

## **VALUE: Austria National Report**

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This document reports on the interaction between University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and volunteering in Austria.

### **1. Overview of Volunteering – University Interaction**

#### **1.1 Volunteering in Austria**

##### **Sources of Data and Definition**

In 2006 the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (as the Ministry was formally known at the time) conducted a survey on the extent and structure of volunteering in Austria. Volunteering was defined therein as work carried out voluntarily and without remuneration for persons outside one's own household. In the survey, volunteering was divided into two categories: 1) formal volunteering, in the form of work for organisations, clubs or institutions and 2) informal volunteering, usually as help for one's neighbours (not within an institutional or organisational framework).

##### **Volunteers in the Austrian Population**

A very large segment of the Austrian population – 43.8% of persons over 15 years of age – is involved in volunteer work. In detail:

- 47.1% of the men and
- 40.7% of the women work voluntarily;
- 27.9% of the population is involved in formal volunteering and
- 27.1% in informal volunteering
- 23.2% of the women are involved in formal volunteering and
- 33% of the men;
- 27.3% of the women are involved in informal volunteering and
- 26.9% of the men.

##### **Volunteers according to Age and Education**

The volunteers can also be seen according to age group:

- 43% of 15 to 19-year-olds
- 45.2% of 20 to 29-year-olds
- 46.7% of 30 to 39-year-olds
- 49.5% of 40 to 49-year-olds
- 48.2% of 50 to 59-year-olds
- 43.6% of 60 to 69-year-olds
- 28% of 70 to 79-year-olds and

- 19.8% of persons over 80 years of age are involved in some type of volunteer work.

The survey also showed that well educated persons are more likely to work as volunteers:

- 54% of university graduates
- 60% of graduates of other post secondary institutions but only
- 33% of persons who completed only compulsory schooling engaged in volunteering.

### **Formal and Informal Volunteering**

Informal volunteering dominates in Austria with 62% of all volunteers (nearly 1.9 million people) engaged in informal volunteering activities. A breakdown according to the categories listed below for formal volunteering is not yet available.

Formal volunteering in Austria can be broken down as follows (% of volunteers working in the area):

- 13.7% in emergency services
- 17.1% in culture; leisure activities
- 5.8% in environmental and animal protection; nature conservation
- 14.2% in religious organisations/faith
- 7.5% in health; social services
- 8% in politics; unions
- 4.8% civic and community activities
- 5.8% education and
- 15.7% sport and fitness.

Volunteering in the area of education takes place primarily as work in parents' associations and centres for tutoring:

- 64.5% of the volunteers are women;
- 63.6% of the volunteers work on one-time projects
- 26.8% work regularly and
- 9.6% work regularly and on one-time projects.

### **Learning as Motivation and Benefit**

The list below is a summary of the reasons volunteers gave when asked about the motivation behind their activities (multiple answers were possible):

- 94% - enjoyment
- 93% - opportunity to help others
- 83% - opportunity to meet people, make friends
- 81% - opportunity to use my skills and knowledge
- 79% - opportunity to share experiences
- 78% - opportunity to learn
- 78% - important for public welfare

- 76% - volunteering helps me to stay active
- 76% - volunteering expands my personal horizon
- 67% - people will help me when I need help
- 64% - working for a good cause
- 53% - social recognition
- 22% - volunteering helps me in my job
- 8% - volunteering helps me to find paid work

Just over 80% of the volunteers welcomed the opportunity to use their skills and knowledge and 78% saw their volunteering activities as an opportunity to learn. In a survey of 400 Austrian companies conducted in 2005, 93% of those questioned said that volunteers were able to acquire valuable competences and skills through their voluntary work.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, in cooperation with a well-known personnel management firm, has developed a *volunteering portfolio* [Freiwilligenpass] for volunteers. It consists of a special folder with standardised assessment forms which are filled in by the organisation(s) the volunteer works for and the volunteer together. This is particularly important for volunteers as it officially documents not only the tasks and duties performed by the volunteer but also on his/her strengths, competences and capabilities. Only officially registered volunteer organisations are authorised to issue documents for the volunteering portfolio. The Austrian Chamber of Commerce and the national employment agency [Arbeitsmarkt-Service] both see the volunteering portfolio as means to provide potential employers with valuable information on an applicant's soft skills as well as professional qualifications.

