ways. Young people and teachers should be inspired to develop the entrepreneurial spirit.

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

EESI Impulse Centre and Competence Compass

In order to further strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) has set up the EESI Impulse Centre ([eesi-impulszentrum](#)), the task of which is to work together with the EESI multipliers of the federal provinces to **promote specialised entrepreneurship education as well as positive attitudes towards entrepreneurial activity among pupils and teachers**.

Certified EE schools are awarded for excelling in the field of entrepreneurship education. It is an ÖNORM certification organised and juried by the EESI team.

Furthermore, a **competence compass** (profile for entrepreneurship teachers) was developed, which is available to schools and teachers and can be used for self-testing and as a control element.

Moreover, the [Youth Start](#) Entrepreneurial Challenges Programme, based on the TRIO model, **offers teaching material and challenges across all grades and subjects**.

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

There is **no specific start-up information program for young people**, who can instead access a large variety of general offers. The **Youth Portal** ([Jugendportal](#)) provides them with a comprehensive list of points of advice and funding opportunities, and is printing a brochure on financial tips and pitfalls.

In 2010, the Austrian government launched the one-stop-shop **Business Service Portal** ([Unternehmensserviceportal](#), USP) which provides information on setting up and running a business in Austria. Furthermore, the **Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs** offers broad information for business start-ups. The Ministry's business start-up service also acts as a link to a number of other institutions offering services to business starters (e.g. **Public Employment Service**, [Junior Chamber Austria](#), the liberal professions, [Austrian Business Agency ABA](#)). Furthermore, the public promotional bank **Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH (aws)** helps with financing and/or funding questions.

Moreover, the **Public Employment Service** ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) **supports unemployed persons who wish to become self-employed** and start up their own business. The potential young entrepreneur may take advantage of **start-up counselling** with a qualified consulting firm and acquire the requisite qualifications (project management, business development, etc.) in **training courses and continuing education measures** paid for by the AMS. In addition, the programme also includes a feasibility check of the business idea and follow-up counselling after the business has been successfully launched. As a rule, the programme extends over a period of six to nine months at the most.

The **Business Start-up Service** ([Gründerservice](#)) of the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ) provides prospective entrepreneurs with a wide range of services and products. In more than 90 information centres located in the provincial Chambers and regional contact points, business founders get **free of charge legal and economic consultations and business start-up coachings**. Furthermore, local chambers organise events as, among others, Business Start-up Days ("Gründertage"), workshops, and lectures. Guidelines for business founders inform on necessary authority-contacts, financing and marketing aspects and give a summary of legal forms and questions of social insurance and tax. Comprehensive business start-up information and service is also made available online, where the [platform Gründerservice](#) provides an entrepreneur-check, information on subsidies, bulletins, checklists, podcasts and information in foreign languages. A minimum turnover calculator helps to calculate the required business volume to cover private costs, fixed costs and estimated operating costs. Within the initiative 'ideas to business', a nationwide i2b business plan competition for innovative product- and service-ideas takes place.

WKÖ's youth organisation, the [Junior Chamber Austria](#), offers **start-up classes**, which provide advice on how to start a business as well as an opportunity to network ([Junge Wirtschaft](#)).

Experts at the new [Austrian Research Promotion Agency \(FFG\)](#) are happy to **advise young technology-sector entrepreneurs** whose business ideas are still in the developing stage.

[INiTS](#) provides advice and **support for graduates, employees and students at universities** and universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) in Vienna who want to start a company to put their business idea into practice.

Access to capital

Major funding initiatives are offered by the **business start-up programme and the business start-up subsidy** ([Unternehmensgründungsprogramm](#) und [Gründungsbeihilfe](#)). The target groups are both **unemployed individuals** and job-seekers who are still employed but will lose their job in the foreseeable future, if they intend to enter self-employment, have a concrete business idea and appropriate qualifications. The **Federal Ministry of Labour** and the **Public Employment Service** ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS) are responsible for the programmes. Approximately 5% of participants are less than 25 years old. AMS has supported more than 4,000 business starters, amounting to 15% of all newly founded businesses. And in doing so it has been successful: 87% of these businesses still existed three years later. In Vienna, AMS has offered its business start-up programme since 1995 and, with a 10 to 15% share in all business start-ups, has become one of the most important funding bodies in the region.

The **New Companies Promotion Act** ([Neugründungs-Förderungsgesetz, NeuFöG](#)) helps business starters and company successors in saving start-up costs. Business starters pay 7% less in non-wage labour costs if they hire staff in their first year of establishment. They also do not have to pay the employer's contribution to the Family Burdens Equalisation Fund (4.5%), the contribution to housing subsidies (0.5%), the second chamber contribution (i.e. the surcharge on the employer's contribution, which varies according to *Land*) and the industrial accident insurance contribution.

In order to further promote self-employment, **microloans** ([Mikrokredite](#)) were established. The Austria-wide offer of the **Federal Ministry of Labour** enables people to step into independence or

enlarge their small enterprise - even without equity and collateral. Required is a plausible, viable and sustainable business idea.

Junior Enterprise Austria (JA Austria) offers **pupils** (ages 15 to 19) the opportunity to **set up their own real company for the duration of one school year**. They independently develop their own business idea and go through all the phases of a real business project from brainstorming and team building to planning, setting up a business plan, production, marketing and sales to closing the deal. A junior teacher coaches each junior team. In addition, business people are available to advise the pupils as experts, thus guaranteeing the project's realism and practical relevance. The Junior Company Programme is carried out as a school event, often as part of an elective subject. For successfully starting their business, the teams **receive share certificates worth a maximum of € 800**, which they can sell to build up their start-up capital. The project is inter alia funded by the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), and the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#).

Further funding options can be found at the [Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH](#), the [Austrian Research Promotion Agency](#), the [Start-up Service of the Economic Chambers](#), and the Austrian tourism bank ([Österreichische Hotel- und Tourismusbank](#)).

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

Global Entrepreneurship Week

Austrian schools take part in the [Global Entrepreneurship Week](#). **Young people and teachers should be inspired to develop the entrepreneurial spirit**. During the Global Entrepreneurship Week, the Entrepreneurship **Summit** ([Summit Wien](#)) takes place, aiming to encourage change makers and people who support others in developing ideas.

Fairs

Fairs related to entrepreneurship **take place on a regional level**, such as the founder fair ([Gründermesse](#)) in Styria and the Youth & profession ([Jugend und Beruf](#)) fair in Upper Austria. They are in many cases co-founded by the Federal Province and the regional Economic Chamber.

Your projects (EureProjekte)

[EureProjekte](#) encourages young people to develop and implement their own project ideas. It makes young people's innovation and commitment visible and fosters their entrepreneurial spirit. Young people aged 14 to 24 with a **project idea can apply for grants of up to € 500** (€ 750 for projects of the annual focus). In addition to this initial funding, they also receive an **individual project consultation** with employees of the youth information centres in the Federal States. EureProjekte is an initiative of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and is carried out by the [National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres](#).

ENSI - Environment and School Initiatives

In terms of **promoting social entrepreneurship**, Austria is part of [ENSI -Environment and School Initiatives](#). ENSI is an international network to support educational developments, environmental understanding, active approaches to teaching and learning, through research and the exchange of experiences internationally since 1986. The Association aims at supporting educational and pedagogical developments that, via research and international exchange of experiences, promote insight into learning for sustainable development, environmental studies, active forms of learning and teaching, as well as education for citizenship.

Networks and partnerships

Junior Chamber Austria ([Junge Wirtschaft Österreich](#), JWÖ) **connects young entrepreneurs** as the association of young entrepreneurs between the age of 18 to 40 years. JWÖ is part of the [Austrian Economic Chambers](#) (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ) and services and lobbying for better regulations for enterprises as well as **national and international networking opportunities** with more than 600 events each year all over Austria. The National Congress with 1 000 participants is the biggest Austrian wide convention for young entrepreneurs and therefore is our flagship project. On the international level, JWÖ is **part of Junior Chamber**

International (JCI). For members, export missions, trips to leading exhibitions and to international conferences for young entrepreneurs are coordinated.

In order to further strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) implemented the **EESI impulse centre** ([EESI-Impulszentrum](#)). Alongside EESI-multipliers in the provinces, it shall foster entrepreneurship training and a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among pupils and teachers.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Taskforce Youth Unemployment and the COVID-19 pandemic

In order to mitigate the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures have brought about for young people on the labour market (as depicted in [Chapter 3.1](#)), the Federal government conducted a survey on 'Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and the youth sector' and **established several measures to support the current situation of young people in regard to the labour market.**

Incentives to employers to hire young people

- Apprenticeship Bonus (March 2021 – October 2021)

A **bonus that ensures companies €2,000 for newly admitted apprentices.** Micro enterprises receive an additional raise of €1,000 and smaller enterprises receive an **additional bonus** of €500. The fundamental criterion here is the date of the apprenticeship contract. More information can be found [online](#).

- Take-over bonus

A **one-off bonus that ensures companies €1,000 for taking on an apprentice from a supra-company apprenticeship.** More information can be found [online](#).

Measures that protect young employees

More recently, corona short-time work was also made available for apprentices in order to preserve apprenticeship positions and to support the companies. In 2020, approximately half of all apprentices (approximately 53,000) were working under short-time work conditions at least temporarily. The seemingly positive effect of short-time work for apprentices is visible when inspecting the stable development of apprenticeship numbers in training companies which is why this concept was extended until the end of March 2021.

Measures to avoid job insecurity and precariousness

To raise the number of apprenticeship positions in supra-company apprenticeships ([Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung ÜBA](#)), the **Training Guarantee was extended, and additional funds were made accessible.** Thus, the **number of apprenticeship positions in supra-company apprenticeships increased** by 3,000 to 14,500 places. This measure targets young people, willing to start an apprenticeship but unable to find an in-company apprenticeship position. More information can be found at the Public Employment Services (PES; [Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS](#)).

Measures regarding information on employment

- *Online apprentice service*

The PES has created an **online apprenticeship service, encompassing all the important information on finding an apprenticeship** for young people and transmitting that to an expert advisor. As a result, personal interviews can be arranged with a preferred appointment.

- *Information line for coaching for apprentices and companies offering apprenticeships*

Established in April 2020, this information line handles the great influx of COVID-19-induced questions concerning apprenticeships.

Adaptations in career guidance and counselling

Expansion of **low-threshold offers**: the low threshold offers - **Youth Coaching, AusbildungsFit** (core-measures) - are being strengthened in 2021.

Interministerial COVID-19 taskforce on youth employment and apprenticeship training

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a joint taskforce on youth employment entitled 'Ensuring apprenticeship training for all young people' ("[Lehrausbildung für alle Jugendlichen sichern](#)") was set up by the [Federal Ministries of Labour](#) (in German), [Digital and Economic Affairs](#) (in German), Education, Science and Research and Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The collaboration aims to **provide young people who have completed compulsory schooling with an in-company, inter-company or school-based training place** in order to close the gap of open places (in June 2020: a demand of 7.673 apprenticeship positions, with vacancies of only 4.962 amounts to a lack of around 2.700 positions for young people) that the pandemic has created. In a first step, **1.000 additional training positions were created**.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

According to [Statistik Austria](#), in 2019 16.9% of the population (1 472 000 people) were considered at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion in terms of the Europe 2020 strategy. 13.3% of the population were considered at-risk-of-poverty, 2.6% of the population were severely materially deprived and 7.8% of those below 60 years of age were living in households with very low work intensity. In pursuance of the Europe 2020 strategy of lifting people out of poverty, the **at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate** dropped from 20.6% in 2008 to 16.9% in 2019 (reduction of 227 000 people). The impacts of the detrimental COVID-19 pandemic and related measures remain to be surveyed and critically assessed.

The **national integration indicators** are intended to ensure that social developments remain in the focus of political decisions over the long term. The national integration indicators have been developed in a dialogue with state and non-state stakeholders within the framework of the Poverty Platform, and are regularly adapted.

In the area of Integration, The Federal Government adopted the **National Action Plan for Integration** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration](#)). The Action Plan is the new foundation of integration policy, combining challenges, principles and objectives in the following key action fields:

- Language and Education
- Work and Employment
- Rule of Law and Values
- Health and Social Issues
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Sports and Recreation
- Living and the regional Dimension of Integration
- Language and Education

In 2008, Austria ratified the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) ([UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention](#)). Alongside the [EU Disability Strategy](#), this accounted for **new standards in dealing with people with disabilities**. In implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Austria has adopted a comprehensive national strategy: the National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020 contained long-term disability policy objectives and measures. According to [Statistik Austria](#), in 2015 2,5% of people ages 15 to 20 (and 19,3% of the total population) were faced with permanent health impairments. The UN CRPD obliges States Parties to ensure that children with disabilities can enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. In this context, the Federal Constitutional Act on the Rights of Children was passed, the Child and Adolescent Health Strategy presented, child rehabilitation was included in the Austrian Structural Health Plan, and a Child Rights Monitoring Board was established. This and further information is accessible the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)).

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

Data on the risk of poverty and social exclusion

According to [Statistik Austria](#), in 2019 16.9% of the population (1 472 000 people) were considered **at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion** in terms of the Europe 2020 strategy. 13.3% of the population were considered at-risk-of-poverty, 2.6% of the population were severely materially deprived and 7.8% of those below the age of 60 were living in households with very low work intensity. Taking the statistical margin into consideration, between 15.6% and 18.2% (i.e. between 1 362 000 and 1 582 000 persons) had to be considered as being at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The **at-risk-of-poverty** rate is calculated on the basis of the equivalised household income, the available household income divided by the number of consumption equivalents in the household (see [Household Income](#)). People are considered to be at-risk-of-poverty if their equivalised household income is below an at-risk-of-poverty threshold of 60% of the national median household income. In 2015, the equivalised income median was €25 729. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold was therefore €15 437 for a single-person household, i.e. approximately €1 286 a month (12 times).

Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources. They can not afford at least four out of the following nine deprivation items: pay rent or utility bills, keep home adequately warm, face unexpected expenses, eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, a week holiday away from home, a car, a washing machine, a TV, or a telephone.

In households with **very low work intensity**, the work intensity in the past year of all working-age household members (18-59 years, except students) was below the threshold of 20% of the theoretically attainable work intensity of the household.

Young people

In 2019, **14.9% of children and youths** under the age of 17 and **14.9% of young adults** between the ages of 18 and 24 were considered **at-risk-of poverty** after inclusion of social transfer payments (compared to 19.5% of people under the age of 17 before inclusion of social transfer payments). In the group of young adults (18 - 24 years) a significantly **higher number of women** was considered at risk of poverty, with 16.7% in comparison to 13.1% of their male contemporaries. According to the EU-SILC 2012 survey, the highest risk of social exclusion by type of household can be found in single-parent households (predominantly single mothers and their children), which accounted for 39%.

Successes of the Europe 2020 Strategy

Within the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Austrian federal government defined the objective of reducing the number of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 235 000 within ten years. In pursuance of the Europe 2020 strategy of lifting people out of poverty, the **at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate** dropped from 20.6% in 2008 to 16.9% in 2019 (reduction of 227 000 people). This result shows that countermeasures have been effective despite the two fiscal consolidation packages in 2011 and 2012. It also means that the developments in Austria have gone against the current trend across the EU.

Challenges in Social Mobility

The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) publishes a Social Policy Study Series. It includes a 2020 [study by the OECD](#) on social mobility, which measures the correlation of life opportunities with the individual's societal starting position in Austria. The authors find that while **'income inequality in Austria is relatively low** compared to many other OECD countries, **social mobility lags behind**. Socio-economic outcomes carry over strongly from one generation to the next: more than elsewhere, fathers' earnings are a strong predictor of the earnings of their prime-age children. This reflects **strong persistence across generations in occupational and educational outcomes, particularly for women and migrants**. Relative income positions also tend to strongly persist over people's lives, in particular at the top and bottom. Meanwhile, the middle-income group is polarising, with **downward risks rising for the lower middle**. Longer-term earnings trajectories (over 15 years) display marked **gender differences**, with women facing weaker chances of moving up and greater risks of sliding down.'

Another [study by the Austrian National Bank](#) on how private wealth is distributed in Austria shows the **increasing importance of wealth over income in recent decades** and conveys how strongly inheritances determine wealth accumulation.

Housing and housing costs in Austria

Alongside food and water, air, and clothing and medical care, housing is a basic human need. National and international experts attest Austria a quantitatively and qualitatively good and relatively efficient housing supply. An Austrian household has to spend 518 euros for a flat in the main rent (incl. operating costs). **On average, Austrian households have to spend 21% of their household income on housing.** While higher-income households, however, only need just under 10% of their disposable income for this, **it is often more than 40% for low-income groups.** The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) has commissioned studies and data on the issue ([Allgemeine Sozialpolitik – Wohnen und Wohnkosten](#)). A study of the Vienna University of Economics and Business shows that tenants have a much higher relative housing cost burden than owners, and that for **young households**, singles and single parents, **housing costs represent a significantly above-average burden.** Subsidising tenants can effectively lower this housing cost burden.

Early school leaving

One of the main challenges is posed by the **integration in the labour market and early school leaving.** The term 'early leavers from education and training' (short: early school leavers, ESL) refers to people between 18 and 24 years of age whose highest qualification is below upper secondary level and who are not participating in education, training or further education. Austria is in an advantaged position in this context, as the proportion of early school leavers has decreased since the mid-1990s to a number significantly below EU average. **In 2018** (according to [Statistik Austria](#)), the proportion of early school leavers amounted to **7.8%** (EU-27: 10.2%). Thus, in Austria around 51 000 young people (31 000 men and 20 000 women) had no further educational qualifications. This comparatively low number has been achieved thanks to different factors such as the system of dual vocational training or the internationally recognised system of supra-company apprenticeships as an important element of the training guarantee for young people up to the age of 18, and measures which contribute towards avoiding the breaking off of training or education.

Social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only the biggest health crisis in more than 100 years, but also acts as a **burning glass of existing socio-economic fault lines in our society** and poses **enormous challenges to the social system.** The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) has therefore commissioned a number of renowned research and university institutions to analyse the social impact of the current crisis in Austria in more detail within the framework of a broad-based study and to identify the need for further political action.

The study ([Analyse der sozialen Lage in Österreich](#)), which was published in October 2020, shows that **a well-developed welfare state together with numerous social policy crisis measures have been able to prevent more drastic effects**, but that numerous challenges will need to be addressed in the near future. The study encompasses a Chapter on children and young people, which shows that **the income conditions of households with children vary to a considerable extent along key socio-demographic characteristics.** They are comparatively less favourable in single-parent households, in households with several adults and at least three children, and further vary across the employment intensity of the household, the main source of income, and citizenship. **Low income is often associated with an increased risk of (child-specific) material deprivation**, i.e. with problems in financing various socially customary expenses. **Welfare state transfers significantly reduce the risk of poverty and exclusion of children and young people in Austria to a considerable extent.** Nevertheless, the labour intensity of the household remains a central constitutive element for material social participation of children and youths. The labour market situation, which has deteriorated substantially in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, is likely to make it even more difficult for affected households to increase their labour intensity. **Considerable differences in social participation are also evident in the education system in Austria**, particularly, among other things, with regard to the criterion of **migration background.** The study presented here on the social implications of the corona-induced home schooling point in the direction of a further social differentiation of opportunities and risks in the field of education, from which, among others, children with a migration background are negatively affected.

In order to obtain comprehensive picture, the Ministry also commissioned a survey on the social situation from the perspective of those affected, which was also published in October 2020 ([Erhebung zur sozialen Lage aus der Sicht von Betroffenen](#)).

Definitions and concepts

There is **no one single national definition and concept** on social inclusion, and correspondingly none for youth in particular. The subject is rather regarded as a broad and complex thematic area, dealt with at different levels and segments.

Social Report and Social Policy Study Series

A [Social Report \(Sozialbericht\)](#) containing detailed information, statistics and surveys on social policy relevant topics is issued every year by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#). The Ministry also publishes a **Social Policy Study Series (Sozialpolitische Studienreihe)**, which analyze social issues such as social mobility.

Austrian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion

Within the framework of the 'Europe 2020 Strategy', the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion was initiated to help the Member States achieve the core goal of freeing 20 million people from poverty and social exclusion. In Austria, the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) has set up a separate platform for this purpose. In addition to the **social partners, the federal and provincial governments as well as civil society actors participate** in the platform. The members of the platform meet twice a year to discuss current issues.

EU-wide survey of income and living conditions

The basis for the calculation of the at-risk-of-poverty rate is the survey on income and living conditions ([EU-SILC](#)). The survey is conducted in all EU Member States. For Austria, the data are collected annually by [Statistics Austria](#) on behalf of the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#).

National poverty indicators

In order to improve the **measurement of poverty in Austria, a set of indicators** (until 2018 under the name 'Inclusion Indicators') was developed by [Statistics Austria](#) on behalf of the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) with the participation of the Austrian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The key figures on living conditions are an important basis for social policy analyses and the identification of fields of action. This set of indicators from the areas of **Standard of living, Housing, Working life, educational opportunities, and health** is intended to complement the EU poverty reporting in Austria. This makes it possible to keep a permanent eye on the poverty situation in Austria.

The current results and a presentation of the **developments between 2008 and 2019** can be found in the publication '[Kennzahlen zu Lebensbedingungen 2019](#)'. In the context of this publication, a first special analysis of EU-SILC 2020 raw data was carried out in order to shed light on the different ways in which people were affected by the Corona crisis.

Simulation: Effects of social policy measures

The **Social Reform Microsimulation (SORESI)** makes it possible to simulate certain reform measures in the areas of monetary social benefits, social contributions as well as income tax. Results are calculated in terms of income distribution, poverty risk and fiscal consequences. You can also choose between three output levels: Household, individual and model household level.

Financing of the social system

The social security system is financed by:

- the **social contributions of employers**
- the **social contributions of protected persons** (employees, pensioners and self-employed persons)
- **diverted social contributions**
- **transfers** from other systems
- **government allocations**, i.e. earmarked or general (tax) resources of the state for financing social protection
- **Other revenues**

Austria's long-term, stable social policy orientation

Due to numerous interrelations, there are **many ways to approach poverty reduction**: education, training, qualification campaigns for less educated workers, health care, and the creation of a framework for high-quality care services for children and adults requiring care. The fact that Austria has managed to remain on the target path in a very difficult economic environment in recent years can mainly be attributed to the country's **long-term, stable social policy orientation and to its numerous social inclusion and poverty reduction initiatives**. This provides a strong fundament to tackle the major challenges the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures pose.

Family allowance and free, quality public education

In order to combat long-term disadvantages for children and youths from households at risk of poverty and the disadvantaged educational opportunities and outcomes that often accompany such situations, Austrian education policy has focused heavily on this target group. From July 2014 onward, the family allowance was raised by 4% (the higher allowance for families with children with substantial disabilities by 8.4%), and increases by 1.9% in 2016 and 2018 have already been established in Austrian law. The **family allowance** ([Familienbeihilfe](#)) is staggered by age: for children from age 10 to 18 a monthly payment of € 141 is disbursed, for young adults from 19 up to 24 in ongoing education (e.g. university studies) it amounts to € 165. Families with more than one child are especially supported with increased payments through sibling adjustments. **High-quality public schools and universities are accessible tuition-free**. Furthermore, study grants ([Studienbeihilfe](#)) are available for students, if neither they nor their parents can cover their living expenses during their course of studies.

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Social inclusion is a **cross-sectoral matter** and therefore approached by a broad variety of measures initiated by several Ministries as well as the Federal Provinces. The **Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection** heads the action on social issues, social security, and the welfare system. As education plays an important role for social inclusion, the **Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research** is also involved in governing measures. For the social inclusion of young people, the **Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery** ([Bundeskanzleramt, Sektion für Familie und Jugend](#)) is another key player.

Competences for the Austrian **social security system are divided between the federal government, the Länder and the municipalities**. Social security and general benefits fall within the remit of the federal government, while the provinces, municipalities and cities are responsible for a large part of health care, housing, social services as well as childcare facilities and 'means-tested minimum benefits'.

Numerous non-governmental parties are involved in social legislation in Austria. They play a central role in the political opinion-shaping process. The discussions of the **social partners** – the **Chamber of Labour**, the Trade Union ([Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund](#), ÖGB), the **Austrian Economic Chambers** ([Wirtschaftskammer Österreich](#), WKÖ), and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture ([Landwirtschaftskammer](#), LKO) – also play an important role in shaping Austrian social policy. Before national social legislative measures are taken, the social partners are consulted. They **seek consensual solutions**, which often provide a good basis for the legal regulations. Not least, the institutions of the **European Union** also provide important impulses for the further development of the social security system. The **Federal Youth Council** ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) alerts to the needs of young people. In representation of youth, it has to be consulted for any law concerning young people. **Private associations** play an important role in providing support in the field.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Austrian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion ([Österreichische Plattform gegen Armut und soziale Ausgrenzung](#))

Within the framework of the 'Europe 2020 Strategy', the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion was initiated to help the Member States achieve the core goal of freeing 20 million people from poverty and social exclusion. In Austria, the **Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection** has set up a separate platform for this purpose. **Representatives**

of the federal and provincial governments and the association of towns and municipalities, the social partners, [Statistik Austria](#), the [Federal Youth Council](#) and the senior citizens' association **as well as actors of civil society** ([poverty conference](#), [BAWO](#), [Caritas](#), etc.) **participate** in the platform. Since 2010, the members of the platform meet twice a year in order to discuss current issues and therefore guarantee a **lasting dialogue** in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The aim of the platform is to provide information on current subjects and developments, to discuss socio-political challenges, to implement the national Europe 2020 strategy, to identify risk of poverty indicators, and to allow an institutionalised exchange with stakeholders. The Poverty Platform thus institutionalizes cross-sectoral cooperation between Ministries and non-governmental stakeholders.

Strategies and Action Plans

Different Strategies and Action Plans have been set up in cross-sectorial cooperation for different matters of social inclusion, e.g. the **National Action Plan for Integration (NAP)**, which pooled policies on integration of the Federal and Provincial Governments, municipalities and cities, and the social partners. It aimed to provide a structured platform for nation-wide cooperation of all involved stakeholders for successful integration measures and their optimized implementation.

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

There is **no strategy on the social inclusion of young people** only. Youth is included in the National Action Plans and the Strategic Social Reporting. There neither is a single strategy on social inclusion, but rather strategies on some sub-areas. The most notable are:

- **Education:** National Strategy on the Prevention of Early Leaving from Education and Training (2012, reformed 2016), Lifelong Learning Strategy (2011), and Education until 18 (2016)
- **Disability:** National Action Plan on Disability (2012)
- **Integration:** National Action Plan for Integration (NAP, 2010)
- **Social Security Reform:** Social Insurance Organisation Act (Sozialversicherungsgesetz, 2018)
- **Welfare:** Principles of Social Assistance Act (Sozialhilfe-Grundsatzgesetz, 2019)

Scope and contents

Education

The **National Strategy on the Prevention of Early Leaving from Education and Training** ([Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen \(Aus-\)Bildungsabbruchs](#), 2012/2016) has been developed by the former Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in cooperation with the former Federal Ministry of Economy, Families and Youth, the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, and the social partners in 2012. It is **part of the Austrian Youth Strategy and the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan**. It encompasses the policy fields of prevention, intervention and compensation, and comprises numerous measures in order to enable young people to successfully complete their education. Furthermore, the [lifelong learning strategy](#) ([Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen](#), 2011), developed in 2011 by the four responsible Ministries (Education, Social Affairs, Economy and Science) under participation of relevant stakeholders aimed to **significantly reduce early leaving from education and training** in accordance with the EU 2020 core goals. The strategy emphasised prevention and target-group-specific interventions (See [Chapter 6.3](#)).

Based on these strategies and the Austrian Youth Guarantee, measures such as **Education until 18** ([AusBildung bis 18, 2016](#)) and **'Fit for training'** ([AusbildungsFit](#)) have been introduced. Education until 18 introduced the obligation to follow an education or training up to the age of 18. It aims to improve the labour market situation (particularly for migrants), prevent and reduce early school leaving and raise the general level of education. As early school leaving is a risk factor for poverty and social exclusion, it aims to close gaps, establish adequate offers for all young people (esp. low-threshold offers) as well as to advance existing offers. Therefore, 'Fit for training' (named production schools until 2020) provides both basic qualification and specialist knowledge in order to **equip students with the skills necessary for their further school education or apprenticeship training**. The one-year programme targets young people between 15 and 21 (in some cases 24), as well as people with special educational needs up to age 24.

Measures to prevent early school leaving and to foster the integration of young people who are already distanced from the system are being taken, reflecting the increased awareness of the problem of NEET young people in Austria. These measures include the avoidance of early school leaving, support and information offers at the interface between school and work (youth coaching), (re-)integration measures and employment programmes. Offers and programmes for NEET young people have to take the heterogeneity of this group into account, and the wide range of needs of this target group have to be covered by means of **individual approaches**. Relationship work with these young people and long-lasting reference persons are important factors for success. For this to succeed, the personnel providing support and advice need to be suitably qualified and fit naturally into their roles. For a part of these young people, alternative forms of learning, particularly in combination with practical activities, can represent an attractive way of remaining in the education/training system or returning to it. One-stop shop solutions, where young people not only receive advice and support with regard to employment and education/training opportunities, but are advised in a holistic way, are also viewed as meaningful. In order to also reach those NEET young people who have already been in a NEET situation for a longer period, are losing touch with society and have no trust in traditional institutions, it is recommended that they are actively approached by youth and social workers. **Keeping young people in the education/training system for longer and at the same time reaching those young people who have turned away from the existing education and labour market systems** are important goals of labour market policy for young people in Austria in order to significantly and sustainably improve their opportunities in the labour market. With preventive offers against early school leaving on the one hand and diverse, low-threshold programmes for young people who are not ready to begin an apprenticeship on the other, the intention is to lead more young people towards sound vocational training (whether it is in a company or a state-run training workshop).

Disability

According to [Statistik Austria](#), in 2015 2,5% of people ages 15 to 20 (and 19,3% of the total population) were faced with permanent health impairments. In 2008, Austria ratified the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention\)](#). Alongside the [EU Disability Strategy](#), this accounted for **new standards in dealing with people with disabilities**. In implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Austria has adopted a comprehensive national strategy: the **National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020 (Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung, 2012)** contained long-term disability policy objectives and measures. The UN CRPD obliges States Parties to ensure that children with disabilities can enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. In this context, the Federal Constitutional Act on the Rights of Children was passed, the Child and Adolescent Health Strategy presented, child rehabilitation was included in the Austrian Structural Health Plan, and a Child Rights Monitoring Board was established. The NAP Disability, which expired in 2020, is to be scientifically evaluated and continued for the period from 2021 to 2030. This and further information is accessible at the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection \(Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz\)](#). The NAP on Disability was formulated by the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with all federal ministries and as the result of a participatory process with civil society - first and foremost with the organisations of persons with disabilities - and the social partners.

Integration

In January 2010, the Austrian Federal Government adopted the **National Action Plan for Integration (Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration, NAP)**. Within this NAP, several Ministries describe their individual measures and time frames. The Action Plan is the foundation of integration policy, combining challenges, principles and objectives in the following **key action fields**:

- Language and Education
- Work and Employment
- Rule of Law and Values
- Health and Social Issues
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Sports and Recreation
- Living and the regional Dimension of Integration
- Language and Education

The objective is to integrate persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection quickly and to enable them to make a living as soon as possible. In this context, acquisition of German language

skills, joining the labour market and communication of the Austrian value system play a key role. Values Courses for refugees and the brochure co-existence are provided. Additionally, a [training document](#) for the values and orientation course has been developed and is available [in several languages](#) on a website of the [Austrian Integration Forum \(Österreichischer Integrationsfonds\)](#).

Social Security Reform and Welfare

Social security is understood to mean protection against various life risks or life situations such as illness, accident, disability and old age, as well as the associated consequences. Social insurance is the most important institution in the field of social policy, both in terms of the number of people protected and the amount of money spent. In Austria, social insurance in a narrower sense consists of statutory pension insurance, statutory health insurance and statutory accident insurance. The **Social Insurance Organisation Act** (2019) reorganised the social insurance institutions, i.e. the institutions that are charged with implementing the social insurance laws.

In 2010, an agreement was concluded between the federal government and the Länder in order to achieve **greater harmonisation of the social assistance systems of the Laender**. This agreement established uniform nationwide standards in core areas of social assistance, which were largely taken into account by the Laender when drafting their minimum income security laws (e.g. benefit floors, standards for asset realisation, recourse, etc). In 2019, a basic federal law pursuant to Art 12 of the Federal Constitution (**Principles of Social Assistance Act**) was created, accompanied by the introduction of a **Social Assistance Statistics Act** and the adaptation of the Integration Act to the amendments of the Basic Social Assistance Act. The essence of a basic law is that it is to be both elaborated in more and enforced by the Länder. In addition to a binding framework that the Länder must adhere to when implementing this Basic Law, the Basic Law also recognises a number of so-called 'optional provisions' that give the Länder a great deal of leeway in shaping their new laws.

Responsible authority

The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) is primarily responsible for measures regarding social inclusion. The [Federal Ministry of Finance](#) is responsible for the budget.

The Strategies have been developed in cross-sectoral cooperation under the lead of the respectively competent Ministry. This includes the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) (Education), the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) (Disability, Social Security and Welfare), and the [Federal Chancellery](#) (Integration).

Evaluation processes exist for the National Action Plans (see respective links above).

Revisions/Updates

The National **Strategy on the Prevention of Early Leaving from Education and Training** ([Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen \(Aus-\)Bildungsabbruchs](#)), adopted in 2012, has been revised in 2016. Furthermore, in 2016 the measure 'Education until 18' has been adopted.

The **NAP Disability 2012-2020** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung](#)) expired in 2020. The implementation of the NAP was continuously assessed by a monitoring group, which showed that by 2015 more than half of the 250 measures had already been implemented. The NAP on Disability is to be scientifically evaluated and continued, after its renewal in a broad participatory process, for the period from 2021 to 2030. In this way, Austria aims to consolidate the human rights for persons with disabilities guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

For the **National Action Plan for Integration** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration, NAP](#)), optimisation proposals have been continuously made across the entire cross-sectional area since its adoption in 2010.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes for vulnerable young people

Most actions fighting social exclusion are taken in the **fields of education, employment and extracurricular youth work**. The main aims generally include protection against discrimination and general accessibility for all handicapped people.

Mother-Child Pass Scheme (Mutter-Kind Pass)

Measures for vulnerable young people initiate before birth, with check-ups in the Mother-Child Pass scheme for pregnant women, babies and young children. Through them, conditions shall be recognized as early as possible in order to foster early support and therapy. The mother-child pass was already in 1974. Since then, the programme has been continuously developed and adapted to the state of medical science and experience. Once a pregnancy has been established, every pregnant woman resident in Austria receives a mother-child pass from her supervising doctor. The passport is used for **preventive health care for pregnant women and infants up to the age of five**. The examinations provided for in the mother-child pass programme are an opportunity for early detection and timely treatment of diseases as well as for checking the child's developmental status.

Free and compulsory kindergarten year (beitragsfreier Pflichtkindergarten)

Austria introduced a free and compulsory year of kindergarten attendance **for children at age five**. Educational work in elementary educational institutions contributes significantly to psychological, cognitive and social development as well as to the achievement of school readiness and **therefore forms the basis for a successful educational career**. In order to remove economic barriers to kindergarten attendance at pre-school age and to give all children the opportunity to participate, an agreement between the federal government and the Länder stipulates that half-day kindergarten attendance (20 hours per week without lunch) is free of charge in the last year before school entry. In return, the federal government contributes 70 million euros per kindergarten year to the resulting additional costs for the Länder and municipalities.

Family allowance and free, quality public education

In order to combat long-term disadvantages for children and youths from households at risk of poverty and the disadvantaged educational opportunities and outcomes that often accompany such situations, Austrian education policy has focused heavily on this target group. The **family allowance** ([Familienbeihilfe](#)) has been raised in recent years. It is staggered by age: for children from age 10 to 18 a monthly payment of € 141 is disbursed, for young adults from 19 up to 24 in ongoing education (e.g. university studies) it amounts to € 165. Families with more than one child are especially supported with increased payments through sibling adjustments. **High-quality public schools and universities are accessible tuition-free**. Furthermore, **study grants** ([Studienbeihilfe](#)) are available for students, if neither they nor their parents can cover their living expenses during their course of studies.

Inclusive schooling (Integrative schulische Ausbildung)

Projects for more inclusive kindergartens and schools have been launched. Inclusive schooling means teaching disabled and non-disabled children together and should already start in kindergarten. In schools, integrated classes exist already by law since the 1990s. In an integrative class, **a reduced number of both disabled and non-disabled pupils are usually taught together in a two-teacher system** (a specialist teacher and a specially trained pedagogue). The children are provided with a common basic and balanced education in social, emotional, intellectual and physical aspects. For children who cannot follow the lessons due to a physical or mental disability, special educational forms of care are offered.

German support classes and courses (Deutschförderklassen und Deutschförderkurse)

Since 2018/19, pupils who are unable to follow lessons due to insufficient language skills are taught in own German support classes or in German support courses parallel to lessons in order to ensure equal opportunities and better integration into the class group. The aim of the German support model for exceptional pupils is the early and intensive learning of the language of instruction German, so that these pupils can be taught together in class as soon as possible according to the curriculum of the respective type of school and school level.

The allocation to a German language support class or to a German language support course is based on a standardised test procedure that is uniform throughout Austria (Measuring Instrument for Competence Analysis - German). The German support class and the German support course **are usually designed for one semester and can be attended for a maximum of four semesters**. Afterwards, the student must be transferred to regular status.

The model has been under discussion regarding its advantages and disadvantages in comparison to an early inclusive teaching of German and non-German speaking children in the same class.

Education until 18 (AusBildung bis 18)

In 2016, the **obligation to follow an education or training up to the age of 18** was introduced. It aims to improve the labour market situation (particularly for migrants), prevent and reduce early school leaving and raise the general level of education. As early school leaving is a risk factor for poverty and social exclusion, it aims to close gaps, establish adequate offers for all young people (esp. low-threshold offers) as well as to advance existing offers.

Job Coaching

Job coaching aims to **support young people (ages 14 to 24) with support needs in the workplace throughout their apprenticeship or traineeship** in the primary labour market. Youths with a current or prospective employment or training relationship or work training receive help in handling difficulties at work and with colleagues, and in learning new steps in their work in order to secure their job. Job coaching is available to all companies that employ people with learning difficulties and disabilities or with mental illnesses, as well as to all work assistance projects and vocational integration facilities in the Vienna area.

'Fit for training' (AusbildungsFit)

'Fit for training' (named production schools until 2020) provides both basic qualification and specialist knowledge in order to **equip students with the skills necessary for their further school education or apprenticeship training**. The one-year programme is an offer that follows on youth coaching. It is designed as a post-maturation project. Young people who lack social competences and cultural techniques should be given the opportunity to acquire basic qualifications and social skills they have missed. AusbildungsFit is offered throughout Austria. The aim is to enable young people to obtain higher qualifications by (re)entering the training sector and thus to participate in the Austrian labour market in the medium term. The offer is available for young people up to the age of 21 or 24, with disabilities or special educational needs, learning disabilities, social or emotional impairments, who want to undergo vocational training, and whose career aspirations seem clear and feasible.

Programmes to foster the occupational participation of people with disabilities (Berufliche Teilhabe von Menschen mit Behinderung)

Occupational participation is one of the central elements for the overall participation of people with disabilities in an inclusive society. The **Nationwide Labour Market Policy Programme for the Disabled** ([Bundesweites arbeitsmarktpolitisches Behindertenprogramm- BABE - ÖSTERREICH 2014-2017- BEHINDERUNG - AUSBILDUNG - BESCHÄFTIGUNG](#)) was adopted in 2013. BABE aligned the long-term Austrian strategy to implement the UN Disability Rights Convention embodied in the National Action Plan Disability ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung](#)) with **labour market policy measures for people with disabilities required for the implementation of the Act on the Employment of Disabled Persons** ([Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz](#)).

With the **inclusion package** ([Inklusionspaket](#)), passed in 2017, the **strengthening of professional participation** and the further development and continuation of existing offers for people with disabilities were maintained as key instruments of disability policy. Particular attention is paid to the sustainability and accuracy of the measures, which shall support both companies the individual directly. For example, **employers can receive support services from the Social Ministry Service when taking on beneficiaries with disabilities**. According to the Act on the Employment of Disabled Persons, all enterprises employing 25 or more persons within Austria are obliged to employ one beneficiary disabled person for every 25 employees. If the employment obligation is not met in full, the company has to pay a compensatory tax per open compulsory position and month. In addition to the employment obligation, the Act also provides for increased protection against dismissal for persons with disabilities. The Social Ministry Service has been offering a **wide range of funding instruments** for years, including various project and individual funding or a combination of both, in order to support professional participation. Qualification projects ([Qualifizierungsprojekte](#)) offer people with disabilities targeted qualification measures to increase their chances of participating in the labour market.

Vocational training assistance (Berufsausbildungsassistenz) and Work assistance (Arbeitsassistenz)

The vocational training assistance supports young people with disabilities and other placement barriers in the context of vocational training in the form of an extended apprenticeship or partial qualification. Young people are **accompanied throughout their training, both in the company**

and at school, and thus training paths are sustainably secured. Similarly, work assistance supports people with disabilities in obtaining and securing jobs. **Companies that want to employ people with disabilities receive support from the employment assistance service** with questions about the legal framework, information about support services and assistance with problems in the company.

Right to an inclusive apprenticeship

Many young people with disabilities and performance problems do not complete their apprenticeship education. Austria introduced accommodations to help young people to successfully conclude their vocational education and training and to receive a qualification. **Special, extended vocational training is offered to disadvantaged young people** ([Lehrverhältnis mit verlängerter Lehrzeit oder Ausbildung mit Teilqualifizierung](#)). The Austrian Vocational Training Act ([Berufsausbildungsgesetz](#)) of 1969 was amended in 2003. In order to make the vocational training system more accessible to young people, including those with disabilities, and to considerably enhance their labour market integration, the possibility of undertaking a prolonged or partial qualification was introduced. The **Austrian inclusive apprenticeship model** is based foremost on company-based vocational training, which is legally indicated to be preferred. The responsible authority is the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#).

The Austrian Integration Fund (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, ÖIF)

The Austrian Integration Fund aims at **supporting language, professional and social integration of (young) asylum beneficiaries and (young) migrants** on the basis of their respective rights and obligations. At the same time, ÖIF provides information on the topic to the general population, since successful integration requires a common efforts.

Habibi – the House of Education and Professional Integration is the central site of ÖIF for measures in the areas language, education and employment. It offers **German language classes** (from literacy to B1 level), **job-specific courses** (computer training, job search training, job-specific German language classes), **job centre work** (labour market counselling, support with educational issues), child care groups, and services for businesses.

The Integration Centres of ÖIF throughout the country **counsel immigrants, organise workshops, networking with key players** on all levels of responsibility, implement projects (e.g. mentoring), and provide information on integration and migration.

Individual Support Services shall facilitate the integration process. ÖIF offers starting aid for integration in the form of **financial support in the areas language, education and employment**. This includes financing German language classes (literacy, various levels), supporting professional training and further education (e.g. forklift driving licence, Liese-Prokop-scholarship) or sponsoring school activities (tutoring, etc.). Target groups are recognised refugees, people granted subsidiary protection and third country citizens with specific residence permits.

[www.sprachportal.at](#) offers comprehensive services regarding **German language skills. Online exercises** provide good training opportunities supplementing conventional German language classes. The **language hotline** of ÖIF provides personal information about German language classes and support schemes offered by ÖIF.

[www.berufsanerkennung.at](#) presents **quick and simple guidance to the right contact point for migrants, who would like to have their professional education recognised** in Austria, and offers comprehensive information on the subject employment and further education.

TOGETHER:AUSTRIA, managed by the ÖIF since 2012, **asks successful migrants ('integration ambassadors')** to pay visits to schools, clubs and associations. Under the motto 'Your Chance!' young people with migration background are to be motivated to recognise education as an opportunity, and to make use of the many career options available.

Incluso

Austria participated in the collaborative project between seven European partners in its 7th Framework programme of research, funded by the European Union. Incluso provided verifiable proof that **social software tools (ICT) can facilitate social inclusion of marginalized young people**. It showcased potential for future research and development. Already in 2008, youth centres in Vienna started to use 'Netlog', a social networking platform (terminated in 2015) to stay in contact with their youngsters. By 2009, 20 out of 28 centres had their own Netlog accounts.

Since 2010, all centres collected quantitative data on their social networking, including the number of chats per month and the number of (re)comments per months.

Youth Work

Social inclusion is one of the most important topics of youth work and supported by both the Austrian Youth Council and the umbrella organization for open youth work and therefore being discussed in [Chapter 4.7](#) as well as [Chapter 10](#).

Funding

As social inclusion in Austria is a cross-sectoral matter and part of many initiatives (e.g. labour market initiatives), **no budget allocated to inclusive programmes for young people only** could be identified. According to [Statistik Austria](#), in 2019 around 9% of the total expenditure on social benefits in Austria was spent on families/children.

In 2021, a budget of around € 103 million is foreseen for integration ([Integrationsbudget 2021](#)). The funds will mainly go into the expansion of compulsory integration measures for refugees. Priorities include the expansion of compulsory value and orientation courses, promotion of voluntary work, integration of women, parenting courses, and measures against radical political Islam and parallel societies.

EU-funds

With an **ESF budget of around 442 million euros**, social projects in specific thematic areas were funded in Austria **during the 2014-2020 funding period** under the principles of partnership, equality policy, non-discrimination and sustainable development. The ESF contributes to the creation of jobs. It helps people attain educational and training qualifications and to reduce disadvantages on the labour market.

Quality assurance

Depending on the initiative/programme, **different QA measures** apply. As different authorities are responsible for various programmes, the respective authority is responsible for QA. In implementation of the [Youth Check](#), legal initiatives undergo a compulsory check for their impact on young people.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

Intercultural education (Interkulturelle Bildung)

Intercultural learning has been **anchored as a teaching principle in the curricula of all general educational schools** (Allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen) **since 1992**. The social, cultural and linguistic diversity in our globalised society leads to an increasing heterogeneity of life plans and family realities, which is reflected in our classrooms. Intercultural education **enables both teachers and students to respectfully deal with diversity in a multicultural society**. It directs the view to both historical and current processes of social change, such as migration movements from the global south to Europe, migration processes in rural regions and population increase in urban areas, diverse biographies and life plans, and intergenerational and social aspects. At the same time, it responds appropriately to the challenges and opportunities that arise in the school system.

The **Framework Decree on Intercultural Education** ([Grundsatzpapier Interkulturelle Bildung, 2017](#)) issued by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), developed in 2017 together with experts from various disciplines, **describes the content and implementation of the teaching principle** of intercultural learning. It helps to ensure that learning together can succeed in an appreciative and respectful atmosphere in everyday school life.

Intercultural education **empowers students to**

- perceive diverse lifestyles and biographies as a social and school normality and to deal respectfully with different ways of life (**developing tolerance and empathy**)
- **recognise that one's own biography shapes one's experience**, thinking and acting (awareness of the conditionality of one's own ways of seeing and acting)

- **analyse one's own (life) history** and to recognise both how it came about and how it can be changed
- perceive and **analyse social, cultural, linguistic and other similarities and differences** and to recognise their significance
- **trace changing affiliations and multiple identities** in one's own and other biographies
- **adopt a critical and appreciative basic attitude** - as a basis for civil courage and a constructive culture of conflict without cultural attributions
- develop a **calm approach to heterogeneity** (practice in the handling of stereotypes and (foreign) attributions)
- recognise and question exclusionary, racist and sexist statements and behaviour and to take a stand against them, and to recognise how power is exercised and domination legitimised through cultural attributions
- look at social developments in a society shaped by migration and individualisation from different perspectives, to form opinions and to present points of view
- apply intercultural competences in all subject areas as well as in everyday life in and out of school

Ressources (Schule Mehrsprachig: Ressourcen)

The **thematic online platform of the Federal Centre for Interculturality, Migration and Multilingualism** ([NCoC Bildung im Kontext von Migration und Mehrsprachigkeit, BIMM](#)) offers educators and everyone interested **multimedia information and know-how on intercultural education** and other topics. Topic packages include 'Intercultural Learning' and 'Othering'.

The **conference on interculturality and multilingualism in school practice** is aimed at educators of all subjects. The 18th **conference on interculturality and multilingualism in school practice** in 2019 was held on the topic of 'Culturally Reflective Learning'.

Regional initiatives for schools (Schule Mehrsprachig: Regionale Initiativen)

Since the end of 2017, the Private University College of Teacher Education Linz (Upper Austria) has been offering **advice and workshops at local schools** with the initiative '[Gelingendes Zusammenleben – GeZu](#)'. The work on intercultural attitudes and the development of methodological and action competences at the school location is supported with various offers that can be chosen depending on the occasion and include, among others, counselling, in-school teacher training, and information.

In Styria, there are concrete support offers for schools in the form of the **Mobile Support Teams (MUT)** of the Province. **Teachers receive support and advice on intercultural issues or further training** in workshops.

Dialogue of Cultures and Religions

Contributing to global trust-building and **peaceful co-existence through intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives** marks one of the central goals of Austrian foreign cultural policy. This objective is further underlined in the Strategy Report of the Federal Government 2013-2016 ([Strategiebericht zum Bundesfinanzrahmengesetz 2013 - 2016](#)), which defines the necessity for intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a major challenge for the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and the Austrian Embassies.

The **Task Force 'Dialogue of Cultures'** aims to foster understanding. **Strengthening pluralism within society and eliminating stereotypes and prejudices** – in Austria, Europe as well as in the Muslim world - also play an important role in this context. Therefore, dialogue must be open to different views and be challenging in order to explain its complexity and enable a differentiated perception. It is indispensable to refer to the universal application of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These priorities are implemented through a combination of internal and external projects.

The main aspects of the preparation and implementation of dialogue initiatives may be summarised as follows:

- The **inclusion of interest groups**, i.e. the civil society, people coming from non-urban areas and participants that have usually not been taken into consideration for dialogue projects
- **Tackling concrete social and political challenges** in a solution orientated and practical way and promoting co-operation with civil society activists, including the media.
- **Dialogue as an important aspect of social, regional and global conflict prevention**, conflict management and peacebuilding also includes aspects of development co-operation.

- **Strengthening the role and participation of women in society and the integration of young generations** (multipliers)
- **Co-operation with key partners** on a national and international level in order to strengthen and expand existing networks.

The „**Intercultural Achievement Award**“ (IAA) is a key project of intercultural dialogue. The award **honours successful, innovative projects in the field of intercultural dialogue, both in Austria and on a global scale**. The award is open to all those who identify and make use of opportunities within intercultural communal life. It is also designed for those who have successfully explored new avenues within the intercultural dialogue, who have mastered a specific challenge through intercultural actions, and who have promoted the dialogue of cultures and religions through their media presence.'

Young people's rights

In November 2004, the Council of Ministers of the Federal Government approved the **National Action Plan on the Rights of Children and Young People** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan für die Rechte von Kindern und Jugendlichen](#)), which was initiated following the ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**. In 2011, the **Federal Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children** ([Bundesverfassungsgesetz über die Rechte von Kindern](#)) was passed. It elevated central provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to constitutional status.

The **central challenge** in the area of children's rights (as well as with human rights in general) is the **actual realisation of these rights**. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind. Children's rights are human rights applicable worldwide to all young people up to the age of eighteen. Children are not dependent on the goodwill of adults. Rather, they have a **right to receive appropriate care, assistance and protection and participate in community life**. Children are competent personalities and have their own rights, which they may assert themselves.

Austrian State Reports

On a regular basis, **Austria submits state reports to the international human rights monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations and the Council of Europe on the measures taken** to fulfil its obligations derived from the ratification of international human rights conventions and treaties. Austria cooperates with all monitoring mechanisms, whose recommendations constitute an important basis for Austria's continuing efforts to improve its own system of human rights protection.

The Austrian state reports are coordinated within a special coordinating body, the group of **human rights co-ordinators of all Austrian Federal Ministries as well as from the nine federal regions**. For each state report, one Ministry is the main responsible authority and leads the process. Upon the recommendation of the monitoring mechanisms, **Austria increasingly applies a shortened reporting procedure** in which the respective monitoring mechanisms transmit a list of issues to Austria prior to the submission of the Austrian report.

Ombudsman for children and young people and Federal Children and Youth Advocacy

In 1995, ombudsman offices for children and young people ([Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaften](#)) were established **in all nine federal provinces** as central, **politically independent institutions reviewing and enforcing compliance** with the rights of children and young people based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act ([Bundes-Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz 2013](#)) also provides that each federal province must establish an ombudsman office for children and young people. The [ombudsman offices for children and young people](#) are contact points for all problems of children and young people. Their **tasks include raising awareness and lobbying for children's rights, information, networking and advice** in case of problems between parents and children. The **Federal Children and Youth Advocacy** ([Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft des Bundes](#)) has been established as a department of the Section for Families and Youth in the Federal Chancellery. Its central tasks include the cooperation with the ombudsman offices for children and young people in the provinces, **the public representation of the principle of non-violent education, public lobbying for a child-friendly society, as well as counselling of children and young people** and their parents or legal guardians.

Children's rights Website and Brochure (www.kinderrechte.gv.at)

The Website by the Federal Ministry of Youth provides **information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child**, its implementation in Austria, the monitoring of children's rights, and the

Children and Youth Ombudsman's Office. The former Ministry for youth has also published a brochure on children's rights ([Broschüre – Die Rechte von Kindern und Jugendlichen](#)).

