

POVERTY WATCH REPORT – AUSTRIA 2021

This report gives an overview about poverty and social exclusion in Austria with special focus on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and lock-down measures on people experiencing poverty respectively people with low income. The first part introduces the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network, the second part shows some actual data and facts on poverty in Austria and the third part deals with COVID-19 consequences.

1. THE AUSTRIAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK

Fight Poverty. Prevent Poverty.

Since 1995, the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network has conducted lobbying activities on behalf of those who have no lobby. It addresses the problems of poverty and social exclusion in Austria, which tend to be ignored, and aims at improving the living conditions of people experiencing poverty.

A conference of many colours

In 1995, the first Anti-Poverty Conference took place in Salzburg, in which many different representatives of civil society joined forces: welfare organisations, umbrella organisations of social initiatives, church and trade union organisations, education and research institutions, as well as groups of people at risk of poverty, such as single parents and unemployed people.

Regional networks

Regional networks and platforms have been established all over Austria. The participation of people experiencing poverty on the one hand, and social initiatives on the other, is enabled on the basis of nationwide campaign weeks, film events and cultural activities.

European networking

The Austrian Anti-Poverty Network is a member of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) The EAPN was founded in 1990, with the priority objective of establishing a network of NGOs combating poverty so as to put the fight against poverty and social exclusion on the agenda of EU policy makers.

2. POVERTY – FACTS AND FIGURES

Being poor does not always mean sleeping in a cardboard box at the train station and spending one's days in the park: being poor means not being able to take part in everyday social life.

In the statistics, poverty and social exclusion are defined as a situation of low income paralleled by deprivation in key areas of life. In terms of income, the risk-of-poverty threshold has been set at 60 % of the national median per-capita household income; and at present it is EUR 1 328 for a single-person household (EU-SILC 2020 – reporting year 2021).

For each additional adult in the household, 50 % is added to this sum, and 30 % for each child (aged under 14) in the household.

Type of household	Multiply by	Income per month
1-person household	1	EUR 1328
1 adult + 1 child (aged under 14)	1.3	EUR 1726
2 adults	1.5	EUR 1992
2 adults + 2 children (aged under 14)	2.1	EUR 2789

Deprivation in key areas of life means that you are unable to replace worn-out clothes or cannot keep your home adequately warm, not to mention paying unexpected expenses. In addition, poor people suffer from ill health more often, and live in crowded, damp flats with mould problems because, for instance, they have no money for repair work.

POVERTY

... particularly affects immigrants, unemployed people, single parents, and working poor

233 000 people in Austria (2.7 % of the residential population) are experiencing poverty and social exclusion (as at 2021): they live in 'severe material deprivation', and in addition to a low income, they are also facing exclusion in key areas of life (e.g. education or housing).

Women are more often affected by poverty than men. One in four people experiencing poverty are children. Their parents are immigrants, out of work, single parents, or have jobs in which they do not earn enough to make ends meet.

One in three poor people are unable to escape the cycle of poverty and social exclusion. Half of all people living in manifest poverty have been in this situation for more than a year.

... can hit everyone

The risk of not being protected by social security has risen and, in view of the economic crisis, will continue to rise – poverty can thus hit everyone. The income of over 1.2 million people (13.9 %) is below the poverty line.

... makes you sick

Poor people get sick twice as often as the non-poor. Children living in poverty today are the chronically ill of tomorrow. In many cases, people experiencing poverty cannot afford the same level of medical care as those not affected by poverty.

... causes stress

Being unable to pay the rent in time, not knowing how to raise the money for the children's school trip, having no, or a poorly paid, job: this causes stress, and in the long run, results in serious health problems such as gastric disorders, heart conditions, hypertension, sleeping disorders, headaches, etc.

... makes you lonely

People who are poor tend to see their friends and neighbours less often. Poor people frequently live isolated lives. For instance, one in ten Austrians cannot afford to invite friends or relatives over for dinner once a month.

... affects your future

For people living on the brink it is harder to progress into a higher-paid job. Their future is determined by their social background. In Austria, the children of poor people have a smaller chance of getting a good education: in most cases, their parents' social status affects the children's educational opportunities, and thus their income prospects.

In fact, poverty means that it is hardly possible to take part, at least to a minimum extent, in key social areas such as housing, health-care, the labour market, social contact, cultural life, education. Poor people are facing poor chances in life.

