

Information
and more

Austria

From the Beginning



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Preface

Welcome to Austria! This brochure will provide you with practical information for your successful integration in Austria. In it, you will find numerous tips and hints that will make life and living together in Austria easier. The topics discussed in this brochure have been selected based on the National Action Plan for Integration, which represents the integration strategy applicable in entire Austria.

People who integrate successfully in Austria are an asset for all of us. This is a view that we also promote to the public. As part of our campaign "Together:Austria", female and male immigrants who have built a successful life for themselves in Austria visit schools as "Ambassadors of Integration" and discuss the topic integration with the students.

Austria has a lot to offer to immigrants. In return, we expect immigrants to make an active effort to integrate successfully. Achievement pays off for the individual man and woman and at the same time, it means progress for the entire society. Learning the German language is the first vital contribution to integration that we would expect from you.

Aside from language difficulties, it is often small things in everyday life that are difficult for a person coming from another country. Where do I find a school for my children, where can I find a doctor? What must I do to have my diplomas and degrees recognised in Austria? Where can I get involved in my spare time? Sharing spare time activities with other people is another important topic. It is in this area where it becomes eventually evident whether a person has really acclimatised in the new country and has been integrated into the society – or not. We have therefore included topics relevant for social integration, such as sports or culture, in this brochure.

Our new immigration system of the Red-White-Red Card provides clear general conditions for settling down in Austria and for working here. It makes it possible to benefit better from the potentials that qualified immigration offers. After all, immigration should benefit all parties involved.

With the integration centres operated by the Austrian Integration Fund and Habibi, the House of Education and Vocational Integration, we offer you a central contact point where you can find answers to any questions that concern you as an immigrant. I would like to invite you: Make use of this offer and get advice – for your success in Austria!



Sebastian Kurz
Sebastian Kurz
State Secretary for Integration

2 Austria at a Glance



Facts about Austria!

Population: 8.4 million
Official language: German
Surface area: 83 879 sq km
Currency: Euro
National Day: 26 October [Day of the Decision on the Neutrality Act]

Austria is a successful country in the heart of Europe. Austria is proud of its competitive economy, an achievement-oriented population and exceptional natural and cultural landscapes.

Culture: Year after year, millions of tourists visit the country and enjoy its beauties. Austria is world-renowned for its artistic and cultural achievements. In the 18th and 19th century, Vienna was a centre of international music life. To this date, opera, theatre and classical concerts are important parts of public life. The New Year's Concert of the Vienna Philharmonics is broadcast in many countries around the world. Also regional customs are culturally attractive, for example folk dances – a tradition that is preserved by associations throughout Austria.

Economy: Austria's economy is characterised by small and medium-size companies. Together with the major industrial corporations, they ensure economic strength and provide employment in the country. Thanks to their achievements, numerous Austrian companies have become world market leaders in economic niches. Compared to other EU countries, Austria's agricultural sector has a high grassland percentage, small-scale structures and a large number of organic farms.

[Austria at a Glance](#)



Eating and drinking: An attractive culinary offer also forms part of Austria's cultural landscape. It is characterised by historical influences, for instance from Hungary, Bohemia or Italy. Wiener Schnitzel and Sachertorte are well-known in many countries. Austria's wine growers are particularly successful and produce internationally awarded quality wines. Closely linked with the wine growing tradition are the Heurigen wine taverns or "Buschenschanken", which are very popular among Austrians and tourists alike.

Sports: Thanks to its geographic location, Austria is among the best in the world in numerous winter sports activities, for instance alpine skiing competitions, ski jumping or snowboarding. Winter sports are important in Austria. Large parts of the population watch TV broadcasts of winter sports. Children at schools attend ski courses. But also soccer and tennis are popular in Austria.

Federal States: Austria has nine Federal States, the "Bundesländer": Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol, Vorarlberg and Vienna, which is a Federal State and the Federal Capital at the same time. The Federal States play an important role in Austria as far as culture and politics are concerned.



Geography: Austria is considered an "Alpine Republic" – and rightly so: About 60 percent of the state territory is made up by mountains. With a height of 3 798 m, the Großglockner in the Hohen Tauern is the highest mountain. The largest lake partially situated in Austria is Lake Constance in Vorarlberg. However, only about 7 percent of its total surface area of 571.5 sq km is part of Austria. At the opposite end of the state territory, in the far East, the Neusiedler Lake is situated, and about 77 percent of its total surface area of 315 sq km form part of Austria.

Religion: The large majority of Austrians are Roman Catholic. Islam is the largest non-Christian community of faith. Approx. one million Austrians do not belong to any religious denomination.

A Brief History of Austria



The area that makes up Austria today has been inhabited since the Old Stone Age. The Celtic Kingdom of Noricum existed from approx. 800 to 400 B.C.

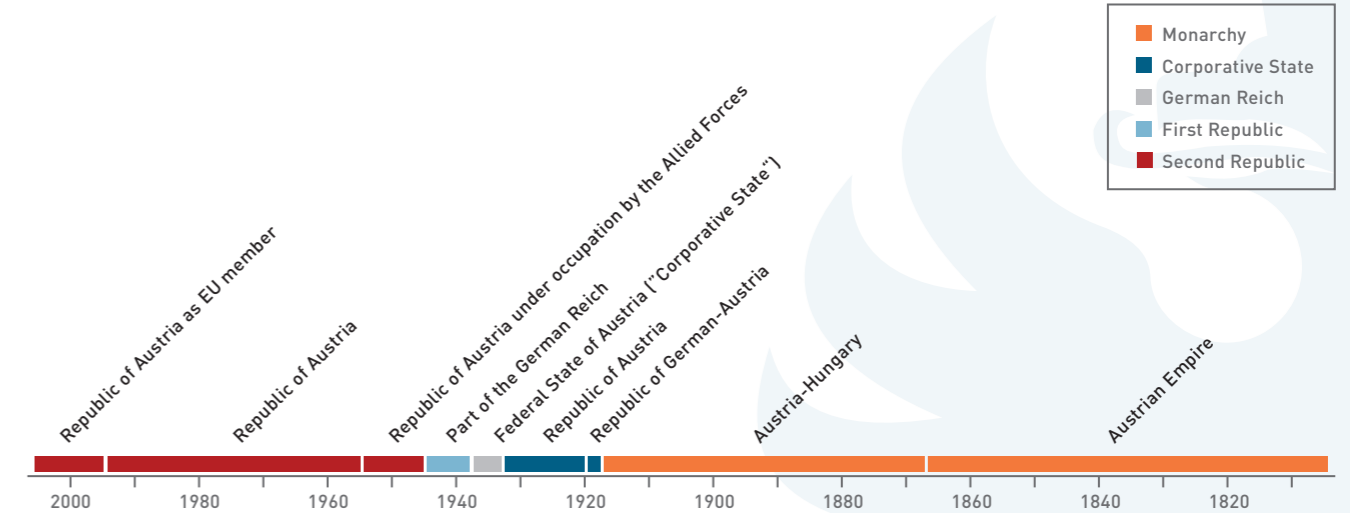
The name "Austria" appeared for the first time as "Ostarrichi" in a deed of donation of Emperor Otto III from the year 996. In the Middle Ages, the Babenberg dynasty ruled. They were followed by the Habsburg dynasty that ruled from 1278 to 1918. As a result of World War I (1914–1918), the multiethnic state of Austria-Hungary disintegrated.

