

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRIA

## KEY STATISTICS

Within the framework of statistical data collection, **Statistik Austria** (the Austrian statistical office) uses an **indicator on registered homelessness**, i.e. those who are formally registered as homeless<sup>i</sup>. Additionally, a list of services provided by homeless services with temporary accommodation is included in their survey. This list, however, is incomplete, with a large part of the picture missing. Statistik Austria itself states that the indicator only captures the bottom line of homelessness in Austria. According to Statistik Austria, **12,055 people** were registered homeless in Austria on the reference date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014<sup>ii</sup>.

The Social Ministry also regularly publishes statistics on homelessness using data from different temporary accommodation services than Statistik Austria. According to the Social Ministry, in 2016, **15,090 people** were registered as homeless. This is 3,691 people more than in the base year of 2008, where 11,399 people were recorded (an increase of 32%)<sup>iii</sup>. This figure does not include all necessary services and does not cover persons living in the street who are not registered.

About **70% of all homeless people in Austria live in Vienna**. Another 20.3% live in other big cities: Graz, Linz, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Klagenfurt<sup>iv</sup>.

BAWO carried out surveys in 2006 and 2007. The results are split into prevention services, mobile services and stationary services<sup>v</sup>.

Besides those mentioned above, there is a variety of local and regional sources of data on homelessness:

- **Vienna Social Welfare Report<sup>vi</sup>**

The Vienna Social Welfare Report 2015 (FSW Leistungsbericht 2015) shows an increasing number of people using homelessness services: according to these figures, the number of homeless services users rose from 8,180 in 2010 to 10,020 in 2015. This is partly due to a higher number of people needing the services, but also to an expansion in the services themselves.<sup>vii</sup>

### Key pull-out statistics

Competing national statistics:  
 (Oct 2014): 12,050 people registered as homeless  
*(source: Statistik Austria)*  
 (2016): 15,090 people registered as homeless  
*(source: Austrian Social Ministry)*

In October 2016, there were 5707 places in the Viennese Assistance Programme for Homeless People: 361 places in Night Shelters (in the winter months there are about 900 places), 4625 places in Supervised Housing, 721 places in Floating Support<sup>viii</sup>.

- **Evictions in Vienna:**

2,446 households were evicted in 2015, with 19,543 households (around 45,000 persons<sup>ix</sup>) at risk of losing their flat because of an eviction proceeding (2014: 21,500 households, around 50,000 persons).

The number of eviction proceedings has been decreasing during the last few years, whereas the number of actual evictions increased between 2014 and 2015. In 2014, 2,300 households (around 5,300 persons) were evicted. Some see that development as a result of the Viennese system to prevent evictions. Others see the increase of fixed-term rental contracts within the private rental market as an important cause. Within the Viennese private rental market, 52% (Austria: 58%) of new contracts have been closed with a fixed term in 2010. In 2013 that increased to 69% (Austria 67%)<sup>x</sup>.

- **Salzburg Annual Homelessness Survey**

For the past twenty years, service providers for homeless people in the city of Salzburg have carried out an annual survey during the month of October. The survey is based on both a questionnaire and contributions from homeless service providers, social services within hospitals and the justice system, street workers, youth welfare institutions, psychiatric wards and bed and breakfast hostels. The 2015 survey estimated that there were approximately 1,650 homeless people in the City of Salzburg in the month of October.

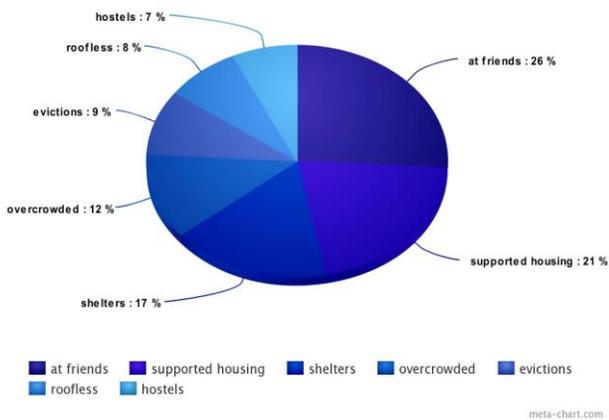
In October 2016, the Salzburg homelessness forum undertook a survey on homelessness, for the first time in the whole county of Salzburg and not only in the city of Salzburg.

