



Social Work in Austria

Introduction

The main task of social workers and the social work profession in Austria is the official recognition as an independent and equally accepted profession.

Social work in Austria has a long and respected history and a number of well known pioneers and representatives. The educational level of social workers is top-level, but only recently connected to university level.

Since more than 13 years the Association of Social Workers in Austria fights for a professional law. The obstacles are mainly constitutional rules, that means all social matters are matters dealt in the regional and provincial governments. The Austrian Association of Social Workers (**obds - „Österreichischer Berufsverband der Sozialen Arbeit“**) wants a federal law with the same rules and standards all over Austria.

Social Services have a long tradition in civil society in Austria and are organized and funded mainly by the social security system and state-funded budgets. Parallel to this there exists an important network of social services financed by religious institutions and a growing number of social institutions of civil society and social businesses has been built up in the non-governmental sector (NGOs), mostly funded by public money also.

Today's struggles for sufficient services and quality on international standards is like Don Quichote fighting against the windmills of neoliberal developments and profit oriented approaches instead of improving standards of quality and human and social rights.

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1. History of Social Work in Austria

1.1 *The political and social situation around 1900 in Austria*

Austria was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Today's countries Austria, Hungary, Czech-Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, parts of Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Poland and Ukraine belonged to Austria. Austria was a monarchy, had a constitutional government system and at this time only certain groups of people had the privilege to vote in elections.

The city of Vienna was the capital and the emperor's residence. Within about 20 years the population of Vienna had risen from about 600 000 to up to 2 million people. Austria was on one hand one of the large powers in Europe but on the other hand very slow in developing as an industrialized country. Agriculture one of the main productions and a feudal system in its political organization. The leading and dominating religion in society was the catholic church. Only in Hungary some percentage of population were Protestants and after 1878 the Muslims became an important religion, this as a result of the occupation and annexion of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 and 1908. In 1912 the muslims were accepted as an official religious group in Austria.

With the developing industries hundreds of thousands of people from the very far and the rural parts of the monarchy came to the big industrial centers trying to get jobs and better wages and better life conditions. The housing-situation was extremely crowded, very bad also the hygienic and medical and social circumstances of this poor worker-population.

At this time the socialist party became an important factor in political life, but also as an educational institution and as a social aid for the masses of poor workers. At the same time charity organisations were founded, which were run mostly by catholic church organisations.

Following the development in the U.S. (Mary Richmond 1898) and in Germany (Alice Salomon 1908) in Austria Ilse Arlt founded the first school for social work in 1912 in Vienna. These women saw the need for a formal social work education. Not only giving alms to the poor but to provide education and professional methods for workers in the social field. The name of the school founded by Ilse Arlt was „Vereinigte Fachkurse für Volkspflege“ (Joined professional courses for public care).



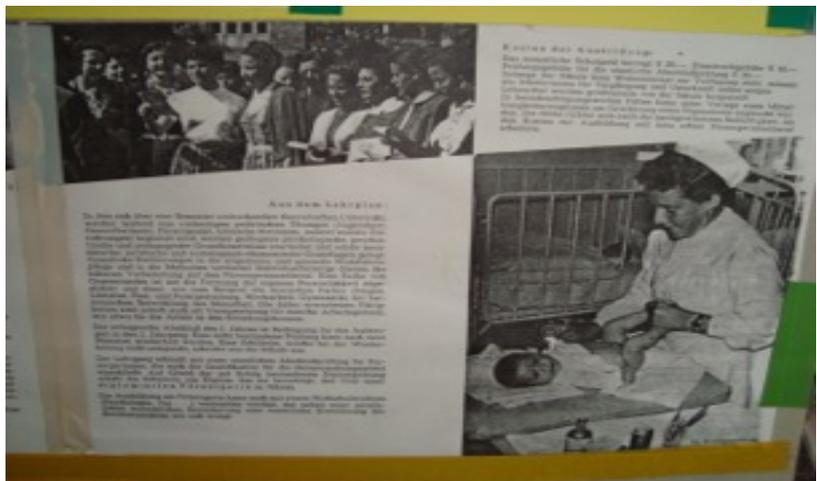
Ilse Arlt

In 1913 the first state institution for orphans and children from poor families was founded. Giving food, medical care

regularly (5-times a year) and providing an income for these children, installing a system of foster-families and secured education. This institution was founded in Ottakring, a suburb of Vienna where mostly poor and migrant workers lived. This institution was the beginning of the stately organized social work for children and families by the municipality of the City of Vienna.



Artl - school of social work, classes 1920 in Vienna



Care-workers after 1918

1.2. World War I and the consequences- the period from 1918 to 1938

World War I contributed to disastrous social situations, famine, diseases as tuberculosis, rachitis, and lues, more orphans and joblessness and economic recession.

In 1916 the Organisation of Catholic Women in Austria founded the „Catholic School for Women“ offering courses in social care. In 1917 they founded an association for „Catholic Schools for Charity and Social Care“.



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In November 1918 WWI ended, the monarchy in Austria was overthrown, the Republic founded. But the most important change to social conditions in Austria was the decay of the country: Hungary, Czech-Slovakian Republic, Yugoslavia became independent states and for Austria the land within the recent borders remained, losing almost 80% of its population. The political and economic base of the new republic of Austria had to be revised, reorganized, reorientated and reestablished. But the economy was confronted with extreme inflation and the duty to pay reparations for the war damages.

Social workers and education for social workers were needed more than ever.