Children's Rights Network

The Children's Rights Network Austria - National Coalition (NC) ([Netzwerk Kinderrechte](#))– is an **independent network of 44 children's rights organisations and child institutions** for the support of the implementation of the UN children's rights convention in Austria. It takes a stand for the rights of all children and young people without discrimination. The network was founded in 1997 to provide the 'complementary report ([ergänzender Bericht](#))' parallel to the state report of the Federal Government within the scope of the monitoring process of the UN-children's rights committee.

Youth information campaigns (Jugendportal)

The Austrian Youth Information Centres as well as their umbrella organization, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth information centres, **provide young people with reviewed information on their rights**. Their **Website** ([Jugendportal](#)) features a thematic focus named 'Know your right!' (Kenn' dein Recht!), which is specifically edited to inform young people on their general and youth-specific rights. It thus provides them with an information platform for the most important questions that concern young people in particular. The answers are explained briefly and simply, and additional useful links and contact persons are provided. The online platform also provides children and young people with a [link collection](#) on their rights. The information is also disseminated through regional Youth information centers, such as [wienXtra](#) in Vienna. Furthermore, information on all matters regarding young people's rights is accessible at the government platform [österreich.gv.at](#).

Democracy workspace by the Federal Parliament (DemokratieWEBstatt)

The Federal Parliament provides an **online information point**, as part of its project on political education, on children's rights that offers a thematic overview and **worksheets** on the subject.

Federal Youth Council (Bundesjugendvertretung): campaigns and media guide

In 2005, the [Federal Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#), BJV) launched a **children's rights campaign entitled 'Children need respect'** (Kinder brauchen Respekt). It intensified its commitment in 2009, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the CRC, with the campaign **'ALL children's rights into the constitution!'** ('ALLE Kinderrechte in die Verfassung'). Since 2013, the BJV has also been a **member of the steering committee of the children's rights monitoring process**, the Children's Rights Board.

In the course of its campaign 'Poverty is not a child's play' („Armut ist kein Kinderspiel“), the [Federal Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) prepared the **media guide 'Children's Rights in Reporting'** ([Medienleitfaden „Kinderrechte in der Berichterstattung“](#)). The guide is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and contains the voices of experts and journalists as well as the results of a media study by the Ombudsman Board on socially disadvantaged children and young people.

Private youth work initiatives

Both the association 'Children's Friends' ([Kinderfreunde](#)) and the young catholic church ([Katholische Jungschar](#)) have started children's rights initiatives. The Children's Friends offer, among other things, **educational materials, a children's rights party set and training for multipliers** on the topic of children's rights. The young catholic church runs a **Austria-wide children's rights campaign every autumn**, in order to inform children, young people, but also parents and adults about children's rights. Activities include building blocks for group lessons, media work, campaigns, and exhibitions.

Cities of human rights

The Austrian cities of [Graz](#) (2001) and [Vienna](#) (2014) have become Cities of Human Rights. As such they are committed to human rights and guarantee a high standard of human rights. In the long term, they aim to **ensures respect for human rights, recognise needs for action and provide an international role model**. Moreover, the city of [Salzburg](#) has signed the European Charter of Human Rights to become Austria's third City of Human Rights. In 2020, Graz became home to the worldwide second **UNESCO Center for the Promotion of Human Rights in Communities and Regions** at the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. Its work focuses on regional and local human rights work, particularly human rights education. Regional focuses are the education for Roma children in South Eastern Europe, human

rights training for cities in Africa in cooperation with the African Academy of Administration, and a toolkit for 'Inclusive Cities' in the Arab world.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

Civic Education in schools (Politische Bildung)

In Austrian schools, civic education is anchored in various ways. It is a **teaching principle for all school types and levels** as well as an **independent or combined subject** in school forms of secondary level 1 or 2. Moreover, **school democracy** should make its contribution to civic education. The basic principles, objectives and implementation of civic education in schools are set out in the **Basic Decree for the Teaching Principle of Civic Education**. In addition to Austrian standards, the decree also refers to the **Council of Europe Charter on Civic Education and Human Rights Education**.

The Austrian Competence Model for Civic Education aims to **build up (self-)reflective political awareness throughout school learning** by means of exemplary approaches to problematic cases of politics. The life and experience world of the pupils is taken into account. Political education deals with **contemporary political issues**, their historical contexts and the **possibilities of influencing decisions**. In a time characterised by increasing complexity in all areas of life (e.g. globalisation, media democracy, non-national or multiple identities of citizens, changed socialisation of children and young people, unequal distribution of power and resources between genders and generations), civic education provides an active contribution to the shaping of society as well as to the realisation and further development of democracy and human rights.

Historical competences

Political competences are closely related to historical competences, which aim at examining judgements with regard to their historical context of origin and the **ability to recognise, analyse and reflect on one's own convictions in their historical conditionality**. In this context, the project 'Memory and the Present' (Gedächtnis und Gegenwart' on erinnern.at) of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) for **dealing with National Socialism and the Holocaust** provides a comprehensive and methodological offer that promotes the transfer of historical knowledge and reflection on its significance for the present.

European Union education

Dealing with the European Union as well as with pan-European issues and topics is part of political education and, like the global dimension, contributes to a comprehensive view of the world. The **network 'Europe in Schools' ([EUropa in der Schule](#)) supports teachers in the task of promoting awareness and responsibility for European and global interrelationships**. Its offers include a guide. The Network is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the Representation of the European Commission, the Liaison Office of the European Parliament in Austria and is managed by [Zentrum polis](#).

Extremism prevention (Schulpsychologie: Jugend und Extremismen)

In a pluralistic society, it is important to **promote a responsible, critical, open-minded and tolerant attitude in schools**. Pupils who come into contact with destructive ideologies and attitudes such as right-wing extremism, Islamism or anti-Semitism represent a major challenge for many teachers. **All extremist tendencies are resolutely countered** through long-term educational prevention work. In the case of a temporary readiness of pupils to follow destructive ideologies, a **well-coordinated approach by teachers, school management, school psychologists and other experts** is needed.

Apart from the Extremism Counselling Centre (depicted separately below), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) provides a number of offers and materials. This includes the **National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence in Schools ([Nationale Strategie zur Gewaltprävention an Schulen](#))**, a guide to improve the culture of relationships between all persons in the school community ([Guide Vereinbarungskultur an Schulen](#)), a **dossier on extremism with links and materials for teachers ([Zentrum Polis – Extremismus](#))**, a multilingual folder 'Islam must not be misused for war and terror' ("Islam darf nicht für Krieg und Terror missbraucht werden") in cooperation with the Islamic Faith Community, materials on the topics of interculturality and multilingualism ([Schule Mehrsprachig](#)), and the **Austrian Strategy for the Prevention of Extremism and Deradicalisation ([Österreichische Strategie Extremismusprävention und Deradikalisierung, 2018](#))**.

Action Days on Civic Education (Aktionstage Politische Bildung)

The **Austria-wide campaign** of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is coordinated by [Zentrum polis](#). It takes place **annually** between 23 April (World Book Day) and 9 May (EUrope Day). **New materials are presented** throughout the event, e.g. on women's rights, public health, young people's participation, language rights, and freedom rights. Further materials include **studies, videos, podcasts, padlets, workshops, and games**.

Politics Encyclopaedia for Young People (Politiklexikon für Junge Leute)

A reference book for pupils with **reliable initial information on political terms and topics**. The encyclopaedia is primarily aimed at young people aged 12 and over. It is also a helpful tool for those who support children and young people in learning politics. The contents are not dictated by a curriculum as is the case with school books, but cover the entire world of politics. The encyclopaedia was commissioned by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

News for Political Education (Nachrichten für Politische Bildung)

In loose succession, **news for practice are presented** by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) on its Website. They inform on new materials and events for civil education.

Extremism Counselling Centre at boJA (Beratungsstelle Extremismus von boJA)

The Centre is the first point of contact for anyone fearing a young person – whether child, friend, pupil or other – might have joined a radical religious group or an extremist political group, or might sympathise with extremist right-wing or radical Islamist ideas. The centre is free of charge and calls are handled anonymous and confidential. The Centre also offers support in building regional counselling and network structures.

The Centre **provides comprehensive counselling services for family, friends and teachers and training** for communicators on the following key points:

- **Diversity** – handling differences in a constructive manner
- **Religiously motivated extremism** such as Islamism, Salafism, Jihadism – ideologies, terminology, symbols, groups
- **Politically motivated extremism** such as right-wing extremism and National Socialism
- **Racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Islamism**

National Committee 'No Hate Speech'

The No Hate Speech Movement was launched in 2013 on the **initiative of the Council of Europe**. Since then, activists in over 40 countries have been campaigning against hate speech on the internet and for respectful coexistence. The national committee aims to **sensitise people to hate-speech online**. It thematises the cause and context in order to counteract the acceptance of Hate Speech and thus fights racism, sexism and discrimination on the internet. The No Hate Speech Committee has **formulated recommendations to the federal and provincial governments**.

With the support of the former Federal Ministry for Families and Youth the **handbook [Bookmarks – Combating hate speech online through human rights education](#) ([Bookmarks – Bekämpfung von Hate Speech im Internet durch Menschenrechtsbildung](#))** has been translated into German.

Zentrum polis - Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools

The Centre is the central education service institution for citizenship education in schools. It **helps teachers to bring citizenship and human rights education into the classroom**, serves as an information platform and advisory centre, develops new materials for the classroom on a regular basis, plays a part in the European and Austrian discussions on citizenship education, has an influential role in teacher training, and organizes events for students.

With the activities offered, polis supports skills-oriented teaching. The aim is political awareness, which the students reach through careful deliberation. In this respect, a **broad range of knowledge as well as learning activities, which enable the student to learn about, think about and deal with political themes**, is provided. The activities are therefore linked to the lives and experiences of the students.

Civil Courage and Anti Racism Work (ZARA - Zivilcourage und Antirassismusbearbeitung)

Zara was founded in 1999. Its mission is to **combat racism and to promote civil courage** as well as a **positive approach to cultural diversity**. As one of its many tasks, ZARA undertakes

social information and awareness activities. ZARA offers [training courses](#) to businesses and educational institutions, as well as an annual training course in anti-racism work. Topic fields for training include awareness raising and/or sensitisation, building courage in one's convictions, legal situation, and language (ab)use.

Online Democracy workspace by the Federal Parliament (DemokratieWEBstatt)

The Federal Parliament's **online information point** does not only provide information on children's rights (as mentioned above). It focuses on **political and democracy education** as a whole and **enables pupils to learn more about politics, democracy, laws and elections**. Its offers include a virtual walks through the Parliament, workshops, information on the Parliament and its members, an interactive political diary, a democracy encyclopedia, news and numerous games.

Youth information campaigns (Jugendportal)

The Austrian Youth Information Centres as well as their umbrella organization, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres, **run campaigns for civic education and against hate speech and extremism**. Their **Website** includes a list of information points for civic education ([Politische Bildung](#)) and against disinformation ([Gib Fake News keine Chance](#)). The Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres has also organized a 'Get Active Team' ([Mitmachen](#)) together with the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). Through this project, **a group of young Austrians is enabled to take part in workshops of political participation**, where they can weigh in their own ideas.

4.6 Access to quality services

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-connecting 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 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

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** (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.

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Youth policy aimed at social inclusion

The **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](#), 2001), which regulates the financial support of extracurricular youth work by defining principles required for the work of promoted organisations (further depicted in [Chapter 10.1](#)), **inter alia promotes social inclusion**. Among the **promoted principles of youth work** are the promotion of

- the attending to **matters of concern for young people**
- responsibility, **independence** and **democracy**
- **personal**, physical, emotional and intellectual **development** of young people
- young people's **tolerance**, communication and peaceful coexistence
- community and **human rights oriented education**
- **political- and citizenship** education
- **lifestyle- and health-related** education
- **vocational- and career-related** education
- the development of the **creative powers** of young people
- **equality of the sexes**
- **integration of people with disabilities**

Main inclusive Youth Work programmes and target groups

Children and youth work in youth organisations targets all young people. Depending on the kind of association, it may target a specific group. The broad range of organizations enables a catering to diverse target groups, including socially disadvantaged youth.

Youth information targets all young people. Its work of strengthening young people and their competences as well as providing them with comprehensible, target-group oriented information promotes social inclusion.

Professional Open Children and Youth Work targets all young people. Per definition, open youth work supports young people on their way to independence, enables the acquisition of educational content and social skills through low threshold offers and thus contributes to social integration and participation, particularly for educationally and socially disadvantaged young people.

Youth organisations, youth information, and open child and youth work organisations run **a large variety of programmes to foster the social inclusion of vulnerable young people**, such as projects against discrimination, projects enhancing life skills and supporting active citizenship as well as outreach and street work youth work programmes. Figures of public funding allocated to these programmes are not available. Exemplary projects and programmes:

- The Austrian Youth Information Centres have cooperated with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to inform young people about the topics of **flight and asylum** by developing the brochure 'My New Neighbour' („[Mein neuer Nachbar](#)"). Another **brochure**, entitled 'I won't be a part of it!' („[Da mach' ich nicht mit!](#)") **informs on racism and discrimination** with funny illustrations and provides answers and arguments against common discriminatory sayings. It is a joint project of the association "Land der Menschen - Aufeinander Zugehen OÖ" and the Viennese youth information wienXtra-jugendinfo.
- **Across Austria, different local organisations provide youth social work, outreach work, streetwork**, school social work and intensive care for young people. An example is the Youth Initiative Triestingtal ([Jugendinitiative Triestingtal](#)) located within the province of Lower Austria (Niederösterreich) and the association for initiatives of social integration ([Verein I.S.I. - Initiativen für soziale Integration](#)) active in parts of the province of Upper Austria (Oberösterreich).
- In a time of information overload and fake news, knowing how to deal with information has become more important than ever – the critical and competent use of information has to be learned. The Austrian Youth Information Centres therefore offer **free and digital-interactive workshops to promote the information and media competence** of young people, particularly those aged 12 to 15. The exercises are available as free learning and teaching materials ([Förderung der Informationskompetenz: Lost in information?](#)).

- 'Together on the road' ([Miteinander unterwegs](#)) is the motto under which the Austrian Alpine Club (Österreichischer Alpenverein), with over 601,000 members both the largest alpine association and the largest **youth organisation** in Austria, is committing itself to the topic of integration. **People with different cultural backgrounds are invited to come together for a tour** and to experience hospitality and make new friends while hiking and climbing.
- The Centre for Open Youth Work in Dornbirn (province of Vorarlberg) has launched the **programme 'refuge'** ("[zuflucht](#)"), which includes projects such as **tandem meetings to break down prejudices and create community**, actions in public space, intercultural cemetery visits, shared festivities, and joint landscape and riverbank cleaning.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

Ongoing debates

The **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** and measures taken in its context on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds has been increasingly thematised. As schools have been moved to remote learning for months and activities from private associations (e.g. sport clubs) have been repeatedly put on hold, **an increase of social disadvantages is feared**. The Austrian debate on reopening and recovery has increasingly taken note of the issue, and as a first response the reopening of schools has been prioritised. Further action to mitigate the social consequences of the crisis is under discussion.

5. PARTICIPATION

Young people's participation **at all levels of politics and society** is regarded as crucial in Austria. The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) acts as an important focal point on the issue. For the Austrian youth policy, the participation of young people is of particular importance. Like youth policy in general, participation is a **cross-sectorial topic** and requires implementation in all areas of politics.

In order to increase the opportunities for young people to actively participate in society, a number of measures has been implemented. With regard to **politics**, the national **voting age was lowered to 16 years** ([Wählen mit 16](#)). In an effort to **provide young people with an informed basis** for decision-making, the Austrian Youth Information Centres and their Youth Portal Website have been strengthened. And in terms of **civic engagement**, Austria successfully aims to pass its strong position of **46% of people** over the age of 15 (3.5 million people according to the [Freiwilligenweb](#)) **engaging in volunteer work** on to the next generation: around 43% of young people aged 15-29 years volunteer.

The **Federal Youth Promotion Act** ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)), which came into effect in 2001, defines **projects** worthy of support as those which in particular include the **participation of young people in all areas of life**, as well as responsibility, independence and the promotion of democracy as principles of their youth work.

5.1 General context

Main concepts

Young people's participation

The participation of young people in (political) decisions and processes that affect them is a basic principle of youth work, which is actively involved in helping to shape their lives. **If adults give up some of their influence, children and young people can increasingly determine the shape of their own lives** ([Austrian National Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#), BJV)). Participation enables people to take part in social activities at all levels and is an opportunity for young people to shape political processes and thus society (ARGE Partizipation: [jugendbeteiligung.at](#)). A vital democracy needs committed people who want to participate and have a say as well as **framework conditions that enable this commitment**. This is especially true for young people, who should be able to have the best possible say and shape and participate in decisions that affect the world in which they live. Therefore, the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) ([Österreichische Jugendstrategie](#))

includes the **action field of participation**, and the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is active in the **National Working Group on Youth Dialogue and Youth Participation** and supports the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue and the European Youth Goals as well as many other initiatives.

Standards for Public Participation

The '**Standards of Public Participation**' ([Standards der Öffentlichkeitsbeteiligung](#)) were adopted by the Austrian Council of Ministers in 2008 and recommended to be applied by the federal administration.

Where policies, plans, programmes, and legal instruments are prepared, **the public is increasingly offered an opportunity to participate**. Public, politics and administration can benefit optimally from such involvement where the participation of the public is exercised at a high quality. This can be ensured by the application of standards aimed at maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of public participation. The present Standards of Public Participation are to help the administrative staff of the federal government in the concrete conduct of **high-quality participation processes**. They are a contribution to good governance in Austria. The Standards of Public Participation were prepared by an inter-ministerial working group with the participation of legally established representations of interest, NGOs and external experts as part of a project commissioned by the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the former Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

Institutions of representative democracy

Austria is a **democratic republic** whose law emanates from the people (Article 1 Federal Constitutional Law, [Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)). Its head of state is the [Federal President \(Bundespräsident\)](#).

As a **Federal State** (Article 2 Federal Constitutional Law, [Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)), Austria is composed of **nine sovereign provinces (Bundesländer)**: Burgenland, Carinthia (Kärnten), Lower Austria (Niederösterreich), Upper Austria (Oberösterreich), Salzburg, Styria (Steiermark), Tyrol (Tirol), Vorarlberg, and Vienna (Wien). The provinces maintain **provincial parliaments with select legislative powers, have broad executive powers**, but no separate court system. Compared with other Federal States (e.g. Switzerland, Germany), **the Austrian system is rather centralised** with the Federal State holding comparatively many competencies.

In Austria, a system of separation of the three powers has been established. History has proven that unlimited power in the hands of one person or group often lead to the suppression of other groups. In a democracy, the separation of powers is to **prevent abuse of power and to safeguard freedom for all. Checks and balances** (rights of mutual control and influence) make sure that the three powers (legislation, executive, judiciary) interact in an equitable and balanced way. The separation of powers is an essential element of the **Rule of Law**, and is enshrined in the Federal Constitution ([Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)).

The Federal System

The Republic of Austria is a Federal State composed of **nine autonomous federal provinces**. Its federal nature is one of the basic principles laid down in the Constitution and can thus only be changed by referendum. Unlike centralist forms of organisation, the legislative and executive powers are shared by the federal and provincial governments. Provincial laws and laws pertaining to communities are passed by the provincial diets, and the administration of the provinces lies in the hands of the provincial governments. **The citizens of a province may also influence provincial legislation through instruments of direct democracy**. The federal system in Austria is characterised by the following **elements**:

- The federal state and **the provinces have legislative bodies of their own**
- They have **executive organs of their own**
- The **federal provinces participate in certain administrative activities of the federal state** ('indirect administration of federal law by provincial administrative authorities')
- The federal state and the provinces have their **own systems of financial management**, i.e. budgets of their own, and they may levy taxes and rates in their own right. However, only the federal government can levy relevant taxes such as the income tax, value-added tax etc., and the federal provinces receive funds from the federal government's tax revenue under the system of revenue sharing. The revenue-sharing plan covers only a few years and is re-negotiated at regular intervals.

In concrete terms, the respective competencies of the federal state and the provinces (the federal states) are laid down in the **competence articles of the Federal Constitutional Law** Artikel 10-15 ([Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)). They define

- which **matters are reserved to the federal level**,
- for **which matters the federal level lays down the principles**, leaving the decision on implementing acts to the provinces,
- **where the federal level holds the legislative power** and the **provinces have executive powers** and
- in respect of what matters **the legislative and executive power is reserved to the provinces** (fallback clause for all not explicitly named subjects).

The **provinces are also involved in federal legislation** through the Federal Council and share the executive power of the federal level within the scope of the indirect administration of federal law by provincial administrative authorities. In addition, the provinces may conclude treaties under international law with other states or parts thereof. Under Art. 23d of the Federal Constitutional Law ([Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz](#)), the federal provinces also hold certain **rights of participation in projects within the framework of the European Union**. They have to be informed on all EU projects. If all provinces agree in their position regarding an EU project affecting a matter that falls within their legislative competence, their joint position is binding.

The federal provinces have the right to establish ombudsman's offices and courts of an audit of their own. In principle, however, control instruments such as the Ombudsman's Office and the Court of Audit are seen as joint organs of the federal and provincial levels.

The Federal Parliament

The Parliament is the very centre of democracy. It represents the interests of the greatest possible number of citizens. The Federal Parliament is **bicameral**. It comprises the **National Council** ([Nationalrat](#)), which is determined by the general electorate, and the **Federal Council** ([Bundesrat](#)), which is staffed by the Länder.

Elections to the **National Council** take place based on **the principles of proportional representation, a closed list system, and preferential votes**. Every citizen can cast one vote for a party which represents them in Parliament. In Austria, Parliament has two chambers – the National and Federal Councils. 183 seats are allocated to the individual groups seeking election based on the percentage of votes they win in the election.

The **Federal Council** has 61 members. Its major responsibility is the representation of the Federal Provinces' interests in the legislative process at the federal states level. This is why it is also referred to as the Chamber of Provinces. Its members are delegated by the Provincial Diets of the nine Federal Provinces.

The two legislative bodies – the National and Federal Councils – form separate entities. Their Members jointly form a third parliamentary body, the **Federal Assembly**.

Elections in Austria (Wahlen)

Austria is a **representative (or parliamentary) democracy**. This means that Members of Parliament pass laws as representatives of the voters. Unlike the situation in a direct democracy, political decisions are not entrusted to the people themselves but to parliament. Free elections are the hallmark of democracy. Parliaments, the Federal Government, the Federal Chancellor, the Federal President – all political institutions envisaged by the Federal Constitution are directly or indirectly derived from the outcome of elections.

In Austria, elections are **held for five different purposes**: to determine the membership of the National Council (every five years), the Provincial Councils (every five or six years at different times for each province), Municipal Councils and the European Parliament, and to directly elect the Federal President (every six years).

The Länder have their own provincial electoral authorities and **electoral legislation**. For nationwide elections, specific federal laws are in force. **Basic principles and provisions governing elections** on all political levels - general, free, secret, and equal suffrage, the direct and personal right to vote - are laid down in the Federal Constitution.

Elections take place based on **the principles of proportional representation, a closed list system, and preferential votes**. Each party draws up a list of candidates, and voters cast their ballots for one of the parties and thus for the persons on that party's slate. Before the election, the parties that stand for election present their 'slates' to the election authority. The more votes are

cast for a political party, the more persons on that slate are voted into office. In recent decades, various elements of the ad personam election system have been introduced into elections by party list – for instance by allowing voters to express their preference for a particular person on their elected party slate. However, only the elections for **Federal President** is held as an election ad personam, with voters directly electing a candidate.

In 2007, the **voting age in Austria has been lowered to 16 years** in order to increase the participation of young people ([Wählen mit 16](#)). The passive right to vote (i.e. the right to stand as a candidate) is set at 18. In general, the Austrian citizenship is a pre-condition to enjoy the active and passive rights to vote (exception: in European Elections and Municipal Elections citizens of EU member states also enjoy voting rights). There is no need to apply for registration as all citizens with a permanent residence are kept in a permanent register, maintained by the municipalities. Voting is **not compulsory**. The vote is usually cast by ballot, **postal voting** has been enabled as well.

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

The voting age limit - Voting at 16 ([Wählen mit 16](#))

The right to vote (active suffrage), has been set at **16 years of age**. In 2007, the **voting age in Austria has been lowered from 18 to 16 years** in order to increase the participation of young people.

This step has been taken, because **voting is the basic form of political participation in a democracy**. At the age of 16, **young people have already reached the age of criminal responsibility and extended legal capacity**, are dealing with their life planning, have to decide on their educational path and their professional future, and some of them already engage in professional life. The National Council has therefore decided to grant young people from the age of 16 the right to be involved in political decision-making processes and to **decide on their living space and their future**.

The lowering of the active voting age was decided upon by the Austrian National Council (Nationalrat) as part of the **2007 electoral law reform**. While it only directly regulates elections that take place at federal level, the Länder are prohibited from drawing the rules for provincial and municipal council elections more narrowly due to the '**principle of homogeneity**', which is anchored in the constitution. Therefore, the voting age of 16 applies to Austrian citizens in the **following elections and elements of direct democracy**:

- **Municipal council** election (Gemeinderatswahlen)
- **Provincial council** election (Landtagswahlen)
- **National Council** election (Nationalratswahlen)
- **Federal presidential** election (Wahl zum Bundespräsidenten)
- Elections to the **European Parliament** (Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament)
- **Referendums, petitions for referendums** and **popular consultations** (Volksabstimmungen, Volksbegehren und Volksbefragungen)

In elections to the **European Parliament and municipal council elections**, all EU citizens aged 16 and over with their main residence in Austria may also vote.

Within the framework of the Austrian National Election Study AUTNES, the project 'Voting at 16 in the National Council Election 2013' was also carried out. A current **report commissioned by the Parliamentary Directorate on first-time voters** in the 2017 National Council election was prepared (Kritzinger, Sylvia, Wagner, Markus und Glavanovits, Josef (2018): [Wählen mit 16 – ErstwählerInnen bei der Nationalratswahl 2017](#). Wien). It inter alia shows that first-time voters were more interested in politics the more interested their parents were in the election campaign, the more political discussions and projects were carried out in school, and if they had previously watched election debates and visited the parliament building. Political knowledge, along with political interest, is one of the driving forces of voter turnout. The study comes to the conclusion that the **lowering of the voting age had positive effects**: first-time voters aged 16-17 were **well prepared to participate** in elections and the **high turnout** in this age group may lead to long-term positive effects on voter turnout.

A distinction is made between active and **passive suffrage**. While Austrians can vote in elections from 16 years of age, they **can only stand as candidates from age 18** onwards. As an

exception, the candidacy for the office of Federal President requires a minimum age of 35 years. As part of the 2007 electoral law reform, the age limit for the right to stand for election was **reduced from 19 to 18 years** as well.

Young voter turnout

There is **no official data collection** on the turnout of young people in elections. Some recent **statistics/evaluations** have been provided by research institutes.

National Council election 2017

The report commissioned by the Parliamentary Directorate on first-time voters (Kritzing, Sylvia, Wagner, Markus und Glavanovits, Josef (2018): [Wählen mit 16 – ErstwählerInnen bei der Nationalratswahl 2017](#). Wien) showed the reported voter turnout for

- **16-17** year olds: **90.3%**
- **18-19** year olds: **74.6%**,
- **20-29** year olds: **81.8%**
- **General:** reported 92.4%, actual 80%

Since the reported voter turnout of all age groups was 92.4%, which is higher than the actual voter turnout of 80%, it can be **assumed that there was overreporting** (due to social desirability and an overrepresentation of politically interested people).

However, the study finds deviating turnout rates for first time voters. On average, **18-19 year-olds had the lowest voter turnout of all age groups**. The clear differences between 16-17-year-olds and 18- to under-20-year-olds are also statistically significant, with **younger first-time voters much more motivated to vote than older first-time voters and 20-under-30-year-olds**. This may also be due to the possibility of better preparation for the election through school and parental home. The problematic group regarding turnout is showed to be not the 16-17 year olds (as feared by critics of the lower voting age) but the 18-19 year olds.

According to the Austrian Society for European Politics ([Österreichische Gesellschaft für Europapolitik](#)) the AUTNES pre-election survey, a total of 86.9% of 16- to 17-year-olds had previously said they wanted to vote in the election.

Austrian parliamentary elections 2013

According to a study on the Nationalrat Election 2013 presented in the parliament ([Studie zur Nationalratswahl 2013 im Parlament](#)), the turnout of first-time voters in 2013, unlike in 2008, was well below general turnout. 16- and 17-year-olds (63%) have more often stated that they have taken part in the election than 18- to 20-year-olds (59%).

- **16 and 17** years: 63%
- **18 – 20** years: 59%
- **General:** 75%

European Parliament Elections 2019 (Eurobarometer)

The European elections 2019 brought a record high turnout due to an **increase in turnout among young people**. In Austria, the increase in the two young voter categories was 19% for people aged under 25 and 16% for people aged 25 to 39. The total turnout in the two categories was 48% (under 25) and 56% (25 to 39) according to a Eurobarometer survey.

Young people as political representatives

As mentioned above, due to the distinction between active and passive suffrage **the right to the right to stand for election is only reached at 18** (age limit lowered from 19 in 2007). Candidates for the office of Federal President must have reached the minimum age of 35 years.

There is no law stipulating age limits to become a member of a political party. Most parties active in Austrian politics have **youth organisations**, as well as associated lists in elections to the **pupil and student councils** ([Schülervertretung](#) und [Studierendenvertretung](#)) – both statutory representatives of their constituencies.

Age distribution national assembly (reporting date 10.01.2020)

The [Website](#) of the parliament provides information on the age and gender distribution in the national assembly.

Age	female	male	total
20 - 29 years	7	6	13
30 - 39 years	16	16	32
40 - 49 years	21	30	51
50 - 59 years	23	41	64
61 - 70 years	5	18	23
71 - 80 years	0	0	0
Average age	45,38	49,45	47,85
Youngest representative	25	24	24
Oldest representative	66	66	66

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

The Youth parliament at national level (Jugendparlament)

At invitation of the **President of the National Council**, a Youth Parliament is held regularly **in the Austrian Parliament** in Vienna. The Youth Parliament wants to make democratic decision-making processes comprehensible for young people and give them a deeper understanding of parliamentary processes. The youth parliament **meets twice a year** to discuss on different subjects to familiarise young people with democratic decision-making processes.

Based on the lowered voting age of 16, **pupils of the 9th grade of all school types** from the province of the current presidency of the Federal Council can apply for the participation in the youth parliament. A **jury selects the most creative entries** to the question 'What does democracy mean to you and your classmates?' Organisation and **costs** for travel, accommodation, and catering for the pupils and accompanying teachers are **borne by the parliamentary directorate**.

The youth parliament is funded by the state. It has **no direct impact on decision making**. In March 2017, about 110 pupils were able to take the chance to be part of the youth parliament. In 2020, the 'youth parliament' was held digitally due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the beginning of the Youth Parliament Day, the participants are divided into four fictitious clubs. Each of the clubs works out its position on a legislative proposal, elects a chairperson and decides which persons will represent the club in the committee deliberations. In the subsequent committee meeting, they try to reach an agreement with the representatives of the other clubs. The a plenary session is held. In order to make it easier to work out compromises, MPs and staff are available to offer advice and support.

Local youth parliaments

In the **municipality of Villach** (province of Carinthia), **young people aged 14 to 19** can stand as candidates for the local '**Youth Council**' (Jugendrat), provided they live or study/train in Villach. They are elected by their peers, who can vote in schools and youth centers. Youth Council **elections take place every two years**. In 2019, almost 1000 young people from Villach elected their representatives to the Youth Council. The model of co-determination has been in existence since 1997. The Youth Council has the **right to speak in the Municipal Council and is consulted in an advisory capacity on issues relevant to young people** in the various committees. Villach was the first city in Austria to have such a body. A trend sports facility and

festivals are among the many projects implemented. The Youth Council is a way of taking the concerns of our young citizens seriously and involving them in many issues, thus letting them have a say in shaping the future.

In the local youth parliament called '*word up!*' (in German) young people can **make requests and demands to the district council** and may become involved in their implementation. *word up!* exists in the **districts Leopoldstadt, Alsergrund, Simmering, Brigittenau and Liesing in Vienna**. This initiative is funded by the City of Vienna. In workshops, plenary sessions, inspections, and other events **the pupils of the 7th and 8th grades** develop their proposals, discuss them with the district leaders and representatives of the responsible municipal departments and **implement the projects**.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Austrian Federal Youth Council (Bundesjugendvertretung, BJV)

The **Federal Youth Representation Act** ([Bundes-Jugendvertretungsgesetz](#)), which redefined youth co-determination at federal level, came into force on 1 January 2001.

Based on the Act, the [Austrian Federal Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#) - BJV) is the body which legally represents young people in Austria and **comprises Austrian children's and youth organisations**, 56 ordinary and three extraordinary members in 2021, which have very varied goals and ideological backgrounds. The member organisations range from those based in political parties and churches to representatives of open youth work and ethnic groups and minorities, pupil's and students's representatives, and also include the provincial youth advisory committees. This diversity guarantees that the interests of young people are represented on a very broad basis. **Every youth organisation fulfilling the criteria** of the [statutes](#) (German only) can become a member of the Youth Council.

As the **legal representative of Austrian young people**, the Council is empowered to have a say in all important political decisions, and has the same status as the other legal representational groups (e.g. employees, traders, farmers or senior citizens). Therefore, the Council has **the status of a social partner regarding youth issues** and thus takes part in political negotiations on behalf of young people. The Council also networks internationally, among others as an active **member of the European Youth Forum**.

The **plenary assembly** of all members takes place **at least once a year**. Within this, the executive board is elected. The management board consists of 4 chairpersons (presidency team), a maximum of eight other board members, as well as the full-time managing director with consultative voice. The members of the management board may not be older than 30 years. **The management board meets at least 8 times per year**. Its functional period amounts to two years. Anyhow, the functional period lasts up to the new election of a management.

The Federal Youth Council **develops co-operation, alliances and projects supporting young people** and is working on the following **fields of action**:

- **Education and work** (education, employment and non-formal education)
- **Youth and politics** (participation, international affairs, citizenship education, anti-fascism)
- **Children and youth** (child rights, protection of minors, sexual health and reproductive rights, volunteering, housing, sustainability, health, military/civil service)
- **Equality** (girls/women, gender mainstreaming, social and distributive justice, diversity/anti-discrimination, inter-generational justice)

The Council is **funded by its members, the state and donations**.

Youth councils at regional and local level

In the Federal provinces, some youth councils exist that are to **consult and advise the regional governments and the youth departments**. The federal states decide whether the consultation is compulsory. Such regional youth councils exist in the provinces Burgenland, Lower Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Upper Austria, Vienna and Vorarlberg. The **councils consist of representatives of youth organisations**.

On a **local level**, youth councils exist **in various cities and municipalities** and districts of Vienna.

Higher education student union(s)

The [Austrian National Union of Students' federal body of Representatives \(Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft Bundesvertretung, ÖH\)](#) is the **legal representative of all students** to the competent ministries. Students in Austria are internally **represented on 3 different levels** where representatives advocate for their interests.

The Austrian Students' Union is the **statutory general students' representative body** in Austria and serves as the students' government by federal law. It is a member of European Students' Union. The statutes of the ÖH are regulated in the **Federal Students' Union Act** ([Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaftsgesetz](#), 2014).

Membership in the ÖH is compulsory for every university student in Austria, including PhD candidates. Each student has to pay a **contribution of € 20.20 per semester** to the Student's Union, the payment is required for continued enlistment at university.

The Austrian National Union of Students is striving to act as the **students' political representation** as well as to **improve the everyday situation of students through numerous services**. Therefore they provide information on different subjects on the website which helps students with the life at and beyond university. The ÖH is **elected every two years by all students directly** and forms the mouthpiece of the students versus the colleges and politics.

The Austrian student union is made up of three levels: **study course representations** (representatives of the field of study), the **university representations** (representation of a whole college) and the **federal representation** (Austria-wide representation).

The Students' Union offers **free counselling and numerous other services** to facilitate a smooth and pleasant run at the University and provides an overview of student life. A brief overview of some of the services and projects rendered by the Austrian National Union of Students:

- Bulletin board ([Schwarzes Brett](#)) - Jobs, Internships and Rental postings
- [Progress](#) - Magazine of the National Students' Union
- [Student Union Helpline](#)
- Fem-Queer funding pool ([Fem-Queer Fördertopf](#))
- Funding for special projects ([Sonderprojekte](#))
- Accommodation funding pool ([Heimfördertopf](#))
- [ÖH- Social Fund](#)
- Platform for studies "[Studienplattform](#)". An Information Portal for all the fields of study in all the different Universities and Academic Institutions in Austria
- Students' Union newsletter ([ÖH Newsletter](#))
- Text message reminder service ([SMS Erinnerungsservice](#))
- ÖH insurance ([Versicherung](#))
- Platform try to study "[Studieren Probieren](#)"
- QueerFeminist Library ([Queer feministische Bibliothek](#)) - Collection of feminist and queer books, Comics, Magazines and DVDs

ÖH at federal level

The [federal representation](#) (Bundesvertretung) represents all students at universities, private universities, advanced technical colleges and educational colleges throughout Austria. On the national level the main tasks are **negotiations with the federal government** and particularly the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), **representation on the international level** (like in [ESU](#), the Bologna follow-up Group or [Eurodoc](#)), **public relations and lobbying, campaigning, networking**, involvement in social movements like ASF (Austrian Social Forum) and ESF, and support of the Students Union at University level. Furthermore, **ÖH has to be consulted any time regarding all laws that affect students. 55 representatives of the federal representation** are elected directly every two years in the course of the ÖH elections. They form the legislative power within the arrangement ÖH and meet twice per semester.

The ÖH has established a number of committees:

- Committee on **educational policy**
- Committee on **equalization questions**
- Committee on **international matters**
- Committee on **special projects**
- Committee on **social politics**
- Committee on **economic matters**

All meetings of the committees, except those of the economic committee, are **publicly accessible**. The committees mostly meet before the meetings of the federal representation and deal with the content subject areas, work out applications and serve as preparation for meeting of the federal representation. Within the committees, a chairperson, as well as their substitution which report on the meeting of the federal representation, is elected in each case.

For the **examination of the performance** of the Austrian student union, a **controlling commission** is installed which consists of fourteen members. The economic consultant has to file a report to the controlling commission.

School student union(s)

In Austria, pupils' representation is legally protected and anchored in the **Pupils' Representation Act** ([Schülervertretungsgesetz](#)). Representatives act on **three levels**, the school level, the regional level and the national level.

The Federal Pupils' Representative Council ([Bundesschülervertretung](#), BSV) is the **legally elected body representing the interests of pupils** in Austria and is **reconstituted every year** at the beginning of school. The BSV consists of **29 members** - the 27 regional school representatives and the 2 representatives of the central educational institutions. All members are pupils and work on a voluntary basis. At the beginning of each school year, the national school spokesperson and the divisional spokespersons for the coming school year are elected from among them. The task of the BSV is to **highlight and represent the interests of the pupils vis-à-vis politicians**, especially the Ministry of Education.

School level

In each secondary school, pupil representatives are elected. The representatives are **part of the school's statutory elected panel** (Schulgemeinschaftsausschuss) of teachers, parents and pupils at Austrian secondary schools. The first three pupil's representatives are eligible to vote alongside three teacher representatives and three parental representatives. The panel is the most important committee of the school life - many important questions such as the house order or school-autonomous regulations are decided here. In addition, **the head pupil's representative has the right to give his vote in the election of the representation in the province** or can be elected on this level. The rights of the pupil's representation are extensive and reach from convoking a meeting of class representatives to the **right of participation in staff meetings and disciplinary conferences**, hearings and speech contributions.

Federal State level

The provincial pupil's representations in Austria is **formed from three school types**, the general secondary schools (allgemeinbildende höher Schulen, AHS), vocational middle and secondary schools (berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen, BMHS) as well as the vocational schools (Berufsschulen, BS). **For every school type, four to eight members** (according to size of the federal state) and the same numbers of substitutes **are elected once a year**. The head representatives are actively entitled to vote for their respective school type. They and the first two substitutes can be candidates for this election. The provincial pupil's representations consist of three head representatives and further nine to 21 other members as well as twelve to 24 substitute members. This body is **entitled to represent the pupil's interests vis-à-vis the state parliament and the province school board**.

The three head provincial pupil's representatives are entitled to **take part in the election to the federal pupil's representation**. In most cases, teams of the two country-wide represented Austrian pupil's organisations, *lit.* the action of critical pupils (Aktion kritischer Schülerinnen und Schüler, AKS) and the pupil's union (Schülerunion, SU) run for election. Both are financed by the corresponding political parties.

Federal level

The federal pupil's representation consists of three provincial pupils' representatives of each of the nine Austrian federal states as well as two representatives of the central teaching institutions (Zentralehranstalt, ZLA), a total of 29 members. These elect among themselves a federal head as well as a speaker for each school type (AHS, BMHS and BS). The federal chairperson is elected for one year and is entitled to take part and to be consulted at negotiations about school topics by the Federal Minister.

Other bodies

Most youth organisations and NGOs are part of the [Austrian Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#) and therefore not presented separately. All statutory bodies – the representatives for youth, students, and pupils – have been depicted above.

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

The **participation and co-determination of young people at all political and societal levels**, is an important priority of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery \(Sektion Familie und Jugend im Bundeskanzleramt\)](#). As youth policy in general, participation is a cross-sectional topic and requires implementation in all areas of politics.

The Department itself is a provider of input and coordinator for the establishment and extension of participation in a variety of fields. A central role is played by **supporting clubs, associations, initiatives and projects**. The Federal Youth Promotion Act ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)), which came into effect in 2001, defines projects worthy of support as those which inter alia include both the co-determination and participation of young people in all areas of life and the youth work principles of responsibility, independence and the promotion of democracy.

As contemporary youth politics calls for young people's participation, active inclusion of youth is also a core criterion of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#). Consultations take place on national, regional and local levels. And in implementing the [EU renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field](#) into Austrian youth policy, the participation of young people played a particularly important role. With the new [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#), the Austrian results of the EU Youth Dialogue will also be integrated.

Federal Youth Council (Bundesjugendvertretung)

The [Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung, BJV\)](#) is the **legally established representative body of children and youth** in Austria. It advocates for the interests and ideas of young people in political negotiations and has obtained the status of a social partner on youth issues. It also engages in international projects and as a member of the European Youth Forum.

Youth Check and Reality Check

The **Youth Check** ([Jugendcheck](#)), in effect since 2013, establishes an effect-oriented impact assessment. The law stipulates that **all new legislative and regulatory proposals be evaluated for the potential consequences they could have on children, young people and young adults**. This instrument makes it easier for youth organisations, in particular, the National Youth Council, to become involved in the legislative process.

Through the **Reality Check** (in German), young people are to be **involved in the development of the goals and measures** for the Austrian Youth Strategy.

Participation Working Group (ARGE Partizipation)

The Participation Working Group is an **institution of the provincial youth departments**, because the implementation of co-determination and participation opportunities at provincial, regional and municipal levels is the competence of the respective federal state. Further members of the ARGE Partizipation include the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), the [Federal Youth Council](#) in representation of young people, the [Federal Open Youth Work Network](#) the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)), and the coordination office for the EU Youth Dialogue. The Working Group is to **coordinate participative measures in Austria and to further develop them**.

Consultation processes by the members of the National Working Group (e.g. among federal provinces) **take place on a regional level**. Within the framework of a structured dialogue, **online consultation** through the networking contacts of all National Working group members are performed. The outcomes are used to further develop the Austrian Youth Strategy and to implement more projects to foster social inclusion.

Research studies and stakeholder interviews

The [Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy \(Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, ibw\)](#), the Austrian Institute for SME Research ([KMU Forschung](#)

[Austria](#)) and the [Institute for advanced studies \(Institut für Höhere Studien, IHS\)](#) frequently **conduct studies** on behalf of public authorities. Within those studies, important stakeholders are interviewed. The outcomes of the studies are being considered in any kind of decision-making. A whole **range of youth research institutions** provide studies on youth issues ([Jugendforschungsinstitutionen in Österreich](#)), which establish the basis for a successful youth policy.

Previous surveys

In the past, a number of youth surveys have been conducted and their results applied in developing the Austrian Youth Strategy. Most notable are the Youth monitor, the Youth strategy on tour, and the Better life-index (Open Delphi 4 youth).

Basic research was e.g. conducted to **investigate the preconditions** of the initiative to extend compulsory education until the age of 18 (AusBildung bis 18). It calculated the number of young people affected and analysed their need of support, in order to draw conclusions on which measures to implemented.

The **youth monitor** was carried out by several different institutions and based on telephone surveys, and on computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Surveys were performed every 3-4 months. With this method, the former Ministry for Families and Youth repeatedly interviewed 800 young people (aged 14-24) on their opinions and attitudes. A series of events was held by the [Youth Competence Centre](#) to present and discuss current research results and activities in the field of youth research

Within the context of '**Youth strategy on tour**', young people were questioned using well-established social research methods. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to actively express and discuss their ideas, wishes, concerns and suggestions in workshops with their peers. Groups were formed to reach a maximum diversity within the youth population and to gain a better insight.

OD4Y (Open Delphi 4 youth/Better-life-index) constituted an open process to consult young people (aged 16 to 30) on specific topics, such as employment, education or well-being. The results had a direct impact on the development of the Austrian Youth Strategy.

Challenges to participation in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

According to the Austrian Survey on the 'Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and the youth sector', in times of the fight against COVID-19, most of the decisions that massively influence the life of young people are taken on high levels and on very short notice. In this context, young people perceive the lack of a real chance to influence relevant decisions and a shortage of being asked for their opinion. It remains to be seen how this experience will shape the future discussion of young peoples participation in society.

Austrian Youth Information: Surveys and 'Get active' team

Any form of **participation is based on information**. The Austrian Youth Portal ([Österreichisches Jugendportal](#)) is operated by the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)) on behalf of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). It offers a selectively chosen and regularly updated collection of annotated links to a wide array of youth-related topics, thereby making it easier for young people to remain informed. From the beginning onward, **young people have been involved** in the development of the Youth Portal. The website provides them with **curated information on all topics and challenges relevant in young people's lives**.

On the [Austrian Youth Portal](#) (German only), **regular online surveys** are conducted on a wide variety of youth policy topics. Around 300 to 500 young people take part in each of these surveys. The results are published on the Youth Portal.

'Get active' team

In order to make the voices of young heard in important (political) decision-making processes, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centers and the Department of Family and Youth at the Federal Chancellery have established the '**Get active Team**'. This '**Youth Participation Pool**' **gathers a group of young people who regularly participate actively in projects** and plans for young people and want to co-develop them with various organisations. It consists of **around 25 young people aged 16 to 24** from all over Austria. Since November 2017, they **participate in projects of ministries and organisations** that aim to better reach young people and involve them in the implementation of measures. The added value for the administration and

the organisations is that their measures that more tailored towards the needs of young people. At the same time, young people have the opportunity to contribute their opinions to different projects, to actively participate and to cooperate with political decision-makers.

Dialogue Youth Research (Dialog Jugendforschung)

Dialogue Youth research is a **series of events** of the Youth Competence Centre at the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery and serves to present and **discuss recent research result and activities** in the youth field.

Actors

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is in charge of the consultation process, alongside regional authorities in charge of youth relevant topics and the Federal Ministries planning the adoption of a particular law with an impact on young people. Other institutional and non-governmental stakeholders may be involved in the processes depending on the specific topic.

The **Austrian Institute for Family Research** ([Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung](#)) continuously protocols all youth relevant data, which have been collected by various institutions. This enables to quickly access any youth relevant topic and to easily link a variety of different data.

Main youth actors are the [Federal Youth Council BJV](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#), representing more than 50 member organisations), **boJA** ([bundesweites Netzwerk offene Jugendarbeit](#), representing open youth work), and **BÖJI** ([Bundenetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#), representing youth information).

As a **target group**, consultations aim to **include all young people** in all their diversity.

Information on the extent of youth participation

The number of participants **varies depending on the method used**. As a high diversity is the survey goal, no specific target group is addressed. The number of participants in the participation process is usually documented, depending on the concrete project.

Outcomes

All outcomes – whether establishment of goals or assessments of efficiency - are **considered in decision making by the federal and regional authorities**. They shall be made available to the public on corresponding **websites**.

Austrian Youth Strategy, Youth Goals and Reality Check

The [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) (Jugendstrategie) is **continuously adapted** to the changing challenges. It is based on **regular youth screenings and input from young people** and their representatives. In this context, [four areas of activity](#) ([Handlungsfelder](#)) were determined and broken down into further detailed national **Youth Goals** (nationale [Jugendziele](#)).

The **four areas of activity** of the Austrian Youth Strategy (2020):

- **Education and employment** (best possible involvement of everyone's talents to allow youths to persist in the evolving challenges of the labour market)
- **Participation and involvement** (increased incentives and recognition in order to elevate societal commitments of young people)
- **Quality of life and togetherness** (equipping youth with relevant instruments to lead an independent and autonomous life, e.g. in terms of health, environment, family, mobility, life perspectives and satisfaction)
- **Media and information** (seizing the opportunities of digitalisation by promoting the media competence of young people and their caregivers, provision of information fit and relevant for youth)

EU Youth Goals

In the 7th edition of the EU Youth Dialogue on 'Creating opportunities for youth', **3,300 young Austrians** (of 30,000 participating young Europeans) **became involved** and gave input on their attitudes, interests and needs. They participated via online questioning and local dialogue workshops. Austria has been supporting the **eleven European Youth Goals** developed in 2018 through a youth consultation that involved 50.000 young Europeans. The goals envision policies in these areas:

- Connecting EU with Youth

- Equality of All Genders
- Inclusive Societies
- Information & Constructive Dialogue
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Moving Rural Youth Forward
- Quality Employment for All
- Quality Learning
- Space and Participation for All
- Sustainable Green Europe
- Youth Organisations & European Programmes

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

Among these initiatives is the '**Get active Team**', depicted above (under Youth Information).

Youth Speech competition (Bundes-Jugendredewettbewerb)

Eloquent youngsters can speak up on topics of importance to them. At the youth-speech competition ([Bundes-Jugendredewettbewerb](#)), they **present their ideas, opinions and positions** - in the form of a classical speech, a spontaneous speech or a creative presentation. The competition **first takes place on a regional level**, organised by the regional authorities. The winners take part in the **national competition** organised by the national authorities. These competitions enable and encourage young people to propagate their ideas and opinions on issues they care about - whether climate change, gender roles, or COVID-19.

Giving Young People a louder Voice

The model initiative 'Giving Young People a louder Voice' **collected the results of participation projects**, processes them according to the target group and publishes them. Wishes and ideas of young people which have originated within the scope of youth participation processes are **presented online**. The main matters of interest comprise, among others, employment, education, health, leisure time, money, politics and media.

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

There is **no specific strategy** to increase young people's political and civil society participation. However, youth participation is one of the four major strategic framework objectives of the **Austrian Youth Strategy** ([Jugendstrategie](#) – see [Chapter 1.3](#)).

Scope and contents

Austrian Youth Strategy (Jugendstrategie): Participation

A thriving democracy needs ambitious people who want to take the initiative and participate and the conditions that support this initiative. This is especially the case for young people. They should be able to speak out, offer suggestions and participate in decisions that affect their lives. With its **voting age set at 16 years**, Austria is a pioneer in Europe with regard to participatory democracy among young people. Studies have shown that early inclusion in institutionalised participation systems such as elections generally results in a stronger desire to participate in political decision-making processes.

Besides elections, there are **numerous forms of participation in Austria**, of which only a portion are actually used by young people. It must therefore be **clarified whether existing forms of participation truly meet the needs of today's youth and how barriers to participation can be lowered**, especially for groups from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Corresponding National Youth Goals:

- Expanding the participation of young workers in **co-determination in the workplace**. ([Federal Ministry of Labour](#))

- Contributing to the political engagement of youth and young adults through **civic education and education for sustainable development** in the classroom. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- Children, youths and young adults are empowered through **participation in science and research** (Citizen Science) and they actively participate in science and research. ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))
- We use the commitment and energy of young people to **achieve our climate and energy goals together**. ([Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#))
- Young people have the opportunity to **actively participate in the design of sports policy measures** in the form of a dialogue process. ([Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#))

Participatory development

The development of a Youth Strategy without the participation of young people themselves would not be a contemporary form of youth policy. Thus, youth is involved directly through various forms of youth participation and indirectly through youth research and the involvement of the Federal Youth Council. The new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 also integrates the Austrian results of the EU Youth Dialogue. **Young people are involved in the development of goals and measures for the Austrian Youth Strategy** ("reality checks").

Participation Guidelines

The **participation unit 'beteiligung.at'** is a specialist contact partner for the involvement and participation of children, young people and adult citizens in socio-political life. The unit compiled an [overview](#) (German only) of **participation opportunities for young people** in Austria. The focus of the research was on legally guaranteed opportunities on behalf of the Federal Chancellery. The search referred to consolidated laws of federal and state law, regulations were only consulted in particularly relevant cases.

