

Our Policies for all Generations

Strategies and Best Practices of Austrian Policies on Ageing



FEDERAL MINISTRY
OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND GENERATIONS

FORWORD



The current process of demographic change is not a threat, but an enrichment for us all. Undoubtedly, the increasing life expectancy that we owe to scientific and medical progress and improved health policies is one of humanity's most important achievements. The average life expectancy for men in Austria is just under 75 and 81 for women. Every five years it rises by one more year.

A healthy, self-determined old age with full social integration is a perspective that we have to open up for more and more people.

In the past, we in Austria have taken important and exemplary steps toward to this goal – and we remain committed to continuing down this path to a society for all generations.

This publication presents an overview of the principles, goals and perspectives of Austrian policies for senior citizens and provides information about a selection of ageing policy best practice measures.

Continuing our long tradition of participation in the development of positions and perspectives within the international community of nations on age issues, we want to make a contribution to actively supporting the implementation of the principles and goals of the United Nations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'H' followed by a long, horizontal stroke that ends in a small vertical tick.

Mag. Herbert Haupt, Minister for Social Security and Generations

C O N T E N T S

Foreword	1
-----------------	---

Introduction

Facts & figures about demographic development in Austria	3
Principles and instruments of a policy for all ages	4

Best Practices

1. Social and political participation for senior citizens	6
2. The pension reform 2000	7
3. Access to lifelong learning	8
4. Policies in the interests of families	10
5. Equal opportunities for older women	12
6. Housing in old age	13
7. Nursing and care	14
8. The contribution made by older people to inter-generational solidarity	16
9. The contribution of older people to society	17
10. Preparing for retirement	18
11. Strengthening the dialogue between young and old	19

Impressum

Published by:
The Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations
Centre for Population and Ageing Policies
Franz Josefs-Kai 51, 1010 Vienna

Printed by:
PPZ/Zimmer, Digitale Medien GmbH, 1020 Vienna

Edition 2002

INTRODUCTION

Facts & Figures about Demographic Development in Austria

Like other west European industrial nations Austria is also in a phase of transformation from a demographically young to a demographically old society. This process of demographic ageing started in Austria after the end of World War I and is the result of a declining birth rate with a simultaneous increase in life expectancy. Specifically, life expectancy for men in 1998 was 74.6 years and 80.9 for women.

Forecasts from the Austrian Central Office of Statistics predict that by 2035, depending on how life expectancy develops, there will be between 2.7 and 3 million people over the age of 60 living in Austria. The percentage of over-60's will rise from some 20 percent of the total population at present to 35 to 38 percent.

Double Demographic Ageing Process: An Increasing Number of very Elderly People

The trend toward "double demographic ageing," i.e. an over proportional increase in the number of people in advanced old age is a central feature of future demographic development in Austria. The number of 75 –85 year olds will rise from 400,000 at present to around one million in 2035, and the number of those over 85 years of age will rise from 140,000 at present to between 500,000 and 600,000. According to other forecasts, the number of over 85 year olds will more than triple.

In terms of gender, the group of older persons is strongly marked by an over proportional number of women. Thus for every 100 women over the age of 60 there are only 66 men of the same age. In the case of people over 75, the gender ratio is 100 women to 44 men. One reason for this imbalance is the shorter

life expectancy of men. Another is the large number of men who lost their lives in the two world wars. In spite of the birth deficit that will amount to over 10,000 people a year between 2006 and 2020, it will be another 25 years before the population of Austria starts to decline due to gains from immigration.

Report on the Situation of Senior Citizens: Comprehensive Empirical Basis for Austria's Generation Policies

The demographic trend poses a wide range of challenges in all areas of political action: Health, social, economic, inclusion and social policies must all be made "fit" for the opportunities and perspectives of a society that is ageing. To enable measures in these areas to be placed on a sound footing, the Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations (BMSG) published the first "Austrian Report on the Life Situation of Older Persons" in the "International Year of Older Persons."

This 662 page report is a novelty not only in Austria, but in Europe too. Never before had the situation of older people been studied so thoroughly and in so much detail as in this study. The report on the situation of older people presents a comprehensive picture of the various life circumstances of older people in Austria. The areas covered by the report include

- the private circumstances of older people and their generational relationships,
- their economic and social situations, including their living arrangements,
- health, leisure, education and transport issues,
- the transition from an active working life and the care and nursing of older people,
- the special situation of older immigrants and social and political inclusion.

