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Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

COUNTRY SHEET

ON YOUTH POLICY

IN AUSTRIA



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1. Context and principles of national youth policy

1.1 Context of national youth policy

Due to the federal structure of the state and the historical development the competencies in youth policy are divided up between the central organ of the state, the federal government, and the Bundesländer, the provinces. Youth policy is to a large extent the task of the nine countries. At the federal level, the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth is primarily responsible for youth policy, with particular emphasis on the upbringing of young people outside the schools sector. The tasks which have to be fulfilled in this area are:

- Legislature 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 health care, new media, participation, sects, youth information, training youth leaders etc.

But on the federal level many laws and actions have a big impact on young people – starting from education or employment policy. A recent study proved that only three federal laws are officially “youth laws” but more than 60 laws on the federal level target young people directly and a lot more have direct impact on young people. These youth laws are on youth promotion, on youth participation and on welfare.

Currently the main topics in policy for young people are education, employment, health, participation and involvement as well as mobility.

The impact of the crisis starting 2008 for young people in Austria was severely but a lot less drastic than in other European countries – youth unemployment rates are still below 10%. But especially the transition from education to the labour market is one of the main challenges for policy concerning young people. Especially the reform of the education system is seen as the most important task for the future since more and more young people are seen as not apt to enter the labour market after leaving school. These efforts are shared by youth policy makers but mainly in defining how youth work can support the education system.

Prevention work and health promotion were and still are important issues for youth policy on national level as well as on the level of the nine *Bundesländer*.

1.2. Principles of national youth policy

As described on the homepage of the Federal ministry in charge of youth, there is no exact definition of youth policy in Austria. Youth policy is described by its objectives, intentions and paths. Youth policy is intended to help young people to cope with the various demands made upon them in this phase of their lives. During their search for answers in the process of socialisation, young people need various forms of support. Youth policy should not prescribe, but set targets, moderate and promote.

Youth policy offers support, but also supports institutions and initiatives which are important points of reference for young people.

Youth policy targets all young people up to the age of 29, where the main target group is between 14 and 26. Each federal state may define its own main target groups but as a common ground young people with fewer opportunities are promoted.

Beside the Federal Ministry in charge for youth (now the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth the *Landesjugendreferate* of the *Bundesländer* are the main actors of youth policy.

Youth promotion and youth work outside the school sector is primarily the responsibility of the provinces. The *Landesjugendreferate* located in the provincial governments have the task of implementing the youth policy measures of the province in youth work outside the schools sector. 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 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 camp sites, attending public

theatre or film performances, visiting public houses, consuming alcohol and nicotine, hitchhiking etc.

Young people are involved by youth councils on regional and national level.

2. Statistics on young people

The total number of young people aged 15 to 29 in Austria in the year 2010 was 1.559.318 which equals 18.9 % of the global population in Austria.

The total number of women in this age bracket is 779.564 and that of men is 779.754.

Age	Women	Men	Total
15 years	47.033	49.564	96.597
16 years	48.432	50.974	99.406
17 years	48.787	52.086	100.873
18 years	49.957	52.522	102.479
19 years	49.888	52.001	101.889
20 years	50.593	51.950	102.543
21 years	51.027	52.796	103.823
22 years	51.367	52.012	103.379
23 years	52.065	52.898	104.963
24 years	52.547	53.731	106.278
25 years	54.346	54.471	108.817
26 years	54.694	54.943	109.637
27 years	56.902	56.739	113.641
28 years	56.876	56.989	113.865
29 years	55.050	56.078	111.128
	779.564	779.754	1.559.318

Source of Data: Statistics Austria

3. Actors and Structures

3.1 Public authorities

3.1.1 National public authorities:

The Ministry in charge of youth is the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (*Österreichisches Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend, BMWFJ*)

Minister Dr. Reinhold Mitterlehner was inaugurated on December, 2nd 2008.

The duration of the mandate is 5 years.