On 12 November 1918, Austria became a republic ("First Republic"). This democracy ended in 1933/34, when Federal Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß – who was later murdered by the National Socialists – founded an authoritarian corporative state.

On 12 March 1938, the German Wehrmacht marched into Austria. This was followed by the so-called "Anschluss" (union) with the National Socialist German Reich. Austrians were also involved in the National Socialist crimes committed in World War II and the Holocaust. On the other hand, Austrians were also among the victims of this violence.

After World War II, Austria was restored as a republic ("Second Republic"), however, was occupied by the victorious Allied Forces (Great Britain, France, USA, Soviet Union) for ten more years. In 1955, the Austrian State Treaty was signed. Since then, Austria has been a "neutral" state and a member of the United Nations.

Following a referendum, Austria joined the European Union in 1995. Since 2002, Austria has been a member of the Euro zone.



Social Engagement



The willingness to work and the sense of responsibility of the people in Austria are also evident in their voluntary engagement. Almost 45 percent of Austrian men and women are working voluntarily and without pay in organisations, clubs and associations, or help in a neighbour support system. Without these contributions, Austria would be much poorer from a social, sports or cultural perspective.

In many areas, voluntary engagement comes natural for the people. They are engaged in rescue services, in the auxiliary fire brigade, and in music associations or sports clubs, for example.

Voluntary engagement pays in all aspects. For instance, an increasing number of employers wish to know whether the job applicant is engaged voluntarily, as voluntary work opens up opportunities for learning important social and technical skills.

For more information about clubs and associations in Austria and a complete list of all clubs and associations, visit:

► www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_vereinswesen/

TIP!

Get involved in a club or association to make more personal contacts in Austria.

The National Action Plan for Integration



With the National Action Plan for Integration (NAP), integration-political measures of all relevant stakeholders have been concentrated successfully for the first time. The Action Plan is the result of a comprehensive work process that involved, aside from the respective ministries, all Federal States, the Association of Towns and Municipalities, the social partners, i. e. the representatives of employers and employees, the industrial association and organisations of civil society.

The fields of action of the NAP are:

- ▶ Language and education
- ▶ Work and job
- ▶ Legal state and values
- ▶ Health and social issues
- ▶ Intercultural dialogue
- ▶ Sports and leisure
- ▶ Living and the regional dimension of integration

This brochure takes up and explains many of these topics.

TIP!

Visit www.integration.at where you can find all relevant information on the National Action Plan for Integration and also on the work of the State Secretariat for Integration.

Language



German is the most widely spoken mother tongue in the European Union (EU). It is primarily spoken in Germany, Austria, German-speaking Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Eastern Belgium, South Tyrol and Alsace.

► Why learn German?

Knowledge of the German language is indispensable for living and working in Austria. Whether in the supermarket, at the doctor or at work: A person who can speak German can make him- or herself understood better and more easily. Also participation in social life, talking with friends and colleagues, visiting restaurants or events will be much easier – and much more fun. Proficiency in German will determine your job and career opportunities in Austria. Your personal commitment to learning the German language will pay.

TIP!

Contact the staff at the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and inquire about options to attend German language courses. Information on internationally recognised German language certificates are available from the ÖIF at www.integrationsfonds.at/integrationsvereinbarung

► How well should I learn German?

In general: The better you learn German, the better for you. However, for nationals of third states who sign the integration agreement, there are legally required minimum language skills if they wish to settle down in Austria permanently:

Before entering the country ...

...you must prove proficiency in German at A1 level. This also applies to your family members if they wish to follow you to Austria.

After entering the country ...

... you will sign the integration agreement and commit yourself to learning German at A2 level within two years.

In order to stay in Austria permanently ...

... you will eventually have to learn the language at B1 level. This is also required for obtaining Austrian citizenship.

There are exceptions to this "obligation to learn German", for example for particularly highly qualified immigrants.

What does A1, A2 und B1 level mean?

A1 level is equivalent to basic knowledge. A person with A1 level would be able to understand known expressions of everyday life and understand easy sentences when spoken slowly. A2 means that the person could additionally handle situations of everyday life, for example shopping or visiting a doctor. At B1 level, a person would also be able to understand more abstract conversations on topics like work or hobbies. A1, A2 and B1 represent the lowest of six language levels in total specified by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages adopted by the European Council.

► German language courses

Integration Agreement

You have signed the Integration Agreement and wish to attend a German integration course? The Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) monitors and certifies the institutes offering these courses in Austria.

Go to www.integrationsfonds.at/integrationsvereinbarung for a list of all certified institutes in Austria.



Offers of the ÖIF

In addition, the ÖIF offers you numerous possibilities for improving your German skills. At Habibi – the House of Education and Vocational Integration in Vienna – the ÖIF offers a wide variety of German language courses. Job-specific courses have been structured according to the requirements of the labour market, for example the language course “German for health care personnel”. In the Federal States Vienna, Styria, Upper Austria and Tyrol, the ÖIF operates integration centres that offer German language courses, among other things.

TIP!

The ÖIF offers financial support for immigrants to learn German. Find out from the ÖIF whether you are eligible for a subsidy:

► www.integrationsfonds.at

Education



Austria has a well-developed education system and a highly qualified population. 66 percent of the population have completed secondary school (university entrance diploma or qualified apprenticeship). 18 percent of the age group between 25 and 64 have a university degree. Only 17.4 percent of Austrian men and women only completed compulsory primary school (Source: Statistics Austria, Education in Figures 2009/2010). All statistics prove: The better the education, the better the income and career opportunities. Therefore it pays to commit actively to your own education and training – and to that of your children.

► Kindergarten

Education already starts in the first few years of a person's life, not only at school. Kindergartens are also important educational institutions. Normally, children between three and six can attend a kindergarten. Other facilities are available for children younger than three, for example crèches or child minders. School children six years and older can also make use of after-school care.

Especially for children who do not grow up with German as their mother tongue, attendance of a kindergarten is extremely important for learning the language.

IMPORTANT!

In the last year before school, it is compulsory for children to attend kindergarten. This compulsory attendance applies to children who turn five before 1 September of the respective calendar year. They have to attend a kindergarten or a children's group.

For more information visit:

► <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Familie/Kinderbetreuung>

► School

In Austria, school attendance is compulsory for nine years for all children who live permanently in Austria. This applies regardless of their nationality.

After attending primary school, children can choose between two types of secondary schools: secondary modern school or New Secondary School (Neue Mittelschule; NMS) or academic secondary school (Allgemein bildende höhere Schule; AHS).