The knowledge obtained from this study has now been incorporated in the first Austrian national plan for senior citizens, which was developed as a political-strategic steering instrument of ageing policy.

This plan will provide a basis for political decisions particularly in the field of social, economic, health, housing and cultural affairs.



Principles and Instruments of a Policy for all Ages

In addition to an intensive empirical analysis of the situation of older people, Austria's policy for all ages is based on clear principles.

The Strengthening of Intergenerational Solidarity – Ensuring Fairness

The promotion and strengthening of intergenerational solidarity as the basis for the peaceful and productive co-existence of the generations is a key principle upon which Austrian generational policies are based. The high degree of solidarity between the generations in Austria (see below) is proof of the general acceptance of the standardised financial transfers between the generations and the distribution policies upon which they are based. In view of the demographic shift, this high level of intergenerational solidarity and the equitable distribution of resources between the generations must be preserved for the future. To this end, measures are being taken in the area of pension reform and projects for intergenerational dialogue.

Shaping Policies "with" Older People

While for a long time policies for senior citizens in Austria were reduced to the issues of pensions and health, in recent years Austria has succeeded in changing the parameters. Instead of policies "for" senior citizens in narrowly defined areas, current policies are perceived as policies "with" senior citizens that extend into a wide range of specialist areas and departments as cross-sectional material. These changed parameters are also reflected in the Austrian model for ensuring inclusion of older people (see be-

low). Furthermore, because older women are disadvantaged in many social areas, there is also a need for contemporary women's policy strategies.

Focussing on People

Austrian intergenerational policies focus on (older) people with their skills and resources. The intention of this is to make it clear that older people are indispensable contributors to society and have a place in the mainstream of society.

In this connection, motivating older people to engage in voluntary work together with young people plays an important role (e.g. "Citizens' Office for Young & Old," see below).

On the other hand, there is a strong need to emphasise the status of older people as human resources, as the size of the potential workforce will decline significantly after the next decade. A large percentage of the current 40 year olds will leave the workforce in 2017. Austria – like other European countries – is already suffering from a lack of skilled workers in certain industries. Against this background, Austria recognises older people as key workers for the future and is taking appropriate measures to ensure their greater (re-)integration into the workforce.

Encouraging Parenthood

Austria does not pursue demographic policies that are characterised by a pronatalist family policy or an immigration policy designed to compensate for the demographic trends. Immigration policy is primarily viewed as an instrument of economic and labour market policy. Austria is an international leader with regard to financial transfers to families and by making it easier to combine a family and a career Austria wants to make it easier for young parents to decide to have children (see below).

The following overview of selected best practice models illustrates how Austria takes political measures to create appropriate frameworks in a wide variety of sectors to achieve a society for all ages.



1

Social and Political Inclusion of Older People: The Austrian Model

Austria implements the generation policy maxim of policies "with" older people in the model for the inclusion of older people. The Senior Citizens Act of 1998 was the first forward looking step toward increasing the older generation's opportunities for participation and also made provision for funding for the information and advisory services run by the major senior citizens' organisations. Senior citizens' organisations receive 80 eurocents for every Austrian male over the age of 60 and every Austrian female over 55, an annual total of 1.5 million euros. At a national level, the National Senior Citizens' Advisory Council was set up. This Council now falls under the jurisdiction of the BMSG and has the task of drawing up concrete proposals for advancing Austrian policies for senior citizens.

Austrian Council of Older Persons: Statutory Interest Group for Older People

The amendment to the Senior Citizen' Act in 2000 opened up a new era in the representation of older people in Austria. The Austrian Council of Older Persons established by the law is the umbrella organisation for senior citizens' organisations and the official representative of older people in Austria. In all affairs concerning older people in Austria, the Senior Citizen's Council has equal status with the statutory representatives of employees, business and farmers. Put simply, that means that senior citizens in Austria have equal rights of co-determination in all issues that affect them. With this model of legally anchored participation and co-determination for older people Austria plays an exemplary role in the EU.

The Next Step: A Constitutional Ban on Discrimination

After this exemplary measure to safeguard opportunities for political participation by older people, the Austrian government now plans to introduce effective protection for senior citizens against discrimination this year. A ban on age discrimination will be anchored in the Austrian constitution as part of a democracy package. Austria will review its entire legal system to identify and repeal provisions that are incompatible with Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Austria is therefore the first country in the European Union to include an explicit ban on age discrimination in its laws.