In 1919 the social workers of Vienna founded the first „Association of Care-workers“ in Austria, The Association was registered with the name „Reichsverband der Fuersorgerinnen Oesterreichs“, in 1920 the social workers of the Family&Youth Department of the City of Vienna founded their Association: „Fachverein der Hauptfuersorgerinnen des Staedtischen Jugendamtes Wien“. The associations had only female members since the profession „Fuersorgerin“ (careworker) was designed only for women and only women were educated. The main focus for careworkers was on hygienic and health topics such as: improving housing conditions and fighting the causes for rachitis, tuberculosis, alcohol abuse.

The city of Vienna, ruled by socialdemocrats, was pioneer in a number of social measures for the empoverished population:

Vienna started fighting the number of infants deaths by installing regular medical checks for newborns and their mothers, institutionalized these checkpoints for familycare as „Muetterberatung“. The socialworkers gave instructions for feeding the babies, they gave food and clothing and started to give a birth-present to every newborn baby and the mother: called „Waeschepaket“. The content was clothing for the baby, diapers and information. This tradition is still alive, in Vienna every newborn baby receives this present and the refuge for family care and family counseling still exist in Vienna and are still very much liked and frequented. The socialworkers also went into the families and if needed because of endangering situations for children, took the children from the families and gave them to foster-parents and child-care shelters. The first child shelter was built and existed until 1997.

In Vienna these services were organized and funded by the city department, in other Austrian regions these services were provided by church-funded organisations like Caritas and Diakonie (protestant church). After 1934 the right-wing regime in Austria allowed only services by the catholic church and thus the services in Vienna were reorganized, but not completely resolved. This happened in 1938 during the Hitler-regime, when social work was resolved completely and incorporated into the racial programs of the Nazi-regime.

Shortly after founding the associations a main problem occurred: necessity for official recognition of professional educated social workers in contrast to uneducated auxiliary workers, care workers and volunteers. This was followed by the problem of receiving decent wages for the educated professional social workers during a period of deep regression and desastrous unemployment. The gender orientation within the profession also contributed to the lack of official and low grade recognition.

The education for social workers in the 1920s improved steadily and Ilse Arit has contributed to this essentially. More and more courses were added and the education was extended up to 2 years! Also the development of psychology and psychoanalysis in Vienna and their socially engaged representatives had influence on education, on methods and aspects of social care and family care, on social politics in Vienna. All these experts and pioneers



of social sciences emigrated and left Austria starting 1934 and 1938.

1.3 WW II and the reestablishment of social work

Civil war in 1934 and the Nazi-time from 1938-1945 meant the end for the continuous development of the profession for at least 15 years. The schools for social work were closed as well as the catholic schools.

What happened really within the profession during WWII no documents exist, most documents have been destroyed after 1945 to hide involvement and responsibilities. There are no records how many social workers were dismissed, how many worked under the Nazi regime, how many continued working after the war.

By the end of WW II lots of auxiliary workers were needed to provide the basic needs for the people and the masses of refugees that came to Austria. During the 1950s in Austria there was a lack of professional social workers. Only few social workers who were expelled in 1938 returned to the profession, many social workers who had been employed by the Nazi regime during WWII were not allowed to work in the field because of their role during Nazi-times.

Social work in Austria had to start almost completely new since only few professionals with scientific and professional recognition returned to Austria after emigration or took up the education and practice again. Ilse Arlt reopened her school for social work („Fuersorgeschule“) in Vienna but had to close it down by financial reasons in 1950.

In 1948 and 1950 the associations in Vienna and Austria were reestablished after World War II.

Most of the social workers were employed within the administration of regions and municipalities. They were part of the public funded system of social aid. Leading head of these institutions were mostly male administrators and the female social workers had to assist them and execute the social policies. In the youth - departments the social workers were seen as helpers of the state guardians. Hardly any exchange and discussion about development roles and methodology happened in these departments of regional administration.

1.4 The new influences and the transition from „Fuersorge“ to „Social Work“

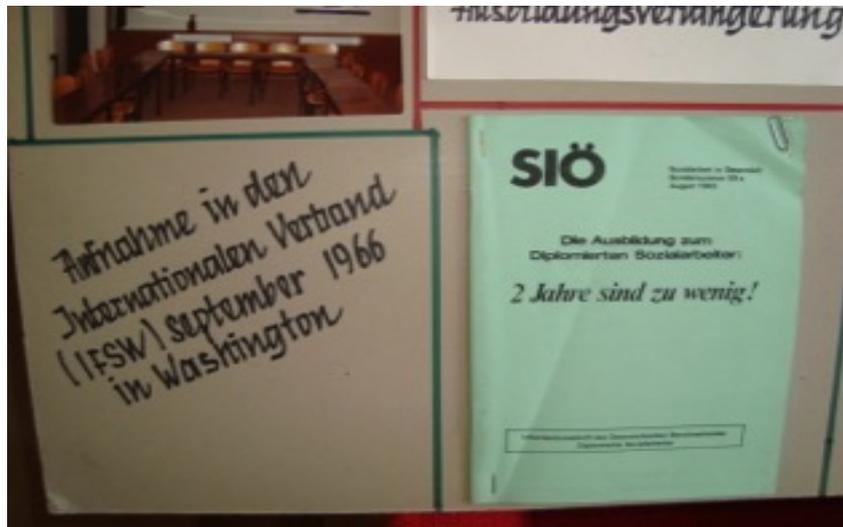
In the 1950s new methods and new aspects influence the conscience about the roles of clients and helpers and the influence of environment, the community and social development. “Case work” and “Group work” was brought to Austria and over years implemented as methods into the education and practice. Social workers oriented on the methods and organisation of foreign helpers of care-organisations who came into the country after WWII.

The mostly private schools for social work took up these incentives and sharpened the conscience of students and social workers about their professional role and how to organize practice to be able to implement these methods. The education started with a 2-year curriculum.

The association for social workers was closely connected to the schools and both tried to open the conscience within the social administrations to give room to new working methods.

