Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union

Country Report
Austria
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Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU

Country report: Austria

Author: Helen Frenzel
1 Introduction: tradition, definitions and concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition for youth work</td>
<td>Not a single definition. Several definitions co-exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal definition for youth work</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate length of youth work tradition</td>
<td>Since early 20th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate length of formal / professional youth work tradition</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of relative importance of youth work in supporting young people</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main sectors/fields of formal / professional / statutory youth work</td>
<td>Information, leisure time, informal and non-formal learning, orientation and counselling, culture, creativity participation, health, sports, inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main sectors / fields of non-formal / third sector led youth work</td>
<td>Informal and non-formal learning, leisure time, culture, creativity participation, volunteering, international exchange, health, sports, inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1 Definitions

In Austria there is no single definition for youth work. Instead several definitions (presented below) emerged over time in legal texts and based on existing practice. Youth work is generally understood as out of school youth work focusing on leisure activities using informal and non-formal learning.

The European definition of youth work and the understanding of youth work in Austria are very similar. Both definitions place at the centre of attention that activities should be organised with, by and for young people highlighting a voluntary participation. Youth work is based on informal and out-of school learning helping youth to gain social competences in all areas of societal life. The aim is to reach social inclusion of all young people and promote participation of the young in societal decision making processes. Nevertheless, while youth work in a broad sense is a term that places the personal development at the centre, the Austrian definitions differentiate between formal professional youth work - open youth work based on a scientific concept - and non-formal youth work as carried out by youth associations.

Finally, the various definitions demonstrate that youth work is not just about providing for all kinds of leisure activities or education, the approach in Austria is that youth work provides activities and a space to help young people to fully develop and participate with their talents in society. It recognises youth as a value for society in general.

Open youth work

Open youth work is understood as a scientific based method for non-formal education. The three quality principles of open youth work are:

- Flexibility
- Process oriented
Continuity

If these principles are not respected one cannot talk about open youth work. In its settings and contents it provides young people a framework to develop themselves as responsible persons and transfer knowledge in their environment. The main action principles are the following:

- Openness – being open to all young people without differentiation
- Voluntary – activities are based on voluntary participation of young people
- Non-political and non-confessional
- Living environment oriented – address young people according to their individual background
- Demand oriented – specific needs and hopes of the individual are taken into account
- Resource oriented – all talents of an individual are taken to be a potential and talent for the society and recognised.

Professional relationship building is seen as a method to which a professional youth worker contributes. Open youth work is mainly carried out in youth centres that are formally subsidised by regional public funds. Open youth work (youth centres) is mainly present in bigger cities. In rural areas open youth work is rather perceived as a space (rooms for ex.) where youth dispose of resources to organise themselves their own activities.

Associative youth work

Associative youth work is defined as extracurricular, out of school activity with emphasis on leisure time activities, youth information and prevention. Associations work in a participatory manner and need volunteers. They provide a space to be together among peers interested in the mission of the association and have a clear structural organisation. They are generally not focussed on the individual but on a common cause defined by the mission of the association.

Associative youth work is the oldest and the most common form of youth work in Austria, as associations are present in rural and urban areas. Associative youth work depends less on public funding.

Youth policy

Youth policies have as the main objective to help shape living situations and perspectives of young people in order to facilitate the passage from youth to adulthood. Central to youth policies is that they aim to protect children and youth and stimulate their development to become autonomous personalities to enable them to make use of their creative and productive potential for societal commitment. Youth protection policies refer in practice to age-specific regulations relating to the access to certain places, the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes, and the use of arcade / gambling machines, cinema, and theatre, as well as to the control of respect of children and youth rights.

Enacting youth protection policies is the work of the Land youth offices part of the general administration.

Youth welfare policies

Youth welfare policies are closely connected to youth protection policies and they support education of children and youth in the context of their family. Other tasks of youth welfare are to provide for youth homes for those that are in difficulty and cannot stay longer in their family; preventive information work about drugs for example; leisure activities for young people that have experienced violence, and
leisure activities for young people with disabilities. Youth welfare work addresses more those young people that are more at risk in some problem areas and are therefore also target groups for secondary prevention. Youth welfare would also be in charge of young school drops outs that are underage.¹

Youth welfare support is provided mainly by the public youth welfare office also through the means of street work reaching out to youth that cannot be reached through the structures of open youth work or associative youth work.

1.2 Tradition and development of youth work

The development of youth work can be characterised by three phases describe below².

The first phase dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. At this time, the family was the central element in society and in charge for out-of-school education. General education and acquisition of knowledge was mainly centred in schools. Youth work in an associative form just started and was seen as an addition to what family could provide. In the early 20th century especially middle class families in bigger cities were suffering from a lack of traditional and a cultural offer. So youth organisation centred their activities on traditional values such as spending time in nature – forming of scouts; and catholic values – catholic youth. These initiatives were based on volunteer help of adults and were free of charge for youth.

The second phase started in the mid-20th century. School gained more importance and the school trajectory gets longer. School’s main task is to pass on knowledge rather than focussing on personal development of students. Associative youth work did not develop further in this phase, activities focus more on younger children to an age of 14, while activities for older youth decrease, as well as the interest decreased in this form of youth work. The phase is characterised by the development of forms of open youth work and the setting up of youth centres. In the 60s youth wants an own space and turns its back to rules for more autonomy. A youth culture starts to develop, young people focus on music and sports. Youth centres are organised by youth for youth, there are no professionals involved yet.

During the third phase the offer of youth activities in youth centres and youth organisation increases. In the late 70s social work and social pedagogy discover youth as a field of action. This is the time when youth centres start to work with professionals. Political support and investment was made at the time in order to “end autonomy” in youth clubs steered only by youth. It was seen as a measure for order. The concept was pedagogic guided animation and participation of youth.

The last ten years could be seen as well as a fourth phase which is still on-going and which is characterised by an increase of the importance of open youth work.³ One of the reasons is that the free living space for the young became very much limited due to an increase of consumer obligation and a large offer of leisure activities that need to be paid for by the families. The recent history has seen as well an increase of international youth work, international cultural exchange and youth development aid with developing countries. There is also a tendency in professional youth work to leave youth centres and to focus on mobile youth work, to go directly to young people

¹ For more information on this definition: http://www.bmwfw.gv.at/Familie/Jugendwohlfahrt/Seiten/Jugendwohlfahrtsrecht.aspx; paper by Wagner, Oswald, Jugendwohlfahrt, University of Graz, 2008.
² This information has been largely gained by the interview with Helix Consulting Austria and their supporting paper “History of youth work” (http://www.helixaustria.com/uploads/media/Geschichte_der_Jugendarbeit.pdf)
where they would spend time. Work in youth associations is still characterised by mainly volunteer work, only few professionals are working in this sector. The concept behind this lies in their way of organisation. Youth associations aim to build up membership from the start so that older youth will help as leader later. The work is focussed on strong relationships between members over a long-term period. Open youth work to the contrary is based on the quality of relationships on a shorter term period. Open youth work can work successfully if space oriented gained knowledge is used operationally. This means that professionals will analyse the local space in which they operate in, knowing political actors, economic structure, social specialities and problems. According to this knowledge they will prepare activities to reach out to youth and help them orient themselves in society at large. In this sense, open youth work provides a lot of counselling and guidance services to support the individual in his personal development; support in education and leisure time educational activities. Nevertheless, open youth work also needs the participation and volunteering of young people to stem activities especially in rural areas.

Both, associative youth work and open youth work are focussed on personal development, transmission of values and social competences but offering a different range of activities. Since the late 70s, it became increasingly recognised that youth work may need to be gender sensitive offering activities that focus only at boys or only girls. Also Land and national funds state that funded activities should be gender specific or provide for gender equality. Gender mainstreaming has become an important aspect especially in open youth work.