Homelessness in the **county of Salzburg**:

- Men: 1,045
- Women: 446
- Children: 270
- Total: 1,761
  
- Inhabitants of the county of Salzburg: 545,742
- Homelessness in the frame of one month: 1,761
- Share of homelessness: 0.32%

There is a large number of homeless children and young adults (up to the age of 30 years) in the county of Salzburg. Their share of the homeless population is 47%. This is a much higher share than in the population of Salzburg, where the proportion is 33%.

Profiles of homeless in Salzburg<sup>xi</sup>:



• **Lower Austria Homelessness Report**

In the official Social Report by the provincial government, there is a chapter on homelessness services and their users. For 2014, the most recent report, the numbers of users were as follows:

- Eviction prevention: 5 service providers, used by 347 people asking for information, by 562 people for short-term counselling, by 301 people for mentoring. 1,055 cases were closed.
- Shelter services: 16 institutions, ranging from Night shelters, Homes, Mother and Child services to housing care, used by 1,370 people
- Women’s shelters: 6 providers, 64 places in shelters, with an average occupancy rate of 71.44% (16,922 nights)

## INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

According to the Social Ministry in 2016, 15,090 people were registered as homeless. This is **3,690 people more** than in the base year of 2008, when 11,400 people were recorded (an increase of 32%). This data can only be seen as the bottom line of homelessness in Austria as the acquisition of data is incomplete.

In addition, local-level evidence suggests that **homelessness is increasing** in a number of cities:

The **Vienna** Social Welfare Reports show that the number of users of homeless services is increasing from year to year. About 10,000 clients used homeless services in 2015 (2009: 7,526 clients; 2010: 8,180 clients; 2013: 9,770 clients). There were 177,000 overnight stays in night shelters in 2015 .

**Vienna** is also increasing the number of places in night shelters to 900 in the winter months to provide for homeless people who do not regularly access the social system. For these people it is important to also find a solution for other months of the year, when they aren’t allowed to use the shelters but also need support in health and other social matters.

In the last few years there also has been a sharp increase in the use of mother and child facilities where numbers of clients have risen by more than 18%.

Data from **Salzburg** show a steady increase in the number of homeless people over a period of 15 years. In Lower Austria, the number of people using services for homeless people remained fairly stable.

In **Tyrol**, all the facilities for the homeless record sharply increasing numbers. There are two main reasons for this:

- 1) Tyrol has the highest rental rates in Austria and at the same time has the lowest average wage income.
- 2) For recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, there is no adequate housing market. A large number of these people live in dramatically overcrowded premises (up to 8 people to 25m<sup>2</sup>).

## CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

There is no data on this at national level.

There are some indications of an increasing proportion of homeless **young people and women** in some local contexts. In Salzburg, there is evidence from the annual survey of increasing homelessness amongst women and migrants, especially from South-Eastern EU countries. According to BAWO members, there is an increasing presence of people without access to health insurance, social assistance (needs based minimum benefits) and homelessness services in Austria. Within this group, there are high proportions of **asylum seekers** whose claims have been rejected, **third country nationals without access to the labour market** or with a temporary residence permit, and **mobile EU citizens** living in various circumstances. This applies to a greater or lesser extent to Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol and Carinthia.

There are about 100 homeless people in Vienna for whom the support system isn't able to provide adequate support. Most of these clients have a **combination of psychiatric and physical illness combined with social problems**.

### New "target group": Refugees

There is a severe crisis in refugee accommodation in Austria at the moment. Approximately 85,000 refugees asked for protection in 2015.

In June 2016, for instance, 22,000 asylum seekers still lived in the Federal Care Scheme (Bundesbetreuung) in **Vienna**.

40% of these refugees are housed in special refugee accommodation and 60% are housed in private apartments. Once the asylum seekers are granted asylum, they have to leave this federal support scheme. In Vienna there are only 100 first homes on hand that can be passed on by the homeless sector. This supply is, of course, inadequate.