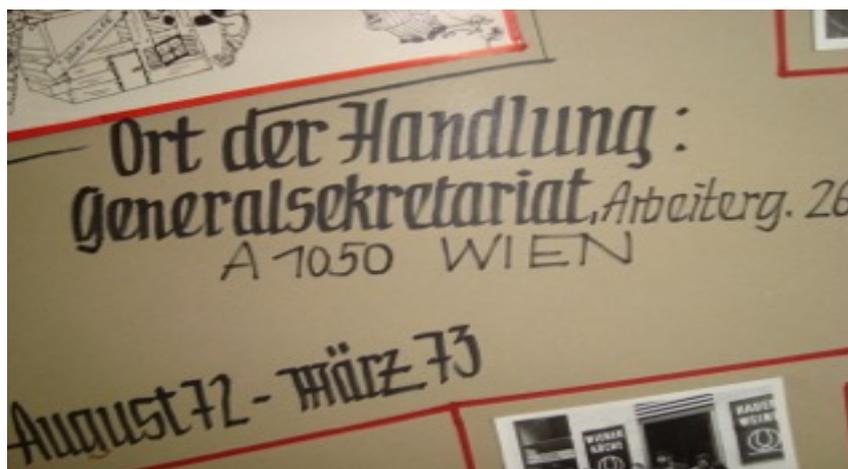
The sociological development after the 1968 upheaval, which was less than moderate in Austria, and the political

change in the country went parallel with the opening of the old care-worker-system (“Fuersorge”) to modern social work. Numerous projects were supported by the social administration in Vienna and many of these then founded institutions still exist since the 1970s.



Obds became IFSW- member in 1966 in Washington

The struggle for establishing social work as a profession still isn't completed. Social work in Austria needs a professional law, recognising social work as an independent profession, which is not a psychologist, not a psychotherapist, not a nurse, not a housekeeper, not a guardian and not a pedagogue, but professional social worker with an academic education, bachelor and master's degree.



The first office of obds

Education has improved a lot, but it has not received full academic recognition as being taught at the university, only at universities of applied sciences, for a PhD alumni of social work have to apply at universities in departments of sociology, psychology or other related sciences. There are positive signs for future steps but the full recognition as an independent profession and scientific discipline in Austria has not yet been achieved.

1.5 History of Education for Social Workers in Austria

- 1912 First education in Austria, „joined courses for social Care workers“ (Vereinigte Fachkurse für Volkspflege) „Arlt-School“
- 1915 Courses for Care workers in Graz , fuersorgekurse der deutschen Frauen (Graz) and
- 1916 Social Caritative Womens School for Wien und Niederösterreich
(later Akademie der Caritas in Wien)
- 1917 Academy for Social Administration in Vienna, Akademie für Soziale Verwaltung der Stadt Wien 1918
Protestant Social School for Women, Evangelische Soziale Frauenschule
(later Evang. Fachschule für Frauen im kirchlichen Dienst)
- 1922-1930 Care Worker School of Lower Austria, fuersorgeschule des Landes NÖ (Baden)(2 years)
- 1926 Care and Nursing School of Upper Austria in Linz, Landespflege und –fuersorgeschule
Riesenhof (Linz)(2 years)
- 1938 During Nazitime in Graz and Vienna: Womens School for Careworkers for Community-health
während der NS-Zeit weitergeführt: Frauenschule für Volks- und Gesundheitspflegerinnen
- 1945 Continuing the schools for social work as before 1934 and 1938 (2 years of education)
Fortführung der früheren Ausbildungen unter dem Überbegriff „Fuersorgeschulen“
- 1946 Womens School for Social Matters in Innsbruck, Soziale Frauenschule der Diözese Innsbruck
- 1950 Ilse Arlt has to close down her school for financial reasons, Schließung der „Arlt-Schule“
- 1962/63 Reforming the Education from private schools into public funded: Lehranstalten für gehobene
Sozialberufe Umwandlung der Ausbildungen zu Lehranstalten für gehobene Sozialberufe
(later in Linz 1971) (2 years)
- 1970 Federal School for advanced Social professions in Vienna, Bundeslehranstalt für Gehobene
Sozialberufe (in Wien) (2 years)
- 1974 Federal School for advanced Social professions in St.Pölten, Lower Austria, Bundeslehranstalt
für Gehobene Sozialberufe (in St. Pölten) (2 years) and in Vorarlberg: Lehranstalt für Gehobene
Sozialberufe (Vorarlberg)
- 1976 Changing the Education from Schools into Academies for Social Work , Umwandlung in
Akademien für Sozialarbeit
- 1984 Academy for Social Work for Employed (Evening Courses), Akademie für Sozialarbeit für



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Berufstätige (Arbeiterkammer Salzburg)

- 1987 Extension of education up to 6 Semesters, the evening courses for employed were extended to 7 semesters, Verlängerung der Ausbildung auf 6 Semester , Abendkurse 7 Semester,
- 1992 Caritas closes the Academy for Social Work and fusions with the Federal Academy for Social Work in Vienna, Schließung der Akademie für Sozialarbeit der Caritas (Wien)
- 1998 founding the Academy for Social Work for Employed in Upper Austria, Akademie für Sozialarbeit für Berufstätige (BFI Oberösterreich)
- 2000 University-Courses for Social Work in Klagenfurt, **Universitaetslehrgang** Sozialarbeit an der UNI Klagenfurt
- 2001 Universities of Applied Sciences, Departments of Social Work founded, Social Work Education is extended to 8 semesters, finishing with Magister (FH), **Fachhochschulstudiengaenge** für Sozialarbeit in Graz, Linz, Salzburg, St. Pölten
- 2002 Fusion of Federal Academy of Social Work in Vienna and the Academy of Social Work of the City of Vienna and changing into University of Applied Science, Dep. Social Work, combined with the department for the evening school for employed students.
- 2006 First Start of Bachelor of Social Work (6 semesters) and Master (4 semesters), the students finish with the title: BA of Applied Social Sciences or MAS of Applied Social Sciences, **the name Social Work has vanished**
- 2007 First Master in Social Work, following the Diploma of social work of the former academy or Magister (FH), to start studies for the PhD is only possible at one University in Austria, in Klagenfurt.
- 2010 With the Bologna-reform it is possible to make an BA in Sociology or Germanistics and then the Master in Applied Social Sciences without any experience in social work practice and dealing with clients.