Federal Youth Representation: Equal Ranking Interest Group for Young People

The new Federal Law on the Representation of the Interests of Youth came into force in Austria early in 2001 with the goal of ensuring that not only the older generation, but also the younger generation has appropriate chances of participation. This law has put co-determination for young people at a national level on a new footing by including representatives from those youth organisations that are organised in associations. Among other things, the law specifies that in matters affecting the interests of Austrian youth the Federal Youth Council is to have equal standing with the interest groups representing employees, business, farmers and the Austrian Council of Older Persons.

The Pension Reform 2000 that came into force on 1 October 2000 was an important step to safeguarding Austrian pensions that are funded on the basis of a pay-as-you-go system.

In accordance with the principle of inter-generational solidarity, the reform sets out to ensure that current pensions can be guaranteed while ensuring that tomorrow's older generation can rely on receiving an adequate pension when they reach old age. Furthermore, the pension reform also aims to increase the percentage of older persons in the workforce in accordance with the goals laid down by the meetings of the European Council in Lisbon and Stockholm.

Restrictions on Early Retirement Pensions

As well as classifying child raising periods as genuine contribution periods for the first time and introducing a value guarantee system whose fixed contributions give preferential treatment to smaller pensions, the pension reform is above all geared to restricting early retirement. The early retirement age for both women and men was raised by 1.5 years (in the case of women to 56.5 years, for men to 61.5 years). The pension reductions that those who decide to retire before the legal retirement age (men 65, women 60) have to expect will gradually be increased. As of 1. 10. 2002 this will be 3 percent a year. However, deductions may not exceed 15 percent.

In financial terms the object of the reform is to halve state expenditure for pensions, which is forecast to rise to ca. 2.2 billion euros by 2003.

Model for Increasing Labour Force Participation and Preventing Discrimination in the Work Process

In addition to limiting premature withdrawal from the workforce with the aim of safeguarding the pension system, Austria also wishes to increase the percentage of older people in the labour force by improving their integration in the employment market. A bundle of instruments has been drawn up to prevent older workers from becoming victims of discrimination and to ensure that they are not pushed out of the working environment prematurely:

- At the start of 2000 the older worker's part time work allowance was introduced. This payment compensates employers for the additional expenditure incurred through keeping older employees who work shorter hours on full pay. The amount consisting of the reduced salary and older workers' part time work allowance is capped by the contribution assessment limit (at present 3,270 euros). The number of individuals taking advantage of this scheme rose sharply last year. The take-up at the end of 2000 was around some 1,300 persons, by the end of 2001 it had already risen to just under 10,000, while in February 2002 there were already over 12,000 take-ups. By 2008 the scheme will have cost the Employment Office around 517.3 million euros.
- To promote further education among workers over the age of 45, the further training allowance was raised to the level of unemployment benefits if educational leave was taken. The educational leave scheme provides for unpaid leave on the basis of an agreement between employee and employer.
- The bonus-penalty system in the unemployment insurance scheme was designed to promote the hiring of older workers and to financially penalise the dismissal of older workers with long service records. Both these measures are implemented in the form of employer contributions to the unemployment insurance scheme. The penalty pay-

ment is based on the age of the person concerned and the amount of time until they qualify for a pension. As of October 2000 the employer's contribution to the unemployment insurance fund is completely cancelled when people over the age of 50 are hired, while the basic amount used to calculate the penalty is doubled in cases where a person over 50 who had been employed for at least ten years is made redundant.

By introducing these measures and additional special support schemes for older workers, the Austrian government is trying to encourage employers to abandon the strategy of replacing older employees as quickly as possible with younger ones.

Due to the abolition of the suspension provisions the Pension Reform 2000 gives those who have reached retirement age (men over 65, women over 60) the option of fully participating in working life with no earnings limits while drawing their pensions. In contrast, "discontinuation provisions" apply to those who have taken early retirement. As soon as a minimum threshold has been reached, their pension is "suspended" completely.



3 Access to Life Long Learning

As opportunities to participate in society and share its prosperity depend on access to knowledge and learning opportunities, access to life long learning opportunities for older people are becoming increasingly important.

The knowledge-based society is reality and requires general rethinking with regard to educational services and educational behaviour patterns. In an increasingly knowledge-driven world and business environment, the ability to continually acquire, evaluate and apply new knowledge will become a key factor for participation. Austria opened up its universities and colleges as educational institutes for older people early on with a senior citizens' study model

The Austrian Senior Citizens' Study Model

While most other states adopt third age educational and university concepts, Austria has aggressively promoted universities for all generations for over 20 years. As a result, Austria is not faced with the great deficit of generational uniformity and the loss of contact with people of differing ages that confront traditional educational facilities for senior citizens.