Youth Department in the Ministry

At a national level the youth department consist of units responsible for national youth policy, for youth welfare and for international youth policy. The tasks to be fulfilled are: Legislation and execution in the area of youth; principle legislation in the area of youth welfare; investigational function for law drafts; UN arrangements on the rights of children; international concerns including the YOUTH in ACTION programme; financial support and sponsoring of youth organisations, youth initiatives, associations and youth projects; youth information; initialising and promoting youth research; initialising, promoting and treatment of thematic main focuses as violence against children, health promotion and prevention, new media, participation, sects, youth information, education of youth workers, etc.

Number of people who work in this ministry in the youth department: 15 in the unit for national youth policy and 6 in the unit for international youth and family policy, 8 in the unit for youth welfare.

Director responsible for Youth and Family in the Ministry is Dr. Ingrid Nemeč

The contact persons in the youth department competent for European youth policy are Elisabeth Ziegler (national youth policy) Sigrid Pilz (international family and youth policy) and Martina Staffe (youth welfare)

Other national public bodies who are directly involved in youth policies

Other Ministries that deal with youth issues:

- Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture
- Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research
- Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management

Offices

Federal Ombudsperson on Children and Youth: The task of this institution is to represent the children and youth rights and interests.

Parliament commission in charge of youth issues

National council committee for family affairs

Chair: Mrs. Ridi Maria Steibl

Bills on children, youth and family are discussed by the committee for family affairs and finally decided on in the plenary sessions of the parliament.

3.1.2 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field

Due to the federal structure of Austria youth affairs are to a large extent in the competence of the federal states (*Bundesländer*). In all 9 federal Governments exists a department for youth affairs and a department for youth welfare.

The departments for youth affairs are in charge of extracurricular youth work and for federal youth policy. Their main areas of responsibility are:

Lobbying initiatives in the area of child and youth work.

Promotion and support of child and youth institutions, especially those of open youth work. The latter include youth centres, mobile youth work and regional youth information services as well as regional and communal initiatives.

Services for children and young people and for child and youth work.

Training and further training courses for youth work staff.

Public relations.

The departments of youth welfare are in charge of child protection, child care, fostering, adoptions and stationary care and for supporting to families at meeting their tasks in care and upbringing.

Despite their different areas of competence, the Federal Government and the federal states (*Bundesländer*) seek to co-ordinate their measures and activities, which are voted on during the *Landesjugendreferentenkonferenz* (Provincial Youth Counsellors meeting) and which produce joint initiatives. Examples for such initiatives are the study group on participation (*ARGE Partizipation*), the study group for youth information (*ARGE Jugendinformation*), or the introductory course for youth leaders.

3.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field

Also on district and municipality level departments in charge of youth exist but no common competences are defined. Local public authorities are in charge of and finance some extracurricular local youth work structures like youth clubs, or centres. In many cases these structures are in close connection to social work. On local level also a variety of institutionalised or not institutionalised forms of participation for young people in public life are provided.

3.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)

The Office of Youth Affairs is the authority in charge of public Youth Welfare. It is a department of the District Commission or of the municipal authorities, with its own statute. Beside these public offices for youth welfare some NGOs deal with welfare for young people as non-public actors.

The office of the ombudspersons for children and youth is established following the Federal law on youth welfare and the regional law on youth welfare. Thus their main tasks are counselling minors and their custodians in all matters relating to the position of minors and the duties of custodians and assisting in cases of disagreement about care and upbringing.

3.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field

3.3.1 Youth Councils

The Austrian National Youth Council, the so-called Bundesjugendvertretung (BJV), is the representative body for youth organisations in Austria. The BJV is the umbrella organisation for youth organisations giving young people a voice. Now 43 youth organisations are members in the BJV.

BJV provides young people with opportunities to have their voices heard. BJV aims to represent and support the interests of youth organisations; to act on issues that impact young people, to represent youth interests in various national external bodies. The BJV wants to provide a voice for young people and to help young people to be more involved in decisions that affect their lives by fostering young people's participation in society and civic life and promoting equality among young people. The BJV represents Austrian youth organisations on multi-national, European and international level, and develops, coordinates and implements cross-national and international youth actions and supports the member organisations on international level.