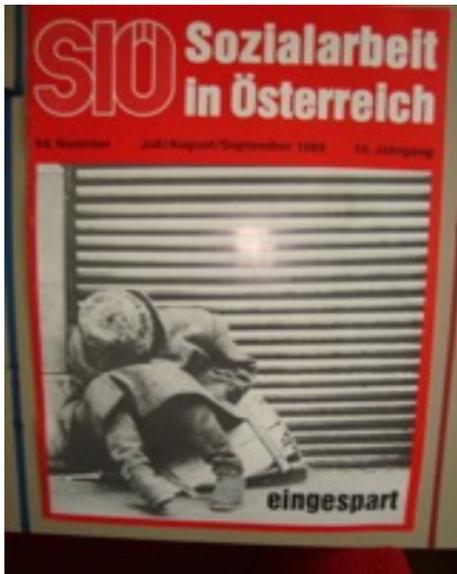
The **Bologna-reform** is seen as an improvement but also as a degradation. The Austrian Association of social workers has required for many years to upgrade the education and finally managed the upgrade to 8 semesters as basic education. With the Bologna-reform the basic education has lowered to 6 semesters and practitioners and students complain a lack of education compared with the times of academy and the „FH“ with 8 semesters.

For more than 40 years the **obds** emphasized the improvement and the upgrade of social work education. Since the founding of University of Applied Sciences, Department Social Work, the education of social workers is organized by the Fachhochschul-Law and there is almost no influence possible on the organisation of courses, on the curricula, on the title of the certificate and the politics of education personnel.

Social work research has started at the Universities of applied sciences but is not as well developed as in Germany.

There exists a great discrepancy between the interest of social work practitioners in research and the scientific personnel, which recruits mostly from sociology and other sciences but not from practitioners of social work.

The Association of Social Workers in Austria had to reorientate its activities and focuses now on the achievement of a professional law for social work and on quality standards in social work practice as well as watching social politics in the country.



SIÖ – Social Work in Austria- the professional magazine of the obds 1984 and 2010

2. Organization of Social Security System and Social Services in Austria

2.1. The Roots and Structure of the Social Security System in Austria

1887: Public Insurance against Accidents in Work - Unfallversicherung

The increasing industrialisation caused a rising number of accidents at work. To avoid high costs of rehabilitation the employers joined and founded an insurance-system for these cases and it was and is still financed entirely by the employers. The system is acting in autonomy.

1889: Social insurance in case of illness - Krankenversicherung

All industrial and commercial workers and employees were summarized under an insurance-system against the case of illness. Both parts, employers and employees contribute fees to this insurance. The system is acting in autonomy.

1906: Public Pension System - Pensionsversicherung

For employees in private businesses and in the public administrations a pension system was established, both employers and employees pay fees from the monthly wages, benefit starts with 65 years of age, with 60 years for women. Since 2011 the women's age is raised every year for 4 month up to the full age of 65. The system is acting in autonomy.



1920 Unemployment – Insurance - Arbeitslosenversicherungsgesetz 1920

In 1920, after WWI the government of the Austrian Republic established a law for insurance of unemployed. The fees were paid by the employed themselves. Today's fees amount to 3% of the gross -wages and are paid for 12 months. One can claim for benefits after paying 12 months within the last 24 months.

The „Third Reich“ 1938 - 1945, Anschluss an das Dritte Reich

1938 the autonomy was cancelled and all systems subsumed under the Reichsverordnung (RVO) of the German system. In the German system not only employers in private businesses and in the administration received benefits, but all kinds of workers.

After the refoundation of the Austrian Republic at the end of WWII in 1947 the German system was transformed and led up to the Austrian social security system, reestablishing the autonomy of the systems. This means that there exist several independent insurance systems for each person in Austria: health-insurance, accident-insurance, pension-insurance and additionally it is possible to pay into a private insurance for health, accident, life insurance, pensions etc.

The public insurance-systems were united in an umbrella organisation in 1948, beginning in 1956 the conditions in all the systems were adapted to an almost equal level over the last 60 years. Since 2009 all Austrians, who are included in health-insurance, possess a chip-card they can attend with any doctor and all hospitals in Austria, and even in Germany certifying that they are currently in health insurance and can receive health aid without payment. Since 2010-2011 all persons in Austria who receive social aid because of lacking income are also included in the health insurance system and receive this chip-card. The insurance is obligate, not voluntarily.

3. Social Services and Social Welfare

As you can see on the development of the social security system not all groups of the population have been included into the system at the same time. You had to belong to a certain group, group of workers, group of administration, being husband or wife of, child of ..., widow or widower of ... Only step by step all persons have been included into the different systems.

The consequence was that all the time up to now additional public or private welfare systems have been needed to meet the needs of people and to prevent extreme poverty.