Source: Statistik Austria: Tabellenband EU SILC 2020: https://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_PDF_FILE&dDocName=125871

2.1. New data on poverty: 289 000 people living in poverty despite gainful employment, 146 000 of them households with children!

Challenges faced by working poor, child poverty, old-age poverty, unemployment and chronic illnesses

“Living wages and unemployment benefits are essential for preventing poverty,” points out the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network, with reference to the 289 000 people who live in households where, despite gainful employment, the earnings are insufficient to provide a living for them – or for their children. 146 000 of these “working poor” are households with children. Precarious or low-paid jobs result in unemployment benefits and pensions too low to ensure a living. Those who work in precarious jobs all their lives will not be able to accumulate a living pension; unemployment benefits and special unemployment assistance (*Notstandshilfe*) are so low that they cannot survive on them for even a day if they lose their jobs.

Child poverty is on the rise – despite the family bonus, and before the abolition of minimum benefit

385 000 children are at risk of poverty. Statistics Austria's figures come from the very year in which the “Family Bonus” was introduced. It obviously does not reach the poorest children. The data were also collected before the abolition of minimum benefit (*Mindestsicherung*) and the massive cuts in welfare.

According to the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network, “social policy answers are now urgently needed – for those at risk due to the expiring rent deferrals, for those affected by cuts in welfare, for children without future prospects, for the precariously employed and for the unemployed without sufficient income to ensure a living, or for all those who cannot afford therapies.”

Child poverty, the working poor, older unemployed, old-age poverty, and chronic illness

The Austrian Anti-Poverty Network draws two further conclusions from the current data from Statistics Austria, which still refer to the situation before the 2020 Covid crisis: “Strong welfare states reduce the risk of falling deeper into poverty and protect the middle social strata from poverty. Also, effective assistance is needed in the case of child poverty, the working poor, older unemployed persons, old-age poverty and chronic illnesses.” Firstly: social benefits make a decisive contribution towards social equalisation and have a poverty-

preventing effect. They reduce the risk of poverty from 42% to 13%. Unemployment benefits, emergency assistance and minimum benefit, as well as housing assistance and long-term care benefits, have the most powerful effect. This includes such benefits as minimum income that have now been converted into reduced welfare assistance. And, while wage incomes and assets are diverging, household incomes in Austria have remained relatively stable. The social gap is widening, and the welfare state functions as an equaliser.

Preventing free fall “right to the bottom”

Secondly: Children, elderly women, single parents, “working poor” and the long-term unemployed are particularly at risk. People with chronic illnesses face major problems. And high housing costs bring many to the brink. 385 000 of all those at risk of poverty and exclusion are children; 47% of those living in single-parent households are at risk of poverty or exclusion, as are 34% of families with at least three children. 289 000 live in poverty despite working, and among pension recipients, women living alone are also disproportionately affected.

Welfare state responses: Enhance strengths, correct weaknesses

“In the current crisis, we must enhance the strengths of the welfare state and correct its weaknesses. Cuts in minimum income are making the situation worse. This increases social precariousness and widens the gap between rich and poor in Austria,” explains the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network in its analysis. “Overall, there need to be more welfare state responses to the growing inequality in this crisis, and fewer funds for which people have to beg. These are measures to which people have a right, which have a lasting effect and which reach those affected in a targeted way, rather than by chance.”

Press release in German:

<https://www.armutskonferenz.at/news/news-2021/neue-daten-289-000-menschen-arm-trotz-erwerbsarbeit-146-000-haushalte-davon-mit-kindern.html>

2.2. European activities of the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network

The Austrian Anti-Poverty Network is a member of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), which aims to combat and prevent poverty at the European level. Among the reports and analyses that the EAPN publishes annually, the NRP (National Reform Programme) and the Country Report are particularly worthy of mention. In addition, the EAPN draws up statements on other EU activities (e.g. child guarantee), and responds to recent sociopolitical developments (e.g. COVID-19 or the Green New Deal).

Monitoring of national developments during the European Semester is a further important element of the participation of civil society in a EU context. The contributions and statements of civil society actors are, in any case, noticed by the EU. The development of the country report in the area of education is a good example. The participation of the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network in the civil society dialogue of the ECE, and the opportunity of contacting the government department in charge, has brought about a change in the arguments in the Country Report.

3. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES ON PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY

3.1. Summary of qualitative survey by Austrian Anti-Poverty Network

Study financed by Federal Ministry of Social Affairs

Summary of main results (press release in German):

<https://www.armutskonferenz.at/news/news-2021/erhebung-armutsbetroffene-und-die-corona-krise-2-0.html>

Download whole study (in German):

https://www.armutskonferenz.at/media/armutskonferenz_erhebung_armutsbetroffene_corona-krise_2_2021.pdf

After fifteen months of the Covid-19 pandemic, what we regarded as normal before March 2020 has become a distant memory, as this **qualitative survey by the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network** clearly shows. That memory was far more distant at the end of May 2021 (in the days of reopening after the spring lockdown) than it was in the summer of 2020, when the study preceding the present one was conducted. Both studies **investigated the impact of the Covid crisis on the lives of people affected by, or potentially at risk of, poverty in Austria**. The studies looked at people who have already been living in poverty for a long time, as well as groups who may have fallen into (near) poverty as a result of the Covid crisis: one-person entrepreneurs, artists and unemployed persons who lost their jobs during the pandemic. One major focus this time concerns adolescents from economically disadvantaged households. The data was gathered during moderated group discussions.

This time, the respondents set markedly different priorities: physical health, social contact and, above all, psychological well-being have gained in importance. Also, living conditions (overcrowding) have now become an issue too.

Some of the developments that the previous study detected even before the public became aware of them or before they could be captured in statistics are now being widely discussed. Qualitative research has thus proven its worth in its role as a “social barometer”; the sensitive situation of those affected by poverty due to their high vulnerability has been confirmed. For example, the **price increases** which, in the last survey, were only felt by people who really do have to take care of every penny, are now a statistically proven fact. High housing and food costs mean that people living in poverty (even those with stable incomes) have become completely dependent on welfare supermarkets or are even forced to look for food in waste bins.

“Food prices are going up all the time. From week to week, from month to month, you might say – always by just a few cents, but then in the end it’s gone up by a euro.”

“I have to go shopping at the welfare supermarket. So I have no choice. I used to go there and only buy bread, because bread is so expensive – good wholemeal bread costs a fortune elsewhere. But now, I have to buy everything there: I can no longer survive. (...) I’m putting on weight because the food is substandard. I wouldn’t usually buy the stuff you get at the welfare supermarket, because it’s mainly ready meals donated by large corporations, and I wouldn’t buy that. It’s very rare to find any vegetables there (...).”

Last summer, the notion that **divisions in society** had been made visible and more fundamental and had, in some cases, been created by the Covid crisis was – unlike now – more a foreboding than a certainty. This time, the discussions painted a picture of a society that is becoming radicalised, in which the willingness to engage in dialogue has diminished and bridges between different concepts of life, points of view and ideologies are crumbling: where efforts to offer

constructive criticism lead to exclusion, and (alleged) breaches of rules to aggression and denunciation; and where those who work in the cultural sector are being increasingly marginalised.

Everyday life during the lockdown was characterised by monotony, inertia and increasing boredom; for adolescents, for instance, it consisted of home-schooling, mobile phones and video games, sleeping, eating, watching TV and streaming and, from time to time, also exercising or shopping online. People living in poverty had greater stress – e.g., because they had to endure long distances and waiting times in order to go shopping at the welfare supermarket – as did all those who had to go to the doctor, to hospital, into an old people’s home or nursing home, or to visit administrative departments on official business.

The dominant topic this time was the issue of **psychological problems** that had set in for a variety of reasons: e.g. because of losing jobs and colleagues; because of not being able to meet friends, family and acquaintances, or only being able to meet them at a distance; because the economic basis for existence seemed to be dissolving into thin air; because of fear of contracting Covid; because of not being able to make ends meet; because the post-lockdown openings were postponed several times (at very short notice), thus bringing disappointment and forcing those affected into the stressful situation of waiting; because plans collapsed and the future became increasingly uncertain; and because the fear of not being able to survive financially gnawed at people more and more. Artists, one-person entrepreneurs and adolescents suffered the most, while those who suffered least were unemployed persons who had had a well-paid job before the Covid crisis – in contrast to unemployed persons with precarious jobs and low unemployment benefits. Loneliness, which was already a major issue last summer and has since got even worse, was compounded by a sort of indifference: many people lost their daily routine, slipped into depression and started sleeping in the daytime and being active at night. Adolescents, in particular, tended to sleep during the day (even while home-school lessons were running on the screen) or were constantly on the go outdoors, including late in the evening. Some things were left undone – schoolwork, as well as housework. The initial burning interest in the pandemic and the measures imposed diminished until many no longer knew what restrictions were currently in place.