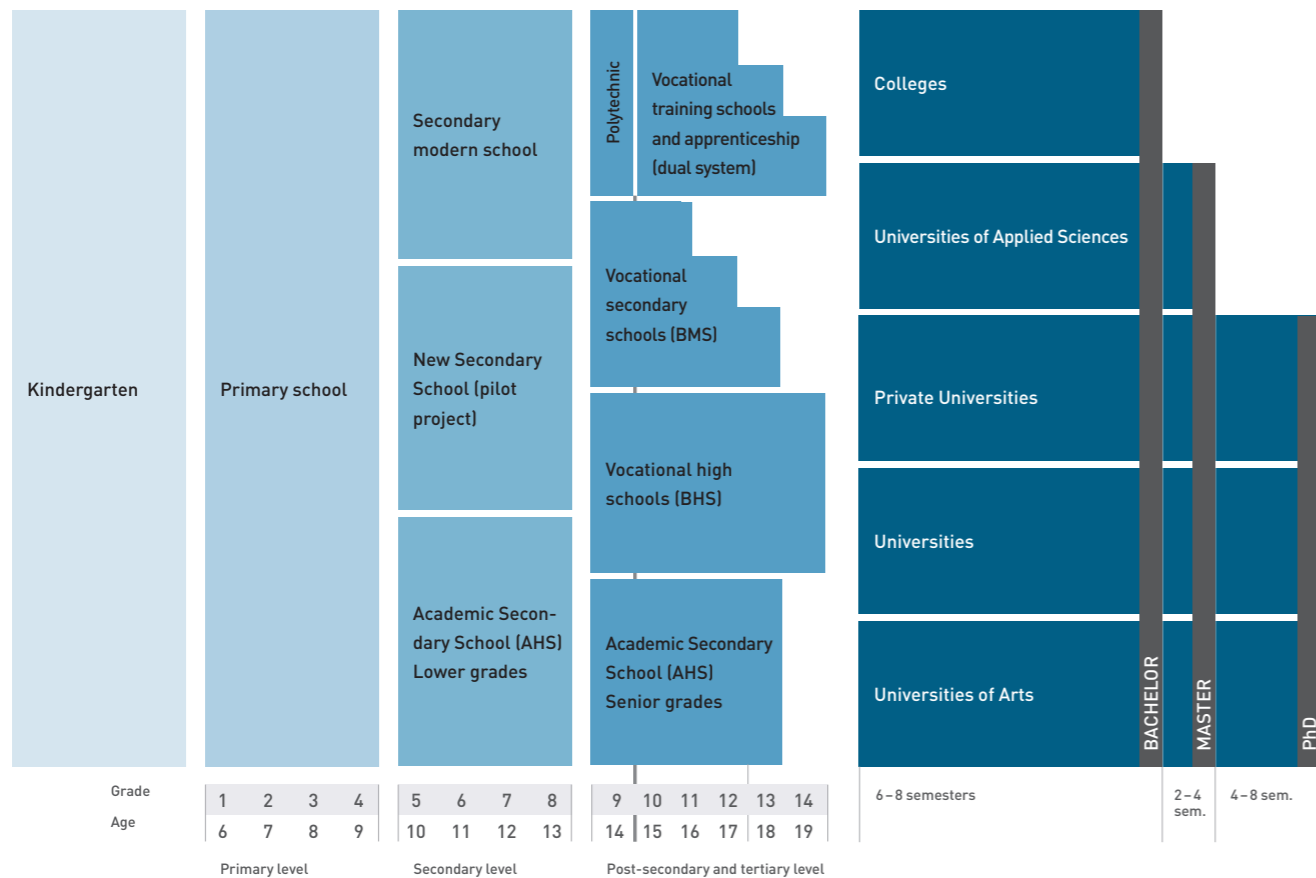
A student will attend a **secondary modern school** for four years. After that, the student can choose to attend a Polytechnic, a Vocational High School (berufsbildende höhere Schule; BHS) or the senior classes at an AHS. In future, the

New Secondary School (NMS) will replace the old secondary modern school throughout Austria. The number of pupils per class is restricted to 25 maximum. Over the next few years, all current secondary modern schools will be changed to the system of the New Secondary School.

Academic Secondary Schools are attended for eight years and, at the end, students must pass the university entrance examination ("Matura"). Matura is the prerequisite for studying at a university or college. Students without Matura may be allowed to enter a university after passing a specific examination.

After eighth grade, a student can also choose to continue his or her school education at a **vocational high school** (BHS). At these, it is possible to obtain vocational training and, after five years, a diploma or university entrance qualification. Consequently, BHS graduates can study at university and have also completed a qualified vocational training. The most important Vocational High Schools:

- Höhere technische und gewerbliche Lehranstalt (Higher technical and vocational school)
- Höhere Lehranstalt für Tourismus (Higher technical education institute of tourism)
- Handelsakademie (Business Academy)



- ▶ Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe (Higher technical education institute for professions in economy)
- ▶ Höhere Lehranstalt für Land- und Forstwirtschaft (Higher technical education institute for agriculture and forestry)
- ▶ Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik (Educational establishment for pre-school pedagogics)
- ▶ Bildungsanstalt für Sozialpädagogik (Educational establishment for social pedagogics)

Some BHS also offer courses of lectures (called "Kolleg") for people in employment.

For more information visit:

- ▶ <http://www.abc.berufsbildendeschulen.at/de/news.asp>

Vocational secondary schools (Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen; BMS) are technical or commercial schools offering vocational qualification and general education. Graduates from these establishments can start their chosen career directly.

TIP!

Make sure to register your child for school early. Procedures for school registration vary from one Federal State to the next. Contact the School Board

responsible for your area to learn more about the necessary steps and forms. For more information visit www.landesschulrat.at

An Austrian particularity are the **vocational training schools**. At a vocational training school, the students alternate between the company where they complete an apprenticeship and school ("dual training"). Depending on the skilled profession they learn, the apprenticeship lasts between two and four years. After completing the apprenticeship, a person has a recognised vocational qualification and may enter the labour market.

TIP!

For a list of all approx. 240 skilled professions for that an apprenticeship is required go to
▶ <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrberufeInOesterreich>

School holidays

Some school holidays vary from one Federal State to the next. To find out the exact holiday periods for the Federal State you live in go to <http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/service/ferien/index.xml>.

IMPORTANT!

It is not allowed to take a child out of school before the start of the school holidays. Where this is required for an important reason, get permission from the headmaster in due time.

► Universities

Austria has a broad and attractive offer of study options. It has 22 universities, 21 universities of applied sciences and 13 private universities (source: BMWF – as in November 2010).

Universities offer a large number of different fields of study. They are scientifically structured and offer more freedom.

Universities of applied sciences follow a more practice-oriented approach and a school-like curriculum. They offer a sound education at academic level. Normally, the acceptance criteria are stricter than for universities since the number of available places is restricted. Depending on the specialisation, job chances are very good as the training is oriented closely to the economy.



Austrian universities have implemented the European Union's Bologna system. Accordingly, studies are normally divided into **Bachelor, Master and PhD** studies. If you have completed a university study course in another country, you should try to get the degree fully or partially recognised. This could increase your job and income opportunities in Austria significantly.

TIP!

Find out about the acceptance procedures at the university or university of applied sciences you would like to attend and also about the registration deadlines early. In some cases, pre-registration for the study course is required prior to the actual registration.

Scholarships and subsidies

Various subsidies and scholarships are available to students, with different prerequisites:

Excellence scholarships are granted for outstanding study achievements regardless of social need. The amount ranges between 727 Euros and 1 500 Euros.