From a policy point of view a recent paradigm change can be noted. While in the past the policy task was to provide for youth welfare and youth protection (somewhat deficit driven approach). Recently policies adopted a more positive approach recognising youth as a special focus group having their own expectations from the society and the State. The reason for this can be mainly found in the demographic development and the increase of the number of senior citizens.

1.3 The current situation: the delivery of formal and non-formal youth work

If formal youth work represents those bodies that provide activities employing professionals and that are financed largely by regional public funds than formal delivery of youth work is provided by the youth centres, youth cafes, youth counselling agents and not for profit organisations from open youth work sector. These are often directly subsidised by governmental funds and under the control of municipalities. Youth centres play a central role in the delivery of open youth work mainly in urban areas. They offer a broad range of activities for young people such as cultural education, specific projects that focus on environment, science or media. They organise sport activities and art courses. Youth centres intend to be foremost a place, open for all young people regardless of their social origin, enrich their life worlds through various activities and provide a space where they can meet without consumption pressures.

Youth information services under the responsibility of regional youth policy departments are another type of formal youth work. The idea is to provide all young people an open access to all kinds of information of interest to them. Young people can come to the youth information office or visit regional websites. A national website has been developed together with 120 young persons and all regional youth

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4 An interesting example can be found in Vienna, where youth centres have created teams of mobile youth workers providing for activities in the city’s parks for more information: http://www.wien.gv.at/freizeit/bildungjugend/jugend/park.html
Information services are bundled in a federal association that is further funded by the federal state.

In addition, there is the Intercultural Centre of Austria which is an independent organisation that coordinates intercultural exchanges, produces pedagogical material on intercultural learning and promotes international youth work. It is furthermore the agency that delivers the Youth in Action programme, selecting and supervising the implementation of projects. It should however be kept in mind that there are other independent NGOs that focus on specific aspects of youth work.

If non-formal youth work is defined by volunteer work and third sector actors than the main delivery agents of non-formal youth work are the Austrian youth associations. These associations are quite diverse in their mission: different religious groups (such as Catholics, Protestants, Jewish and Muslim), the youth organisations of different political parties or of political orientations and youth groups of social partners, some focus on young people coming from rural areas or with interest in environment protection and scouts. Some of these organisations employ professional youth workers and pedagogues or other professions; some provide internal training and some help young people with responsibility in their organisation to take specific formal training.

Youth welfare is a specialised state service and is an official task of family policy in the public domain. Youth welfare is addressed to parents, children and youth. It provides support with education and family welfare through individual tailored advice. The offices delivering these services are part of a network which also involves youth associations and the open youth work sector. It should function as a one stop shop. The basic principle is the need for a coordinated and multifaceted approach to deliver effective work with young people in difficulty. One of the most important fields of action in youth work is the prevention of social problems. Also the support to young people to help them gain more confidence and self-control can be seen as preventive work. In this case almost nine out of ten associations also contribute to prevention work.

Finally, another important youth institution is the advocacy office for children and youth rights which was set up by law since 2000. It was conceived to monitor the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of children. This institution contributes to the preventive youth work activities and youth welfare protection. These offices also deliver awareness raising campaigns and workshops such as participation projects and mainstreaming youth rights.

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5 See more details about the centre: [http://www.iz.or.at/start.asp?ID=4143&b=1602](http://www.iz.or.at/start.asp?ID=4143&b=1602)
6 See for a list of the main representative youth organisation: [http://www.jugendvertretung.at/ueber-uns/mitgliedsorganisationen/mitgliedsorganisationen.html](http://www.jugendvertretung.at/ueber-uns/mitgliedsorganisationen/mitgliedsorganisationen.html)
8 For further information: [http://www.kija.at/index.php/kija#adressen](http://www.kija.at/index.php/kija#adressen)
2 Legislative context and governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative framework for youth work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of regulation for youth work</td>
<td>National / Regional / Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body(ies) with a responsibility for governing youth work</td>
<td>National Ministry Economy, Family and Youth, National Ministry Schools (and other Ministries), The National Body of Youth Representation, National Body of Open Youth Work, Intercultural Centre Austria, State Youth Administrations, Local Youth Referees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.1 Legal background

Austria has ‘youth law’/legislation that specifically refers to youth issues/laws containing a section addressing the needs and/or rights of young people. These are foreseen under the: Youth Protection Act: federal framework regulation and 9 different youth protection acts in the 9 states; Federal Youth Promotion Act and Guidelines for the subsidisation of extracurricular education and youth work; and, Federal Youth Representation Act.

On 1 January 2001, the Federal Youth Promotion Act⁹ came into effect. The aim of this law is the financial support of measures for the education and personal development of young people and of youth work outside the schools sector, particularly to promote the development of the intellectual, psychological, physical, social, political, religious and ethnic competencies of children and young people. The act sets a federal framework for public financing while the Land level enacts specific youth work plans and distributes funds to actors of youth work.

The Austrian legal definitions can be found in the following laws:

- Jugendschutzgesetz - Youth Protection Act: federal framework regulation and 9 different youth protection acts in the 9 states - the state has to ensure that prevention work is carried out to sensitise youth for ex. on alcohol use or drugs. Therefore, funds are provided to carry out projects in this area.
- Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz - Federal Youth Promotion Act and Guidelines for the subsidisation of extracurricular youth education and youth work (2000/2001)¹⁰; this act defines the conditions under which associations and other organisations can benefit from national public funding.

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Bundes-Jugendvertretungsgesetz - Federal Youth Representation Act (2000/2001)\(^1\)\(^1\)\(^1\); this law recognises the National Youth Council as a social partner.

Bundes-Jugendwohlfahrtsgesetz - Federal Youth Welfare Law (1989)\(^1\)\(^2\) – provides for protection of children against all forms of violence, promotes the appropriate development and development of children and adolescents, reintegration of children and youth in their families, strengthening the education power of families and supporting parents in the care and education.

2.2 Governance

The national Government and the federal States share responsibilities for youth policy.

At a national level, the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth coordinates and supervises various working committees. The youth section within this Ministry is rather small: 9 in the unit for national youth policy and 5 in the unit for international youth and family policy, 7 in the unit for youth welfare. Concurrently, policies referring to youth are implemented by all Federal Ministries in line with their own campaigns and initiatives. There is no coordination point or single governing body in place yet, but created in the near future. The federal level is responsible for the funding instrument of out-of-school youth work. The Federal Ministry is obliged by legislation, under the Federal Act for the mainstreaming of youth interests into all policy areas. It also has the responsibility to 'inform about the development of diverse and open youth policies'. It provides the Parliament with a report on the situation of young people in Austria every five years (for each legislative period). In addition to these youth reports, a monitoring survey is conducted three or four times a year with around 800 young people. The federal level has more a coordinating and steering role due to the federal structure of Austria.

The youth departments of Austria’s nine federal states have the primary responsibility for funding youth work in the ‘core’ areas of youth policy, for example: extracurricular youth work; educational and vocational training institutions and, the work of youth associations and public youth work, such as sports, educational and cultural clubs. Youth referees for local communities are nominated to coordinate youth activities of associations and groups at local level. The referees function as advisor for municipal policy makers and as a person of trust for young people in the area. They inform about federal state, national and EU subsidies and are the connection between the different entities in youth work. Furthermore eight federal states (out of nine) have a youth council which represents youth interests in policy making at federal level. In the youth council sit representatives of all youth organisations in the federal state. The youth council status is recognised by legislation (except for one – Tirol). The youth laws on federal level determine that the participation of young people in policy making should be ensured.

