

Illustrations of good practices in Austria

Report of the Center for Population, Ageing and Volunteering Policies
Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection

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The National Report of Austria on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan on Ageing and the Berlin UNECE-Regional Implementation Strategy are under preparation. Please find here some Austrian examples of good practice on ageing policies.

The Image of Older People in the Media

Senior citizens are underrepresented in the media, their needs being more or less invisible.

The representation in the publicity does not focus on factual product information for older people. Often a distorted picture of older people is shown, presenting them in a top form or excessively juvenile and not infrequently representatives of the older generation are presented in an ageist, discriminatory way.

A contract for work and services for the preparation of standards in the advertising industry against a discriminatory presentation of older people in the media has been concluded with the association EURAG Austria.

A working group has elaborated a voluntary restraint code for the media concerning the presentation of older people and presented it to the public in April 2005.

Generational Solidarity

Generational solidarity in Austria is based on a sure foundation.

In Austria two scientific surveys (Generationenbeziehungen in Österreich 1998, Generationensolidarität in Österreich 2005) 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 play an immense role. Austria wishes to establish transparency in the area of generational transfers to make clear the mutual dependency between the generations.

“Nestor” Contest

In 2004 the department initiated the “Nestor” contest, especially highlighting those enterprises, which promote the continued employment of older employees, for instance, as part of an in-company health promotion, age related models for working-hours or motivation, and do not want to do without the valuable know-how of these colleagues.

Furthermore, the “Nestor” competition aims to raise awareness of the demographic challenges of the future and, beyond that, to motivate those older employees, who know about their strong points and want to use them successfully in their working environment, to do so.

Access to lifelong learning

The knowledge-society is a reality, and requires a general rethinking of education opportunities and behaviour with regard to education.

In an increasingly knowledge-driven business world and society, the ability to constantly acquire, evaluate and use new knowledge is becoming a key factor for participation in social, political, economic and cultural life.

The points of departure for the discussion of education from the perspective of a policy on senior citizens are, in principle, the following:

1. offering older people the chance to participate
2. the significance of a knowledge-based society
3. the demographic development
4. lifelong learning

The objective is that all age groups and particularly older people shall be offered equal opportunities and unimpeded access to a high quality and a wide variety of learning opportunities as well as a multitude of learning experiences.

Research

In the field of fundamental research, the research project “The Practice of Education for Older People in Austria – Opportunities and Limits of Intergenerational Learning. Providers and Offers.” was commissioned by the Ministry.

The report contains a detailed discussion of the concept of education, gerontological-sociological reasons for education in getting older and descriptions about education for older people in practice. There is also an empirical section on the recording of education offers and a survey of the course leaders, the results of an investigation into “good practice projects”, a summary of the research results and recommendations for measures in this field.

On the part of the Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection, various measures have been taken in recent years to promote learning in the post-employment phase of life. These measures range from the support of academic education for senior citizens via lecture series to the support of model projects for the development and carrying out of educational projects for older people on various themes. These projects should also serve to promote social integration.

The following model projects were supported:

Further Development of Senior Citizens' Studies:

In 2002/2003 the inter-ministerial working group on “senior citizens' tertiary studies” established with the help of the BMBWK elaborated an extensive conceptualisation for the further development of academic education options available to senior citizens, which was thoroughly discussed by the Federal Senior Citizens Council.

The Co-financing of the EU-Project “Innsbruck Academy for Older People” (Interreg III A, cooperation Tyrol-Bavaria) from 2002 to 2005 provided the opportunity to create and test offers in the field of academic and scientific continuing education for senior citizens as part of a co-operative effort with Garmisch-Partenkirchen and to develop university programmes in the fields of archaeology, reflexive anthropology, sociology and philosophy at a cost below the study grant.

Further to this the Monday Academy (*Montagsakademie*) in Graz has supported a cycle of lectures, which now takes place annually with a changing focus of subjects where known scientists communicate current subjects in a form also accessible to non-specialists.

Development of a 3rd Age College

The goal here is to create new opportunities for senior citizens in cooperation with the University of Graz. The project focuses on the elaboration of sound decision criteria with regard to the question of how a college/university for the 3rd age can be established as part of existing university structures. This programme will provide new access to university studies, scientific/academic training and continuing education, promote participation in higher academic/scientific and general education and offer access to professional and post-professional qualification programmes particularly for individuals from disadvantaged social groups.

Departing from the necessity of creating or launching measures to satisfy the growing demand for further education also within societal groups that are excluded from or less likely to participate in education and universities, the focus is the creation of new "senior citizen related" offers in the field of tertiary education especially tailored to the needs of these the target groups, the development of alternatives in addition to the existing programmes and the elaboration of an attractive, demand-oriented offer for target groups, whose representatives have not been able to participate to a satisfying degree in university education as well as scientific education and continuing education.

A central issue was also the promotion of conferences, which deal with the topic of education in old age for very specific target groups, such as family members who act as informal carers and people on the threshold of retirement. This also includes projects which serve to promote inter-generational exchanges of views and experience and in which older people can pass on their knowledge and experience to younger ones. Further examples are the support of further education offers for professionals in the field of work with senior citizens, or of palliative care courses.