In addition, Austrian students and foreigners of equivalent status as well as stateless persons may apply for study grants.

These are subject to social need and a good studying success.

For more information and possible applications for study grants go to www.stipendium.at.

TIP!

Achievement at a university pays: If your study results are very good, you may be eligible for a scholarship.

▶ Adult education

In Austria, a broad educational offer for adults is available that you can use for developing your professional and personal skills. Adult training centres play an important role in this regard. The educational offer of these can normally be used on a part-time basis after work. Education will increase your possibilities in Austria in all aspects. Make an active effort to improve your education and training.

- ▶ www.erwachsenenbildung.at
- ▶ www.vhs.or.at
- ▶ www.bfi.at
- ▶ www.wifi.at

▶ Recognition of your degrees and diplomas

If you obtained a diploma, certificate or professional qualification abroad, you should try to get these recognised or legalised in Austria. This may have a major effect on your job and career opportunities.

You have attended school abroad?

Before your certificates are recognised in Austria (nostrification), they will be reviewed and compared with the Austrian education system. You may be required to repeat certain examinations.

Verification and nostrification fall under the responsibility of the Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur (Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture; BMUKK).

You can find the respective application forms at

- ▶ www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/nostrifikationen.xml.

You have completed school abroad?

The Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung (Federal Ministry for Science and Research) is responsible for the recognition of university entrance qualifications, which you

will require for studying in Austria, for example.

The university entrance qualifications of 48 states are recognised automatically. You will find the list of these states at:

- ▶ http://www.bmwf.gv.at/startseite/studierende/academic_mobility/enic_naric_austria/faq/anererkennung_von_reifezeugnissen/

The official point of contact is the ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA. For more information visit

- ▶ www.nostrifizierung.at.

You have studied abroad?

If you already have a university degree, you should have it legalised or nostrified. Only then will you be allowed to work and use the title in this profession (for example as a doctor) in Austria as well.

You may apply for nostrification at an Austrian university (university or university of applied sciences or the respective board of education) or at the central information department NARIC of the Ministry of Science.

Agreements concerning university degrees have been signed between Austria and other states, which might make recognition of your degree easier. Contact the ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA at www.nostrifizierung.at.

TIP!

You will find the correct contact for the recognition of your vocational training here:

- ▶ www.berufsanerkennung.at

Working in Austria



Austria is an economically very successful country. Its wealth has been created through the work, diligence and achievements of its population. Despite the difficult general economic conditions, Austria has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe (5.8 percent in the 3rd quarter of 2011). 73 percent of the population between 15 and 64 are employed or self-employed. The employment rate of men is about 79 percent, that of women about 67 percent.

▶ Who is allowed to work in Austria?

Whether you are allowed to work in Austria and whether any restrictions might be applicable to you depends on your residence status. The men and women working at the job centre in Habibi will be happy to advise you on your work options in Austria.

▶ What type of work is available in Austria?

In Austria, people may legally start working once they are 15 years old and have completed their compulsory school education.

Different types of employments and contracts exist. These differ in respect of the kind and scope of the duty to work and the social benefits.

IMPORTANT!

In Austria, you will normally sign a written contract when you start a long-term employment. In such a case, you should insist on being given a written contract. In the event of any disputes with the employer, you will be in a better position if you can submit written documents.

Founding a company

You have a business idea, wish to establish or take over a firm or operate a franchising business? Self-employment may open up attractive professional opportunities. Entrepreneurial thinking and engagement pay off.

Prior to establishing a company, you should get information on the legal requirements and on financial and organisational issues.

TIP!

As part of its service for company founders, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber offers advice that will assist you with the step into self-employment.

▶ www.gruenderservice.at

▶ www.mingo.at

Working as an employee

In Austria, people normally work 40 hours per week (full time). This number may be lower in certain industries, where people might work only 38.5 hours. Employment with fewer hours is also available, for example 20 or 30 hours (part time).

Another important question is whether your contract is temporary. In such case, it will expire after a certain period and needs to be extended.

Working as an independent contractor

As an independent contractor, you will work regularly for an employer, however, will be paid by the hour. You are free to divide your time as you wish and often do not have a workplace at the office.

▶ Taxes and Duties

Austria offers a well-developed public infrastructure: be it roads or schools, the police or hospitals. These services, that all people can enjoy, are paid through taxes. It is therefore important to pay taxes and duties correctly and in due time.

If you work as an employee – meaning that you are not self-employed – you will pay **wage tax**. Your employer will deduct this tax directly and pay it on your behalf to the receiver of revenue. The amount of the wage tax depends on how much you earn.

If you work as an entrepreneur or an independent contractor, you will have to pay **income tax**. You have to complete your tax declaration independently every year and send it to the receiver of revenue. For more information, contact the tax office responsible for you: <http://dienststellen.bmf.gv.at>

In most cases, you will also have to pay **social insurance contributions**. In return, you will enjoy health insurance, meaning that you can consult a doctor free of charge, will receive unemployment benefits should you lose your job, and will be entitled to old-age pension once you have reached a certain age. Normally, social insurance contributions are also deducted directly from your income and paid by your employer on your behalf.

Under some types of contracts, you do not enjoy comprehensive insurance, for example under service contracts. In such event, you will have to register with the insurance and pay

the contributions yourself. If you earn less than 376.26 Euros (2012), you are below the so-called minimum income limit and only “partially insured”; for example, you will not have health insurance. In this case as well, you are required to arrange for health insurance yourself.

IMPORTANT!

If you have insufficient insurance cover, you might incur high costs should you become ill. Make sure that you have insurance at all time.

TIP!

Make use of the comprehensive advice all around the topic tax and duties to prevent unpleasant surprises.

- ▶ www.arbeiterkammer.at
- ▶ <http://help.gv.at>
- ▶ <http://bmf.gv.at>

▶ Finding a job

The **Arbeitsmarktservice** (labour market service; AMS) will support you when looking for a job or apprenticeship. The AMS will also assist you if you still have a job but are planning a career change.

You may visit an AMS office personally or, if necessary, register early as unemployed on the Internet if you are still employed but have terminated your employment contract.

You can find all AMS addresses at

- ▶ <http://www.ams.at/sfa/sfags.html>.

IMPORTANT!

Don't forget your E-Card and official identity document with photograph (e. g. passport) when you visit the AMS for the first time.

▶ Mentoring for immigrants

You have a completed training but experience difficulties finding a job in Austria? Then, “Mentoring for Immigrants” might be the right thing for you. The programme is organised by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the Austrian Integration Fund and the Labour Market Service.

Under this programme, experienced personalities of economic life – male or female mentors – support people with a migration background – mentees – with their integration into the Austrian labour market. The mentor and the mentee work together for

approximately six months after which time the mentee should get a foothold in the labour market. Being stakeholders with good connections in economic life, the mentors will be able to give his or her protégé valuable advice and provide him or her with contacts. This will put you in an even better position so that you can convert your personal achievement and commitment into professional success.

“Mentoring for Immigrants” is available in Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Tyrol, Vorarlberg and Styria.

Make use of this unique opportunity and apply.

For more information visit <http://www.wko.at/mentoring> and www.integrationsfonds.at/mentoring.

