



DIE ARMUTSKONFERENZ.

ÖSTERREICHISCHES NETZWERK GEGEN ARMUT UND SOZIALE AUSGRENZUNG

AUSTRIAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK Die Armutskonferenz NATIONAL REPORT 2016

1. Influencing National Governments for Better Policies - Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making linked to European Level developments

Our main focus is public relation and media work, to influence perspective and engagement in society and build more awareness on the topic of poverty and the positive effects of adequate social security.

A. MINIMUM INCOME

Our main topic in 2016 was the means-tested minimum income, because of cuts of minimum income in most federal states in Austria. We based our advocacy and lobbying work mainly on three pillars: 1. public events & press releases, 2. a social media campaign and 3. “fact checks” on myths around MI.

1. We organised a **public action** in cooperation with PEP – People Experiencing Poverty, under the slogan “Don’t strip us of everything we have” (“Wir lassen uns nicht das letzte Hemd nehmen”). In front of the ministries for social affairs and economy.

Details (in German):

<http://www.armutskonferenz.at/news/news-2016/mindestsicherung-lassen-uns-nicht-das-letzte-hemd-nehmen.html>



2. #abersicher [“that’s for sure”] was **small** (zero-budget) **online and social-media campaign** in order to underline the importance of the minimum income scheme. Prominent representatives of social care organisations or member organisations of the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network (e.g. Caritas, Diakonie and many others), as well as recipients of the minimum income, explained why the minimum income plays such a key role.

Their messages were e.g.:

- *“The minimum income ensures the security of our welfare state for all of us.”*
- *“The minimum income permits a certain level of life in dignity.”*
- *“The minimum income does not enable a life in luxury. It helps people avoiding manifest poverty. Cutting back on the minimum income puts social cohesion at risk.”*

For further information visit www.armutskonferenz.at/abersicher (in German).



3. We made several **“fact-checks”** and **“lemons”** against **MI-myths**. Some are explained below:

Myth of abuse of social benefits

Facts:

- massive disclosure obligation of beneficiaries (bank accounts etc.)
- Myth of “workshy” - Fact: only one quarter of MI-beneficiaries is able to work
- More than half of MI-beneficiaries live in Vienna so myth is that there is “widespread abuse” > Fact: In all Austrian cities live more beneficiaries than on countryside (reasons: shame, less information etc. > real problem = non-take-up on countryside!)

In German: <http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/mindestsicherungs-monitoring/bms-faktenchecks/regierung-nutzt-finanzierungsproblem-fuer-unbelegte-sozialschmarotzer-debatte.html>

Myth of “minimum distance rules” between wages and MI:

Myth: There has to be a (significant) difference between wages and MI to raise incentives to work (as discussed in Leuven with example DK)

Facts:

- No correlation between number of unemployed people with low skills and higher MI in Austrian federal provinces (as the MI-regulations are different in Austrian provinces it is possible to look at the provinces with highest amount of MI and the number of unemployed people) > The increase of MI-beneficiaries is higher in provinces were MI-benefits are average or low. [not so easy to explain in short words, sorry]
- Real problem is that there are too less jobs! Austrian average: 16 unemployed people for 1 job at employment office.

In German: <http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/mindestsicherungs-monitoring/bms-faktenchecks/faktencheck-mindestsicherung-hoechste-zuwachsraten-in-bundeslaendern-mit-niedrigem-leistungsniveau.html>



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Myth that people receiving a lot of money from MI:

Based on politicians quote that some hundred families only in province of upper Austria are receiving more than 2.000€ out of MI.

Facts:

- only big families (2 parents with 4 children, or single parent with 6 children) would theoretically have the possibility to receive more than 2.000€ MI > these are just 3% of all MI-benef.
- In average just 39% of maximum possible MI is paid to beneficiaries because they have additional income (wages from part-time jobs, unemployment insurance etc.)
- the average time of receiving MI is 6-9 months > myth of “lazy long-term benef. is not true (e.g. In Vienna only 10% are long-termi benef.)