The targeted and actively promoted opening of universities to senior citizens in the late 1970's was based on the still valid insight that a positive ageing process requires not only appropriate medical, psychological and social conditions, but also intellectual stimulation and that education and the study of intellectual values forms a key element of health care and health policy. Study should offer senior citizens an opportunity for self-fulfilment and add new meaning to their lives. An important educational policy prerequisite for the widespread and effective use of university education in Austria was the introduction of the status of "extraordinary student." This permits

individuals to attend university without the necessary admission qualifications.

The acquisition of the necessary admission qualifications in the form of a university eligibility certificate is an international novelty. Individuals who do not qualify for university admission under the normal regulations may obtain direct admission to Austrian universities by means of a restricted eligibility certificate. This means that senior citizens who did not take the necessary school leaving exams may pursue degree courses.

Promotion of Inform and Communications Technology Competence

University study significantly increases the satisfaction that older students have with their lives. Three quarters of those over 55 say that they now are now generally more satisfied than before they started studying. A university education not only changes and stimulates the process of self-change and self-reflection, research also shows that it increases empowerment.

Research also shows that other effects of study include the acquisition of technical skills – many senior citizens only learn to use the Internet and its services as a result of their studies.

In Austria 25 percent of the 50 plus generation have a computer. Only 13 percent have Internet access at home, 8 percent have it at the office. 78 percent of those over 50 have no Internet access at all. In this connection, the Austrian Ministry of Generations supports numerous educational opportunities to strengthen the ICT competence of older people (e.g. Internet courses, Internet cafes).

Multiplicator Courses: Euro Fitness for Senior Citizens

To inform those people who are ill, no longer mobile, live in old people's or nursing homes or who require special care and attention, about the euro and the currency conversion, a project was set up to train multipliers who can convey the necessary information to senior citizens in an appropriate form.

The BMSG funded training courses for around 400 multipliers. Special training material was also provided free of charge. Most of those invited to participate in this nationwide project were district health and social workers, citizen's advice bureaus, old age people's homes and nursing homes, volunteer workers, academies for social work and geriatric care training institutions.

The success of the project is documented not least of all by the fulsome praise given by the Euro Price Commission to the BMSG for its excellent work in preparing senior citizens for the introduction of the euro.

Further Training for Nursing Family Members – Activating those in Need of Care

Further training measures for family members caring for elderly relatives are an important contribution to making their indispensable care work easier and thus affordable in the future. The model project "Activation Programme to Promote, Reactivate and Preserve Cognitive and Motor Skills and Sensitising and Training Sensory Modality" is designed to show older people and those who care for them – be they family members or members of the mobile care services – how they can use targeted exercises to help the individual requiring care to preserve and improve their mental facilities, recover physical mobility and make conscious use of their sensory organs.

After trials have been completed and the programme

evaluated, multiplier training courses will be held within the target group of nursing relatives and other carers (e.g. those working for social services, old age people's homes and nursing homes.).



4 Policies in the Interests of the Family

The object of Austrian family policy is to guarantee families living in Austria a maximum degree of social security and fair compensation for their contributions. The instrument that serves this purpose is the Family Burden Equalisation Fund (FLAF). The fund finances the two central family policy transfer payments, namely family allowance and child care benefit. The Austrian family support system is one of the best developed in Europe. Apart from the high level of financial transfers, Austrian family policy is increasingly focussing on improving the compatibility of work and the family. On this basis, young men and women should be encouraged to take heart and have a child.

Financial Security through Family Allowance and Child Care Benefit

The two key transfer payments to families in Austria are family allowance and the new child care benefit that was introduced on 1 January 2002:

- Irrespective of employment or income, parents who have a home or their permanent residence in Austria have the right to family allowance for their children. The mother has the prime right to claim. There are special provisions for foreign citizens. Family allowance amounts to 105.4 euros from the date of birth onward, 123.6 euros for children over the age of 10 and 145.4 euros for children over the age of 19. There is an additional allowance of 131 euros for a seriously disabled child. As of 1 January 2002, if family allowance is drawn for two children, the total amount of family allowance will increase by 12.8 euros a month. Families drawing family allowance for three or more children will receive an additional 25.5 euros per child. Family allowance may be drawn until the child's 27 birthday.