Housing



Looking for and finding a suitable apartment is not always easy when you come from another country and wish to settle down in Austria. In addition, real estate prices have increased significantly for some time now. Housing costs may differ greatly depending on the area and region. Apart from the private real estate market, some housing in Austria belongs to the municipalities or not-for profit building associations.

► Buying an apartment

Instead of renting an apartment, many people looking for housing choose to buy a flat. Especially in view of the economic development, many people invest their money in property. As the owner of a flat, you do not have to pay rent, however, will have to pay running costs and, if you took out a loan for purchasing the flat, the corresponding instalments.

Before buying an apartment, you should check your financial options and have a discussion with your bank. Compare the financing offers available.

IMPORTANT!

When buying an apartment, be sure to work with reputable business partners and never sign a contract that you have not read or understood completely.

Buying your own apartment involves many challenges – however, it will also strengthen your ties with Austria. To be on the safe side, consult an attorney or notary.

TIP!

An apartment in Austria is not only a place for you to stay, but also an investment that you can rent out and leave to your children.

► Buying a property

If you as a foreigner wish to buy a property, for example for building a house on it, you will require an authorisation. The purchase must not be inconsistent with cultural, social and macro-economical interests or state political considerations. Normally, the authorisation process will take two to three months; procedures vary from one Federal State to the next.

► Searching and finding an apartment

If you cannot or do not wish to buy a flat, you have the following options:

- **Private rented flat:** You sign a rental agreement with the flat owner.
- **Council flat:** Town councils and municipalities offer a large number of flats.
- **Flats owned by non-profit developers:** These are constructed by not-for-profit building associations, for example cooperatives. In the beginning, you pay a higher contribution, and later a lower rent. You might have to wait a certain period until you are eligible for this type of flat.

The following types of rental agreements exist:

- Permanent rental agreement
- Temporary rental agreement: You have to move out or renew the contract at a certain time.
- Main tenancy: You are the tenant.
- Sub-tenancy: The tenant of the flat sublets a part of the flat to you.

When looking for a flat, you should make use of the following sources of information and offers:

- ▶ People you know in Austria
- ▶ Internet exchanges
- ▶ Non-profit housing associations
- ▶ Your municipality
- ▶ Building managements
- ▶ Estate agents

▶ **Compulsory registration**

In Austria, registration is compulsory. When you move, you have to notify the authorities of your new place of residence. Register within three days after changing your address with the local authority or municipal district office.

IMPORTANT!

Violations of the compulsory registration are punishable by a fine of up to 726 Euros.

Go to <http://help.gv.at> for information on registration, re-registration and deregistration and the applicable deadlines. Keep the **proof of registration ("Meldezettel") you will be given at the district office safe.** It will be required for many administrative formalities.

If you use a secure digital signature (citizen card), you also have the option of applying for and printing out the proof of registration online:

- ▶ <https://bportal.zmr.register.gv.at/fns-p-formserver/instance/Meldebestaetigung.bpel>

▶ **All around housing**

Conflict with the landlord

Should you have a dispute with your landlord, you may contact an arbitration body that will offer assistance. This will help you to come to an agreement without having to go to court.

Arbitration bodies offer help in the following cases, among others:

- ▶ Rental, operating cost and heating cost reviews
- ▶ Execution of maintenance and repair work
- ▶ Main rent increases due to maintenance
- ▶ Recognition as main tenant
- ▶ Toleration of interventions in rental laws
- ▶ Changing of the rented object
- ▶ Determination of claims on transfer
- ▶ Determination of the operating cost portion



Arbitration bodies are available in the major towns in Austria. You can find information about the arbitration body of Vienna at www.wien.gv.at/wohnen/schlichtungsstelle/.

In small municipalities where arbitration bodies are not available, the district courts offer consultation days during that you can ask for a review of the amount of your rent.

Waste separation

Waste separation prevents contamination of the environment by toxic substances such as paints, varnishes or batteries. In Austria, correct separation of waste is very important to people. Often, it is even required by law.

Most households have waste bins with lids in different colours. Separate your waste correctly:

- ▶ Red: paper
- ▶ Yellow: plastic bottles
- ▶ Blue: cans
- ▶ Brown: bio waste
- ▶ Green/white: stained glass, clear glass
- ▶ Black bin: other waste

Batteries can be returned at many shops or be disposed of in battery collection boxes. Take paint, oil or any other toxic substances to a hazardous waste collection point in your area. Pharmacies will accept expired medication. Bulky items can be taken to the nearest scrap yard or waste material collection point. Disposal at these points is free of charge. Many delivery companies will collect old appliances against payment of a fee and dispose of these correctly.

Noise avoidance

Where people live together, especially in the city, noise is an important topic. In Austria, there are certain rules in place for this:

- ▶ **Rest periods:** 10 pm to 6 am. Be considerate towards your neighbour and put your TV or music softer.
- ▶ In many cities, **hooting** is generally prohibited or is only allowed in an emergency.
- ▶ Major **festivities** (for examples balls, performances of music bands, dances) must be approved beforehand by the responsible office of the State Government or the district administration or, in Vienna, the responsible municipal administration. Find out about the conditions and rules applicable to such an event in due time beforehand.

Internet

Depending on the Federal State, different Internet service providers are available. A fixed Internet connection costs about 20 to 30 Euros per month.

Mobile Internet is very popular in Austria and well developed in metropolitan areas. At a price of 10 to 20 Euros per month, the costs are relatively low. Caution: In most cases, the included download volumes are limited. If you exceed these, it will cost significantly more.

Phone

Whether you wish to use the landline phone, a mobile phone or both for making phone calls is up to you. Find out about the available packages offered by the operators.

The international dialling code for phone calls to Austria is 0043.

Electricity, gas, heating

Austria has about 130 different regional and supraregional electricity and gas providers. You have the option of selecting or choosing the provider yourself.

Visit www.e-control.at for information on the utility providers in your Federal State.

TV/radio license fee

If you use a radio or TV set, you have to pay radio and TV license fees. You have to pay this fee even if you do not watch or listen to the public broadcaster ORF.

Register your devices at:

- ▶ www.orf-gis.at

Under certain prerequisites, it is possible to be exempted from the payment of TV and radio license fees. Visit the GIS homepage for information on the requirements and application forms.



In international comparison, Austria has an excellent health system. This system works best if everybody observes the basic rules:

- ▶ If you have any health complaints, consult a general practitioner first.
- ▶ In an emergency, you can go directly to a hospital.
- ▶ Make use of the available preventive medical check-ups: If a health problem is detected early, this will be good for you and for the health system.
- ▶ Exercise and look after your health.

IMPORTANT!

If you have any acute health problem do not hesitate before you consult a doctor. Detecting an illness at an early stage may save your life.

▶ Insurances

In Austria, any person who works must be insured (compulsory insurance). A person with a minimum wage job is insured against accident through his or her employer, however, has the option of taking out full insurance (health, accident and pension insurance) at a contribution of approx. 50 Euros. Minors and students can be included in the insurance cover of their parents. This means that any person will receive benefits from the insurance if this is

necessary. Different social insurance companies are available depending on your profession. Every insured person will receive an "E-Card" that you will need in many situations, for instance when visiting a doctor.

