Interreg Danube Region

Co-funded by the European Union

COOPOWER

Country report Austria

By:

Carmen Siller & Juliet Tschank

Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AES	Adult Education Survey
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CV	Curriculum vitae
DRP	Danube Region Programme
EU27	European Union's 27 member states (after the United Kingdom's exit)
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
Jems	Joint electronic monitoring system
LP	Lead partner
MA/JS	Managing authority and Joint secretariat
NEETs	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NUTS	Nomenclature des Unités territoriales statistique – statistical classification System used by the European Union to identify and classify territorial units
PP	Project partner
PPS	Purchasing Power Standard
PR	Partner report
PPR	Project Progress Report

1. Introduction

This country report provides an analytical overview of the situation of young people aged 15–29 in Austria, with a particular focus on labour market integration, education and training pathways, and associated social risks. It forms part of Deliverable D1.1 within the COOPOWER project and contributes to validating and refining the challenges identified at proposal stage through an evidence-based assessment of the national and territorial context.

The report is based primarily on desk research, drawing on harmonised statistical data from Eurostat statistical database. In addition, expert interviews with relevant stakeholders have been conducted to complement the quantitative analysis. These interviews serve to contextualise statistical findings, support interpretation of observed patterns, and provide insight into practical challenges related to education-to-work transitions and youth vulnerability. The qualitative input is used in an illustrative and supportive manner and does not constitute an evaluation of policies or interventions. Apart from chapter 3.8, in the text, the experts' insights are marked with ❝

The purpose of the report is not to assess the effectiveness of specific policy instruments, but to identify structural patterns, persistent disparities and territorial concentrations of disadvantage affecting young people. Particular attention is given to cumulative forms of vulnerability, whereby disadvantages related to education, labour market transitions, disability or activity limitations, and socio-economic conditions interact and reinforce each other over time.

While Austria is characterised by comparatively strong overall labour market performance, aggregate indicators conceal important internal differentiation. The analysis therefore combines a national perspective with a territorial focus on Vienna, where multiple risk factors affecting young people tend to concentrate more strongly. This territorial perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of youth labour market exclusion in a context where overall employment levels are high.

The findings presented in this report provide a common analytical basis for Austria's engagement in COOPOWER project activities. Although no local pilot intervention is implemented in Austria, the report will inform participation in learning- and cooperation-oriented formats, including the Local Cooperation Incubators and the Transnational Hub. By grounding these activities in robust statistical evidence, complemented by expert insights, the Austrian country report contributes to transnational exchange and comparative reflection on how cumulative and territorially embedded disadvantages affect young people across different regional contexts.

Overall, the report aims to support a shared understanding of youth vulnerability within the project partnership and to strengthen the evidence base underpinning subsequent joint activities and strategic discussions within COOPOWER.

2. Problem

Austria is characterised by a generally strong labour market and comparatively favourable macroeconomic conditions. However, this overall performance conceals persistent and structurally embedded disadvantages affecting specific groups of young people aged 15–29, which remain insufficiently addressed by existing systems of education, employment, and social support. Youth labour market exclusion in Austria is therefore not a generalised phenomenon, but a concentrated structural problem affecting young people with low educational attainment, disabilities or health limitations, unstable school-to-work transitions, and those exposed to social and territorial disadvantage.

A core problem is the strong and persistent education gradient in labour market outcomes. Young people with low educational attainment (ISCED 0–2) face substantially higher unemployment rates, markedly lower employment rates, and significantly elevated risks of poverty, material deprivation, and housing cost overburden compared with their better-qualified peers. These disadvantages persist across economic cycles and have not diminished during periods of overall labour market recovery, indicating structural rather than cyclical exclusion mechanisms. Early school leaving has increased at national level since 2019 and remains above pre-pandemic levels, with young men particularly affected. This trend reinforces the pool of low-qualified young adults and weakens the effectiveness of transition systems between education and employment.

A further structural problem concerns the limited inclusiveness of education and labour market systems for young people with disabilities or activity limitations. National-level evidence shows very large and persistent employment gaps, high inactivity rates, and elevated long-term unemployment among young people with disabilities. These disadvantages are not marginal but systemic, suggesting that mainstream education, training, and employment pathways do not adequately accommodate or support young people with health-related limitations.

Despite generally high employment rates among young adults, forms of labour market integration are increasingly unequal. Part-time employment has expanded over time, particularly among young women, while employment stability remains strongly stratified by education level. These patterns point to differentiated and gendered entry pathways into the labour market, with long-term implications for income security, career development, and social protection.