■ The new child care benefit takes the system of burden equalisation further along the road toward a system of contribution equalisation. The child care benefit recognises the care provided by parents, while at the same time giving them greater freedom of choice and significantly improving the compatibility of work and the family. All parents receive a child care allowance of 436 euros a month, irrespective of whether they were in employment before the birth of a child or not. If mother and father take turns at caring for the child, child care benefit may be drawn for up to 36 months. The provision permitting a parent to earn up to 14,600 euros in addition to the benefit encourages and makes it easier for parents to maintain contact with the working world. This in turn makes it easier for them to return to employment after parental leave, thus significantly improving their chances of professional development. This is particularly true in the case of women. In the final analysis, this should also bring about an improvement in women's pensions later in life.

Family & Work Audit: Promoting Family Friendly Companies

A working environment that takes into account the needs of families is a key factor toward improving the compatibility of work and the family. To encourage companies to take greater account of family needs in their own business interests – be it in the form of more flexible working hours, flexible work locations and personnel policies that show sensitivity to the needs of families – the ministry developed the Family and Work Audit and promotes its application by business. This sophisticated consulting instrument allows companies to examine their family orientation and take specific measures to improve it, irrespective of the size of the company and field of business. As the audit also gathers, links and analyses quantitative company and family data, it creates the basis for an

objective cost-benefit analysis of family orientation. The Family & Work Audit gives companies an instrument that, once the initial audit has been carried out, can be used repeatedly internally (e.g. to check up on departments and divisions). After the first Family & Work Audit has been successfully completed the company receives a basic certificate. Re-auditing is required after three years. The successfully audited company then receives a three year certificate that may be used for advertising purposes. The amount of the grant depends on the size of the company and the consulting costs. So far, over 20 companies have taken part in a Family & Work Audit and benefited from the positive economic effects of greater orientation toward the needs of families.



5 Equal Opportunities for Older Women

Women account for over 50 percent of the population in Austria. There are over 1.5 million women over the age of 50 in Austria, almost one fifth of the population. However, in many areas, older women are at a disadvantage compared to younger women and men of the same age. Older women suffer from educational disadvantages and greater risk of poverty due to lower income during their working life. Furthermore, they generally also have a greater work load as older women tend to perform unpaid work in the family in addition to any paid work that they might do. Women are also less involved in decision-making processes.

Catalogue of Measures for More Equal Opportunities

In addition to gender mainstreaming, specific support programmes and incentives should be taken to improve the situation of older women. Important areas where action is needed include ensuring that women are independently provided for in old age and have equal access to education.

- Gender mainstreaming focuses on the reorganisation, improvement, development and evaluation of basic policy processes with the goal of bringing a gender-specific perspective into all political concepts and decision-making processes. Austria has made a political and legal commitment to implement the strategy of gender mainstreaming in its national policies. In a cabinet decision of 11.7.2000, the Austrian government agreed to set up a corresponding inter-ministerial working group under the auspices of the Minister for Social Security and Generations.
- Women and men who raise children or care for older family members should be able to do so in

conditions that do not lead to the loss of their entitlements under social welfare law. The child care benefit scheme already includes contribution years that count toward a pension and independent health insurance, while the care allowance and nursing leave are important measures for achieving this goal.

- Fair access to education is an important prerequisite for the inclusion of older people in society. Specific measures should therefore be taken to provide older women with easier access to education and further training.



6 Living Arrangements in Old Age

According to the Austrian Report on the Life Situation of Older Persons, well over 90 percent of older people in Austria live in their "own four walls." The desire for autonomy and responsibility for oneself is intimately linked with the individual living environment. There is a close relation between an elder person's satisfaction with their living conditions and their state of health. Thus older people living in poor housing are far more likely to suffer accidents than those living in better equipped housing.

In 1999 alone 1,248 people over the age of 60 died as a result of accidents. 190,000 were so seriously injured in accidents that they needed medical assistance and 74,000 had to receive hospital treatment after accidents. While the number of accidents suffered by those under 60 has declined in recent years, the figure for over 60 year olds continues to rise.

Austrian ageing policies support senior citizens in their wish to live in their own homes for as long as it is safe and possible for them to do so – and for this reason, they promote new advisory services and housing models.

Action Plan for Increased Safety in the Home

The Action Plan for the Safety of Senior Citizens was set up to reduce older people's higher accident risk through information, prevention and training. Special events will be arranged to provide specific impulses to promote suitable activities to prevent accidents.

The target group for this campaign includes people who deal with senior citizens who still live independently in their own homes – in particular, providers of mobile services for the elderly, health and social care workers, but also geriatric training institutions.

