

Austrian input to the Secretary-General's

2021 report to the Commission on the Status of Women on "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work"

Member State:	Austria
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Mandate of report: Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/6](#) on future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women; Council resolution [2020/15](#) on multi-year programme of work of the Commission

Reporting period: 2015 to date.

1. Strengthening normative and legal frameworks (paragraphs 40 (a) to (j))

What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulatory frameworks that ensure gender equality and prohibit discrimination against women in the world of work?

In the past years, several steps were taken to further strengthen the representation of women in leadership positions:

- The Act on Equality between Women and Men in Supervisory Boards was adopted in June 2017. As of 1 January 2018, the supervisory boards of listed companies and companies with more than 1.000 employees must include a minimum of 30% female representation. This quota applies to new members whereas existing mandates remain unaffected. The (central) workers' council must also stick to this regulation when sending employee representatives to the supervisory board. For the nomination proposals, it is therefore important to meet the 30% quota. Nomination proposals that do not meet this criterion are invalid. In this case, the corresponding seats in the supervisory board remain vacant until a legal proposal is made.
- On 3 June 2020 the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution to increase the proportion of women on the supervisory boards of state-affiliated companies (federal share of at least 50 percent) from 35 percent to 40 percent over the course of the current legislative period (until 2024). Its implementation will be reviewed by an annual progress report. The quota is a voluntary commitment by the federal government.

What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in both the public and private sectors?

Austria has introduced measures for pay transparency in 2011. Two mechanisms are currently in place to promote pay transparency – the legal requirements (1) to state the minimum wage in job vacancy advertisements and (2) to present income-reports for companies employing a pre-determined number of workers. Since 2014, companies with 150 employees or more are required to produce biannual income reports.

The online wage calculator (since 2011, updated every three years) informs users about wage levels to be expected in certain regions, sectors, and professions and constitutes thus another measure to inform about pay transparency and the gender pay gap. The website also contains information on rights to equal pay: <https://www.gehaltsrechner.gv.at/>

Austria is also focussing on better implementation: i.e. an Equal Pay Label “EqualityA” for enterprises has been created in 2020

The European Social Fund (ESF) in Austria invests in the fields of employment, education and combating poverty. The ESF focus lies on (operative) programmes. In the current period (2014-2020), one priority referred to the equality between men and women, focusing on skills training for disadvantaged women as well as on counselling and coaching companies and HR managers on business-related gender issues. These include equal pay, work-life balance and parental leave management, (further) education of low-educated employees, career management and inclusion of refugee women.

In this context, the project “100 Prozent” (100 Percent) is currently being implemented (project duration: June 2020 - March 2023). It aims at reducing pay discrimination by supporting companies to implement a fair and transparent salary system in accordance with the principle of equal pay for equal work. Furthermore, it aims at reducing discrimination by supporting companies to promote career opportunities for women in enterprises. The project builds on two pilot projects implemented from August 2017 to July 2019, which aimed at counselling and coaching companies and HR managers on issues related to equal pay (Project “Equal Pay”) and career management of women (Project “Gender Career Management”).

What measures have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and policies to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women in the world of work and provide means of effective redress in cases of noncompliance?

From 2019 until 2021, the Federal Ministry for Women’s budget was substantially increased by 43%. Thus, the total budget amounts to EUR 14.65 million and is mainly used for violence protection measures.

Due to restrictions in movement induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in home office, there was a risk in rise of domestic violence. Therefore, the Division for Women and Equality in the

Austrian Federal Chancellery issued a domestic violence information campaign, in order to ensure that every woman knows where to find help and support.

In May 2021, the Council of Ministers approved a comprehensive package of measures for violence protection, victim protection and violence prevention worth 24.6 million euros.

2. Strengthening education, training, and skills development (paragraphs 40 (k) to (n))

What measures have been taken to mainstream a gender perspective into education and training programmes in order to facilitate the effective transition from education or unemployment to work?

The effective and equal participation of women is a precondition for a sustainable and future – oriented development of societies. Information campaigns, public relations campaigns are destined to raise awareness for strengthening women’s participation in training and employment. As a consequence, awareness in enterprises as well as in the society, particularly amongst parents and persons in the secondary education level, is raising and the share of female apprentices in technical apprenticeship groups is steadily increasing (2015 8.1%, 2020 10.6%).

Furthermore, the analysis of the TOP 10 apprenticeship professions among women shows concrete results. For example, the apprenticeship occupation “metal technology” has become more popular in recent years and advanced from TOP 9 in 2017 to TOP 7 in 2020.