The [ARGE Partizipation](#) has developed **Guidelines for youth participation on several levels**:

- **Guide to Child and Youth Participation** ([Leitfaden Kinder- & Jugendbeteiligung](#))
- **Guide to the sustainable participation of young people in communities** ([Leitfaden zur nachhaltigen Beteiligung von jungen Menschen in Gemeinden](#))
- **Guide to the sustainable participation of young people in urban areas** ([Leitfaden zur nachhaltigen Beteiligung von jungen Menschen im städtischen Bereich](#))

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

In order to implement youth policy in an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary way, **all Ministries** have their own youth policy campaigns and initiatives. They thus all hold responsibilities when it comes to youth participation as well as the implementation of the joint Youth Strategy. Acting specifically for youth policy is the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), which is responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the Youth Strategy. The **provinces, cities and municipalities** also hold responsibilities to implement youth participation in their own policy fields.

Revisions/Updates

Youth research provides an evidence-based evaluation of the implementation.

The **Austrian Youth Strategy** is regularly evaluated and updated. **Revisions are made continuously** and at least once every legislative period. In 2019, the new Youth Goals were developed.

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

On 1 January 2001, the **Federal Youth Promotion Act** ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)) came into force. It was last modified in 2018. Its objective is the **promotion of measures of extracurricular youth education and youth work**, for the purpose of furthering the development of the mental, psychic, physical, social, political, religious and ethical competencies of

children and young people (§1). For funding recipients, the guidelines for the promotion of extracurricular youth education and youth work, which are based on the Federal Youth Promotion Act, are binding as well ([Richtlinien zur Förderung der außerschulischen Jugendberziehung und Jugendarbeit](#)).

Youth organisations in the sense of the Federal Act (§ 2) are voluntary associations with their own legal personality whose members are predominantly young people and whose main purpose is to represent and promote the interests of young people. **Out-of-school youth education and youth work** within the meaning of the Federal Act includes all appropriate youth education and training measures that supplement family upbringing or socialisation taking place in the private sphere of young people's lives and are provided outside the formal school education system or the services provided by public youth welfare.

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 particular orientate themselves towards the following **principles (§3)**:

- 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

Funding Requirements

Funding for youth work programmes can be granted upon application to (§ 4):

1. **Associational youth organisations, youth initiatives and youth groups** not organised as associations as well as **institutions of open youth work**, provided they are constituted as an **association** and a) whose organisational statutes are in line with the commitment to the democratic Republic of Austria, with the fundamental values of peace, freedom and parliamentary democracy as well as human rights and the rule of law, b) whose statutory purpose includes the representation of the interests of young people and is in line with the objectives of § 1, c) whose statutes and activities are in line with the principles for extracurricular youth work according to § 3, d) whose activities are not aimed at making a profit, e) whose registered office is in Austria.

2. Youth initiatives, youth groups not organised in associations as well as institutions of open youth work, provided they are **not constituted as an association** and a) their activities are compatible with the objectives of § 1, b) whose activities are in line with the principles for extracurricular youth work according to § 3, c) are not aimed at making a profit, and d) at least one person of legal age or one legal entity guarantees the fulfilment of the funding conditions by signing the declaration of commitment.

A brief overview over the general requirements for the granting of a subsidy (§6):

(1) Basic funding shall be granted to youth organisations organised in associations,

1. which, in accordance with their statutes, are formed for the entire federal territory and are represented in at least five federal provinces and the applicant youth organisation can credibly demonstrate a total of at least 3,000 members nationwide and, insofar as

- it is not a party-political youth organisation, has moreover existed for at least ten years,
2. whose activities predominantly comprise services and offers of youth work and whose associational youth work follows a holistic, qualitative approach and is not only oriented towards a sub-area (e.g. aid measures, music, sports) of youth work and goes beyond the development of concrete abilities and skills,
 3. which perform nationwide coordination, planning and communication tasks,
 4. which offer training and further education measures for volunteers and full-time staff as well as services for members of the organisation,
 5. who represent the interests of young people,
 6. carry out continuous quality assurance of their work, and
 7. which do not receive funding from federal funds comparable to basic funding under this Act.

Quality assurance

The federal youth organisations applying for basic funding are **obligated to conduct continuous quality assurance** ([Qualitätssicherung](#)) according to § 6 para. 1 Z 6 of the Federal Youth Promotion Act and the additional Guidelines. Self-evaluation is proposed as the mode of action. Therefore, a row of measures, methods and standards have been installed.

A central statement of these cooperation projects is the recommendation of **self-evaluation**. A tool-set to for self-evaluation is provided online, containing a summary of theoretical principals, guidelines and a row of work tools.

According to the Youth Promotion Act, a **quality assessment form must be handed in** with funding application. Furthermore, the umbrella organisation of open youth work ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#)) provides several **publications and tools** for quality assurance in open youth work:

- **Quality compendium** ([bOJA-Qualitätshandbuch](#))
- **Goals, services and impact of Open Youth Work in Austria** ([Ziele, Leistungen und Wirkungen der Offenen Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#))
- **Toolkit – tools and methods of quality development in open youth work** ([Werkzeuge und Methoden der Qualitätsentwicklung für die Offene Jugendarbeit](#))
- **Online open youth work documentation databank**
- **Questionnaires** (self-evaluation, youth, stakeholders)

Further information

- Information on the law and promotion guidelines ([Jugendförderungsgesetz](#))
- Funding application form ([Förderungsansuchen](#))
- Information on the funding priorities 2021/2022 ([Förderschwerpunkte](#))
- Settlement data forms for funded projects ([Abrechnung](#))
- Information on quality assurance ([Qualitätssicherung](#))

Public financial support

The aim of **Federal Youth Promotion Act** is the **financial support** of measures for the education and upbringing of young people and of youth work outside the school sector. Therefore financial funding is provided according to the Federal Youth Promotion Act as well as by the Federal provinces and within the framework or ERASMUS+.

Federal funding

The **Federal Youth Promotion Act** determines the financial funding of measures of the extracurricular youth work and youth education governed by the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

As **basic funding for the associational youth work of youth organisations which fulfill the aforementioned** requirements (leaving aside exceptions and more specific rules) shall be granted, based on the number of members credibly claimed (§7):

1. the amount of **14,534.6 euros** for a membership of **3,000 to 10,000 young people**,
2. the amount of **36 336.4 euros** for a **membership of 10 001 to 30 000** young people,
3. the amount of **72,672.8 euros** for a membership of **30,001 to 80,000** young people,
4. the amount of **145,345.7 euros** for a membership of **more than 80,000** young people.

Three priorities are funded in **2021 and 2022**:

1. Competences and qualification
2. Digitalisation/Media Literacy/E-Youthwork
3. Intergenerational dialogue

All projects have to be **participative**, provide **gender equity** and **include discriminated or underprivileged young people**. Regarding the funding priorities, **precise didactic, methodical and content aspects**, which go beyond the general and fundamental effect of child and youth work, have to be designated.

Youth Promotion in the Federal Provinces

According to the federal constitution, the **competence for extracurricular child and youth work** rests with the authorities of the federal provinces. Thus, each province decides upon and implements its **own funding for youth organisations**. More information can be found at the respective [provincial youth departments](#).

EU-Program ERASMUS+

Co-financing which young applicants can use for their project ideas is available from e.g. the EU Youth Dialogue programme ([EU-Jugenddialog](#)).

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

Youth organisations **address all young people** and shall support and strengthen their development. Among the **principles of youth work** are the attending to matters of concern for and the interests of young people, the promotion of independence and personal development, the support of education, the development of the social commitment of young people, and the integration of people with disabilities. **All projects shall** be participative, provide gender equity and **include discriminated or underprivileged young people**.

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy Framework

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#), BMBWF) has issued the **General Ordinance on Citizenship Education** ([Unterrichtsprinzip Politische Bildung, Grundsatzterlass 2015](#)). This ordinance addresses the formal learning sector. It has also issued the **Framework Decree on Intercultural Education** ([Grundsatzterlass Interkulturelle Bildung, 2017](#)), which is depicted in [Chapter 4.5](#).

Furthermore, during the development and implementation of the **Austrian Youth Strategy**, youth participation has played a central role as one of the four fields of action (see [Chapter 5.5](#)). The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is responsible for the Youth Strategy.

Formal learning

Civic Education in schools (Politische Bildung)

In Austrian schools, civic education is anchored in various ways. It is a **teaching principle for all school types and levels** as well as an **independent or combined subject** in school forms of secondary level 1 or 2. Moreover, **school democracy** should make its contribution to civic education. The basic principles, objectives and implementation of civic education in schools are set out in the **Basic Decree for the Teaching Principle of Civic Education** ([Unterrichtsprinzip Politische Bildung, Grundsatzterlass 2015](#)). In addition to Austrian standards, the decree also refers to the **Council of Europe Charter on Civic Education and Human Rights Education**. Citizenship education had first been introduced as a cross-curricular educational principle for all school types, grades and subjects in 1978. The **broad mandate** and the goals of citizenship education in schools are enshrined in the **School Organization Act** (§2 [Schulorganisationsgesetz, SchOG](#)). Implementing citizenship education broadly ensures young people’s right based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The three pillars of Austrian citizenship education are thus

1. its inclusion in curricula as an **independent subject** or as a combined or **cluster subject**,
2. its effect in the **frameworks of school partnership** and legal student representation,

3. and as an **interdisciplinary teaching principle** that makes an important contribution to shaping society as well as to bringing about and developing democracy and human rights.

The Austrian Competence Model for Civic Education aims to **build up (self-)reflective political awareness throughout school learning** by means of exemplary approaches to problematic cases of politics. The life and experience world of the pupils is taken into account. Political education deals with **contemporary political issues**, their historical contexts and the **possibilities of influencing decisions**. In a time characterised by increasing complexity in all areas of life (e.g. globalisation, media democracy, non-national or multiple identities of citizens, changed socialisation of children and young people, unequal distribution of power and resources between genders and generations), civic education provides an active contribution to the shaping of society as well as to the realisation and further development of democracy and human rights.

Historical competences

Political competences are closely related to historical competences, which aim at examining judgements with regard to their historical context of origin and the **ability to recognise, analyse and reflect on one's own convictions in their historical conditionality**. In this context, the project 'Memory and the Present' (Gedächtnis und Gegenwart' on erinnern.at) of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) for **dealing with National Socialism and the Holocaust** provides a comprehensive and methodological offer that promotes the transfer of historical knowledge and reflection on its significance for the present.

European Union education

Dealing with the European Union as well as with pan-European issues and topics is part of political education and, like the global dimension, contributes to a comprehensive view of the world. The **network 'Europe in Schools' ([EUropa in der Schule](#)) supports teachers in the task of promoting awareness and responsibility for European and global interrelationships**. Its offers include a guide. The Network is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the Representation of the European Commission, the Liaison Office of the European Parliament in Austria and is managed by [Zentrum polis](#).

Extremism prevention ([Schulpsychologie: Jugend und Extremismen](#))

In a pluralistic society, it is important to **promote a responsible, critical, open-minded and tolerant attitude in schools**. Pupils who come into contact with destructive ideologies and attitudes such as right-wing extremism, Islamism or anti-Semitism represent a major challenge for many teachers. **All extremist tendencies are resolutely countered** through long-term educational prevention work. In the case of a temporary readiness of pupils to follow destructive ideologies, a **well-coordinated approach by teachers, school management, school psychologists and other experts** is needed.

Goals of Citizenship Education as a Cross-curricular Educational Principle

- offers an important contribution to the **stability and development of democracy and human rights**
- **empowers individuals to recognize social structures**, power relationships and the potential for further development, and to **examine underlying interests and values**, as well as to evaluate and to change them if need be in terms of their own opinions
- **demonstrates democratic means of participation on all social and political levels** and enables individuals to take an active part as individuals, as members of social groups, or as a part of society
- **promotes an interest in social issues and the readiness to participate in political life** in order to advocate one's own interests, the concerns of others, and matters of general welfare
- **addresses fundamental political questions**, e. g. the legitimation of political power and its control, a just distribution of resources, a responsible and resource-friendly approach to nature and the environment, the equality of political rights
- enables individuals to **recognize, understand and evaluate different political concepts and alternatives**, and leads to a critical and reflected engagement with one's own values and the political beliefs of others
- is **based on democratic principles and values** such as peace, freedom, equality, justice and solidarity; in this context, **overcoming prejudice**, stereotypes, racism, xenophobia and antisemitism as well as sexism and homophobia is a specific aim

- **highlights the role of Austria in Europe and globally**, and communicates an understanding of existential and global relationships and problems of humanity
- **shows that a just order of peace and a fair distribution of resources are necessary** for humanity's survival, and that this demands a global, concerted effort, but also need to be understood as a personal obligation

Advanced school curriculum

With school year 2016/17 a new curriculum has come into force for the subject history and social studies/political education. Participation in politics is part of this subject. Thus, **educational colleges and other institutions are providing a broad offer for teacher training regarding political participation** correlating with the new curriculum.

Action Days on Civic Education (Aktionstage Politische Bildung)

The **Austria-wide campaign** of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is coordinated by [Zentrum polis](#). It takes place **annually** between 23 April (World Book Day) and 9 May (Europe Day). **New materials are presented** throughout the event, e.g. on women's rights, public health, young people's participation, language rights, and freedom rights. Further materials include **studies, videos, podcasts, padlets, workshops, and games**.

Politics Encyclopaedia for Young People (Politiklexikon für Junge Leute)

A reference book for pupils with **reliable initial information on political terms and topics**. The encyclopaedia is primarily aimed at young people aged 12 and over. It is also a helpful tool for those who support children and young people in learning politics. The contents are not dictated by a curriculum as is the case with school books, but cover the entire world of politics. The encyclopaedia was commissioned by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

Non-formal and informal learning

Participative structures within formal education settings

As already mentioned in [Chapter 5.3](#) in Austria, **pupils' representation is legally protected and anchored in the Federal Pupils' Representation Act** ([Schülervertretungengesetz](#)). Representatives act on three levels, the school level, the regional level and the national level. Thus, pupils are represented in school councils.

Online Democracy workspace by the Federal Parliament (DemokratieWEBstatt)

The Federal Parliament's **online information point** focuses on **citizens, political and democracy education** as a whole and **enables pupils to learn more about politics, democracy, laws and elections**. Its offers include a virtual walk through the Parliament, workshops, information on the Parliament and its members, an interactive political diary, a democracy encyclopedia, news and numerous games.

Youth information campaigns (Jugendportal)

The Austrian Youth Information Centres as well as their umbrella organization, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres, **run campaigns for civic education and against hate speech and extremism**. Their **Website** includes a list of information points for civic education ([Politische Bildung](#)) and against disinformation ([Gib Fake News keine Chance](#)).

The Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres has also organized a **'Get Active Team'** ([Mitmachen](#)) together with the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). Through this project, **a group of young Austrians is enabled to take part in workshops of political participation**, where they can weigh in their own ideas. This **'Youth Participation Pool'** **gathers a group of young people who regularly participate actively in projects** and plans for young people and want to co-develop them with various organisations. It consists of **around 25 young people aged 16 to 24** from all over Austria. Since November 2017, they **participate in projects of ministries and organisations** that aim to better reach young people and involve them in the implementation of measures. The added value for the administration and the organisations is that their measures that more tailored towards the needs of young people. At the same time, young people have the opportunity to contribute their opinions to different projects, to actively participate and to cooperate with political decision-makers.

WIK:I – What I can do through informal learning

WIK:I allows young people **to collate and present their informally acquired skills**. The benefit of compiling a portfolio is that young people gain an awareness of their informally acquired skills and a sense of direction for their subsequent education and career planning; above all, it empowers them when they are required to describe and present their skills (e.g. in the context of job interviews). WIK:I aims to **promote empowerment and initiative**.

UN Youth delegates

Each year, since 2012, Austria has sent **one youth delegate to the UN General Assembly**. In Austria, the **National Youth Council** ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) is responsible for the programme. Every country may send youth delegates to the General Assembly in order for them to **represent the interests of children and young people worldwide**. The design and **mandate of the youth delegates regulated by every country** and thus not uniform. In the run-up for their speech to the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly, **Austrian youth delegates are tasked with obtaining input from Austrian children and young people by means of a participatory process**. Furthermore, they shall **raise broad awareness** on the programme in numerous youth organisations. The Austrian representatives **network** with other youth delegates, address the General Assembly on youth issues and participate in plenary sessions and informal meetings.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

The comprehensive quality assurance processes and quality guidelines for non-formal learning are detailed in [Chapter 10.4](#).

Educators' support

polis – The Austrian Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools

The Centre **supports teachers in putting citizenship education into practice**. It works under contract to the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). The Centre provides **teaching materials**, acts as information and consultation platform, offers formation and continuing education for teachers, as well as **workshops** for students. Apart from knowledge transfer activities, the Centre also engages in **awareness-raising and sensitisation** for all issues concerning politics, democracy, human rights, consumer education and the strengthening of social skills. Its **website www.politik-lernen.at** ('study politics') is the most comprehensive Austrian online information platform for education on democratic citizenship, human rights, financial literacy and consumer rights. It provides advice on events, teaching material, basic principles of citizenship education, and information about the Citizenship Days.

polis aktuell - magazine for teachers

The magazine for teachers is published five times a year. In every issue, between 16 and 20 pages are dedicated to **a particular topic of citizenship education** intended for teachers and multipliers: an editorial piece with general background information on the topic, exercises for the classroom, tips for links and background reading.

News for Political Education (Nachrichten für Politische Bildung)

In loose succession, **news for practice are presented** by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) on its Website. They inform on new materials and events for civil education.

Brochure for political participation in open youth work

bOJA, the **Federal Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work** ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#)) in Austria, developed and published a **brochure for political participation in open youth work** ([Politische Partizipation in der Offenen Jugendarbeit](#)). The aim of this publication is the collection of existing expert's assessments and methods for democracy and participation support in open youth work in Austria. One main topic is how young people can be activated to show more interest in participating in politics and democracy.

Best Practice Archive (Praxisbörse)

The online best practice database offers **teaching suggestions, lesson plans and practical ideas for projects** that can be carried out in the classroom generally. The entries can be sorted and examined according to the topic and school level. In addition, a keyword search feature is also available.

[Austrian Society for Political Education \(Österreichische Gesellschaft für politische Bildung, ÖGPB\)](#)

The Austrian Society for Political Education ([Österreichische Gesellschaft für politische Bildung, ÖGPB](#)) promoted by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) provides materials and funding for all kinds of projects related to political education.

[Network 'EUrope in Schools' \(EUropa in der Schule\)](#)

The Network **supports teachers in the task of promoting awareness and responsibility for European and global interrelationships**. Its offers include a guide. The Network is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the Representation of the European Commission, the Liaison Office of the European Parliament in Austria and is managed by [Zentrum polis](#).

[Education Group](#)

The online platform provides **information on citizenship education**. It provides teaching material, link collections of various subjects such as e.g. citizenship education activities throughout Europe (networks and databases) and news on youth relevant topics.

[ReferNet](#)

The European network of reference and expertise in VET was established in 2002 by Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, with the objective of meeting the growing demand for information which enables comparisons between developments and VET policies in the EU Member States. Subsequently, national ReferNet teams with comprehensive VET expertise were set up in every EU Member State as well as in Iceland and Norway.

ReferNet Austria is a cooperation of three institutes that carry out research and development at the interfaces between education, qualification and the labour market. This consortium aims to **disseminate information about the Austrian VET system, about research findings and education policies**. The activities of ReferNet Austria are cofinanced by Cedefop and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is responsible for citizenship education in school. The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) holds responsibility to raise young people's political awareness due to its competence for youth, as do the Federal provinces.

Young people can inform themselves on a broad variety of information websites, such as the **Youth Portal** ([Jugendportal](#)) and the Federal Parliament's **Online Democracy workspace** ([DemokratieWEBstatt](#)).

A **network of nine regional Youth Information Centres** spans across Austria and is brought together under the umbrella organization '**National Network of Youth Information Centres in Austria**' ([Austrian Youth Information Centres](#)). The Centres provide information and counselling both in person and on their websites. Overall, 28 offices in all federal provinces offer nationwide services for young people between the age of 12 and 26. They annually answer approximately 160,000 enquiries on all youth-relevant topics, including work and training, living and mobility and compulsory military/community service. Additionally, every year approximately one million visitors use the online services of the youth information centres. Youth information **promotes the social and political participation of young people and the knowledge of their own rights and obligations**, which is one of the basic requirements for active participation in society. The majority of Youth Information Centres are organised as **associations** and are **largely financed by the respective provincial government**. The Federal Network is a member of the International Federation of Youth Information Centres (ERYICA) and is the national coordinating body for the EU programme EURODESK.

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

Citizenship Days

The Austrian Citizenship Days ([Aktionstage Politische Bildung](#)) provide a **forum for all topics related to Citizenship Education, provide an opportunity to discuss**, and offer manifold approaches, including outreach programs, discussions, and methods. They take place **annually** between 23 April (World Book Day) and 9 May (Europe Day). **New materials are presented** throughout the event, e.g. on women's rights, public health, young people's participation, language rights, and freedom rights. Further materials include **studies, videos, podcasts, padlets, workshops, and games**. The Citizenship Days are an annual nationwide campaign, initiated by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) and coordinated by [polis](#).

Online election information point for young people (Province of Styria)

The online platform [altgenug.st](#) ('old enough') provides **information on participation and elections**. This platform is particularly addressing first-time voters. It is an initiative of the province Styria but available to young people all over Austria.

PoliPedia: multimedial information platform

PoliPedia is a multimedia information platform **on democracy, politics and participation**. Information is provided for young people and for teachers. A variety of different topics is discussed and **participation projects** are promoted. Among the topics are:

- Human rights ([Menschenrechte](#))
- Poverty ([Armut](#))
- Democracy and internet ([Demokratie und Internet](#))
- School democracy [Schuldemokratie](#)
- Democracy and laws in the working environment ([Demokratie und Rechte in der Arbeitswelt](#))
- The Austrian constitution ([Die österreichische Verfassung](#))

Austrian Youth Portal (Österreichisches Jugendportal)

The online youth portal serves as **signpost for the wide variety of institutions, websites and other services in Austria and Europe** and is, therefore, the national equivalent of the European Commission's European youth portal. It also **informs young people on current topics** (e.g. up-to-date corona regulations) and its campaigns (e.g. 'Your projects' and 'Get active') via Facebook and Instagram. The Portal also features the **Youth Reporter Blog ([Jugendreporter](#))**, where since 2016 selected young people receive journalistic workshops and write blog posts and create podcasts for their peers on topics of their choice, e.g. climate, politics, education, travel.

The Austrian Youth Portal is commissioned and financed by the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and maintained by the National Network of Austrian Youth Information centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)).

Fit to Vote ([Fit fürs Wählen](#)) und free newspaper subscription (Upper Austria)

The **information campaign 'Fit to Vote'** ([Fit fürs Wählen](#)) by the regional government of Upper Austria provides **information on the province, the political system, political parties and voting rights**. Furthermore, young people can take part in an online challenge and win prizes by doing so. Moreover, schools can use the interactive homepage with information on Upper Austria, the parties and elections as teaching material.

The regional government of Upper Austria also provided **free newspaper subscriptions for first-time voters** to get information about regional politics prior to the election.

Neuwal

Neuwal (German word play of new election/whale) provides **online information on politics and offers workshops for schools** and offices. With their initiative 'PopUpPolitics' they deliver extensive knowledge, constructive arguments and ideas for the positive discourse on eye level in the digital era.

Ask the government (Frag den Staat)

As everyone can pose questions to the government, this side **publishes inquiries of information and the respective answers**, so that the process can be checked by the public.

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

Talk together (ZusammenReden)

This initiative provides **teaching material, brochures, workshops for schools, discussion evenings in municipalities, and intercultural training** for an intercultural dialogue. The initiative was started in 2009 by [Caritas](#) and is supported by public authorities.

Life tracks (Lebensspuren)

In 2005, the Austrian library network started an initiative which moves the libraries increasingly in the centre of integrative cultural work through **information and workshops in public libraries**.

Peer-Education Intercultural Competence (Peer-Education Interkulturelle Kompetenz)

Since 2012, the youth department of the province of Upper Austria offers a peer-education project for pupils. **Pupils can gain knowledge about intercultural competence in education modules** designed for their age. The aim is to recognise cultural diversity as an enrichment, to perceive potentials, to reflect culture, identity, prejudices and conflicts, to respect differences and to appear against misanthropic positions. The peers **spread their experiences and knowledge to class colleagues and to the whole school** – either in lessons, self-organised projects, by school actions or simply by passing time together.

Intercultural education in schools

Intercultural education is promoted as an underlying teaching principle in schools, based on the **Framework Decree on Intercultural Education** ([Grundsatzterlass Interkulturelle Bildung, 2017](#)), which the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#), BMBWF) passed. The Framework Decree is detailed in [Chapter 4.5](#).

Migration(s) in textbooks (Migrationen im Schulbuch)

'The **critical analysis of migration narratives and representations of people with a migrant background in current Austrian textbooks** are central to the project. The main research questions include 'Which Austrian and European migration histories are narrated in the textbooks?', 'Which stories are marginalised or even 'forgotten'?', 'How are people with a migrant background depicted?' In this study, the widely varying **perspectives of teachers and students alike** on the topic of migration and their experiences with textbooks are used both methodologically and analytically. Such collaboration between researchers, teachers and students is not only an innovative and promising approach in textbook research in general, but it also reduces the danger of over-emphasizing the researcher's view of the topic.'

List of good practices (Dialogforum Migration & Integration)

Co-financed by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the [Federal Chancellery](#), Dialogforum has curated a list of good practice examples in Austria. Examples include:

- [Projekt Kontakt Tandem](#), which facilitates the **exchange** between young Austrians and young people from other cultures **through various leisure activities**.
- [Verein JUKUS](#), an association for the promotion of **youth, culture and sport** with the intention to promote the **acquisition of social skills**.
- [CULTRAIN](#) provides **cultural orientation training for unaccompanied minor refugees** as a start-up aid for integration in Austria.
- Multicultural Network Association (Verein Multikulturelles Netzwerk): The intercultural project JUMIGG worked with **50 young multipliers against violence** and dealt with different forms of **discrimination**.
- [Somos Salzburg](#) provides **new spaces for encounter and dialogue** through intercultural breakfasts **for families**.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

There are **no guidelines** on transparent public communication targeting young people **and no national or large-scale programmes or initiatives** on providing training for policy-makers at various levels of suitable and youth-tailored communication.

5.9 E-participation

The webspace and social media enable a interactive media consumption and a low-threshold. E-participation projects offer a direct and creative method for youth participation.

Barcamp E-Participation

The e-Participation BarCamp (2012) constituted the beginning of a more intense examination of the issue of online youth participation. The project was an activity in the framework of the Youth Strategy by the Department for Family and Youth at the Federal Chancellery. In cooperation with the International Youthpart project, relevant standards were developed.

90 participants developed the Austrian status quo of e-participation and made proposals for further improvements:

- Contents of participation projects should be generated in a way for participants to get a broad range of information
- Making use of creative web tools such as video platforms in order to include young people with articulation problems
- Existing quality criteria for participation for offline projects must be adapted and/or extended for the requirements of the Internet
- A better link between online and offline participation projects should be implemented to reach diverse target groups

Online Surveys on the Austrian Youth Portal (Österreichisches Jugendportal)

On the [Austrian Youth Portal](#) (German only), online surveys are regularly conducted on a wide variety of youth policy topics. Around 300 to 500 young people take part in each of these surveys. The results are published on the Youth Portal.

Jugenddialog (EU Youth Dialogue)

On a regional, national, and european level, the EU Youth Dialogue asks young people for their views, interests and needs in order to integrate them into politics. It combines on- and offline participation methods and has resulted in the EU Youth Goals. New rounds, related to specific youth goals, are continuously organised by different EU Member States in a rotating system. The participation of Austrian youth is encouraged by [jugenddialog.at](#).

Coronabusters

The [Coronabusters](#) (in German only) project enables youths to play an active part in tackling the pandemic and allows them to be listened to. In sharing their knowledge and experiences with their peers, they can become personal messengers. The conducted projects and elaborated messages are disseminated on different social media channels, making use of the shared hashtag [#zusammendiekurvekriegen](#) ('turning the corner together'). This shall spread the projects and their outcomes to as many young people as possible. With 'Coronabusters' young people in open youth work get the opportunity to develop ideas and to make their own contributions in fighting the pandemic. All activities and measures are developed by young people for young people.

Participation platform (Beteiligungsplattform)

The platform was a joint venture project by the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and the [Austrian National Youth Council](#). Via this platform different online consultation processes were accomplished. Beyond voting, young people could discuss ideas and requests together. This allowed for better and improved answers.

Guidelines for successful e-participation of young people

Peer-Learning is a strong instrument for a mutual exchange. The multilateral co-operation project "youthpart" has been initiated by IJAB - International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany ([IJAB-Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland](#)). The aim of the project was to start an international dialogue about how to motivate more young people to participate in decisions in this prevalent digital society. The Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery was one of the co-operation partners developing these guidelines.

[jugend.beteiligen.jetzt](#) provides practical support for the digital participation of young people. The platform offers procedural know-how and tools, as well as qualification opportunities. It also provides examples of good practice and links to a number of other exemplary digital youth participation projects.

On jugendbeteiligung.at (German only) the Austrian Participation Working Group (ARGE Partizipation) provides further material and guidelines on how to conduct and evaluate different forms of youth participation, e.g. for cities and municipalities.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The initiative "[Get active](#)" by the umbrella organisation of youth information centres, BÖJI, promoted by the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery has been launched in November 2017. During the initial phase, young people had the opportunity to actively shape projects and plans of the youth information centres and the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery. In 2018, other Ministries and organisations were already involved. Additionally, the young people taking part, receive a semi-annual training (project management skills, communication, media, politics, etc.).

Ongoing debates

On the initiative of the Austrian poverty conference, people with poverty and exclusion experiences were invited to the dialogue with representatives. Under the title "Parliament of the excluded" people, who are hardly or not at all represented in the Austrian National Assembly, have the possibility to express their concerns, visions and demands and to discuss this with elected representatives. Thematically it focuses on the subject areas existence protection, work, living, participation, health, social human rights and fundamental rights, children and family as well as age.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Public schooling is tuition-free in Austria. Moreover, children and youths - together with their parents - may, in principle, freely choose their school (in case of excess applications, schools autonomously decide on admission mostly based on grades).

School books and public transport to school are provided for free to every child. School meals and further transport are often provided at low cost.

All children permanently residing in Austria are subject to **general compulsory education**, which starts in September following the child's sixth birthday and lasts for nine years. Since 2016, young people who have completed compulsory schooling have to enrol in a further education or training measure (or a measure preparing for such a measure) until they reach the age of 18 ("[Ausbildungspflicht bis 18](#)").

In terms of **training**, [the Austrian model of a dual apprenticeship](#) system has a long tradition and is highly regarded. The dual vocational training combines apprenticeship in a company and vocational education at a vocational school.

Levels of the Austrian Educational system:

Primary level (4 years)

- Primary School
- Special Needs Education

Lower secondary level (4 years)

- New Secondary School
- General Secondary School
- Academic Secondary School - Lower Cycle
- Special Needs Education

Upper secondary level (1 or 4-5 years)

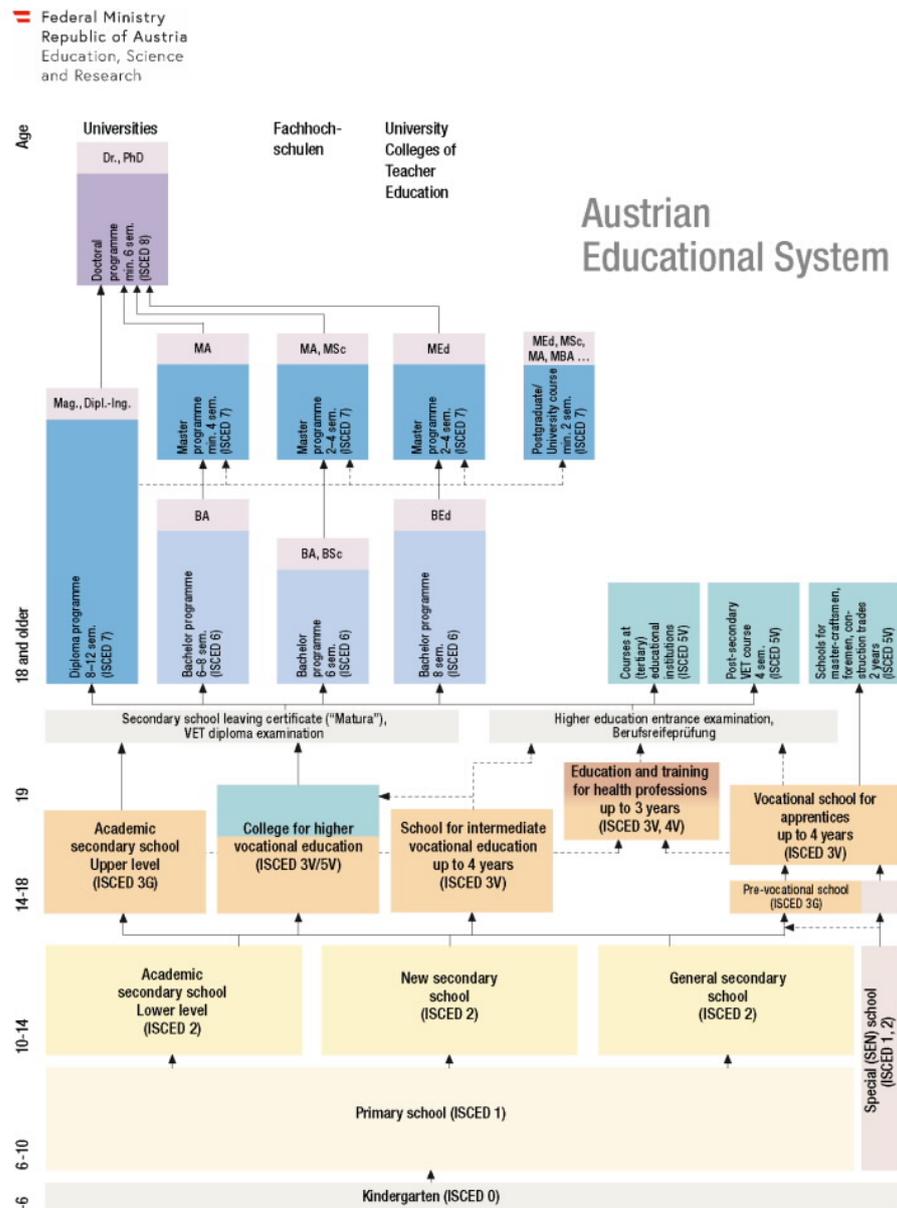
- Pre-Vocational School (1 year)
- Preparation Year for Work (1 year)
- Special needs education (1 year)
- Part-time Voc. School and Apprenticeship (Dual Training) (4 years)

- Academic Secondary School - Upper Cycle (4 years)
- School for Intermediate Vocational education (4 years)
- College for Higher Vocational Education (5 years)

Post-secondary and tertiary Level

- Post-secondary VET course
- School for master-craftsmen
- University College of Teacher Education
- University (Mag., Dipl.-Ing., BA + MA, BSc + MSc, BEd + MEd, Dr., PhD)
- University of Applied Sciences

Austrian educational system



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ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO), ISCED 2011
 ISCED-level of programme
 G – general
 V – vocational

6.1 General context

Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

Public schooling is free in Austria, and parents are officially able to choose the school that their child attends. Teaching materials, school meals and transport to and from school are often provided free or at low cost.

Education until 18

The Austrian Federal Government has decided that all youth until 18 years of age are required to complete an education beyond compulsory school, because it is an important goal to ensure that all young people have a solid education to enable them to organise their future life independently and to be an active member of society. The Education until 18 (AusBildung bis 18) programme was initiated - a joint project of the social partners, the provinces, relevant institutions and companies as well as several ministries (the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the [Department for Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#)).

Starting with the school year 2016-2017, it is compulsory after year 9 for every young person to attend a higher secondary school or a training course by [law](#). The main focus here should always be to provide individual support to young people, taking into consideration their wide range of interests, abilities and needs.

The following educational or training opportunities are suited to Education until 18:

- General education or vocational education secondary schools
- In-company apprenticeships or apprenticeships at state-supported special workshops, including partial qualifications and apprenticeships over an extended period
- High-quality recognised labour market or educational policy measures which prepare young people for re-integration into higher-level training or education programmes
- Programmes for young people with an increased need for support.

Education until 18 is intended to improve the coordination of the many offers available, to use them more efficiently and to close gaps in the range of programmes offered. Areas which will be (further) developed here include support in making choices of education/training, avoiding dropping out of schools and courses, preparation for higher-level training courses for disadvantaged young people, and apprenticeships in companies or in specially organised workshops.

According to the platform [stop-dropout](#), secondary vocational schools have a dropout rate of up to 42 %, and every third apprentice does not finish the vocational education. Drop out rates are higher at learners with migration background.

External Quality Assurance

The [School Quality in General Education \(Schulqualität Allgemeinbildung, SQA\)](#) initiative: Introduced in 2012, SQA is designed to ensure optimum learning conditions for students at school by improving teaching quality and quality assurance in general.

In a coordinated interaction of all levels of the school system, SQA aims to set up **development processes** which range from the formulation of needs and an analysis of the current situation, agreements on objectives, implementation measures, and success control, to conclusions and further plans. The goal is to always have concrete, needs-oriented development projects which the pupils can also attain.

Internal Quality Assurance

[SQA-online](#) (German only): The schools' self-evaluation is backed by the web-based support system SQA-online of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), which is an evaluation instrument for teaching and school quality for the fourth grades of new secondary school, general secondary school, and academic secondary school (year 8). SQA-online can provide indications of strengths and weaknesses at the school location. Participation in SQA-online is voluntary. It allows the pedagogically responsible staff of a school to obtain feedback from pupils by using a questionnaire which focuses on 14 aspects of school quality. Therefore the survey provides an important basis for the development work at the individual school.

Student Social Survey

The [Institute for Advanced Studies](#) ([Institut für Höhere Studien](#), IHS) did carry out the Student Social Survey 2015 on behalf of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

The survey was supervised by a project advisory board containing representatives of the Universities Austria Association (uniko), the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences in Austria (FHK), the Rectors' Conference of Austrian Universities of Education (RÖPH), the Conference of Austrian Private Universities (ÖPUK), the Austrian Union of Students (ÖH), the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) and the Austrian Science Board.

In spring 2015, all students in Austria received an e-mail from their higher education institution inviting them to participate in the online survey.

The survey, which has been carried out at regular intervals since 1970 and covers a wide spectrum of topics relating to the social situation of students, is one of the most important sources of information and a key decision basis for higher education policy in Austria.'

Organisation of the education and training system

All children who are permanently residing in Austria are subject to general compulsory education. It begins with the first of September following the child's sixth birthday, and lasts for nine years. The actual education for children starts at Kindergarten.

1. Primary School
2. New Secondary School
3. Pre-Vocational School
4. Academic Secondary School
5. Special needs education
6. Part-time Vocational School and Apprenticeship
7. School for Intermediate Vocational education
8. College for Higher Vocational Education
9. Post-secondary VET course
10. University College of Teacher Education
11. University
12. University of Applied Sciences

Children subject to compulsory education must be registered at a **Primary School** by their parents or guardians.

The **New Secondary School** (Neue Mittelschule, NMS) has been the standard secondary school since September 2012. The first phase of the nationwide implementation of the New Secondary School in secondary schools was completed in the 2015 –16 school year. All former secondary school sites have thus – starting with the first years – started the development work to become NMSs. All lower stages of AHS schools (academic secondary schools) are invited to take part in the reform project.

Pre-vocational School (Polytechnische Schule) follows the 8th grade and includes another grade. In the 9th or voluntary 10th year of school, pupils are prepared for life, and especially for their working life, by further general education, professional guidance and basic vocational training. An orientation period at the beginning of the school year and professional guidance as a principle of teaching provide a range of opportunities for learning more about the world of work. The choice of career is supported by exploration of businesses and professions in the scope of training workshops and extracurricular institutions, as well as one-day internships (mini-apprenticeships) in companies.

Basic vocational training is offered in specialised areas (elective subjects). They correspond to broad occupational fields in the economy, and basic skills, abilities and knowledge (key skills) are acquired. Action and work-based learning encourage the individual talents as well as the learning motivation of pupils.

Academic Secondary School (Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule, AHS) comprise a four-year lower level and a four-year upper level, and conclude with the upper secondary diploma (Matura). The upper secondary diploma entails the entitlement to study at Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences, University Colleges of Teacher Education, and other colleges.

Forms of Academic Secondary School

- **Gymnasium** with a special focus on languages, humanities and the arts
- **Realgymnasium** with a special focus on natural sciences and mathematics
- **Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium** with a special focus on economics and life skills (including in practical terms)

Special Needs Education (Sonderpädagogik) Integrated lessons and inclusive education open up the possibility for disabled, non-disabled children and young people to have a shared learning experience. Pupils with special educational needs may be taught by way of integrated training in a Primary School, Secondary School, New Secondary School, the Lower Cycle of Academic Secondary School, Pre-vocational School and the Domestic Science School. Integration in pre-vocational school, as well as domestic science schools, have been legally established by the amendment filed under Federal Law Gazette I, no. 9 / 2012. The relevant changes in fundamental provisions of the School Organisation Act ([Schulorganisationsgesetz](#) (SchOG)), School Education Act ([Schulunterrichtsgesetz](#) (SchUG)) and Schooling Obligation Act ([Schulpflichtgesetz](#) (SchPflG)) entered into force on 1 September 2012.

Special Needs School (6 to 15 years of age) consists of nine grades. The final grade is a vocational training year. With the approval of the school board and the consent of the school provider, Special Needs School may be attended for a maximum of twelve years. The Austrian special needs education system consists of ten divisions. The pupils receive basic general education from specially trained teachers, as well as by individual teaching methods, which is intended to provide a basis for further vocational training or the attendance of Secondary Schools.

Young people who have concluded an apprenticeship agreement with an instructing employer (business) or a traineeship (training institution) are obliged to attend **Part-time Vocational School and Apprenticeship** (Berufsschule, BS). The Part-time Vocational School and Apprenticeship curriculum comprises general educational, business, theoretical technical and practical compulsory subjects, as well as optional subjects and non-examined classes.

As part of the initiative *Apprenticeship with Matura* by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), apprentices have the opportunity to attend preparatory courses for the higher education entrance examination during their apprenticeship. Three exams may be completed during the apprenticeship, and the final exam upon turning 19 years of age. The preparatory courses and exams for the higher education entrance examination are free of charge to apprentices.

School for Intermediate Vocational Education (Berufsbildende mittlere Schule, BMS) lasts for between one and four years. BMS with a training period of one or two years result in partial vocational training. BMS with a training period of three or four years result in full vocational training. Graduates gain the relevant professional qualifications of the Commercial Code. After a minimum BMS of at least three years, supplementary courses (three years) lead to matriculation and diploma examinations. There are special forms of professional colleges for graduates of four-year technical schools.

College for Higher Vocational Education (Berufsbildende höhere Schule, BHS): Higher Technical and Vocational Schools impart higher vocational training as well as a broad general education, and conclude with a matriculation and diploma examination after five years. The diploma entails the entitlement to study at Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences, and Colleges of Teacher Education; it also permits the employment in legally regulated professions under Commercial Code. The recognition of relevant professional knowledge for graduates of BHS for universities and colleges is required by law; authorisation according to engineering law applies for graduates of higher technical and agricultural schools.

Postsecondary VET course (Kolleg) Colleges offer a two-year (two to three years for working professionals) higher vocational training equal to higher vocational schools or educational institutions and conclude with a diploma examination. The graduates attain the professional qualifications of the corresponding BHS.

Education careers after the upper secondary diploma

A matriculation examination, vocational matriculation examination or higher education entrance examination is a prerequisite for these courses. For some colleges and higher schools, there are special admission opportunities for graduates of relevant professional four-year colleges or with complete vocational qualifications.

In the 2015/16 academic year, new professional training for those studying in the field of primary education has been available at **University Colleges of Teacher Education** nationwide.

At **University** (Universität) courses in the humanities and cultural studies, engineering and arts, teacher training programmes for teachers in higher secondary schools (two teaching subjects), medical, natural sciences, law, social and economic sciences and theological studies are offered.

Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen) offer science-based vocational training with an emphasis on vocational orientation (at least one practical semester is included in the course).

A [graphical abstract](#) of the Austrian education system is provided by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

Main concepts

After primary school children move on to lower secondary level. Here the pupils' education system diversifies for the first time into three types of schools, i.e. the lower level of academic secondary schools (Allgemein Bildende Höhere Schule - AHS), the new secondary – i.e. comprehensive – schools (Neue Mittelschule – NMS) and general secondary schools (Hauptschule – HS), with the latter to be replaced by the new secondary schools by the 2018/19 school year. For admission to an AHS, children completing year four of a primary school must have good or excellent marks in German (reading/writing) and maths or must pass an entrance examination to that particular school. The lower secondary level lasts four years.

Having completed the lower secondary level (8 years), pupils move on to the upper secondary level (level II).

At this level, the following education pathways are available:

- a prevocational year (*Polytechnische Schulen - PTS*, one-year course),
- level II academic secondary schools (AHS, four years),
- secondary technical and vocational colleges (*Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen - BHS*, five years),
- secondary technical and vocational schools (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen - BMS*; one to four years).

The PTS follows directly on year eight and lasts one year. It offers general education, vocational guidance and basic vocational education.

The AHS comprises secondary levels I and II, i.e. lower and upper secondary levels. The upper secondary level lasts four years. Pupils graduate from an AHS by taking and passing the standard matriculation examination (Matura), which permits access to universities, universities of applied sciences, teacher training colleges and academies.

BHS colleges combine general education with vocational training. These upper secondary courses last five years and pupils graduate by taking a diploma and matriculation examination. There are BHS colleges for technical, economic and commercial fields of training, as well as for tourism and kindergarten teachers, etc.

BMS schools provide vocational training. These courses last between one and four years and some end with a final examination (which does not include matriculation examination). One- or two-year BMS courses provide partial vocational training, while the three- to four-year BMS courses provide full vocational training and include a leaving examination. After leaving a BMS young people may gain access to the tertiary education system *via* different pathways: apart from taking and passing academic entrance examinations (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) or vocational matriculation examinations (*Berufsfreifeprüfung*), they may also take matriculation and diploma examinations after completion of special add-on courses (lasting two to three years). The option of using add-on courses to attain the entrance level for higher education is also open to young people who have successfully completed their apprenticeships and participated in a preparatory course lasting one or two semesters.

As an alternative to continuing their education after completion of compulsory schooling, pupils may also choose to enter the dual training system, apprenticeships that involve on-the-job training (80%) plus compulsory attendance of vocational school courses (*Berufsschule*, 20%). Apprenticeships involve formal training which ends with a final examination. There are more than 200 recognised apprenticeship trades in many different fields. Roughly 39% of young people leaving compulsory school in any given year enter apprenticeship-based training. Those who have completed their apprenticeships may move on to attend schools for master craftsmen/craftswomen or foremen/forewomen.

According to the Austrian Federal Constitutional Law ([Bundesverfassungsgesetz](#)) the fundamental principles of education in Austria are:

- democracy,
- humanity,
- solidarity,
- peace and justice,
- openness and tolerance towards everyone regardless of race, social status and financial background

According to the School Organisation Act ([Schulorganisationsgesetz](#)) of 25 July 1962 "it shall be the task of the Austrian school to foster the development of the talents and potential abilities of young persons in accordance with ethical, religious and social values and the appreciation of that which is true, good and beautiful, by giving them an education corresponding to their respective courses of studies. It shall give young people the knowledge and skills required for their future lives and occupations and train them to acquire knowledge on their own initiative".

The Austrian legal system guarantees general access to public schools without distinction of birth, gender, race, status, class, language or religion. Private sector schools, in contrast, may select pupils according to religion, language or gender, although such selection is rarely applied.

Educational principles in Austrian schools

- Reflexive gender education and gender equality ([Reflexive Geschlechterpädagogik und Gleichstellung](#))
- Health promotion ([Gesundheitsförderung](#))
- Intercultural education ([Interkulturelle Bildung](#))
- Reading education ([Leseerziehung](#))
- Media education ([Medienbildung](#))
- Political education ([Politische Bildung](#))
- Sex education ([Sexualpädagogik](#))
- Environmental education for sustainable development ([Umweltbildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung](#))
- Road safety and mobility education ([Verkehrs- und Mobilitätserziehung](#))
- Economic and consumer education ([Wirtschafts- und VerbraucherInnenbildung](#))

Educational Concerns

- Promotion of gifted students ([Begabungs- und Begabtenförderung](#))
- Education and career orientation ([Bildungs- und Berufsorientierung](#))
- Education for sustainable development ([Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung \(BINE\)](#))
- Development education ([Entwicklungspolitische Bildung](#))
- Intellectual national defence ([Geistige Landesverteidigung](#))
- Equality between girls/boys and women/men ([Gleichstellung von Mädchen/Buben und Frauen/Männern](#))
- Global education ([Globales Lernen](#))
- Literacy promotion ([Leseförderung - Literacy](#))
- Project teaching ([Projektunterricht](#))
- Linguistic education in Austria ([Sprachliche Bildung in Österreich](#))

Educational standards

- Educational standards in general education ([Bildungsstandards in der Allgemeinbildung](#))
- Educational standards in VET and competence-oriented teaching ([Bildungsstandards in der Berufsbildung und kompetenzorientiertes Unterrichten](#))

Educational development and research

Early school leaving ([Frühzeitiger Schul- und Ausbildungsabbruch](#))

National Qualification Framework

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) form the foundation for a transparent presentation and a comparison of qualifications. The NQR in Austria is divided into 8 levels, which are orientated towards learning outcomes. Each of the eight levels is characterised by different descriptors made up of knowledge, skills and competencies. A legal foundation was developed in 2015. The development process was headed by Austria's [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) and involved all target groups represented in the NQF steering group. The government bill was submitted for opinions in autumn and was then adopted by the National Council in spring. The law

was published in the Federal Law Gazette for the Republic of Austria on 21 March 2016. Implementation of the NQF can now be formally finalised based on this law.

Early School Leaving (Frühzeitiger Schulabbruch)

Early school leaving/drop-out is an individual as well as a socially relevant problem in the context of educational poverty and chance justice. Educational poverty appears on one hand in certificate poverty (in missing graduations) as well as in competence poverty. For the phenomenon early school leaving/drop-out there are complicated causes and causal relations which can only be explained by the interaction of the socioeconomic environment, (missing) individual problem solving strategies and systematic conditions. Early school leaving decreases the later life and career opportunities and contributes in the long term to the fact that personal risks like health danger, social exclusion or unemployment are high.

Adult education

The misleading expression “adult education” is not only addressing adults but also young people. It consists of a variety of educational institutions with different objectives and educational opportunities. The training ranges from general education, basic education and remedial training, education qualifications as part of Second-Chance Education, vocational offerings, to management classes and courses for personal development, through to university courses and university education.

Schools for professionals and tertiary training individuals who have already started their professional life or have completed vocational training have the opportunity to acquire relevant qualifications in the form of evening classes. There are secondary and higher vocational schools of general education for professionals, advanced training programmes, colleges and academies. There are also continuing education courses at universities and colleges; the latter also offer additional university of applied sciences courses for working professionals.

Institutions of adult education funded by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), such as adult elementary education, vocational training institutes, business development institutes and a number of non-profit regional adult education institutions offer general education, vocational education and training measures. An important task of adult education is the development and implementation of an adult-oriented and target-group adjusted programme, and the high-quality educational and vocational guidance to enable access to lifelong learning by way of educational information/advice, provision of basic education/ basic skills, acquisition of educational qualifications, etc. **Further education colleges** in all provinces of Austria provide either free or low-cost courses with a large variety of subjects for every age group. At the moment there are 272 further education colleges in Austria.

6.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Federal legislation has played a prominent role in the **formal education system**. Laws that regard education have a de facto constitutional status of aggravated amendment (without constituting formal constitutional law), as such they can only be passed or **amended by a two-thirds majority** in parliament.

Actors

The ministries responsible for formal education are:

1. [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#): holds the main responsibility for education
2. [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs \(Bundesministerium für Digitalisierung und Wirtschaftsstandort\)](#): partial responsibility for education due to the dual apprenticeship system
3. [Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism \(Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus\)](#): for [Secondary Agriculture and Forestry Colleges \(Agrarische Schulen\)](#) that train and educate students (currently around 4000) in the fields of agriculture and forestry
4. [Federal Ministry of Finance \(Bundesministerium für Finanzen\)](#): with regard to the general budget

In addition, further ministries are involved in further education:

- The [division for Families and Youth of the Federal Chancellery \(Sektion für Familie und Jugend im Bundeskanzleramt\)](#): due to its responsibility for youth
- [Federal Ministry of Labour \(Bundesministerium für Arbeit\)](#): support of professional training and development in adjusting jobseekers' qualifications to the labour market's requirements

There are many different stakeholders and actors involved. The main **non governmental actors** taking part in the development of policies in the field of education and training are:

- the [Austrian Trade Union Federation \(Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB\)](#)
- the Chamber of Labour ([Arbeiterkammer, AK](#))
- [the Austrian Economic Chamber \(Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO\)](#)
- the Chamber of Agriculture ([Landwirtschaftskammer, LK](#))
- the [Federation of Austrian Industries \(Industriellenvereinigung, IV\)](#)

Framework of competence on education

The **federal government is responsible for education**. The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) is in charge of the Austrian school system. Its responsibilities in the area of education cover **the entire school system**: from primary school to the completion of secondary school education, as well as university colleges of teacher education. Adult education and lifelong learning also fall within the sphere of responsibility. The federal government **sets the broad framework**, while detailed legislation is enacted by the nine federal states.