The federal states subsidise youth work in different areas:

- Youth centres and areas where young people can gather.
- Preventive youth work activities addressing at-risk youth.\(^1\)\(^3\)

There is the national youth council that should be consulted by all ministries for policies that impact on youth and youth interests as determined by the youth representation law which entered into force since 2001. All representative youth

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\(^1\) See: BGBl. I Nr. 127/2000 and BGBl. I Nr. 136/2001


\(^3\) All of the information of this paragraph is taken from the 6th Youth report of the Government to the Parliament, 2011, pp.382 -389.
organisation on national level are part of the national youth council. The national youth council represents 52 children and youth organisations. It represents the political, social, economic and cultural interests of young people and voices their concerns and demands towards policy and decision-makers at all levels, the media and the public in Austria. There is the national Network of Open Youth Work which represents open youth work from each Land. It is the competency centre for all information and programmes that relates to this type of youth work. They are in general consulted for important youth relevant legislation.

Youth information providers have an important role at national and federal level. They collect and link to all organisations and institutions that are relevant in youth work.

An overall amount for 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.

3 Policy and programme framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>General level of political commitment to the issue of youth work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dedicated policy / strategy on youth work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes on the development of youth work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net impact of economic crisis on funding for youth work</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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3.1 Policy commitment

Austria recently renewed its national youth strategy for the period 2012-2020. The objective of this strategy is to follow a process structured in different phases conducting to a systematisation of youth policies, youth work initiatives and projects to further develop and strengthen youth policies in Austria. This process should contribute to identify best practices and weaknesses of youth policies and actions in place and determine future possible actions. The youth strategy targets young people aged from 14-24. The strategy also intends to reemphasise youth issues as one of the policy priorities as recently there has been a shift in focus from children and young people to senior citizens which resulted in lower commitment to youth issues.

Young people will be actively involved in the implementation of the strategy through their representative bodies of the national youth council, as well as formal youth information centres and youth work bodies like the platform for open youth work. The strategy is based on eight fields of actions as set out under the EU youth strategy and combines the federal states action plans for youth.

The youth strategy includes a model project, which started recently. The expected outcome of this model project is to raise awareness among all political actors on youth work and youth policies as a transversal issue to which they can actively contribute. It also aims to create a coordination centre for youth policies. This would work at an inter-ministerial level to streamline all issues and positive aspects of youth work. The three axes of the project are:

For a list of national youth organisations represented in the youth council see: http://jugendvertretung.at/ueber-uns/mitgliedsorganisationen/mitgliedsorganisationen.html

Website of the organisation: http://www.boja.at/
Knowledge: the background for this aim is that administration is not always aware of projects and programmes and the functions and structures of different youth work stakeholders, thereof the aim is to create a knowledge data base which is accessible to all relevant actors. The data base should also contain evaluations of youth projects and best practice examples.

Transparency: all of youth work activities, benefits and political youth strategic measures should be made known to a wider public.

Room for new designs: this final phase would then allow to create new initiatives and help new actors to contribute to an innovative youth strategy.

The youth strategy is a stepping stone to streamline youth into all policy areas. Youth legislation and policies are part of many different ministries at national level and shared with state level. In the preparation phase of the youth strategy, the Ministry for Youth found that in Austria regional action plans had not specifically mentioned youth actions. National level policies other than education rarely referred to youth (only health and environmental awareness policies mentioned youth). Until 2011 national policies did not take youth into account as an interest group for policies other than those designated at youth. Only recently three federal states (Voralberg, Wien, Steiermark) have done a mapping of youth activities and started to evaluate policies and actions in youth work. These three states can be seen as well as the most active in the field of youth work from a strategic, politically coordinated and structurally funded point of view. It has been remarked in an interview that youth work is only to a very limited extent subject of research in Austria. There used to be a national funded youth research institute however it has been closed down in 2009 in its 50st year of existence. There is a private research institution focussing more on research of youth culture.

The interviews for this study show that youth representatives consider that youth is often neglected in other policy areas and even though the national youth council is recognised by law as a social partner to be consulted, it is often a struggle to make the voice of young people heard at the national level.

3.2 Policies and programmes to develop youth work

The general development and financing of non-formal educational youth work falls under the responsibility of the federal states.

The objectives of the Landesjugendreferate (federal state youth departments) are as follows:

- Maintain and strengthen the impact of youth work organisation.
- Enhance and improve open youth work and support social preventive youth work (more leisure time-pedagogy).
- Enhance voluntary work and participation.
- Professionalisation of youth work.
- Financing of training and additional qualification courses for youth workers.
- Continuous improvement of information distribution and guidance.
- Introduce more co-decision and participation of young people in decisions making at regional, federal and national level.
- Awareness raising measures of youth issues and needs in public decision bodies and media.

Institute für Jugendkulturforschung, www.jugendkultur.at
Since 2011 the national body for open youth work determined in accordance with the national Ministry for Economy and Youth a quality framework within which projects and initiatives of open youth work should be delivered. Open youth work should reflect the following:

- The needs of young people
- The needs of youth work professionals to deliver quality work
- The needs of society at large

Certain framework conditions need to be guaranteed in order for youth work to be successful. These conditions are:

- Stable financial and HR resources.
- Good cooperation between the administrations and actors delivering youth work projects.
- High qualification and professionalisation standards of youth workers.
- Longevity of key projects allowing youth workers to establish good contacts to young people providing them persistence, continuity and stability in their relations.17

In general youth politics are based on two different tools. The Jugendmonitor18 is a monitor (questionnaire addressed to approximately 800 young persons) done several times each year.

The national ministry and federal states youth administrations meet in different working groups to coordinate priorities. A strong priority at national level is to empower young people to actively participate in society and especially in youth policies. In 1991, a working group on youth participation was established to further develop concepts of participation and provide training for multipliers and pedagogues in youth work. All federal states youth administration referees, the ministry for youth and a representative of the national youth council are part of this working group.

The general youth policy objectives are reflected in the national subsidy law for youth work. It states that financial aid should be deployed for out-of-school youth work and youth education in particular for the development of intellectual, psychical, physical, social, political, religious and ethical competences of children and youth. For the timeframe 2012-2014 the Federal Ministry for Economy and Youth determined three funding priorities:

- Occupational orientation: the emphasis of projects should attract young people to choose an occupation within the natural sciences, such as mathematic, informatics, physics, chemistry and technical occupations.
- Respectfully living together, violence prevention and integration: projects should enable a dialogue with young people from different religious and societal background. Violence prevention projects could be scientific studies that research the origin and causes for violent action.
- Participation: projects should reflect on processes on how to best make youth participate in societal responsibilities by involving young people and make use of social media and networks.

The budget for the National Youth Fund was set for 2012 at 8.6 million euro. Half of this budget was to be attributed to the national representative youth organisations that are part of the youth council as structural support, while other parts were provided for the federal youth information service and national youth work projects.

### Table 3.1  Budget National Youth Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget (million, euro)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6,314,805,98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6,354,000,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6,548,215,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6,278,928,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6,414,301,83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Federal Ministry for the Economy, Family and Youth

The 6th Youth Report 2011 states that 43% of youth work is publicly funded and provides the below table on expenses.

### Table 3.2  Youth work budget of the 9 states in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount in EUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth departments</td>
<td>53,793,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth information</td>
<td>2,464,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administered youth organisations</td>
<td>5,130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Budget Youth Work</td>
<td>61,567,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source 6th Youth Report 2011

The budget coming from the 9 states is additional to the National Youth Fund.

The funds from the European programme Youth in Action can be seen as an important source for additional funding for youth projects in Austria. The budget available for Austria in 2012 was 3.5m Euro. Nevertheless, an interviewee remarked that the administration costs for small organisations of open youth work in rural areas are quite high to apply for these funds. Yet, the Agency distributing the funds in Austria ensures that funding for small scale projects in rural areas are prioritised. The interview partners confirmed that the Youth in Action programme provides funds for smaller scale projects especially from youth associations that do not receive federal funding.