On the regional level (in the federal states) youth councils may exist that consult and advise the regional governments and the youth departments. It is up to the federal states if the consultation is compulsory or not. Such youth councils exist in Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Burgenland, Vienna and Styria. The councils consist of representatives of youth organisations. On a local level youth councils exist in various cities and towns and even districts of cities.

3.3.2 Youth NGOs

Almost all relevant youth organisations are members of the BJV.

3.4 National network(s) for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organisations, NGOs)?

- The study group on participation (*ARGE Partizipation*) is a joint initiative of the State and the federal states dealing with measures for youth participation.
- The study group on youth information (*ARGE Jugendinformation*) is an association of the regional youth information offices.
- The study group on open youth work (*ARGE Offene Jugendarbeit*) works on the establishment of an umbrella organisation for the open youth work in Austria where also representatives of the *Bundesländer* are involved.
- The study group for the European Youth Pact is an inter-ministerial working group on the implementation of the Youth Pact in Austria
- The strategy group on national youth policy discusses the development of youth policy in Austria and the development of a National Youth Plan.
- The working group on Youth gives an overview over developments on youth and youth policy in Austria. To this network the EKCYP correspondent is attached in that way that he reports on the newest developments on the European level and receives information. Furthermore the members of this network function as resource persons for the national correspondent to the EKCYP.

4. Legislation

Articles of the constitution concerning youth explicitly

The Austrian constitution holds for all Austrian citizens – also for young people and for youth. The term “Youth” is only mentioned in article 12 where it is declared that it is a federal concern to issue general laws on youth (welfare) and it falls under the jurisdiction of the Austrian federal states to implement laws and execute them.

National legislation on youth

Federal Law on Representation of Youth (NR: GP XXI IA 270/A AB 351 S. 46. BR: 6253 and 6254 AB 6264 S. 670.): In this law from 2001 the representation of the concerns of youth (=young people up to 30) in Austria observe the policy makers on national level is granted. The BJV (=representing organisation) advises the government in youth concerning affairs. Federal law on Supportive Measures for the Youth (NR: GP XXI IA 269/A AB 350 S. 46. BR: 6252 AB 6263 S. 670.): Objective of this law is the support and promotion of measures of out of school youth education, especially the promotion of the development of the mental, spiritual, physiological, social, political and ethical competencies of children and youth. The impact of this law is that youth organisations can apply for financial support for projects that provide measures for the above mentioned development.

Federal law on youth welfare (BGBL 161/1989 latest changed 2007 NR XXIII RV 87 AB 103 S. 25. BR: AB 7710 S. 746) defines child care as well as mothering protection issues.

The Federal law on the Change of the Rights to Vote (32/BNR (XXIII GP)) provides the right for young people that reached the 16th year of age to vote on local, regional, national and European level.

Regional and local legislation on youth

In the nine federal states of Austria exist federal laws on youth concerning youth protection, youth promotion, representation of the concerns of the youth and rights of youth.

The different laws for youth in Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Carinthia, Styria and Burgenland can be found in the [www](#).

Also the federal laws on youth welfare do exist in the 9 *Bundesländer* of Austria, defining and structuring the competences of the federal state, the districts and municipalities on child and youth care, adoption, fostering, stationary care and representation of rights and interests of children and youth through the ombudsperson.

5. National Policy Programmes on youth

National programmes on youth.

Following the Federal law on Supportive Measures for the Youth promotion of youth organisations and youth work is guaranteed in Austria. Youth organisations receive support according to the number of their members and for special projects.

On the national level no programmes comparable to YOUTH in ACTION exist but following the Federal law of support of youth and the Youth Action Plan, focal points of the support of projects in different fields are established:

Participation: under this focal point projects with high involvement of young people are supported

Prevention: Promotion of projects of out of school youth work that deal with the reasons for consumption of legal drugs or/and prevent the usage of drugs or/and reduce the harm of drug consumption.