Thus, the governance and administration of the entire education system are divided into three levels:

- **federal** level (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung))
- **federal state** level (9 provinces) and
- **local** level (municipalities).

Federal level

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) is **responsible for the Austrian school system**:

- **General school system** (elementary schools, general secondary schools, novel secondary schools, polytechnical schools, educational institutions in the area of Kindergarten pedagogy and social pedagogy, and special-education facilities)
- **Vocational school system** (vocational schools, middle and higher technical, commercial and artisan schools, the business school system and human-professional middle and secondary schools)
- European and international **educational cooperations**
- **Adult education**
- **Educational research** and quality development
- Matters of the **teacher's colleges**
- Diversity politics and linguistic politics, political education, environmental education, consumer education and road safety education, school psychology and educational consultation as well as health promotion
- School partnership
- **Personnel matters** of the AHS, the BMHS and the administrative staff
- **School management**
- Service and pay legislation
- Controlling for teachers and school laws
- School maintenance
- Teaching means and media education

Federal State level

Within each Federal State, the **Regional Education Board** is responsible for **implementing federal policies and for supervising schools** in educational and technical matters.

Education Directors (Bildungsdirektoren) are appointed by the Federal Minister upon proposal of the head of the provincial government. The [Directorate of Education \(Bildungsdirektion\)](#) organises the whole school management for its federal state, despite the split competence between the federal and the provincial level. It thus constitutes a **common federal and provincial authority** and is **responsible for the implementation of the entire school law** within its federal province. The Directorate of Education's responsibility ranges from federal teachers and provincial

teachers, external school organisation and federal management staff to school supervision, quality assurance and education controlling. This authority, which has been introduced by the 2017 educational reforms, has brought about a significant **unification of competence in the implementation of education politics**.

Exemplarily, the **Vienna Board of Education** is the Directorate of Education for the federal province of Vienna. It runs more than 700 schools – primary to upper secondary – in Vienna. Its European Office is responsible for the development, implementation and supervision of a wide range of language learning initiatives, as well as projects that aim at an increased exposure to and understanding of the European dimension. It also constitutes the contact point for international and in particular European affairs, such as the initiation, planning, and implementation of projects and the development and supervision of modern language initiatives.

Local level

Municipal authorities are involved in maintaining schools and there are also some **powers exercised at the school level**.

Almost all matters relating to the **maintenance of general compulsory schools** (except staffing) have been assigned to local authorities but are **supported by the federal state**. **Schools have some autonomy** for budgetary matters and up to a point, are able to adapt curricula to local needs.

School level

With the **educational reform** of 2017, **schools have been granted increased autonomy**. These extended freedoms shall create the conditions for self-responsible and opportunity-providing autonomous schools, which are the most fit to achieve the targets defined in the educational standards and assessed in the standardised maturity and diploma examinations. The reform was based on the idea that often there is no best approach to achieve certain educational aims in school development. Thus, by giving a higher priority to local school development, **schools can be developed depending on their particular needs and starting points**. **Quality management instruments** are implemented in order to achieve the targets.

Each single **school independently chooses its pedagogical concepts and organisational forms** in order to live up to the needs of its pupils, the training and strengths of its teachers, and the particularities of the place and region.

The autonomy includes possibilities in these **areas**

- of **flexibilised teaching time** (de-standardising of 50-minute units) and opening hours
- the **formation of student groups** based on content and subject-related aspects (class, year, interdisciplinary, project-oriented)
- the development of **unique pedagogical concepts** (e.g. design of teaching organisation)
- **cooperations** with (supra)regional and international (extra)school partners
- the selection, development and in-service training of **staff**
- the use of **novel teaching methods** (project teaching, open forms of learning, free work, use of technology, peer learning, networked coordinated content)
- competence-oriented performance assessment

Adult education

Adult education is also regulated by the **federal states and municipalities**. The municipalities are responsible for community education or may participate in common-benefit institutions for further education. The federal states are responsible for the funding of adult education. The **social partners** (AK, LK, ÖGB, WKO - as mentioned above), too, are public bodies responsible for (adult) education. They own institutions for further education and are involved in negotiating collective agreements for providers of education (professionals/employees and institutions/employers). The **ten associations of adult education providers** as defined by the Adult Education Promotion Act ([Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der Erwachsenenbildung und des Volksbüchereiwesens](#)) are brought together by an umbrella association: the **conference of adult education in Austria** ([Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs](#), KEBÖ). The association is a partner of the Ministry for Education, Science and Research in implementing focus points of adult education policy.

Members of the KEBÖ are

- the working group of Austrian educational centres ([Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bildungshäuser Österreich](#), ARGE BHÖ),
- the Austrian vocational training institute ([Berufsförderungsinstitut Österreich](#), BFI),

- the association of public libraries in Austria ([Büchereiverband Österreichs](#), BVÖ),
- the forum for catholic adult education in Austria ([Forum Katholischer Erwachsenenbildung in Österreich](#), FORUM),
- the rural continuing education institute ([Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut](#), LFI),
- the network of Austrian adult education institutes ([Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke](#), RÖBW),
- the Austrian Economic Society ([Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft Österreich](#), VG-Ö),
- the association of adult education for Austrian trade unionists ([Verband Österreichischer Gewerkschaftlicher Bildung](#), VÖGB),
- the association of Austrian Adult Education Centres ([Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen](#), VÖV),
- the Austrian Chamber of Commerce's Institute for Economic Promotion ([Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut der Wirtschaftskammer Österreichs](#), WIFI)

A great number of **NGOs and other non-governmental providers of adult education** are not listed in the Promotion Act of 1973 and may therefore not benefit from basic financial support. As part of the Ö-Cert certification, an up-to-date **registry of adult education providers** has been created ([Verzeichnis der Ö-Cert Qualitätsanbieter](#)). This list of certified providers encompasses many non-governmental providers, associations and NGOs.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

In Austria, there are **several institutions which carry out quality assurance in the formal education sector**. Due to the high density of regulations, the **Federal Ministries**, in particular, are competent for quality assurance in education and training. The bodies competent for the respective qualifications in the Austrian education system are also responsible for their quality assurance.

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#)) **establishes curricular frameworks by means of a broad consultation process**. In some fields, the social partners (AK, LK, ÖGB, WKO - as mentioned above) are included in such consultations. Thus, cross-sectorial cooperation takes place.

Ö-CERT is an **overall framework of quality for adult education providers**. In effect since 2011, it's a nationwide quality trademark and regulated by law. Providers that apply for Ö-Cert have to fulfill the Ö-Cert-basic-requirements and introduce a Quality Management System (QMS).

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

The national **strategy on preventing early leaving from education and training** ([Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen \(Aus-\)Bildungsabbruchs](#)) has been developed by the former Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in cooperation with the former Federal Ministry of Economy, Families and Youth, the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, and the social partners in 2012. The national strategy preventing early leaving from education and training is **part of the Austrian Youth Strategy and of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan**. It encompasses the **policy fields of prevention, intervention and compensation**, and comprises **numerous measures** in order to **enable young people to successfully complete their education**. Austria's first National Reform Programme of 2005-2007 had already included several measures and initiatives to reduce early school leaving and youth unemployment, with a focus on **post-qualification to promote vocational education and training**.

Actors

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#)), [Federal Ministry of Labour](#) ([Bundesministerium für Arbeit](#)), the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) ([Bundesministerium für Digitalisierung und Wirtschaftsstandort](#)), the [Department of Family and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) ([Sektion für Familie und Jugend im Bundeskanzleramt](#)), and the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) **cooperate closely** on the implementation of the strategy to tackle early leaving.

Additionally, **many institutions are involved** in avoiding drop-outs from the education system, bringing young people back into education, or integrating them into the labour market and providing social and vocational support. The **Public Employment Service** ([Arbeitsmarktservice](#), AMS), the **Federal Social Office** ([Sozialministeriumservice](#), BSB) as well as the **social partners** figure prominently. National measures are complemented by **measures of the Federal States**.

Lifelong learning strategy

With the [lifelong learning strategy](#) ([Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen](#)), developed in 2011 by the four responsible Ministries (Education, Social Affairs, Economy and Science) under participation of relevant stakeholders, Austria aimed to **significantly reduce early leaving from education and training** until **2020**, in accordance with the EU 2020 core goals. The goal is further pursued in the present strategy with an **emphasis on prevention and target-group-specific interventions**.

The LLL-Strategy is based upon the **four basic principles** of gender and diversity, equal opportunities and social mobility, quality and sustainability, and performance and innovation. According to its **five guidelines** it shall provide life phase orientation and Life Long Guidance, put learners at the centre, be competence oriented, and encourage participation.

The **ten lines of action** of the LLL-Strategy:

1. strengthening pre-school education and upbringing as a long-term basic prerequisite
2. basic education and equal opportunities in the school and initial training system
3. a free catching up on basic qualifications and ensuring basic competences in adulthood
4. developing alternative transition systems into working life for young people
5. measures for reorientation in education and occupation and consideration of work-life balance
6. strengthening community education approaches through municipal institutions and organised civil society
7. promoting learning-friendly work environments
8. further education to secure employment and competitiveness
9. enriching the quality of life through education in the post-professional phase of life
10. procedures for the recognition of non-formally acquired knowledge and competences in all sectors of education

Education until 18 (Compulsory Formation Act)

In 2016, the Compulsory Formation Act ([Ausbildungspflichtgesetz](#)) was passed. Everyone under the age of 18 is obliged to attend school, vocational training or a preparatory programme, even after completion of the nine year compulsory schooling period. **Compulsory education or training** is at the heart of the **Education until 18 (AusBildung bis 18)** initiative. It shall prevent early school leaving and **reduce youth unemployment**, while providing all young people with **equal opportunities and a good start into (working) life**.

Furthermore, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#)) aims to increase the level of education of all pupils.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

Structural Measures

The National Strategy to avoid ELET takes the **interlocking of (school)system-related and personal measures** into account. The systematic-structural, school location-specific, and individual-oriented measures are understood as both **preventive, and quality-protecting and improving approaches**. To guarantee successful interlocking of the three spheres system – school – person, measures are adjusted on the federal provincial and local level. The **structural measures**, which were initiated in the last years, **are the core of the strategy** for the avoidance early leaving from education and training.

Structural level

- Nationwide installation of **New Middle Schools** (Neue Mittelschule, NMS)
- Introduction of the **standardised competence-oriented final exams**
- Further **development of the daycare at schools**
- Implementation of **educational standards**
- Introduction of the **new upper secondary level with competence modules**

- Expansion and quality assurance of the **occupational orientation and educational consultation**
- **Reading support**
- **Professionalisation of school management** and school supervision
- Introduction and **implementation of systematic quality management** in the general school system

School level

- **School and teaching development** through **quality assurance** (SQA, QIBB)
- A **lowering of school-internal drop out rates**
- An **Early warning system** and a **decrease of negative completion**
- Apt **remedial teaching**
- **Mentoring, Tutoring, Peer-Mediation**; violence prevention programmes; **school social work** in chosen locations
- Interdisciplinary communication, cooperation and coordination of the **psychosocial consultation systems**
- **Youth coaching**
- **Language promotion** and language classes for refugees
- Inclusion of the **parents as an educational partner**
- **All-day schooling or school day care** ([Ganztägige Schulformen oder schulische Tagesbetreuung](#))

Personal level

- Specific **case management**
- **Apprentice coaching** within the triangle "parents-education company-vocational school"
- **Compulsory mediation** whenever a danger of ELET is given
- **School social work**
- **AusbildungsFit** (formerly: production schools)

Literacy: strengthening of reading abilities

Reading support strategies are aimed at **mediating the base competence of reading**, above all on the ability of **understanding and reflecting on texts**. As reading competence is the **basis for any success in other educational processes**, it constitutes an essential contribution to the successful completion of (higher) education and professional training. Youngsters without literacy abilities often lose social connections due to difficulties in participating in social processes. Strengthening literacy **directly contributes to the prevention of poor school experiences and results** and thus to the avoidance of early school leavers. The focus in growing reading ability lies **on individuals and groups with special needs** that may e.g. arise from their social, linguistic or ethnic origin. Additionally, the **strengthening of teachers** is important in order to improve their ability of diagnosing reading competence issues and supporting their improvement. Thus, within the scope of the new pedagogue's education professionalisation, such offers are provided.

Supporting pupils with migration background

The support of pupils with migration background is important, as they are more likely to be affected by educational disadvantages and early school leaving. The focus is set on **mediation of the teaching language and support of their reading competence**. The linguistic competence of **both their mother tongue and the teaching language** is to be consequently promoted. Besides the extension of **mentoring projects**, the support of schools is important in dealing with linguistic and cultural diversity. This entails **professional advice, professional guidance of school** development processes, and the supply of information and training aids.

Pre-school measures

- **Compulsory, free kindergarten year for five-year-olds** (since 2010)
- Determination of language skill levels and corresponding **promotion of the German language in kindergarten** (since 2008)
- Introduction of a joint **federal state-wide education frame plan for elementary educational institutions** (2009)

In-School measures

- **German language promotion** for pupils with mother tongues other than German at general secondary schools and vocational schools
- **Promotional course "German" for extraordinary pupils at general compulsory schools** (Allgemeine Pflichtschule, APS) and at the higher general-education school, lower cycle (AHS-Unterstufe) (§8e SchOG) in the scope of eleven weekly hours
- **Expansion of the mother-tongue teaching project 'school multilingual' ([Schule mehrsprachig](#))**: approximately 33,900 pupils (school year 2014/15) profit from this measure. As more than 20% of Austrian students make daily use of another language than German, more than 400 teachers are employed on teaching roughly 24 languages
- Initiatives for **linguistic-sensitive lessons in polyglot classes** as well as for the **promotion of multilingualism**
- **School books and training aids** for German-as-a-second-language-teaching and mother-tongue teaching as well as bilingual dictionaries for all pupils with mother tongues other than German
- Twice a year the magazine TRIO provides **material for joint reading and teaching in three languages** (German, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Turkish)
- Information sheets on the **subject migration and school** (six issues)
- Nationwide advanced training set **"interculturality and multilingual facility in schools"** (Interkulturalität und Mehrsprachigkeit in der schulischen Praxis)
- **Anchorage of linguistic education** (multilingualism, linguistic basics) in the curricula of the educational colleges
- **Transitional class for refugees** (no longer of compulsory school age) in approx. 44 schools all over the country
- **Brochure "Young refugees at Austrian schools"** (Flüchtlingskinder und -jugendliche an österreichischen Schulen) and Folder **"Welcome to the Austrian school"** (Willkommen in der österreichischen Schule) for children parents - in twelve languages
- Project "mobile intercultural teams" for the support of schools regarding the integration of young refugees.
- With the Refugee-College (Flüchtlings-College) Vienna implemented a separate school type for refugees to prepare young people between 15 and 21 years for a job or further training

School social work

School social work aims to **reduce or prevent school absences and dropouts**. Currently, projects run in secondary schools in the regions Carinthia, Lower Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Vorarlberg and Vienna.

These projects were launched in the new program period of the ESF 2014 – 2020 and are to be **carried out at schools with a high index of social disadvantage**. Nationwide interlinking and exchange on experiences and good practice examples, the development of suitable quality standards, and **cooperation models between school social work and other psychosocial support systems** are envisioned.

The strategy to prevent violence in schools (Strategie zur Gewaltprävention - Gemeinsam gegen Gewalt)

Experiencing violence in school has long-term effects on pupils' mental health and life satisfaction. A positive environment that prevents aggressive behaviour and discrimination, addresses violence, does not leave students alone with their thoughts, and offers support and help has a preventive effect. The aim is to create a school environment that makes all students feel safe. A climate of tolerance and appreciation should enable students to grow into independent and responsible people.

Vocational diploma (Berufsmatura: Lehre mit Reifeprüfung)

Apprentices are offered the opportunity of vocational training (apprenticeship) with the advantages of a Matura (final exam). This can open up better job opportunities for young people, and enables "non-traditional" students to study at universities and Fachhochschulen and participate in lifelong learning.

Promotion of talents (Begabungsförderung)

The promotion of students aims at supporting, promoting and accompanying pupils in their holistic development and the achievement of their potential. It is based upon the contemporary principle of educational individualisation. Giftedness first develops in interaction with a stimulating social and

intellectual environment and is thus inherent as potential in every human being. The promotion of giftedness focuses on teaching and learning settings that consistently enable a development of this potential. It is a joint effort by parents, educational institutions and extracurricular institutions.

ibobb: Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf

"**Information, counselling and guidance for education and careers**" includes all measures for educational and vocational guidance at school. Decisions on education and training paths shall be made according to talents, independent of family, social, gender and regional background. Pupils are supported to follow their individual best educational and vocational path towards becoming young self-reliant people. Basic competences for making autonomous decisions are conveyed in compulsory school subjects and career orientation lessons, practical experience is made available through projects, and individual information and counselling is provided by student and educational counsellors.

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Youth coaching

In the difficult phase of **deciding on their future education and career path**, young people and their guardians need **professional counselling and support**. The offer of youth coaching ([Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz](#)) is based on the **principle of voluntariness and is free of charge**. It aims to plan the ideal next steps on the basis of young people's strengths and abilities, thus enabling a successful transition into future working life. Youth coaching is also intended to contribute to the personal and social stabilisation of young people's situations.

Open Youth Work

The three central approaches of Open Youth Work are the **focus on open space and leisure time, target groups and the social environment**. The offers are developed in cooperation with young people and are based on their living environments and needs. Specific target groups are reached by means of gender-reflected children and youth work, intercultural work, and work with cliques and peer groups.

The **objectives** characterising Open Youth Work contribute to tackling ELET:

- *Personality development*

Open Youth Work is a place for recreational activities, communication, information, learning, experience, development, advice, orientation, help and support. It thus has a preventive impact. The continued development of the personality of young people is actively supported, with a focus on independence, personal responsibility, and empowerment. The focus on "learning", "knowledge" and "experiencing" deepens the social, personal, cultural, intercultural, political and gender-related skills.

- *Action competence*

Open Youth Work expands young people's action competence by **specifically initiating and promoting educational processes**. Cognitive education is an essential aspect in this context. The absorbing, processing, reflecting on and acting on information is promoted. The measures are funded on the federal, federal state and local level. Beside these levels, important stakeholders and co-operation partners for providing extracurricular offers are the social partners, the public employment system and regional institutions.

Reading mentor project (Pilotprojekt LesepatInnen)

In order to awaken the joy in reading and the interest in books, volunteer reading mentors visit schools once or twice a week in order to read with participating students. This provides a cosy and stress-free atmosphere to transmit reading skills.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

Lifelong learning Strategy

With the national strategy on lifelong learning, Austria aimed to clearly reduce ELET according to the EU 2020 core aim. With these aims, the clear lowering of the dropout rate was strived for. There is no monitoring of the implementation of the strategy itself, but some of the individual

measures are being evaluated. In 2018, the proportion of early school leavers was 7.8% (EU-27: 10.2%). Beyond 2020, Austria will work on pursuing this goal and strategy.

National education report (Nationaler Bildungsbericht 2018, NBB)

The regular national education reporting is a legally anchored core task of the Federal Institute of Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School Sector ([Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens](#), BIFIE). The report is written by experts of the Austrian education research landscape and issued every three years since 2009. It provides a comprehensive basis for the politico-educational discussion and controlling of public education. The NBB is thus to serve as an empirical and scientific basis for evidence-based decisions. The NBB consists of a two-volume parallel structure: Volume 1 (the educational system in the mirror of data and indicators) shows the total statistic volume of data to the education area, while Volume 2 (analyses of politico-educational central topics of interest) discusses current politico-educational questions. Topics are analysed and assessed on the basis of available data and research results.

Monitoring and quality assurance

The **quality initiative vocational training** ([QualitätsInitiative BerufsBildung](#), QIBB), is a VET Quality initiative of the General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training (GD VET) of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) to implement systematic quality management (QM) in the Austrian vocational school sector. The objectives pursued with QIBB are the **assurance and further development of school and teaching quality** as well as the quality of administrative services at the executive levels of schools, provincial governments and the federal government. The supra-company training, for instance, has been evaluated on a regular basis. For schools, analogously, the 'quality management school' ([Qualitätsmanagement Schule](#)) is implemented.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

According to the **National Coordination Point of the National Qualification framework (Koordinierungsstelle für den Nationalen Qualitätsrahmen)**, Austria is currently working on developing a national strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning based on the recommendation of the European Council of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Council recommends that member states establish national regulations for validating competencies acquired through non-formal and informal methods by 2018.

The general aim is to record competencies acquired through non-formal and informal methods and give them visibility. This should give people who have acquired competencies outside of the formal qualifications system better educational and professional opportunities.'

The Accreditation Austria, responsible for quality assurance in Higher Education, issued recommendations for the validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences in Austria in December 2016.

In 2012, the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) was established as an agency for quality assurance for Austrian higher education institutions on the basis of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

According to AQ Austria's legal remit, AQ Austria is responsible for the entire higher education sector in Austria (with the exception of university colleges of teacher education). In carrying out its responsibilities, AQ Austria follows these basic principles:

- The higher education institutions (HEIs) bear the main responsibility for the quality of their activities and for quality assurance and improvement.
- AQ Austria understands its procedures as supplementary to an HEI's internal quality assurance. It is independent in what it does and not bound by any instructions. Decisions in quality assurance procedures are made exclusively in accordance with quality criteria.

LLL-Strategy

The needs-driven implementation of appropriate models for validation of non-formal learning is an objective of the broad-based opinion-forming process in the project.

The development of an Austrian validation strategy for recognition of non-formal and informally-acquired knowledge is an objective that was supposed to be implemented by 2016. It will be developed by an inter-institutional working group as part of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy LLL:2020. The results of this project will be included in the plan.

Pilot projects based on the results of this process will help to raise awareness and boost acceptance and willingness to recognise non-formal learning in Austria. For example, workshops will be organised with institutions and associations that work with disadvantaged people, in which results from the process will be used for discussion and supplemented by experiences and knowledge gained from those events. The aim is to develop a plan for a validation strategy which is coordinated as broadly as possible, and takes into account motives, benefits and all target groups and responds flexibly to needs and requirements.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning on the federal state level

As many initiatives and measures are part of duties of the federal states, it is possible to validate non-formally gained skills in some federal states. A good practice example is the Viennese Validation System "My Chance, I am able to do this!" (Wiener Anerkennungssystem "Meine Chance, ich kann das!").

With this Viennese recognition system developed by the social partners, the Viennese vocational schools, the public employment system (AMS) and the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds, waff) the city of Vienna offers a new way to the extraordinary apprenticeship diploma since May 2015. The Viennese recognition system is another milestone in the scope of the Qualification Plan Vienna 2020.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is not yet common in Austrian Higher Education. At the moment, VNIL in Austria cannot lead to a complete award of a higher education qualification. Still, it is possible to obtain admission to some Austrian HE institutions or to receive credits for prior learning within study programmes. Examples of VNIL initiatives in Austria:

- Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung, SBP)
- Secondary School Vocational Examination (Berufsreifeprüfung, BRP): The General Higher Education Entrance Examination is for people who went through apprenticeship training or vocational education schools but did not take an examination entitling them to study at higher education level.
- Admission without final exams (Reifeprüfung/Matura, SBP or BRP: Under certain conditions, higher education institutions admit applicants who have not taken the final exams (Reifeprüfung/Matura) or any other exam mentioned above.

Youthpass

Youthpass is an official, European certificate for the recognition and documentation of non-formal and informal learning experiences in the extracurricular youth sector. The Youthpass is issued for Erasmus +: Youth in action projects. With the Youthpass the participants of these projects can collect their experiences and document their gained knowledge.

Information and guidance

Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich, wba)

The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education is a validation system for the qualification and recognition of adult educators. Adult educators' qualifications are recognised according to set standards based on qualification profiles.

Launched in 2007 wba acknowledges prior learning results and offers guidance and counselling as far as the acquisition of missing skills is concerned.

Target Groups

The wba is directed towards individuals who are actively involved in adult education in Austria and beyond and want to take part in a certification process.

Appropriate areas of work would be

- managerial positions in institutes of vocational and non-vocational adult education, responsibility for educational matters, the planning, organization and support of learning processes
- teaching/training
- (career) guidance and counselling or
- librarianship.

To cause a consciousness for the value of the competence acquired non-formally and informally as an essential supplement to the education at school, measures with professional experts are compiled in the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery taking the national qualification frame (NQR) into account:

WIK:I – What I can do through informal learning (WIK:I - Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen)

The initiative WIK:I allows young people to collate and present their informally acquired skills. The focus is on informal learning among peers, at leisure, within their families, in sports, in their voluntary and/or honorary activities, in their hobbies, in the context of jobs, etc.

Qualified WIK:I portfolio counsellors assist the young people in systematically documenting their informal learning experiences. Starting with collecting and describing personally significant activities (“what I do”), young people are eventually able to identify and describe the skills they gained in the process (“what I can do”). The description of skills is always linked to specific activities (“I can do this because ...”).

The benefit of compiling a portfolio is that young people gain an awareness of their informally acquired skills and a sense of direction for their subsequent education and career planning; above all, it empowers them when they are required to describe and present their skills (e.g. in the context of job interviews).

The principles of the WIK:I method are:

- to focus on strengths and resources,
- to promote empowerment and initiative,
- to encourage self-reflection,
- to focus on dialogue and group processes (peer learning) as well as a biographical approach to learning.

With respect to the validity of the results, the WIK:I method is a guided self-assessment for young people.

aufZAQ

aufZAQ certifies non-formal courses for people who work in the extracurricular child and youth work in Austria and South Tyrol.

Competence Checks

The Austrian Public Employment Service offers “competence checks” for asylum seekers. These checks include the validation of informal learning.

Quality assurance

Since many procedures and initiatives for validating non-formally or informally acquired competencies belong to the formal education system and/or aim at a qualification equivalent to one of the formal systems, the same quality assurance activities as in the formal system are relevant. Due to the wide distribution of responsibilities across various ministries, there is no overall quality assurance framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, the consultation document for the development of the Austrian validation strategy refers to the introduction of measures for ensuring the quality of validation arrangements.

No overall framework for the evaluation of the arrangements exists for the evaluation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Evaluation is carried out in different ways and with a different frequency (if at all) for the different measures, projects, or initiatives. Evaluation studies are usually carried out by independent experts or by researchers from universities and are usually commissioned by the institution providing the validation measure or by the responsible ministry.

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Policy framework

OeAD GmbH (Österreichischer Austauschdienst)

The OeAD GmbH is the central service centre for European and international mobility and cooperation programmes in the fields of education, science and research. The OeAD GmbH advises, promotes and provides support to strategic development and provides guidance to implementation measures. It analyses international development and uses this information to form recommendations and measures.

The federal law for incorporating the OeAD GmbH (Bundesgesetz zur Errichtung der „OeAD-Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung“, [BGBl. I Nr. 99/2008](#)) describes all relevant tasks and topics of the OeAD. All shares in the OeAD are owned by the federal government. The Federal Minister of Science, Research and Economy is tasked with exercising the shareholder rights.

- Identity & areas of focus

The OeAD is the central service point for European and international mobility and cooperation programmes in education, science and research. As a full-service provider, they deal with the creation and implementation of the programmes. They coordinate international higher education marketing and represent Austria as a location for learning and research around the world. They are expert partners for strategic tasks in international cooperation.

- Core business

The core business is the exchange of people across the age and educational spectrum. In doing this they support institutional cooperation in Europe and worldwide, manage international cooperation programmes and coordinate and support their implementation. For example, there is a special focus on development cooperation and on exporting education.

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The OeAd provides the following information online:

Mobility projects in Erasmus+

Mobility projects in Erasmus+ support study and training periods abroad in general education and vocational education and training. The aim is to achieve positive and sustainable effects for the participants and the participating organisations.

This is the sub-programme with the highest budget within the Erasmus+ programme: From 2014 to 2020 the European Union wants to support up to five million stays abroad throughout Europe.

In Austria alone, some 14,000 people become mobile by means of Erasmus+ every year.

Institutions working in the field of education can submit mobility projects. The projects support the mobility of learners, teachers and staff at educational institutions.

It has been proved that education-related stays abroad contribute to an improvement of people's vocational, social and foreign language abilities and skills. The experience gained not only enriches people on the personal level but also enters educational institutions and the labour market. It contributes to internationalisation, an increase in quality and innovation of the national education systems.

Students can spend part of their studies or do an internship in another European country by means of Erasmus+. Graduates, as well as pupils in initial vocational education and apprentices, also have the possibility to do on-the-job training abroad. Teachers and staff of educational institutions of all educational sectors can benefit from further education activities abroad or teach abroad for a certain period of time. International mobility in higher education to and from partner countries worldwide as well as "Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees" are also supported.

- [Erasmus+ mobility projects in school education](#) (for (nursery school) teachers, teachers and other educational staff at schools)
- [Erasmus+ mobility projects in vocational education and training](#) (for people in initial vocational education and training and specialists in vocational education and training)

- [Erasmus+ mobility projects in higher education](#) (for students, graduates, lecturers and staff at higher education institutions)
- [Erasmus+ mobility projects in adult education](#) (for adult educators and other adult education staff)

OeAD supports for [pupils, teachers and the school system](#):

A whole series of OeAD programmes and initiatives focus on schools and kindergartens.

[Erasmus+, the educational programme](#) of the European Commission, supports

- further education of teachers and other school staff
- cooperation of actors in education (higher education institutions, schools, authorities, NGOs, companies, ...) to learn from each other or try something new
- partnerships between schools and kindergartens from different countries
- learning periods of youngsters (14 years or older) at partner schools abroad (this is only possible within the framework of school partnerships)
- networking of teachers and cooperation of schools on a [web platform](#) all over Europe.

Sparkling Science and **Young Science** support cooperation between science and schools by means of:

- [research projects](#) in which scientists and pupils carry out research together
- the research contest [Citizen Science Award](#), in which school classes send data, pictures or evaluations to research teams
- [school visits](#) of researchers
- the awarding of the Young Science Quality Label for research partner schools
- [information](#) about cooperation possibilities and events

The projects for cooperation between science and schools are funded by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

Additionally, the international organisations [AFS](#) and [EF](#) provide pupil exchange programmes abroad for young people in Austria.

OeAD support for [vocational education and training](#) and further education:

People in initial vocational education: The European programme Erasmus+ provides financial support options for pupils at schools of vocational education who want to gain experience abroad at a comparable institution. This also applies to apprentices who want to do part of their training at a company in another European country.

School leavers and apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship can apply for financial support within the framework of Erasmus+ provided that they complete their internship abroad within one year of completing their school education or their apprenticeship.

Specialists in vocational education and training, e.g. teachers and trainers as well as career counsellors and personnel managers in companies can apply for funded stays abroad for vocational further education and training in the form of teaching assignments, job shadowing, etc.

Vocational education and training institutions can submit innovative project ideas in Erasmus+; the exchange of good practice between them can also be funded. European project partners – e.g. educational institutions, companies, social partners, authorities, research institutions, etc. – will, for example, develop new curricula together. In this way e.g. a virtual platform to document the work of dance instructors, courses for teachers and trainers who want to prevent young people from dropping out of their education or training, or materials to facilitate access of deaf youngsters to the labour market will be developed with the participation of Austrian institutions.

Quality development in vocational education and training

One of the departments of the OeAD is the Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ARQA-VET).

ARQA-VET has three central tasks:

- As a network node in the EU network EQAVET, ARQA-VET acts as a link and communication interface to the European Union and thus enhance quality in vocational education and training on the European level.
- As a national expertise centre, ARQA-VET provides information and cross-link the Austrian stakeholders, e.g. by means of the annual quality network conference.

- As a service and support provider, ARQA-VET supports the Department of Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) in the implementation and further development of the [Quality Initiative Vocational Education and Training](#) (QIBB).

Other international co-operations in higher education

'While scholarship programmes support stays abroad of individuals, project support enables transnational cooperation in scientific projects. People can apply for project support within the framework of bilateral agreements or within multilateral networks. Funding is provided mainly for accommodation expenses and travel expenses. There are different foci in project funding, both thematic and regional ones, and both project terms and funding sums vary.'

- **Bilateral "Aktionen" (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary)**

'The "**Aktionen**" between Austria and the neighbouring countries **Slovakia, Hungary and Czech Republic** enable scientific exchange between the neighbouring countries and support the learning of each other's language. Different scholarships for students, lecturers and researchers as well as project funding support bilateral cooperation with the aim of creating sustainable relationships.'

[Aktion Austria – Slovakia](#)

[Aktion Austria – Hungary](#)

- **ASEAN-European Academic University Network (ASEA-UNINET)**

'The higher education institutions network's aim is to support research and teaching activities between the member universities in Europe and South-East Asia (in Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam).

ASEA-Uninet Austria receives funds from the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). Approximately 100 bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects between Austrian and Southeast Asian member universities are funded each year.

The main focus is on research projects in which scientists as of the post-doc level can take part. Training/teaching courses, workshops and summer schools are also supported.

Project funding is available for travel costs and/or accommodation costs according to the ASEA-UNINET terms. A financial contribution of the Asian partner university in the relevant project is desired.'

- **Eurasia-Pacific Uninet (EPU)**

'The Eurasia-Pacific Uninet (EPU) was established in 2000 with the objective of creating an educational network for Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and educational institutions in Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific area. It comprises a great number of international partners of all fields of research and supports projects in the areas of research, research-based teaching and art as well as technology cooperations. For the academic year 2015/16, the EPU approved approx. 60 projects with a total funding volume of 325,000 euros. Only scientists at Austrian EPU member institutions can submit project applications. The funds serve exclusively to cover travel and accommodation costs. The amount of the funding depends on the individual projects (Guideline: 1500 euros/person for travel costs and accommodation).'

- **HERAS Scholarship Programme**

'The HERAS scholarship programme offers (prospective) PhD students and PostDocs a grant for their studies and/or research in Austria. The target group are staff members of Kosovan public higher education institutions, which are not in Austria yet. Scholarship amount and age limits for PhD: € 1050,-/month; max. 35 years old (exceptionally 40 years old in case of considerable care responsibilities); for PostDoc: € 1.150,-/month; max. 40 years old or max. 5 years after award of the PhD degree.'

- **IMPULSE Iran - Austria**

IMPULSE Iran - Austria is based on a mutual interest to considerably improve knowledge exchange on an international level and to strengthen the international profile of the institutions involved. The aim of the programme is to stimulate joint activities and contribute to direct collaboration among universities, higher education and research institutions of both countries. Thus, the OeAD-GmbH and the MSRT will support the initiating phase of sustainable partnerships financially with means from their respective funds. The Centre for International Cooperation and Mobility at the OeAD-

GmbH will be in charge of administering all relevant programme procedures on the Austrian side. The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) will be in charge of the administration of all relevant programme procedures on the Iranian side.

- **Scientific & Technological Cooperation (S&T Cooperation)**

'The Scientific & Technological Cooperation (S&T Cooperation) is based on inter-governmental and bilateral agreements for co-operations in the fields of science and technology. The financial support is intended for research visits within the framework of concrete scientific cooperation projects with researchers from partner countries of the Scientific & Technological Cooperation; the basic funding of the research projects must be secured from other sources. Funding is available mainly for travel and accommodation costs. Active bilateral agreements are currently in place with Argentina, Albania, Bulgaria, China, France, India, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary and Vietnam.'

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

„Erasmus +: Youth in action"

Within the scope of „Erasmus +: Youth in action," it is possible to take part in different training and continuing education measures.

Further information on mobility projects can be found in chapter 2. [Voluntary activities](#) and Chapter 9. [Youth and the world](#).

Quality assurance

Quality Management at the OeAD

'Since 2006 the OeAD has been running a quality and process management system, which aims to guarantee continuous improvement, development and optimisation of its services and internal processes. In the same year, the OeAD was certified for the first time according to the international quality standard ISO 9001. Since then the effectiveness of the quality management system has been confirmed every year by external audits.

The system of internal quality assurance and improvement is based on the business processes that are documented in a transparent and uniform manner. Thanks to the regular evaluation of process performances and workflows by those responsible for the processes, on the one hand through the annual internal audit undertaken by the designated QM officer and on the other hand procedural errors and implementation risks, structural failures and deviations from the goals can be identified early and the corresponding corrective or preventative measures can be brought about. The expansion of the internal control system for compliance management is especially helpful in ensuring the business' legal compliance and reducing the corresponding risks.

To complement the system, critical feedback, complaints and suggestions from both the service recipient as well as from the contracting entity are promptly captured and analysed in order to be able to take pick up on the trends and concerns voiced by our customers.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

Schools

According to the [National Action Plan on Disabilities](#) the school reform package of 1993 laid down that integration in schools is a task of primary schools.

In 1996, the integration of disabled children into secondary stage I was made legally binding. The education of children and young people with special educational needs can either take place in a special school for the specific disability, or in integrated/inclusive form at a mainstream school (primary school, secondary modern school or the lower stage of a general secondary school – AHS). In order to fulfill their compulsory schooling, pupils with special educational needs currently have the opportunity to attend a special school for up to twelve years, a polytechnical school or a one-year domestic science school (from the school year 2012–13).

Even more, teachers who are competent in sign language are needed to teach deaf children and young people. Courses at teacher training colleges and universities are being offered for this purpose.

In 2011, a participative strategy for the implementation of the UN Disability Rights Convention in the Austrian school system was initiated. To this end, dialogues, conferences, information and discussion events have been held.

The most important areas of action and measures identified until now relate to:

- The pedagogic and organisational development of schools and lessons
- The improvement of regional support structures
- Support based on needs and requirements
- The training of teachers
- Scientific guidance

In the form of the 'inclusive region' approach, a way to realise this in practice has been developed: the federation, the federal states and communities will initially test inclusive school and teaching programmes in pilot regions and then extend the latter over time.

- The quality of the establishment of special educational needs should be further improved (e.g. in order to differentiate it more clearly from language support measures)
- Improvements in the field of counselling for the parents and guardians of children with special needs
- Raising public awareness, especially among parents of children without disabilities.
- Increased in-service training courses on Austrian sign language for teachers and also in the care and support of pupils who are hard of hearing.
- Care should be taken to respect the principle of inclusion in the field of educational media and media education.
- The participation in European projects (e.g. MIPIE–Mapping the implementation of policy for inclusive education) is intended to help to identify data which is relevant to planning, to improve the data situation and ultimately to increase the inclusion rate. Participation in the project 'Teacher Education for Inclusion across Europe' is being used for the development of teacher training in Austria.

Universities

The former Ministry for Science, Research and Economy developed the [national strategy on the social dimension of higher education \(Nationale Strategie zur sozialen Dimension in der Hochschulbildung\)](#), published in February 2017.

The government's programme for 2013-2018 stipulated that measures were to be devised "to support the compatibility of work and study and to provide non-traditional access to the entire higher education sector".

Amongst other things, these identified the following target groups: Underrepresented groups can be broadly defined on the basis of the findings of the 2015 Social Survey of Students, the results of which are included in the EUROSTUDENT survey for international comparison, as well as higher education statistics.

Underrepresented groups include:

- Students whose parents do not have higher education entrance qualifications or who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (currently around 40%).
- Underrepresentation of women or men in particular degree programmes (e.g. women in technical studies, men in veterinary medicine studies)
- Students from particular regions/federal states
- Students with migrant backgrounds (with an Austrian entrance qualification)
- Students with a disability and/or chronic illness

In addition, attention was paid to groups with specific needs, where particular indicators could, over the course of a student's educational biography, change and/or become combined in new ways.

Groups with specific needs include:

- Students with young children or other care responsibilities
- Students with a disability and/or chronic illness
- Students with delayed entry to higher education (i.e. at least two years since leaving school or "second chance" education)

- Students in employment

The National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education lays out three target dimensions with three action lines and practical measures for each.

1. More inclusive access
 1. Improve quality and accessibility of information materials
 2. Outreach activities and diversity-sensitive course guidance
 3. Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competencies
2. Avoid drop-out and improve academic success
 1. Ease entry into higher education
 2. Structures of study programmes and quality of teaching
 3. Increase compatibility of studies with other areas of life
3. Create basic parameters and optimise the regulation of higher education policy
 1. System-related issues in higher education systems
 2. Integrate the social dimension into strategic planning for higher education and create appropriate governance structures
 3. Further development of student support schemes

Non-formal educational programmes

Non-formal educational programmes offer special opportunities for people with disabilities. The design of the curriculum is far more flexible than in formal education, as are the certification processes, which can be structured according to the needs of the participants. What is still lacking in this context are clear rules on the binding nature and transparency of the respective educational processes with regard to their usefulness on the employment market and for more advanced courses. Non-formal education offers for people with disabilities should be assigned to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF, a system in which all education and training levels are related to each other, thus enabling comparison). This should lead to an improvement in their usability in employment and to greater recognition of these qualifications in society and the labour market. The national youth council BJV, ant the umbrella organisation for open youth work bOJA and youth information centres BÖJI provide a large variety of participation projects among their member organisations.

Measures within the National Action Plan on Disabilities

- The principle of accessibility should be given greater emphasis in the award of subsidies.
- Creation of a framework for NQF Corridor 2 with the involvement of disabled persons' associations, the establishment of corresponding structures and the assignment of at least 15 qualifications in the field of NQF Corridor 2.

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Equal treatment legislation currently comprises the following areas:

- Equal treatment of women and men at work.
- Equal treatment at work irrespective of ethnicity, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation.
- Equal treatment irrespective of the ethnicity outside work.
- Equal treatment of women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services
- Principles concerning the regulation of equal treatment at work in agriculture and forestry.

The Act Governing the Equal Treatment Commission and the Ombud for Equal Treatment deal with the institutions for combating discrimination. Persons feeling discriminated against can appeal to them. The Federal Equal Treatment Act applies to all persons employed with federal authorities or applying for employment or training with federal authorities; it forbids discrimination on grounds of gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or beliefs. Its provisions apply in particular to the establishment of employment or training relationships, fixing of pay, promotion, and termination of the employment or training relationship. Equal treatment in areas falling within the competence of the states is regulated by individual state laws.

The legislation governing the equal treatment of people with disabilities covers the following areas:

- The Act Governing the Hiring of People with Disabilities implements the principle of equal treatment at work of persons with disabilities.
- The Federal Act on Equal Treatment of People with Disabilities includes the protection from discrimination in everyday life. Both acts took effect on 1 January 2006 and apply both to the private sector and to federal institutions. Both acts were amended in 2008 and 2011 to further improve the situation of persons affected by discrimination.

Legal Framework for Equality

Gender equality is often equated with the factual implementation of equal rights, e.g., in context of personal or job-related potential for development. Gender equality is not a natural state, but rather a lasting adjustment assignment (work promoting gender equality).

Especially during the 20th century, many very important measures for the promotion of gender equality were decided.

- [Milestones on the Path to Gender Equality](#)
- [National directives](#)
- [Gender Equality in Science and Research in Austria](#)

Equal treatment act

Persons not to be discriminated against

Grounds for discrimination

- Persons on grounds of gender
- Persons on grounds of ethnicity
- Persons belonging to a specific religious community or denomination, or persons holding specific beliefs or opinions
- Persons on grounds of age
- Persons on grounds of sexual orientation

The discrimination prohibition applies to the following:

- Establishment of an employment relationship
- Pay (also including company pension funds)
- Voluntary social benefits
- In-house special and advanced training
- Promotion
- Other working conditions
- Termination of employment

It is prohibited to discriminate anyone

- In job counselling, job training, advanced vocational training outside employment
- With respect to membership in an employees' or employers' organisation and in the access to the services provided by such organisations
- In the access to self-employment
- In social protection
- With respect to means-tested social benefits
- In education and training
- With respect to publicly offered goods and services
- Not included are services provided by the government without economic consideration in fulfilment of its public functions

Youth coaching

The predominant aim of youth coaching is to keep pupils that are at risk of exclusion motivated to attend school and to get a diploma. As young people with migrational background are at higher risk of exclusion, this is an important measure to provide equality.

Apprentice coaching

Coaching and counselling for apprentices and companies

Apprentices and education companies that require consultation or counselling during the education can apply for an accompanying coaching. The new programme »Lehrlingscoaching and Lehrbetriebscoaching« runs under the brand "Apprenticeship instead of emptiness" (Lehre statt Leere).

Promotion of German as the teaching language

All year round 2-hour non-binding practise classes "supporting linguistic training German" are provided for all students with deficits.

Educational principle: Intercultural education ([Interkulturelle Bildung](#))

Intercultural learning as a teaching principal has been introduced in all general education schools. Numerous intercultural relations are found in the curricula of all school types, also of the vocational

middle and secondary schools. A teaching principle is not limited to a certain subject but should be part of all subjects. The teaching principle „intercultural learning“ should contribute to the mutual understanding, to recognising differences and common characteristics and to the dismantling of prejudices.

Educational principle: Reflexive gender education and gender equality ([Reflexive Geschlechterpädagogik und Gleichstellung](#))

It is important to reflect on the dimension of gender in school teaching and learning with the aim of expanding individual scope for action and overcoming gender stereotypical assignments and prescriptions.

Initiatives and programmes by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research regarding Gender and Diversity and by the Federal Chancellery-Division for Women and Equality

- [8th European Conference: Gender Equality in Higher Education](#)
- [The Austrian Science Fund's \(FWF\) Career Development Programme for Women](#)
- Gabriele Possanner State and Promotion Prize
- [Equal Treatment Commission](#)
- [Girls' Day](#)
- [Boys' Day](#)
- [Gender Mainstreaming Guidance Gender Budgeting in Public Administration](#)
- [Käthe Leichter Recognition Award](#)
- [Interministerial Working Group Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting \(Interministerielle Arbeitsgruppe Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting\)](#)
- Equal Treatment Act ([Gleichbehandlungsgesetz](#))
- National Action Plan for equality between women and men in the labor market ([Nationaler Aktionsplan zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern am Arbeitsmarkt](#))
- [UniKid-UniCare](#)

Equality of opportunities

Providing equality of opportunities already begins in the elementary education area and with the strengthening of the education competence by consequent parental education. The new middle school and the all-day offers are also relevant for lifelong learning.

Open Youth Work

The three central approaches of Open Youth Work are the focus on open space and leisure time, the focus on target groups and the focus on the social environment. The offers are developed in cooperation with the target groups and are based on their living environments and their needs. They allow them to make experiences in their leisure time, without any pressure to perform or any strict orientation on efficiency. The orientation on specific target groups among young people is visible in the gender-reflected children and youth work, in intercultural work, as well as in work with cliques and peer groups. The common space children and young people share with other social groups can also serve as a starting point for relevant services. Therefore, in addition to location-related Open Youth Work, mobile youth work represents an important approach in creating relations to young people at those places they frequent, from residential areas and parks to railway stations, and to offer them services that are based on their needs.

National Youth Council (Bundesjugendvertretung, BJV)

Girls and Women, Gender Mainstreaming

The BJV regularly launches new projects to empower and to encourage young women. Demands of the BJV are formulated in the position paper women-political demands ([Positionspapier Frauenpolitische Forderungen](#)) and in the position paper gender mainstreaming ([Positionspapier Gender Mainstreaming](#)).

Diversity

The BJV has dealt intensely with different facets of the diversity and has presented the position paper on diversity and solidarity. As young refugees have the right of protection, for help and an appropriate environment for their age, the BJV offers workshops (together with AKNOE) and provides a toolbox on the topic migration and asylum.

Adult education centres (Volkshochschulen)

These institutions also provide free tutoring for all pupils at schools in Vienna. With this continuous learning, young people can also further develop their learning techniques and learning strategies.

Youth Information Centres

The youth information centres provide folders and workshops all over Austria. These initiatives are partially funded by the state.

Connecting people

Asylum Coordination Austria has compiled various initiatives and contact addresses regarding refugee relief on its website. Connecting people is one of them. Austrian can take the good partnership for unaccompanied minor refugees.

Integration house (Integrationshaus)

The "Integrationshaus" provides accommodation and help to particularly needy refugees and asylum seekers.

Young Caritas

Young Caritas sees its role to act as an intermediary between Caritas and young people. Various projects all over Austria aim to help people at risk of social exclusion.

Austria Together (Zusammen Österreich) Integration ambassadors indicate ways for a successful togetherness, meet prejudices in open talks and create motivation among pupils with and without migration background to perceive their chances in education and occupation.

National Institutions and Networks

At the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Federal Chancellery-Division for Women and Equality

- [Gender equality in schools](#) (in German only)
- [Gender equality at university colleges of teacher education](#) (in German only)

With the participation of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Federal Chancellery-Division for Women and Equality

[Inter-Ministerial Working Group Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting](#)

National Networks

- ARGE GLUNA – Working Party for Equal Treatment and Equality at Austrian Universities
- EUF – Erfolgreiche Unternehmensnachfolge durch Frauen (Successful Company/Corporate Succession by Women)
- ÖGGF – Gender Studies Association Austria

Gender mainstreaming

The living situations of women and men differ in many aspects. Gender mainstreaming is a political strategy which deals with the issue of gender. Gender mainstreaming differs from explicit women's policy in the sense that equal opportunities for both sexes are given the same consideration.

The legal basis for gender mainstreaming

In addition to the Federal Constitution and the Equal Treatment Act, Austria has undertaken to implement its gender mainstreaming strategy at a political and legal level on the basis of international legal provisions and action plans of the UN and the EU.

Gender mainstreaming working groups

The federal government, the provinces and local authorities have become active and have planned and realised numerous measures. At a federal level, all of the ministries, as well as the supreme bodies, have joined together to form the Interministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming (IMAG). Here, gender budgeting has the role of extending budget policy by adding the perspective of gender and to thus use it as a sociopolitical steering tool.

The internal working group on gender mainstreaming has already been in existence at the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) since 1999. It supports the senior managers and staff of the Ministry in the realisation of the strategy.

6.7 Skills for innovation

Innovation in formal education

General ordinance governing the principles of project-centred teaching

The 6 prime goals of project-centred education are:

1. Autonomous learning and acting
2. Realising one's own skills and needs and developing them further
3. Developing the willingness to act and assuming responsibility
4. Developing a mind that is open for the world and aware of social-historical problems
5. Recognising and structuring challenges and problematic situations and developing creative approaches to solutions
6. Developing communicative and cooperative competences and the ability to deal with conflicts Grasping and designing organisational contexts

Another strategy paper is the **Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation** (RTI-Strategy) of the Austrian Federal Government. In it, the government defines the strategic and operative goals, sets action priorities and lays down support measures that are needed to implement over the next decade.

The foundation of this strategy was prepared by the Federal Chancellery, the [Federal Ministry of Finance](#), the [Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) and [Federal Chancellery](#) on the basis of existing studies and involving input from the social partners and crucial stakeholders and thus affects these institutions.

Austria has a separate **Open Innovation Strategy**, which was presented to the council of ministers in July 2016. The strategy presents a vision for 2025. The measures set out in the Austrian Open Innovation Strategy will be implemented by the individual ministries in the areas falling within their remit in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders. The various actors at the provincial and municipal level are furthermore urged to do their utmost to bring the strategy to life. At the same time, the Federal Government explicitly invites interested parties from a wide range of areas to take inspiration from the content of the strategy and initiate their own open innovation activities. A monitoring group will be put in place to track the realisation and further development of the Open Innovation Strategy. In addition, a report will be submitted to Austria's parliament as part of the Austrian Research and Technology Report (FTB) detailing the progress made in implementing the Open Innovation Strategy

Objectives: Education system (Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation)

- Promotion of the talents of people in all levels of education, awakening their passion for research, and facilitation of the best possible training for business dealings and scientific research. This should guarantee universities, research institutions and firms a sufficient pool of highly qualified researchers.
- The entire education system must be optimised, from the early childhood phase to models of lifelong learning.
- These reforms attempt to mitigate social selectivity, to improve permeability between education courses and tracks, to implement thorough quality improvements in school and university instruction, to better integrate immigrants, and to balance out gender discrepancies in research.
- The portion of drop-outs should be reduced to 9.5% by 2020.
- The portion of pupils graduating with a school-leaving certificate for an age cohort should be raised to 55% by 2020.
- Among the pupils whose first language is not German the share of those who do complete upper secondary school should increase from 40% to 60%.
- The conditions of study at universities should be fundamentally improved, which will require establishing new financing models for higher education.
- The proportion of 30- to 34-year-olds who have completed a university degree or have an equivalent educational certificate should be increased to 38% by 2020.

Addressed areas of the Open Innovation Strategy:

Three action areas "Culture & Competences", "Networks & Cooperation", and "Resources and Framework Conditions" have been defined as described.

- Development of a culture of open innovation and teaching open innovation skills among all age groups.
- Formation of heterogeneous open innovation networks and partnerships across disciplines, branches of industry and organisations.
- Mobilisation of resources and the creation of framework conditions for open innovation

Fourteen measures were formulated for these, which can be assigned to one or several action areas.

Measures relevant for education:

1. Create open innovation and experimental spaces
2. Embed open innovation elements at kindergartens and schools as well as in teacher training
3. Build up research competence for the application of open innovation in science
4. Develop and implement co-creation and open innovation training programmes
5. Embed principles of open data and open access in research

As project-centred teaching is a teaching principle, it is part of the regular teacher education. Teachers can also find teaching material online provided by the Federal Institute of Educational Research, Innovation and Development (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung (BIFIE)). The website www.schule.at provides teaching tools and learning platforms for teachers.

