Levels of child care

According to the Barcelona targets of the European Union dating from 2002, Member States should "strive, taking into account the demand for child care facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide child care by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age."

In 2010, 90.7% of three to five-year-olds in Austria already had a place at a child care facility. To this figure we can also add the 0.3% of children who started school early, generally at the age of 5 years. By 2016 this rate showed a further rise to 93.1%. As regards younger children, in 2010 Austria was only halfway to achieving the Barcelona target, with a figure of just 17.1% attending a child care facility. Only in Vienna and Burgenland did child care levels for infants up to two years of age approach the Barcelona target: 28.1% and 26.9% respectively.

In the meantime, at least one in four children nationwide in this age group has a child care place (25.4% in 2016). To date however it is only Austria’s capital that has managed to attain the Barcelona target. At 33.2% this figure was first exceeded in 2011 before climbing to 44.3% in 2016.

Share of children in child care facilities by age groups

Children that are below the age of five and are enrolled in school but not in after-school care have not been taken into account. (approximately less than 0.5 %)
Source: Statistik Austria, Statistics on child care

Share of 0-2 year-olds in childcare facilities by federal state
Source: Statistik Austria, Statistics on child care

Share of 3-5 year-olds in childcare facilities by federal state

Share of 6-9 year-olds in childcare facilities by federal state
Share of children in childcare facilities by year

*Including children enrolled in schools below the age of five
Source: Statistik Austria, Statistics on child care

Development

Over the last two decades all age groups have seen a major increase in the growth of child care levels (number of children in day care centres, referred to youngsters of the same age in the resident population, survey date 1 September of each year). Relatively speaking, over the last 20 years the trend towards child care has been the most marked in the case of children under the age of three. In this age group the figure increased more than fivefold, rising from 4.6% in 1995 to 25.4% in 2016 (highest levels in Vienna and Burgenland at 44.3% and 30.3% respectively, and lowest in Styria at 14.1% and Upper Austria at 15.4%).
The number of infants attending nursery mainly aged three to five years (incl. mixed age groups) increased from 70.6% in 1995 to 93.1% in 2016, with a child care level of 98.5% for five-year-olds including children who started school early. Only Styria (86.7%) and Carinthia (87.6%) failed to meet the Barcelona target of 90% for three to five-year-olds in 2016. The increase of 22.5 percentage points for Austria overall means that almost a third more children of this age receive child care outside the family than 20 years ago. Day care attendance by children aged 6 – 9 years, for which no Barcelona target exists, also rose in the same period from 7.0% to 16.2%, i.e. an increase of just under ten percentage points.

Further information

- Between 2008 and 2018 the federal government invested a total of € 442.5 million in developing childhood education and care, with € 387.5 million being set aside for 2012 to 2018 (reporting period). Thanks to the development offensive, 65,459 additional child day care places were created between 2008 and 2016, including 38,467 places for children under the age of three years and 26,992 for those aged between three and six years.
- Opening hours have also been extended here. In 2016/17, 59.6% of under 3 year olds and 43.2% of children from 3 to 6 years were cared for at facilities complying with the VIF (family compatibility) indicators (open min. 45 hours/week and min. 47 weeks/year). In 2007/08 these figures were just below 55% for under 3 year olds and only around 21% for 3 – 6 year olds.
- In kindergarten year 2009/10 half-day attendance at nursery for children at the age of five was made free of charge, and since kindergarten year 2010/11 this has been mandatory, with the federal government allocating € 70 million per kindergarten year to the Länder for this purpose. Since kindergarten year 2016/17 the following measures have been taken with the aim of involving four year olds more closely in elementary education:
  - Mandatory counselling by appropriate specialists for parents whose children are not registered for kindergarten in the penultimate year before compulsory school attendance
  - Recommendation to attend kindergarten in the penultimate year before compulsory school attendance
  - Attendance free of charge in the penultimate year before compulsory school attendance or attendance at reduced or means-tested rates.