



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Information received from Austria on follow-up to the  
concluding observations on its ninth periodic report\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## **Follow-up report on concluding observations 25 (b), 27 (b), 31 (d) and 43 (c) (reporting period: July 2019–July 2021)**

### **25 (b) Strictly enforce article 104 (a) of the Criminal Code by investigating, prosecuting and imposing adequate sentences on perpetrators of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls**

1. Austria continues to pursue a comprehensive approach to combating trafficking in persons, consisting of prevention, victim protection, criminal prosecution as well as national coordination and international cooperation.
2. Since the establishment of the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings in 2004, the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, together with partners from the federal and provincial administrations, specialised organisations, and NGOs, has been committed to the fight against human trafficking. During the reporting period, one focus of the Working Group on Child Trafficking was to create a protection concept and to discuss and develop a concept for a specialised facility for underage victims of human trafficking. For this purpose, specific sub-working groups were established in 2019 and 2020, and a joint concept for a protection facility was developed. Efforts have been intensified to quickly establish a nationwide protection facility for underage victims of human trafficking.
3. The Intervention Centre for Trafficked Women, LEFÖ-IBF, provided support to a total of 336 girls and women in 2019 and to 314 girls and women in 2020. In the reporting period, the Federal Criminal Police Office, in cooperation with staff from the socio-pedagogical organisation *Drehscheibe Wien*, conducted trainings and awareness-raising events about child trafficking for all staff members of the Vienna Child and Youth Welfare Services.
4. For the years 2021 to 2023, the National Action Plan to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings (NAP) has set itself the goal, among other things, of continuing existing victim protection services for trafficked women (LEFÖ-IBF). The NAP also aims to facilitate access to legal resources for trafficked children. In addition, measures are planned to improve the implementation of the non-punishment principle in administrative criminal law and to ensure uniform application of national regulations on residence for victims of human trafficking in order to ensure long-term protection. The continuation of the sub-working groups on prostitution and child trafficking is another focus of the NAP that aims to address the vulnerability of these groups in the best possible way.
5. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Justice also organises an annual exchange of experiences and opinions to enhance cooperation between law enforcement agencies and NGOs in cases of human trafficking. In the course of this exchange, representatives of these bodies discuss difficulties and problems as well as investigative successes in cases of human trafficking based on real completed cases in order to develop best practice guidelines and increase the efficiency of legal proceedings.

## **27 (b) Implement legal requirements for a statutory minimum quota, and related economic incentives to political parties, for the representation of women in rankings or nominations to stand for election to the National Council and the nine provincial parliaments**

6. In order to strengthen women's political representation at the national level, the funding scheme for parliamentary groups was amended by the Austrian National Council on 3 July 2019. The Federal Act that facilitates the activities of the campaigning party groups in the Austrian National Council and the Federal Council (Federal Act on the Financing of Parliamentary Groups, Klubfinanzierungsgesetz 1985 – KlubFG) was complemented by a bonus for a higher proportion of women within these parliamentary groups. If a party's share of women in the National Council or the Federal Council exceeds 40 per cent, the amount of funding for the parliamentary group is increased by three per cent. The change in funding came into force on 1 November 2019.

7. Furthermore, some political parties have internal quota regulations (voluntary commitments) for electoral lists or vacant mandates and functions. The party statute of the Austrian Green Party stipulates the parity of women and men in all party bodies at federal level as well as on electoral lists in National Council elections; the representation of at least 50 per cent women in all elected bodies and functions is to be ensured by corresponding regulations. The Social Democratic Party of Austria stipulates in its party statutes a minimum proportion of 40 per cent women and men at all party levels and in legislative bodies; this quota is to be considered when officials leave office. The Austrian People's Party provides in its organisational statute for the best possible balance between women and men, or 40 per cent, in all bodies and for a zipper system for electoral lists.