The economic crisis did not seem to have a particular financial impact. The interviewees did not particularly know about specific budget cuts related to the current crisis. It seems that more structural financial help could be provided in different rural areas but this problem is not a consequence of the crisis and existed already before. The Youth Representation has in a recent press conference claimed that governments do make cuts in budgets directed at young people, such as stricter regulated criterion to get study aids for school and university, cuts or no adjustment to inflation for subsidies for families in need. While the budget of the National Youth Fund remained stable, the challenges for youth, especially pressures from the labour markets increased, creating more work for youth associations and open youth work centres which had to be performed under the same budget.¹⁹

¹⁹ Information was taken from the press statement of the Youth Representation: http://www.oeh.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/unterlagen_pressegespraech.pdf
The recent strong political focus by the European Union on early school leaving did incite Austrian policy makers to pay higher attention and start the youth coaching initiative (School Ministry). This initiative aims to work as early as possible, preferably while still at school with hard to reach young people, or students likely to not complete a school degree and to provide for occupational orientation.

4 Youth workers: training, status, population and profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum qualifications standards for youth workers</td>
<td>Yes (youth welfare only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth worker as a recognised profession / occupation</td>
<td>No (only for the civil service in youth welfare)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of formal, dedicated qualifications for youth workers</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education background of the majority of youth workers</td>
<td>Social worker (Applied Sciences Degree), Psychologist, Social Scientists, Pedagogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of youth workers</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend in the overall number of youth workers</td>
<td>Increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Training and qualifications

There are regulated minimum qualifications for youth welfare workers in the civil service. For this type of profession each federal state has its own laws and requirements. For example in the federal state Upper Austria the qualification can be obtained in specific training modules provided by recognised VET providers, consisting of at least 1200 units of instruction of theory and 1,200 hours of practice. The training is divided into at least two years of training. Concerning contents the following theories and subjects are included:

- General basics: education (45 lessons); medical and special pedagogy (45 lessons); legal and institutional basics (70 lessons), Sociology and Social Policy (25 lessons); Psychology and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (105 units); Medical / First Aid / Food (55 sessions).
- Methodology of Social pedagogy (270 units).
- Social pedagogic action fields (195 units).
- Social and Personal Skills: self-awareness (75 units); Supervision (30 lessons), other issues (165 units).
- Practical reflection (45 lessons).21

The profession of social worker or youth worker is not regulated as such. There are many different types of social workers and related professions. Each has its own specific training courses and curriculum. It is only the university, VET provider, schools that have to get a state certification in order to deliver a degree. This means that a number of criterions concerning the quality of teaching are regulated.

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20 Information from http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/ba/schulabbruch.xml
21 Socialprofessions law of Upper Austria, Sozialberufegesetz 2006.
Various degrees for social worker are available: it can be a university degree, university degree of applied sciences, vocational training, additional qualifications for sociologists, psychologists, social management professionals etc. It seems that it depends on the degree of responsibility in a position and type of occupation which determines the necessary type of degree. In general, social workers or social pedagogues follow the degree provided by universities of applied sciences. The studies require a higher secondary diploma. A Bachelor or Master degree is provided at the end of studies. It was highlighted in an interview with an expert that social work studies do not pay significant attention on youth and the courses do not provide enough insights in the field of youth work. Knowledge is gained primarily during training within a youth association or centre.

Open youth work employs mainly professional social workers. There are however differences between federal states. While in Vienna mainly qualified social workers work in open youth centres in Upper Austria many open youth centres are run by volunteers. The federal representation body for open youth work has recently in 2011 set a quality framework for youth work in youth centres, specifically referring to the use of professional youth workers. The role of the youth worker is to be an expert guide, offer monitoring, guidance, solutions and options to the young persons. He / she is an authentic adult and should be considered as a "role model".

The youth associations, in particular those with a religious background have developed specific internal trainings that all youth guides and leaders need to follow prior taking up any responsibilities. Some of them have developed a certificate for the training that they provide detailing the quality and learning standards of the training.

It can be concluded that youth work aims to integrate a professional approach also in the non-formal sector of youth work.

4.2 Status of youth worker profession

As said above youth worker is not a recognised profession in Austria. Professionals in youth work have generally an official recognition as social worker, psychologist, a specific additional qualification for youth work or social work, vocational training diploma in youth or social work, pedagogue or teachers. Depending on the projects also other professions can be found in youth work such as artists, sport coaches or musicians.

There are recognised professional social work bodies in Austria such as: http://boeshp.bplaced.net/boes/aktuell.php - Berufsverband Österreich SozialpädagogInnen; http://www.sozialarbeit.at Österreich Berufsverband SozialarbeiterInnen. These are national private associations with regional offices. However there is no qualification accreditation body for social work in Austria.

The reason why there is no accreditation body in Austria is due to the very recent professionalisation in the sector of youth work.

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22 The public employment service has a glossary on professions. General information was taken from the glossary website: http://www.berufslexikon.at/pdf/pdf.php?id=2082&berufstyp=bhs
23 Boja, Qualität in der Offenen Jugendarbeit in Österreich, June 2011.
24 Further explanations about the types of internal training can be found in a document published by the Austrian Youth Representation: http://www.jugendvertretung.at/asset/bjv/28/3/download_001.pdf
25 This enumeration represents the professions currently employed in the largest organisation of youth centres in Vienna.
4.3 Youth worker population

There are some data provided regarding the number of professionals employed in youth work though they are rather based on Land level studies or indicative data provided by the youth associations. There is no database kept by the Land ministries to inform about the number of youth workers employed in youth associations and youth centres.

Interviews confirmed a trend towards more professionalisation of youth work activities and increase of employed youth workers has been recognised by experts.

The current state of employment of personnel in open youth centres is not very clear as different indicative data is available. In the federal state Voralberg 58% of 36 open youth centres found that their HR situation was only partially satisfactory. In those 36 open youth work centres work in total 74 persons sharing 44.5 fulltime positions. This means that only 1.3 fulltime position is available on average per centre. However the situation in 2003 was that in 20 youth centres less than one person was employed. These figures show that most of the workers are employed part-time. The 6th Youth Report 2011 states that 5% of Austrian youth centres do not have paid personnel while this is the case for 35% youth organisations. In total there are 7.300 youth workers in 203 establishments (open youth centres) employed but only 53% of the establishments are working only with paid personnel. This would indicate that personnel working in open youth centres are mixed – voluntary and paid personnel. In 2009 a national study on open youth work was carried out, mailing to around 356 establishments though only 60 replied. The responses of the youth centres reflect the study that was carried out in the federal state Voralberg, saying that most of the establishments employ 2 persons (27% of the 60 responding establishments).

There are 35 national youth organisations available for national funding. There are more youth organisations that have not applied for national funding however they are not part of the statistics. It should be kept in mind that the 35 associations are present at national level however each has its federal state sub-associations. These 35 youth organisation represent in total 1.5m members (double membership is possible and hence this figure exaggerates the total population reached). The table below shows the number of leaders working in these 35 youth organisations. In general it can be assumed that they have followed a specific training however they are not professional youth workers. It is not known if they are employed or voluntary personnel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth leaders</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41.713</td>
<td>55.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33.265</td>
<td>44.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74.978</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Number of Youth leaders in organisations receiving national funding, 2010

Source: Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth website


27 Unfortunately the report does not state the source for this number.

4.4 Profile of youth workers

Open youth work centres generally work with professionals, mainly social workers and social pedagogues. It depends however on projects and activities that are offered by the youth centres and accordingly selected personnel. For special counselling or individual coaching of young people there are special youth councillor qualifications. Also regarding professional orientation there is the profession of occupational councillor. It is rather rare that youth centres work with volunteers as the concept of open youth work demands for a professional implementation. However there can be quite strong differences between urban and rural areas as in very rural areas youth centres can be smaller and might be run by volunteers. The profile of these volunteers is not well known.