3.1 Public Welfare

- Public Welfare in Austria is organized regionally and is administered and executed by the municipalities. There exist 9 regions in Austria, The city of Vienna being one of the 9 regions. Consecutively there exist 9 different laws of public welfare with different amounts for the welfare benefits in each region. It is a fact one can be better off living in a certain region.
- Public Welfare is a subsidiary system. One has to apply to all possible kinds of social insurance-systems for benefit and if not granted, then one can apply for social welfare. This goes along with a rather great



administrative expense of control.

- Migration-laws diminish the chances for non Austrian citizens to benefit from the public social welfare. Only with a permanent residence permit of 5 years one can benefit from public social welfare. One cannot get a permanent residence permit if he is not regularly employed and lives on social welfare, public or privately.
- Austria has established a new system of Social Welfare, called „Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung“ - “requirement-orientated basic minimum protection“ The reform tried to bring the public welfare to an equal level throughout whole Austria. This was not achieved. The basic minimum protection secures for every adult person (with permanent residence of 5 years) a basic income of 837,76 € a month. (*A couple in common household receives 1.256,64 € and for each child additionally 226,20 € These are the amounts in Vienna.*) But for additional housing costs and other benefits the regions still pay different amounts, perpetuating the local differences in public social welfare.
- The greatest achievement of this complicated system is the inclusion of all welfare-recipients in the public health insurance.

Conclusion: The poverty line in Austria lies high above the amount of 837 € and the basic minimum protection does not protect from poverty and all the consequences of social exclusion.

Povertylines for specific households in Austria:

(EU-SILC 2017, data base 2016) in Euro (monthly income) 1 person 1.185€

Groups of population who are in danger to slip below the poverty line are: migrants, long term unemployed, single parents and families with 3 or more children.

3.2 Money transfer systems

For families and children:

- **Familienbeihilfe** (family aid) for each child up to the age of 18 (up to age 25 for students), the amount depends on age and the number of children in the family, between 105 and 202 € for one child, not depending on income
- **Kinderabsetzbetrag** (money transfer instead of tax reduce for unemployed or low income) is €58,40 per month for each child
- **Kinderbetreuungsgeld** (income for young mothers and fathers after birth of child, staying at home with the baby), one can choose between 5 types, if both parents share, then they get paid longer, the amount depends on how long the mother is staying at home with the child: up to 12 months -- € 1000,00 / up to 36 months - €436 per month
- **Mehrkindzuschlag** (for low income families beginning with the 3rd child) €36,40 per month
- **Notstandshilfe** (after consuming 12 month of unemployment insurance) unemployment aid - in case of having no place in kindergarten for the child or special problems getting back to job, lasts for 12 months, afterwards welfare aid.



- **Studienbeihilfe** (students aid), low income of the students parents, between €475 and €679 / month
- **Schülerbeihilfe** (schooling-aid) for pupils between 16 – 18 years attending school, low income families, between €94 to €218/ month
- **Mietbeihilfe** (aid for housing-costs) depends on number of persons living in the household and size of the apartment or house, only for families consuming welfare aid.

For persons consuming pensions and for disabled persons:

- **Ausgleichszulage:** extra pay for persons who have low pensions or disability pension, lower than the amount of Mindestsicherung of €753, the difference up to €753 is paid by the public social system.
- **Pflegegeld** (nursing allowance) for disabled or senior persons, depends on the demand which is proofed by consultants, paid in 7 classes, amounts between €154 and €1656 / month
- several **fonds** to support persons and families, disabled persons in special need

3.3 Other public transfer systems (non-monetary transfer)

- Kinderabsetzbetrag – tax reduce for people paying alimony
- all costs of intramural supply for aged persons, disabled, children in public care and child protection services,
- costs for rehabilitation for disabled, for drug addicts,
- extra schooling for long-term unemployed by the unemployment-insurance
- Education and schooling, there are no fees for public schools in Austria, presently no fees for university-studies, but discussing it.
- Care for refugees

3.4 Social services

A long tradition of social services exists in Austria, historically you can follow up back into the Middle Ages. By the end of the 19 th century public services started besides already existing private charity services. But there was also a need for private services through the fact that public services did not include all groups of population in need. Different reasons are responsible for this. In present time the financial crisis is the cause for budget cuts in the public social system. Private services try to compensate the lack of aid, but as all experts know, less money comes in through donations and is distributed for an increasing number of persons in need.

3.4.1. Public Services

- **Child-care and Child-protection** departments in the 9 regions in Austria, giving counseling, financial aid, psychological and therapeutical aid, proving housing conditions, child neglect, violence in families, giving educational aid, courses for young families, providing childrens shelters after child abuse of all kinds, educating and coaching foster parents, placement of children in foster families, placing children in social-



pedagogical groups and group houses, to childrens care institutions. **Social workers** are on all levels involved and responsible for a professional process during clarification and the decisions about measures to secure the childs wellbeing. Only estimations exist for the numbers of social workers in this system. The **obds**- Austrian association of social workers estimates about 1100 to 1300 social workers throughout whole Austria. There is a lack of social workers in the child-department system, being unattractive for young social workers and in many regions badly paid, having an extremely high case-load, great danger of burn-out after a short time of working there. The situation is a little better in Vienna. Mostly a holistic care for multi-problem families is not possible and the main task in the public child-care system is punctual action, prevention lacking almost everywhere. Social workers are more and more forced to act like a fire-brigade, having „fires and emergencies“ in their regional departments up to 10 times a day.