“All I do is sleep now. (...) At home, I just leave everything lying around. I feel as if I’ve aged a lot due to the whole situation – not just physically, because lately everything hurts, probably from lying down so much.”

The adolescents suffered psychologically due to their parents’ financial problems and struggled with a feeling of being restricted on many fronts, but the majority maintained their **social contacts**: outdoors, in accordance with the regulations, albeit often in large groups. Adults usually adhered to the contact restrictions strictly, which meant meeting online, talking on the phone, or doing things together only in small groups and only outdoors. What people increasingly missed in the course of the pandemic was uncomplicated, regular contact with people in everyday life (e.g., when shopping).

“I couldn’t see my friends for the first three months, because we had no idea whether we were allowed to meet outdoors. My parents were very strict too. But later on, we got to understand the rules better and found out more. You were only allowed to go out with one friend, but we still went out in groups.” (Adolescent from Vienna)

Cases where whole neighbourhoods came closer together tended to remain a phenomenon of the first lockdown, as did the revival of old friendships by telephone or video conference. Overall, the whole situation resulted in a massive restriction of social contact and hence the aforementioned loneliness. People who were unable to maintain their circle of friends and acquaintances now fear that they may have lost some contacts permanently. This particularly applies to impoverished older people to whom the digital world is unfamiliar. On the other hand, families and couples have grown closer: thus, adolescents said they had got to know their parents better. However, some people's eyes were opened when, for instance, latent or suppressed domestic conflicts erupted more often or for the first time.

"I wasn't doing so well at that time. I was pretty depressed. But I didn't want to talk on the phone either, because my mum always listens in when I'm on the phone." (Adolescent from Vienna)

Home-schooling did not work well for the majority. Of the boys and girls interviewed (aged 16 to 19), nine attended school during the lockdowns. Two of these dropped out of their course of education due to the distance learning: one student could not follow the lessons because she is not a native German speaker and had to share a room with two siblings who were simultaneously being taught online. The other girl received no online instruction at all, but simply had the work assignments sent to her. The hours spent passively sitting in front of a screen were tiring for both hard-working and lax students, and few teachers were able to hold the school students' attention for a prolonged period (the problem of falling asleep during online classes has already been mentioned). In the discussion groups, parents affected by poverty were doubly concerned about the home-schooling: firstly, because of the children's declining performance, and secondly, because they often had to take on the role of teachers, which overtaxed them emotionally, organisationally and technically. This was particularly evident in the case of single parents and families with a migrant background. By contrast, one important aspect examined in the previous study hardly caused any problems this time: the equipping of households with digital technology. On the other hand, over-crowded living conditions were mentioned more often – in connection with home-schooling.

"In the beginning, my schoolwork improved by a mark or two. And then it got worse. (...) Because I didn't keep up. And it was no fun learning at home. I simply lost my motivation. (...) – There's no one to tell me to work. And I was lying in bed with lessons running in the background. Now and again, I went to sleep." (Adolescent)

"It was very difficult for me. There are five of us at home. In the morning, we always had online lessons. Sometimes, we didn't have any Internet and it didn't work at all. Another time, I was supposed to ask four questions. Then my sister said to me: 'Keep it down, please.' And I said to my sister, 'Keep it down yourself.' That was very difficult for me. The flat's very small for us: everyone ought to have a room of their own, but unfortunately, we don't. That's why it was quite difficult for us, and I failed school subjects." (Adolescent)

Health now plays a far more important role than it did in the summer of 2020 – but not protection from Covid. The focus was almost exclusively on sports and exercise. Those who were not very physically active before the Covid crisis feel healthier and fitter as a result of regular walking and cycling. Conversely, for athletic people this was not a full substitute for their usual training, especially if they had kept painful degenerative processes under control through special exercise programmes. Thus, many older people now suffer from more severe pain. Among the adolescents, on the other hand, the absence of sports, which they sorely missed both for physical exercise and mental balance, was a preeminent topic in general. Several people affected by poverty complained of poorer health as a result of the often-substandard food from the welfare supermarkets. Visits to the doctor and direct, personal contact with health services proved difficult. Complaints were not taken seriously enough, and the odd check-up was omitted.