In Salzburg statistics indicate that 80% of the refugees leaving the Federal Care Scheme are at risk of homelessness.

## POLICIES & STRATEGIES

There is no national homelessness strategy. Vienna and Upper Austria have adopted an integrated program on homelessness, covering prevention, accommodation and reintegration. The program in Vienna is known as the Vienna Integration Program for Homeless People (Vienna Multi-Stage Scheme). Housing First approaches are being implemented.

## REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

### Positive

- Most of the Austrian entities showed quite some effort to overcome the severe crises in refugee accommodation .
- In some of the Länder, regulations for residential building subsidies have been changed in order to allow building of additional affordable housing in Austria .

### Negative

- The efforts to overcome the crises in refugee accommodation are insufficient as statistics indicate that 80% of the refugees leaving the Federal Care Scheme are at risk of ending up in homelessness.
- There has been a severe tendency by most regional governments to diminish the needs-oriented minimum security scheme especially for refugees, migrants and larger families.
- Negotiations between the Federal and the regional governments on the extension of the needs-oriented minimum security scheme have failed. This scheme was introduced in 2010 and amongst other achievements led to the inclusion of many people in the health insurance scheme. Besides the lowering of entitlements, the consequence of the failure of the negotiations is that the unification of the social welfare regime is again fragmented into 9 different regional systems.

- There is also a tendency towards toughening begging laws in all provinces. Aggressive begging and begging with children is punishable by regional laws in all regions of Austria. Begging legislation has been extended. Examples include the banning of “commercial begging” in Upper Austria, sectoral begging bans in Salzburg and time limits being introduced in Innsbruck.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> In Austria the registration of people without fixed residence is possible with the instrument of the "main residence confirmation" (§ 19a, Reporting Act). This main residence confirmation enables homeless people to prove their relationship to the respective municipality area. The issuing of the main residence confirmation by the registry office is bound to two prerequisites: (1) probable cause must be shown that the focal point of the person's day-to-day life has existed exclusively in the municipal territory for at least one month, and (2) the designation of a contact point that is regularly visited by the homeless person. The contact point shall also be regarded as a mailing address, provided this is approved by the contact point.

<sup>ii</sup> Q: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Abgestimmte Erwerbsstatistik (AEST) 2014.

<sup>iii</sup> Statistik Austria (2017): Armut und soziale Ausgrenzung in Österreich. Indikatoren 2008 bis 2016. Präsentation am 25. Oktober 2017.

<sup>iv</sup> Statistik Austria: Abgestimmte Erwerbsstatistik 2012; Mai 2015.

<sup>v</sup> See also: [http://www.bawo.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/public/Dokumente/Publikationen/Berichte\\_Studien/2013-05\\_Wohnungsnot\\_und\\_Wohnungslosigkeit\\_Update\\_Dateneueberblick\\_BMASK\\_HSchoibl.pdf](http://www.bawo.at/fileadmin/user_upload/public/Dokumente/Publikationen/Berichte_Studien/2013-05_Wohnungsnot_und_Wohnungslosigkeit_Update_Dateneueberblick_BMASK_HSchoibl.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.wien.gv.at/gesundheit/einrichtungen/planung/pdf/sozialbericht-2015.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> FSW (2016): Leistungsbericht 2015. Fonds Soziales Wien. Zweiter Band. Details zu den geförderten sozialen Dienstleistungen in Wien. P. 48. <https://www.fsw.at/downloads/broschueren/fsw/LB15TEIL2.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> [http://wohnen.fsw.at/downloads/dokumente/201610\\_WWH\\_SupportStructure\\_EN.pdf](http://wohnen.fsw.at/downloads/dokumente/201610_WWH_SupportStructure_EN.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> Statistik Austria: 2.3 persons per household.

<sup>x</sup> AK Wien (2016): Mietensteigerungen in Wien und Österreich. Page 7, 12.

<sup>xi</sup> Heinz Schoibl, Partizipative Wohnungslosenhilfeplanung im Bundesland Salzburg, Salzburg 2017.