TIP!

For more information visit

▶ www.sozialversicherung.at.

Health insurance

Thanks to your health insurance, you can enjoy diverse health services: This may be medical assistance, treatment at a hospital, nursing at home, rehabilitation, the administration of medication or the purchase of therapeutic aids (for example a wheelchair) and supplies.

The "E-Card" is the key to Austria's health system. Take your E-Card along whenever you visit a doctor. Your name, date of birth, insurance number, sex, your insurance and the card number are stored on the E-Card. Data relating to your health are not stored on it.

The E-Card is valid at a doctor who is contracted in, any insurance establishment, at the establishments of the social insurances and for preventive medical check-ups and medical examinations within the framework of the mother-and-child-pass.

Initial issuing of the E-Card is free of charge. Your employer will deduct a service fee of 10 Euros per year. Should you lose your E-Card call the E-Card service line at: 0501243311.

For more information visit:

- ▶ www.sozialversicherung.at
- ▶ www.chipkarte.at

Old-age pension insurance

Thanks to your old-age pension insurance, you or your dependents will receive benefits once you are no longer able to work because of old age or health problems.

At present, Austrian pension insurance funds pay out approx. 26 billion Euros per year. It is funded through the so-called pay-as-you-go system – also referred to as the **intergenerational contract**. This means: Those who work today also finance today's pensions. Both the employee and the employer pay contributions to the pension insurance. In addition, subsidies are paid out of tax money.

For more information visit:

- ▶ www.pensionsversicherung.at

Accident insurance

Accident insurance protects you in the event of an accident and offers a number of benefits:

- ▶ Prevention of work accidents and occupational diseases
- ▶ Occupational health care
- ▶ Provision of first aid in the event of a work accident
- ▶ Medical treatment in the event of an accident
- ▶ Rehabilitation
- ▶ Damages in the event of work accidents and occupational diseases

Who is insured?

If you are employed, your employer will register (or respectively de-register) you with the insurance and will pay the contributions on your behalf.

If you are self-employed, you have to register with the insurance yourself. You are required to do so within one month following the beginning or end of the compulsory insurance.

IMPORTANT!

It is against the law not to register an employee with the insurance or register him or her late. If you are unsure whether you have been registered correctly, contact the social insurance at: www.sozialversicherung.at

▶ Preventive health care

Regular medical check-ups help detect and be able to treat diseases at an early stage. Every person 18 years and older is entitled to one free preventive medical check-up per year. These medical check-ups are available at doctors in private practices, outpatient clinics of the health insurances and in Vienna at district office 15 – Health Services.

The examination comprises:

- ▶ Blood test
- ▶ Urine sample test
- ▶ Stool sample test for occult blood
- ▶ Lung function test
- ▶ Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- ▶ Internist's diagnosis
- ▶ Blood pressure measurement
- ▶ Ear-nose-throat diagnosis including hearing test
- ▶ for women: gynaecological examination with Pap smear

Where can I find a doctor?

Go to <http://www.praxisplan.at/> where you will find the right doctor for your needs.

TIP!

In Austria, a patient will not go directly to a hospital except in an emergency. For regular check-ups, visit your GP. If necessary, he or she will refer you to a specialist.

Emergency

In an emergency, call the free number 144. You will be connected to the closest emergency services. This number is free in entire Austria. You can also reach this number from public telephone booths and from a mobile phone even without a SIM card.

Apart from the emergency numbers 144 (emergency services), 133 (police) and 122 (fire brigade), the standardised free emergency number 112 is available in all countries in Europe.

In a medical emergency, you should be able to answer the following questions over the phone:

- ▶ Where exactly is the place of the emergency?
- ▶ What is the number at that you can be called back?
- ▶ What exactly happened?



- ▶ How old is the patient?
- ▶ Is he or she awake (conscious)?
- ▶ Is he or she breathing?

First aid training

You should be able to provide first aid in an emergency. First aid training courses are offered by the following organisations, among others:

- ▶ Red Cross
- ▶ Arbeiter Samariter Bund
- ▶ Johanniter Unfallhilfe
- ▶ Malteser Hospitaldienst Austria

Death

Should a member of your family die, you should contact a funeral service as quickly as possible. The necessary steps depend on where the person died.

To find the nearest funeral service company go to www.bestatter.at.

Vaccinations

Today, effective immunisation is available for many diseases. Make use of these options in your own interest and in the interest of your children. The vaccination calendar provides a detailed overview of vaccinations for babies, toddlers, school children and adults.

In Austria, vaccination against whooping cough, measles, mumps and influenza are particularly important. Up to 1 000 people die of influenza (flue) in this county almost every year. Also find out if you live in an area where virus-infected ticks are found. Consult your GP who will tell you which vaccinations are advised.

For more information visit:

- ▶ http://www.bmg.gv.at/home/Schwerpunkte/Praevention/Impfen/Oesterreichischer_Impfplan_2012

Social Affairs



► Support for the elderly

If elderly people require nursing, they are normally cared for at home by their family members. However, they may also make use of professional nursing services. These offer care and nursing in a person's normal environment, but also assist with necessary errands and help the elderly person to do as many things as possible on his or her own.

Aside from qualified health care professionals, elderly care nurses and home helpers provide services. In this manner, it can often be prevented that elderly people have to move to an old-age home.

For more information visit www.bags-kv.at.

► People with disabilities

People with disabilities have special needs and appropriate offers are available in all Federal States.

- Subsidies for reconstructing apartments to make these suitable for wheelchairs
- Living with part-time or full-time care personnel
- Transport offers for people with permanent reduced mobility so that these can participate in social and cultural life

Contact the office of your State Government or your municipality for more information.

► Early support for children with disabilities or retarded development

For children with a disability or retarded development, it is especially important to receive early support. For this reason, early learning facilities and school education for children with disabilities are supported. Make use of this offer in the interest of your child if he or she has special needs.

This falls under the responsibility of the social department of your State Government. For more information visit www.help.gv.at ► Behinderung.

The Ombudsman for People with Disabilities protects the rights and ensures equal treatment of people with disabilities: ► www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at

► Youth protection, alcohol and tobacco

In Austria, the internationally recognised principle that young people must be protected from dangers to their physical, mental or psychological development applies.

Youth protection is regulated by laws, which vary only slightly in the different Federal States. The laws of the Federal State where the children and youth currently reside are applicable.

Persons younger than 18 are generally prohibited to visit the following places:

- Betting offices and casinos
- Brothels or other places where prostitution or peepshows are available

Minors are generally forbidden to take part in gambling or bets.

All Federal States allow consumption of alcohol and tobacco for persons 16 years and older. Exceptions are spirits, meaning high-alcohol beverages with an alcohol content of 15 percent. In some Federal States, these are only allowed for people 18 years or older.

► Protection for women

Women who become the victims of violence can find quick help and advice:

- Call the women emergency helpline ("Frauennotruf") at: 0800 222 555. This helpline will support you in an acute emergency and will advise you on legal or social issues. If necessary, it will refer you to shelters for women in your area. For more information visit www.frauenhelpline.at and www.frauennotrufe.at.
- Protection against violence and intervention centres are specialised in the area of violence at home. They will actively help and support you, especially if the perpetrator needs to be kept away from the home by the police.
- In addition, there are numerous women's houses and shelters for battered women in Austria. Women and children suffering under violence at home can live there temporarily.