Intercultural dialogue and equal opportunities as well as quality assurance in youth work are further main topics.

Information and Counselling on employment and labour market will be a main topic of youth policy for the year 2011. This information should be provided in schools as well as in youth work.

Parallel to the European focus voluntary activities will be an important issue for youth policy as well.

Action plans i.e. official strategies

YAP: the National Action Plan for the Rights of Children and Youth passed the National Council of Austria 2004. It gives direction and guidelines for a future child and youth policy and describes to achieve the defined aims. YAP follows the Convention of the Rights of Children and Youth in the main aims of protection, provision and participation.

The *Demokratie-Initiative* (initiative for democracy) aims for the raising of young people's awareness towards democracy and institutionalised active citizenship. This initiative is carried by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research.

6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth

Following the report on funding 2009 (*Bundesvoranschlag* 2010) of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance 9.542.000 Euro were spent on projects and organisations concerning youth promotion (here only the expenditures of the unit on national youth policy can be mentioned, an over all calculation of all federal spending on youth issues is not possible).

On regional and local level the expenditures can not be calculated, but in all 9 federal countries special budgets for youth exist. These regional budgets together are far more than the National Budget on youth.

7. European Dimension of youth policy

7.1 Council of Europe.

Through the Partial Agreement on the Youth Card with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) it is possible for young Austrians to take part in the Programme of the Partial Agreement (cross-border exchange, training programmes and projects).

7.2 European Union.

7.2.1 Implementation of the Youth in Action programme

The new national agency for the YOUTH IN ACTION programme, the Interkulturelle Zentrum (Bacherplatz 10, 1050 Wien, Austria, tel +43 1 586 75 44; fax +43 1 586 75 44), is in charge of the implementation of YOUTH IN ACTION and is supported on regional level due to the federal structure of Austria by regional institutions.

Other EU programmes implemented in an important way for youth purposes

For Socrates, Erasmus and Leonardo

there are National Agencies:

Sokrates and Erasmus National Agency Österreich ÖAD - Österreichischer Austauschdienst, Alserstraße 4/1/3/8 A- 1090 Wien;

LEONARDO DA VINCI National Agency, Nationalagentur Lebenslanges Lernen (Lifelong learning); Schreyvogelgasse 2, A-1010 Wien, Tel: +43/1/534 08-0, Fax: +43/1/534 08-20

Eurodesk: jugendinfo.cc, Lilienbrunnngasse 18/2/41 A- 1020 Wien; Tel: +43(0)699/12005183, Fax: +43/1/216 48 44 55

ERYICA: jugendinfo.cc, Lilienbrunnngasse 18/2/41 A- 1020 Wien; Tel: +43(0)699/12005183, Fax: +43/1/216 48 44 55

8. Further sources of information on youth policy in Austria

Publications:

BMWFJ (Hrsg.): 6. Bericht zur Lage der Jugend in Österreich (6th Report on the situation of youth in Austria), Wien 2011

Jugendmonitor (download: <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Jugend/Forschung/Seiten/Jugendmonitor.aspx>)

Newsletter of various homepages (e.g.):

- www.boja.at
- www.jugendinfo.cc
- www.jugendvertretung.at

research (e.g.):

www.jugendkultur.at

statistics:

www.statistik.at

homepages of the Ministry and the *Landesjugendreferate*:

www.bmwfj.gv.at – Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth

Burgenland: www.ljr.at

Carinthia: www.jugend.ktn.gv.at

Lower Austria: <http://www.noe.gv.at/Gesellschaft-Soziales/Jugend.html>

Upper Austria: www.ooe-jugend.at

Salzburg: www.salzburg.gv.at/themen/gv/landesjugendreferat

Styria: www.jugendreferat.steiermark.at

Tyrol: www.tirol.gv.at/themen/gesellschaft-und-soziales/jugend/jugendreferat

Vorarlberg: www.vorarlberg.at/jugend

Wien: www.bildungjugend.wien.at