Associative youth work is build up mainly by the work of volunteers. These are to a large extent young people themselves working together with young adults having already more experience. Many youth organisation are run by young people for young people. Nevertheless especially in youth organisation with religious background or political party youth groups do work with professionals. Also smaller project based associations could temporarily work with social workers.

A study on youth work based on the state Styria\textsuperscript{29} (south east Austria) concludes that only 18 out of 38 organisation employed professionals but only in 8 associations 2 social workers were employed on a full-time basis while in the other organisation professionals were employed on a punctual basis. Furthermore the study reports that distribution of subsidies was often made dependant on the size of organisations. This means smaller structures will depend highly on volunteers to animate activities.

Yet, youth organisations have a long tradition to employ workers to guarantee a continuity of activities. It cannot be said however to what extent they were professionals or what kind of professionals because profession of social worker mainly developed in mid of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

A key challenge for the youth work sector is to provide sustainable employment conditions for professional youth workers. Only few youth centres and organisations can provide a position that is adequately paid and to offer long-term employment. Most of the activities in youth work are financed for a limited time period making planning of resources and personnel difficult.

The structural support for youth clubs (finances, rooms other means) varies depending on local, city and regional administration. For example the city of Vienna provides long standing strong structural support to youth centres. However, youth work is different in rural areas in other Austrian Lander where much less structures exist to support youth work. Youth clubs play a central role in connecting young people with other youth work providers depending what kind of support is needed.

5 The role and value of youth work

5.1 Education and training

Open youth work through youth clubs and youth associations play an important role in informal and non-formal education.

\textsuperscript{29} Landesjugendreferat Steiermark, Jugendarbeit: freiwillig, engagiert, professionell –Versuch einer interdisziplinären Auseinandersetzung, 2012, Verlag der Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik Steiermark

Youth clubs engage in various activities that are open to all young people:

- Sports and adventure pedagogy
- Learning about and working with media
- Youth café
- Co-determination and participation in the organisation of youth centres
- Subject oriented projects
- Counselling and case management for job search
- Local community activities
- Campaign activities, participation in local politics

Youth associations contribute to informal and non-formal learning equally as open youth centres. Their role in providing social competencies that are gained from activities or leadership in projects is recognised. Many youth associations’ projects focus on environment and energy. This shows that youth is highly interested in this topic and willing to actively participate in these activities. Some examples:

- Rural Youth – Project Energise me\(^30\) – aims to provide general information on sustainable energy provision, how to save energy and how to create energy, including workshops, competitions and energising cooking.
- Friends of Nature – Environmental camps – these are action weeks when young people can participate to protect nature and help in eco-tourism projects.\(^31\) Participation in the promotion work of these projects can also lead to a certificate from the Ministry of Life recognising gained competencies.
- Nature protection youth – eco-islands\(^32\) – children and youth donate their pocket money to help the organisation buy land to create biospheres for animals and nature.
- Scouts – provide many different activities outdoor and try to sensitise children and youth for their environment.

Regarding at risk students or young NEETs, youth associations work preventive or open youth centres can play a role in the early warning network or help in motivating young NEETs to find employment. A network of different actors has been put in place, mostly public actors such as the youth welfare offices and public employment service or occupational counselling and coaching services to cooperate directly with schools in various projects. Examples:

- Youth Coaching: an initiative by the national Ministry for Education and the National Welfare Office. The Network of Occupational Search Assistance implements the initiative.\(^33\) The objective of youth coaching is to help difficult to reach young people and at-risk young drop outs in professional orientation. The youth coach will in a first step provide further information. In a second step, helps with reaching a decision and orientation towards a specific occupational profile. In a third stage, if needed, the young person can be accompanied for one year to develop an individual occupational development plan. The young person will be intensively accompanied in his/her decision making. The project started in January 2012 in Vienna and Styria and will be extended in the coming years. The providers of youth coaching are not for profit companies that sometimes create jobs that are publicly subsidised allowing only for a small compensation of the

\(^{30}\) Website to the project: [http://www.landjugend.at/?id=2500%2C2734952%2C%2C](http://www.landjugend.at/?id=2500%2C2734952%2C%2C)

\(^{31}\) Website for the initiative: [http://www.naturfreundejugend.at/](http://www.naturfreundejugend.at/)

\(^{32}\) Website of the initiative: [http://www.oenj.at/naturschutz/grundstuecke/](http://www.oenj.at/naturschutz/grundstuecke/)

\(^{33}\) For further information: [http://www.neba.at/jugendcoaching/warum.html](http://www.neba.at/jugendcoaching/warum.html)
workers; or for ex the Caritas, the catholic not for profit organisation for social work.

- GenerationLearning\textsuperscript{34} – a project initiated by the city of Salzburg. It aims to engage senior citizens as mentors for students in difficulties at school. The mentor will work at least 2 hours per week with the student and help him/her with homework. In general the association Einstieg provides many initiatives for young NEETs and youth in difficulty to find work, provide out of school learning and reach a qualification.

- Assistance for schools with difficult or at risk-students is provided through social pedagogic professionals from a variety of providers. The Austrian ministry for education ran a pilot project early last year with different partners in all nine federal states.\textsuperscript{35} These partners are often independent NGOs providing social assistance. Schools work closely together with youth welfare offices and the child and youth advocacy offices. An example is the youth welfare office Upper Austria – SuSa project –set up a network of counselling offices (in social assistance offices) and send out social workers from the welfare offices in schools in order to better cooperate with schools to support especially those young people that are disadvantaged as early as possible.

In Austria non formal education and learning is not validated in a formal way. Nevertheless it could depend on the project and initiative, for example if through coaching a young person did a traineeship or participated in an accompanied European volunteer service year then this is recognised as training. Participating in the health sector for the Red Cross, in the volunteer fire-fighter service or the Alps outdoor guides can also be formally recognised as professional experience. In Styria a validation initiative “Ehrenwertvoll”\textsuperscript{36} came into place in 2011 in order to recognise gained competencies in volunteer work. A certificate for youth work training and qualification was initiated in Tirol to promote quality of youth work in youth centres and organisations.\textsuperscript{37} The organisation for rural youth started a project onTOP which aims to provide a certificate to their volunteers having participated in more than 25 hours personal development during one season.\textsuperscript{38}

5.2 Employment and entrepreneurship

Youth centres and organisations such as the Catholic Youth can in some projects and labs provide for specific skills that can be useful for a future employment. Sometimes centres could establish contacts or help in CV and motivation letter writing. Youth centres can provide as well for specific occupational skills in this regard two examples:

- Spacelab urbain – youth centre in Vienna\textsuperscript{39}, provides an integrative approach for young NEETs who wish to work in one of their four projects (creative lab, working in parks, environmental lab, media lab). They are led to acquire occupational competencies. In addition the centre provides

\begin{itemize}
  \item For further information on the initiative http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/pwi/pa/schulsozialarbeit.xml
  \item For further information: http://www.ehrenwertvoll.at
  \item For further information: http://www.tirol.gv.at/themen/gesellschaft-und-soziales/jugend/jugendreferat/aufzaq/
  \item Website to the initiative: http://www.landjugend.at/?id=2500,2735160
  \item For further information: http://www.spacelab.cc/
\end{itemize}
clearing coaching to set up a competency profile of the young person and help with occupational orientation.

- Furthermore a project called “Job Ahoi” can be mentioned – an initiative of a youth centre in the state of Vorarlberg, city of Dornbirn\textsuperscript{40}, the aim was to provide additional job qualifications in a “social enterprise”. The young people were able to produce products in the sector of textile and wood manufacturing. All participants earned a minimum wage and they could sell their products.

In general it is more of a supporting work that is provided in motivating the young person. Projects to mention here come from the Youth Muslim organisation – Fatima and Mustafa – two projects one for young Muslim women and one for young Muslim men to help them gain decisive soft skills and empowerment to find a job.\textsuperscript{41} Also youth organisations of political parties, trade unions or within a specific political framework and orientation provide leadership skills in their activities.