In German: <http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/mindestsicherungs-monitoring/bms-faktenchecks/faktencheck-tatsaechlich-erhaltene-mindestsicherungs-leistungen-fuer-familien-nur-39-der-maximal-moeglichen-hoehe.html>

Myth: Costs for MI and social security are “exploding” (especially because of migrants)

Facts:

- MI is only 0,7% (2015) of the total Social budget of Austria
- E.g. In province of Lower Austria the expenditures on MI increased from 0,5% of total expenditures in 2011 to 0,8% in 2015 > that's really not dramatically!

In German: <http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/mindestsicherungs-monitoring/bms-faktenchecks/faktencheck-mindestsicherung-niederosterreich-anstieg-von-05-auf-08-der-gesamtausgaben.html>

Myth: The new cuts in MI only hit migrants

Background: The cuts in MI in different provinces in Austria were mainly argued by politicians to be caused by “massive increase of migrant-benef.” - so special rules for people with migration background were introduced but also other cuts (like 1.500€ cap)

Facts based on detailed calculation for different households.

Hit also:

- caring relatives (two adults and adult son with handicap) loose 189€ per month
- Family of 2 adults and 3 children loose 349€
- > Mainly children are affected by the cuts!!

In German: <http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/mindestsicherungs-monitoring/bms-faktenchecks/faktencheck-6-deckelung-der-bms-in-noe.html>



B. OTHER ACTIVITIES

We had several activities apart from Minimum Income – some impressions:

We had some meetings with politicians – including “inaugural visit” at new minister for social affairs Alois Stöger and with minister of education Sonja Hammerschmid.

The Austrian Anti Poverty Network is part of an alliance of eleven trade unions, social and environmental organisations called „Wege aus der Krise” (Ways to exit crisis). Members of the network participated in meetings and developing an alternative budget proposal including sustainable and democratic steps to find a way out of the financial and social crisis we are facing. The “civic budget for the future 2017” was presented in October 2016. Further information (in German): www.wege-aus-der-krise.at

Like in 2016 we organised **nationwide actions days** around the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17th of October) with the motto: “Ein Leben in Würde. Für alle” (A life in dignity. For all!) Several member-organisations, regional networks and other initiatives participated with public action or events. The Austrian Anti Poverty Network itself organised public kick-off for the campaign “Aber sicher” (That’s for sure) in front of the Ministry for families and children – to highlight the fact that especially children suffer from cuts in Minimum Income. And secondly with an event in Austrian parliament called “Parliament of the excluded” with PEP – *further details see section next page.*

Further information on Action days:

<http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/aktionstage/aktionstage-2016-ein-leben-in-wuerde-fuer-alle.html>

Since years we support the association “Hungry for art and culture” and the “**Kulturpass**” (“cultural passport”) with communication and other activities. Coming from Vienna the initiative is continuously spreading all over Austria. In 2016 only in Vienna more than 45.000 people use the “Kulturpass” to get free entrance in theatres, museums, cinemas and other cultural institutions.

Publications:

Umwelt und Gerechtigkeit (Environment and justice) published together with environmental organisations: http://www.armutskonferenz.at/files/oekobuero_umwelt_und_gerechtigkeit-2016.pdf

Mit Menschenrechten gegen Armut (With human rights against poverty): (*Short version in English attached*)

http://www.armutskonferenz.at/files/armkon_menschenrechte_gegen_armut-06-2016.pdf

Research paper: NGOs in der Armutsbekämpfung (Austrian NGOs combating poverty)

<http://www.armutskonferenz.at/publikationen/dawid-heitmann-2015-studie-nros-in-der-armutsbekaempfung.html>



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Participation of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion in Internal and External Workings of the National Network

People experiencing poverty and social exclusion are involved in both, the internal and the external, workings of the Austrian Anti Poverty Network. We support them to form Austrian Network as “Plattform Sichtbar Werden” (becoming visible) > this platform has the status of a member of the Austrian Network, and they also form a working group (see details regarding structure below) and have two representatives in our steering group (coordination team). They also participate in other working groups of our network (public relation, social policy etc.)