In the training process the „apprentice and company coaching“ ("Lehre statt Leere") – as a support programme for companies and apprentices – offers personal, digital and telephone (individual and group) coaching to improve the company culture (e.g. questions and problems regarding vocational school, learning in the company and private challenges).

Since 2015, around 10,000 coaching sessions were held. In 2020, 1.412 apprentices and 213 trainers were accompanied by the coaching. 438 apprentices and 53 training companies were supported in 2021 (January – April).

The Austrian PES (public employment services, AMS) has a great focus on gender and diversity awareness. For the PES training programmes, a gender perspective and a gender mainstreaming approach is state of the art and always taken into account.

3. Implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (o) to (mm))

What steps have been taken to promote decent paid care and domestic work in the public and private sectors?

Long-term care: Matters relating to long-term care are exclusively the competences of the federal regions (Länder) in Austria. This results in different operator structures in the area of care and support in the Länder, which include both public and private providers.

In the field of long-term care, the Federal Government plays a major role in securing funds for regional governments to cover expenditure for long-term care services and facilities, alongside supporting the provision of benefits.

The Long-term care benefit in cash is regulated in the Federal Long-term Care Benefit Act (Bundespflegegeldgesetz) and has the aim to ensure that people who require nursing care have the opportunity to obtain the care and support they need in order to lead an independent and self-determined life. In 2020 on average 467,136 persons received long-term care benefits in cash. 2/3 of the recipients are women.

24-hour-care: To support 24-hour-care, the Ministry of Social Affairs has developed a subsidies model that provides persons in need of care or their family members with support. The subsidy can amount up to 1,100 € in the case of employees or up to 550 € in the case of self-employed carers. The income of the person in need of care is taken into account during the application process. The maximum earnings limit is 2,500 € net per month. In 2020 an average of 6,700 men and an average of 17,300 women received a subsidy for 24-hour care.

Regarding **COVID-19**, the guidelines for 24-hour care were changed in 2020 to support people in need of care: A subsidy of 275 € per month can be paid for only a self-employed care worker. From March 2020, people who have been cared for by an independent care worker for at least 14 days will receive a subsidy of 550 € for the duration of the pandemic. In all cases, the deployment times must reach the minimum extent specified in the House Care Act (Hausbetreuungsgesetz). All data subjects automatically receive this increased amount in full and no separate application is necessary.

The vast majority of care persons working in 24-hour care in Austria are from other EU member states. To guarantee the care for dependent persons, the 24-hour caregivers were granted a one-time special bonus (500 €) if the regular cycle was extended by another 4 weeks. The bonus ended on 31st December 2020.

<p>What specific measures have been implemented to promote women's entry, re-entry and advancement in the labour market?</p>

Paid care leave: Since 1st January 2014, workers may take care leave (with not wage or salary being paid) for up to 3 months. In order to support caring and nursing family members taking care leave or family hospice leave (both is also possible part-time), these family members may claim care leave benefits. The rate of the care leave benefits is income-related and basically equal to the rate of unemployment benefits (55% of the daily net income). If workers take family hospice leave, they may under certain conditions claim additional supplements from the leave programme's compensation scheme. In 2020 72% of the beneficiaries were women.

Social insurance for caregiving relatives: Caregiving relatives, looking after a close family member that takes up the time in which they would otherwise be able to work, may opt to be pension- and (co-)health insured. These pension insurance contributions are fully paid by the federal government, so that caregiving relatives do not have to pay anything.

Long-term care fund: In 2011, the long-term care fund was introduced by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The purpose of grants from the fund is to ensure the provision and sustainability of long-term care services, which are provided by Länder and municipalities in cooperation with non-profit organizations. The long-term care-fund sets priorities for nationwide expansion of mobile services and is primarily used for nonstationary services.

The long-term care fund offers enormous potential for creating jobs in the social sector, which will subsequently result in macroeconomic and economic effects. Care and employment are areas in Austria, which will continue to grow strongly in the next few years due to the expected increase in the number of older people.

In 2019, 88% of caregivers in long-term care were women.

According to §§ 22 to 25 Labour Constitution Act, the Federal Conciliation Office sets minimum wage rates in sectors where no collective agreement can be concluded. Minimum wage rates contain regulations on minimum payments and minimum amounts for the reimbursement of expenses. The minimum wage rates for housekeepers and domestic workers is set every two years.