- **Youth-Clubs and meeting places for children and youth**
- **Assistance** for school-exams and after school recreation for socially handicapped and migrant youth
- **Public Social Welfare** has undergone a great reform, „Mindestsicherung“ has been established in 2010, most of the clarification and decisions in the application-process do the former administrations on regional and municipal level. In greater cities there exists the possibility to get support by social workers. Also all regions have established various kinds of general social aid systems with social workers employed. But social workers are not necessarily involved in the clarification process. From a professional point of view there is great demand for social workers, but it is not paid by public budgets. There is a lot of crossover with the child welfare departments, since single-parent families are growing in numbers and are, more than other families, endangered to get under the poverty-line. A holistic and systemical approach is not paid and not cared for in the public system.
- Social work with persons on **probation** and released from prison
- **Social work with drug addicts**
- **Streetwork for youth**
- Streetwork with jobless migrant workers
- Streetwork with football clubs and -fans
- **Social work for homeless people**
- Day-care centers and shelters for homeless people
- **Ambulant services for persons with mental health problems**
- **Services for senior citizens**, in Vienna and other regions there exists social work service for seniors living in senior-homes doing special counseling but also organizing cultural events, trips to exhibitions and places in the countryside, support for application for nursing aid, all kinds of activities for seniors and special courses to improve physical and mental ability, raising the opportunities for communication. This service is not available for all seniors throughout the country.
- Heimhilfe und „Essen auf Rädern“ (housekeeping aid and delivering meals) is a service for seniors and



publicly and privately organized, partly paid by the seniors themselves, partly by the public

3.4.2 Private services

Private services have a few great players in Austria, which are Caritas, Diakonie, Pro Mente, Volkshilfe, SOS-Kinderdorf and some more. During the last 20 years a great number of private associations or private businesses have been established who offer social services of various kinds. The big players have many social workers employed for those services, but they try to limit the number even when enlarging their services. They are financed partly by public funds and partly by donations. Smaller players try to get public funded jobs. The public administrations more and more outsource social services to private organisations, trying to save money by cutting budgets for these services. This means that the assigned private associations employ less qualified persons and a decreasing number of professional social workers. In some regions there do exist treaties with the regional governments about professional standards for private services. There are no general standards and numerous ways to avoid following these standards mostly because of financial reasons.

Groups of services are:

- Social and financial aid for families
- social and financial aid for migrants
- social and financial aid for refugees
- foster-care and shelters for children
- neighborhood services
- day-care institutions for seniors and mentally disabled
- day-care and job-assistance for disabled persons
- Heimhilfe und „Essen auf Rädern“ (housekeeping aid and delivering meals) is a service for seniors, partly privately organized
- clubs and meeting places for children and youth
- assistance for school-exams and after school recreation for socially handicapped and migrant youth
- social work with drug addicts
- social work for homeless people
- day-care centers and shelters for homeless people
- streetwork with youth
- streetwork with drug addicts
- Frauenhaus – women´s shelters after violence attacks
- counseling for battered women



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- counseling for pregnant youth and women
- child-protection shelters
- psychological and therapeutic aid for children, families and traumatized persons
- shelters for mother and child and for young mothers under age 18
- counseling families in case of divorce and separation, also for children after divorce
- counseling for relatives of mental health patients
- ambulant services for persons with mental health problems
- Aid and shelters for victims of trafficking
- Aid for prostitutes to quit jobs

3.4.3. Services by volunteers

In the services run by volunteers very often you can find former social workers and social workers who do this as an alternation from regular work or to gain more experience. Another major group are seniors who want to have an occupation and responsibility and contact to people. Also many students and young people, who want to find out if they are capable to go for a job in the social field. In Austria there is the possibility to apply for a „voluntary social year“, working in a social institution for one year, without getting wages, but having full social insurance, free housing and food, pocket money of €180 /month. Mostly young women over 18 take this opportunity. Young men usually get experience in social institutions by solving in the civil social aid service („Zivildienst“) instead of army service. In addition many laymen and -women engage as volunteers in:

- social and financial aid by church communities
- services for seniors by church communities
- neighbourhood services
- contact and accompanying services for seniors and disabled
- social and financial aid for culpable and persons released from prison
- services for ill children and their working parents
- information and counseling in selfhelp groups for more than 100 ailments and diseases, alcohol abuse,
- help for pupils with school- and homework

4. Current Developments in Social Services

4.1. The neoliberal impact on social services

During the 1990s the neoliberal ideas seized foot in the social field and the social services. Private profit is beautiful and paying taxes as well as public spending for transfers on weak social groups become dispiseable.



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Budget cuts were made with priority on social expenditures and the public called for more control of social welfare money and punishment for the misuse and abuse of the system. This public bashing is in complete contrary with the statistics showing that there was almost no or very little misuse. The percentage of expenditures for public social aid did not rise during the last 10 years(seen in correlation to the GNP in Austria), the absolute amounts have risen as well as the GNP and the average income in Austria.

More and more public social services have been outsourced to private companies or associations, who get the money from public budgets mostly. What makes the difference is the working conditions for the employees. They are paying lower wages and have worse working conditions than the services run by the social administrations. Also there do not exist general standards for quality in social services, not the obligation to employ professional educated workers, professional social workers and educated careworkers.

The Austrian Association of Social workers, **obds** is thriving hard to achieve a professional law, securing educational and working standards for social workers.

In present the regional administrations are afraid to give way for a federal law for social work, mainly because of financial reasons. The consequence of a professional law would be the obligation to employ social workers instead of care-personel with short-term education and lower wages than the academic social workers.

Consumer´s rights and client´s rights receiving high quality care and less offences against the obligation of secrecy, against data security and low and insufficient information and insufficient services is not yet a matter of public conscience and of public discussion.

4.2. The development of Social Services in the future

What kind of social services will be needed in the future? One of the big social questions today!

The economic development and the development of distribution and inclusion are the main challenges of today´s society. Are our governments going the way of equal distribution of resources and knowledge or are they going the way to open resources and knowledge only for a privileged group in our societies?

In the years of steady growth between 1970 and 1990 many had the vision that less social aid and social work will be needed because of the advancing economic development.