The volunteering sector offers training courses for those employees and/or volunteers who are responsible for coordinating other volunteers, and training courses for volunteers. Guidelines for the development of such courses have been published by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

### 1.2 University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in Austria

In Austria, there is a clear legislative distinction between "regular" degree programmes (Bachelor, Master programmes, and PhD studies) and university continuing education or ULLL programmes. Both strands have their own institutional regulations based on the University Act 2002.

ULLL in Austria covers a wide range of activities opening up learning opportunities at university level through open lectures, workshops, seminars, summer schools, courses, degree courses and other programmes. The majority of programmes have a clear vocational purpose and are credited (ECTS); some lead to an international Master's degree. Non-credited activities are open to the general public regardless of age. To some extent, professional ULLL

programmes are open to professionals lacking the formal requirements for university entry.

In general, ULLL in Austria has to be self-financing and/or externally sponsored. Some activities such as open public lectures or Universities of the Third Age etc. are financed by the universities themselves (including participants' fees) and by public funds/sponsoring.

The Association "Universities Austria" (the forum of the Rectors of the Austrian universities) has published recommendations for the provision of lifelong learning, continuing education and professional development at Austrian universities, along with concrete recommendations on ULLL quality.

### 1.3 The political and legislative context in Austria

#### *1.3.1 Volunteering Policy*

Political responsibility for volunteering lies with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth. From the available documentation provided by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, it can be seen that the State supports volunteering as it constitutes an important contribution to social – and intergenerational – cohesion. In addition, volunteers perform a substantial and varied amount of unpaid work for the benefit of the general population.

As one of the results of the International Year of Volunteers 2001, the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work was set up by the then Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection in 2003 as an advisory body for policy on voluntary work and as a networking platform between non-profit organisations and the volunteers themselves. It aims to improve the framework within which voluntary work is carried out and to ensure the long-term continuation of voluntary activities by all generations. Although the Council was set up by the government at the time, it is independent of government funding. Currently the Council has 55 members, nominated by the organisations themselves but appointed by the Minister.

Innovative projects and measures aimed at encouraging people to engage in volunteering are being developed by representatives of volunteering organisations together with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, which is also offering financial support for their realisation.

Examples include:

Web-Platform: Volunteering Initiative / Initiative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection: <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/>  
This website is an important source of information on volunteering in Austria for both volunteers and organisations/centres needing volunteer workers. Here

volunteers can find information on current projects, on the organisations that manage them and on positions available. It gives volunteer organisations/centres the opportunity to present their projects and activities, and provides them with information on how to set up training and continuing education programmes for their volunteers. There is information for business and industry on how they can become involved in volunteer work and on the special qualifications of volunteers and their volunteering portfolios. In addition to this, there is a direct link to the section on volunteering on the official website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

**Guidelines for Training Programmes:** In order to create a standardised training programme for volunteer coordinators / managers of volunteers and for volunteers, the Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection has published a set of guidelines for continuing education and professional development programmes for coordinators of volunteers and for volunteers. These guidelines contribute to quality improvement and quality assurance in volunteering in Austria.