Even though youth work can contribute to entrepreneurial and employment orientation and training, in Austria, it is mainly the public employment service that provides for assistance for job search and occupational information and orientation. Furthermore, the Chambers of Commerce provide companies and young people guidance to find the right vocational training position. The Austrian Ministry of Labour initiated the project Active Youth in 2011 focusing on bringing young NEETs into the public sector employment such as police, fire fighters and elderly care. The Ministry subsidises as well projects helping young people without degree to be able to pass again a vocational training degree or to be employed in a specific subsidised employment in the services industry or not for profit companies to help young people without training to gain professional experience.

The Chamber of Commerce also includes a sub-organisation called Young Chamber of Commerce directed at young entrepreneurs. The Young Chamber in Vienna also runs an academy providing training courses to young people aiming to become young entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{42} The courses are given by professional trainers.

5.3 Health and well-being

In the area of health and well-being, Austrian youth organisations and formal youth work providers focus their activities mainly on prevention of addiction, extremisms, violence and promotion of sports. It should be noted that there is an inter-ministerial group that coordinates a framework policy on “health and well-being in school”\textsuperscript{43}.

Preventive Action Addiction

Austria has a special working group on youth addiction prevention.\textsuperscript{44} This working group includes the Land youth departments, youth welfare organisation representatives and specific institutes. Each federal state nominated one organisation that acts on addiction prevention. The group’s objective is to develop prevention programmes and products that can be used in all Austrian states and to build up a network with all actors concerned.

\textsuperscript{40} For further information: http://www.ojad.at/ojad/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=24
\textsuperscript{41} Website to the initiative: http://www.mjoe.at/projekte/mustafa/ ; http://www.mjoe.at/projekte/fatima/
\textsuperscript{42} For further information: http://akademie.jwwien.at/
\textsuperscript{43} For further information: http://www.gesundeschule.at/
\textsuperscript{44} Website of the working group: http://www.suchtvorbeugung.net/
One example could be the Institute of addiction prevention of Upper Austria. They provide a wide range of activities such as campaigns, projects in schools, individual advice or workshops. One activity is run by and with young people called “Barfuss” - a bar that can be rented for parties but where no alcohol is served. The concept is to teach young people to create exotic juice drinks.

**Healthy Food Education**

Youth centres provide punctual workshops especially for girls on healthy food and nutrition. Another research project was organised in the state of Voralberg which tried to identify how to make health and well-being actions more attractive for youth. It was accompanied by a research team who worked closely with youth organisations and youth centres.

**Sports**

Sports associations provide all kinds of activities for youth. They are the main sport activity provider. Youth centres in cities such as Vienna, also try to provide for concepts and sport activities that include all groups of young people in a local area, including maintenance activities of public sport spaces. The organisation “young friends of nature” provide many courses and outdoor projects for youth and children. It is young people that organise outdoor camps, skiing courses or hiking courses for other youngsters. The concept is to acquire social competencies through outdoor education and experimental outdoor pedagogy.

### 5.4 Participation

Austria emphasises efforts to increase participation of youth in local, regional and national societal decision making. When lowering the voting age for youth to 16 years (in vigour since 2007), each Land started a variety of projects concerning political education. There is a national working group on participation including all levels of youth public administration and ministries. This working group exists since 1991 and functions as an expert group accompanying certain projects and providing for quality and evaluation standards in participation projects.

There are many examples either in relation to a specific project such as the creation of a youth centre or youth sports spaces; on-going participation like the open door day of federal youth ministries; or in relation to parliamentary work through simulation and youth parliament projects.

- **Youth Codetermination Initiative Vienna** – organisation of local district youth parliament implemented by local associations, schools and youth centres. The youth parlaments allow young people to get an idea of the parliamentary decision making process and to actively make their voices heart in areas that concern young people.
- **Youth State Parliament Salzburg** – met four times as of end 2012 and its objective is to provide youth a possibility to directly petition the state parliament. In 2012 youth parliament petitioned for better integration and

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45 Website of the Institute: [http://www.praevention.at/seiten/index.php/nav.3/view.15/level.2/](http://www.praevention.at/seiten/index.php/nav.3/view.15/level.2/)

46 Information received from Interview with Youth Centres Vienna.

47 Website to the report and the project: [http://www.allsimgrueana.at/projekt](http://www.allsimgrueana.at/projekt)

48 Website of the youth organisation: [http://www.naturfreundejugend.at/](http://www.naturfreundejugend.at/)


50 Website of the initiative: [http://www.mitbestimmung-wien.at/parlamente.html](http://www.mitbestimmung-wien.at/parlamente.html)

ending all kinds of discriminations. Similar initiatives exist in the state Styria and also on national level.

- Vorarlberg Initiative Invo\textsuperscript{52} – coordination agency that helps local communities to implement youth participation. It also implements other projects related to health, politics and intergenerational dialogue.

### 5.5 Voluntary activities / volunteering

One of the biggest volunteering youth actions in Austria is a project called 72hours\textsuperscript{53} hosted by the Caritas and young Catholics. During three days 5000 young people organised in groups in local areas around Austria need to work on specific projects to show solidarity. Groups can either propose a project beforehand or be surprised by an action that the organiser proposes to the group. Projects can include renovation actions in social facilities, work with disabled, charity or spend the days with asylum seekers. This initiative receives high attention. The 2012 edition (6\textsuperscript{th} edition) was accompanied by television and other media.\textsuperscript{54}

Another important national project is the voluntary year in social work establishments – a project addressing youth in their age from 17 to 26 years. The young work nine to ten month in a social work project or with a carrier being only given a small living contribution and social security. The work is accompanied by training and supervision of professionals. Young people that wish to work later in the social work area gain valuable insights into different areas of work. It can help young people to orient themselves professionally.\textsuperscript{55}

### 5.6 Social inclusion

Activities in this area generally focus on inclusion of young migrants, young people with disability or special educative needs.

Examples:

- “Together we are Austria”\textsuperscript{56} is an action that started in 2012 by the Ministry for Integration implemented in schools, youth organisations and companies. The objective is to better integrate people with a migration background. It uses ambassadors for integration. These ambassadors are migrants holding good work positions. The organisation for rural youth is involved in this initiative. They wish to sensitize their members to help integrate young migrants or with a migrant background into their organisation.

- Open youth centre Klagenfurt – Together we are St. Ruprecht\textsuperscript{57} – an awareness raising and marketing action for a township in Klagenfurt that is known for a high number of migrant inhabitants and associated by the local population with high criminality. Young people and professionals from the youth centre created posters – taking pictures of personalities of the townships and telling their stories.

\textsuperscript{52} Website of the agency: \url{http://www.invo.at/ueber-invo}
\textsuperscript{53} Website of the initiative: \url{http://www.72h.at/site/home}
\textsuperscript{54} Young Catholics office has internal documentation and evaluations available.
\textsuperscript{55} There is an association that organises the admission of the young to the programme and the general co-ordination. The association was created by the Catholic youth organisations in Austria and other Christian associations. Website of the association: \url{http://www.fsj.at/}
\textsuperscript{56} Website of the initiative: \url{http://www.zusammen-oesterreich.at/}
\textsuperscript{57} This example was given as a best practice example by the national representation of Open youth work on its website: \url{http://www.boja.at/index.php/gute-projektideen/konzepte-diversitaet/587-plakataktion-wir-sind-st-ruprecht.html#.UL91M65i1I0}
Social inclusion is however mainly promoted by the Youth welfare offices taking care of the following⁵⁸:

- Children and Youth Protection house – every municipality, city, commune has it and provides especially mothers and her children protection from sexual abuse or violence.
- Street workers – are employed by the youth welfare office, providing socio-psychological help to young people either living on the street or coming from disadvantaged families.
- Residences – are run to provide for a temporary or permanent home for homeless youth, these residences employ professionals such as socio-psychological, socio-educational personnel to provide guidance.
- Counselling services for families, children and youth providing all kinds of socio-psychological help, as well as educational guidance for parents.
- Leisure Camps – are organised in the summer for children and youth from disadvantage families that do not have enough money to go on vacation.