8. In July 2021, 40 per cent of the members of the Austrian National Council were women; in the Federal Council 43 per cent of the members were women. Overall, a positive trend can be seen in the reporting period: Both in the National Council (+3 percentage points) and in the Federal Council (+5 percentage points), the proportion of women increased between June 2019 and July 2021.

### **Measures in the Federal Provinces**

9. In five provinces, the proportion of women in the provincial parliaments increased during the reporting period, while in three other provinces the proportion of women remained stable (comparing June 2019 to July 2021). Overall, the share of elected female members of provincial parliaments increased from around 32 per cent in June 2019 to 36 per cent in July 2021 across Austria.

10. In the reporting period, an amendment to the Upper Austrian Parliamentary Group Funding Act was passed in the province of Upper Austria similar to the amendment at the national level. With the beginning of the next legislative period (expected in September 2021), the provincial contribution to the funding of the provincial parliamentary groups will increase by three per cent if the proportion of women in the respective group is above 40 per cent.

11. In order to further strengthen the representation of women in politics at the regional and local level, training courses and mentoring programmes for politically active and interested women continue to be held in many provinces.

**31 (d) Adopt a strategy to reduce the school dropout rate at the upper secondary level of education among girls with a migration background and girls whose parents have lower levels of education and ensure that women and girls who have dropped out are reintegrated into the education system**

12. Several strategies to reduce school dropout rates have already been implemented and continued during the reporting period. Compulsory education until the age of 18, which came into force in 2016, provides for a legal framework to ensure that all 15- to 18-year-olds receive education or vocational training. This also helps to identify young people in this age group who are not pursuing any kind of education or vocational training and to support them in youth coaching programmes so as to help them start suitable education or training. This is intended to limit premature school dropouts, which are particularly frequent among young people with a migration background, and to create incentives for further training and education.

13. The most important measure to reduce the number of pupils dropping out of school is the aforementioned youth coaching. This and other services of the Network for Professional Assistance (*NEBA; Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz*), such as the training programme *AusbildungsFit*, which also includes a pre-module, are easily accessible schemes that support girls and boys at risk of exclusion in their development and participation in the labour market.

14. Another important preventive measure is psychosocial counselling at and for schools; a programme which follows a gender-sensitive approach and provides the best possible counselling and support for young male and female dropouts. The educational and vocational career orientation process is enhanced on a permanent basis – an initiative known under the brand *ibobb* (information, counselling, educational and vocational career orientation).

15. The 15a Agreement on Elementary Education between the federal and the provincial authorities aims to ensure the best possible start for children in elementary school and enhance educational opportunities. The focus lies on strengthening elementary educational institutions as the very first educational institutions and on the early promotion of German as an educational language.

16. The Austrian Federal Government provided special-purpose subsidies amounting to €125 million in the 2018/19 kindergarten year as well as €142.5 million in each of the 2019/20 to 2021/22 kindergarten years – a total of €400 million between 2018 and 2022. At least €18.125 million in funding is available for early language support.

17. German language skills and enhanced early language support for four-year-olds help to prepare children for their educational careers in the best possible way. In order to ensure an ideal start, children must attend a compulsory half-day kindergarten year. This year is free of charge. Fulfilling the compulsory attendance in home education or with child minders is only possible at the request of the legal guardian if there is no need for language support for the child.

18. Furthermore, one of the core concerns of integration activities is to prevent children with a migration background from dropping out of school prematurely. Deficits in the German language often stand in the way of school success. Since the situation is likely to have been further aggravated by the pandemic and related restrictions in schools as well as the challenges associated with home schooling, a summer school programme for pupils with a migration background and a lack of German language skills was established in mid-2020. Targeted support in these summer schools and at the same time information provided to parents with a

migration background during parent courses offered by the Austrian Integration Fund should make up for potential deficits.

19. Furthermore, since September 2018, pupils with insufficient German language skills must attend compulsory German language support classes and German language support courses (§8h SchOG; School Organisation Act). Special language promotion courses to enhance German language skills have existed since 2008 and have been continuously expanded. Early and in-depth learning of the German language should help pupils to be able to follow regular lessons as quickly as possible. Furthermore, 29 civil society projects will receive approximately €3.3 million from national and EU funds in 2021 as part of the Children and Youth Funding Package. Young people with a migration background should be supported in their educational and vocational careers through a wide variety of projects.