Support measures of the Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation relevant for education

Structural reform of the education system

- Improve early support programmes with an obligatory and free year of kindergarten (half-days) for five-year-olds
- Increase the number of full-day schools and expand need-based full-day child care
- Expand the vocational diploma programme for apprentices and the vocational school leaving examination for adults as a course of study
- Introduce Austria-wide educational standards and partially standardised final examinations
- Further develop the school system in terms of better individual support and an increase in permeability, especially in lower secondary school
- Strengthen human potential in the areas of mathematics, information technology, life sciences, and technology through targeted funding in (pre-)school education and at university institutions

Improve educational transitions

- Expand career orientation and study advising in schools (such as a study checker ("Studien checker") or trial studying ("Studieren probieren"))
- Establish flexible study entry phases in all diploma and bachelor's programmes

Improve quality assurance and quality enhancement of higher education institutions

- Develop an "Austrian model" for future distribution of financing to universities based on student-related functions (teaching) and research
- Improve supervisory relationships between students and faculty
- Develop indicators for improving quality of teaching in higher education

Improve integration programmes

- Increase hiring of teachers whose first language is not German, and intercultural employees
- Offer more language teaching
- Design flexible recognition and equivalence validation of diplomas and other degrees

Increase mobility

- Targeted increase of mobility among students and graduates in selected countries
- Expand exchange programmes for pupils, students and teachers at all levels with research-, technology- and innovation-intensive firms and abroad

Improve conditions for researchers at universities

- Make awarding of permanent positions at universities transparent and performance-based

- Improve collective agreements and the University Act concerning the tenure-track system (implement a career model with options for unlimited employment, dependent on performance evaluations)
- Increase support for doctoral candidates and post-docs by expanding structured programme offerings

Strive for gender equality in research

- Include gender-specific budgeting measures in all research support
- Establish individualised support measures for women studying to become scientists >> Support measures for improved compatibility between career and family

Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

Open Minds award

Create added value together: With the [Open Minds Award](#) in Austria a platform is created which promotes the exchange among open communities and honours the best protagonists. This initiative was partially funded by the state in 2017.

STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-**promotion** (MINT, Mathematik, Informatik, Naturwissenschaft und Technik) **and promotion of young people**

Young Science

An overview of the initiatives and programmes is found on the [platform](#). Since 2011 the centre for the cooperation of science and school – Young Science- acts as a service point for projects and initiatives in the interface of school education and research in the Austrian exchange service, (initiated and funded by the state).

Important programmes promotion of young people by the state are:

Sparkling Science

Sparkling Science promotes projects in which pupils are actively included in the research process.

Children's Universities (Kinderuni)

Children and young people can attend special lectures and workshops at universities.

18plus. employment and study check (18plus. Berufs- und Studienchecker)

The project encloses measures to help pupils adapt their education and study choice to their personal inclinations and abilities.

Try to study (Studieren Probieren)

Within this project visits of lectures at universities, universities of applied science, and teacher training colleges are organised for pupils.

aufZAQ – Certified quality of non-formal education in youth work

“aufZAQ” is a certification of training courses for people active in youth work, provided by the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery, the Youth Departments of the Federal States of Austria and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano – South Tyrol. aufZAQ has been certifying the quality of training since 2003 and has thus been contributing actively to the recognition of non-formal education in the field of youth work. So far, 34 different training courses have been certified, some of the offered courses include innovation fostering.

Your projects (EureProjekte)

Young people with a project idea can apply for a grant of up to €500 (€750 in 2019, for projects with the focus on climate protection and sustainability). In addition to this initial funding, they also receive an individual project consultation with employees of the youth information centres in the Federal States. The aim of Eure Projekte is for young people to experience their own effectiveness and to put themselves to the test – and failure is allowed! At the same time, young people’s innovation and commitment are made visible.

New skills conference (New skills Konferenz)

In the framework of Erasmus+, the new skills conference takes place every year since 2012. In 2017, this [conference](#) is conducted in co-operation with the Austrian Chamber of commerce.

Austria Youth Award (Österreichischer Jugendpreis)

The Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery awards outstanding youth projects of three categories. Beside projects of the EU-programme Erasmus+ and projects supported by EureProjekte, initiatives of national youth work are awarded.

Austrian Science Center-Network

'The Austrian Science Center-Network focuses on hands-on engagement with sciences and technology. More than 160 partners nationwide form an alliance of organizations and individuals with an active interest in science centre activities. The Association ScienceCenter-Network serves as the hub for the network, enabling exchange and training as well as performing projects and research. Within ScienceCenter-Network, a wide range of [projects](#) for various target groups has been initiated.'

As several public bodies and various funding lines are involved in the funding of measures, initiatives and/or projects dedicated to fostering creativity and innovation of young people a concrete budget cannot be specified.

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

National ICT Security Strategy Austria

In a collaboration of 130 representatives of Austrian stakeholders, a concept for the protection of "Austria's cyberspace" and of the people in virtual space was developed and published in 2012 by the Federal Chancellery.

Education and research are basic requirements for successful implementation of the National ICT Security Strategy. In this context, attention is drawn to two key issues: training in ICT security and media competence and national ICT security competence in teaching and research.

Strategic objectives and measures according to the Strategy

Objective 1: Education in ICT, ICT security and media competence in early school grades

ICT and ICT security must be incorporated to a greater extent into school curricula and daily teaching practices from primary school level onwards. It is a medium-term goal that each individual's familiarity with the use of modern media can be taken for granted—this is not only in the interest of the citizens but also the basis for protecting national infrastructures.

Measures

- Incorporating ICT, ICT security and media competence in curricula to a much greater extent:

The use of ICT and new media, as well as ICT security, have to become an integral part of the curricula of all types of schools. These issues must be covered by a compulsory subject to improve media skills in all areas. As children interact with new media at a very young age, this issue must be suitably addressed even at primary school level. The introduction of ICT-focused curricula in specific types of schools (comparable to today's sport, music or ICT secondary schools) is recommended.

- Defining educational standards for ICT and ICT security:

A meaningful and adequate level of ICT competence must be ensured across all types of schools.

Objective 2: Compulsory ICT training for all teacher training students

It is an important prerequisite for teaching the relevant skills that ICT (security) competence becomes part of the curricula of teacher training colleges and universities. Adequate in-service training programmes for fully-fledged teachers will ensure that ICT training can be implemented fast, effectively and on a sustainable basis.

Measures

- Compulsory ICT training of all students of teacher training (at all pedagogical colleges and universities): All students undergoing teacher training require ICT training to enable them to use new technologies and media safely in their fields. They will also feel more confident using applications and services relevant to their areas of specialisation in daily teaching practice. Particular attention should be paid to the training of teachers in the ICT sector (ICT teacher training studies) as they will be responsible for teaching the general subject "ICT" as well as for the safe and professional use of ICT. It is therefore of vital importance to develop suitable teacher training programmes, and to address the ICT security issue appropriately in these programmes.
- In-service training of teaching staff: The sustainable ICT competence of teachers must be ensured in programmes offered by teacher training colleges and universities.
- Further development of training programmes for adults, especially parents: Special programmes have to be developed for parents within the school system which will help them to become a knowledgeable source of advice for their children and to examine their use of new media and the media skills.

Objective 3: Improving training structures for ICT security specialists in the tertiary sector

Existing study and training programmes will be further developed on a proactive basis. Networking and cooperation between educational organisations will be promoted.

Measures

- National know-how in the area of ICT security: Strengthening and establishing national interdisciplinary competence centres in the area of ICT security as well as general, state-of-the-art training in this field.
- Promoting networking among individual educational organisations: Active cooperation among all educational institutions in Austria is of crucial importance. Curricula must be harmonised to achieve synergies and to use resources economically. Special attention has to be paid to the interface between identification of threats and response to system-specific risks.
- Consideration of security aspects in ICT training: "Security by design"—as a guiding cross-cutting theme—means that security issues should be taken into account in all areas of ICT training.

According to the publication 'monitoring measures must be developed and used regularly with a view to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of the measures taken. To this end, suitable monitoring measures and responsible stakeholders have to be defined. Existing instruments and structures must be used, and suitable projects should be continued or extended.'

Austrian Cyber Security Strategy

Media education/competence is also part of the [Austrian Cyber Security Strategy](#) published in 2013 by the Federal Chancellery.

Relevant objectives and measures for education according to the document are:

Awareness raising and training

Objective:

By sensitising all target groups, the necessary awareness of, personal interest in and attention paid to cybersecurity will be increased. These awareness-raising measures will help to create understanding for the need to ensure cybersecurity. By taking concrete and target-group-specific measures, the necessary knowledge about security-conscious behaviour and a responsible approach to using information and ICT as a whole will be imparted and promoted. A meaningful and adequate ICT competence level should be ensured by intensifying training in the field of cybersecurity and media competence in schools and other educational facilities as well as by developing national cybersecurity competence in the apprenticeship training system.

Measures:

Incorporating cybersecurity and media competence into all levels of education and training

- Stronger integration of **ICT, cybersecurity and media competence into the school curriculum**. ICT and new media literacy have become part of the curriculum of all types of schools. Moreover, ICT security issues and cyber security should become an integral part of a model for "digital competence" – adjusted to the curriculum of the respective type of school – so as to create awareness for security issues and to help children learn a responsible use of ICT

and new media. The aim is to ensure an adequate ICT competence level across all types of schools.

- ICT (security) competence should be taken into account in the training programmes of pedagogical universities and other pedagogical institutions at tertiary level as a prerequisite for teaching these skills at school as well as in adult education centres.
- The training of experts in the public sector responsible for improving cybersecurity will be intensified in cooperation with national and international training facilities.
- The ICT system administrators of the operators of critical infrastructures should receive cybersecurity training to enable them to recognise cyber incidents, to detect anomalies in their ICT systems and to report them to their security officers.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

General Ordinance: teaching principle media education (Grundsatzterlass: Unterrichtsprinzip Medienerziehung)

The general ordinance describes the content and implementation of this cross-curricular educational principle. In order to clearly identify the objectives of media education, all terms used for media in a school environment, as well as customary names for subjects linked with media work, are defined in this general ordinance:

Media pedagogy includes all issues concerning the pedagogical importance of media in education, leisure and work. It looks into the contents and functions of media, their forms of utilisation in these areas and their individual as well as social impact. In view of the complexity of the term, it is useful to subdivide the complex of media pedagogy as follows:

Media didactics: covers the functions and effects of media in teaching and learning processes. The use of audio-visual media in their role as teaching materials should be decided with due account given to the educational and teaching task, the curriculum, and the didactic principles of the respective subject. Media are tools to achieve subject-specific objectives (education by media).

Media education: a type of pedagogical utilisation of the media intended to teach the critical-reflective use of all media. Where media become important for human socialisation as a means of information, entertainment, education and day-to-day organisation, they become the subject of media education – the media are the subject and object of education (education on media).

Media competence as an objective of media-pedagogical work includes not just the skills to handle the technical side but, even more, skills such as the ability to select, differentiate, structure and recognise own needs, etc. It is in particular when using the so-called New Media that issues of individual and social relevance emerge in a media-education context which ranges beyond the mere use of the media for a specific field.

eEducation Austria

The primary goal of the initiative eEducation Austria of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is to advance digital and ICT-based competencies throughout all schools in Austria - starting from Primary schools to Upper Secondary. The initiative promotes the gain of competencies needed to use technology consciously and productive for individual development and to ease access to current and future occupational fields.

Austrian Institute for Applied Telecommunications (OIAT)

The OIAT promotes the competent, safe and responsible use of digital media. It is an independent non-profit organisation financed solely through projects.

Current projects, (partially) funded by the state

- **Saferinternet.at:** Initiative for the safe use of digital media through the promotion of media literacy (www.saferinternet.at)
- **Watchlist Internet:** Independent information platform dealing with online fraud (www.watchlist-internet.at)

Saferinternet.at - Austrian Awareness Centre

Saferinternet.at is the information and coordination centre for safer internet use and media competence in Austria. Saferinternet.at supports internet users, with a special focus on children, youth, parents and educators, in safer use of digital media. The rich portfolio of ongoing activities includes the website www.saferinternet.at, free school resources and booklets, workshops and helpline services throughout Austria, as well as networking with relevant players and being a contact point for journalists. The initiative is led by the Austrian Institute of Applied

Telecommunications (OIAT) in cooperation with the association of Internet Service Providers Austria (ISPA). It is co-funded by the CEF/Telecom Programme of the European Commission, the Federal Ministries as well as industry sponsors.

Specific teaching material is published and also provided online, such as:

Fact or fake on the internet? ([Wahr oder falsch im Internet?](#))

Youth and pictures on the internet ([Jugendliche Bilderwelten im Internet – Mit Fotos & Videos im Netz kompetent umgehen](#))

Anti Cyber mobbing teaching material (Aktiv gegen Cyber-Mobbing)

Media manual

The [mediamanual](#) project is an interactive platform for integrative media work in schools and offers pupils, students and teachers material for practical media education. It contains basic knowledge in the form of lectures and workshops in which practical courses are offered on subjects such as film, radio, video and new media. Thematically it is concerned with problematic subject areas in media education such as the question as to how common media knowledge influences value systems and ideas. The media manual is also a forum which organises an annual media literacy award. This is intended to thematise media competence as a political, social, cultural and personal qualification and to help establish the social and critically sensible use of media within the context of the organisation of everyday life.

Within the scope of continuous teacher training, the responsible school authority shall make provision for workshops and lectures (shows) both on the use of audio-visual teaching materials and on the problems of media education to be offered to the teachers of all subjects and types of schools. To achieve the most intense training of teachers, it is recommended to establish a focus on media education at the teacher training colleges.

Further teaching material can be found online:

Teaching material for media education

- Internet fraud with pretended free-of-charge: Do I have to pay? ([Internet-Abzocke mit vermeintlichen Gratis-Angeboten: Muss ich zahlen?](#))
- Active against cyber mobbing ([Aktiv gegen Cyber-Mobbing](#))
- [Online-Zoo](#)
- Poster: 5 tips to surf the internet safely ([Poster: "5 Tipps – So surfst du sicher"](#))
- Tips and information for teachers ([Tipps und Informationen für Lehrende](#))
- Website for secure and responsible use of mobile phones ([Handy und Tablet](#))
- Online portal for eLearning and E-Government [bildung.at](#)

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) promotes measures and initiatives to convey this media competence, so that young people are able to learn how to deal with media consciously and critically.

Open Educational Resources by the Austrian Youth Information Centres

The Austrian Youth Information Centres are the Austrian specialist agencies for youth-oriented information processing and education for non-commercial purposes and therefore also feel committed to the concept of [Open Educational Resources](#) (OER). In this sense, and in particular with the concern to support young people in the best possible way to lead a self-determined and fulfilling life, since April 2019, they are happy to provide their teaching and practice manuals and the corresponding publications and presentations as free learning and teaching resources. Teaching materials are available online, including Lost in Information - a workshop manual incl. The worksheets and templates, as well as the presentation and the accompanying information poster

InMeLi

[InMeLi](#) was a project of the Vienna Media Education in the Sparkling Science programme of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). The project took place from 2014 to 2016 and aimed to develop a test for surveying and reflecting media literacy and media habitus.

The project „Development of an Instrument for Surveying and reflecting Media Literacy and the Media Habitus“ (InMeLi) aimed at the facilitation of Media Literacy and the facilitation of reflecting

the Media Habitus. Since students have developed the test, a falsification of test results by complicated diction could be avoided. By taking the test, students were able to measure their own Media Literacy and to reflect their Media Habitus.

Media-Youth-Info

The Media-Youth-Info ([Medien-Jugend-Info](#)) is a service unit of the Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery.

Media literacy is a crucial qualification in our digital society. It is the ambition of the MJI to foster media literacy in all of its aspects.

The MJI understands media literacy as

- the ability to use (old and new) media
- to know about the application possibilities of media
- a critical examination of media
- to know about and handle risks
- to actively participate and produce media

The Media-Youth-Info Centre cooperates closely with other organizations in the field of media literacy, first of all with [Saferinternet.at](#).

Situated at a multifunctional and barrier-free accessible facility the Media-Youth-Info Centre offers free-of-charge events, workshops, seminars and advisory service.

The equipment allows for interactivity and hands-on-experience.

Supporting handouts, information material and seminar papers are available for participants and disseminators.

According to the specific needs and interests the services of the Media-Youth-Info Centre are targeting

- children
- youngsters
- parents
- contributors of youth organizations and youth facilities
- teacher and educators
- students, scholars and researchers
- personnel of administration and politics

FROG (Future and Reality of Gaming)

[FROG](#) invites to an academic discourse on the subject of games. The international conference brings together scholars, players, students, game designers, game developers, educators and experts from various disciplines to discuss the Future and Reality of Gaming.

Federal Office for the Positive Assessment of Computer and Console Games (Bundesstelle für die Positivprädikatisierung von Computer- und Konsolenspielen, BuPP)

The Federal Office for the Positive Assessment of Computer and Console Games has been implemented by the former Federal Ministry for Families and Youth in 2005. In 2013, the service has been extended for apps for portable devices.

Media.Competence.Yes

The annual main focus of the Viennese youth work in 2017/18 with the title "Media.Competence.Yes" dealt with the various aspects of the subject. Within the scope of this annual focus further training was developed and provided.

The media centre ([Medienzentrum](#)) and the Institute for Education in Leisure Time ([Institut für Freizeitpädagogik](#)) in Vienna provide workshops, seminars and courses for youth workers and youth leaders.

Both, the umbrella organisation of youth information centres, BÖJI, and the umbrella organisation of open youth work, bOJA, provide expert conferences on new media and media competence for youth workers in the corresponding fields.

Several youth organisations in Austria have focus projects addressing media literacy. Furthermore, workshops for youth associations can be arranged with experts from [saferinternet.at](#). This initiative is funded by the [Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection](#).

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

Cyber mobbing

Cyber mobbing is officially a criminal offence since 1st of January 2016.

Information on cyber mobbing can be found on various national online platforms. Each of these platforms has contact persons for pupils and/or teachers and parents.

Cyberbullying: Violence and mobbing in new media ([Cyberbullying: Gewalt und Mobbing mit neuen Medien](#)) is provided by the school psychology - educational counselling ([Schulpsychologie, Bildungsberatung](#)).

Saferinternet.at provided [information and tips](#) against cyber mobbing, including a folder for young people with information and guidance.

The information website Cyberbullying: violence and mobbing with new media ([Cybermobbing: Gewalt und Mobbing mit neuen Medien](#)) by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) also provides a wide range of information on cyber mobbing for pupils.

Helpline "Rat auf Draht"

The helpline informs young people about various risks of new media. Additionally, the helpline supports young victims of cyber mobbing.

Stopleveline

[Stopleveline](#) is a reporting office for internet crime, which can be addressed by all internet users. Since 2007, the Stopleveline has been cooperating with the Saferinternet.at initiative.

The national youth council has launched the campaign [mein-netz.at](#) (my internet). Beside various information, the position paper on youth and internet of the national youth council and the study about media competence of young people are provided.

Make IT safe 2.0

Within the scope of this peer to peer project, 20 young people in facilities of the extracurricular youth work in Upper Austria and Styria were trained to "Peer Experts". They transmitted their knowledge about the secure and responsible use of new media to other young people.

Mona-net

[Mona.net](#) is an online network addressing girls and young women. Target group-specific information is provided.

6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Information providers / counselling structures

Even though the following information and service providers are all linked to adult education, these initiatives also target young people.

The website [www.erwachsenenbildung.at](#) by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) presents comprehensive information on Austrian adult learning and second-chance education offers, including possibilities for the validation and recognition of informally developed competencies.

The website of the Austrian Initiative for Adult Education ([Initiative Erwachsenenbildung](#)) provides information about the accreditation of programmes and courses provided within this framework. The Initiative for Adult Education arose from a cooperation of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) and the nine Austrian provinces.

Year of Youth Work in Austria

2016 has been the Year of Youth Work in Austria. Within this initiative, the platform youth work in Austria ([Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#)) has been established. Various information on extracurricular youth work is provided online.

Awareness raising initiatives

The website www.erwachsenenbildung.at serves as an online-platform for everybody who deals with adult education or further education as a learner, teacher, or someone working in organisation and administration. For example, it provides information on initiatives related to validation of non-formal and informal learning relevant for adult educators and guidance practitioners.

WIK:I – What I can do through informal learning

Qualified WIK:I portfolio counsellors assist the young people in systematically documenting their informal learning experiences. The benefit of compiling a portfolio is that young people gain an awareness of their informally acquired skills and a sense of direction for their subsequent education and career planning.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Extending staff autonomy for schools

As of September 2018, school principals will be able to have a say in the new appointment of teachers and have the responsibility for school leadership for staff development and performance evaluations.

Violation of compulsory education

As of September 2018, the new and more consistent rules apply to absence without valid excuse according to the compulsory education law ([Schulpflichtgesetz](#)). Legal guardians must already expect a report if their compulsory school-aged children are missing on more than three school days within the nine years of compulsory school.

German training classes (Deutschförderklassen)

As of September 2018, separate German classes are installed for pupils with insufficient language skills. These classes have a different curriculum with a focus on German. After each semester the language skills are tested. As soon as the language skills are good enough to take part in the regular classes, pupils will transfer.

Further recent reforms are described on the Eurydice platform:

- [14.2 National Reforms in School Education](#)
- [14.3 National Reforms in Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning](#)
- [14.4 National Reforms in Higher Education](#)
- [14.5 National Reforms related to Transversal Skills and Employability](#)

Ongoing debates

Training until 18 (Ausbildung bis 18)

Even though the training until 18 has been implemented, further enhancement of this initiative is discussed.

Validation Strategy

Austria is currently working on developing a national strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning. A [consultation document](#) including objectives, measures, the implementation plan and timetable has been sent to relevant stakeholders.

The general aim is to record competencies acquired through non-formal and informal methods and give them visibility. This should give people who have acquired competencies outside of the formal qualifications system better educational and professional opportunities. The development and implementation of a national validation strategy is the task of a working group, that is comprised of various stakeholders and the members include representatives of relevant federal ministries, social partner organisations, youth organisations, adult education, Universities in Austria, Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Austria has a health care system **based on solidarity**. It ensures **high-quality medical care for all citizens**, independent of their social status or income. While a large part of the health care system's resources is still spent on health care, an **increasing importance is given to health promotion and prevention of illness**.

In 2010, the children's health dialogue was started by the then Federal Minister of Health, which led to the development of the **Health Strategy for Children and young people** ([Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie](#)) in 2011. Since then it has been monitored and developed further. The current version of the strategy covers **five areas** and is subdivided into the corresponding aims:

1. Societal framework
2. Healthy Start into Life
3. Healthy development
4. Equality in health
5. Care for sick children and young people in specific areas

Additionally, the **10 Austrian health targets** have been developed with the aim to **prolong the healthy life years of all people living in Austria**, irrespective of their level of education, income or personal living condition.

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Children and young people represent **the healthiest group of the population**. Their health has **continuously improved** since the beginning of modern health care. The reduction of the baby's mortality and child mortality as well as the containment and improved treatability of communicable diseases have had a major impact on this development. However, for some years the **slowing of this trend and even a tendential trend inversion** has been observed. Above all, **chronic diseases** (e.g., atopic diseases, cancer and diabetes), **musculoskeletal disorders**, **psychological disorders** (anxiety disorders, depressive disorders) as well as **behavioural and developing disorders** (ADHS, circumscribed developmental disorders) seem to have increased. They are discussed under the term 'modern morbidity' and represent a health-political as well as a macrosocial challenge. The **living conditions of children and young people are of particular importance**. These influence their health behaviour, attitudes, convictions and values as well as their competence. According to the Austrian Anti Poverty Network ([Armutskonferenz](#)), 290.000 children and young people in Austria are at risk of poverty or exclusion (21% of the total of people at risk of poverty or exclusion in Austria). 14.9% of children and youths under the age of 17 and 14.9% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 were considered at-risk-of poverty after inclusion of social transfer payments. In the group of young adults (18 - 24 years) a significantly higher number of women was considered at risk of poverty (16.7% in comparison to 13.1%). The conditions have a major impact on the health of young people.

Therefore, both the **development of individual health competence and the guaranteeing of a healthy environment** are crucial to children's and youth's short and long term health. According to the Austrian Health Targets ([Umwelt und Gesundheit - Eine kommt selten allein / Environment and health - one rarely comes alone](#)), **environmental pollution can be detrimental** to health in various ways:

- **Chemical** pressures (e.g. the release and spread of pollutants in the air, water, soil, food chain, everyday products such as cosmetics, and the human body)
- **Physical** pollution (e.g. noise, particles or radiation)
- **Biological** pollution (e.g. moulds or blue-green algae)

Child and youth health report

The **child and youth health report** ([Österreichischer Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsbericht](#)) has been first published in January 2016 (reporting year 2015). The report gives a detailed overview of the situation of young people's health in Austria and states:

- The **self-estimated state of health and the general life satisfaction** are problematic for 11 percent of the male pupils and for 13 percent of the female pupils.
- 22 percent report about two or more **different symptoms which occur several times per week**. Especially common are problems falling asleep and irritability.
- Boys are **treated** more often **in a hospital** than girls. The most frequent causes for inpatient stays in hospital are injuries and illnesses of the respiratory organs. The hospital frequency is steady since the beginning of the 1990s.
- The **number of people suffering from cancer** is slightly rising (14 new cases per 100,000 in 2011), the relevant mortality, however, falling (2.8 per 100,000 in 2014). The most frequent tumour type among children and young people is leukaemia.
- **Psychological diseases** have become increasingly common among boys and girls. Eating disorders have remained steady, **suicide rates** decreased.
- The **incidence of diabetes** increases. In 2007, 18.7 new cases per 100,000 were registered among 0 to 14-year-olds.
- According to literature **atopic diseases** are increasing. About 5% of the 6 to 7-year-olds suffer from asthma and/or hay fever, twelve percent suffer from neurodermitis.
- Action is required in the field of **dental health**. Only 50% of 6-year-olds are 80%-caries-free.
- The prevalence of **developmental delays** can be estimated only roughly: 10% of the 4 to 7-year-olds have language problems, 6% or 15% of the 6 to 12-year-olds (depending on the severity) show problems with skills at school. About 25 percent of the 4 to 5-year olds show motoric anomalies.
- 4% of all family allowance receivers obtain **raised family allowance due to severe disability**, with a rising trend.
- About 17% of pupils suffered from **more than one injury that needed medical care** during the past 12 months prior to being surveyed. Each year about 50,000 injuries are treated by inpatient care; a steady trend for the last 20 years. **Deadly injuries** are clearly decreasing (about 120 in 2014).
- The **total mortality** is declining.

According to Laido, Z., Voracek, M., Till, B. et al., the total average suicide rate for Austrian minors (10-19 years) was 4.57 per 100,000. The male:female-ratio was 3.5:1. The total youth suicide rate significantly declined from 2001 to 2014.

Main concepts

Austria has a health care system based on solidarity. It ensures high-quality medical care for all citizens, independent of their social status or income.

Austrian health targets

The 10 [Austrian health targets](#) have been developed with the aim to **prolong the healthy life years of all people living in Austria**, irrespective of their level of education, income or personal living condition. The 10 health targets were **officially approved by the Federal Health Commission** ([Bundesgesundheitskommission](#)) and the Council of Ministers in 2012. They are **mentioned in the government programme** and are an important basis for the health reform process.

Target 1: To provide **health-promoting living and working conditions** for all population groups through the cooperation of all societal and political areas.

Target 2: To promote **fair and equal opportunities in health**, irrespective of gender, socio-economic group, ethnic origin and age.

Target 3: To **enhance health literacy** in the population.

Target 4: To **secure sustainable natural resources** such as air, water and soil and healthy environments **for future generations**.

Target 5: To **strengthen social cohesion** as a health enhancer.

Target 6: To **ensure conditions** under which children and young people can grow up as healthy as possible.

Target 7: To provide **access to a healthy diet for all**.

Target 8: To promote **healthy, safe exercise and activity in everyday life** through appropriate environments.

Target 9: To **promote psychosocial health** in all population groups.

Target 10: To secure **sustainable and efficient health care services of high quality** for all.

The **main health strategies** are

- the health **reform** process,
- the health **promotion strategy** and
- the health strategy for **children and young people**.

Health strategy for Children and Young people (Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie)

In 2010, the **children's health dialogue** was started by the then Federal Minister of Health, which led to the development of the Health Strategy for Children and young people in 2011. Since then it has been **monitored and developed further**. The current version of the strategy (last updated in May 2017) covers **5 topics and is subdivided into the corresponding aims**. This publication provides the strategy and the monitoring of implementation.

1. Societal framework

- Aim 1: Strengthen consciousness for **special needs** of children and young people
- Aim 2: Strengthen consciousness for the **cross-cutting responsibility** for health ('Health in all Policies')

2. Healthy Start to Life

- Aim 3: Provide the base for a good start at pregnancy and birth
- Aim 4: Build a solid foundation for long-term health in early childhood

3. Healthy development

- Aim 5: **Strengthen life competence** of children and young people
- Aim 6: Use **education** as the central influence factor on health
- Aim 7: **Promote exercises** for children and young people
- Aim 8: **Promote a healthy diet** of children and young people

4. Equality in health

- Aim 9: Promote equality in health of socially disadvantaged persons
- Aim 10: Promote equality children and young people with health disadvantages
- Aim 11: Improve early diagnosis and specific support for children and adolescent

5. Care of sick children and young people in specific areas

- Aim 12: **Optimise outpatient initial treatment** and improve edge times and weekends
- Aim 13: **Strengthen paediatric competence** in emergency care
- Aim 14: Make care in hospitals more child-friendly
- Aim 15: Improve care in selected fields (child and youth psychiatry, psychosomatics, neuro paediatrics and social paediatrics)
- Aim 16: Improve integrated care of 'modern morbidity'
- Aim 17: Adapt neonatal care to the changed demographic circumstances
- Aim 18: Improve rehabilitation programmes for children and young people
- Aim 19: Guarantee paediatric care and expand children's hospice care and palliative care
- Aim 20: Improve availability of pharmaceutical drugs appropriate for children

Several national and regional measures and their progress are combined in the strategy and thus, the regular updates of the strategy are a quality assurance and monitoring tool.

Austrian Children's Environmental Health Action Plan

Protecting the environment and the population from burdens caused by biological, chemical, and physical pollutants is important for healthy development and health care. Thus, the Austrian Children's Environmental Health Action Plan ([Kinder-Umwelt-Gesundheits-Aktionsplan für Österreich](#)) has been developed. It is based upon **four priorities**:

- I. ensuring the supply of clean water and good sanitary conditions
- II. preventing accidents and ensuring that children have sufficient physical activity through child-friendly urban and transport planning
- III. ensuring clean outdoor and indoor air
- IV. preventing exposure to hazardous agents

Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG)

The *Gesundheit Österreich GmbH* (GÖG) is the **research and planning institute of the health service and the competence and promotion agency for health promotion** in Austria. The basis for GÖG is the federal law regarding GÖD ([Bundesgesetz über die Gesundheit Österreich GmbH](#)). Sole shareholder is the Republic, represented by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)).

The GÖG is divided into three business divisions:

- **Austrian Federal Institute for the Health Sector** (Österreichisches Bundesinstitut für Gesundheitswesen, ÖBIG)
- **Fund for a Healthy Austria** (Fonds Gesundes Österreich, FGÖ)
- **Federal Institute for Quality in the Healthcare System** (Bundesinstitut für Qualität im Gesundheitswesen, BIQG)

The GÖG works by order of the federal state, the federal health commission ([Bundesgesundheitskommission](#), BGK) and the federal aim control commission. [Fonds Gesundes Österreich](#) (FGÖ) is the **national competence centre and central funding office for health promotion** and one of the three business units of Gesundheit Österreich GmbH. The federal, provincial and local governments jointly cover its annual budget of EUR 7.2 million.

Health insurance

According to AmberMed's annual report 2017, **0.5 % of the people living in Austria don't have a valid health insurance.**

Young people are usually co-insured with their parents for free until their 18th birthday. Up to their 18th birthday children count as dependants. After graduation from school, the co-insurance is not automatically extended and therefore a risk for young people. It is however extended in cases where the young adult is unable to work because of illness or infirmity or is unemployed, as well as alongside family allowance up to the age of 24 if the young adult seriously pursues further education (e.g. university).

For all circumstances, **documentation is required.** More [information about co-insurance](#) is provided by the [Austrian Health Insurance Fund](#).

Persons not covered by compulsory statutory health insurance and resident in Austria can insure themselves ([self-insurance](#)) at a cost of around € 450 / month.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

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

As far as legislation and its enforcement are concerned, the Federal Government plays a central role. The [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) prepares laws and is responsible for the **protection of public health and the overall health policy**. It also acts as a facilitator between the different stakeholders of the health care system and a decision maker and supervisory authority. However, **many competences are delegated to the federal states or the social security institutions.**

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 regional level**: the Federal Government lays down the legislative framework whilst the federal states are in charge of defining implementing legislation and ensuring implementation. All regulations regarding pharmaceuticals, pharmacies, medical devices and health professions (e.g. education of physicians) and **structural policy** are the responsibility of the Federal Government.

All insurers convene in the **Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions ([Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger](#))**. This umbrella organisation is responsible for **safeguarding general social security interests** and for representing the social security institutions in matters of common concern (e.g. concluding contracts with doctors, hospitals, etc.). It also represents the Austrian social security system in dealings with similar organisations abroad and, in an international context, acts as a focal point and liaison body in matters of health, accident and pension insurance.

The Austrian Health Targets

Since population health is profoundly influenced and determined by many sectors other than the health care sector, the **Austrian health targets ([Österreichische Gesundheitsziele](#))** were defined in a broad and participatory process that involved more than 40 stakeholders from relevant institutions and civil society.

Actors

- 4 provincial representatives, nominated by the provincial liaison offices
- Aka Austria (forum of Austrian working groups on health) ([Forum österreichischer Gesundheitsarbeitskreise](#))
- Association of Patients' Ombudspersons ([ARGE Patientenanwälte](#))
- Austrian Association of Cities and Towns ([Österreichischer Städtebund](#))
- Austrian Association of Municipalities ([Österreichischer Gemeindebund](#))
- Austrian Chamber of Pharmacists ([Österreichische Apothekerkammer](#))
- Austrian Economic Chamber ([Österreichische Wirtschaftskammer](#))
- Austrian Health Care and Nursing Association ([Österreichischer Gesunden- und Krankenpflege Verband](#))
- Austrian Health Insurance Fund ([Österreichische Gesundheitskasse](#))
- Austrian League for Children's and Young People's Health ([Liga für Kinder und Jugendgesundheit](#))
- Austrian Medical Association ([Österreichische Ärztekammer](#))
- Austrian National Youth Council ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#))
- Austrian Senior Citizens' Council/Retiree Association of Austria ([Österreichischer Seniorenrat](#))
- Austrian Society of Public Health ([Österreichische Gesellschaft für Public Health](#))
- [Austrian Trade Union Federation](#) ([Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund](#))
- BAG federal free welfare association ([Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft freie Wohlfahrt](#))
- [European Anti-Poverty Network Austria](#) ([Armutskonferenz](#))
- [Federal Chancellery of Austria](#) ([Bundeskanzleramt](#))
- [Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism](#) ([Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus](#))
- [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#) ([Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie](#))
- [Federal Ministry of Defence](#) ([Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung](#))
- [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) ([Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung](#))
- [Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs](#) ([Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres](#))
- [Federal Ministry of Finance](#) ([Bundesministerium für Finanzen](#))
- [Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz](#))
- [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) ([Bundesministerium für Digitalisierung und Wirtschaftsstandort](#))
- Federal Parents' Association ([Bundesverband der Elternvereine](#))
- [Federation of Austrian Industries](#) ([Industriellenvereinigung](#))
- KFA - health-care institution of the City of Vienna ([KFA – Krankenfürsorgeanstalt der Stadt Wien](#))
- Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions ([Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger](#))
- MTD Austria - umbrella organisation of technical medical services ([MTD Austria - Dachverband der gehobenen medizinisch-technischen Dienste Österreichs](#))
- Professional Association of Austrian Psychologists ([Berufsverband Österreichischer PsychologInnen](#))
- Social Insurance Institution for Austrian Railway and Mining Industries ([Versicherungsanstalt für Eisenbahn und Bergbau](#))
- Vienna Chamber of Labour ([Arbeiterkammer Wien](#))

Content

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 health, safe exercise and activity in everyday life through appropriate environments
9. Promoting psychosocial health in all population groups
10. Securing sustainable and efficient health care services of high quality for all

Implementation

For the implementation of the Austrian Health Targets, **intersectoral working groups** define sub-targets and concrete actions. All relevant institutions and organisations are represented in these working groups, for the proposed objectives and measures to be implemented in the respective institutions/organisations. In this way, a **systematic approach and consistency** as well as sustainability in the realisation of the measures are ensured.

Monitoring

The implementation of the Austrian Health Targets is accompanied by a monitoring process. This serves the purpose of **strategic management** and is intended to contribute towards **optimised strategy and action plans**. The goals and key elements of the monitoring process were drawn up by the [Austrian Public Health Institute \(Gesundheit Österreich GmbH, GÖG\)](#), coordinated with the Health Targets plenary, and adopted by the Federal Health Commission ([Bundesgesundheitskommission](#)).

The monitoring process acts contains **three levels**:

1. At the level of the 10 **Austrian Health Targets**, meta indicators were defined with experts which enable statements to be made on the achievement of goals.
2. At the level of **objectives**, indicators are to be drawn up in the respective working groups.
3. At the level of **measures**, the responsible institutions in the working group define at least one benchmark which is designed to make the level of implementation of the measure visible. At regular intervals, the current state of affairs is ascertained. Thereby, the working groups and the Health Targets plenary are able to reflect upon the monitoring results regularly and to use this information to plan the next steps.

The monitoring of the Austrian Health Targets takes place **in coordination with the monitoring of other strategies** such as the health reform process, the health promotion strategy and the health strategy for children and young people.

The Austrian Child and Youth Health Strategy (Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie)

In order to sustainably improve the health of children and adolescents, the former Federal Ministry of Health, now the **Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz)** conducted the **Child Health Dialogue** with a total of 180 experts from various fields of child and adolescent health and developed a Child and Youth Health Strategy.

The strategy is composed of **five thematic areas** with a total of 20 objectives. The thematic areas are:

- The Social framework
- A Healthy start in life
- Healthy development
- Health equity
- Care for sick children and adolescents in specific areas

Cross-sectorial cooperation

In 2011, the Federal Health Commission (Bundesgesundheitskommission) and the Austrian Council of Ministers (Ministerrat) requested the development of health targets at federal level. The **Austrian Health Targets** were then **formulated by all relevant stakeholders**. They provide a **framework for coordinated action** that is backed by all institutions involved. As mentioned above, **intersectoral working groups** made up of representatives of all relevant institutions and organisations define sub-targets and concrete actions, which allows a systematic, consistent and sustainable implementation of the measures within all institutions/organisations.

A **coordination unit for child and youth health** has been established and delegated to the Austrian Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH, **GÖG**) and a **coordination unit for health promotion** has been installed at the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#).

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

National Action Plan Physical Activity

The first National Action Plan Physical Activity ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Bewegung](#)) has been developed by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlichen Dienst und Sport\)](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection \(Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz\)](#) and published in April 2013.

In view of the data on the present situation of physical activity of people in Austria, different target groups can be identified and various needs exist in the different social environments. As in all social areas and age groups, many people can strongly profit from more physical activity, the national action plan intends to **provide measures for everybody**. It still has to be taken into account that socioeconomic underprivileged groups show a worse health behaviour and thus profit most from changes. This action plan should act as a **guiding principle, upon which measures shall be developed and implemented**, that aim to improve physical activity behaviour and cause a measurable change in society. The national action plan has been established in accordance with the [EU Physical Activity Guidelines](#) and features the following aims:

- **cross-sectoral approach** (Health in all Policies)
- catalogue of **targets**
 - overarching objectives
 - sports
 - health
 - education
 - transport, environment, regional planning and building planning
 - working environment
 - senior citizens

The defined aims (corresponding with the EU Physical Activity Guidelines):

Overarching objectives

- **Provide and convey information** on health and physical activity
- Build **network structures**

Sports

- Build a **network of sports organisations** with nationwide, health orientated physical activity programmes
- Construct sport association **structures that consider special target groups and support the building of social bonds** and regular participation
- Physical activity orientated **health promotion** and a more health policy related topics prevention

Health

- Improve knowledge regarding physical activity among health professionals
- Promote health orientated physical activity via social security institutions

- Motivate health professionals to increase their physical activity
- **Motivate people** to increase their physical activity via health professionals

Education

- Create **framework conditions** for education facilities with a better physical activity orientation
- Ensure **better quality and more physical activity** in primary schools and secondary schools
- Further develop and implement **school sports competitions and related events**

Transport, environment, regional planning and building planning

- Increase the percentage of the **active mobility** of the population
- Enable **environmentally acceptable** physical activity in nature
- Pursue a '**strategy of short ways**' and supply all populations groups with **space for physical activity**, games and sports
- Consider the physical activity aspect in **object planning** of all building forms

Working environment

- Strengthen the **role model function of public bodies** regarding the promotion of physical activities
- Make physical activity a subject of discussion for employers and advocacy, and take steps to **promote physical activity at the inter-company level**
- **Motivate unemployed people** to do health effective activities
- Provide **impulse for research**

Senior citizens

- Motivate institutions and organisation to place a focus on physical activity of senior citizens
- Train coaches for senior citizens
- Motivate sports club via their umbrella organisations to open the clubs for senior citizens

According to the action plan, a permanent monitoring system should have been established within months after April 2013. Until August 2017 no such monitoring system has been implemented.

Many (youth) sports organisations are partially funded by the state and provide a large variety of offers and services for people of all age groups.

Furthermore, this topic is addressed by **aim 7 of the Child and Youth Health Strategy (Kinder und Jugend Gesundheitsstrategie, [Chapter 7.1](#))**.

Besides the national strategies and action plans, strategies of the federal states exist. Thus, countless measures supporting both, the national and the federal states' strategies are implemented at the federal state level but not further described.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

Measures by the Republic

- Project [PASTA](#) (Physical Activity through Sustainable Transport Approaches) aimed to **integrate active mobility in the daily routine**, to evaluate the effects on health and to develop recommendations for promotion on the basis of best practice examples. It ran in the period November 2013- October 2017 and was funded by the 7th EU framework programme.
- Within the scope of the **audit family-friendly municipality ([familienfreundliche Gemeinde](#))**, **sports fields and playgrounds can be built for children and young people** to promote their physical activity. This is an ongoing process initiated by the former Federal Ministry for Families and Youth.
- [WISPOWO](#) is a service point for winter sports weeks. The aim is to **implement nationwide measures to push winter sports weeks**.

Measures by the Federal States

Since, according to the general fallback clause in Article 15 of the Federal Constitution, **matters pertaining to sports fall under the constitutional competence of the federal states**, several further measures have been developed and implemented at the federal state level.

Examples:

- **TWO AND MORE leisure time portal ([ZWEI-UND-MEHR](#)-Freizeitportal, Styria)**: The Styrian family pass encourages all families to engage in sportive, educational and cultural activities by

offering financial reductions for around 900 regional businesses. Offers for example include swimming baths, climbing halls, and youth hostels in skiing and hiking areas.

- **SKIKIDS** (Lower Austria): In Lower Austria, children aged 5 - 10 (alpine skiing) and 8 - 12 (snowboarding) who are absolute beginners receive help in getting started in skiing. The campaign offers them a free 2-day beginner's course for skiing or snowboarding led by certified instructors, including lunch.
- **Youth sports promotion** ([Jugendsportförderung](#), Tyrol): financially supports Tyrolean sports clubs with young athletes (up to the age of 18).
- **Let's Go Graz** (measure by the City of Graz, Styria): In 2021, the City of Graz has launched a 'year of sports' in order to activate and inspire all people living in the city, particularly children (and non-athletes and pensioners) for sports. The project shall raise awareness for the health aspect of sports, put clubs in the spotlight and create stronger inclusion through sport. It is promoted through local media and an app has been created. Children and their families can participate in challenges by counting their daily steps, are motivated to hike up the seven local hills with a stamp collection pass, to bike around the city, and to share pictures and videos of these experiences online.

National network for the promotion of physical activities

The national network ([Bundesweites Netzwerk zur Bewegungsförderung](#)) is legally consolidated in the Federal Sports Promotion law ([Bundes-Sportförderungsgesetz](#)). It provides a **nationwide organised coordination of health supporting sports offers**. Its most important duties are the **support and development of associations** with regard to health-oriented sports offers, the coordination and support of different projects in the area of the physical activity.

[Fit Sport Austria](#) is part of this network and provides a **large variety of physical activity programmes for children and young people**. Fit Sport Austria is subsidised by the federal sports-promotion fund.

Workshops and seminars on integration/team play ([Teampay ohne Abseits](#)) are provided by [ZUSAMMEN.ÖSTERREICH](#) in co-operation with the Austrian football association ([Österreichischer Fussballbund](#), ÖFB). 50 professional football players with migration background visit football associations all over Austria as new integration ambassadors of ZUSAMMEN:ÖSTERREICH and share how they have successfully mastered their integration in Austria.

According to the Action Plan Physical Activity, the population of Austria is characterised by immigration and an increase in the share of older people. The **strengthening of the health competence and the mediation of knowledge suited for the regarding target group** are recent challenges for various institutions responsible for integration, education, senior citizens, sports, social issues or public health services. Nationwide leading events and the corresponding reports on public broadcasting (TV, Radio) are communication tools for the various messages and target groups.

These **model projects** are an inspiration for regional and local events. Examples are:

- **Fit for Austria-congress** ([Fit für Österreich-Kongress](#)): The training events primarily offer the opportunity to learn about new contents and findings in the field of health-oriented sport from top speakers in working groups or workshops. They also provide platforms for exchanging ideas among each other.
- **BSO-Sport-Award** ([BSO-Sport-Cristall](#)): In representation of 50,000 people in the Austrian sport system, from 1998 to 2017 an award was given for special achievements.
- **Day of Sport** ([Tag des Sports](#)): Austria's biggest open-air sports event shall inspire (particularly young) people to engage in sports and showcase the variety of Austrian sports associations. Previously touring through the regions, it is held in Vienna since 2016. In the years before the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of visitors, 122 sports associations and more than 400 successful athletes celebrated the day together.
- **Together physically active** (www.gemeinsambewegen.at): Sports associations and municipalities provide opportunities for everyone to fulfill the health goal of 150 active minutes a week. Gemeinsambewegen promotes their offers. Since 2016, the initiative '50 days of exercise' has been run under the motto 'Fit together. Move with us!'. The goals for children and young people are elevated to physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day with at least moderate intensity, muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening forms of exercise at least three days a week, and additional activities to improve coordination and maintain mobility.

Organised sport and the regarding sports associations have excellent chances to include and integrate people and have low access barriers. Sports associations provide chances to generate

social capital for children, young people, and others by regular participation in physical activity programmes. The gender aspect is of specific importance.

Measures

- Identify what target groups to prioritise, with focus on socially disadvantaged and inactive target groups (e.g. migrants, people at risk of poverty, handicapped people).
- Funding priorities considering the promotion of integrative physical activity programmes with the ability to act as role model projects by facilitating the (first) access for disadvantaged people.
- Integration by demonstration sport of handicapped people at major sports events.

Physical education in schools

The **health promotion campaign 'Active School'** was started in 1989. 'Healthy & Happy' is provided for elementary schools and 'Fit & Smart' for Secondary I schools.

Healthy & Happy (Gesund und Munter)

These measures seeked to **interrupt sedentary learning with activity breaks**. Information booklets, class posters and a Happy Families game encouraged physical activity. The topics addressed by the material are among others the correct sitting posture, suitable school furniture, school bags and break organisation. A media collection for swim training, including folders, videos and CD-ROM was provided. A cooperation with the Austrian Youth Red Cross has been established and an activity diary for pupils has been developed (Bewegungstagebuch und LehrerInnen-Handbuch Gesund & Munter).

Fit and Smart ([Klug und Fit](#))

The goal of this measure is to **determine pupils' postures and motoric skills through motoric and muscle function tests** conducted with the assistance of school doctors. This determination of physical competition capability should serve as a foundation

- for the organisation and differentiation of teaching and practice in class,
- for advice and actions of all school partners, and
- for advice and motivation for individual pupils and parents on how deficits caused by targeted training can be caught up.

In 2015, a daily sports routine has been implemented for all-day-schools.

Physical Education and Sport is a compulsory subject in all school types (except for part-time vocational school in the dual training system). Furthermore, additional optional sports classes and exercises are provided at schools.

The **platform Physical Education & Teachers Training in Austria** ([Plattform Bewegung und Sport in den Schulen Österreichs](#)) by the Federal Ministry of Education provides various information, services and teaching material online.

All school curricular for physical education and sports are provided online ([Alle Lehrpläne für "Bewegung und Sport" sowie für "Bewegungserziehung und Sportkunde"](#)).

School sport events

More than 245,000 pupils take part in **sports events lasting longer than one day**. Enhanced training is offered at winter sports weeks, summer sport weeks, health weeks, training weeks and competition weeks.

School sports competitions

About 200,000 pupils actively take part in [school sports competitions](#) in 22 disciplines. Each year about 25 Federal School Sports Championships, more than 200 national championships and countless regional championships are staged.

Training of teachers at the national sports academies (Bundessportakademien)

Training for sports federations and umbrella organisations recognised by the Austrian federal sports authority takes place at the National Institutes for Physical Education **for coaches, instructors, trainers and sports teachers in schools**, the police force, justice and customs department.

Collaboration and partnerships

Since, according to Article 15 of the Federal Constitution, matters pertaining to sports fall under the constitutional scope of the Austrian federal states, **nine regional sports directorates** have been set up. The following **goals** were appointed:

- **Intensify physical activity-supporting everyday mobility of young people and creating of mobility spare time offers** appropriate for youth within the scope of climate-actively mobile ([klimaaktiv mobil](#)) (special funding for youth mobility projects of extracurricular youth work facilities).
- **Facilitation of access to sports associations** for children and young people, where non-competitive offers are to be prioritised.

Austrian Sports Organisation (Sport Austria)

The Austrian Sports Organization (Österreichischen Bundes-Sportorganisation, BSO) is a **non-governmental umbrella organization in Austrian sports and coordinates all matters of sport** with the responsible government agencies. The scope of activities of the BSO includes, among other tasks, the **governance of political issues of sports, representation of sports concerns in federal institutions, the coordination of special education centres, education and training of instructors and trainers, development of sports projects**, the assessment and revision of legal and administrative bills and acts, creation of databases and documentation and promotion of fairness in sports, with particular regard toward special measures against doping, violence and racism.

The **BSO Sports Youth Programme** is a platform for young people to make a positive contribution to the sporting community. Through workshops, events, publications and projects children and teenagers can learn about important themes and issues for youth in sports.

Beside the professional open youth work facilities, many youth organisation members of the Federal Youth Council provide regular sports offers.

The **constitutional basis for the promotion of sports by the government** forms the **federal sports promotion law** ([Bundes-Sportförderungsgesetz](#)). The law was first implemented in 1969 and last been updated in 2017 and will enter into force in January 2018.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

National health targets and child and youth health strategy

The aims depicted in [Chapter 7.1](#) also emphasize a healthy lifestyle and nutrition. Particularly, the **Austrian health target** 1 aims for health-promoting living and working conditions for everyone, Health Target 3 envisions an enhancement of health literacy in the population, and Health Target 7 aims to provide a healthy diet for all. In the **Health strategy for Children and Young people** ([Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie](#)), Target 3 promotes a healthy development through education and the promotion of a healthy diet of children and young people.

The relevant measures and programmes are discussed below.

Austrian Nutrition Action Plan and National Nutrition Commission

The Austrian Nutrition Action Plan ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Ernährung](#)) was launched in 2011 and aims to **implement effective measures in a transparent and intergovernmental way to prevent over-, under- and malnutrition**, to reverse the rising overweight and obesity rates by 2020 and to prevent diet-related NCDs. **Existing activities were combined in one strong strategy** and a nationwide commitment.

The Action Plan is designed to establish and maintain a **structured continuous dialogue and cross-sectoral cooperation**. It is embedded in the [Austrian Health Targets](#), part of the Austrian Prevention Strategy ([Österreichische Suchtpräventionsstrategie](#)) and is being updated on a regular basis advised by the **National Nutrition Commission** ([Nationale Ernährungscommission](#), NEK), which was established in 2011 as a multidisciplinary nutrition advisory board for the Minister of Health. All relevant players are involved in the development of the Austrian nutrition policy.

The **update of the Austrian Nutrition Action Plan** in 2013 was focused infants, children and young people, pregnant and nursing women as well as on the further development of tools for

communicating information, and empowerment. The aim of **nutritional prevention** is the prolongation of a healthy life and it thus contributes to improving the quality of life.

Strategic aims

- **Improvement of health and quality of life** by enhancement of nutritional and health behaviour in Austria
- **Strengthening** the field of **nutrition** in all areas of society
- Dismantling of **health inequalities** (social, age, gender)
- Accessibility of a **healthy diet for all**
- **Prevention of disease** or age-associated malnutrition
- Strengthening of **nutrition therapy** in the health care system

Further nutrition relevant policies and actions (not only targeting children and young people):

- [Price policies \(food taxation and subsidies\)](#)
- [Trans Fat Regulation](#)
- [Marketing to children](#)

A **self-regulatory code of audio-visual media companies** is in place dealing inter alia with the marketing of food to children and was strengthened based on EU legislation. In addition, everybody a complaint with a special complaint body ([Werberat](#)) can be filed if a special marketing activity or advertisement is perceived to harm children, to take them at a disadvantage, to be misleading or exploiting the inexperience of children. The procedure is transparent. Each complaint and the outcome of the subsequent examination is available online (www.werberat.at).