Their staff should be trained to recognise possible dangers (e.g. unsuitable lighting, "stumbling blocks") and to advise those whom they care for about changes that could be made. In many cases, simple home modifications are all that is needed to adapt housing to the needs of senior citizens.

Home Modification Advisory Services

Austria already has many arrangements under planning and building regulations to promote barrier-free living and there are also a large number of grant schemes that serve the same purpose:

- Most guidelines for grant schemes in the provinces explicitly address the target group of "older and disabled persons."
- The ÖNORM standards of the Austrian Institute of Standards lay down clear requirements for buildings for older and disabled persons.
- The city of Vienna assumes contingent liability for loans given to older people for renovation purposes.

All existing advisory and service schemes that provide housing advice in the broadest sense for older people have been analysed and documented in a BMSG study. This forms the basis for a comprehensive index of organisations and institutions that offer housing advice for senior citizens.

New Living Arrangements for Older People

In addition to independent living arrangements with the support of professional care givers and organised living projects in old people's homes, Austria also actively sponsors a number of new housing forms for older people. While these include projects such as house-sharing schemes for senior citizens, the most noteworthy is the concept of multi-generation housing. This term applies to intergenerational housing

projects that promote cohabitation among several generations not only within the family, but also among people who are not related. Projects with houses for three generations help counter the increasing isolation and loneliness facing older people, especially in rural areas where the single family dwelling is the predominant form of housing. The "Housing for Help" scheme run by GEFAS and the students' union of Graz University is another example of the new form of living arrangements. Older people who live in large flats but who require a little help with everyday tasks provide students with rooms in exchange for their practical assistance. Students and older people wishing to take part in the scheme can get to know each other at a co-ordination centre.



7 Nursing and Care

The changing structure of the population places new demands on the care of the elderly. The increased number of very elderly people is particularly important in this context. The number of people in the 75 to 85 age group will rise from 400,000 at present to around one million in 2035, and the number of people older than 85 will rise from 140,000 at present to between 500,000 and 600,000 (see above). At present around 80 percent of those requiring nursing care are looked after in nursing homes, while 80 percent of care is provided in the family by relatives or other private helpers, especially women. 10 percent are cared for by social services.

At present around 330,000 people in Austria (approx. 4 percent of the population) require care.

Like other west European countries, Austria now promotes the expansion of mobile services. This not only supports a varied care structure, it also fulfils the wishes of older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Partial in-care services such as sheltered accommodation, interim and temporary nursing are increasingly complementing traditional residential and non-residential nursing care.

The Care allowance Model: Freedom of Choice for Care

The care allowance system means that in an international comparison Austria provides an excellent basis for ensuring that older people are able to afford the care of their choice and thus live autonomous and need-oriented lives for as long as possible. In contrast to the Federal Republic of Germany, the person requiring care receives the money themselves and can then choose whether they wish to pay for the services of a care institution or give the money to

family members who look after them. Moreover, the care allowance is provided irrespective of income, financial assets or the reason why care is required.

The key criteria for payment are:

- a need for continuous care and assistance due to a physical, mental or psychological disability or a sensory disability, that will foreseeably last longer than six months, and
- a need for over 11 hours of continuous care a month.

The Seven Scale Care Allowance

The care allowance is scaled in seven brackets depending on the degree of care that is required (see table).

The costs of the federal care allowance are financed from the national budget and amounted to some 1.4 billion euros in 2000. Parallel to the introduction of the care allowance, the provinces agreed to provide for the decentralised and comprehensive development and expansion of out-care, partial in-care and residential care services and to ensure that these uphold minimum standards. Furthermore, the provinces have a duty to ensure that the services offered are part of an organisational network and that information and advisory services are guaranteed.

Care requirement in hours per month	Scale	Amount in EURO/month
Over 50 hours	1	145,40
Over 75 hours	2	268,-
Over 120 hours	3	413,50
Over 160 hours	4	620,30
Over 180 hours, if an extraordinary degree of care is required.	5	842,40
Over 180 hours, if <input type="checkbox"/> care which cannot be co-ordinated timewise is required and this has to be provided regularly during the day and night or <input type="checkbox"/> the continuous presence of a care giver is required during the day and night, because the elderly person is likely to endanger themselves or others.	6	1.148,70
Over 180 hours, if <input type="checkbox"/> no co-ordinated movement of the four extremities with functional use is possible <input type="checkbox"/> or an equivalent state is ascertained.	7	1.531,50

Nursing Leave. Compassionate Care Instead of "Help Dying"

Experiences with the hospice movement show that terminally patients want to live right until the end if they are offered appropriate palliative therapy, individual care and psychological support. The Austrian government emphatically rejects euthanasia programmes such as those in the Netherlands and instead promotes palliative medicine and mental care and support for the dying.