20. In addition, 41 civil society projects for women will receive approximately €2.9 million from national and EU funds in 2021. This aims to counter existing educational deficits and increase employment opportunities for women whose native language is not German; this will also have a positive influence on the educational and vocational careers of children and young people.

### Measures in the Federal Provinces

21. In order to reduce the school dropout rates of girls with a migration background and girls whose parents have lower levels of education and to reintegrate dropouts into the education system, the federal provinces provide counselling and support services in cooperation with different institutions.

22. Pupils and their legal guardians are offered numerous counselling and support services within the school system (school psychology, school social work, pupil and educational counselling), among others. Courses, support, and coaching programmes are also available.

23. In Vorarlberg, for example, young people from 9th grade up to 19 years of age can turn to the BIFO information centre to analyse their interests, abilities, and personal strengths and to receive information on suitable education and training or support for career changes. For young people from 9th grade up to 24 years of age who will probably not be able to complete a regular apprenticeship, the programme *Dafür* provides counselling, support, and information about career choices. The Career Information Centres (*BIZ; BerufsInfoZentren*) from the Austrian Employment Service AMS also support pupils in their career choices and professional (re)orientation.

24. Vienna supports numerous women's' and girls' associations, such as *Sprungbrett* and the *Peppa* girls' centre, which support and advise girls in many areas of their lives, including their educational path. Target groups include girls with a migration background or girls whose parents have lower levels of education. Other measures include German language courses, general education and training courses for newly immigrated young people, as well as learning support for pupils whose native language is not German. The youth college *StartWien*, for example, focuses on German language learning, improving general education (mathematics, English, ICT) and placing young people in secondary school, vocational training or in a sustainable employment.

25. Carinthia has a specialised competence and networking centre, the Girls' Centre in Klagenfurt, where also the regional gender competence centre for adolescence is based. The focus is, among other things, on social inclusion of young women between 18 and 25 years of age who have experienced disadvantages in different areas of life – i.e., intersectional discrimination, social marginalisation, and poverty. A special focus

is placed on areas such as dropout, a lack of family structures, care obligations, migration background, and a wide variety of psychosocial issues. The settings for the services vary and range from easily accessible programmes, such as the Girls' Club, to language courses, vocational training and career orientation, psychosocial counselling, and cooperation projects with schools.

### **43 (c) Reduce legal and administrative barriers to family reunification for women and men who are beneficiaries of international protection**

26. Austria complies with international and European legal provisions, in particular regarding family reunification. Austrian law provides for several possibilities for family reunification:

27. Family members of persons entitled to asylum can apply for an entry permit at an Austrian representation authority abroad within three months after the asylum status has become legally effective if certain general requirements, such as health insurance, are met and proven.

28. Family members of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can apply for an entry permit in the context of family reunification three years after the protection status has been granted and must additionally prove to have adequate accommodation, health insurance, and sufficient income.

29. However, if these requirements are not met, the application is not automatically rejected, but it must be examined in each individual case whether the right to family reunification arises in accordance with Art. 8 ECHR.

30. If the applicant is the parent of an unaccompanied minor who has been granted the status of a person entitled to asylum or who is a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, the additional requirements are deemed to be fulfilled.

31. It is possible to apply for family reunification free of charge at any Austrian representation authority. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, operations at the representation authorities were restricted and included waiting times in 2020. An electronic appointment system has facilitated access and applications have been prioritised based on time requirements. Representation offices with a need for staff with special language skills take foreign language skills (e.g., Arabic, Dari) into account in the recruitment process. A real system of appeal has been created with the Federal Administrative Courts so that every decision can be reviewed by the courts. In many cases, applicants are represented by non-governmental organisations in appeal proceedings, and decisions can be subsequently corrected in favour of the applicant.