Furthermore there are the children and youth advocacy offices that provide information and guidance on children and youth rights. There is an office in each federal state running different kinds of projects. Here some examples:

- The office in Vienna initiated a project called: Gemma’s an – it provides voluntary mentors (adults) to youth that finds themselves in a difficult situation or coming from disadvantaged families.⁵⁹ A similar project is organised by the office in Upper Austria.
- The office in Styria has a yearly prize “Trau Di” for organisations that help youth and children to develop themselves according their needs. The gala for the prize is now well known and transmitted on regional television.⁶⁰
- Most offices organise school workshops on rights of children and youth, and violence prevention providing mediation competencies.

5.7 Youth and the world

Almost all youth organisations are part of an international counterpart and organise exchanges in and outside the EU.

- Rural Youth – International Farmers Youth Exchange – the organisation facilitates exchange between young farmers, students in farming vocational training to get an international experience.⁶¹
- The Catholic Youth is also one of the biggest youth organisations focussing many of its activities on fair development policies, by organising workshops, projects and exchanges for youth and in cooperation with youth centres in Austria.⁶² They organise a working group Enchada in order to better network and promote the activities. Youth exchanges to El Salvador and India are organised.
- The Youth Red Cross – Summer camp for cultural exchange – camp is organised for two weeks to learn intercultural competencies. Young people

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⁵⁸ This information was taken from the different youth welfare office websites in the nine federal states.
⁵⁹ Further information on this project can be found under the following link: http://www.zeitraum.org/de/gemmasanpatinnenprojekt
⁶⁰ Further information on the prize: http://www.kinderanwalt.at/_lcms_/__00176/TrauDi-2011.htm?VER=121206120119&LANG=ger&MID=208
⁶¹ Website of the initiative: http://www.landjugend.at/?id=2500%2C21036481%2C
⁶² Website showing all activities: http://katholische-jugend.at/entwicklungspolitik/
⁶³ Website of the project: http://www.jugendrotkreuz.at/oesterreich/was-wir-tun/friedens-und-konfliktkultur/internationales-freundschaftscamp
from Red Cross around the world come to Austria to make a unique experience. At the end of the two weeks an event in the regional city is organised to share opinions and explain ideas to the local community.

The EU Youth in Action and other EU exchange programmes do provide for an important source of funding for many exchanges that are organised by youth organisations. An important NGO for cultural and youth exchange is the Intercultural Centre. They coordinate partnerships for schools and teacher exchanges mainly in central and south-eastern Europe. In addition they also provide seminars and workshops on integration and intercultural learning.

5.8 Creativity and culture

Youth culture is decided by youth themselves. Youth organisations and centres will adapt to current trends or try a top-down approach in order to pass on specific values. In general quite a number of youth organisations are attached to regional traditions in Austria such as traditional dances, music and fashion. Their main focus is to keep the tradition alive among young people. Youth centres try to adapt more to the current youth cultures and help young people develop their own ideas and foster creativity.

- Rural youth – Do bin I da hoam – project aims to give old traditions a fresh look and to think about how to combine traditional values with modern way of life.  
- WUK – culture house Vienna, including spacelab – youth projects and meeting space. This NGO is one of the biggest culture and creativity houses in Europe, organising many different activities for different groups and ages.  
- Brass music youth – different level certificate for all kinds of brass instruments, certifying the level of apprenticeship. The organisation disposes of a national youth brass orchestra in which the best musicians would play.

All of the federal states and as well the national level organise a choir singing event. This brings together all young people interested in singing. This event seems to have a long standing tradition in Austria.

6 Outcomes and impact of youth work

6.1 Target and reach

6.1.1 Target groups

There is no general age definition for youth. The UN Convention on the rights of the child determines that any person aged below 18 is regarded as a child, however many youth policies address young people that are aged below 18. Austria considers that youth policies are targeted to people till an age of 30. Often policies refer to “young adults” once they target people aged over 20.

There is a tendency that most of the activities and policies are targeted at a youth aged from 14 to 24. However, interviewees highlighted that there can be variations depending on the sector and policy objectives.

64 See: http://www.landjugend.at/?id=2500%2C2734947%2C%2C6
65 Website of the organisation: http://www.winds4you.at/jmla_richtlinien
Interviewees highlighted that in order for youth work to better contribute to help young NEETs and drop-outs an early warning networking system should be created connecting actors from school, the welfare office and social pedagogues working in schools with actors from youth work. Currently, young people in search of employment are provided help in youth work only once any other measure has already failed and the young person already left school.

6.1.2 Reach

The Ministry for Economy and Youth provides the following figures on the number of young people that have participated in youth projects in the national funded projects of the National Youth Fund.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>689,127</td>
<td>51,71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>643,520</td>
<td>48,29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,332,647</td>
<td>100,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry for Economy, Family and Youth website

These figures do not take into account the number of young persons reached through the work outside national financed youth work. This concerns in particular the people reached by open youth centres that are funded by municipalities or federal states. These centres reach a significant number of young people. For example, the Vienna youth centres association recorded more than 700,000 participants in various projects and in their cafés in 2011 (though there could be double counting as one individual can take part in several activities). This rate can of course only be reached in bigger cities. Youth centres in rural areas struggle sometimes to attract participants due to geographical distances in rural areas.

6.2 Outcomes and impact

It is commonly agreed that youth work contributes through informal education in various ways to the development of young people. Competencies such as information and technology skills, social skills, general values and other technical knowledge can be transmitted to the young. However, the outcomes and impacts of youth work in Austria are not systematically assessed. The main source of information is the youth report that has to be presented in each legislative period (4 years). Youth associations and open youth work establishments are mainly gathering output data in their yearly activity reports. A few federal states have tried to map activities in youth work and assess their impact though this has not been done in a continuous manner (ex. Styria).

In open youth work, the organisation “Verein Wiener Jugendzentren” in Vienna (running 25 youth centres, 1 café only for girls, 5 offices for mobile youth work and 6 teams providing activities in city parks) can be seen as an exemplary model in Austria and is also one of its biggest “open youth work centres”. The organisation has developed its own concept to measure the outcomes and plan activities accordingly. The work is delivered in three dimensions:
The concept of evaluation states that the first step is to assess what needs to be invested regarding input (working methods), then an activity needs to be described using the three dimensions, then output is measured and outcome inquired, finally the impact can be evaluated. The organisation has set three impact levels: the individual, the local community and the society at large. The impact for the individual is measured by recognising his potentials and how talents are fostered. Open youth work provides the individual fun activity and create curiosity but also focuses on the individuals’ specific anxieties and problems. Open youth work should empower the individual to act independent and self-determined. In a local perspective open youth work provides room and meeting space for youth and creates awareness for needs and interests of young people. Open youth work can ameliorate the participation of young people in local decision making and make their voice heard. The impact for society at large is that open youth work can provide for activities for young people independent from their socio-economic situation. Open youth work empowers young people to be recognised as a group in society by its political education, and through preventive work it contributes actively to prevent use of alcohol, drugs or violence.