In future, persons caring for dying family members in Austria will be legally entitled to nursing leave. Employees will enjoy protection against dismissal for up to 6 months. The eligible family members are spouses, linear family members (parents, children, grand-children) adopted and foster children, life partners and siblings. Several members of the family may take this leave simultaneously. An employee may start this leave only five days after giving notice of his or her intention. If the employer refuses to agree, the employee may take recourse to the industrial tribunals. The employee may take leave until the court has reached a decision.

Protection against redundancy and dismissal starts upon commencement of leave and ends four weeks after it has ended. Employees on leave retain full health, pension and unemployment insurance coverage. This also applies to the unemployed who renounce unemployment benefit or emergency welfare relief in order to take nursing leave.



8

The Contribution of Older People to Intergenerational Solidarity

Generational solidarity in Austria is based on a sure foundation. Scientific surveys show that the willingness among younger and older people to relate to one another and help each other is far greater than was assumed. That is an important basis for sustainably strengthening solidarity between the generations, which is one of the most important goals of Austrian generational policies. Contrary to the impression that might be created by a pay-as-you-go pension system that it is exclusively the younger generation that finances the older generation, transfers from old to young also play an important role. The BMSG wishes to establish transparency in the area of generational transfers to make clear the mutual dependency between the generations.

Transfers from Old to Young

According to the 1998 study "Relations between the Generations," both the transfer of assets and financial payments from the older generation to the younger generation, as well as the social support given by the middle ("sandwich" generation) to the older generation are considerable.

- Every tenth senior citizen gives over 2,900.- euros annually to the younger generation (children/grandchildren).
- Four fifths of grandparents give their grandchildren money, in just under 40 percent of the cases, these gifts exceed 36 euros a year.
- One fifth of senior citizens sets aside money for the next generation, 12 percent finance a building society savings account for a child or grandchild, and 8 percent have concluded a life insurance policy for their children or grandchildren
- One third of "bigger gifts" made by older people to the younger generation consist of cash, payment

of housing costs or the costs of building a house.

- Almost one third of the older generation says that it has already given their children part of their inheritance, while only one fifth will not leave their children any inheritance at all.

The financial transfers from old to young are an eminently important means of support for young families.

Families as Solidarity Hubs

More than any other institution it is the family that provides security in emergencies and when help and support are required. Studies show that none of those surveyed would be refused help by their families. Young people require support far more frequently than their elders, in particular financial support and help caring for children and they also have a greater need to talk to someone about their problems and worries. The parental generation regularly meets this need for help.

Generally, help is mostly provided by female family members. In 60 percent of Austrian families grandparents help look after their grandchildren, whereby 10 percent do so on a daily basis and 19 percent do so weekly.

The studies show that while there is a potential for conflict between the generations, particularly where values and lifestyles are concerned, there is no hostility. An unbridgeable gulf between young and old of the kind often said to exist in the public debate could not be ascertained in Austria. Overall, researchers noted an astonishingly high degree of solidarity between the generations in Austria.

9

The Contribution of Older People to Society

Austrian ageing policy is especially concerned to advance the process of re-evaluation of old age that was initiated with the International Action Plan in 1982 and to promote a change in attitudes. Above all, this includes accepting that people who have reached retirement age are just as valuable and important members of the community as before. The International Year of Volunteers in 2001 provided important support for Austria's efforts to show the importance of older people for the good of the community. Older people represent a huge potential for intergenerational voluntary work. The more this is utilised, the more evident it becomes that senior citizens are not merely passive contribution recipients, but active contributors to society themselves. This voluntary work is not only indispensable for the community, it also offers older people who have retired the opportunity to find meaning and fulfilment in their lives, thus fulfilling the intention of active ageing.

International Year of Volunteers 2001: Focus on Older Volunteers

In the International Year of Volunteers Austria set up no less than eight expert groups to draw up specific measures to improve conditions for volunteer work. As well as focussing on the target group of young people, particular attention was directed to older people and potential volunteers from among this age group. The proposals drawn up by the participating experts and volunteers were incorporated into Austrian volunteer policies. As one of the first results; Austrian Citizens' Offices for Young and Old (see below) will be developed into regional "volunteer exchanges" that will help people who wish to become involved in volunteer work find a suitable area of work.