“Visits to the doctor have become insanely complicated: for example, you get fobbed off right away with any old diagnosis over the phone and get sent antibiotics without any sort of examination. During the first lockdown, I was quite sick – bad timing. (...) Then you simply tend to skip lots of check-ups because it’s such an insane amount of time and effort. (...) Of course, the doctors changed their office hours – some of the specialists couldn’t even be reached at times. So I’ve experienced a lot of problems.” (Vienna)

In the summer of 2020, **work** had been the dominant topic of discussion. This time, it only retained equal importance for some groups: the “new” unemployed, who did not yet have a prospective job and whose chances on the labour market were, furthermore, poor; the one-person entrepreneurs, since at the end of May 2021 they still had no idea when and how they would be able to return to (unrestricted) work; and people accustomed to poverty, who were looking for at least a marginal job or missed the voluntary work to which they feel very attached in terms of its content. Higher unemployment may already have weakened the position of the job seekers: the respondents said that wages had fallen, and job requirements had become more exacting. In the case of people employed in precarious jobs and “working poor”, a particularly clear pattern emerged: financial problems have a knock-on effect on other family members and bring them into financial difficulties too, in a kind of chain reaction.

In summer 2020, conversations with **those working in the cultural sector** focused almost entirely on their precarious working conditions, which had immediately plunged them into financial distress with the imposition of the first lockdown, as they lacked any resources to tide them over. The Covid aid payments that have meanwhile arrived have helped to soothe their anxieties: although these payments are just as low as their salaries would be, they come more regularly and more reliably. This has sufficed to ease the financial situation, but not the mental strain: not being able to practise the profession they love, the multiple announcements and last-minute cancellations of the reopening of the stages, extreme loneliness (due to strict adherence to the Covid measures) and a feeling of being disregarded by society weighed heavily on their state of mind.

“I love my job: I want to do it, and then I’m not allowed to do it for months on end and I don’t know when I’ll be able to do it again. And that kind of thing is really nerve-wracking.” (Artist)

On the other hand, artists whose working conditions had not been precarious before the Covid crisis, now found themselves in the same financial situation as many **one-person entrepreneurs**: despite Covid aid payments, they suffered massive losses of income. The one-person entrepreneurs had also either not been able to work at all for 15 months (e.g., in tourism) or had seen their business volume slowly shrink to a dangerously low level during that time. Both a quick and a slow economic death were described as being extremely stressful.

“Because I can no longer actively acquire customers in sales. (...) I’m not only losing my old business base, but the new one as well. And that’s one of the reasons why I’m starting to break down mentally – because I can see where this is going. It’s like dying slowly.” (Self-employed person)

The “**new**” **unemployed** comprise two groups: one worked in low-paying jobs before the crisis, has no savings and receives very low unemployment benefit. These people have in fact fallen into poverty due to the Covid crisis and the loss of their job. The second group had a well-paid job, ideally some financial reserves and sufficiently high unemployment benefit. These unemployed have never come close to poverty and are unlikely to do so in the future. Overall, it is clear that well-paid dependent employment has offered by far the greatest social and financial security, which in turn had a positive effect on a person’s state of mind.

"I think I'm cracking up mentally. Because I absolutely need to have a normal job. When I was working, I used to constantly complain, 'I work from eight to eight, and never see daylight.' And now I constantly have this feeling of agitation inside – I'm left with no job, I'm left with no job. Yeah, it's kind of weird." (Job seeker)

After a transition period that was difficult to bridge for those affected, the **state Covid aid** ultimately worked well. The one-person entrepreneurs criticised the fact that there was no legal entitlement to the aid. They said that the application process was too complicated and the waiting time for payment too long; in addition, they often found the sums that were paid out incomprehensible. **Assistance from a person's private circle** has lost its pre-eminence since the previous study, but it is still this assistance which provides rapid, straightforward relief in the worst emergencies.