Austrian Addiction Prevention Strategy

The first Austrian Addiction Prevention Strategy ([Österreichische Suchtpräventionsstrategie](#)) has been published in 2015 and provides a good **starting point for taking appropriate steps at the federal, provincial and local level** to meet the challenges of the next years, based on what has already been achieved. The strategy addresses illicit drugs, new psychological substances, psychotropic medications, smoking, drinking, gambling, other behavioural addictions and doping/neuro-enhancement. Like Health policy in general, **addiction policy concerns all policies** through the principle of 'health in all policies'. People's health can only be effectively and sustainably fostered if all political actors involved join forces, and measures taken in the health sector are appropriately aligned with measures in other policies, particularly those that touch on areas of life where factors that foster the development or prevention of addiction have been identified. This strategy is not only targeting youth but the whole population.

Goals

Alcohol

Social conditions that enable healthy lifestyles, paralleled by addiction prevention measures, shall keep the number of people who develop problematic patterns of alcohol use as low as possible. The regulations on youth protection regarding alcohol primarily apply to public spaces. Here, the **trading and catering industries** play a key role and carry responsibility regarding implementation and control. In the private sphere, young people should have the opportunity to learn an appropriate approach to drinking. **Protection of minors ([Jugendschutz](#))** is the competence of the Federal States. While details differ, generally young people under 16 can't buy and (publically) consum alcoholic beverages, distilled alcohol ('hard liquor') can't be bought (consumed) until the age of 18. In 2019, the federal states have agreed to harmonise youth protection laws in the areas of smoking, alcohol and curfews, however a solution hasn't yet been reached.

Tobacco

Prevention measures that **target children and young people are particularly important** so that as few people as possible even start smoking. Comprehensive measures are needed to protect people, particularly children, from exposure to second-hand smoke indoors. Efforts must be made to ensure adherence to all anti-smoking regulations, especially those enshrined in youth protection laws as well as smoking bans. Across the Federal States, the legal age to purchase and make use of tobacco has been raised to 18 ([Jugendschutz](#)). After years of discussion in 2019 finally a **full smoking ban ([Nichtraucherschutz in der Gastronomie](#))** in bars and restaurants has come into force. According to [Statistik Austria](#), in the time span 2014 - 2019 the greatest decreases in smoking were seen in the younger population and here especially among women.

Gambling

Both **prevention measures and statutory measures** need to be taken in order to keep down the number of people who develop problems relating to games of chance or similar activities, such as sports betting. Gambling must be controlled in such a way for it to be primarily a harmless entertainment, and so that heavy financial losses are unlikely. Efforts must be made to ensure that the regulations protecting young people and gamblers are complied with. Young people under 18 are not allowed to participate in gambling, including online gambling, and are not allowed to enter places where money is played for (e.g. betting office, casino). Lottery tickets can be bought from age 16 onwards.

Intervention

Harmonised provincial laws for the protection of youth regarding drinking, smoking and gambling are an important aspect of addiction policy, and must be implemented effectively and in line with the state of the art. Since 2019, Austria has largely uniform - however not completely harmonised - provisions on the purchase and consumption of alcohol and tobacco, as well as on curfews in the respective provincial laws that regulate the protection of minors ([Jugendschutz](#)). Further fields of action include alcohol-induced violence within and outside families, as well as driving under the influence of alcohol.

Target groups of the strategy are abstinent people, low-risk users, problem users, addicted patients and third-party affected. **Children and young people are the primary target group of prevention activities.** Measures specifically designed for this group must be taken to encourage them to turn to help services whenever problems arise and to prevent problems from arising in the first place. **Attention needs to be paid to those children and groups with a higher risk of developing addiction** – for instance, children from families with addiction problems. **Early detection, early intervention**, as well as **life skills and risk competence approaches**, have proven their worth as professional approaches to prevention. Life skills approaches are effective not only in preventing addiction, but also in preventing **violence**. Appropriate prevention measures targeting adults are also envisioned. (Further) training programmes in prevention for key persons and multipliers as well as peers make it possible to reach a very large number of people (of the direct target group). **Providing the public with well-founded, appropriately prepared, objective information on problem substances and patterns of behaviour, as well as on help services**, is of great importance. To achieve prevention goals in a sustainable way, systematic steps need to be taken, based on **socio-scientific findings** and coordinated with all stakeholders. At the provincial level, the **addiction prevention units** serve as competence centres, and any prevention activities in individual areas – e.g. in school and recreational settings, or prevention in the workplace – as well as the involvement of experts from other fields (e.g. the police), should be coordinated with the units. The **funding shall be provided by the federal and provincial governments** and the social insurance funds, and/or through revenue from taxes on alcohol, tobacco and gambling.

Investing in health literacy: Policy Brief 19

This policy brief is one of a new series to meet the needs of policy-makers and health system managers. The aim is to **develop key messages to support evidence-informed policy-making** and the editors will continue to strengthen the series by working with authors to improve the consideration given to policy options and implementation.

Besides the **national strategies and action plans, strategies of the federal states** exist. Thus, countless measures supporting both, the national and the federal states' strategies are implemented at the federal state level but not further described.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Completed national measures in the framework of the Austrian nutrition action plan targeting youth

- **Best practice guide 'beverages'** ([Praxisleitfaden „Getränke“](#)) developed and implemented by [SIPCAN](#) on behalf of the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.
- **Best practice guide 'dairy products'** ([Praxisleitfaden „Milchprodukte“](#)) developed and implemented by [SIPCAN](#) on behalf of the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.

- **Best practice guide 'sweets'** ([Praxisleitfaden „Süßigkeiten“](#)) developed and implemented by [SIPCAN](#) on behalf of the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.
- International and national **youth conferences** (health)
- **Nutrition hotline**
- Regional measures of the federal states are described in the action plan.

Ongoing national measures in the framework of the Austrian nutrition action plan targeting youth

The **Austrian beverages and snack licence** ([Der österreichische Trink- und Jausenführerschein](#)), developed and implemented by [SIPCAN](#) on behalf of the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.

- [Graphical illustration](#) of **nutrition pyramids** and development of **nutrition recommendations for children** by the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.
- [Generation blue](#) (**information on water**)
- **ÖGE-Seal of Quality**. A seal of quality for caterers and commercial kitchens which provide health-promoting meals has been established.
- Further training of **parent trainers** in the field of family health.
- **'The good choice'** ([Die gute Wahl](#)) is an initiative linked to the project **'our school buffet'**. Healthy dishes at the school buffet will be labelled with the good choice label. The information on this project was presented by the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and [AGES](#) (Österreichische Agentur für Gesundheit und Ernährungssicherheit / Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety) in March 2016.
- **'Children eat healthy'** ([Kinder essen gesund](#)) is an Austria-wide initiative for better nutrition of children. Within the framework of this initiative, useful **tools are disseminated for parents, educators** as well as those responsible for meals in kindergartens, after-school care centres and schools. The focus is on the promotion of scientifically based projects, and **broad-based press and public relations work**. The project is supported by the Ministry of Health, AGES, Fonds Healthy Austria, and Gesundes Österreich GmbH.
- The **Austrian Youth Portal (Jugendportal)** helps young people in finding information on how to maintain a healthy diet ([Ernährung](#)).

Regional measures of the federal states are described in the action plan.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Health education

Health education is a teaching principle for all school types in Austria.

Health promotion in schools

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) has noted international studies to show that

- the self-confidence of pupils strongly depends on **how comfortable they are in school**
- **well-being and self-confidence have a positive impact** on the physical and mental state of health
- **health behaviour is influenced** by the school.

As **health and academic achievements correspond**, healthy pupils show a better performance. High-achieving pupils act healthier. Targeted interventions result in **improved stress management** and problem-solving among teachers and subsequently in a less detrimental work attitude.

Health promotion

Health promotion is a process which **sensitises for health correlations** and thereby provides options, for everybody involved, to actively contribute to the preservation of health. Differently to prevention, which aims at the avoidance of risks, health promotion wants to **strengthen people physically, mentally and socially to reduce the likeliness of diseases and to enable handling of existing health risks** (e.g., stress). School influences the health of teachers and pupils via the social climate and the organisation of classrooms and equally by the quality of the lighting, the ergonomics of the furniture as well as by break arrangements and food offers. Thus, school affects the physical, mental and social health of all people.

Main objectives

- Embedding of health promotion as an **organisation-wide approach** - it is important for the school management and staff to support this idea.
- Knowledge development and **development of personal action competence**.
- **Organisation of the school** as a health-supporting social environment.
- **Regular thematisation in the committees** of the school community
- Anchorage of health promotion in the **school programme** or school profile

The former Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture has published the **fundamental decree on health education** ([Grundsatzlerlass zum Unterrichtsprinzip Gesundheitserziehung](#)) which describes the duties, objectives and bases of the health promotion in schools and the regarding implementation in 1997. (GZ 27.909/15-V/3/96, circular No., 7/1997).

The main implementation areas of the decree are

1. School as a workplace and living space
2. Interlinking of different social environments
3. Social school culture
4. Teamwork
5. Forms of teaching
6. School internal further training
7. Public relations

Furthermore, **books like 'Me and my world'** („Ich und meine Welt“) have been developed to enhance health competence.

School buffet

In 2011, the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection launched a nationwide initiative financed by the Federal Health Agency on **healthy eating in school cafeterias**. The initiative called 'our school buffet' ("unser Schulbuffet") is **geared towards cafeteria owners**. They get an **onsite counselling free of charge** how to improve their food and drink basket based on a guideline published by the Ministry while considering their individual environment aiming at **sustainable improvements based on healthy nutrition recommendations and their economic viability**. When meeting the standards cafeterias get **certified by** the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection \(Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz\)](#).

Overall, a total of 354 buffets took part in the initiative until the end of 2014. That accounts for around 25% of all such operations in Austria. 240 000 pupils were thus able to benefit from an improvement of the catering offered at schools. To be able to continue the Our School Buffet initiative, the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection \(Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz\)](#) has been looking for cooperation partners in the individual provinces so that the **initiative can be continued on a regional basis** and so that the financing in these provinces is ensured. The Ministry provides the concept, all necessary documents and the know-how. The cooperation partners assume responsibility for the mobile advisory services which are the centrepiece of the Our School Buffet initiative. The mobile coaches have been well-prepared for their tasks thanks to a training course.

Environment and health education fund (Umwelt- und Gesundheitsbildungsfonds)

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) financially supports the realisation of **environment-oriented and/or health-supporting project teaching** at schools.

Sex education and personal relationships education

Sex education is a **teaching principle for all school types** in Austria.

Sex education in schools

It is the duty of the school, in the cooperation with teachers, pupils and parents as the school community, to promote pupils in their personality as a whole. Sexual development is a part of the whole personality development of the person and takes place at cognitive, emotional, sensory and physical levels. Today contemporary **sexual education theory is a form of the education at school which begins accordingly to age in the early childhood and continues until the adult's age**. In this process, sexuality is understood as a **positive potential** being inherent in the person. Within the scope of a comprehensive sexual education **information and competence**

should be conveyed to children and youth to be able to act responsibly with themselves and others. Beside institutions like kindergartens and schools, parents play a central role in this process.

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) has published the **updated fundamental decree on sex education** ([Grundsatzlerlass Sexualpädagogik](#)) which describes the duties, objectives and bases of sex education in schools and the regarding implementation in 2015 (BMBF-33.543/0038-I/9d/2015).

General principles of sex education in the decree

1. Positive educational position towards sexual development
2. Sexual development as the base for sex education
3. Sex education supports personality development
4. Support of the capability of expression and the discussion ability
5. Enhancement of fact-based knowledge
6. Enhancement of body competence
7. Arrangement of social rules

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) provides **teaching material for the promotion of responsible handling of sexuality, for the prevention of abuse and for HIV.**

The **website school psychology: sexual health - sex education** has been implemented ([schulpsychologie.at: Sexuelle Gesundheit - Sexualerziehung](#)).

Peer-to-peer education approaches

PartyFit!

A peer-to-peer approach for the **prevention of alcohol abuse** was launched with the project [PartyFit!](#) (mentioned in the Austrian Child and Youth Health Strategy). Commissioned by the Institute for Addiction Prevention, PartyFit! is aimed at teenagers and young adults who like to party. On site at events, they directly inform on the topic of alcohol.

Project GAAS

The project GAAS ([Projekt GAAS](#)) had the aim to **promote health competence of young people that are not in education, work or training.** According to the principle, 'no intervention without diagnosis' measures were adapted for the promotion of health competence to the needs of the young people. Due to the **integration of students of dietetics and physiotherapy** the peer-to-peer approach was very successful.

Health education in youth work

The umbrella organisations BÖJI and bOJA published the **handbook health competence in youth work** ([Leitfaden: Jugendarbeit - Gesundheitskompetenz](#)).

Several youth organisations provide information and campaigns concerning health related subjects, such as, among others, sex education and addiction prevention.

Collaboration and partnerships

Professional open youth work in Austria (youth centres, mobile open youth work, and youth street work) dealt with health competence in the corresponding facilities. Representatives of the field of action developed **standards for health-competent professional open youth work.** At the same time, the **nationwide network Health-Competent Youth Work** ([Gesundheitskompetente Jugendarbeit](#)) has been founded. By developing standards, it became visible that the **local settings**, both in urban areas and in more rural municipalities, **are of great importance** when it comes to supporting health competence of young people in the setting of open youth work.

Health-competent open youth work in local settings

The project 'health-competent open youth work in local settings' aims for facilities of open youth work to systematically deal with their organisational health competence and **commit themselves to the concept of health-competent open youth work.** This happens in narrow cooperation with the respective local authority. The aim is **capacity building of health competence** in the field of open youth work, which is strengthened by activities to interlink and transfer knowledge and know-how. Thus, open youth work significantly contributes to an increase of health competence. The project took place from 2017 until 2020. Concrete measures were the

development and implementation of a 3-step validation system for health-competent youth centres and health-competent mobile open youth work respectively in municipalities.

Flanking the process of implementing health competence in the field of open youth work, **activities on health-competent youth work** (including youth information centres and youth organisations) were envisioned: the network Health-Competent Youth Work is continued and further developed and a **website with recent information on health competence** was launched. A close link to the Austrian platform health competence is planned and will assure the quality of the activities. The project is funded by the FGÖ, the main association of Austrian social security institutions and the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

Handbook on health competence in extracurricular youth work

The umbrella organisation for professional open youth work and the umbrella organisation for youth information centres published a handbook on health competence in extracurricular youth work. Chosen facilities of open youth work (youth centres, youth clubs, mobile youth work) and the youth information centres in Styria, Salzburg and Tyrol compiled **criteria for health-competent youth centres or the health-competent mobile youth work and health-competent youth information centres. Peer-to-peer-approaches** are pursued in this area. Young people realise offers and workshops for other young people.

The development of the handbook was supported by the Fund for a Healthy Austria ([Fonds Gesundes Österreich](#), FGÖ), the Federal Ministry Civil Services and Sports and the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

Brochure on sex and love

The umbrella organisation of youth information centres published an extensive brochure on sex and love ([Erster Sex und große Liebe](#)) in 2016, updated March 2017. The development was financially supported by the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#).

According to § 46 of the school education act ([§ 46 Schulunterrichtsgesetz, SchUG](#)) of 2014, schools have been opened to offers from leisure time education and **schools can make use of these offers**.

risreflecting®

[risreflecting®](#) teaches (young) people to anticipate and manage risks and to reflect upon their behaviour. The programme of risk management from drug and alcohol consumption has been expanded to areas of consumer spending, gambling, driving, and extreme sports. Sponsoring organisations are: Youth Department Vienna ([Landesjugendreferat Wien](#)), Youth Department Salzburg ([Landesjugendreferat Salzburg](#)), Office for Youth Work Bolzano ([Amt für Jugendarbeit Provinz Bozen](#)), Austrian Alpine Club ([Alpenverein ÖAV](#)), Youth Department Lower Austria ([Landesjugendreferat Niederösterreich](#)), and [Verein Vital](#).

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

Several public bodies are in charge of health and health information in Austria. Additionally, a wide range of **non-public bodies supports** health promotion.

First of all, the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) provides information on a large variety of health topic, from alcohol and drugs, nutrition to travel information and environmental health.

The **Fund for a Healthy Austria** ([Fonds Gesundes Österreich](#)) has chosen the motto 'health for everyone'. This nationwide contact and promotion service sets manifold activities to promote health and prevent risks. Information regarding health and prevention is found on its website.

The **Gesundheit Österreich GmbH** is the national research and planning institute in the health care sector. The competence centre for health promotion links up several business divisions and offers comprehensive professional information its website.

The public health portal [Gesundheit.gv.at](#) offers quality assured information on health and diseases. Beside medical topics, the structures of the health care system are explained.

The nationwide service centre **GIVE** is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#)

([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) and the Austrian Youth Red Cross. Activities for teachers and educational experts are the focus of this initiative. However, on the website, there is also a lot of useful material and information for young people.

The [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology](#) ([Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie](#)) is responsible for key **quality-of-life issues** and for questions which are essential in creating a liveable future the children.

The **Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety** ([AGES](#)) is a company of the Republic of Austria, owned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Ministry of Environment and was founded in 2002. AGES supports the management of the federal government in questions relating to public health, animal health, food safety, medical and drug safety, food security and consumer protection along the food chain by providing professional and independent scientific expertise (as stated in Article 8 of the Austrian Health and Food Safety Act).

The hotline '[Rat auf Draht](#)' presents a series of **health-related articles** on the website. In addition to the hotline, information on, among others, smoking and eating disorders is provided.

The Austrian Youth Portal provides a link collection on health and well-being services provides in Austria.

Since 1999 the **Fund for a Healthy Austria** carries out **large scale information and awareness campaigns** to improve the consciousness and knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity, neutrino, lifestyle and non-smoking were up to now the central subjects. A [collection](#) of campaigns and initiatives for the whole population is provided online.

Special youth-targeted information campaigns

'Live your life. Without smoke. [YOLO!](#)' is the slogan of the tobacco prevention initiative for 10 to 14-year-olds by the federal Ministry of Health and the Fund for a Healthy Austria. On this occasion, a website and a hotline have been installed. Initially the campaign was supposed to last until December 2015, but was then further extended until 2018. A quiz app can be downloaded .

In 2006, the **nationwide campaign 'Mehr Spaß mit Maß'** ('**More fun with moderation**') stimulated young people to an independent and reflected consumption of alcohol.

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

Mental health is part of the Health strategy for Children and Young people (Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie). Aim 5 aims to strengthen the life competence of children and young people, according to aim 11 early diagnosis and specific support for children and adolescent shall be improved and aim 15 sets out to improve care in selected fields (child and youth psychiatry, psychosomatics, neuro paediatrics and social paediatrics). Furthermore, Austrian Health Target 9 stresses the promotion of psychosocial health in all population groups.

In 2008, **regulations concerning child and youth psychiatry** have first been integrated into the **Austrian Structural Health Plan** ([Österreichischer Strukturplan Gesundheit](#), ÖSG). They are a guideline for the implementation and expansion of the in-patient child and youth psychiatry regarding improvements in provision and the **increase in the number of medical specialists** in this area. The latter is a condition for the long-term planned improvement of the out-patient child and youth psychiatric care. However, the implementation state is still expandable in Austria and varies in the regions. Somatic disorders with a mental background as well as a row of mental clinical pictures among children and young people often don't need psychiatric intervention, but are optimally treatable at specialised **psychosomatic care units**. Hence, the implementation and expansion of the psychosomatic care unit for children and young people are stipulated in the Austrian Structural Health Plan. The aim is to **guarantee a multidiscipline care for all psychically suffering or strongly overburdened children and young people** regardless of their social status by a nationwide care service free of charge. This provision includes specialised medical, psychological as well as psychotherapeutic and functional-therapeutical care. Due to the **expansion of the regarding services, a positive development** took place (according to the evaluation of provisions for the update of Child and Youth Health Strategy in 2016). In many federal states, the psychiatric and psychosomatic in-patient and day-clinic care for children and young people have been further developed. In parallel, the out-patient care has been further developed too.

Additionally, the Child and Youth Health Strategy is strongly supported by the **National Mental Health Strategy** ([Nationale Strategie zur psychischen Gesundheit](#)) and the 'package of measures until 2020' of the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions by affirming the improvement and expansion of the mentioned service areas.

Suicide prevention

Since the 1980s, a significant decline in suicide incidence in the general population has taken place (which slowed down considerably with the onset of the global economic crisis between 2008 and 2014). The numbers are still three times higher than road fatalities ([Suizidprävention Sozialministerium](#)). Among adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24, suicide is the second most common cause of death ([gesundheit.gv.at](#)). 'Therefore, an **increased awareness of the need for support in this phase of life is necessary. Tailor-made offers** are needed, as the life and emotional worlds of adolescents differ significantly from those of adults', which is why [Fonds Gesundes Österreich](#) promotes suicide prevention projects that have been specially developed for children and adolescents.

In 2012, the former Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection implemented the [co-ordination office for suicide prevention](#) and presented the **National Austrian Suicide Prevention Plan (SUPRA)**. The [SUPRA-web portal](#) has been launched in May 2017.

The [website www.bittelebe.at](#) ('please live') was developed for adolescents and young adults who are worried that a friend might harm themselves. Its central statement is that most people who attempt suicide do not want to die, but can rather no longer continue living in the way and form they have been. Because of this, talking and help can save lives. The website contains tips for conversation and behaviour ('Talking about it, but how?') and clears up common prejudices in videos.

Free anonymous help on the subject of suicide is offered **around the clock by 'Telephone counselling'** ([Telefonseelsorge](#)) under the number 142 (without area code) and '[Rat auf Draht](#)' under 147 (without area code). Rat auf Draht is specifically targeted and promoted towards children and young people and has been offering them an important contact point for problems, questions and in crisis situations since 1987. Apart from them, (grand)parents, other relatives, teachers and all caregivers can turn to the experts for help with questions about parenting. A team, consisting of psychologists, clinical/health psychologists, life and social counsellors, social pedagogues and lawyers, receives around 100,000 counselling requests per year. On average, up to 250 counselling sessions are conducted daily.

Improving the mental health of young people

Main measures for the improvement of child and adolescent psychiatric care

- Quick **expansion of the child and adolescent psychiatric in-patient care structures** in accordance with the ÖSG provisions (ongoing, in process of implementation).
- The decree of a lack field (Mangelfach) regulation until 2021 aims for an urgently necessary **rise of the education capacity** in this area (issued in 2015).
- Expansion of the **capacities for the basic care by resident medical specialists** and guaranteeing the **multidiscipline full care** together with resident therapists with child specific education (ongoing, in process of implementation).
- Interlinking and **cooperation of all involved services and structures** like
- **health promotion, prevention, crises management**, addiction treatment, rehabilitation, facilities for treatment of children and adolescent with complicated disorders and facilities for child and youth welfare (recommended in 2011, in process of implementation).

Main measures for the improvement of psychosomatic care

- Quick and nationwide **expansion of psychosomatic care structures** in accordance with the ÖSG provisions (in process of implementation).

Other measures of aim 15 of the Austrian Child and Youth Health Strategy

- **Mental health strategy** by the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions: The action area 7 focuses on a **low-threshold, nationwide basic care in psychiatry, psychotherapy and in functional therapy** (in process of implementation).
- Project: **regulation collection for ergotherapy, speech therapy and physiotherapy** for children and adolescent (in process of development).

The [SUPRA-web portal](#) has been launched provides a collection of 24 hour helplines, emergency institutions and information folders for suicide prevention.

Eating disorders

Offers for eating disorders

- **Handbook eating disorders:** help for relatives, teachers and pedagogic professionals ([Handbuch Essstörungen: Hilfe für Angehörige, Lehrkräfte und pädagogische Fachkräfte bei Essstörungen](#)) (Federal State of Carinthia)
- **Web platform** for people with eating disorders and their relatives ([Onlineplattform für Personen mit Essstörungen und deren Angehörige](#))
- **Workshops for girls and young women to prevent** eating disorders by the Women, Parents, Girls health centre FEM ([Workshop](#), FEM-Frauen, Eltern, Mädchen Gesundheitszentrum, Vienna)
- **Workshops for multipliers**, City of Vienna ([Workshops für MultiplikatorInnen](#) der Stadt Wien)
- Eating disorder [hotline](#) (City of Vienna)

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

Aim 11 of the Child and Youth Health Strategy ([Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie](#)) emphasizes the importance of early diagnosis and specific support for children and adolescent. The early diagnosis of (health) problems allows an early support by specific promotion and thus, shows better prevention success or success of treatment. There are different and **only partly standardised programmes for different target groups** in Austria. The **main tool** for early diagnosis of diseases of children in Austria is the **'mother-child passport'** ([Mutter-Kind-Pass](#)). Its further development according to the present scientific evidence was one of the main focuses of the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)) in the last years.

Main Measures for early diagnosis

- The pilot programme **'health check junior'** (Gesundheitscheck Junior) (since 2013 implemented in Vienna and Burgenland) has been extended to a nationwide programme. In order to identify health risks at an early stage and to increase health awareness, social insurances offer children and adolescents aged six to 18 a free Health Check. For ongoing health monitoring, the possibility is also offered for all adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 ([Jugendlichenuntersuchung](#)).
- **Further development of the Mother Child passport** with the aim to provide recommendations based on screenings of possible of health risks (in process of development).
- Standardised examinations for **early diagnosis of specific needs in Kindergarten** (recommended in 2011, in process of implementation).
- Development of a draft for **school health** in cooperation with relevant profession groups (recommended).
- Adaption and expansion of **nationwide new-born screenings** (implemented).
- **Free of charge orthodontic treatment** for all under 18 years (implemented).

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are young people and their parents, doctors and health professionals, health insurances, multipliers and teachers.

Guidance to stakeholders

Early diagnosis measures at school aim at the **training of teachers and focus on anomalies in the area of dyslexia and dyscalculia**. Another focal point in early diagnosis of **addiction**. These trainings will be part of the draft for school health.

Regional measures provide guidance and training for stakeholders. In Tyrol, special **linguistic support** training is offered for kindergarten teachers. **Parent counselling** is provided in most federal states.

Teacher training and information on interacting with children with dyslexia is provided by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). **School physicians** are present in schools all over Austria. Further training for school physicians is provided by various public bodies. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research promotes the communication and co-operation in the area of **psychosocial counselling**.

Target groups

Apart from young people with problematic consumption, **no special target groups** are identified/defined by the strategy.

Funding

There is no description of the financial support for this specific aim.

80 million Euro each year are provided for the free of charge orthodontic treatment for all people under 18 years.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

Goal 14 of the Austrian Child and Youth Health Strategy ([Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitsstrategie](#)) aims to make health facilities more child and youth-friendly.

Main measures

- **Child-appropriate design of in-patient care** by setting up child areas, guaranteeing child care by certified staff with paediatric competence and by guaranteeing regular paediatric conciliar visits in non-paediatric hospital wards
- Expansion and **improvement of the infrastructure for accompanying persons**
- Restructure of bed use in a hospital by **pushing paediatric day-clinical structures** in particular for chronic sick persons and planned medical interventions
- Strive for the **participation of children in the hospital**: children shall be involved in decisions regarding them according to their stage of development

There is no description of the financial support for this specific aim.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

Ongoing debates

- An **Austria-wide youth protection law** has been discussed; so far the federal states did not agree on one common draft, which leaves the nine regional laws in place.
- According to the [media](#), there are still too **few clinic spaces in the child and youth psychiatry**. 133 12-18-year-olds had to be treated at an adult psychiatric institution in 2017. At the moment there are only 64 beds for stationary care for young people in Vienna

Novel challenges due to COVID-19

A survey of the National Youth Council made evident that youth workers perceive negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people in terms of social contacts, mental health and job/education. Young people long for normality and social contacts while at the same time becoming more and more withdrawn. Thus, **the COVID-19 crisis has raised new challenges for youth politics - with regard to mental health** and others - that need to be addressed. In line with an emerging public debate, the nationwide network Open Youth Work' ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#), bOJA) in February 2021 published a paper ([Positionspapier von bOJA Feb '21: 1 Jahr Corona Krise - Potentiale der Offenen Jugendarbeit in der Pandemie](#)) calling for an **increased consideration of young people's concerns in the pandemic response**. The ongoing pandemic and its continuous contact restrictions have heavily affected young people's mental health. An **increase of depression**, withdrawal behaviour and anxiety disorders has been noted among young people. **In times of crisis, young people need outside social contacts more than ever** - whether exchanges with their peers, stable and sustainable relationships with adults and the opportunity to make use of youth work. Furthermore, as sports often entails social contacts, sports associations, sports facilities, and sports groups have been shut down during the pandemic, restricting the carefully built up sports environment for young people. **Sports associations have thus repeatedly alerted to the high importance of sports for children and young people** ([Breitensport: Vereine drängen auf Öffnung](#)).

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

In Austria, arts and culture are ubiquitous and enjoy a high societal value, which makes them a natural **part of young people's everyday life**. **Creativity** is defined as a **teaching principle** and several school subjects (e.g. music, arts, German) are closely related to culture and creativity in all school types. Furthermore, all **federal museums run an art education department** and thus provide a large variety of services for schools and young people.

With the **initiative "Freier Eintritt bis 19" (free admission up to 19)** the Austrian federal museums open their gates to children and young people. Young people have free access to Austria's biggest cultural treasures. According to the Arts and Culture Report 2019 ([Kunst- und Kulturbericht 2019](#)), curated by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#), more than 10 million children and adolescents made use of this offer since its start in 2010. In 2019, 1.312.904 young people of this age group (of which 557.925 or 42% Austrian) were reached with the offer.

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

According to the Federal Arts and Culture report 2019 ([Kunst- und Kulturbericht](#)) provided by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#), more than one million visitors up to the age of 19 benefitted from the Federal Museums in Austria. The number is constantly rising: 1.312.904 young people under the age of 19 in 2019 accounted for an increase of 6% compared to the year before (1.235.203 in 2018). The high number of young visitors is accomplished by free entry provisions for young people up to the age of 19. Since the implementation of the free entry for under 19 years old in 2010, more than 10 million children and adolescents made use of this offer. The information events provided were have been very well accepted. From 2010 to 2018 2.740.348 children and young people attended the overall 153.035 arts and culture mediation events. Of the young people under 19 benefitting from free entrance, in 2019 557.925 (42 %) were Austrian. There is a significant disparity between federal states, with Vienna accounting for 66% of participants (70% in 2018) due to the concentration of federal museums in the capital city. All nine federal provinces run provincial museums (brought together under the [Museumsbund Österreich](#)), which at the least foresee reduced tariffs for children and youth, and enable young people to encounter culture throughout Austria regardless of their geographical origin.

The detrimental impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, in the course of which museums remained closed during certain lockdowns, remained to be seen in the upcoming Federal Arts and Culture report for 2020.

Young visitor numbers by federal museum

Museum	2019	2018	change in %
Albertina	159.806	159.806	-11
Belvedere	213.339	213.339	+8
KHM	224.564	224.564	+1
MAK	21.289	21.289	+21
mumok	35.302	35.302	+41
NHM	309.319	309.319	+4
TMW	204.321	204.321	+10

ÖNB	67.263	67.263	+36
Gesamt	1.235.203	1.235.203	+6

Main concepts

In 1992, Austria ratified the [Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#). With the ratification of the [UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) in 2009, Austria committed to the creation of an inventory of its intangible cultural heritage as well as its continuous updating.

For Austria, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has brought about some relevant impulses, as the [2015 report on its implementation](#) shows. Its policy aspects include the promoting of cultural diversity and inclusivity (e.g. increased recognition for linguistic minorities), sustainable tourism that increases the visibility of communities' intangible cultural heritage and the use and preservation of traditional knowledge regarding natural resources and hazards (e.g. in terms of sustainable resource management such as traditional seed cultivation). Committees and working groups have been established to initiate awareness-raising projects.

In the field of cultural education, all federal museums have an art education department and thus a large variety of services for schools and young people.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport (Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport)

The Ministry promotes contemporary art in Austria as well as Austrian artists abroad. It is responsible for **federal funding programmes for all segments of contemporary art** including the performing and fine arts, music and literature, film, new media, photography, architecture and design as well as regional cultural initiatives. In the Federal Ministry, a Secretary of State is deployed.

It is engaged in the following culture areas (Links available in German only):

- [Federal grants](#) for **regional museums**, activities in the area of **folk culture**, and the **public library system**
- [Monument protection](#) and world heritage
- [Art restitution](#) affairs (Commission for Provenance Research)
- Supervision of business activities and compliance with legal requirements, including the creation of suitable framework conditions for [federal cultural institutions](#)
- Coordination and **representation of Austria in EU cultural policy, information on EU incentive programs, cultural cooperations in Europe**, networks for ministers of culture.
- [Bi- and multilateral cultural cooperations](#) with European and non-European nations.

Funding and the federal provinces

Alongside the Federal Ministry, the **nine provincial governments are important players** in arts and culture politics.

This is showcased by Statistik Austria's data on public cultural expenditure ([Statistik Austria: Kulturfinanzierung](#)), which in 2018 amounted to a total of around 2.69 billion euros (0.70% of GDP). Federal expenditure amounted to 893 million euros, while the Länder recorded 1,052 million euros, and the municipalities (excluding Vienna due to its double status as a province and municipality) 863 million euros.

In total, this corresponds to a per capita expenditure of 304 euros in 2018. The expenditure profile of the state budgets shows a focus on education and training (30% of cultural expenditure).

National Center of Competence for Arts Education (National Center of Competence für kulturelle Bildung)

The National Center of Competence for Arts Education, founded by the Austrian [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), **operates all over Austria for all school types** and is located

at the [University College of Teacher Education Lower Austria](#). The Centre focuses on **giving impulses in the field of arts education by "train-the-trainer" education and multiplier workshops** in all school subjects, concentrating on arts subjects. It is in charge of **organising networks of experts** in the fields of arts education, i.e. [visual arts](#), [music](#), [drama](#) and [material arts](#). The networks consist of teachers from all fields of education from all over Austria. The discourse in the networks deals with the **promotion and development of arts education** in schools. The Centre **promotes cooperation** and networking between institutions of professional development of teachers and **gathers and spreads information** on training courses, publications, competitions and other offers for schools that are relevant for arts education in a free monthly newsletter.

'Cultural education with schools' (Kulturvermittlung mit Schulen) and 'Educational Cooperation with Eastern and South-Eastern Europe' (Bildungskooperation mit Ost- und Südosteuropa) by the OEAD

On behalf of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the department of Cultural Education at the [Austrian Academic Service \(Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung, OEAD\)](#) works at the interface of schools and arts and culture. In this context, **participative cultural education projects and activities with schools throughout Austria** are conceived, promoted, and given advisory and organisational support. These programs were formerly termed [Kultur Kontakt Austria \(KKA\)](#). As of 2020, they have been integrated into the OEAD, Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation. The OEAD's work in this field is based on the central principle that **children and young people should be encouraged to actively participate in artistic and cultural processes and foster their competences**, taking the circumstances of their own lives as a point of departure. The projects are carried out **in cooperation with artists and cultural professionals** as well as with artistic and cultural institutions. Engaging in direct encounters with artists gives children and young people new ways of accessing and involving themselves in the arts and culture and is thus - as well in the context of equal opportunities - an important precondition for participation in the processes of society.

Objectives

- With its cultural education programmes and its large network of cooperation partners, OEAD promotes the active involvement of children and young people in various forms of contemporary art and culture. The objective is to **promote active participation in the arts and culture on an as broad basis as possible** as well as a constructive approach to dealing with diversity and difference in society
- OEAD supports collective and individual learning and teaching processes of pupils, teachers, artists and cultural educators, also in terms of a **new learning culture at schools**
- The **quality and sustainability of communication between cultural institutions, artists and young people** are a central focus. Other important aspects are European developments in and discourses on cultural education

Non-governmental actors

A number of private actors and interest groups work at the interface of arts and culture and youth.

- [IG Culture \(IG Kultur\)](#) is a network and interest group of free and autonomous cultural work in Austria. Its central task is to improve the working conditions for cultural work. It acts as a cultural policy lobby and as an advisory body on behalf of cultural initiatives. As a nationwide umbrella organisation, it represents more than 800 autonomous cultural initiatives. Together with the cultural interest groups at the provincial level, it negotiates framework conditions on behalf of its members and sets cultural policy standards. IG Kultur represents cultural initiatives that work continuously and self-determined and in the field of contemporary cultural mediation and production. The prerequisite for membership is independence from public institutions, religious communities and political parties as well as agreement with the goals set out in the vision.
- [IG Architecture \(IG Architektur\)](#) is an association of over 300 architects from all over Austria. It networks architects with each other and with important stakeholders in building culture. As an architects' interest group, it is an impulse platform for the discussion of questions of architecture and architectural policy.
- [IG Visual Arts](#) represents the interests of visual artists in arts policy, social, economic, legal, and other professional matters. It aims to create good living and working conditions for visual artists.

- *art-bv.at* ([Berufsvereinigung der Bildenden Künstler Österreichs](#)) is the professional Association of Fine Artists in Austria and campaigns for the cultural-political, social, economic, legal and fiscal interests of artists.
- [Association of Free Radios Austria](#) (Verein Freie Radios Österreich, VFRÖ) is a community of broadcasters that provide ad-free programming from local communities as an alternative to mainstream broadcasting. In principle, they create opportunities for every member of our society to be able to go on air. Community broadcasters are nonprofit, autonomous, and ad-free media organisations.
- [Austrian Music Council](#) ([Österreichischer Musikrat](#), ÖMR) is an umbrella organisation of music-related NGOs and a member of the European Music Council, and the International Music Council associated with UNESCO.
- *mica* - [music austria](#) is a competence and music information centre (not an interest group) dedicated to "helping people help themselves" through music. It provides numerous workshops, legal advice, and a music database
- [Austrian Composers' Association](#) ([Österreichischer Komponistenbund](#), ÖKB) represents the interests of composers of all musical styles and genres living and working in Austria.
- [International Society for New Music](#) ([Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik](#), IGNM) promotes and disseminates contemporary new art music and sound art. It works on achieving the networking of composers, interpreters and musicologists on a regional and international level.
- [Austrian Society for contemporary music](#) ([Österreichische Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik](#), ÖGZM) advocates for the interests of contemporary music makers, in particular through mediation activities and the performance of their works.
- [Film and Music Austria](#) ([Fachverband der Film- und Musikindustrie](#), FAMA) is the professional association of the film and music industry and part of the trade and craft sector in the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.
- [Association of the Austrian Music Industry](#) ([Verband der österreichischen Musikwirtschaft](#), IFPI) promotes economic, legal and cultural framework conditions that enable bringing diverse music productions to the widest possible audience.
- [Musicians' guild](#) ([Musikergilde](#)) is the largest Austrian interest group for freelance music creators. It aims to improve the situation of musicians, composers and lyricists of all musical genres.
- [IG Free Theater Work](#) ([IG Freie Theaterarbeit](#)) focuses on the interests of independent theatre, dance and performance workers. It founded the IG-Netz, which supports independent groups in paying their social security contributions.
- [zirkusinfo.at](#) is a freely accessible platform that aims to create better networking between professionals in the field of contemporary circus.
- [IG Authors](#) ([IG Autorinnen Autoren](#)) is the interest group of Austrian authors.
- [IG Translators](#) ([IG Übersetzerinnen Übersetzer](#)) is the interest group of translators of literary and scientific works.
- **Regional culture interest groups** represent the interests of cultural professionals on a provincial level: IG Culture Burgenland, the Interest Group of Cultural Initiatives in Carinthia/Koroška ([Interessensgemeinschaft der Kulturinitiativen in Kärnten/Koroška](#)), Culture networking Lower Austria ([Kulturvernetzung Niederösterreich](#)), the umbrella organisation of Salzburgian culture initiatives ([Dachverband Salzburger Kulturinitiativen](#)), IG Culture Styria ([IG Kultur Steiermark](#)), Tirolian Culture Initiatives ([Tiroler Kulturinitiativen](#)), Culture Platform Upper Austria ([Kulturplattform Oberösterreich](#)), IG Culture Vienna ([IG Kultur Wien](#)), and IG Culture Vorarlberg ([IG Kultur Vorarlberg](#)).

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Interdisciplinary cooperation and networking at the interface of education systems, the arts, culture and the business sector are integrated into the OEAD's activities. It acts as a point of contact and intermediary for and between countries, systems, institutions and their cultures. Exchanging experiences with European partner countries and cooperating on approaches on the further development and implementation of projects bring each party valuable benefits.

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

There is no national strategy on creativity and culture.

Scope and contents

There is no national strategy on creativity and culture.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

There is no national strategy on creativity and culture.

Revisions/updates

There is no national strategy on creativity and culture.

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

In Austria, a wide range of initiatives - from school-related projects to federal and other museums' programmes - aims to simplify the access to creativity and culture for all young people.

Free admission to museums

The initiative "[Freier Eintritt bis 19](#)" opens the gates of Austrian federal museums for children and young people up to the age of 19 since 2010. Young people have access to Austria's biggest cultural treasures without any financial barriers. More than 10 million children and young people have already used this offer. The initiative is funded from the general budget of the federal museums, which derives from the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#).

Participating museums

- [Albertina](#)
- [Belvedere](#)
- [KHM](#) (Kunsthistorisches Museum mit Museum für Völkerkunde (Weltmuseum Wien) und Österreichisches Theatermuseum)
- [Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art](#) (MAK - Museum für angewandte Kunst)
- [Museum of modern art](#) (mumok - museum moderner kunst stiftung ludwig wien)
- [Natural History Museum](#) (Naturhistorisches Museum)
- [Vienna Technical Museum](#) (Technisches Museum mit Österreichischer Mediathek)
- [National Library](#) (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ÖNB)

Cultural Passport (Kulturpass)

The initiative "Hungry for arts and culture" ("Hunger auf Kunst und Kultur") enables people who live of a family income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold to a free cultural passport. With this card, socially disadvantaged people in eight federal provinces (all but Carinthia) receive free admission to numerous cultural institutions. The initiative is jointly funded by a variety of actors: the federal provinces, the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#), and private donors.

Creative competition "projecteurope" (Projekt Europa)

The creative competition "projecteurope" is a nationwide project by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) and invites all schools and pupils to submit group projects and individual works. It enables a dialogue between education, culture and science, while providing young people with a diverse understanding of art and culture and offering them space to develop their creativity. Students develop creative ideas for a lively school culture and the winner of the Austria-wide creative competition receives an award. In the term 2020/21, the European topics of "digitalisation" and "climate" are to be artistically processed.

'Cultural education with schools' (Kulturvermittlung mit Schulen) by the OEAD

The [Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation \(Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung, OEAD\)](#) works at the interface of schools and arts and culture. In this context, participative cultural education projects and activities with schools throughout Austria are conceived, promoted, and given advisory and organisational support. The OEAD aims to encourage young people to actively participate in artistic and cultural processes and to foster their competences. The projects are carried out in cooperation with artists and cultural professionals as well as with artistic and cultural institutions. Engaging in direct encounters with artists gives

children and young people new ways of accessing and involving themselves in the arts and culture and is thus - as well in the context of equal opportunities - an important precondition for participation in the processes of society.

Services and Activities

- Consultation services for teachers, artists, cultural educators and cultural institutions
- Financial support of cultural education activities in schools (e.g. programmes supporting cooperation with artists in class instruction, cultural education for apprentices, cooperation between schools and cultural institutions)
- Support of up to 3.000 workshops per year in the context of the programme "Dialogue Events" - Austria's largest cultural education programme
- Provision of impulses for the cultural development of schools
- Participation in EU programmes and groups of experts
- Cooperation with national and European networks

As a state-owned non-profit committed to the common good, the [OeAD](#) is funded by public sources. Its total budget for 2019 amounted to € 72 million, most of which were available for scholarship and grant programmes. Its shareholder is the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). KulturKontakt Austria, which ran the programmes 'cultural education in schools' and the 'educational cooperation in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe' until their integration into the OeAD in 2020, had an annual budget of around € 5.6 million euros.

culture connected - cooperation between schools and cultural institutions (culture connected – Kooperation zwischen Schulen und Kulturpartnern)

culture connected is a nationwide initiative by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). The main target is to support cooperation projects of schools and cultural institutions. In the school year 2020/2021, teams of pupils, teachers and at least one extracurricular partner are invited to submit projects on the topic "More than bytes - Cultural Education and Digital Media" from all fields of art and culture. The [OeAD](#) provides conceptual, advisory and organisational support for the initiative.

u19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD

[u19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD](#) is Ars Electronica's festival for kids and young people. The colourful festival village surrounding the Ars Electronica Center (Linz, Upper Austria) is a playground for ideas, solutions to problems, concepts and experiments. The [Ars Electronica museum](#) is inter alia co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union and the city of Linz.

Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM) art education

At the [KHM](#), all guided tours for school groups are conversational and tailored to the students' needs. Visits can focus on one or two collections or focus on a particular topic or theme in artworks from different collections and periods. After a short guided tour, workshops invite pupils to recreate what they have seen and experienced. Tailor-made programmes for different schools and grades allow pupils to understand constructive processes and invite them to work with assorted materials. Additionally, open or private workshops and tours are provided for children and young people as well as audioguides.

Albertina art education

A wide range of Albertina programmes - guided tours, workshops and art courses - mediates art to children and young people. Albertina art educators develop [didactic programs](#) for all school levels and kindergartens for each exhibition. Contents and methods are geared to the individual requirements of the group, and visual aids, worksheets and interactive games help children and young people to question and describe the works of art. This conversational manner of examining art stimulates their ability to associate and express themselves verbally. At the end of the exhibition tour, the group is invited to take part in an art workshop. Besides school class programmes, offers for individual young visitors are provided. Junior tours, family Sundays, holiday games and workshops are provided for almost all special exhibitions. For all bigger exhibitions, free riddle rallies invite to individually explore the exhibition contents in a playful manner. Additionally, free audioguides are provided online. The school programme writing workshop (Schreibwerkstätte) that inspires young people to write texts on the basis of artworks has been submitted to a relaunch.

MAK art education

The MAK School Program is aimed at children and young adults aged between 6 and 18. Guided tours aim to arouse and foster interest through dialogue: questions are welcome and knowledge is to be imparted in a fun way. Workshops enrich the visual and verbal exhibitional approach in order to preserve concentration. Pupils can realize their ideas and thoughts, as well as creatively follow up on their questions and comments in the hands-on, material-oriented, and creative workshops.

MUMOK art education

For young people, the workshop „Overpainted- a club which is not a club“ is provided. It enables participants to look behind the scenes at mumok, work with artists, and meet like-minded people. Art education for schools at mumok addresses original works of art directly and is designed to the needs of different ages.

Naturhistorisches Museum (NHM)

The museum's pedagogic team plans, organises and coordinates more than 5000 events each year. Tours and lectures are held, special programmes for children are offered on weekends and during holidays, and public micro theatre shows are performed.

Technical Museum (Technisches Museum)

The [technical museum](#) provides various information and services for young people and schools. Groups of young people can spend a night at the museum. Projects and teaching material are provided online. Examining innovations and slipping into the role of urban planners was the theme of a recent exhibition. Guided tours, workshops and events are offered around the exhibition, some especially designed for kindergartens and school classes.

Burgtheater art education

The Burgtheater provides diverse services for young people. A theatre training is offered and commedia dell'arte weekend workshops, creative writing workshops, impro workshops are held.

State Opera: Opera for Young People

The State Opera welcomes children and young people at the opera house and at the Agrana Studiobühne, a location designed specifically with a young audience in mind. Regularly new works are commissioned for children aged 6 years and older. Ballets performed by students of the Opera's Ballet Academy offer a first glimpse of dance theatre to a young audience. Each year, concerts designed specifically for children or "The Magic Flute for Children" are performed. Children who are interested in actively singing or dancing may join the children's chorus of the Opera School or attend the Ballet Academy. Special programmes are offered for schools: "Wiener Staatsoper [live@school](#)" enables visits to performances and rehearsals, dance workshops, guided tours and a specially designed live stream programme.

Volksoper Kulturvermittlung (Junge Volksoper)

The young Volksoper offers workshops for young people aged 14 and above. School classes can attend rehearsals free of charge. Backstage tours provided school classes with an insight into modern theatre-making.

National Library

The institute for youth literature ([Institut für Jugendliteratur](#)) enables young people to discover the national library and its five museums. [Teaching material](#) (German only) for different school levels is provided online.

JUNGLE VIENNA - Theatre for a young audience (DSCHUNGEL WIEN – Theaterhaus für junges Publikum)

JUNGLE VIENNA is a centre for children, youth and families. The programme consists of a wide spectrum from play through narrative theatre, music theatre, object theatre and figure theatre up to opera and dance theatre as well as interdisciplinary forms. Festivals, workshops and dialogue events with artists take place regularly. With different art forms, artists from more than 20 nations who live and work in Vienna reach out to a young audience.

Dschungel Wien is jointly funded by the Province/City of Vienna, the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#), and the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Theatre of the youth (Theater der Jugend)

The "[Theater der Jugend](#)" is Austria's biggest theatre organisation for children and young people.

Funding of these activities

In 2019 - according to the Federal Arts and Culture report 2019 (Kunst- und Kulturbericht) provided by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport (Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport) -, the Federal Ministry paid a basic compensation of € 87,062,500 to the Federal Museums and € 25,020,500 to the Austrian National Library for expenses incurred in the fulfilment of its cultural policy mandate. The basic compensation amounted to 23.842 thousand euros for the KHM, 7.747 thousand euros for the Albertina, 9.661 thousand euros for the MAK, 9.588 thousand euros for MUMOK, 14.694 thousand euros for NHM, and 12.564 thousand euros for the technical museum. This general budget it also used for the federal museums' art education programmes.

The Burgtheater, State Opera and Volksoper are non-profits owned by the Bundestheater-Holding, which is among the largest theatre groups in the world and wholly owned by the Republic of Austria.

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

Austrian Youth Portal

The Austrian Youth Portal ([Jugendportal](#)), run by the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres, provides young people with all relevant information. The section on Arts and Culture compiles information on how to engage in the field and on where to find current arts and culture events. The Austrian Youth Portal is commissioned and financed by the [Federal Chancellery](#).

Cultural education days in schools (Tage kultureller Bildung an Schulen, KuBi-Tage)

Each year, the nationwide KuBi days take place. In 2020, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) organised them as part of the UNESCO International Arts Education Week. Schools nationwide of all types and levels are invited to shape the KuBi Days with their contributions. The aim is to raise public awareness of the artistic-creative activities at Austria's schools through a joint appearance and to underline their importance for the personality development and creativity of pupils. Schools are enabled to present presentations from all art disciplines, such as architecture, dance, film, literature, photography and new media, especially in connection with music, visual education, handicrafts and theatre at school.

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

Austrian Heritage Day

The Heritage Day ([Österreichischer Welterbetag](#)) is Austria's contribution to the European Heritage Days. Organized by the Federal Monuments Authority, it is celebrated nationwide on the last Sunday of September every year. The aim is to sensitize the public for the importance of cultural heritage by rendering it tangible as well as by arousing public interest in matters of monument protection and care. The event is organised and funded by the [Austrian Commission for UNESCO, Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#), and the [International Council on Monuments and Sights Austria](#).

The Federal Monument Office's programmes for children and youth

Pupils can experience culture at the Federal Monument Office. The initiative invites pupils and teachers to start projects together with the Federal Monument Office ([Bundesdenkmalamt Lernort](#)). [Denkmalkids](#) aims to win young children's interest into the topic. Furthermore, girls days encourage young women to become natural scientists. The co-operation of schools with monument experts allows a lively contact with monuments and their preservation and maintenance. The aim of the project is sensitisation and appreciation of witnesses of the history and the past. Free tours are provided for school classes. The online tool "[Bundesdenkmalamt interaktiv](#)" enables students to virtually explore the Vienna Imperial Palace (Wiener Hofburg).

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

In Austria, schools are engaged with awakening students' interest into arts and culture and their creative potential. This aim is promoted through structural and institutional support.

Guideline Decree for a holistic-creative learning culture in schools (Ganzheitlich-kreative Lernkultur in den Schulen, BMUKK-10.077/0004-I/4/2009)

The guideline decree for a holistic-creative learning culture in schools has been issued in 2009 and establishes **creativity as a teaching principle**. Creativity is an interdisciplinary and fundamental principle of the education system that is not limited to certain teaching subjects. It is of great importance to personal, social, cultural and economic circumstances. The **development and support of creative abilities** are essential factors for the competent coping with future questions.

At any time, **school should be a place of curiosity, questioning and learning** for teachers and students alike. More than an individual attitude, **creativity develops from cooperation and communication** and is a key to innovation. Thus, critical distance and the **constructive handling of differences** and contradictions also promote an open and participatory learning culture. Creativity is also a basic competence for interaction and communication within heterogeneous groups. The **promotion of creativity, critical faculties and the ability to work in a team** is an important task for the entire education system.

Creativity in schools shall be fostered through a **positive and appreciative working environment**, team work tasks, presentations, innovation, **interlinked learning fields** (e.g. environment) and process-oriented, independent learning.