**Project “Orientation for voluntary work”:** The workshop “Orientation for voluntary work” emerged in the framework of the EU project “SLIC - Sustainable Learning in the Community”. The SLIC project is coordinated by the Austrian Red Cross and the Research Institute of the Red Cross as well as the Circle of Austrian Adult Education Associations (*Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke*, the umbrella organisation of Austrian education associations). International cooperation partners are Institut für Soziale Infrastruktur ISIS (evaluation, Germany), Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki (Finland), Budapest Cultural Centre (Hungary), Lunaria (Italy), INTEVAL Limited (UK), Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity PRIAE (UK) and the University of Strathclyde (UK). The SLIC project, which is supported by the European Commission and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, aims at raising the awareness of older persons for their own skills and potentials and at showing them ways of shaping their life in retirement actively. “The aim is the empowerment of older persons in order to avoid social isolation, strengthen informal networks and facilitate a healthy transition from working life to retirement.” For this reason, methods are being developed to “involve older persons actively in society and at the same time give them an opportunity to identify their potentials and develop them further by formal and informal learning. The participants are to find out which formal and informal learning options they need to avail themselves of if they want to become involved in their local environment. Local community activities may e.g. be volunteer work at various levels, becoming active in political life, the development of one’s own projects or the foundation of informal learning groups.” To develop methods which are to contribute to older persons’ actively shaping their lives, SLIC proceeded as follows: Firstly, information on existing materials on education, skills and engagement of older persons was collected. This was done by gathering data on measures carried out by educational and vocational guidance institutions, on

retirement preparation courses and skills balance sheets. The next step was to assess the needs of older persons in respect of their expectations about skills profiles and certificates for learning. Following this stage of the project, a concept for a two-day skills workshop with older persons was developed, and this concept was, or still is, implemented in practice. The purpose of the skills workshops is to prepare a manual which will help various organisations to carry out the workshop on their own. In the long run, the goal is to enable older persons to offer skills workshops for people in their age group themselves. On the surface, the target group of the workshop "Orientation for voluntary work" is people over 50 years of age who want to do voluntary work in the areas where the Red Cross is active. The two-day workshop is deliberately not organised on two consecutive days to give participants time for reflection. It takes place between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. The first day starts with taking stock of life, family and work experiences up to the present which eventually lead to a skills balance sheet identifying personal strong points. Therefore, the motto of the first day is "What can I do?" The motto of the second day is "Where do I want to go?" This is dealt with in a personal Action Plan showing where the participants can use their personal skills best and what they need to do to get there.

### *1.3.2 Lifelong learning policy in Austria*

Under the leadership of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, a Lifelong Learning strategy for Austria is currently being developed. Learning (lifelong and lifewide) at all ages is included. Presently the strategy is undergoing a process of realisation and consolidation.

For this report it is important to note that the strategy includes formal and informal learning for all ages. The basic targets of the Austrian LLL strategy are:

- The setting-up of a framework which would make it possible for all those interested in learning, regardless of their age and their previous schooling, to continue their education, to acquire the qualifications they need and to add to those they have;
- To create incentives and to cultivate an economic and social climate in which Lifelong Learning is seen as a valuable pursuit and is also attractive to those individuals who are not well qualified and/or who are generally not interested in (formal) learning;
- To improve the system of granting credit for learning, so that knowledge, skills and competences that have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning can officially be recognised as qualifications, thus permitting the orientation of learning processes to the outcomes.

The five strategic guidelines of the Austrian LLL-Strategy are: 1.) Lifelong Learning for all stages of life, 2.) Focus on the learner, 3.) Life Long Guidance, 4.) Acquiring competences through Lifelong Learning and 5.) Promoting participation in Lifelong Learning.

For the higher education sector, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research formed a Lifelong Learning Advisory Board in 2008.

Forums and associations such as the “Universities Austria” (the Rectors’ Conference) and AUCEN (Austrian University Continuing Education and Staff Development Network) are important platforms for strategy development and peer-to-peer consultation. In January 2009, Universities Austria published “Grundsätze und Empfehlungen zum Weiterbildungsangebot an Universitäten” [Guidelines and Recommendations for University Continuing Education]. This document includes a definition of university continuing education, a list of the types of university continuing education and a statement defining the minimum standards.

“Learning in Later Life” and “volunteering” are two areas which are currently being discussed by the Austrian Expert Group Learning in Later Life (founded in 2008) for their project “Guidelines and Priorities for Learning in Later Life - 2020” (which is partly funded by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs & Consumer Protection).