This is not true any more and growing groups of the population are affected with the limited resources and the limited chances to get a job, to stay in jobs and to have a job one can live on.

Especially in Austria all systems of social security are based on the model of life-long working. **Women** are the main group from the beginning that did not fit to this model and therefore suffered great losses of chances and money since generations. Women in their senior years are very much in danger to get underneath the poverty-line. Next group are women with small children, working parttime or getting benefits from the „Kindergeld“. Children living in poverty in Austria have reached the number of 270 000 say the latest estimations.

Migrant workers and their families are the next group in danger of poverty and social exclusion. Even the second generation of migrants do have problems to get into the first labor-market because of language and education problems.

Young people in general have troubles to get decent employments with sufficient payments. Even if they are highly qualified they have to stay in unsecure jobs or as a trainee with unsecure payments. This also happens to social workers. Lots of parttime jobs are offered, but the payment stays on low levels and the contracts are limited to 6 months or a year. Many private social services are constantly reconstructed and reformed. This means social workers become unemployed after a short time working there and have the chance to continue, but instead with worse conditions. Standards and quality are at risk constantly.

The population in Austria is growing older and older. **Care for seniors** is scarce and expensive and needed urgently. It is one of the great budget posts in social budgets, providing care, homes and medical care for seniors. But the society in Austria has not yet realized that major sacrifices are necessary to provide this.

One of the topics of social politics will be to secure the professional role of social work among the services for seniors. It is an important topic how to secure human rights and consumer's rights for endangered and weak groups. Quality of Standards, high quality of professional education, preventive measures against early burn-out and massive job-rotation are the only ways to avoid neglect, violent behavior and lack of care against seniors and disabled persons. This needs expenses of social budgets.

The supply of these services cannot be private risk and part of private precautions alone and cannot be the responsibility of families alone.

Right now the Austrian government is working on European standards for **medical care** in hospitals and for certain diseases and health-risks. **obds** is engaged in forming **guidelines**. Social work is demanded very much for information and dealing with problems of rehabilitation and problems of crossover between systems. But there is no conscience that quality and professional management of these problems has to be paid and can not be provided by other professions who work under great workloads and stress already, meaning nurses first of all.

Major topics of civil society already are **integration** of disabled persons, integration of migrants and their children, integration of low educated youth, integration of refugees. **Social work in schools** is enforced in present days, struggling with quality and standards right from the beginning.

Child-protection is a very emotional task in the media, but to establish standards and quality for the expanding needs and the rising complexity of the problems is not provided by the regional governments yet.

Various kinds of **Streetwork** is a growing service in the urban areas.

obds-activities 2009-10, from the left: pressconference, meeting and planning, street actions for quality in child-care





5. Social Work Practice Today

There are no statistics about social work in Austria. **obds** is aware, being this a great disadvantage in argumentation to favor social work and for the implementation of a professional law. Social work research has not made this a topic yet.

Social workers are not recognised as a separate profession in statistics. Either they are subsumed as employees in social businesses or as administration employees etc.

Since membership in the **obds** is voluntarily, there is no secure number of social workers employed. One of the opportunities to count the numbers of social workers is to see how many students finish the education.

Estimations say, there are about 6000 social workers in Austria. Many social workers change the profession and go into the therapeutic field, work as supervisors and mediators.

The **obds** has about 1700 members all over Austria which means about 28% of the social workers are organized in the association. This number is decreasing during the last 10 years.

As mentioned before the **obds** estimates that about 1100 to 1300 social workers are employed in the public child-protection system. This number is also lowering since the administrations try to outsource services.

Change of professional request, changing working conditions and the ongoing reform of the education for social workers reduces the identification with the profession and with the association.

A great deal of identification being a social worker is produced during social work education. Practitioners of social work educated future social workers and thus transported identification and conscience about the specific role of social workers. Sorry to say this does not happen any more in some universities of applied sciences.

In three FHs (out of 8) social work is taught by a majority of teachers who are not professional social workers.

Tabelle 1: Lehrende an den acht FH BachelorStudiengängen

Teachers at the Universities of applied sciences, departments of social work in Austria

Standorte FH Location	Absolute Anzahl Lehrende/ absolute number of teachers	Geschlechterverteilung gender		DSA/ Mag.FH Diploma/ Mag.FH	Andere Pro- fessionen other profession s	Anteil DSA/ Mag. FH percentage	Anteil andere Pro- fessionen percentage other prof.
		weiblich female	männlich male				
Wien	15	11	4	12	3	80,00%	20,00%
St.Pölten	11	6	5	8	3	72,70%	27,30%
Linz	11	8	3	6	5	54,55%	45,45%
Salzburg	5	1	4	3	2	60,00%	40,00%
Innsbruck	9	7	2	8	1	88,90%	11,10%

Vorarlberg	8	4	4	2	6	25,00%	75,00%
Kärnten	13	6	7	3	10	23,00%	77,00%
Graz	12	5	7	0	12	0,00%	100,00%

Source: SIÖ 4/2010 Roland Fürst, Education, page 35

What kind of social workers do they educate? Are they apt to deal with difficult clients? Are they skilled to do the required communication and networking. Are they devoted to the ethical principles required to deal with marginalized groups? The future will show.

Contacts of the **obds** with students and institutions, who employ young social workers coming from the FH, transport the complaints of lacking practice and lacking capability to cope with the requests of the profession!

6. International Connections in Social Work and the role within the European Union

Social workers in Austria oriented themselves very much on the developments in Germany. Language and common history emphasizing this. In Germany the education of social workers went a different way than in Austria but the upgrading of education in Germany has always been a model for the aims in Austria.