"If you call there, no one knows anything, no one knows where you can get anything. The secretary's office doesn't work properly anyway. Everyone's working from home – I don't know, it's a disaster. You have to do everything yourself." (Vienna)

Almost all the respondents' view of the **future** is characterised by uncertainty and timidity: they would rather not think about it at all, let alone cherish any hopes or desires.

"I don't want to get too excited right now. Because you always start looking forward to something, and then it doesn't happen after all (...). But I've got a feeling it's going to be like last summer. That all the rules will be relaxed and then there'll be another lockdown in the winter." (Adolescent)

3.2. Government measures (short-term)

The Austrian Government has taken various measures to support business and the population (some of them are still in place), but this support has not been oriented towards the poorest groups. The government representatives argue that people experiencing poverty have already been poor before the crisis so, for them, the situation has not changed. However, this view ignores the fact that the means-tested minimum income and other social benefits have been insufficient already before the crisis, and that the crisis makes the situation even harder for people experiencing poverty (losing support through social services, child care etc.).

One of the measures taken is the short-time work scheme, i.e. employees work only part-time, and part of the income they lose is paid by the state (so they earn about 90 % of their original wage). More than 1 million employees are doing short-time work at the moment. This measure prevents people from losing their job and having to rely on unemployment benefits, which are lower. Another corona measure that has been taken is support for self-employed people (mostly financial support by means of government-backed loan guarantees). The problem here is that people who earned too little are not eligible for support; it has been criticised that credit guarantees are mainly support for banks, whereas self-employed people have to pay back the money and will be indebted. Precarious working situation already before the crisis, now even more dramatic.

The family hardship fund, another corona support measure, was originally only aimed at families in which one partner had recently lost their job because of the corona crisis. After massive criticism and interventions by the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network, among other organisations, the government modified the regulations and also included families in which one partner had already been unemployed before the crisis, and also recipients of means-tested minimum income. This, in fact, is one measure that is oriented towards the situation of people experiencing poverty.

Another measure from which people experiencing poverty can benefit is the Government's decision that people who have been unemployed for a longer period won't lose their regular (short-

term) unemployment benefits (normally, the regular unemployment benefit is replaced with a – reduced – long-term unemployment benefit after a certain period.

HOWEVER: despite our criticism, the Federal and Regional Governments did not change the new regulations concerning the means-tested minimum income scheme. In Germany, for example, the Government decided to abolish the proof-of-financial assets requirement, and it has not been possible either to reduce the waiting period (which is up to three months).

The Austrian Anti-Poverty Network has voiced a number of other proposals regarding support especially for people experiencing poverty – but these proposals have been implemented only in part:

- (temporary) increase of the means-tested minimum income;
- easier access to 'support in specific situations' (part of the means-tested minimum income scheme, but in most cases people are not granted this type of support);
- higher 'family bonus' for people receiving unemployment benefits.

Our press release (in German):

Austrian Anti Poverty Network demands a social fund for the most deprived!

<http://www.armutskonferenz.at/news/news-2020/armutskonferenz-fordert-sozialfonds-fuer-die-aermsten-schutzschirm-fuer-menschen-in-not.html>

3.3. Addressing the social crisis: Demands to the Government (middle & long-term)

1. Reduce educational inequality.

- ← Ensure completion of education for all children.
- ← Increase school social work nationwide, and expand outreach social work
- ← Establish an opportunities index for schools: support for 'hotspot schools' with an opportunities index on an empirical basis, combined with school development. Additional school-related resources, school assistance, social work, cooperation with parents.

2. Convoke a Parliamentary Subcommittee on combating poverty.

Raise awareness of, and listen to, voices against poverty.

3. Avert insolvency and private bankruptcy.

Those particularly at risk include unemployed people, people with reduced incomes, as well as those failing at self-employment.

Provide sufficient means for debt advisory services in times of crisis.

4. Fight unemployment among young people.

- The Federal Government must ensure the Guaranteed Training Scheme up to age 25, oriented towards diversified education and training options. The focus must particularly be on young people with precarious biographies, who need a high degree of stabilisation and a well-structured environment.
- Digitisation efforts which, in addition to technological equipment, focus on teaching media skills, as well as on the pupils' self-reliance.

5. Prevent child poverty.

Introduce universal minimum financial support for children independent of type of family, ethnic origin or parents' residence status.