Senior Citizens Safety Campaign

The Senior Citizens Safety Campaign, which receives key support from the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection, concentrates on the themes of information, prevention and training.

In prevention, the free brochure "Living safely - living better" from the Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection offers extensive information on how sources of danger in living areas can be recognised and eliminated. It also points out sources of help in everyday life and lists advice centres, which can be contacted. A short film on the subject of "Avoiding Accidents at Home" shows the most important sources of danger for household accidents and possible solutions. In the area of training, a curriculum for trainers and facilitators has been drawn up, which is the basis for nationwide training courses on the subject of safety for senior citizens in 2005. The training of facilitators is intended to enable them to pass on specialist information and advice.

The aim is a clear reduction of the number of fatal accidents and accident-related hospital stays and the improvement and preservation of the quality of life and the creation of opportunities for older people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

Older Women

Co-financing for the EU-Project "Mapping Existing Research and Identifying Knowledge Gaps – MERI" in 2003 and 2004.

The project "MERI - Mapping Existing Research and Identifying Knowledge Gaps" relating to the situation of older women in Europe focuses on gathering more knowledge about the specific living conditions and problems of older women, improving the empirical foundations concerning the situation of older women for scientific works and raising the awareness of a broad public on the situation of older women. This and the study about the extent of a gender- and age related differentiation of the statistical data so gathered are central issues in guaranteeing the basic preconditions for the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in all policy sectors.

Citizens' offices for Young and Old

In the last few years, 28 Citizens Offices for Young and Old were established with the support of the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection in almost all Austrian provinces.

The Citizens Offices act as centres for people who want to do voluntary work or make enquiries. At the same time, they are platforms for autonomous groups and initiatives, which work for the benefit of the community and for which active cooperation in the region is a matter of concern. People of any age, gender, origin or political persuasion can play a part in the Citizens Offices with their ideas and concerns, and can create networks and bring things about together.

A central function of the Citizens Offices for Young and Old with regard to voluntary services policy is that in this way supply and demand for voluntary engagement can be brought together at a local level. This important function of the Citizens Offices is being developed in a targeted way by the establishment of regional volunteers exchanges. The interactive database on the website www.freiwilligenweb.at offers an overview of the existing Citizens Offices and serves as support for the coordination activities of the Volunteers Exchanges.

Active Ageing and Volunteering

Austrian Council for Voluntary Work

The Austrian minister of social security, generations and consumer protection took the initiative to the follow-up of the International Year of Volunteers by establishing the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work by the common Decision of Ministers of 17. 6. 2003.

The Council for Voluntary Work aims at:

- Improvement of basic conditions of voluntary work
- Counseling of the federal minister of social security, generations and consumer protection in questions of volunteers issues
- Lobbying and networking of volunteers and organizations

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*.

Austrian Volunteer Pass and Confirmation of Voluntary Work

In 2001 the „working group on recognition, appreciation and off-spring promotion of voluntary work“ recommended the implementation of a confirmation of voluntary work. Volunteers distinguish themselves in having special qualifications. The confirmation of voluntary work should make these qualifications visible and applicable in the world of work, where „social skills“ have become more and more important. Voluntary commitment is not just a treasure for the common good, but also should be a treasure for the professional career of volunteers.

In order to encourage volunteers to exhibit their voluntary commitment with self-confidence, and in order to show people, that voluntary commitment pays off and that the time spent pursuing charitable activities is anything but meaningless „downtime“, the Austrian Volunteers Pass, which volunteers can use to document their voluntary work throughout their lives, was created.

Basic-curriculum for training and further training of volunteers

A basic curriculum for the training of volunteers was developed, which enables different associations and organisations to adapt the curriculum to the needs for training of volunteers in their specific field of action.

Volunteers-Management-Curriculum for coordinators

Organisations have to take initiatives to attract, motivate, lead and train volunteers. A Curriculum for the education and qualification of volunteers' accompanists (3 days), - coordinators (6 days) and -managers (9 days) was developed.

Internet platform on Volunteering

The web site www.freiwilligenweb.at informs of current initiatives in the field of volunteering in Austria, as well as the large range of ongoing activities involving voluntary work.

More than 600 organisations and associations from all walks of life that are committed to voluntary work have already registered on this web site, which offers interested volunteers a comprehensive overview of the multitude of voluntary and honorary activities available and the benefits offered to volunteers in these organisations. Enquiries and services by volunteers and their organisations are networked on the Internet platform offered at www.freiwilligenweb.at.

Competition “Austria’s Senior Citizen Friendly Community 2006“

This competition honours those communities which have shown overwhelming support for senior citizens, for instance, by initiating care projects, computer training, leisure time activities, innovative activities in the construction sector etc.

Fit and Active in Older Age

The activity programme “FIT and ACTIVE in old age” - especially for older people to train their cognitive, motor and sensory competencies.