Since more than 15 years **obds** is emphasizing international contacts in order to learn and to exchange experiences. In present days there exist numerous models of international connections:

6.1. Education:

Schools of social work do have numerous connections since many teachers come from Germany. International meetings and field visits are organised for students in neighbouring regions as they are close to Germany, in Salzburg, Innsbruck and Linz.

6.2. **obds** and IFSW:

The Austrian association of social workers (**obds**) is member of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), a global organisation, having a regional branch for Europe. Herbert Paulschin, currently managing director of the **obds**, served as European deputy of IFSW for many years. Austria organised the first cross-border Congress of IFSW-Europe in Vienna and Bratislava in 2001. Austria and the **obds** is utilizing the traditional knowledge and fruitful connections to Eastern Europe, resulting from historical times during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.





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obds-representatives coworked on IFSW- papers on social topics, taking part in workshops and hosting meetings for the participants.

obds was the leading part in the EU - Twinning project to develop the child-protection system in Bulgaria in 2006, before Bulgaria joined the European Union. There are frequent contacts with the Croatian association of social workers. **obds** gave expertise for the organisation of the European joined Conference in Dubrovnik in 2009. Main theme of all projects and conferences **obds** is taking part is „Social Inclusion“. By the end of January 2011 **obds** attended a workshop in Zagreb, Croatia, dealing with the impact of the financial crisis in Eastern Europe and coping mechanisms there.

obds is engaged in two EU-projects in Romania, providing experts and knowhow and organising field-visits in Austria to educate Romanians.

Two great social service organisations, pro mente and BBRZ are partners in this project and have also experience with other international projects for disabled persons.

obds-representatives regularly take part at the IFSW conferences and attended the global meetings in Canada, Australia, Brazil and Hong Kong 2010.



6.3. obds and the german-speaking neighbors – Germany and Switzerland:

For many years **obds** has attended regular meetings of the associations of Germany – DBSH and Switzerland –

avenir social. The last meeting was organised by DBSH and happened in September 2010 in Munich. The



partners have agreed on cooperation in translating international papers and working on common ethical standards based on IFSW standards. Munich: Sept.2010

6.4. Social businesses expanding to Germany:

Neustart – social service for probation-clients has founded a branch in Baden-Württemberg, Germany and organises social work for persons on probation there. <http://www.neustart.at/DE/de/>

6.5. EU-projects with obds as partner and expert-pool (2008 -2011):

Project 1:

ESF-Project 4127

Verbesserung des Zugangs von jugendlichen Häftlingen zu berufsbildenden Programmen und Eingliederung in den Arbeitsmarkt während und nach ihrer Haftzeit „Improving the access of young juvenile delinquents to professional trainings and integration into the labor-market during and after their sentence.“

Project 2:

ESF- Project 4138

Schaffung und Umsetzung eines integrierten Modells zur Evaluierung, Berufsausbildung und Anstellung von Menschen mit Behinderung am Arbeitsmarkt in Rumänien „Creation and implementation of an integration model for evaluation, job-training and integration into labormarket for disabled persons in Romania.“

6.5. Social services being implemented in Eastern Europe:

Caritas and Diakonie, pro mente, BBRZ and many other private organisations have established a great number of small projects in several countries of eastern europe. Mostly projects for foster-care and orphans, children on the street, for Roma-people, for beggars from Romania and Bulgaria, for disabled persons und much more.

6.6. International meetings:

obds is attending many international meetings of social workers and is co-founder of the „ South-East European Conference“ of social workers in Sibiu in Romania.



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The „South-East European Conference“ aims to promote co-operation of social workers between countries from the South-East- European region by enhancing their capacity in developing and managing (EU-funded) projects. The Program includes plenary keynotes with discussion, working groups with practice orientated simulations and presentations of good examples, sharing experiences and exchanging ideas for project co-operation ("Agora" - the market place).

obds-representatives attended and actively participated in lectures and workshops at conferences, seminars and workshops in Latvia, in Siberia, in Russia, in Serbia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia etc.

Continuously **obds** gets invitations to name experts for international projects, recently for Egypt and for Ukraine.

6.7. Connections to United Nations:

obds-representatives are working for the United Nations in Vienna, the NGO membership in the UN named „CoNGO“ : CoNGO's NGO Committees bring together NGOs, members of the CoNGO secretariat and government delegations to discuss pertinent themes and issues before the UN and the international community. CoNGO members and the larger NGO community work together through these committees to share information, to cooperate on substantive issues and to bring NGO expertise into the discussions of governments in UN fora. CoNGO's NGO Committees operate in Geneva, New York and Vienna. <http://www.ngocongo.org/committees>

Brigitte Fragner and Georg Dimitz are on the **Vienna NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs**,

Christine Petioky is on the **CONGO Committee on Ageing**

7. Summary and Abstract

The main task of social workers and of the social work profession in Austria is the official recognition as an independent and equally accepted profession. Social work in Austria has a long and respected history and a number of well known pioneers and representatives. The educational level of social workers is top-level, but only recently connected to university level. But there does not exist a professional law for social work.

Social work in Austria is connected with all international developments in social work, having numerous contacts to the international federation and doing pioneer-work in south-east-european countries.

Social work and social services are as much influenced by the neoliberal economic developments as any European or other country in the world. Social work in Austria has to fight for quality and ethical standards and human rights constantly.

Social politics in Austria has to deal with growing numbers of poor and people working poor, growing number of marginalized groups and danger of constantly high numbers of unemployed people because of bad education and rising social exclusion.

Social Services are very well organised, still mainly publically funded. Austria's social security system has long traditions and still works rather well in times of financial and economic crisis. But there is the danger of constant budget cuts, outsourcing of services to cheap providers and losing quality of standards and renommé of social work as profession.



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