You can find a list of all women's houses and outreach centres for women on the homepage of the association "Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser" ("Autonomous Austrian Shelters for Women"): www.aof.at and at www.help.gv.at ► Soziales und Notfälle ► Gewalt



► Equal treatment

You suffer from discrimination at your workplace because of sex, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or age? Please contact the National Equality Board.

- www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at



1 Marriage and Partnership



Marriage is considered a “bond for life” and provides the married spouses with legal security, for example in the event of an illness or an inheritance. In Austria, only a man and a woman can get married. The marriage is concluded at a registry office.

To be able to marry, a person must be an **adult**, which means at least 18 years old. Exceptions for 16 and 17 year olds are possible if the other spouse is older than 18 and a court has given its permission.

The following are forbidden in Austria:

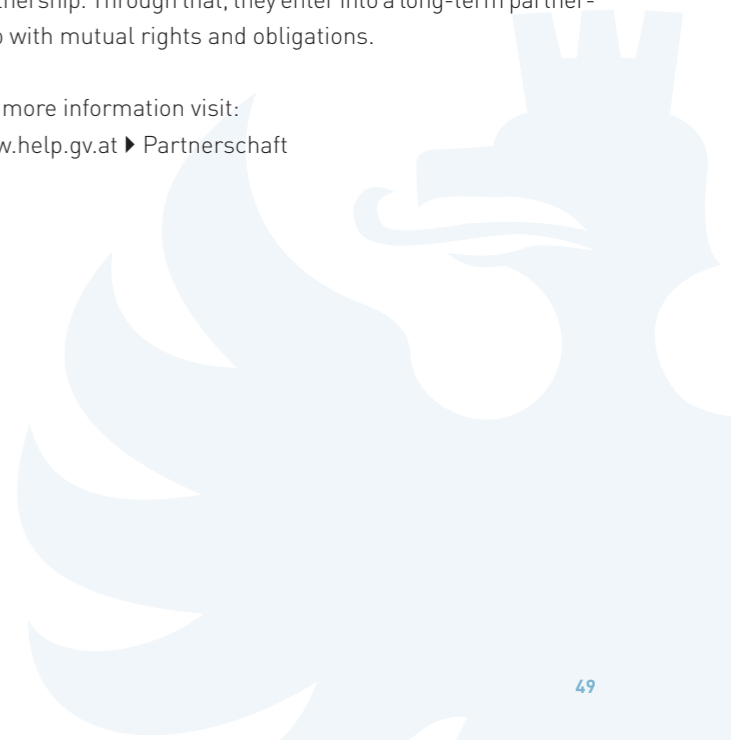
- ▶ Marriages between blood relatives, for example between siblings
- ▶ Marriages between an adoptive mother or father and the adopted child
- ▶ Marriages with more than two partners
- ▶ Forced marriages that are concluded against the will of the man or the woman

Forced marriages are punishable in Austria even if they were concluded abroad. The perpetrator or the victim do not necessarily have to be Austrian citizens. This prohibition applies as soon as one of the two lives in Austria. Forced marriage may be punished by imprisonment of up to five years.

There are also options other than marriage for a couple to have legal protection. You may sign a partnership contract that regulates cohabitation with your partner. This is useful, above all in the event you separate.

People of the same sex have the possibility of a registered partnership. Through that, they enter into a long-term partnership with mutual rights and obligations.

For more information visit:
www.help.gv.at ▶ Partnerschaft



13 Money



In Austria, every adult person normally has his or her own bank account. Having a bank account is also a prerequisite for most jobs. You should therefore arrange for opening your own **bank account** as soon as possible.

TIP!

Compare the offers of the banks near you. Some banks offer advice in your mother tongue. Do not sign anything that you have not read and understood, above all no loan agreements, purchase agreements or sureties.

Your monthly salary will be transferred into your "salary account". Accounts will also be debited to it, for example by way of a debit order automatically every month.

If you have saved some money, find out about possible investments that will offer you a better interest rate than a normal account.

Should you need a loan, contact a reputable bank. Do not lend money from private loan providers.



Culture, Leisure Time and Sports



Austria considers itself a country of culture. Especially the capital Vienna has a broad cultural offer. Visits to museums, operas, music bars and theatres are affordable. This enriches a person's experiences, perspectives and attitudes. In addition to the current programme of cultural institutions, internationally renowned cultural festivals, first and foremost the Salzburg and Bregenz Festivals, take place in Austria. An increasing number of cities and municipalities organise their own local cultural festivals that offer a varied programme.

However, it is also important to participate in Austria's **culture in everyday life**. Here, the Austrian media play an important role. Find out what is happening in society and politics so that you can form your own opinion and take part in discussions.

Only if a person has knowledge he or she can participate in discussions and contribute to shaping the country – and assume responsibility in and for Austria.

► Media

Television

The most important TV broadcast station in Austria is the public service Austrian broadcaster **ORF**. The ORF offers two full-time programmes (ORF one and ORF 2) and two theme channels (ORF III, Sport plus). The ORF also operates a studio in each Federal State. From there, regionally relevant news are supplied.

Apart from the ORF, there are Austrian **private television stations**, some of which can be received throughout Austria, while others are broadcast only in some Federal States or cities. Examples include Puls4, ATV or Servus TV. In addition, the Austrian windows of TV stations in Germany can be received.

In order to watch television, you will either need digital antenna reception (DVBT), or a cable or satellite connection.

Radio

The ORF also operates several radio stations, among these Ö1 for in-depth news and culture, Ö3 for pop music, FM4 for alternative music, plus regional radio stations in all Federal States. In addition to this public service offer, Austria has a number of private radio stations.

The frequencies for radio station reception differ from one place to the next. For a list of all frequencies of the ORF radio stations go to:

▶ <http://kundendienst.orf.at/technik/frequenzen.html>

Newspapers

Newspapers and magazines play an important role in Austrian public life. Austria has 18 daily newspapers in total, 15 of which must be bought while three are available free of charge.

The following daily newspapers are published in **entire Austria**: Der Standard, Die Presse, Kronen Zeitung, Kurier, Österreich (normally free), Salzburger Nachrichten, Wiener Zeitung, Wirtschaftsblatt.

The following regional daily newspapers are available:

- ▶ Carinthia: Kärntner Tageszeitung, Kleine Zeitung
- ▶ Lower Austria: Heute (free)
- ▶ Upper Austria: Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, Neues Volksblatt
- ▶ Salzburg: Salzburger Volkszeitung
- ▶ Styria: Kleine Zeitung

- ▶ Tyrol: Tiroler Tageszeitung, Tiroler Tageszeitung Kompakt (free)
- ▶ Vorarlberg: Vorarlberger Nachrichten
- ▶ Vienna: Heute (free)

As in: February 2012

TIP!

In the daily newspapers, especially in the Friday/Saturday editions, you will often find a list of upcoming events, such as concerts, festivals, movies, etc. Make use of this event calendar to find events you wish to include in your own spare time programme.