#### 1.4 The volunteering-university interaction in Austria

A survey on volunteering-ULLL interaction in Austria has yet to be carried out.

Regular university studies: It is up to the individual university staff member to engage in university-voluntary sector interaction and to involve students in these contacts. In some degree programmes, the curriculum requires an internship, where the student involved very often does volunteer work.

Research: The Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Nonprofit Organisations (NPO Institute) at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration has, since 2004, been involved in carrying out research projects on business administrative, management-oriented, economic, sociological and socio-political topics; these are projects tailored to the needs of various Nonprofit Organisations (NPOs) and other institutions. They also include the 226-page “First Report on Volunteering in Austria” [Freiwilliges Engagement in Österreich. 1. Freiwilligenbericht] (June 2009) which was compiled for the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

Training: University staff is involved in training programmes for volunteers and/or managers of volunteers, but participation is up to the individual university staff member and not within the framework of institutional cooperation.

ULLL: Doing the research for this report, no specific programme or practice of accreditation was found. All programmes which are on offer in ULLL can of course also be of interest to individuals working as volunteers or in the management of volunteers. One programme offered by a private company and accredited by the Ministry of Science and Research could be identified:

“Professional NPO-General Management Program”, which is classified as a “university level course” (“Lehrgang universitären Charakters” [LuC] as described in the Universities Act 2002).

## **2. Good practice examples and effectiveness of the interaction**

For this report it has not been possible to provide examples of good practice but the report shows that universities and the volunteering sector are working together, but not yet in ULLL. The lessons learned from previous and current interaction with the volunteering sector could be examples for interacting in ULLL.

## **3. Barriers and opportunities for future development**

### 3.1 Barriers

“Regular” degree programmes and “university continuing education” or “professional development” are strictly separated. Accreditation of prior formal learning for entry to regular degree programmes is possible. However, there is no APEL system implemented in Austria. In ULLL, the system of accreditation of prior formal, non-formal learning and informal learning is more flexible; depending on the curriculum and specific entry regulations, it is up to the academic director or the board of directors of the programme to decide.

### 3.2 Opportunities

In both strands in the university system, i.e. “regular degree programmes” and “university continuing education”, potential can be identified.

As for access to “regular degree programmes”, Austria lacks a system of APEL. In ULLL with its diversified programme structure at different levels, it seems more likely that some of these programmes could be opened up to offer employees from the voluntary sector and/or volunteers some form of academic accreditation.

At strategic and institutional level, institutions in both sectors might become aware of the potential of inter-sectoral collaboration if concrete actions are taken. Small projects at research level (e.g. needs analysis of volunteers as learners) or at programme level (e.g. modules for volunteers) could be developed.

The volunteering sector contributes immensely to public welfare. This should be used as argument for at least some public funding towards developing institutional collaboration between both sectors to develop pathways for volunteers to ULLL.

## **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

#### 4.1 Initial conclusions and summary

Although ULLL is well developed and the volunteer sector very well developed in Austria, interaction between ULLL and volunteering is clearly more a “potential” than a reality. The examples of interaction in other countries show that both sectors could benefit from each other.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

Looking at the potential, the following broad recommendations can be drawn for both the volunteering and the ULLL sectors:

1. Strategic level: At strategic level, institutions in both sectors should be aware of the potential of mutual partnerships; all institutions have strategic/developmental plans and might consider including such partnerships in these plans.
2. Institutional level: At institutional level, relay points should be established to function as contact points responsible for continuous communication, sharing information and the development of concrete actions including small projects. The Center for Continuing Education at the University of Graz, for example, could function as such a relay point for the University of Graz and function as a “gate” to the university, providing information for the volunteering sector and trying to develop joint action. Institutions in both sectors should be aware that volunteers are contributing a tremendous amount to public welfare and should be offered individual pathways to learning and upgrading. It is up to institutions in both sectors to develop these pathways. Accreditation at university level will be further discussed in Austria and the volunteering sector should contribute to these discussions and raise its voice to express the expectations of volunteers who want to engage in university learning.
3. Funding: ULLL in Austria has to be self-financing and/or externally sponsored. Taking into account that volunteering is unpaid, one possible approach for institutions seeking collaboration could be to think about a cost-sharing model (including public funding) based on modest participant fees.
4. Projects: Institutions in both sectors interested in exploring the potential of working together should develop projects at research level (e.g. needs analysis of volunteers as learners) or at programme level (e.g. modules for volunteers). EU programmes (e.g. exchange programmes for volunteers) could be a framework for collaboration.
5. A forum for exchange: At national level, it is important to use existing forums such as the Council for Voluntary Work, the Universities Austria, AUCEN, the Austrian Expert Group Learning in Later Life and other professional networks and platforms for the exchange of good practice.

## 5. Further information

### 5.1 Bibliography and references

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(Zusammenfassung erhältlich) [download: [www.bmask.gv.at](http://www.bmask.gv.at)]

*Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (ed.): Volunteering in Austria. 1<sup>st</sup> Report on Volunteering, Vienna 2009 (summary available) (in German)*

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*Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (ed.): Volunteering in Austria. Facts and Figures, Vienna 2008 (in German)*

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[download: [www.bmask.gv.at](http://www.bmask.gv.at)]

*Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (ed.): Guidelines for the development of training programmes for volunteers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Vienna 2008 (in German)*

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Entwicklung von Lehrgängen für Freiwilligen-Begleiter/innen, Freiwilligen-  
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*Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (ed.): Knowledge – Opportunities – Competences. Strategy for the Implementation of Lifelong Learning in Austria. Consultation Paper, Vienna 2008 (in German)*

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Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz (Hrsg.): Grundsätze und Empfehlungen zum Weiterbildungsangebot an Universitäten, Wien 2009 [download:

<http://www.uniko.ac.at/>]

*Universities Austria (ed.): Guidelines and Recommendations for University Continuing Education, Vienna 2009 (in German)*

## 5.2 Further resources

### 5.2.1 Websites

Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection:

[www.bmask.gv.at](http://www.bmask.gv.at)

EU-Projekt SLIC (Sustainable learning in the community – Raising awareness for older people’s competences and identifying new opportunities for learning and engagement): [www.slic-project.at](http://www.slic-project.at)

The Research Institute for Nonprofit Organisations / The Group for Nonprofit Management – Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration

<http://www.wu.ac.at/npo/research>

The Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Nonprofit Organisations (NPO Institute) <http://www.npo.or.at/ueberuns/englishversion.htm>;

<http://www.npo.or.at/forschung/abgeschlossene.htm>

Volunteering Initiative / Platform of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection:

<http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/index.php?id=CH0586>

Universities Austria: <http://www.uniko.ac.at/>

### 5.2.2 Glossary

Definitions of keywords in this report:

Volunteering: For the supplementary survey carried out for the “micro” census (2006) which formed the basis of the present report, volunteering was defined as an activity or service that was performed voluntarily (i.e. without legal obligation), which did not involve remuneration of any kind and which was performed for the benefit of persons outside one’s own household (from the summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Report on Volunteering [Source: Freiwilligenbericht 2009]).

Formal volunteering: is defined as an activity or service performed voluntarily by individuals whose services are offered by an organisation (from the summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Report on Volunteering [Source: Freiwilligenbericht 2009]).

Informal volunteering: is defined as an activity or service performed voluntarily on a one-to-one or private basis, i.e. directly between the volunteer and the recipient of the benefit (as in the case of helping one's neighbours) (from the summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Report on Volunteering [Source: Freiwilligenbericht 2009]).

University Continuing Education: is defined by Universities Austria (2009) as research-based teaching which is directed to university graduates and/or professionals who, although lacking formal requirements for university entry, have gained enough experience through their work to qualify them for admission.