

OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

AUSTRIA

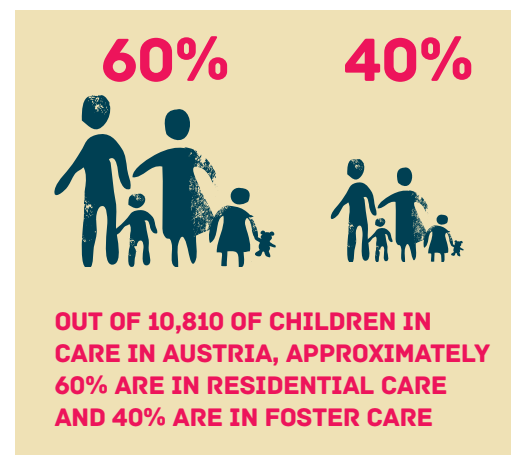


COUNTRY FACT SHEET

The process of transforming institutional care in Austria towards community-based approach and family-like settings has started in the mid-1980s and is almost completed. Austrian children deprived of parental care grow up in community-based settings (so-called social pedagogical facilities) or in a family-based care. The latest CRC concluding observations in 2012, however, recommended Austrian authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure that children in care are surrounded by the trained professionals, to encourage child victims, especially in alternative care, to report instances of violence, abuse and neglect, and to ensure that the quality standards in alternative care settings are strictly regulated by the law and are effectively enforced. Since then, community-based settings are constantly improving, employing professionals working to address individual needs of every child in the best possible way.

The latest available statistics indicate that 6,159 children were growing up in 600 social pedagogical facilities (Small Group Homes) in 2014 in Austria. The maximum capacity of children per social pedagogical facility is 8 children, with the only exception for the province of Burgenland where the maximum number of children is 12. Social pedagogical facilities are supervised by the relevant province authorities up to two times per year, and the quality of services provided to children in these facilities has been constantly improving. There are more and more social pedagogical facilities that use specialised services, such as psychotherapy, trauma-related pedagogy or other services, to address individual needs of each child in the best possible way. One of the examples is the work of a FICE Austria member, NGO *Terapeutische Gemeinschaften*. In the latest CRC Concluding observations for Austria¹, the Committee provided several recommendations regarding the situation of children in alternative care. Some of these recommendations have been already fulfilled (e.g. on statistical data or quality standards), some are still in progress. >>

¹ CRC Concluding Observations for Austria, 2012





**MOST OF THE UNACCOMPANIED
MIGRANT & REFUGEE CHILDREN
ARE PLACED IN STATE-RUN
RECEPTION CENTERS IN AUSTRIA**

>> According to the same statistics, 4,651 of children were growing up in foster care in 2014 in Austria. One of the priorities of our National Coordinator, FICE Austria, is to increase the number of children in foster care. Currently, out of 10,810 of children in care in Austria, approximately 60% are in residential care and 40% in foster care. FICE Austria aims to improve the situation with foster care in the country – both quantitatively and qualitatively – by implementing existing standards more efficiently, as well as introducing the new ones. Professionalisation of foster parents is set as the ultimate goal.

Although children in Austria are growing up in family- and community-based care, they are not supported when they leave care. Transitioning from care to independent living for young adults is not explicitly covered by the legislation. Therefore, young adults' aftercare mostly depends on a voluntary involvement of their (former) residential care provider and/or foster parents. Due to the strict Austrian data protection law regulations, there is no up-to-date register of care leavers available. This makes it difficult for the NGOs to get in touch with the young people and offer them support.

In recent years, Austria's child protection system was challenged by the great influx of unaccompanied migrant and refugee children. Current situation with unaccompanied migrant and refugee children in Austria could not be described as satisfying. Whilst majority of these children are still placed in state-run reception centers, continued efforts have been undertaken to provide suitable alternatives for their accommodation and care (e.g. in small group homes, in so-called host families² or in foster families).

² Gastfamilien

FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **OUT OF 10,810 OF CHILDREN IN CARE IN AUSTRIA, APPROXIMATELY 60% ARE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE AND 40% IN FOSTER CARE.**
- **6,159 CHILDREN WERE LIVING IN 600 SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL FACILITIES AND 4,651 CHILDREN WERE PLACED IN FOSTER CARE IN 2014.**
- **THE QUALITY OF CARE IN THE COMMUNITY-BASED SETTINGS HAS BEEN CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING AFTER THE LATEST CRC CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS IN 2012 REGARDING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE CARE.**
- **TRANSITION FROM CARE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING IS NOT EXPLICITLY COVERED BY THE LEGISLATION. AFTERCARE MOSTLY DEPENDS ON A VOLUNTARY INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG ADULTS' (FORMER) RESIDENTIAL CARE PROVIDER AND/OR FOSTER PARENTS.**
- **8,000 – 10,000 IS AN ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ACCOMPANIED MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN IN AUSTRIA IN 2015, AND THEIR MAJORITY IS STILL PLACED IN STATE-RUN RECEPTION CENTERS.**



OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN AUSTRIA

FICE Austria, founded 1968, is the national section of FICE International (International Federation of Educative Communities) which is an international worldwide network of professionals working with and for "out of home" children, children at risk and children with special needs. FICE Austria promotes high-quality standards in alternative child and youth care, as well as it actively supports exchange of knowledge, expertise and good practice among respective stakeholders at national, European and international level. To find out more visit www.fice.at

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign supports national efforts to develop child protection systems that strengthen families and ensure high-quality family and community-based alternative care for children, by leveraging EU funding and policy and building capacity in civil society.

It is a partnership between 5 international organisations and civil society across 15 European countries. For more information go to www.openingdoors.eu