The extensive publicity given to volunteer work in the International Year made it possible for older people to demonstrate the importance of their role as voluntary workers. Many of the highly publicised Volunteer Awards 2001 given to honour unique or particularly long term volunteer work were given to older people.

EU-Exchange Programmes for Older Volunteers

The pilot project "European Exchange Programme for Older Volunteers" was carried out within the framework of the International Year of Volunteers. The object of the programme was to give older volunteers access to experience and information exchanges and recognition for their services to the community. The concept for a European exchange programme for older volunteers is based on the results of a feasibility study sponsored by the European Commission and supported by the BMSG. A total of 150 volunteers from eight European nations (Belgium, Germany, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Austria) participated in the first exchange programme in autumn 2001, whereby Austria was represented by 21 volunteers. Austria acted as a best practice model for Europe in the preparations, funding, co-ordination and organisation of the exchange programme.

Due to the great success of the exchange programme, Austria is now urging the European Commission to utilise the experiences gained from the feasibility study and the pilot project in a European exchange programme for older volunteers.

10 Preparing for Retirement

For many people retirement entails a major change in their view of life, which in some cases can even lead to the so-called "pension shock." An important prerequisite for active and self-determined ageing is an awareness of one's personal opportunities for the future. It is also crucial that the difficult transitional period from employment to retirement is structured as well as possible. Insights gained from courses that prepare older employees for retirement and life after they leave employment show the success of such measures. People who have participated in these kind of courses are more contented, plan their lives more consciously, expand their personal contacts and are more willing to engage in voluntary activities and feel healthier.

Feasibility Study and Model Project for a Transitional Period with Support

As compared to other EU member states Austria has only a very small number of measures to support older persons in the "transition to retirement," the BMSG commissioned a feasibility study to evaluate existing models, question experts and prepare for the implementation of such programmes. A course to prepare workers for retirement is being developed and tested as part of a model project with an Austrian supermarket chain.

The course is based on a modular concept and includes social-psychological, legal and medical information and advisory modules:

- The social-psychological module focuses on assisting retirees develop new concepts for their lives and new processes for finding meaning.
- The health advice module focuses on prevention and strengthens a sense of responsibility for one's own health.

- Practical legal advice ensures that the legal issues associated with retirement are optimally solved (e.g. severance pay, pension law, arrangements for the payment of pensions, protection against discrimination).

The Minister for Generations is paying for the development of the modules and some of the costs for the course advisors.



11 Strengthening Dialogue Between Young and Old

The international discussion about "civil society" has shown that the quality of a society is significantly influenced by the active involvement of its citizens. In addition to social commitment and neighbourhood activities, interaction between the younger and older generations also plays an important role. In order to activate the potential of older people for the good of the community and as a new platform for dialogue between the generations, the Generation ministry is promoting the establishment of Citizens' Offices for Young and Old.

Citizens Offices for Young and Old: Generation Hubs

In the last three years, the BMSG has opened a total of 30 Citizens Offices for Young and Old in almost all provinces. When drawing up the guiding principles upon which such Citizens Offices for Young and Old are based, the ministry was able to make use of the experience with the offices for senior citizens in Germany that were set up in the early 1990's.

The Citizens Offices for Young and Old see themselves as hubs for voluntary work between young and old. They allow individuals to make a self-determined voluntary commitment for a specific period of time in an area that meets their own needs and interests. Citizens Offices for Young and Old have been well accepted by people of all ages in Austria and are now a fixed element of intergenerational work within the community.

Citizens' Offices have started a large number of activities and initiatives that promote intergenerational exchange (e.g. sample computer courses for senior citizens, chauffeur services for older citizens who are no longer mobile, "Lunch Table for Young & Old" – children and senior citizens cook together,

”Bicycle Workshop” – adults show children how to carry out simple repairs).

Furthermore, a ”market” for young people and non-profit organisations was created within the framework of a project bourse to provide young people with project-oriented access to voluntary intergenerational activities.



For further information about Austrian ageing policies and the Austrian best practice models please contact:

Federal Ministry
for Social Security and Generations
Centre for Population and Ageing Policies
Franz Josefs-Kai 51
1010 Vienna
Telefon: ++43/1/711 00-3275
Fax: ++43/1/711 00-3341
E-Mail: eveline.hoenigsperger@bmsg.gv.at
Web: www.bmsg.gv.at