Shaping Democracy and society through Cultural Education

In a democratic and pluralistic society, it is important to help children and young people develop a responsible, self-reflecting, open and community-oriented outlook, and to give them **opportunities to actively participate in societal processes**. Therefore, the [Austrian Academic Service \(Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung, OEAD\)](#) runs the **project 'Cultural education with schools' (Kulturvermittlung mit Schulen** - previously called KulturKontakt Austria).

On behalf of the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#), the project works **at the interface between schools, the arts and culture. Participatory cultural education projects and activities** with schools throughout Austria are conceived, accompanied, and supported. The focus lies on **encouraging children and young people to actively participate in artistic and cultural processes** and to foster their competences.

Cooperations with artists, cultural professionals and artistic and cultural institutions enhance the experience. Engaging in direct encounters with artists gives young people new ways of becoming involved in the arts and culture and fosters participation in societal processes and equal opportunities. Alongside these activities, the OEAD engages in exchange and networking in this field at European level.

Objectives

- Promoting the **active and broad involvement of children and young people in various forms of contemporary art and culture**. This shall also provide a constructive approach in dealing with diversity and differences in society
- Supporting collective and individual learning and teaching processes of pupils, teachers, artists and cultural educators, also in terms of a **new learning culture at schools**
- Ensuring the **quality and sustainability of communication** between cultural institutions, artists and young people
- **European developments in and discourses** on cultural education

Offers

- **Advice** for teachers, artists, cultural educators and institutions of the arts and culture

- **Financial support** for cultural education activities at schools (e.g. programmes for cooperation with artists in the classroom, exposure of apprentices to art and culture, cooperation between schools and cultural institutions)
- Funding of up to 2,600 **workshops** per year ("Dialogue Events" programme)
- Setting impulses in **cultural school development**

As a state-owned non-profit committed to the common good, the [OeAD](#) is funded by public sources. Its total budget for 2019 amounted to € 72 million, most of which were available for scholarship and grant programmes. Its shareholder is the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). KulturKontakt Austria, which ran the programmes 'cultural education in schools' and the 'educational cooperation in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe' until their integration into the OeAD in 2020, had an annual budget of around € 5.6 million euros.

Austria reads. Meeting point library ([Österreich liest. Treffpunkt Bibliothek](#))

'Austria reads' is the largest literature festival in Austria and is held every year. Austrian libraries organise a colourful selection of events for every age group: book presentations, literature walks, picture book cinemas, book flea markets, readings and much more. Libraries of all kinds - from small libraries to the national library - offer a diverse programme to whet the appetite for reading.

This initiative is organised by the Austrian library association (Büchereiverband Österreichs, BVÖ) and funded by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#). In the framework of this initiative, the first action library slam took place. Well-known Austrian poetry slammers have been invited to moderate the event, at which poets of all genres and age groups were able to prove their talents. Participants could improve their presentation skills and fine-tune their texts.

Cultural and architectural school, Tyrol ([Kunst- und Architekturschule, Innsbruck](#))

In Innsbruck (province of Tyrol), the culture and architecture school ([Kunst- und Architekturschule](#)) provides extracurricular workshops for young people and has a special programme for schools and kindergartens. The venue is a place of creativity for young people. The school is jointly funded by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the [Federal Chancellery](#), the federal province of Tyrol and the City of Innsbruck.

wienXtra-medienzentrum for young people and Video and Film Days ([video&filmtage](#))

The [wienXtra-medienzentrum](#) (Viennese Media Centre) **invites youth to experiment with media**. It offers equipment rental, studio, editing suites, workshops, and advice. The services and facilities are free of charge for young people up to the age of 22. The centre is maintained by the City of Vienna and works in close cooperation with the Youth Department Vienna.

The City of Vienna and the wienXtra youth information center, also organise the Film Days festival. It's a **platform to meet people interested in film**, to watch movies by young people and to discuss with the movie makers and the audience.

Non-formal learning-grants to associations for developing young people's creativity

A number of provincial grants support private associations in fostering the creativity of young people and their involvement with arts and culture, such as e.g.:

- **COME ON!** (Link in German only) is an initiative by the province of Lower Austria to promote cultural youth initiatives. It aims to promote young artists and cultural workers and to support them in realising their artistic ideas. It disburses around € 300,000 a year.
- **Contemporary culture funding ([Förderung im Bereich der Zeitkultur](#))** is provided to associations, institutions, cultural venues and cultural practitioners in the province of Upper Austria who offer a predominantly cultural and artistic annual programme or implement contemporary cultural projects. The programme aims for an enrichment of the cultural offer outside the urban agglomeration areas as well as independent, experimental and contemporary programming and sets a programmatic focus on youth work and outreach.
- **Lower Austrian Creativity Promotion ([Niederösterreichische Kreativitätsförderung](#))** creates an extracurricular free space in which children and young people can develop their creative talents. As a subsidiary of Kultur.Region.Niederösterreich, the Lower Austrian Academy of Creative Arts, the Lower Austrian Academy for the Gifted and the Lower Austrian School of Music and Art have

established a tightly knit network of creativity promotion throughout the province, whose range of offers is as broad as the creative potential of young people.

- *Promotion of youth culture* ([Förderung der Jugendkultur](#)) in the province of Burgenland provides funding for youth initiatives, activities of youth organisations, and projects by young people in all artistic disciplines.
- *Promotion of youth cultural work* ([Förderung der Jugendkulturarbeit](#)) in the province of Tyrol provides funding for measures, projects and framework conditions that contribute to young people becoming active in the cultural field. Young artists and cultural workers are promoted and supported in realising their innovative artistic ideas. Young people are also supported on their way to (semi-)professionalism. Funding is provided for training measures that contribute to the improvement of cultural activities, provided that they are not offered by formal training providers. The target group for this funding are youths and young adults who want to engage in cultural activities and organisations/associations in the field of extracurricular youth work that take measures to promote culture among young people.
- *Youth project funding* ([Jugendprojektförderung](#)) in the province of Vorarlberg is directed at private sponsors, private individuals and municipalities. It is a framework of funding, actions, projects and programmes that inter alia promotes cultural activities for children and young people. This includes, for example, the promotion of education in extracurricular youth work.

Media literacy and safe use of new media

Training young people in media literacy and the safe use of new media also helps to develop their cultural and creative competences. The measures thereby taken in Austria are depicted in the Austrian Youth Wiki [Chapter 6.8](#).

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

Cultural Professionals' Services for Schools

The cost-free service [platform](#) by the OEAD (formerly run by KulturKontakt Austria) provides **information and service on how teachers can find cultural professionals** located in their area with whom they and their pupils can work in class. Artists of various fields as well as cultural educators can present descriptions of their workshops and other educational services for schools there. Through this [platform](#), the OEAD provides:

- A **presentation platform for cultural professionals** (artists as well as cultural educators) who work in the school environment
- a **networking instrument** for teachers and cultural professionals
- a **pool of ideas** for cultural education activities for schools
- a better **overview of services** offered by cultural professionals for the school context
- support for cultural professionals in **establishing contact** with schools
- **projects** covering the idea of "Creating democracy and society through cultural education"

Cultural professionals who wish to present themselves and their services for pupils can enter their data into the database. Teachers who wish to integrate services offered by cultural professionals into their class work can search for them on this platform. **New contacts can be made** and existing relationships intensified. The platform is a continuously growing network and contains educational services offered by cultural professionals of all fields throughout Austria, that are specially designed for pupils of various age groups.

Workshop series 'Culture politics international'

Since 2011, the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#) organises the [workshop series](#) 'Culture politics international' on cultural-political topics at EU-level. This enables **discussions on the newest developments**, especially the work of EU-expert groups, with stakeholders from the cultural sector on a regular basis. Most recent topics (2019) were 'Climate Change' ([Kultur Politik International: Klimawandel](#)) and 'Arts for Health' ([Kultur Politik International: Arts for Health](#)).

Kunsthistorisches Museum and Belvedere Museum: multiplier programmes

The [Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien](#) (KHM) provides **special programmes for potential multipliers**. **Teacher tours** for special exhibitions are offered and one-day seminars on general methods of museum art education for students of the teacher training college Vienna are held. Weekend seminars are provided for teachers and headmasters.

At the [Belvedere Museum Wien](#), regular **information tours and training workshops** are provided **for pedagogues** ([Pädagog_innen-Info für die Sekundarstufe I+II](#)). Moreover, **offers on didactic sections** are constantly developed in close collaboration with teachers from various school types.

As federal museums, these institutions receive their their funding through a basic compensation by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#). In 2019, according to the Federal Arts and Culture report 2019 ([Kunst- und Kulturbericht](#)) the Federal Ministry paid a basic compensation of € 87,062,500 to the Federal Museums, of which the KHM received 23.842 thousand euros and the Belvedere 8.970 thousand euros.

Providing quality access to creative environments

Free admission up to 19 ('Freier Eintritt bis 19')

With the initiative "Freier Eintritt bis 19" (free admission up to 19), the eight **Austrian federal museums open their gates to children and young people**. Young people have **free access** to Austria's biggest cultural treasures. According to the Arts and Culture Report 2019 ([Kunst- und Kulturbericht 2019](#)), curated by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#), more than 10 million children and adolescents made use of this offer since its start in 2010. In 2019, 1.312.904 young people of this age group (of which 557.925 or 42% Austrian) were reached with the offer.

MuseumsQuartier Wien (MQ)

With about 70 cultural facilities, the [MuseumsQuartier Wien](#) is **one of the largest art and culture complexes** worldwide. The many **courtyards, cafés, and shops** throughout the complex lend it the additional quality of being **an urban living room and an oasis of calm and recreation** in the City of Vienna. Historic buildings from the 18th and 19th century and contemporary museums form a unique architectural ensemble and create a special ambiance. At the MQ Wien, the production and experience of art form an inseparable whole with recreation and relaxation.

Q21 is part of the MQ and provides workspace for [around 50 initiatives, organizations, agencies and editorial offices](#) working in the cultural sector. This creative space is spread across over 7,000 sqm within the MQ. Several of the Artists-in-Residence are represented with their works in the Q21 exhibition space ([frei raum Q21 exhibition space](#)).

International Heritage Photographic Experience – IHPE

Austria participates at the IHPE, which takes place under the patronage of the Council of Europe. Children and young people up to the age of 20 are invited to **post their pictures** under the hashtag #ihpe19austria and the motto 'monument' on Instagram.

Steirischer Herbst - Festival of new art

'[steirischer herbst](#) has **re-invented itself many times** in its history – an amorphous institution in progress that poses the question as to its conditions and necessities as a very individual platform for new art every year. As a festival, steirischer herbst is **special in many respects**: by dint of its many voices, its promotion of communication between the various disciplines of art, thanks to the link-up of aesthetic positions and theoretical discourse. Its clear-cut positioning as a festival of production and processes, of facilitation and initiation is special as well – and increasingly necessary in the international politico-cultural situation. The **incorporation and networking of both international and regional artists, scenes and contexts** is a central issue – *steirischer herbst* did, after all, emerge from an initiative of local scenes, on the one hand, and has taken productive advantage of its proximity to Slovenia, Croatia and the Central and Eastern European regions (long before the opening of most borders), on the other.' In 2020, Steirischer Herbst has overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by holding an **innovative online festival** entitled [Paranoia TV](#).

Wiener Festwochen

'Historically, the [Wiener Festwochen](#) have defined themselves as **a festival for high culture, subculture, and counterculture**, combining music theatre, theatre, fine arts, performance, dance, music, installation, discourse, participation, workshops, and new art forms that cannot yet be categorised. Thus, the festival will not pause at genre boundaries.'

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

Entrepreneurial skills are first and foremost fostered throughout the formal education system. In schools, the **subject "Geography and economics"** is taught from 5th grade onwards. Furthermore, the **project "School meets business"** ("[Schule trifft Wirtschaft](#)") by the [Austrian Economic Chambers \(Wirtschaftskammer Österreich\)](#) provides teachers with materials, workshops and contacts to companies. This shall enable business and entrepreneurship education and financial literacy as well as career guidance in schools. It combines practice and theory in a clear, simple, and targeted way and supports holistic teaching. Moreover, for youths who take a particular interest into business, **vocational secondary commercial schools (HAS) and commercial academies (HAK)** teach subjects such as business administration and accounting. Further initiatives are depicted in the Austrian Youth Wiki [Chapter 3.8](#).

A [creative-industries strategy](#) has been developed by the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) in co-operation with [Kreativwirtschaft Austria \(KAT\)](#), the Austrian Economic Chambers and [austria wirtschaftsservice \(aws\)](#). About 100 creative agents from all federal provinces of Austria participated in developing the strategy and contributed input as part of a stakeholders' workshop. It aims to strengthen Austria's innovation system, the competitiveness of its creative industries, their transformative effect on other economic sectors, and Austria's international image as a creative country of culture and innovation. This shall inter alia be achieved through making innovation spaces accessible to creative entrepreneurs, expanding knowledge about innovative methods, creating awareness of the creative industries in people starting in childhood, and expanding networks for peer learning. Kreativwirtschaft Austria also runs the projects '[C hoch 3](#)', a skills and service programme and co-operation network for creative entrepreneurs.

Supporting young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

Jugend Innovativ (Innovative Youth)

This initiative is an annual competition for innovative ideas. Pupils and apprentices between 15 and 20 years register roughly 600 projects each year. For the most innovative project ideas in the areas of business, design, engineering, science or sustainability monetary and travel prizes are offered. In addition, winners are nominated for the participation in international competitions, fairs and seminars. Jugend Innovativ supports participants on their way 'from the idea to the realisation of their project'. It promotes teamwork and interest into research and development.

Jugend Innovativ is run by the [Austrian promotional bank](#) (Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH) on behalf of the [Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). Additional funding is provided by sponsors from the economic sector.

Cash for culture

Cash for culture ([Link in German](#)) is a promotion measure by the City of Vienna granting financial and organisational support for culture project of young people aged 13 to 23. Coaches provide support throughout the projects. Additional help is provided by experts of the regarding field. The project (inspired by the model of the City of Stockholm) shall improve the existing system of cultural funding. It offers a funding programme specifically geared to the needs and potential of young people, who receive uncomplicated and fast support of up to 1,000 euros for their art and culture projects. The project is funded by the City/province of Vienna, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), and private partners.

SMartAt Mobility

[SMartAt Mobility](#) is a digital, cultural information system, developed by SMartAt in cooperation with Federal Chancellery. It has been designed for artists, creatives of all ages and many others who live and work in Austria and abroad and/or who want to inform themselves about various issues and practical questions that workers in the creative industries face.

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) has launched school projects such as the annual [media literacy award](#). [Media manual](#) provides best practice examples and information material for media competence. Further initiatives to foster young people's media literacy and the safe use of new media are detailed in the Austrian Youth Wiki [Chapter 6.8](#).

eEducation Austria

The primary goal of the initiative [eEducation Austria](#) of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is to advance digital and ICT-based competencies throughout all schools in Austria. More than 2,450 Austrian schools have already become members of the initiative. Furthermore, eEducation.expert.schools are asked to transfer their know-how to new schools that have just started their journey towards the organisational development of digital competencies. The project envisions the didactical useful integration of digital media into all subjects.

Netguides - National Library

In a cooperation between the National Library and the institute for youth literature, pupils have designed a [multimedia guide](#) for the ceremonial room and the globes museum of the National Library. This project work enabled them to create many, partly audiovisual, contributions relating to objects of their own choice. The results are presented to the public online, thus allowing other young people to discover 'Roman numerals celebrating a party in a ceremonial hall, an interview with a 17th century polymath, children's favourite reading places, videos, comics, dances, poems and a puppet show'.

Museum for Applied Arts (Museum für angewandte Kunst, MAK)

Knowledge, history, and visions are taught in a clear, playful, and constantly changing way at the MAK. Workshops provide young people with the opportunity to get involved and bring their ideas to life. In addition to the regular educational program on the permanent collection displays and current exhibitions, there are ongoing personal and media projects in the field of art education. It focuses on encouraging young people to participate as well as on involving digital educational approaches.

The MAK as a federal museum as well as the National Library receive their funding through a basic compensation by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#). In 2019, according to the Federal Arts and Culture report 2019 ([Kunst- und Kulturbericht](#)) the Federal Ministry paid a basic compensation of € 87,062,500 to the Federal Museums (of which the MAK received 9.661 thousand euros) and € 25,020,500 to the Austrian National Library for expenses incurred in the fulfilment of its cultural policy mandate.

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is placing an emphasis on new media: The master plan for digitisation in education ([Masterplan für die Digitalisierung im Bildungswesen](#)) at the efficient, sustainable and systematic utilisation of modern information and communications technology in the fields of education, arts and culture.

The master plan is divided into **three major fields of action**:

1. Software: pedagogy, teaching and learning content
2. Hardware: infrastructure, modern IT management, modern school administration
3. Teachers: education, training and further education

Further initiatives to strengthen young people's media literacy and the safe use of digital media are depicted in the Austrian Youth Wiki [Chapter 6.8](#).

Kulturpool

Kulturpool is the central search portal for digital Austrian Cultural Heritage Assets. (Digital) cultural heritage plays a central role in future strategies of our information society. An important concern in this realm is the comprehensive access to digitized assets of museums, libraries and archives. The goal of the joint project Kulturpool is to provide a central searchable access point to all publicly

available digital objects and catalogues of Austrian cultural institutions. Strategically this aims at encouraging a closer relation of culture and education. Beyond this, Austria's cultural heritage is made more accessible to a broader public through new technology. Targeted user groups of Kulturpool are the interested public, teachers, students as well as scientists and research personnel. Alongside the image databases [Artothek](#) and the digital collection of photographs owned by the Republic of Austria ([Fotosammlung](#)), this has enabled young people's and schools' access to a broad variety of works of arts and culture throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Kulturpool is a joint initiative of the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

Ars Electronica

A main actor in the field of media and digital arts is the [Ars Electronica](#) museum in Linz (Upper Austria), which annually organises one of the most important festivals at the interface of arts, new media, politics and society. It views itself as a museum, centre and school for the future through enabling (young) people to create their visions of the future in its future lab. It specifically targets young people through the presenting of trendsetting technologies, art and social change with people at its centre and an interactive approach that listens to the views and ideas of its visitors. It is characterized by a playful, creative approach, enthusiasm for new ideas and a commitment to making them accessible to a broader public. In this context, a number of digital offers has been developed during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to enable the museum to become part of virtual classrooms. The [Ars Electronica museum](#) is inter alia co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union and the city of Linz.

Museum of Art History (Kunsthistorisches Museum, KHM)

[KHM Stories](#) is a free of charge app provided by *Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM)*. This app enables users to discover collections through interactive tours on topics such as »Love« or »Magic«. Highlights, both famous and little-known or concealed, are described. Hidden secrets such as the reverse of an artwork, its interior or X-ray images play a part in the app. Interactive elements make the original artefact even more fascinating, connecting the past and the present and captivate young people's interest into art through digital media. With numerous high definition scans of its collection highlights and virtual tours through the museum's venues, the MAK participates in the [Google Arts & Culture platform](#) - which has gained further relevants for young people and their educators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Albertina

Mediation work taking multimedia tools into account has been intensified. Tablets have already accompanied tours for years by showing comparative examples and playing music or movies. For some exhibitions, special tablets for school class tours have been provided. The devices enable the pupils to act as photographers or film directors, making photographs and movies, and writing individual plots.

As federal museums, MAK and Albertina receive their funding through a basic compensation by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#). In 2019, according to the Federal Arts and Culture report 2019 ([Kunst- und Kulturbericht](#)) the Federal Ministry paid a basic compensation of € 87,062,500 to the Federal Museums, of which the MAK received 9.661 thousand euros and the Albertina 7.747 thousand euros.

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

Working groups have been established in cooperation with experts from the Federal Ministries of Education, Labour, Family and Youth, Health, Women's Affairs, Foreign Affairs and representatives of the cultural scene, interest-groups, trade union and social-partnership representatives. These working groups have been working on the issues of social security for artistic, cultural and media workers, employment law, unemployment insurance law, women in the arts, support for art, copyright and taxation measures and mobility in order to improve the social situation of artists in Austria.

Kreativwirtschaft Austria

As part of the [Austrian Federal Economic Chambers](#), Kreativwirtschaft Austria promotes the interests of the creative industries within Austria and fosters public awareness of the creative solutions the sector provides. It represents the interests of the Austrian creative industries, both at a national, European and international level. It is committed to developing the creative industries in Austria and creating linkages with other sectors. The activities encompass *skills development* to support the economic success of creative people through tangible services and networking of companies and intermediaries; *representation of interests* of the creative industries and *information and awareness* as a knowledge hub, commissioning studies into and increasing the visibility of the achievements of the creative sector.

CULTURE CONNECTED

[Culture connected](#) is a nationwide initiative by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). The Aim of this initiative is to support cooperation projects between schools and culture partners. New perspectives should be conveyed, old ones should be questioned and prejudices should be reduced by this initiative. Teams consisting of pupils, teachers as well as at least one extracurricular cultural partner are invited to apply with their projects for a maximum funding of 1500 Euro. The [OeAD](#) supports the initiative conceptually, in an advisory capacity and organisationally.

Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

Austrian Cultural Council (Kulturrat Österreich)

The Austrian Cultural Council is a consortium of the associations representing the interests of art, cultural and media workers. It is a platform for shared cultural policy concerns and objectives and represents common interests to politics, media and administration as well as connects to European and global organizations and networks.

Cooperation between WienXtra and museums in Vienna

In the framework of the MQ event Summer of Sounds, the Leopoldmuseum and WienXtra (Vienna's Youth Information Centre) developed and organised the "speaking picture" project through which the museum space became discernible for children in a new manner. The voices of young viewers which told stories about themselves formed "speaking pictures". Short picture-radio-plays arose completely from the ideas of the children and were presented at special listening locations. The project thus provides a best practice example of a cooperation between youth centres and cultural institutions.

Connecting youth with creative projects: the Austrian Youth Information Centres

The Austrian Youth Portal ([Jugendportal](#)) and the nine provincial youth information centres gather and portray information on cultural projects that young people can become involved in both online and in brochures. This provides a central point of information on the broad range of available activities in fields such as acting and performance, ceramics and sculpture, cosmetics, dance, film and photography, graffiti, literature and poetry slam, living history and role play, music, nature, newspaper and print, painting and drawing and radio. The Youth Information Centres themselves organise projects that bring youngsters and creative professionals together, such as the Youth Portal's [Youth Reporter](#) project that connects youths with an interest in journalism with media professionals through workshops in digital, print, radio and video.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people's involvement through cultural activities

In Austria, there are no cohesive programmes at national level linking social inclusion and culture. Artistic funds, grants and awards, as well as project promotion, are the main support schemes for artistic work.

Apart from individual projects and the stipulation of cultural diversity in strategy papers and laws, there have not been any programmes linking intercultural dialogue and culture. Grants for multicultural projects are provided at different government levels.

Albertina museum: KuKon - responding to conflicts with art (KuKon- mit Kunst Konflikten begegnen)

The programme helps to address conflicts by means of artworks. The project is especially welcomed by school classes dealing with problematic interactions of pupils. This initiative is provided by the Albertina museum.

Belvedere museum: Promotion of German (as a second language) (Sprachförderung)

As art is an excellent resource for fun and lively language learning, in 2009 the Belvedere museum began devising programmes for each school level, especially taking multicultural and multilingual classes into account. A playful approach and activities finely attuned to the psychology of learning give young visitors the opportunity to build on vocabulary and improve their language skills.

'Hunger for Art and Culture' ("Hunger auf Kunst und Kultur")

The initiative was founded by the poverty conference and the Viennese theatre Schauspielhaus in 2003. Today, more than 500 cultural institutions throughout Austria offer free entrance to unemployed people and people living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. The initiative is supported by eight federal states. It enables socially disadvantaged youth to an equal access of large parts of the Austrian arts and culture scene and thus with the opportunity to develop an interest into arts and the partaking in this societal process.

KHM museum: barrier-free and inclusive art education (Barrierefreie Kunstvermittlung)

For blind, visually impaired as well as for hearing impaired pupils, special mediation strategies have been developed. 'Please touch!' is the motto of the 'Seeing Differently' tours for blind and partially sighted visitors that take place on a regular basis. This tactile experience is enhanced by auditory descriptions of the artists, their working methods, and the objects. The guided tours for visually impaired people thus offer a new way to explore paintings. Paintings have been transposed into tactile reliefs by specialised new technologies, allowing visitors to feel the basic elements of the painted composition. These novel impressions are augmented by oral explanations provided by the educator. Furthermore, a brochure in Braille that comprises descriptions of the artworks written especially for the blind and the visually-impaired is provided. Moreover, the programme 'KHM on a visit' has been established for pupils of sociopaedagogic centres and hospital schools, who are not normally able to visit the museum due to health or social psychological problems. The Kunsthistorisches Museum also regularly offers guided tours in sign language as well as tours in simple language.

The museum is among the first to have received the COME-IN! award for sustainably addressing the accessibility of its house and artworks, thus improve access to European cultural heritage for all people. In order to be able to design the educational programs in the best way possible and to ensure barrier-free access, the team of the Art Education Department of KHM took part in an Erasmus+ Mobility Program.

Museumsquartier Vienna (MQ Wien)

A wide variety of free activities offered year-round in the outdoor areas, including dance performances, exhibition projects, and the seasonal programmes 'summer at MQ' and 'winter at MQ' make the MQ a very special environment. Visitors are surrounded by art and can choose themselves to what extent they want to get involved with it. The MQ is thus an integrative place for living and experiencing where you can enjoy the cultural offerings or just relax or meet with friends for a casual get-together.

Wir lesen! (We read!)

The project 'Wir lesen!' bundles and complements the Austrian library associations's reading promotion activities. Reading promotion campaigns, teaching material, advanced learning campaigns and many other programmes are offered as creative and innovative ways to promote reading. The online platform provides best-practice examples for education and reading promotion, as well as news, basic literature, videos and other downloadable material. 'We read!' responds to the increasing reading deficiencies of children and young people in Austria. The project aims to

strengthen public libraries as attractive places to read and to support them with know-how in the field of reading promotion. As reading skills are a prerequisite of both societal participation and success in school and career, this early measure of cultural mediation fosters the social inclusion of Austria's youth. It is funded by the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport \(Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport\)](#).

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

The Day of Flight and Escape (Langer Tag der Flucht)

An annual, Austria-wide initiative on the subjects flight and asylum takes place with numerous events under the patronage of UNHCR and in cooperation with museums and numerous organisations of various fields. On this day, young people can engage with the topics of flight and asylum in diverse ways. Austrians, refugees and asylum seekers have the opportunity to exchange views and learn more about each other through workshops, readings, exhibitions, cinema screenings and discussions. A special programme is put together for school classes. These new perspectives and informations shall help reduce children's and young people's prejudices.

Working group 'youth against violence and racism' (ARGE Jugend gegen Gewalt und Rassismus)

'ARGE Jugend gegen Gewalt und Rassismus' is a specialised group for violence prevention, human rights education and anti-discrimination work. The targets children, young people, and adults who work with them. The group has received a number of awards for its creative projects, such as the Youth Creativity Award of the Province of Styria and the Human Rights Award. It runs a number of projects that familiarise pupils with topics such as violence prevention and conflict management, human rights, solidarity, civil courage, and inter-religiousness. For example, in the 'Change of perspectives' project a creative product is developed over the course of the school year, e.g. a democracy and human rights workshop, short films, videos or theatre plays, or photo collages on socio-cultural diversity for the classrooms. The group is inter alia funded by the federal province of Styria, the City of Graz, and the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria.

8.10 Current debates and reforms

There are no current public debates or forthcoming policy changes.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

Throughout Austrian politics and policies, **global issues play an important role**. Different Federal Ministries are involved in conveying important global goals. Moreover, **NGOs** play a crucial role in advocating and campaigning for global issues as well as in motivating and educating young people.

Young people in Austria actively participate in the discussion on global processes and policies as well as in global youth cooperation. From school onwards, they are **sensitised for issues** that affect or concern people throughout the world, such as environmental affairs, human rights, and sustainable international development.

In different projects and associations, young people are particularly taking action to promote **environmental matters**. A recent (2020) study by the Institute for Youth and Youth Cultural Research ([Institut für Jugendkulturforschung](#)) shows that more than eight out of ten children and young people are most concerned about climate change and environmental pollution, and 88% hold that only immediate measures can tackle the issue. It is thus the key concern of young people, regardless whether they live in the city or on the countryside and which school type or educational background they come from. Young people in Austria also wish for more information on environmental protection.

In terms of **Sustainable Development**, the Section for Family and Youth at the Federal Chancellery sees the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a global orientation framework for the continuous optimisation of national family and youth policy (["Internationale Jugendpolitik: nachhaltige Entwicklung"](#)). The identification of children and young people with the 2030 Agenda and their political participation are viewed as central to achieving the development goals. Furthermore, the Section has found its competence in working on a number of the goals (1 -

end poverty, 3 - healthy life for all, 4 - inclusive, high-quality education, 5 - gender equality, 10 - reduce inequalities between countries, 16 - peaceful and inclusive societies).

9.1 General context

Main concepts

Sustainable Development

The [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) set out the frame of reference for Austrian development policy. Development policy is a whole-of-government and whole-of-society challenge. Austria's development-policy positions are set in the three-year programme '[Working together. For our world. Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2019–2021](#)' ([Gemeinsam. Für unsere Welt. Dreijahresprogramm der österreichischen Entwicklungspolitik 2019–2021](#)). As a member state, Austria has committed to implementing and reporting on the SDGs. Based on a 2016 decision by the Federal Council of Ministers, all federal ministries have been charged with the coherent implementation of the 'Agenda 2030'.

The **Federal government** also **provides educational material for school lessons** on sustainable development. It promotes the brochure '17 goals for a better world - global learning' ([17 Ziele für eine bessere Welt - BAOBAB - GLOBALES LERNEN - Broschüre für die Sekundarstufe II, Jugendarbeit und Erwachsenenbildung zu den Zielen für nachhaltige Entwicklung](#)) as well as the international educational project [World's Largest Lesson](#).

In its **public relations and promotion of development-education projects in Austria**, the [Austrian Development Agency](#) (ADA) highlights poverty, hunger, climate change, conflicts or migration as issues that directly affect everyone. The **platform, MITMACHEN!** ('Participating!') **shows how people can contribute** something. Non-governmental and governmental initiatives are presented on the website. The range lasts from (school) education, workshops, and contests for young people to possible government funding for projects of NGOs and companies.

In Austria, **NGOs play an extremely important role in advocating and campaigning for global issues** as well as in **motivating and educating young people**.

Platform youth politics and international affairs (Plattform Jugendpolitik und Internationales)

The platform has been initiated by the [Austrian National Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#) in May 2015 to contribute to **sustainable networking in the area of international youth politics and youth work**. The framework enables to share recent developments and to exchange information on international activities and projects. Furthermore, networking of voluntary and full-time employees, as well as delegates in the sector of international affairs, is provided. Periodically, members of the BJV, network partners, the Department of International Youth Politics of the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) are invited to stakeholder meetings.

Environmental protection

Environmental protection is a **key concern of young people in Austria**. Environmental policies are a central mean in passing on a liveable lifeworld to young people and future generations. **Involving young people in both local and global climate action** is thus a vital concern of youth and environmental policy.

According to the 2nd Austrian Volunteer Report ([Freiwilligenbericht](#), 2014), **22% of Austrian youth volunteer in the field of environmental, nature and animal protection**.

[Forum Umweltbildung](#) (Forum Environmental Education) is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology \(Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie\)](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#).

Together with the Institute for Environment, Peace and Development (IUF), it has published the reading **book** 'Our world. Our Future' on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, a knowledge **quiz**, an environmental **teaching poster**, and the **card game** 'challenge accepted'.

The independent [Austrian Youth-Environment-Platform](#) (Jugend Umweltplattform JUMP) offers young adults **opportunities for participation**, capacity building and personal orientation in the area of environment and sustainability on a long, middle and short term basis as well as training

courses and assistance for projects. Young people can also engage in a **voluntary 'environmental year'**.

Youth interest in global issues

According to the **7th Austrian Youth report** (7. [Bericht zur Lage der Jugend in Österreich](#), 2016), **64% of the interviewed young people are interested** in environmental, climate protection or other sustainability subjects. About one-third is rather interested. Particular reasons for being interested in these subjects are **the future and the next generations** (35.7%), as well as personal responsibility and the protection of nature.

A recent (2020) study by the Institute for Youth and Youth Cultural Research ([Institut für Jugendkulturforschung](#)) shows that **more than eight out of ten children and young people are most concerned about climate change and environmental pollution**, and **88% hold that only immediate measures can tackle the issue**. It is thus the key concern of young people, regardless of whether they live in the city or on the countryside and which school type or educational background they come from. Young people in Austria also **wish for more information on environmental protection**.

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Major actors of Austrian development policy

- The [Federal Government](#)
- The [Federal Parliament](#)
- The nine Federal States (Bundesländer)
- Cities and municipalities (Städte und Gemeinden)
- [Austrian Development Agency](#)
- [Austrian Development Bank \(österreichische Entwicklungsbank\)](#)
- Organisations of the Austrian civil society
- Scientific and educational institutions
- Citizens engaged in voluntary work
- Social partners and chambers
- Private sector/Austrian businesses/[Austrian Economic Chambers](#)

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA)

Combating poverty, ensuring peace and preserving the environment are the three major concerns of Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the **operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation** at the [Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs \(Bundesministerium für Europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten\)](#). ADA **funds about 650 projects and programmes annually with a total of EUR 500 million**. ADA is primarily engaged water supply and sanitation, renewable energy, climate protection, agriculture and forestry, private sector & development as well as human security, human rights and rule of law projects and programmes. It attaches particular importance in all its programmes and projects to the equal participation of women, **taking special account of the needs of minors** and persons with disabilities.

Distribution of responsibilities

Based on the Federal Act on Development Cooperation ([Bundesgesetz über die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit](#)), the **Federal Republic shall provide development cooperation** within the framework of its **international development policy**. The Official Development Assistance encompasses all Austrian official development assistance provided by the federal government, the provinces and municipalities. The **Federal Ministries have been tasked with the coherent implementation of the 'Agenda 2030'** on sustainable development by a 2016 decision of the Federal Council of Ministers . Thus, the main responsibilities on sustainable development lie with federal authorities. Environmental affairs are handled at all levels of government.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Joint development policy

Cooperation by all relevant actors in the interest of sustainable development takes place in coherence with other policies. Cross-sectorial cooperation **takes place at several levels**.

Cooperation measures at the policy level:

- Development-policy **Jour Fixe**, Austrian **civil society organisations dialogue**, **Advisory board** for Development Policy, dialogue with the **Parliament**
- **Assessment** of environmental and development aspects in **Austrian foreign, trade and agricultural policy**

Cooperation at the operational level:

- **Interministerial working group** on policy coherence for development and evaluations.

Platforms

BINE-Platform – Education for sustainable development Platform (Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung, BINE)

The interministerial platform BINE, has been established in 2004 by the former Federal Ministry of Education and the former Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economics. Results of this platform are **contributions to the education strategy**, participation in preparation and implementation of the EU-Conference 2006 and issuing of the publication of the UN-decade of education for sustainable development.

SDG Watch Austria

[SDG Watch Austria](#) has been founded in September 2017 and is a **member of SDG Watch Europe**, a **cross-sectorial alliance of NGOs** from social, human rights, development, environment and other relevant sectors. Its goal is to **hold governments accountable** for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This organisation is not directly funded by the state, but a part of its members are.

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

There is **no national programme** for exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

[UN Youth delegates](#): think globally, act locally

Each year, since 2012, Austria has sent **one youth delegate to the UN General Assembly**. In Austria, the **National Youth Council** ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) is responsible for the programme.

Every country may send youth delegates to the General Assembly in order for them to **represent the interests of children and young people worldwide**. The design and **mandate of the youth delegates regulated by every country** and thus not uniform. In the run-up for their speech to the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly, **Austrian youth delegates are tasked with obtaining input from Austrian children and young people by means of a participatory process**. Furthermore, they shall **raise broad awareness** on the programme in numerous youth organisations. The Austrian representatives **network** with other youth delegates, address the General Assembly on youth issues and participate in plenary sessions and informal meetings.

EU Youth Dialogue

The EU Youth Dialogue enables young people to collect their ideas, wishes and worries on the subject of youth in Europe and to thus introduce them into the European political debate. In 2018, in the course of the Trio Presidency over the Council of the European Union of Estonia, Bulgaria and

Austria, the [European Youth Goals](#) have been developed at corresponding [youth conferences](#) that engaged 50.000 young Europeans.

The eleven European Youth Goals encompass:

- Connecting EU with Youth
- Equality of All Genders
- Inclusive Societies
- Information & Constructive Dialogue
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Moving Rural Youth Forward
- Quality Employment for All
- Quality Learning
- Space and Participation for All
- Sustainable Green Europe
- Youth Organisations & European Programmes

In the most recent 7th edition of the EU Youth Dialogue on 'Creating opportunities for youth', 3,300 young Austrians (of 30,000 participating young Europeans) became involved and gave input on their attitudes, interests and needs. They participated via **online questioning and local dialogue workshops**.

Participation & Sustainable Development in Europe ([partizipation.at](#))

The [platform partizipation.at](#) provides **information on various projects of municipalities, regions and federal states**. The database of case histories contains a wide thematic and geographic variety of examples from all application fields of public participation in a big thematic and geographic, among them [Youth participation projects](#).

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Development communication and education in Austria

According to the [Federal Government's Three-Year Development Programme 2019–2021](#) development education work and public relations in Austria include

- **Portraying the social, environmental and economic aspects of development**, especially with a view to the **2030 Agenda** as well as **highlighting the opportunities and benefits** of development cooperation for Austria, while also making a **critical appraisal**
- **Discussing Austria's global networking** and the attendant scope and **challenges**, particularly related to the Sustainable Development Goals
- **Organising voluntary, quality-assured stays abroad** (activities under the Volunteer Service Act ([Freiwilligengesetz](#)) and others that contribute to development education in Austria)
- **Advancing global learning and global citizenship education** for modern general education (in schools, universities, out-of-school work with children and youth and also adult education)
- **Fostering dialogue, cooperation and strategic partnerships** together with institutions, organisations and businesses outside the development-policy sector
- **Promoting civil-society projects** and **strengthening** tried and tested **institutions**
- **Supporting campaigns** for reinforcing relevant thematic clusters
- **Advancing arguments for the impacts and benefits** of development policy to the Austrian public'

The [Austrian Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development](#) (short version) ([Österreichische Strategie zur Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung](#)) has been issued by the former Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the former Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and the former Federal Ministry of Science and Research in 2008.

Citizenship education is a cross-curricular educational principle. A general ordinance has been issued in 2015. [Zentrum polis](#) is the central pedagogical service institution for curricular citizenship/political education. Citizenship education is being **taught in different subjects**: History, History and social science, political education and geography and economics. An overview table ([tabellarische Übersicht](#)) depicts to what extent citizenship education is taught in all

secondary level schools. BAOBAB provides a link collection for [school workshops](#) by Austrian NGOs addressing global issues.

Environmental education: FORUM for sustainable development (FORUM Umweltbildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung)

The FORUM Environmental education for sustainable development is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology \(Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie\)](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#). It combines more than thirty years of experience in environmental education with **innovative and ground-breaking educational approaches** especially in the field of education for sustainable development (ESD).

It offers **educational support via publications, websites, events** like conferences and workshops, innovative **flagship projects, educational networks, educational funds** and personal contact. FORUM Umweltbildung works for a **target group of educators** in the formal (school and university) and non-formal (further education, adult education) educational sector in Austria. Together with the Institute for Environment, Peace and Development (IUFE), it has published the reading **book** 'Our world. Our Future' on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, a knowledge **quiz**, an environmental **teaching poster**, and the **card game** 'challenge accepted'.

Austrian Latin America Institute (Österreichisches Lateinamerika-Institut, LAI)

LAI is an **interdisciplinary orientated organisation**, aiming at **intensifying dialogue and exchange between Austria and Latin America**. It was founded as an association in 1965 and receives subsidies for its work in development politics as well as scientific and cultural events and projects.

Supporting educators

The **Strategy Global Education in the Austrian Education System (Strategie Globales Lernen im österreichischen Bildungssystem)** has been developed from 2007 until its publishing by the strategy group in 2009. The strategy group consisted of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and was formed in 2003. The strategy is currently under revision. Additionally, the strategy group organises a **yearly conference** under the title 'Global Learning: Potentials and Perspectives' **for teacher trainers, teachers and the interested public**. The **web portal** Strategy Global Education ([Strategie Globales Lernen](#)) provides information on the strategy, activities, teaching material and an overview of events.

The [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) provides an [overview](#) on offered **handbooks, guideline and teaching material** of various actors on its website.

Teaching folder on SDGs for schools

The **teaching folder on '17 goals for a better world'** ([Unterrichtsmappe- Die 17 Ziele für eine bessere Welt](#)) is provided by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research \(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung\)](#) to support teachers in conveying these important topics. The folder aims to raise awareness and to promote a conscious look at the 17 sustainable development goals in class.

Our world, think globally, act locally ([Our World – Global denken, lokal handeln.](#))

The National Youth Council ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)) offers **training for educators in extracurricular youth work**. The training provides an **insight into global problems and existing solution approaches. Thematic inputs and methods** are part of the training. The global education approach imparts knowledge to educators on global issues and calls attention to complex worldwide correlations. The focus is set on consumption & lifestyle, nutrition & environment, and participation & engagement. The training is provided free of charge and takes place in various regions. Co-operation partners are various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

C3 Centre for International Development

'The [C3 Centre for International Development](#) is a **place of research, discourse and education in the field of international development**. Five organisations offer a unique venue for dialogue, discussion and reflection on issues relevant to international development. These are: ÖFSE - the

Austrian Foundation for Development Research; BAOBAB - a developmental education and training resource; Frauensolidarität - Solidarity among Women; the Paulo Freire Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Research and Dialogical Education; and the Mattersburg Circle for Development Politics at Austrian Universities.'

BAOBAB

BAOBAB is a **central learning and communication place for global education in Austria**. With an extensive library, advanced training offers for kindergarten teachers, teachers and multipliers and the development of educational materials BAOBAB promotes the discussion on development and global issues.

Youth Environment Platform (Jugend-Umwelt-Plattform, JUMP)

JUMP **links social, ecological and economic concerns and actively support the sustainable development of society**. It encourages youth participation in environmental and socio-political processes, by **motivating young people to work for a sustainable and environmentally conscious society**. JUMP promotes and actively supports young people's commitment to a sustainable lifestyle. The platform **organises environmental education events** for young people, cooperates with environmental education institutions, **transports young people's environmental concerns and ideas**, and networks young people with people, initiatives and organisations that are committed to the sustainable development of society. It also **show careers perspectives in the environmental sector**, enables young people to pass a voluntary environmental year, and **initiates environmental projects** and implements them together with young people in order to set impulses for the establishment of sustainable development.

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

The [Austrian Development Agency](#) provides information on global issues and started the **MITMACHEN (Participating) initiative**. Information on governmental and non-governmental initiatives and projects are provided on this platform.

The 6th and 7th Forum Youth Strategy ([Forum Jugendstrategie](#)) by the former Federal Ministry of Families and Youth have had the focus on participation and the sustainable development goals.

Most campaigns addressing global issues in Austria are launched by NGOs (some of which are partially supported by the government). Listed NGOs receive financial support from the government. Many other NGOs work independently from government funding.

The 'Mother Earth' media project

The environmental association 'We for the world' runs the project '[Mutter Erde](#)' ('mother earth') on behalf of the [Austrian Public Broadcasting Corporation](#) ([Österreichischer Rundfunk](#), ORF) and leading environmental and nature conservation organisations in Austria (Alpenverein/Alpine Association, BirdLife, GLOBAL 2000, Greenpeace, Naturfreunde/Friends of Nature, the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union, VCÖ and WWF). The aim is to **create awareness for the environment, to encourage (young) people to take action and to support environmental and nature conservation projects**. Each year, a different relevant environmental topic is the focus of the joint activities. Previous thematic focuses have been set on water (2014), bees (2015), food waste (2016), climate protection (2017), agriculture (2018), using instead of wasting (2019) and 'Our Climate, Our Future - It's in Our Hands' (2020). Each year **more than 150 contributions in all public media** - television, radio, online, provincial TV studios and Teletext - are dedicated to the topics of climate protection and species conservation. The motto for 2021 is 'Protect climate, protect species', which highlights the connections between the climate crisis and species extinction. The focus is not only on the status quo but also on solutions for climate protection and species conservation. While the campaign as a whole is directed towards the general population, specific offers target young people in particular.

Information providers

Austrian Foundation for Development Research (Österreichische Forschungsstiftung für Internationale Entwicklung, ÖFSE)

ÖFSE is Austria's leading research and information centre on development cooperation and development policy. Research at ÖFSE is interdisciplinary and practice-oriented. Its Science & Research department offers information, analysis and advice on the following topics:

- International development policy and development cooperation

- Public and private development policy and development cooperation in Austria
- Global economy and development economics
- Education – Research – Development

Austrian Society for Environment and Technology (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Umwelt und Technik, ÖGUT)

The Austrian Society for Environment and Technology is an **independent non-profit organisation** which has been **focusing on sustainability in economy and society** for more than 30 years. The platform brings together institutions from economic backgrounds, administrative bodies and environmental groups.

The **web portal „Participation and Sustainable Development in Europe“** is owned by the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology \(Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie\)](#) and its content is handled by the Austrian Society for Environment and Technology.

Südwind Magazine

The [Südwind-Magazine](#) has been **reporting on topics like international politics, culture and international development** policy since 1979. The magazine's mission is to inform the public on social, political, economic and cultural realities in so-called third-world countries, on development policies and international cooperation.

Youth Portal (Jugendportal)

The Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centers' Website **provides youth with selected information and links to important players on any relevant topic**, including the focus areas of 'democracy and youth policy', 'Europe and EU', and 'Society and Environment'. It has also established a focus on 'With Facts against Fake News: Climate Change'.

Key initiatives

Global education week

The global education week **takes place annually** since 1999. Through the Global Education Week **young people should learn about the causes and effects of global and local issues**. Each year a link collection and teaching material are provided according to the corresponding theme. The NGO responsible for the [Austrian Global Education Week](#) is [Südwind](#). Beside support from EU-funds, this initiative is promoted by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). During this week, 10 workshops and film screenings are provided for schools and organisations in the field of extracurricular youth work. The action week takes place Europe-wide and is aimed at strengthening the pedagogical concept of Global Learning and thus contributing to the achievement of the 17 sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030. It targets teachers and educators in all sectors as well as children and young people.

Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid (Globale Verantwortung)

The umbrella organisation 'Global Responsibility' is an **Austrian Platform for development and humanitarian aid and currently represents the interests of 34 member organisations**, active in the fields of development cooperation, development education and policy work, as well as humanitarian aid and sustainable global economic, social and ecological development. A [fact-sheet](#) on public development co-operation and humanitarian aid gives an overview of the budget spent in Austria.

care-Austria

[care Austria](#) is a private and both politically and religiously independent aid organisation and supported by means of the Austrian development cooperation and of the European Union. Its main focus lies in the areas of **disaster aid & humanitarian aid, social development and environment & development**. CARE helps families and communities with innovative development programs as well as with professional emergency help. CARE compiles lasting solutions for their social, economic and ecological problems with the people.

CARE acts as an **advocate to strategically influence national and international political decisions which affect the life of the poorest people** worldwide.

Diakonie

[Diakonie disaster aid](#) ([Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe](#)) and the sister organisation Bread for the World ([Brot für die Welt](#)) are member organisations of [Diakonie](#) Austria – the Austrian Protestant relief group. They are responsible for **humanitarian aid work** within the network and are responsible for projects providing **development aid**.

FIAN (FoodFirst Information and Action Network) - Austria

[FIAN](#) is an **international human rights organisation to advocate for the realisation of the right to food and nutrition**. [FIAN Austria](#) has developed various strategies to promote its concerns: research and documentation, campaigns and actions, lobbying, education and media work, networking.

Women's solidarity (Frauensolidarität)

The association women's solidarity is active since 1982 and is **involved in women's rights in Africa, Asia and Latin America**. In the **information work in Austria** the association connects feminist and development concepts.

Horizont3000

[HORIZONT3000](#) is the **largest Austrian non-governmental development cooperation organisation**. With their work, they help disadvantaged people in the Global South to develop in a sustainable and humane way.

Light for the world (Licht für die Welt)

Light for the world is an **international disability and development NGO aiming at an inclusive society** with the core member 'Licht für die Welt-Christofell Entwicklungszusammenarbeit'. Initially, prevention of blindness and restoration of eyesight were the most important focus. In the last recent years the scope has been widened towards the promotion of inclusive education, community-based rehabilitation, and disability rights.

Südwind

As an **independent organisation for international development education and public relation**, Südwind advocates for a worldwide solidarity.

The **core competencies and key fields of action** are:

- **international development education** in Austria,
- production of international development **media**,
- introduction of international development issues and concerns into **civil society initiatives**, (campaigns, studies on global issues, etc.),
- **lobbying**.

Youth one world (Jugend eine Welt)

[Jugend Eine Welt](#) operates in the spirit of Don Bosco, a Christian patron of youth. It is an **international aid organisation with the purpose national and international youth welfare** and cooperation for sustainable development.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

Youth Environment Platform (Jugend Umwelt-Plattform, JUMP)

JUMP offers young adults opportunities for participation, capacity building and personal orientation in the area of environment and sustainability. Long, middle and short-term activities as well as training courses and assistance for projects are offered.

Programmes

- **Voluntary ecological year** ([Freiwilliges Umweltjahr](#), FUJ)

A voluntary ecological year **with education for occupational orientation and environmental project management**. The FUJ offers young people aged 18 and above the opportunity to work in

a non-profit organisation for 6 to 12 months in the **conservation, environmental protection and sustainability area** in Austria. The year is recognised as a substitute for civilian service.

- [Green days](#)

An **environment conceptions network convention for young people lasting three days** on a yearly basis. The program includes workshops, discussions, excursions, further education, tuition offers, networks, contacts around the world of environmental protection and sustainability.

- **Pioneers of Sustainability ([Pionierinnen der Nachhaltigkeit](#))**

In the project '**Pic herstory - Female Pioneers of Sustainability**', a group of 12 young people from all over Austria **developed a mobile exhibition** under the guidance of professional photographers and writing trainers. The theme of the exhibition is the commitment of **female sustainability pioneers** from all over the world in the field of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. An online vernissage was held.

- **Podcast for future: on tour ([Klimaradio](#))**

A group of **young people is encouraged to produce podcast episodes on various climate and energy topics** with the support of professional radio trainers and climate and energy experts. They experience the whole process of creating a podcast and get a first-hand look at radio and podcast work while dealing and disseminating issues of climate change.

- [CEHAPE \(Children´s Environment Health Action Plan for Europe\)](#)

Young people between 16 and 24 years from Austria can contribute as CEHAPE peers, implement projects and participate in national and international activities.

- [Frequency GREEN TEAM](#)

The purpose of the Frequency GREEN TEAM is to **sharpen the awareness of Frequency festival visitors and mutually form the festival more sustainable**. With creative ideas, persuading, a lot of motivation and role model behaviour they declare hostilities against the piles of garbage every year.

- [City Surfer](#)

City Surfers is an **instruction course for young pupils from three different schools in Linz (Upper Austria) on climate-friendly mobility** as well as safe behaviour in public transport systems.

Environmental NGOs

Young people can also voluntarily engage on environmental matters in **a number of NGOs in Austria**, such as the Alpine Association/[Alpenverein](#), Friends of Nature/[Naturfreunde](#), [Greenpeace](#), [WWF](#), and the Association of Austrian Animal Welfare - [proTier](#).

Green production and consumption

[Environment Agency Austria \(Umweltbundesamt\)](#)

[Environment Agency Austria](#) was founded in 1985. In 1999 it received the legal status of a limited liability company. The Environment Agency Austria played an **active role in environmental protection and monitoring in Austria and in Europe**. The experts are **developing strategies and solutions for decision-makers** in politics, administration and the economy.

[EU-environment office Austria \(EU-Umweltbüro\)](#)

The organisation has been established as the **competence centre for European environmental policy** and is located **at Austria's environmental umbrella organisation ([Umweltdachverband](#))**. The key competences of this organisation are comprehensive knowledge of the political preparation of legislation at EU-level and **information on current and future developments at EU-level**.

[The Austrian Ecolabel \(Österreichisches Umweltzeichen\)](#)

The [label](#) has been created on the initiative of the former Federal Ministry of Environment in 1990. It **provides the general public with information on the environmental impact of consumer**

goods that arises from their production, usage and disposal and attracts the attention of consumers to alternative environmentally friendly products.

Footprint calculator

The [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology \(Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie\)](#) provides an [online tool](#) to **calculate the CO₂-footprint in Austria**.

Conscious consumption (Bewusst einkaufen) and Energy conservation

The website of the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology \(Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie\)](#) provides a large **variety of information regarding green consumption**. Among other, [quality labels](#) are explained, a [databank of sustainable products](#) is provided and a [Facebook site](#) with news regarding the subject has been launched. It also provides a large variety of **information on Energy consumption**.

Climate Alliance Austria (Klimabündnis Austria)

Climate Alliance Austria comprises seven regional branch offices and attends to cities, municipalities, schools, nursery schools and enterprises across the country. The main focus lies on **information and awareness raising projects and activities to promote knowledge on climate issues and sustainable development** and hereby generating public and stakeholder support regarding climate protection, equality and mitigation. The organisation's working methods are characterised by **target-group specific communication, stakeholder-engagement, education and dissemination** of best practice on a local, regional and national level.