Every year, Boys' Days are organized in all Austrian federal states under the strategic direction of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The aim of Boys' Day is to expand the range of occupations young men can choose from and, subsequently, to increase the proportion of men in so-called atypical educational and nursing professions.

The support of the 151 women's and girls' counselling centres throughout Austria and thus ensuring a nationwide counselling service is a central concern of women's policy. In 2021, an area-coverage of 88% will be achieved. Free and confidential counselling is provided, inter alia for women and girls entering, advancing in and re-entering the labour market. This includes e.g. counselling on education and qualification measures for women, especially with regard to new technologies, atypical career choices, professional reorientation and further education and training. In 2021, the 12% increase in funding for the Austrian women's counselling services will be continued (as in 2020) and increased again by 3%. Overall, € 6.396 million will be provided for the funding of women's counselling centres in 2021.

<p>What specific measures have been implemented to promote women's entry, re-entry and advancement in the labour market?</p>

The objective of the project "PERSPEKTIVE:ARBEIT - economic and social empowerment for women affected by violence" is to offer financial independence to women affected by violence. This is to be achieved by placing them in long-term jobs that will allow them to earn a living on the primary labour market as well as to secure/improve existing jobs so that the affected women will be able to permanently leave abusive situations. This project is currently available in Upper Austria, Styria and Lower Austria; in Vienna the implementation is foreseen for late 2021. It is foreseen to provide the services of "PERSPEKTIVE:ARBEIT" throughout Austria in the near future.

5. Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (rr) to (ss))

What specific actions have been taken to support women's access to skills development and decent work in emerging fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics?

The **Girls' Day** (since 2006) and **Girls' Day MINI** (since 2015) in the federal Civil Service were introduced with the objective to encourage girls and young women in choosing STEM-educations and professions. Girls from the age of six are invited to the "Girls' Day" which is organized in the public sector each year. This action day allows young girls to gain active insights and real experience within these fields. Targeting pre-school girls, the "Girls' Day MINI" was additionally initiated. Girls' Day MINI aims to give girls aged between four and six the possibility to experiment and get in touch with technical and scientific phenomena.

To further increase women's and girls' representation in **MINT/STEM** subjects and professions, a **call for funding** was launched. The call for funding for the empowerment of girls and women in education, work and society with a focus on mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology as well as financial literacy was issued in 2021 with a total volume of € 1.6 million. The aim is to strengthen women's economic independence and to increase the proportion of women in male-dominated educational and professional fields. The eleven selected projects will be implemented between October 2021 and December 2022 and will focus on:

- offering experiments and workshops in kindergartens or schools
- providing low-threshold and free counselling for girls and women who are about to make educational decisions or are within the career orientation phase
- providing strategies for empowering women in male-dominated fields of education and occupation.

The **MINT-Girls Challenge** is a nationwide initiative and competition in which girls and young women are encouraged to use mathematics, IT/computer science, natural sciences or technology in developing creative ideas and solutions to tackle global challenges. Ideas could be submitted until August 31st, 2021. The initiative aims to spark enthusiasm in girls and young women for mathematics, computer science, natural sciences and technology (MINT) as well as to counteract the shortage of skilled workers in Austria as a business location.

The online information platform "**Meine Technik**" (My technology) aims to inspire more women to opt for careers in non-typical professions and to reduce barriers they face in accessing these fields.

In order to facilitate training and apprenticeship programmes for non-traditional fields, job-seeking women are supported by the programme FiT (Women in Crafts and Technology) by the PES. The goal is to graduate from an apprenticeship programme or tertiary education (universities of applied science).

Women are an explicit target group of the Corona-Job Offensive, a special (re)skilling programme of the PES, which is investing 700 Million Euro between October 2020 and December 2021 for 100.000 persons to (re)integrate them into the labour market. The focus is on care/health, metal, electronic/IT/digital sector as well as environment/sustainability.

7. Strengthening the role of the private sector in women’s economic empowerment (paragraphs 40 (bbb) to (eee))

What efforts have been undertaken to encourage private firms and institutions to mainstream gender equality considerations in policies and practices?

What action has been taken to increase investment and support for women entrepreneurs?

In 2020, [equalitA](#) was presented – an initiative to award companies for measures on equal opportunities and pay.

The project “equalitA” is an effort to encourage private firms and institutions to mainstream gender equality and to promote women in companies in management positions., This project is an initiative of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs, the Seal of Quality for in-house advancement of women.

For companies the PES offers a specialized consulting measure called ‘impulse consulting for businesses; Impulsberatung für Betriebe). One of the aspects of this service is gender equality and the promotion of women in the workforce.