Internet

Most newspapers and the ORF also offer extensive news online. The most widely used offers include (ÖWA 2012):

- ▶ orf.at
- ▶ oe24.at (Austria)
- ▶ krone.at
- ▶ derstandard.at
- ▶ kleinezeitung.at
- ▶ kurier.at
- ▶ diepresse.com
- ▶ salzburg.com
- ▶ tt.com



► Museums

Austria has countless museums and collections. These range from fine arts and photography through to design or nature and technology. For a complete list of all museums, visit www.museum.at.

In addition, each Federal State has its own lists of museums:

- **Burgenland:** <http://www.burgenlandkultur.at/burgen>
- **Carinthia:** <http://www.kultur.kaernten.at/>
- **Lower Austria:** <http://www.noemuseen.at/de/default.asp>
- **Upper Austria:** <http://www.ooemuseumsverbund.at/>
- **Salzburg:** <http://www.salzburg.info/de/sehenswertes/museen>
- **Styria:** <http://www.kultur.steiermark.at/cms/ziel/3016302/DE/>
- **Tyrol:** <http://www.austria.info/at/kunst-kultur-in-oesterreich/museen-und-sammlungen-in-tirol-1087714.html>
- **Vorarlberg:** <http://www.vorarlbergmuseen.at/>
- **Vienna:** <http://www.wien.gv.at/ma53/museen/>



► Theatre

Theatre in Austria has a long tradition. The Vienna Burgtheater is famous throughout the German speaking world.

Renowned theatres in Vienna include:

- **Burgtheater**
Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Ring 2, 1010 Wien
www.burgtheater.at
- **Theater in der Josefstadt**
Josefstädter Straße 26, 1080 Wien
www.josefstadt.org
- **Akademietheater**
Lisztstraße 1, 1030 Wien
www.burgtheater.at
- **Volkstheater**
Neustiftgasse 1, 1070 Wien
www.volkstheater.at

For a complete list of all theatres in Vienna, visit

- <http://www.wien.gv.at/kultur/theater/>

Interesting theatre productions await you also in the Federal States – for instance at the regional theatres.

Lower Austria: <http://www.landestheater.net/>

Upper Austria: <http://www.landestheater-linz.at/>

Salzburg: <http://www.salzburger-landestheater.at/>

Styria: <http://www.buehnen-graz.com/>

Carinthia: <http://www.stadttheater-klagenfurt.at/>

Tyrol: <http://www.landestheater.at/>

Vorarlberg: <http://www.landestheater.org/>

TIP!

At many theatres, you can buy tickets for seats that would otherwise remain empty at a reduced price shortly before the show begins.

► Music

Music, first and foremost classical music, is part of Austria's self image. The epoch of the "Vienna Classic" around Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn is well-known internationally.

You can visit classical concerts and operas at the following addresses in Vienna, among others:

► Vienna State Opera

Operngasse 2, 1010 Wien
www.wiener-staatsoper.at

► Wiener Konzerthaus

Lotheringerstraße 20
1030 Wien
www.konzerthaus.at

► Wiener Musikverein

Bösendorferstraße 12
1010 Wien
www.musikverein.at

The Federal States also offer numerous renowned concert houses and operas.

► Sports

Sports clubs provide good opportunities not only to stay physically fit, but also to make new contacts quickly and to get to know Austrian men and women. A diversified offer of sports activities is available: from soccer and gymnastics through to Austria's "national sport": skiing.

Find the right sports club for you:

- www.bso.or.at
- www.sportministerium.at
- www.askoe.or.at
- www.sportunion.at
- www.asvoe.at

TIP!

Become a member in a sports club and make contact with the other members. Together with friends and acquaintances, it will be even easier for you to practice your favourite sport regularly.



15 Religion



The freedom to exercise one's own religion is firmly enshrined in the Constitution. At present, Austria officially recognises 14 churches and religious communities. This means, among other things, that these are entitled to religious instruction at public schools. On the other hand, religious communities also have certain duties. Next to religious, these also include welfare, social and culture-political tasks that serve the public good.

The majority of Austrians are Roman Catholic.

► Recognised churches and religious communities

The following religious communities are officially recognised in Austria:

- Old Catholic Church of Austria
- Armenian Apostolic Church in Austria
- Protestant Church (Lutheran and Reformed)
- Evangelical Methodist Church in Austria
- Greek Oriental (= Orthodox) Church
 - Greek Oriental Church Community of the Holy Trinity
 - Greek Oriental Church Community St Georg
 - Bulgarian-Orthodox Church Community St Ivan Rilski
 - Romanian Greek Oriental Church Community of the Holy Resurrection

- Russian-Orthodox Church Community St Nikolas
- Serbian Greek Oriental Church Community St Sava
- Islamic Faith Community in Austria
- Jewish Religious Community
- Catholic Church
 - Roman Catholic Rituals
 - Greek Catholic Rituals
 - Armenian Catholic Rituals
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) in Austria
- Coptic Orthodox Church in Austria
- New Apostolic Church in Austria
- Austrian Buddhist Religious Community
- Syrian Orthodox Church Austria
- Jehovah's Witnesses

► Officially registered religious confessional communities

Since January 1998, followers of a religion that have not yet been officially recognised have the option of associating as an "officially registered religious confessional community". They thus become an independent legal entity. In Austria, the following communities of faith are currently considered officially registered religious confessional communities:

- Baha'i Religious Community in Austria
- Union of Baptist Communities in Austria
- Union of Evangelical Communities of Austria
- The Christian Community – Movement for Religious Renewal in Austria
- Elaia Christian Communities
- Free Christian Community/Pentecostal Community
- Hindu Religious Society in Austria
- Islamic Alevite Community of Faith in Austria
- Church of the Seventh-day Adventists
- Mennonite Independent Church of Austria
- Pentecostal Church Community of God in Austria

A Few Words at the End



Austria is an attractive destination for many people. This is because it is one of the richest and economically most successful countries in the world. But this wealth did not just come out of nothing: It is only possible through the achievement and commitment of the people in Austria. Behind the quality of life in Austria, there are those people who create it anew day after day through their hard work and commitment in education, at work and in society.

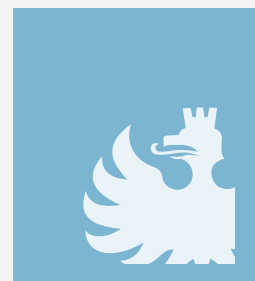
You now have the opportunity to become part of this Austrian story of success.

Therefore, it is important

- ▶ That you learn German quickly so that you can communicate well everywhere
- ▶ That you actively learn about Austria and have a good knowledge of the country and its people
- ▶ That you know the basic rules of living together in Austria and observe these in everyday life

- ▶ That you make active use of the opportunities available in education and job and motivate your children to do the same
- ▶ That you and your family can live economically independently as soon as possible
- ▶ That you make an active effort to have contact with the population, for example with neighbours, with colleagues at work or in a club or association in your spare time, and
- ▶ That you can be proud of your achievements in and for Austria.

Make use of your opportunities in Austria!



integration

BM.I  REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES
STAATSEKRETARIAT FÜR INTEGRATION


Österreichischer
Integrationsfonds