Klimaaktiv (detailed German website, English overview website)

Klimaaktiv is an **Austrian climate protection initiative and integral part of the Austrian climate strategy**. It is run by the [Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology \(Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie\)](#). klimaaktiv's primary objective is to **launch and promote climate-friendly technologies and services**. In doing so, klimaaktiv focuses on high standards of quality, provides education and training of professionals, gives advice and cooperates with a large network of partners. The focus is on the four thematic areas of **construction and renovation, energy saving, renewable energies and mobility**. Municipalities, households and businesses are supported by klimaaktiv in their climate protection activities. The [Austrian Energy Agency](#) is entrusted with the operational implementation of the programmes and projects.

WearFair and more

The [Wearfair](#) is Austria largest **fair for sustainability and eco-fair consumption**. Originally conceived as a pure fashion fair, the WearFair and more today claims to cover all consumption area. The fair is organised by the non-profit organisation WearFair + more formed by three major Austrian NGOs: Südwind, Global 2000 and Klimabündnis. In 2017, the fair had its tenth anniversary.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

Fieldwork

Fieldwork stays are provided by [Horizont3000](#). Working abroad for two years, qualified experts from Austria can use their skills and knowledge. These experts must have solid training and practical knowledge. The work of Horizont3000 has continued despite the pandemic.

Further projects and information

The umbrella organisation of Austrian youth information centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos, BÖJI](#)) published a brochure ([Fairantwortungsvoll](#), a wordplay of fair and responsible) on fair voluntary activities abroad.

Projects are provided by and within international youth organisations and their local organisation in Austria.

WeltWegWeiser - Servicestelle für internationale Freiwilligeneinsätze

[WeltWegWeiser](#) is a project by "Jugend eine Welt" ("Youth One World") and a **service point for international voluntary services**. Up to 50 young people aged 18-26 become ambassadors for good practice in development co-operation.

Volontariat bewegt ('voluntary work makes a difference')

Participants of the voluntary service (more information below) conduct training and network opportunities after their stay abroad. Hence, the participants are supported in their role as multipliers. After returning to Austria, they are advocating for topics of development politics and become involved in development work in Austria.

Development cooperation activities

Austrian Catholic Children's Movement (Dreikönigsaktion, DKA)

To increase the effectiveness of development work, DKA Austria thematically concentrates on five areas. These establish the framework for activities in projects and programmes, advocacy, education and public relations. "LernEinsätze" is a programme by the DKA for a one-month stay at partner organisations in developing countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the programme. While stays at the Philippines have been cancelled for 2021, the organisation hopes to continue to carry out its projects in Ghana and Kenya in the summer of 2021, if permitted by the circumstances.

Volontariat bewegt (voluntary work makes a difference)

[Volontariat bewegt](#) is a non-profit organisation, offering one-year voluntary services in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The volunteers are between the ages of 18 and 35 and engage in social projects catering for children and youth. The organisation works on behalf of the non-profit organisation 'Jugend Eine Welt' and the Salesians of Don Bosco.

The COVID-19 pandemic has faced volunteers and sending institutions with major challenges. Priority is given to the health and safety of participants. Therefore, in March 2020 31 volunteers were repatriated from abroad and all further trips suspended. The next posting of volunteers is projected for summer 2021, under the observation of stringent safety measures.

Social development co-operation (Sozial.EZA)

Sozial.EZA is a Project by the Austrian Development Agency that promotes traineeships in Africa, Asia and Latin-American for students of universities of applied sciences. The participants are trained in a seminar series prior to their stay abroad. A sozial.EZA traineeship lasts at least for 15 weeks. In many cases, students can make use of public support. In this case, students receive public grants (700 €) provided by the Austrian Development Agency.

International voluntary assignment by Caritas Austria

The [Caritas programme for international voluntary assignment](#) provides the opportunity to work on Caritas projects abroad - in Kenya, Uganda, Peru, India, Nepal, Indonesia and Thailand. Young people aged 18 years or older can become part of these projects.

Austrian Service Abroad (Österreichischer Auslandsdienst)

The association enables Austrians to work at Austrian Holocaust Memorial Services, Austrian Social Services or Austrian Peace Services in foreign countries. It is an organisation acknowledged by the [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#). Young people can thus fulfill their mandatory civilian service abroad. The stay may last from 6 to 12 months and is open to people of any age and gender.

The Austrian Service Abroad provides opportunities at 82 places in 37 countries. Since its foundation in 1998, more than 550 people have benefited from this opportunity to render their civilian service or a voluntary service abroad. In 2020, 56 people were deployed and 22 new posts created.

Grenzenlos (“without borders”)

[Grenzenlos](#) is an Austrian NGO with the main aim of promoting peace and tolerance through international non-formal education programmes that combine cultural integration with engagement in non-profit initiatives worldwide. Grenzenlos realises the platform [volunteering.at](#) and organises voluntary services in Africa, Asia, Anglo-America, Europa, Latin-American and Oceania. The programme has various target groups, project types and project times. Grenzenlos also organises the programme Melange in co-operation with WienXtra in Vienna. Melange is funded by the City of Vienna and the European Commission (Youth Program).

In the COVID-19 pandemic, Grenzenlos has enabled volunteers to cancel or postpone their trips. If inevitable due to the COVID-19 situation, programs were cancelled.

EU Aid Volunteers programme (Volunteering in humanitarian aid field)

Young people in Austria can also take part in the [EU Aid Volunteers programme](#) (soon to become 'Volunteering in humanitarian aid field'). EU Aid Volunteers brings volunteers and organisations from different countries together, providing practical support to humanitarian aid projects and contributing to strengthening local capacity and resilience of disaster-affected communities. Participants must be over 18 years and a citizen of an EU Member State or a long-term EU resident. Volunteers receive accommodation and travel expenses, insurance, ongoing learning and development, a monthly allowance, and a resettlement allowance to help with expenses of returning home.

9.7 Current debates and reforms

After an **increase in funding for the Foreign Disaster Fund and Development Aid** in 2020, these are to be increased again in 2021 ([Parlamentsskorrespondenz](#)). In 2021, the federal budget estimate provides for disbursements in the amount of € 549.9 million, which means an increase of 10.9% compared to 2020. In detail, € 10.7 million more and thus € 125.1 million in budget funds are to flow into bilateral development cooperation, which are to be used for priority projects in Austrian Development Cooperation. The Foreign Disaster Fund, i.e. Austria's worldwide disaster and humanitarian aid, will more than double to € 52.5 million (2020: € 25.0 million) with € 27.5 million, by 2024 it is to increase to € 60 million.

10. YOUTH WORK

'Child and youth work' refers to a **very broad and diverse spectrum of offers and measures** in the field of social action. It includes **youth education and training measures** that are provided **outside the formal school education system** or the services provided by the public child and youth welfare services. Thus, the term 'extracurricular / out-of-school youth work' has been coined. Child and youth work is a **voluntary offer** in children and young people's free time, where they are not be obliged to participate.

In Austria, out-of-school youth work has a **strong emphasis on activities in leisure time** and is thereby oriented towards **informal and non-formal learning** of young people. It sets qualified and planned leisure and socio-pedagogical offers and activities. The primary aim of youth work is to **promote the potentials and strengths of young people**.

The **structures and offers** of youth work are as **diverse** as young people themselves. They range from institutional youth work, and open and associative youth work to youth information, international youth work and initiatives. Within the youth work structures, there is hardly a field of action and topic that is not covered.

On the one hand, youth work **implements the contents and objectives of youth policy frameworks**. On the other hand, it is a seismograph and translator for the needs, concerns, wishes and demands of young people and thus **influences future youth policy strategies**. Its aim is to **contribute to the personal development of young people**. To this end, it should be linked to the interests of the adolescents and be co-determined and co-designed by them. In this way, young people are empowered to self-determination and encouraged to share responsibility in society and social commitment.

These takes on Youth Work in Austria are taken by the [Section for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and on the Website '[Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#)', which the Federal Network of Youth Information Centres runs on its behalf.

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 **favours 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**

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

Youth policy at the federal level

As a result of the federalist structure of Austria, the responsibilities for youth policy and for extracurricular child and youth work divided between the nine federal states and the federal government. Youth Policy is a cross-departmental cross-sectoral matter. That is why youth-relevant agendas can be found in all ministries. The agendas for general affairs and the coordination of youth policy lie with the Federal Chancellery (2019). The objectives of the Austrian Youth Strategy are the establishment of youth policy as a cross-sectoral matter, the positioning of extracurricular child and youth work as an important pillar of youth policy, the visualisation of existing activities for young people in all policy areas and fields of action and on this basis the improved coordination of measures between the youth political stakeholders. According to the Federal Youth Promotion Act (Federal Act on the Promotion of Extracurricular Youth Education and Youth Work, [B-JFG](#)), the work of nationwide youth organisations and associations is financially

supported by the Federal Chancellery. At the national level, the Federal Youth Council acts as a legally anchored advocacy group for all children and adolescents. Its tasks are regulated by the Federal Youth Representation Act, whose implementation falls within the area of responsibility of the Federal Chancellery. All parties represented in the National Council have (child and) youth spokespersons. There is no separate Child and Youth Committee in Parliament, and agendas are dealt with in the relevant committees, mainly the Family Committee.

Youth policy at the federal states level

For the regional design and implementation of youth policy issues and the implementation of extracurricular child and youth work, the respective head of (provincial) youth department (LandesjugendreferentIn) is responsible. Depending on the federal state, there are different competence distributions and areas of responsibility; within the state administration, these tasks can also be assigned to different organisational units. According to the Federal Constitution, the responsibility for extracurricular child and youth work lies mainly with the federal states. Similar to the children and youth spokespersons in the National Council, there are also mostly children and youth spokespersons among the parties represented in the Provincial Diets. Provincial advisory councils (with different designations) advise the Provincial Governments in the field of youth policy in almost all federal states. The composition and competencies of these bodies vary from federal state to federal state.

Youth policy at the communal level

The municipalities are the immediate living space of children and adolescents and thus of particular relevance. They enable them to gain a wealth of experience in the immediate living environment by creating recreational facilities, open youth centres or mobile youth work and other infrastructure. The municipal extracurricular child and youth work comprises a very wide range of activities. These include the coordination and networking of interest groups and actors in extracurricular child and youth work, the construction and maintenance of child- and youth-specific leisure facilities, the support of child and youth organisations and the development and implementation of own offers and programs, such as holiday games or youth citizens celebrations.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

As part of the national coordination of youth affairs, there is an annual conference of the heads of (provincial) youth departments (LandesjugendreferentInnen) with the federal minister responsible for youth, in which the employees of the relevant specialist departments participate.

As part of the Austrian Youth Strategy, each federal ministry has developed and defined one or more national "youth objectives" within its own sphere of competence until September 2019. Building on this, measures to implement the youth objectives will be developed from autumn 2019 onwards.

10.3 Support to youth work

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 and 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 organisation 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

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.

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-organiser, 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+.

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

High-quality offers and the qualification of people working in extracurricular child and youth work are of particular importance in working with young people. Ensuring quality and the **continuous quality development of extracurricular child and youth work** has become an indispensable field of activity. The **definition of standards and the engagement of evaluation tools such as self-evaluation and impact analysis** serve to live up to the needs of the increasingly complex field of action.

Federal youth organisations that apply for basic funding from the Federal Government are required to carry out continuous quality assurance. Additionally, depending on the area of Children and Youth work, there are different types of mechanisms in place to evaluate the quality of youth work programmes and projects.

Professional Open Children and Youth work

Most professional Open Children and Youth workers are specifically qualified employees with relevant training in the total amount of at least 60 ECTS points or 1500 hours in the secondary, post-secondary and tertiary sector. Further **occupational training, supervision and intervention** are important elements of quality assurance. The **Quality Manual for Open Youth Work**, 4th edition, August 2016 ([Qualitätshandbuch für Offene Jugendarbeit](#), 4. Auflage, August 2016), developed by the Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in 2011, outlines the basic principles in the area of quality standards. It describes the **requirements in terms of structure, process and result** of Professional Open Children and Youth Work in Austria and makes **suggestions for further development**. Furthermore, the **impact concept** "Goals, achievements and effects of the Open Youth Work in Austria" ([Ziele, Leistungen und Wirkungen der Offenen Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#)) - a description of 5 dimensions of the Open Youth Work -, the **Toolkit** 'Tools and Methods of Quality Development for Open Youth Work' ([Werkzeuge und Methoden der Qualitätsentwicklung für die Offene Jugendarbeit](#)) and the bOJA-**Documentation Database** contribute to the quality assurance and development of the field.

Children and youth work in youth organisations

Many seminars, courses, workshops and programmes are constantly held within the framework of internal educational and further training measures and are attended by thousands of volunteers and communicators. These non-formal educational offers contribute greatly to quality assurance in associational children and youth work. A detailed overview of the educational and further training

measures in the area of associational child and youth organisations can be found in the publication 'This Way! Navigational Aid Child and Youth Organisations' ([Hier geht's lang! Navigationshilfe Kinder- und Jugendorganisationen](#)).

The 'Manual for the Promotion of Gender Mainstreaming in Child and Youth Work - Ideas and Tools' ("[Handbuch zur Förderung von Gender Mainstreaming in der Kinder- und Jugendarbeit. Ideen und Werkzeuge](#)"), developed by the National Youth Council and cooperation partners, aims to **support reflective and gender-related work** with children and adolescents. It is actively supported in the member organisations of the National Youth Council.

The Federal Youth Promotion Act ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)) stipulates that basic support should only be granted to those youth organisations which - in addition to a number of other conditions - provide continuous quality assurance in accordance with § 6 para. 1 no. 6 Federal Youth Promotion Act or § 13 para. 4 of the Guidelines of the Federal Youth Promotion Act perform their work. In view of this, as well as the fundamental meaning and necessity of quality assurance in associative youth work, a series of measures and activities have already been set in recent years, all aimed at finding ways, methods, standards, etc. A key message of these cooperation projects is the recommendation of self-evaluation. A form for the proof of the implementation of a continuous quality assurance ([Formblatt für den Nachweis der Durchführung einer kontinuierlichen Qualitätssicherung](#)) for the grant submission according to section 13 (4) of the Federal Youth Promotion Act must be completed compulsorily and submitted together with the application for basic funding.

Professional Open Children and Youth work

Most professional Open Children and Youth workers are specifically qualified employees with relevant training in the total amount of at least 60 ECTS points or 1500 hours in the secondary, post-secondary and tertiary sector. Further **occupational training, supervision and intervision** are important elements of quality assurance. The **Quality Manual for Open Youth Work**, 4th edition, August 2016 ([Qualitätshandbuch für Offene Jugendarbeit](#), 4. Auflage, August 2016), developed by the Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in 2011, outlines the basic principles in the area of quality standards. It describes the **requirements in terms of structure, process and result** of Professional Open Children and Youth Work in Austria and makes **suggestions for further development**. Furthermore, the **impact concept** "Goals, achievements and effects of the Open Youth Work in Austria" ([Ziele, Leistungen und Wirkungen der Offenen Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#)) - a description of 5 dimensions of the Open Youth Work -, the **Toolkit** 'Tools and Methods of Quality Development for Open Youth Work' ([Werkzeuge und Methoden der Qualitätsentwicklung für die Offene Jugendarbeit](#)) and the **boJA-Documentation Database** contribute to the quality assurance and development of the field.

Youth Information

The following measures are being implemented in the National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres:

- **Ongoing further training offers for the staff** of Youth Information Centres – from beginner courses up to in-depth topics
- **Nationwide quality criteria and quality standards** as well as a **commitment to the European Youth Information Principles**. The brochure on "Quality in Youth Information" ([Qualität in der Jugendinformation](#)) describes the quality assurance mechanisms for the Austrian Youth Information Centres and is divided into key areas, criteria, and indicators. The key areas encompass structural framework and resources, information management, external communication, and information dissemination. The quality standards describe quantifiable and measurable measures, processes and resources.

aufZAQ - Certified training quality for extracurricular child and youth work

On the one hand, the aufZAQ certificate is a means of proving personal qualification, on the other hand, it **helps to ensure quality standards in education and training** for full-time and voluntary youth leaders and youth workers. With the certificate, the [Section of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), the Youth Departments of the Federal States, and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Italian Province of Bozen/Bolzano – South Tyrol **confirm the high quality of educational courses in the non-formal area**. aufZAQ makes the quality of courses visible, **comparable and recognisable**. Thus, people working in extracurricular child and youth work receive orientation when choosing a training or further education offer. For course participants, the aufZAQ certification is proof of the high quality of their education. For employers

and institutions of child and youth work, aufZAQ guarantees that the respective course is a high-quality vocational education and training that is strongly oriented towards professional practice.

According to the aufZAQ [Competence Framework](#) there are five different competence areas. Each of the five areas is subdivided into different dimensions that specify the area in each case.

I. Enable, initiate and promote learning

- **Set educational goals using a participatory approach** and support children/youths in achieving these objectives
- **Create settings which promote (self-)education** and learning processes
- Facilitate (self-)educational processes and **shape learning processes**
- Use **appropriate methods for successful learning**
- **Evaluate and develop** learning processes

II. Support identity development and approaches in coping with everyday life

- **Support children/adolescents in the development of their identity** and further personal development
- **Enable** children/youths to experience **self-efficacy**
- **Promote responsibility and independence** of children and adolescents
- Strengthen **personal recognition and sense of community**
- Support children/adolescents in **coping with everyday life**

III. Enable participation and represent interests

- **Organise** activities, offers and projects **participatory**
- Use **appropriate methods and procedures** for successful participation
- **Enable participation in the development of the organisation**
- **Promote social and political participation** of children/adolescents
- **Represent the interests** of children/young people

IV. Act and interact consciously and responsibly

- **Take responsibility**
- Implement roles conscientiously and with **consideration**
- **Include** the different **dimensions of diversity** in the work
- Design **group/team settings**
- **Initiate** and design **group/team processes**
- **Accompany** and develop group/team processes
- Act constructively and **solution-oriented in problem and conflict situations**
- Act **competent with risks**

V. Organise and manage projects

- **Design** organisational **processes**
- Use appropriate **methods for successful organisation**
- **Evaluate and develop** organisational processes
- Carry out **administrative tasks** and use financial resources responsibly
- Carry out **communication** and public relations
- **Shape and develop** the organisation

In addition to the content-related division into areas and dimensions, the competence framework also makes a **distinction between different levels**. There are **five levels starting at Level 2**:

- **Level 2**: Work with children/adolescents **under guidance** with some autonomy and **taking responsibility** for one's own actions. Being responsible for one's own actions, **adapting one's own behaviour** under certain guidance to common situations and circumstances in a **pre-structured framework**
- **Level 3**: Work with children/adolescents **in simple situations autonomously and self-responsibly**. Take responsibility for one's own actions consistent to the situation. **Independently adapt one's own behaviour** to the state and circumstances of common situations in a pre-structured framework
- **Level 4**: Work autonomously and self-responsibly with children/adolescents **in changing routine situations. Plan, carry out, and evaluate projects**. Independently adapt one's own

behaviour to different situations and under **varying conditions** to the respective state and circumstances

- **Level 5: Act independently and flexibly in varying and even unpredictable situations.** Coordinate and manage projects and/or teams independently. **Instruct colleagues** in changing assignments. Participate in the **professional development of organisational structures** and/or pedagogical concepts
- **Level 6: Lead complex and comprehensive functional areas** and/or projects independently and as ultimately responsible. **Deal critically and responsibly with actions of colleagues as well as project** and working teams. Take responsibility for **managing the professional development** of individuals, teams, organisational structures, and pedagogical concepts or those of a similar nature

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

The [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) has a budget to finance youth research and youth reports.

Youth Report

The [Austrian youth report \(Jugendbericht\)](#) is composed at request of the National Council, commissioned by the Department/Ministry of Youth and submitted to the National Council once during each legislative period. The most recent report on the situation of youth in Austria has been published in 2016. The preparation of Parts A and B of the 7th Report on the Situation of Youth in Austria was entrusted to the [Danube University Krems'](#) Department for Migration and Globalization in cooperation with [Statistics Austria](#). The outcomes of these reports are integrated into the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#).

Dialogue Youth Research (Dialog Jugendforschung)

Dialogue Youth Research serves to **present and discuss current research results and activities** in the field of youth research.

Bellow is a brief overview of **recent events** of Dialog youth research:

- **Impact evaluation of mobile youth work** ([Wirkungsevaluation mobiler Jugendarbeit](#)), September 2017

Mobile youth work represents an outreach, life-world-oriented social support offer for a particularly vulnerable target group. A **complex research design and a mix of five methodological approaches highlight the high complexity of impact dynamics and contexts**. Each research access is characterized by special strengths, which complement each other and enable meaningful knowledge of action. The publication Impact evaluation of mobile youth work ([Wirkungsevaluation mobiler Jugendarbeit](#)) can be obtained as Open Access Version on the website of the [Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology \(Instituts für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie, IRKS\)](#).

- Knowledge on young people in Austria: results from the [7th Austrian youth report](#)

At the Dialogue on Youth Research, the authorship of the 7th Report on the Situation of Youth in Austria ([Siebenter Jugendbericht](#)) gave an **insight into the most important and surprising results of the 7th Youth Report** - Part A: Knowledge of Young People. Both **existing studies and especially prepared analyses**, for example from the Austrian Health Survey ([Österreichische Gesundheitsbefragung](#)), were used for this purpose. For example, the following questions were dealt with:

- **Who** is the Austrian youth?
- Which **educational paths** do Austrian young people take?
- How are young people with a **migration background** doing?
- Which **health problems and diseases** are particularly affecting young people?
- When do young people start **smoking and** how is their health behaviour (**alcohol, exercise, diet**)?
- How are young people behaving in their **home environment**, with their **relationships**, with their **sexuality**, with themselves?
- **Youth-specific data**

Austrian Institute for Family Research: Collection of youth-relevant data

In a research project, the [Austrian Institute for Family Research \(Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung, ÖIF\)](#) documented **which youth-relevant data are regularly collected by institutions**. This makes it possible to **quickly and easily access different contents** of

youth topics and to link them in content. All previous studies can be viewed on the website of the ÖIF.

The publication "Focus on Youth - An Overview in Numbers" ([Fokus Jugend 2019 - Ein Überblick in Zahlen](#)) was developed by the Austrian Institute for Family Research at the University of Vienna in cooperation with the Competence Centre for Youth in the Federal Chancellery and under participation of youth policy stakeholders. It provides a **compact overview of existing data on young people in Austria**. For this purpose, existing, publicly available statistics were researched and processed in a user-friendly way.

Impact box Youth Work

The impact box Youth Work ([Wirkungsbox Jugendarbeit](#)) provides a **comprehensive collection of empirically proven and well-founded effects of extracurricular work** for children and youth. This collection is based on the results of literature research funded by the Federal Chancellery and carried out by the Centre of Competence for Non-profit Organisations and Social Entrepreneurship of Vienna University of Business and Economics (WU) ([Kompetenzzentrum für Nonprofit Organisationen und Social Entrepreneurship](#)) on evidence-based, societal effects of extracurricular child and youth work. The impact box youth work contains **effects from about 200 relevant contributions in scientific and grey literature**. These effects of various activities of extracurricular Child and Youth Work are described in the impact box, according to the original language of the article, in German or English. The concept of the effect box developed by [Schober/Rauscher](#) (2017) is used here.

Participative Youth Work

Participatory youth research

As young people can be professionals for their worlds, this approach aims to develop them into **co-researchers**. The aim of participatory research approaches is to **involve affected persons** in sub-stages or the entire research process, and thus to **improve the applicability of research results**. Marginalised groups without a public presence are **supported in expressing their opinions** and giving their voice weight.

In a first step towards the (further) development of participatory research approaches, the Institute for Children's Rights and Parental Education ([Institut für Kinderrechte und Elternbildung, IKEB](#)) was commissioned to **compile a literature review** ([Literaturanalyse – partizipative Jugendforschung](#)) on methods of participatory research projects with young people.

Get active Team

Alongside the Nation Network of Youth Information Centres (Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos) the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) initiated the founding of the [Get-Active-Team](#). The aim was to **set up a youth participation pool: a group of young people who actively and regularly participate in projects and measures for young people** and want to **help develop them** with different organisations. The Get Active team consists of around **25 young people aged 16 to 24 from all over Austria**. Since November 2017, they have been participating in projects of ministries and organisations that aim to better reach young people and/or involve them in the implementation of measures. The added value for the administration and the organisations is the achievement of **measures that are more oriented towards the needs of young people**. Young people have the opportunity to contribute their opinions to different projects, to actively participate and to **cooperate with political decision-makers**. They receive free training in the areas of project development, rhetoric/communication, media and Austria's political landscape.

Reality Checks

As part of the [Austrian Youth Strategy](#), each Federal Ministry formulates one or more youth goals ([Jugendziele](#)) that are aimed at young people in Austria. In a 'reality check' an **exchange on the respective youth goals of the ministry between young people and representatives of the departments** is held. In the reflection, the **relevance of the goal to young people** and its connection on their realities of life is discussed. Through the discussion with the Get Active Team, the ministries want to **take up and integrate ideas, suggestions, and perspectives of young people** into the formulation of goals or the development of further measures. So far, reality check workshops were **held with four different Ministries**:

- BKA ([Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#))
- BMBWF ([Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#))

- BMF ([Federal Ministry of Finance](#))
- BMJ (Federal Ministry of Justice) on the reform of custody and contact rights in family law

Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

Symposium and magazine on digital youth work

The Centre of Competence for Professional Open Children and Youth Work ([Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit, bOJA](#)) organised their **annual symposium with a focus on digital youth work in 2017**. All lectures are provided online. With the 2018 edition of the bOJA **'Explizit' online magazine**, the content of the symposium is provided online.

International conference on digital youth work competencies

In 2020, the conference "[Exploring the digital dimension of youth workers' competencies](#)" was held in Vienna. Around 120 participants received an **overview of the latest developments concerning the digital dimension of youth work** and exchange their skills. The was targeted at youth workers, youth leaders, and trainers as well as other stakeholders of youth work. It was organised by the National Agency ERASMUS+ Austria ([Agency for Education and Internationalisation, Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung](#), OEAD) in cooperation with [aufZAQ](#), [POYWE](#), and [the SALTO Youth Resource Centres](#).

Study on digital lives of young people

The study WhatsApp - a 'must-have', Snapchat - a teen phenomenon, YouTube - an increasingly important daytime companion of the 'Generation Cloud TV' ([WhatsApp – ein „Must-Have“, Snapchat – ein Teenie-Phänomen, YouTube als zunehmend wichtiger Tagesbegleiter der „Generation Cloud-TV“](#)) of the Institute for Youth Culture Research ([Institut für Jugendkulturforschung](#)) gives **insights into the digital lives of young Austrians**. The Institute has **interviewed 300 'digital natives' aged 16 to 24 years on their digital communication**. The study shows that social media is an indispensable part of youth cultural life.

make-IT-safe 2.0

The project [make-IT-safe 2.0](#) is a **peer project of ECPAT**. Peer education aims to **strengthen the media literacy of children and adolescents** so that they can avoid the risks of violence when using digital media.

Youth workers can find an overview of the chapters covered and additional background information. The **toolbox has been developed by peer experts** together with their coaches. It is a collection of methods that can be used in extracurricular youth work to **raise the awareness of children and adolescents regarding 'Child Protection Online'**.

Webinar and research on digital youth work (digi4family)

Digi4family is an initiative of the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) to **increase the media literacy of families**.

A **webinar by the initiative** addressed the topic '**Youth Work in a digitised society**' ([Jugendarbeit in einer digitalisierten Gesellschaft](#)) – an event with an interactive live broadcast.

In the workshop results of a **research project on digital youth work (E-YOUTH-works)** were combined with the **know-how of [saferinternet.at](#)** and the following questions were worked on together:

- Which fields of work and types of use of digital youth work exist?
- Which social networks do young people use?
- How can Instagram be used as a communication and working medium in youth work?
- What do you have to consider when working with Instagram?
- What knowledge and skills are helpful for digital youth work?

In one of the interactive parts, **Instagram posts were reflected on together**. In order to make this as practical as possible, posts from the account of the participating youth organisation could be forwarded in advance as examples for the reflection.

MAKING: digital fiddling for youth work (MAKING: digitales Tüfteln für die Jugendarbeit)

This **workshop seminar invited to try out different possibilities of MAKING**. From electronic components useful or funny **workpieces were soldered and created**. Analogous and digital designs for the foil cutter (T-shirts, bags, stickers or inscriptions) were designed and first own

objects planned for 3D printing. The seminar was free of charge as **part of the Erasmus + project [Digitally Agile Youth Work](#)**.

Workshops and services (bOJA, University of Vienna and saferinternet.at)

The Centre of Competence for Professional Open Children and Youth Work ([Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit, bOJA](#)) and the [Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology at University of Vienna](#) provided **[workshops on digital youth work](#)** in cooperation with the umbrella organisations in the federal states.

[saferinternet.at](#) provides **[services](#) (tools, news, FAQs, material and tips)** for youth workers online and offline.

Regional projects

The [wienXtra-medienzentrum](#) presents the **results of an Austria-wide online survey and talks with young people and youth workers on young media behaviour** and media in youth work. The **report on digital media in Austrian youth work** ([Screenagers - Digitale Medien in der österreichischen Jugendarbeit](#)) provides insight into the results of the online survey as well as the case studies and focus group discussions. Screenagers International was a project funded by Erasmus+.

The blog [www.medienkompetenzia.wien](#) is a **virtual exchange platform for employees of Vienna's child and youth work**. They share their knowledge, their experiences and information about media work with children and adolescents. The blog is also available to an interested professional audience. The project is funded by the City of Vienna.

The Federal State Styria published the book 'youth work: analogue and digital - an interdisciplinary discussion' ([jugendarbeit: analog und digital - Versuch einer interdisziplinären Auseinandersetzung](#)).

The [Fachstelle NÖ](#) (Expert body Lower Austria) with its approximately 100 qualified employees is a **hub and competence centre for addiction work and sexual education** in Lower Austria. This institution offers **seminars addressing digital media in youth work**: Seminar on addiction-preventive access to digital media: At what point is internet usage problematic? What signals are there for a pathological internet use? What dangers can exist and how can they be handled? ([Seminar über den suchtpreventiven Zugang zu digitalen Medien: Wann liegt eine problematische Internetnutzung vor? Welche Signale gibt es für einen pathologischen Internetgebrauch? Welche Gefahren können bestehen und wie kann damit umgegangen werden?](#))

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

Definition of Youth Workers provided by the website "Youth Work in Austria" (Jugendarbeit in Österreich)

A professionally qualified person who works full-time or volunteer in extra-curricular child and youth work. In Austria, different names are used for persons working in child and youth work, such as: B. Specialist of open child and youth work (Fachkraft der Offenen Kinder- und Jugendarbeit), youth information worker (JugendinformationsarbeiterIn), youth worker (JugendarbeiterIn, JugendbetreuerIn), youth worker, youth leader (JugendleiterIn) or child and youth group leader (Kinder- und JugendgruppenleiterIn).

The qualifications required of youth workers differ according to the setting and nature of their respective jobs. The underlying competences are presented in the "Competence framework for child and youth work" ([Kompetenzrahmen für Kinder- und Jugendarbeit](#)). The competence framework for child and youth work systematically presents and describes at different levels how people act competently in their work in extracurricular child and youth work.

It covers both the open youth work as well as children's and youth's associations in Austria. The Competence Framework is a translation tool from qualifications of child and youth work to the [National Qualifications Framework](#) (NQF). The NQF makes qualifications visible and comparable by the European Qualifications Framework across Europe. For people in and outside the field, the framework makes clear what people, who are active in youth work, do and what quality standards they have. It stimulates the development of key competences which benefits children and young people and motivates the increase of quality of the range of education. People inside the working

field are encouraged to networking, co-operations, development and mutual recognition of education.

Nationwide network and website "Health-competent Youth Work" (Gesundheitskompetente Jugendarbeit)

The network "Health-competent Youth Work" was founded in 2016 by bOJA with the aim of networking, exchange and mutual learning. Professionals from the health and youth work area, from adjacent areas of activity such as child and youth welfare, the school, community work, in labour market policy projects and interested parties exchange in regular meetings on various youth-related health issues with different priorities.

The "Healthy Youth Work" ([Gesunde Jugendarbeit](#)) website, launched by bOJA in 2019, is a service platform that provides knowledge, good practice, a calendar of events and information on advanced networks and partner organisations for employees in extracurricular youth work.

Education, training and skills recognition

There is no statutory training for this profession.

All federal states have universities of applied sciences, where the study "social work" is offered on the level of a bachelor and/or master degree. At some there are special courses on youth social work.

[University of Applied Sciences Burgenland \(Fachhochschule Burgenland\)](#)

[University of Applied Sciences Carinthia \(Fachhochschule Kärnten\)](#)

[University of Applied Sciences St Pölten](#) (Lower Austria) ([Fachhochschule St. Pölten, Niederösterreich](#))

[University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria \(Fachhochschule Oberösterreich\)](#)

[University of Applied Sciences Salzburg \(Fachhochschule Salzburg\)](#)

[University of Applied Sciences Joanneum](#) (Styria) ([Fachhochschule Joanneum](#), Steiermark)

[MCI - Management Center Innsbruck](#), Tyrol ([MCI - Management Center Innsbruck](#), Tirol)

[University of Applied Sciences Vorarlberg \(Fachhochschule Vorarlberg\)](#)

[University of Applied Sciences Campus Wien \(Fachhochschule Campus Wien\)](#)

The necessary knowledge and skills are usually acquired in the context of short training, for example:

- ifp – Institute for Leisure Education ([ifp – Institut für Freizeit für Freizeitpädagogik](#)) (together with the youth leader school of the association wienXtra): "Basic Course Youth Work"; duration: 207 lessons.
- "[Alpenverein-Akademie](#)" of the Österreichischer Alpenverein (Austrian Alpine Association): "Basic Course: Experience Mountain"; duration: 52 lessons.
- "[Naturfreundejugend](#)" (nature friends youth) "KiJu-LeiterIN Alpin" (children and youth leader alpine); duration: 2 weekends.

Furthermore, the ifp offers specially developed courses for selected areas of youth work. In these courses important, new, current topics are dealt with intensively and comprehensively theoretically and practically for youth work.

Courses at a glance

- Basic course youth work ([Grundkurs Jugendarbeit](#))
- Advanced training youth work ([Aufbaulehrgang Jugendarbeit](#))
- Preparatory course ([Vorbereitungslehrgang](#))
- Short course pedagogy of play ([Kurzlehrgang Spielpädagogik](#))
- Violence prevention ([Gewaltprävention](#))
- Team leader in youth work ([Teamleitung in der Jugendarbeit](#))

In addition to these courses a symposium ([ifp- Fachtagung](#)) in youth work related topics takes place and an education programme ([Bildungsprogramm](#)) is offered.

The symposium of the open youth work ([bOJA-Fachtagung](#)) is a conference that takes place each year in a different federal state and on changing relevant topics related to youth work.

aufZAQ – Certified quality of non-formal education in youth work (aufZAQ – Zertifizierte Ausbildungsqualität für die Kinder – und Jugendarbeit)

“aufZAQ” is a certification of non-formal education and training courses for people active in youth work, provided by the Austrian Federal Chancellery, the Youth Departments of the Federal States of Austria and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano – South Tyrol. aufZAQ has been certifying the quality of trainings since 2003 and has thus been contributing actively to the recognition of non-formal education in the field of youth work.

aufZAQ developed the Competence Framework for Children and Youth Work. This competence model shows how people act competently in their work in children and youth work. It covers both the open youth work and children and youth work in youth organisations. The Competence Framework ([Kompetenzrahmen](#)) is a translation tool from qualifications of children and youth work to the [Austrian National Qualifications Framework](#) (NQF). In turn, the NQF makes qualifications visible and comparable through the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) across Europe. In particular, the competence framework is part of the aufZAQ certification.

Mobility of youth workers

Within the framework of "ERASMUS + Youth in Action" there is the possibility to attend various training and further education measures. The training calendar ([Trainingskalender](#)) can be found online.

ifp – Institute for Leisure Education ([ifp – Institut für Freizeit für Freizeitpädagogik](#)) also offers training and networking on an [international level](#). Expert networking in the area of youth work across the Vienna borders. Study excursion - Viennese experts continue their education, exchange ideas, get to know other approaches and perspectives, and continue discussions in Vienna. Presentation of Viennese youth work in an international context - at delegations and at conferences. Inter / national delegations will be welcomed and visit the Vienna Youth Facilities. Children and youth exchange activities are organised and carried out.

As boJA – the Centre of Competence for Open Youth work is also part of the poywe network (Professional Open Youth Work in Europe) and ECYC (European Confederation of Youthclubs), international exchange, study visits of professionals and youth meetings are possible for youth workers in open youth work.

The National Network of Youth Information Centres in Austria is part of the [ERYICA](#) Network and thus, training and events are provided for youth workers in youth information.

SHERYICA - series of good practice in youth information

The [Good Practice Booklet](#) is a collection of successful stories from the network in order to learn, inspire, generate and develop new projects and ideas.

The National Youth Council is an active member of the European Youth Forum and additionally provides [offers](#) for young people in youth work.

Youth work institutions provide additional exchange and e.g. job shadowing within and outside their networks.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

There is currently **no nationwide accreditation of non-formal skills** that young people develop in child and youth organisations and transfer to other areas of their life (e.g. pursuing a profession) towards a qualification within the system of formal education.

In order to achieve a **greater level of awareness of the value of skills obtained in an informal or non-formal environment** as a key addition to formal education, the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) is working with specialists in a targeted manner to develop measures. It thereby takes into account the [National Qualification Framework \(Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen, NQR\)](#), which is an instrument to transparently map qualifications from the Austrian education system in order to support their comparability and comprehensibility throughout Europe.

WIK:I ('What I can do through informal learning / 'Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen')

WIK:I is a **low-threshold model on making basic and key skills informally obtained** by young people and young adults **visible and recognised**. It's a flagship project of the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) and is carried out in cooperation with the Alliance of Austrian Educational Work ([Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke](#)) and the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichischer Jugendinfos](#), BÖJI).

Methods

WIK:I **enables young people to record and present their informally acquired competences**. The focus lies on informal learning among peers, in leisure time, in family, sports, voluntary work, hobbies, jobs and others. Qualified WIK:I portfolio guidance supports young people in **systematically recording their informal learning experiences**. Starting from collecting and describing personally significant activities ('What I do'), young people finally arrive at identifying and describing the competences they have acquired ('What I can do'), always keeping the link to concrete activities in mind ('I can do that because').

The WIK:I procedure is a **guided self-assessment** in which young people align their strengths and resources in a process of being empowered and stimulated to self-reflection. The work is orientation towards dialogue and group processes (peer learning) as well as biographical learning.

Benefits and results

The benefit of creating a portfolio for young people lies in making them aware of informally acquired competences and in gaining orientation for further education and career planning, but above all in empowering them to present their personal competences (for example in job interviews).

The **WIK:I competence portfolio for young people** is a folder containing the worksheets (including data sheets, checklists, questionnaires, posters) that were created during the workshop and during the participants' own work. It provides participants with a **competence profile** (naming and describing the competences), an **action plan** (indication of next steps, need for resources and support, timetable), and the competence description or **proof of competence** for job applications. The focus of the portfolio is **individually aligned with the respective goal** of its creation. The portfolio can be used as a **supplementary application document**.

aufZAQ: Certification for non-formal education courses

In Austria and South Tyrol, [aufZAQ](#) (word-play with the idiom 'to be on the ball') certifies non-formal education and training courses. 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](#) 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. aufZAQ is further detailed in [Chapter 10.4](#).

Skills

As part of the description of the [Principles and Goals of Children and Youth Work](#) the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) states: 'By **discovering their own abilities** as well as their limits, young people can develop their own perspectives on life. By **building relationships** – whether with other children/youth or to the children and youth workers – they **develop their ability to communicate and strengthen their social skills**. Being able to experience a variety of views and interests, different cultural orientations and religious beliefs creates a foundation for dealing with such differences in a reflective manner. This **strengthens the basis for solidarity**.

When **children and youth are actively involved in children and youth work institutions**, work on projects and take part in local decision-making processes, they can **experience their own potency and get a sense of themselves as being effectual in the public sector**. Seeing that their opinion counts and that anyone can contribute towards the success of a project is a fundamental of political participation and thus for shaping society.

Reflective learning becomes possible when children and youth discuss and reflect on their current experience and then transfer these experiences to their own living environment. In this way, **children and youth work facilitates learning experiences that are anchored in reality and that** – as opposed to formal learning settings – **are neither evaluated nor graded.**¹

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

The **Austrian National Network of Youth Information Centres** (Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos) runs the **Website "Youth Work in Austria"** ([Jugendarbeit in Österreich](#)) on behalf of the [Department of Family and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) (Bundeskanzleramt). The website presents the fields of action and structures of Austrian youth work, its achievements as well as its positive contributions. From the perspective of different stakeholders ([Department of Family and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), Provincial Youth Units ([Landesjugendreferate](#)), [Federal Youth Council](#), [Youth Information Centers](#), [Nationwide network of open youth work](#), [Austrian National Agency for Education and Internationalisation](#)), topics of out-of-school youth work are highlighted and good practice examples given. The Website also provides a comprehensive collection of empirically proven, substantiated effects of out-of-school youth work.

Additionally, the [Austrian Youth Portal \(Jugendportal\)](#) provides comprehensive information on anything regarding youth, including youth work.

Key initiatives

Austrian Youth Award (Österreichischer Jugendpreis)

Outstanding initiatives and projects of extracurricular youth work are honoured with the Austrian Youth Award.

In Austria, more than 160,000 qualified volunteers, together with thousands of full-time and part-time professionals, make great and valuable contributions to extracurricular child and youth work. An important goal of Austrian youth policy is to **make these achievements visible** and to strengthen the charitable involvement of young people. In cooperation with the Federal Youth Council, the Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work, the National Network of Youth Information Centres, the Austrian National Erasmus Agency 'Youth in Action', and the European Solidarity Corps, the [Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) honours the best projects of extracurricular youth works. In 2020, the awards were conferred for the fifth time. To promote understanding of the lifestyles of young people, in 2019 an award for "Journalistic Accomplishments in the Interest of Youth" was introduced. In 2020, the event was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The recognition is awarded in 5 categories.

Category "National Youth Work": Awarded are projects of open and associative youth work as well as youth information that are **dedicated to** one or more **fields of action of the Austrian Youth Strategy**: employment and education, participation and commitment, quality of life and togetherness, media and information.

Category "Digital Youth Work" (in 2020: "COVID-19: Digital Youth Work): In the field of "Digital Youth Work", projects by institutions of extracurricular child and youth work, which contribute to the **promotion and strengthening of media and information literacy**, are awarded. Awards in the field of action "Media and Information" go to projects that either use digital media and technology as a tool (e.g. online communication, online consulting) or perform an activity with its help (e.g. a "digital scavenger hunt"), or discuss digital media and technologies in the context of youth work (including "Fake News"). In 2020, innovative and creative initiatives and projects that were implemented in order to enable the continuation of youth work during the COVID-19 pandemic or to respond to the impacts of the crisis were awarded.

Category "Journalistic Accomplishments in the Interest of Youth": The prize is awarded to **authors whose editorial contributions address the lifeworld of young people** and present an understanding of their issues and concerns in a respectful manner to the general public. In addition to the journalistic "quality of craftsmanship", an important criterion is an independent (youth) view. All young people and professional journalists aged 14 to 30 are encouraged to submit their work.

Category "Your Projects (Eure Projekte)": Projects of young people, which were realised within the framework of the initiative "[Eure Projekte](#)" (Your Projects) of the Department of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery, are honoured. The initiative supports **young people in implementing their own ideas** and empowers them to become active themselves.

Category "European Initiatives": The award recognizes **cross-border youth work initiatives** funded under the Erasmus+: Youth in Action program and the European Solidarity Corps, which have stimulated coexistence in a united Europe and the mobility of young people.

Award "health-competent open youth work"

[bOJA](#) honours **youth centres and mobile youth work organisations as health-competent organisations**. The award process takes between three months and half a year. The award stages include gold, silver and bronze level. The respective municipality (municipality or city) is an important partner in the application and audit. The badge "health-competent youth centre/health-competent mobile youth work" is awarded for three years at a time.

In addition to the Funds Healthy Austria ([Fonds Gesundes Österreich](#)), in the period 2018-2020 the awards was funded by the [Federal Chancellery](#) and the Federation of Austrian Social Security Institutions ([Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger](#)).

Coronabusters

The [Coronabusters](#) (in German only) project **enables youths to play an active part in tackling the pandemic** and allows them to be listened to. In sharing their knowledge and experiences with their peers, they can **become personal messengers**. The conducted projects and elaborated messages are disseminated on different social media channels, making use of the shared hashtag [#zusammendiekurvekriegen](#) ('turning the corner together'). This shall **spread the projects and their outcomes** to as many Austrian youths as possible. With 'Coronabusters' young people in open youth work get the opportunity to develop ideas and make their own contributions in fighting the pandemic. All activities and measures are developed by young people for young people.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Reorientation of the youth strategy from 2019

As an ongoing process, the Austrian Youth Strategy is subject to continuous development. In order to strengthen the establishment of youth policy across sectors and to better take into account the realities of life of young people, the Austrian Youth Strategy will be expanded in terms of content during this legislative period.

Based on the fields of action ([Handlungsfelder](#)) of the youth strategy, youth goals are currently being developed and measures geared to these goals or newly developed.

The field of action "Media and Information" is explicitly addressing youth work:

Safe and competent use of opportunities

It is particularly important for youth policy to actively use the digitisation of our information society as an opportunity. In many ways, young people are at the forefront of digitisation and the acquisition of new technologies and media. Precisely for this reason and because of their phase of life, they are also exposed to special risks.

The Austrian Youth Strategy with the new field of action "Media and Information" places particular emphasis on all those measures aimed at strengthening the media literacy of adolescents, families, youth workers and other educational practitioners. These include strengthening information literacy and providing information that is relevant to youth and relevant to youth, especially in times of cyberbullying, hate speech and "fake news".

Continuous development of the Austrian Youth Strategy

The [Austrian Youth Strategy](#) ([Jugendstrategie](#)) is designed as an ongoing process and thus subject to continuous further development. As of 2020, the Austrian Federal Government has decided to continue the Youth Strategy. Based on the fields of action, youth goals were created. In a next step, measures are now aligned or newly developed. In 'Reality Checks', these youth goals

are reflected with young people and it is considered whether the youth goal contributes to the implementation of a European Youth Goal.

Media literacy and digitalisation

Particular attention is currently paid to the **field of action 'media and information'**, in the context of fake news, disinformation, and media literacy. Youth policy strives to **actively use digitalisation** as an opportunity. In many ways, young people are at the forefront of digitalisation and the acquisition of new technologies and media. Precisely for this reason and because of their phase of life, they are also exposed to special risks. The Austrian Youth Strategy places particular emphasis on measures aimed at **strengthening the media literacy of adolescents, families, youth workers and other educational practitioners**. These include strengthening information literacy and providing information that is relevant to youth, especially in times of cyberbullying, hate speech and 'fake news'.

Ongoing debates

COVID-19 and Youth Work

In March 2020, Austrian Youth Centers and Youth Work spaces responded quickly and comprehensively to the pandemic. Most of them **moved the majority of their operations to digital services** from the first lockdown onwards. Since autumn 2020, an exemption for personal counselling and information sessions allows limited work on site.

In line with an emerging public debate, the nationwide network Open Youth Work' ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#), bOJA) in February 2021 published a paper ([Positionspapier von bOJA Feb '21: 1 Jahr Corona Krise - Potentiale der Offenen Jugendarbeit in der Pandemie](#)) calling for an **increased consideration of young people's concerns in the pandemic response**. The ongoing pandemic and its continuous contact restrictions have heavily affected young people, some of which are reaching their psychological limits. An increase of depression, withdrawal behaviour and anxiety disorders has been noted among young people. Furthermore, educational deficits may only become apparent in the aftermath of the pandemic and the worsening youth unemployment provides a scary outlook for some young people. **In times of crisis, young people need outside social contacts more than ever** - whether exchanges with their peers, stable and sustainable relationships with adults and the opportunity to make use of youth work. Therefore, calls for further opening steps (under strict conditions such as regular testing, use of FFP2 masks, smaller groups, outdoor work) in open youth work have been made. Moreover, an increased consideration of youth perspectives and interests in the pandemic and a better equipment in terms of digital resources is advocated for.

GLOSSARY

Admission requirements admission to technical and vocational schools and colleges

The admission is conditional upon the successful completion of grade 8 (or 9) for graduates of the lower level of secondary academic schools and of a positive assessment in the subjects German, mathematics and modern foreign language for graduates of lower secondary schools respectively.

Apprenticeship Leave Exam

The exam is divided into a practical and theoretical part and consists of a written and an oral exam at the end of apprenticeship training and is held before a committee of employee and employer representatives.

Full-time practitioner

A paid employee with appropriate qualifications who works in children and youth work on the basis of a job description.

Head of the provincial youth department

The term has different meanings. It can refer to:

- the respective member of the provincial government in his/her function as political head of the provincial youth department

- the function at the administrative level
- a person in charge of youth issues in an organisation

Higher Education Entrance Exam

This exam provides people not holding standard entry qualifications for universities with access to the relevant course of studies.

Informal learning

Learning that is not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support and does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional, but in most cases it is non-intentional. It can take place in daily activities related to work, family or leisure ([European Commission 2001a, p. 33](#)).

Marginal employment ([geringfügige Beschäftigung](#))

Employments are considered marginal employments, if the payment to which the employee is entitled does not exceed the € 438.05 per month (2018).

Marginal employment threshold

The maximum amount of payment to be considered as marginal employed.

Media literacy

"The ability to employ all kinds of media for human communication and action repertoire in a way that actively explores the world." Media literacy means being able to make use of the individual (new and old) media, knowing their applications, critically examining them, being aware of the dangers, properly handling the dangers, as well as actively contributing towards their design. ([Baacke 2015](#))

Mobile youth work

In addition to centre-based youth work, the second general form of open children and youth work that is community- or district-oriented and geared towards often socially and economically disadvantaged young people who spend their free time in public spaces.

Non-formal learning

Learning that is at least partially structured in terms of learning objectives and does not automatically lead to certification. It is intentional from the learner's perspective ([European Commission 2001a, p. 35](#)). As a provider of non-formal and informal learning, children and youth work allows self-determined and self-organised learning and competence development without success or outcome pressure – as opposed to the formal education system. Non-formal learning is characterised by the fact that it is, in principle, freely accessible, voluntary, tailored to the students, largely shaped by them, and that it takes place in flexible framework conditions.

Open youth work

A form of youth work (in addition to the children and youth work in youth organisations and youth information centres) that is a pedagogical field of action, which offers – in the extracurricular context – extremely broad, voluntary services with low-threshold access for girls and boys, irrespective of their social, educational, religious and cultural backgrounds. The settings of open children and youth work are youth clubs, youth centres, and outreach and mobile youth work in public spaces. Professionals from various (socio-)pedagogical fields are active in these settings. Important success factors of open children and youth work are its interdisciplinary nature and the use of skills relating to living environments.

Personal dependence

For the employee this is referring to placement in the organisation of the company, being subject to directives of the employer, control, disciplinary responsibility and personal service obligation.

"Reifeprüfung"- and TVE-Exam

The "Reifeprüfung" and the TVE-exam at technical and vocational colleges: double qualification including standard entry qualifications for university and vocational qualifications necessary for the exercise of white-collar jobs.

"Reifeprüfung"-Exam (Matura)

The final exam at secondary academic schools which provides students with standard entry qualifications for university.

TVE-Exam (technical and vocational education exam)

This exam provides graduates of the dual apprenticeship system, of at least three years, lasting technical and vocational schools, of schools for auxiliary nursing and of schools for the training of para-medical staff with standard entry qualifications for university.

Voluntary work

Voluntary work can be formal within institutions, e.g. associations, or informal on a private basis, e.g. neighbourhood assistance. Voluntary work is a central pillar of youth work and is carried out by young people and adults in all fields of action.

Youth

The term used for young people in the juvenile phase, which begins with the onset of puberty and ends at a no longer universally definable point in time (i.e. the transition to adulthood) ([Schröder 2013, p. 111](#)). The Austrian legal system does not have a uniform age definition or terminology for youth. According to the Federal Act regulating the Representation of Youth Concerns (Federal Youth Representation Act) and the Federal Act on the Promotion of Education and Upbringing outside Schools and the Promotion of Youth Work (Federal Youth Promotion Act), all young people up to the age of 30 are considered youth.

Youth check

In January 2013 the Youth Check (effect-oriented impact assessment) went into effect. The law stipulates that all new legislative and regulatory proposals be evaluated for the potential consequences they could have for children, young people and young adults. This instrument makes it easier for youth organisations, in particular the National Youth Council, to become involved in the legislative process.

Youth Information Centres

They offer young people a first point of contact for their questions. The "one-stop shop" principle helps to prevent stigma and enhances the low-threshold nature of the service. All questions are permissible and are either answered directly or passed on to the appropriate experts. The umbrella organisation of youth information centres is BÖJI (Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos).

Youth protection

Legal regulations and educational principles that protect young people from threats to their physical, mental and spiritual development and promote their willingness and ability to take responsibility for themselves. Austria does not have a nationwide uniform regulation of youth protection. The law of the respective federal state in which the children and young people live always applies.

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