The concept of evaluation and the impact levels of activities of the Vienna youth centres give an idea of the expected impacts of open youth work at large. Because open youth work depends more on public funding, and funding rules describe some quality standards regarding management and report, open youth work is more evaluated than associative youth work. Projects organised by youth associations are evaluated only when depending largely on public funding. Most of the youth association report outputs that are then presented in the annual activity report of the national youth council or their own activity reports. Projects such as the above mentioned project 72Hours (voluntary activities) organised by the Catholic Youth Austria are followed up by an evaluation that is based on a larger survey of participants giving insights on whether the project was well organised. The evaluations did not focus as such on its outcome and impact. While group work, help in organising

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66 The information on the evaluation concept is available in a published brochure by the Vienna youth centres available at: http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/fileadmin/pdf_downloads/pdf_f_experts/wirkungskonzept_broschuere_klein.pdf
projects and participatory manner of structural organisation of an association can be placed to the front associative youth work impact, open youth work is based more on the individual and hence fostering technical skills for ex communication, computer, design, sports or creative skills. Both types of youth work are important for political education and participation of young people in societal decision making processes.

Positive impacts have been recorded for the actions of public employment service and associated projects focusing on qualification for NEETs and bringing them into employment or into apprenticeships. These projects mostly reached out to boys and youth with a migration background. A study carried out for the federal state Upper Austria in 2011 showed that students reaching a qualification in the regular secondary school trajectory have fewer chances to be unemployed compared to those that have gained qualification through specific targeted measures and an alternative qualification measures by specialised schools – called the “third” way qualification. The reason behind this relates to a weak general image in society at large of “third” way qualifications even though the success rate for labour market integration of NEETs having followed “third way qualification” provided by the public employment services is still over 60%. One explanation for this success is certainly the apprenticeship system of Austria Yet, the economic crisis impacted most on unqualified or second chance young job seekers.\(^67\) Furthermore, a study from the public labour market service highlights that recognition of informal learning is especially important for drop-outs and youth with migrant background.\(^68\) However this has not been achieved so far. In Austria it is mainly the social origin that decides over success in the formal school education and while youth work has integrated this knowledge into their concepts the formal school system has not been able to make adaptations. It is highly recommended by experts that schools and youth work build up networks to prevent social origin being a determinant factor of young person’s life trajectory.

Finally, the interviewees agreed that working with professionals in the youth work sector is seen as a criterion for quality assurance in youth work projects in general. Taking into account that social work is a scientific field working also with scientific methods and practices it can be assumed that this profession does add a substantial value for young people with specific needs.

6.3 SWOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big variety of youth organisation having a long standing tradition.</td>
<td>The continuous high number of volunteers in associative youth work allows especially environmentally focused and church oriented associations to multiply their activities and be a long term contact point for young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal recognition of national youth council as partners in politics providing for an adequate institutional framework of dialogue.</td>
<td>Open youth work can be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of open youth work as a local space based networking actor, providing an “open space” for all young</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^67\) Vogtenhuber (2011), Aktive Arbeitsmarktpolitik fuer Jugendliche in Oberoesterreich, Institute fur Sozial – und Wirtschaftswissenschaften, WISO Zeitschrift, Liny - study has been consulted on the following link: [http://www.isw-linz.at/themen/dbdocs/Vogtenhuber_LF_2_11.pdf](http://www.isw-linz.at/themen/dbdocs/Vogtenhuber_LF_2_11.pdf)

\(^68\) Dornmayr et al (2006) Benachteiligte Jugendliche, Jugendliche ohne Berufsbildung, report for the PES Austria AMS, Vienna, study has been consulted under the following link: [http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/Benachteiligte_Jugendliche.pdf](http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/Benachteiligte_Jugendliche.pdf)
## STRENGTHS

- people; intermediary with all types of actors and additional formal alternative learning provider.
  - Austrian youth strategy to streamline youth policy into all political resorts and renewing dialogue with all actors on impact of youth work and its role in society.
  - National funds to finance structures of associative youth work.
  - Youth welfare provides for additional protection and activities to most disadvantaged youth.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- further developed as intermediary between school and youth welfare office as it focuses strongly on the individual and his talents and increase the personal success of the individual and especially disadvantaged youth.
  - Quality concepts and evaluation standards are currently reviewed and discussed for the new national youth strategy, could ensure better recognition of youth work activities.
  - Professionalisation of open youth work.

## WEAKNESSES

- No uniform national formal recognition of informal learning and engagement in youth activities.
- No formal profession of youth worker.
- Weak image of youth work in society.
- Quality of delivery of youth work is difficult to assess due to a either very recent developed quality standards or absence of quality standards.

## THREATS

- Under investment in funding youth activities and lack of continuous provision of structural support for youth associations and open youth work drives youth work towards project termed operations making it difficult to employ staff on a long term or full time basis.
- Not enough recognition of open youth work in especially rural areas and regional planning due to a lack of political prioritising.
- Despite the young age of voters (16) youth is not yet recognised as a group of stakeholders which limits the impact of their voice for youth activities and structure of youth work.

### 7 Conclusions and recommendations

Key points to note concerning Austrian youth work are:

- Youth work is defined in general as out-of school activity based on the voluntary participation of youth; however methods, target groups and activities vary depending on the sector of delivery. There are four types of youth work in Austria: open youth work, associative youth work, youth information services and youth welfare protection.

- The strengths of Austria’s youth work sector lies certainly in its volunteers and youth associations. They have a long standing tradition in youth work and were able to innovate and adapt to youth culture and young person’s needs and interests. Furthermore the concept of open youth work his highly promising to achieve a better networking approach for all youth work actors and providing a web of target activities for all kinds of young people.
Future challenge for youth work is the change of participative behaviour of young people. Youth organises more and more in their own peer groups along their personal interests. They are more interested in bigger events or international exchange. This development has been driving their participation out of traditional associative forms of youth work. It has been a challenge for most of the bigger youth organisations to keep their memberships stable and to adapt to the very quickly changing youth cultures.

Furthermore a paradigm change can be observed regarding the role of school and qualification and vocational training: while the role of schools decreases the role for youth work increases especially regarding guidance, alternative ways of qualification and acquaintance of social competencies. This would indicate that in the future a coherent national system for recognition of informal education would need to be put into place in order to adapt to this change.

Most interviewees highlighted that the image of youth work is not very positive in the Austrian society. Many do not know about projects and the quality of work done by youth organisations and centres.

Austria has seen a recent professionalisation (early 90s) of youth work and continues to develop. There is no general youth worker profession; most of the professional staff has social work and socio-pedagogic qualifications.

Austria also witnesses an even more recent initiative in the development of quality standards for youth work activities (beginning 2010), This is the reason why at this stage there is no coherent evaluation framework or data collection on outcome and impact of youth work.

Youth policy at national level has changed the ministerial resort after each change of government creating further inconsistencies regarding national strategies for youth and delimiting political commitment.

The following recommendations were made in literature consulted and the interviewees:

- Clear legal definition of the role of national level in determining strategic goals for youth policies and clear division of tasks between Land and local, community level. Youth should be part of the same Ministry and not change with each government to guarantee continuity. Continue to prioritise the national youth strategy and put mechanisms in place to map activities in youth work.

- Standardised reporting on youth policies and youth work activities/programmes for the federal state level in order to be able to compare, this would necessitate firstly a report from each state on the current status of youth work and collect information on best practices.

- Continue the development of indicators for quality in delivering youth work and a systematic gathering of output, outcome and impact of youth work activities.

- Optimising structures for funding and transparent distribution of funding at national, federal state and local level. Specific focus should lie on activities in rural areas as youth as most activities are provided in bigger cities disadvantaging youth in rural areas.
Politics need to provide more attention to participation of youth in political decision making processes and should recognise youth as a particular group of stakeholders in society.

Develop a national framework for the recognition of informal learning and skills gained from participation in youth work activities and volunteering.

Recognise the profession youth worker and regulate minimum standards for qualification levels.

8 Sources

8.1 Interviewees

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Youth Council. Date of interview: 16th of October 2012

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Intercultural Agency Austria, National Youth in Action Agency. Date of interview: 29th of October 2012

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8.2 Bibliography

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http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/ba/schulabbruch.xml Webpages of the Ministry of Education concerning school drop outs and youth coaching

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**Journal article:**