It is an accepted fact among gerontologists that active use of the body, mind and senses protects people from premature ageing, and that even very old people, whose mobility is already restricted or has been completely lost, can regain their physical mobility with

appropriate activity and can also improve their mental performance and employ their senses more consciously.

This is also the approach of the “Activation programme for the promotion, reactivation and preservation of cognitive and motor competencies and for the sensitisation and training of the senses”, which has been developed by the organisation Menschen im Lebenszyklus (People in the Lifecycle).

The aim of training facilitators is to provide them with general information about the ageing process, about how to deal with old people in care situations, about different ways of promoting mental and physical flexibility and about training the senses. Further elements of the facilitator training courses are an introduction to the teaching aids and practical tips for performing the individual exercises, but also training in methods for the avoidance of overtaxing people (and of asking too little of them) and maintaining their motivation.

It is important that facilitators be taught that older people’s thought and action processes slow down and that it takes them correspondingly longer to process information. Clear, short instructions are therefore a prerequisite for the successful employment of the exercise programme.

The criterion for success in the case of old people who have lost a large part of their facilities is not to concentrate on their deficits but to strengthen the competencies, which they still have. The importance of carrying out all exercises in a playful way should additionally be conveyed to facilitators. The programme should be enjoyable and should never create pressure to perform well.

The target group for facilitator training courses including reflection seminars and coaching are the staff of social- and health institutions, voluntary staff of visiting services and carers and informal carers looking after people who are still at home.

Federal Care Ombudsperson

In 2005 a Federal Office of the Care Ombudsperson was created for people in need of care and their relatives to address problems and complaints in the field of long-term care provision. As a service supplementary to the care hotline, this group of persons can also ask for a free visit to get counselling on issues of care at home, including a check for care aids. If needed, contact can also be made with the appropriate bodies (e.g. authorities) on behalf of those concerned so as to give them organisational help and support.

Care Hotline and Internet platform “Caring at home”

The “Care Hotline – Counselling for Caregivers”, which can be reached at the toll-free number 0800/20 16 22, is another free service in this field.

Individuals who are either caregivers or affected by carerelated problems are the addressees of the care hotline which is an information hub and advisory body. In 2004 5,525 counselling and information sessions were offered, most of them over the phone.

The Internet platform “Caring at home” offers assistance and mutual exchange of caregivers on www.bmsg.gv.at.

Quality assurance for long-term care at home

Qualified members of the nursing staff visit persons in need of care and their care-givers at home

In Austria 80% of all older persons requiring longterm care remain in their homes and are cared for and assisted by relatives and informal carers.

Quality assurance was implemented to the Federal Care Allowance Act in 2001. Since then those authorities, who are responsible for granting care allowances, have to this purpose the possibility to move measures to assure quality in the fields of care at home, particularly in form of visits of persons, who are requiring long-term care, to their homes.

Referring to the positive experiences of the projects in the years 2001 and 2003 this quality measure was widely extended in the whole area of Austria and was made to an institutionalized and ongoing measure situated at the Competence Center of the social insurance institution of farmers. Concerning this measure this Competence Center is responsible for all social insurance institutions.

Within the scope of "quality assurance for long-term care at home" the actual situation is evaluated in the course of visits to the home of the person receiving care allowance and to the family members providing care.

At the moment 46 academically qualified members of the nursing staff visit persons in need of care, who receive long-term care allowance of level 3 to 7 and their care-givers. The main emphasis is put on giving informations, support and detailed personal consultations concerning all questions that are in a connex with care at home and providing informations about other institutions and care facilities.

This measure is not only important for the ensurance of the quality of care at home but also meaningful for matters of prevention to avoid or delay the need for long-term care.

QM-Model E-Qalin and National Quality Certificates for Residential Homes for Senior Citizens and Nursing Homes

Austria is a partner in the European Project E-Qalin, which aims at developing a specialised model for the quality management of residential homes and nursing homes for older people.

In a pilot stage (October 2004 to October 2005) a national manual as well as training modules for assessors were elaborated by the project leaders, together with professionals and home managers and the QM-model E-Qalin was then established in nine pilot houses in Austria. The results of the pilot stage were presented to some 700 participants from the organising countries on Nov. 18th 2005 at the international E-Qalin congress in Vienna

A further important step was the nation-wide certification of residential and nursing homes for older people. The objective here was the improvement and transparency of the offered services in the interest of the (potential) clients as well as an optimisation of the resources and an increase of the competitiveness of residential and nursing homes for older people.

For the elaboration of the certification's conception the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection together with the umbrella organisation of the home managers has established a working group including representatives of the responsible departments of the provinces (Laender), the provincial cooperatives or LaenderARGEN of the individual home managers, the directors of care services and experts on quality

management. The working group will establish preconditions for the application for the national certificate, quality requirements and the certification process.

In the two meetings of working groups in September 2005 und January 2006 the requirements of the provinces for the National Quality Certificate (NQZ) as well as the objectives were settled. The working group has agreed that existing standards, quality management systems and seals of approval will be included in the NQZ, and concrete impulses for further development shall be applied. All sectors, processes and results shall also be considered from the point of view of the homes' residents.