6. Single parents: Reform alimony law.

Here, considerable shortcomings are apparent, which trigger poverty.

- Ensure a minimum level of alimony in line with age-related guidelines for average needs, based on actual child-related expenses.
- Expand the advance-on-alimony scheme, and particularly extend the age limit up to completion of education/training.
- Quickly implement the alimony reform oriented towards the children's well-being.
- Simplify alimony advancement proceedings

7. Welfare assistance: Security for people with disabilities.

If a 25-year age limit for parents' maintenance obligations towards children with disabilities is laid down, as a consequence, the current obligation on the part of adults with disabilities to sue their own parents for maintenance must also be abolished.

8. Child health: Close the therapy gap.

Tens of thousands of children do not get necessary therapies.

9. Introduce health impact assessment.

A health impact assessment (HIA) combines various procedures, methods and tools in order to predict and assess the positive and negative health consequences for certain population groups that may result from a variety of plans and programmes.

HIA can be complemented by a 'social impact assessment' of legislation that is adopted.

10. Prevent persistent long-term unemployment.

This requires qualification programmes, employment in social firms, as well as programmes that combine work and learning.

It is particularly important to include all people who are unable to find jobs with living minimum wages in the present-day labour market.

11. Prevent violence against women and children.

Ensure basic support for women and children experiencing violence, as well as the nationwide expansion and secure funding of women's shelters.

12. Youth services up to age 24.

The young people affected need assistance and support beyond the age of 18.

13. New means-tested minimum income that ensures livelihood, opportunities and social inclusion

The welfare assistance scheme will increase social problems instead of solving them.

14. Invest in social housing.

Housing has become unaffordable for many people, and housing costs pose a high poverty risk.

15. Include social human rights in the constitution.

Strengthen fundamental rights: enforceable rights, not charity.

3.4 Activities of Austrian Anti-Poverty Network

Press releases, press conferences, lobby work.

Specifically launched 2 campaigns:

Campaign “We together II” on the importance of our welfare system launched in December 2020 (until April 2021)



Homelessness is “Hostal search” without Christmas
Let's stand up for a welfare state which assures affordable housing for everyone.
We together.



Child poverty leaves all wishes open.
Let's stand up for a welfare state which assures a good future for all children.
We together.

All topics and images: <https://wir-gemeinsam.at/themen/>

Campaign “We together III” on the importance of adequate social benefits launched in June 2021 (ongoing)

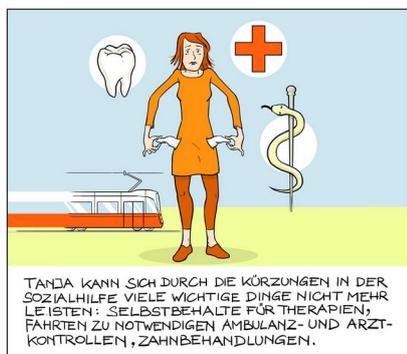
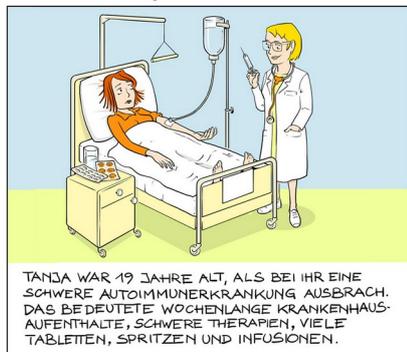
2019 the conservative right wing government introduced a new law on minimum income schemes, which reduced the benefits and tends to exclude specific groups (especially migrants). Austrian regional states have to implement these rules in their regional law. Now people and groups register step by step the consequences of these cuttings. Broad public and media do not really care about these cuttings so we try to tell these stories of people affected.

Picture story of Tanja:



TANJA WIRD IM REGEN STEHENGELASSEN

ÜBER DIE NEGATIVEN FOLGEN DER GEKÜRZTEN SOZIALHILFE



WIR BRAUCHEN GERADE JETZT EINEN FUNKTIONIERENDEN SOZIALEN SCHUTZSCHIRM!

Scribble video on the story of Mrs. Emre and Mr. Innerhofer:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdGK8oVJK88>

Cartoons:



More information: <https://wir-gemeinsam.at/mindestsicherung/>