External: Project, events

Through the project “volunteering from the point of view of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion” we could gain support from social ministry for our PEP-work. Highlight of the year was the **“parliament of the excluded”** in the Austrian parliament in October 2016. On world café tables PEP got in contact with politicians from all political parties (members of the Social committee of parliament).

Report here:

<http://www.armutskonferenz.at/aktivitaeten/sichtbar-werden/parlament-der-ausgegrenzten-armutsbetroffene-im-gespraech-mit-abgeordneten.html>



Journalismprize “from below”

People experiencing poverty and social exclusion also play a decisive role in the award of the price for journalism “from below” for respectful reporting on poverty. They form the jury for electing the winners. award ceremony in December 2016. This price is awarded to journalists who portray poverty in a respectful and profound way. Prices are awarded in the categories print, online, radio, and television. Since 2015 we successfully spread the prize to other countries (poverty networks), also with support of EAPN Fund.

PEP – representatives of platform “Sichtbar Werden” are involved in some working groups in Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: Poverty Platform, Minimum Income Steering group, FEAD-network.



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Development and Growth of the Network (including growth and training and capacity building actions)

End of 2016 the network had 42 national members and 6 regional networks.

New member:

Kinderfreunde Österreich (Austrian Children's Friends Association)

All members:

Anton-Proksch-Institut | Arbeiter Samariter Bund Österreich | Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser | ASB Schuldnerberatungen GmbH | arbeit plus - Soziale Unternehmen Österreich | Bundesjugendvertretung | Bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit | Caritas Österreich | Dachverband Berufliche Integration | Diakonie Österreich | Europäisches Zentrum für Wohlfahrtspolitik und Sozialforschung | Evangelische Akademie Wien | FIAN Österreich | Forum Kirche und Arbeitswelt | Heilsarmee Österreich | Jugendrat der Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft | Katholische Aktion Österreich | Katholischer Familienverband Österreichs | Katholische Frauenbewegung Österreichs | Katholische Sozialakademie Österreichs | Kinderfreunde Österreich | Kolping Österreich | Lebenshilfe Österreich | Nein, zu Krank und Arm | Netzwerk Österreichischer Frauen- und Mädchenberatungsstellen | NEUSTART, Bewährungshilfe, Konfliktregelung und soziale Arbeit | Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft | Österreichische Kinderfreunde | Österreichische Plattform für Alleinerziehende | Österreichischer Berufsverband der SozialarbeiterInnen | Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund - Frauenabteilung | Österreichischer Verein für Drogenfachleute | Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz | Plattform Sichtbar Werden | pro mente austria | SOS Mitmensch | St. Virgil Salzburg | TelefonSeelsorge | Verband der österreichischen Tafeln | Vertretungsnetz: Sachwalterschaft, Patientenanzwtschaft & Bewohnervertretung | Vinzenznetzwerk | Volkshilfe Österreich | Wiener Hilfswerk.

Regional Anti-Poverty Networks in: • Lower Austria • Upper Austria • Salzburg • Vorarlberg • Vienna • Carinthia

We are organizing annually two membership meetings up to 6 hours each. Apart of formal topics we are presenting new studies, made by us or by members, or discussing actual topics.



Governance and Internal Democracy (including internal governance, respect of statutory requirements, management in the network and funding).

Since three years we are changing the formal association structure to a soziocratic structure. Means a structure with working groups, which allows a broader participation of members and elected workshop group members in the coordination team.

The active working groups are: * Administration and financial issues; * public relations; * social policy; * women and poverty; * PEP; * minimum income; * scientific advisory board.

Since 2015 the national coordinator Eugen Bierling-Wagner is working part time for elderly employees, means 23 working hours a week. Next to him Robert Rybaczek-Schwarz has a continuous employment of 20 hours a week for public relation, national and international projects.

Funding 2016:

NN	Total budget	Sources of funding in %		Division in spending in %		funds form EAPN Europe %
		Public	Private	Core funding	Projekt funding	
Austria	2.016	110.200	35.000	65.000	80.200	2.775
	145.200	75,90%	24,10%	44,77%	55,23%	1,91%