Social and economic risks further compound labour market disadvantages. While Austria has seen a general decline in poverty and material deprivation at aggregate level, young people who are unemployed, low-educated, or inactive remain disproportionately exposed to poverty, severe material and social deprivation, and housing cost overburden. Housing affordability is a particularly salient issue for young people with low incomes, for whom housing costs frequently exceed sustainable thresholds, undermining labour market participation and independence. These national-level challenges are significantly intensified in Vienna (NUTS 2). The capital consistently records lower youth employment rates and substantially higher youth unemployment

and long-term unemployment than the national average. This disadvantage persists even among highly educated young people, indicating that higher educational attainment alone does not ensure labour market integration in the urban context. Vienna also exhibits elevated NEET rates, with limited improvement over the past decade, and particularly high risks among young women.

Educational disadvantages are more pronounced in Vienna, where early school leaving rates are systematically higher than at national level and have remained high even after the pandemic period. These elevated rates contribute to a sustained inflow of low-qualified young people into a labour market that increasingly rewards higher and specialised skills.

Vienna further concentrates social and health-related vulnerabilities. The city records markedly higher risks of poverty, material and social deprivation, and severe deprivation than Austria overall, and these risks have increased in recent years. Housing cost pressures are systematically higher in Vienna than in other regions, reflecting the interaction of low incomes, high rents, and urban living costs. Health inequalities are also evident, with consistently higher infant mortality rates than the national average, signalling underlying socio-economic disparities that affect young people and families in vulnerable situations.

Overall, the problem addressed by COOPOWER in Austria and Vienna is one of structural polarisation: strong aggregate economic and labour market performance coexisting with entrenched exclusion risks for specific groups of young people. These challenges are multidimensional, cumulative, and territorially concentrated, and cannot be effectively addressed through isolated or single-sector interventions. They point to the need for better coordinated, inclusive, and territorially sensitive approaches that link education, employment, social support, and health-related measures in order to support sustainable labour market integration for vulnerable youth.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that the most vulnerable group among 15–29-year-olds in Austria and Vienna consists of young people experiencing cumulative and intersecting disadvantages, rather than disadvantage along a single dimension. Vulnerability is most pronounced among young people with low or medium educational attainment who experience weak or disrupted school-to-work transitions, prolonged unemployment or inactivity, and limited access to stabilising resources such as training, income security, or supportive social environments. These risks are substantially intensified where educational disadvantage intersects with early school leaving, disability or activity limitations, poverty or material deprivation, and housing cost overburden. In Vienna, such cumulative disadvantages are more strongly concentrated and persist even among young people with formal qualifications, reflecting structural urban inequalities. Gender differences shape the manifestation of vulnerability, most notably through higher inactivity among young women and higher early school leaving among young men, but do not constitute an independent driver of vulnerability in the absence of other structural risks. The problem addressed by COOPOWER therefore concerns a clearly identifiable subgroup of young people whose labour market exclusion is cumulative, persistent, and territorially embedded, and who are insufficiently reached by standard education and employment measures.

3. Analysis

3.1. Population and demographic statistics

3.1.1. Population and age structure

TABLE 1: Main demographic data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Total population	9,158,750	2,005,760
Proportion of 15-29-year-olds in the total population	16.8%	19.9%
Proportion of females in total population	50.7%	51%
Median age of population	43.6	39.6
Median age of population - females	45.2	41.1

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2024, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2024. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *demo_pjangroup (Population on Jan 1 by age group and sex) for statistics on total population, Proportion of 15-29-year-olds in the total population and Proportion of females in total population for **Austria***
2. *demo_pjanind (Population structure indicators at national level) for statistics on median age of population and median age of population – females for **Austria***
3. *demo_r_pjangroup (Population on 1 January by age group, sex and NUTS 2 region) for statistics on total population, Proportion of 15-29-year-olds in the total population and Proportion of females in total population for **Vienna***
4. *demo_r_pjanind2 (Population structure indicators by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on median age of population and median age of population – females for **Vienna***

According to Eurostat data, Austria had a population of 9,158,750 in 2024. Over the past decade, Austria's population has increased steadily, rising from around 8.51 million in 2014, with growth slowing somewhat after 2016 but remaining positive throughout the period. Despite population growth, Austria's demographic structure shows clear signs of ageing. The median age increased gradually from 42.9 years in 2014 to 43.6 years in 2024, while the median age of women rose from 44.1 to 45.2 years, reflecting longer female life expectancy. Women accounted for 50.7% of the total population in 2024, a slight decline compared with the beginning of the decade, when the female share exceeded 51.1%, indicating a slow convergence towards gender balance.

The share of young people aged 15–29 has declined over the decade. In 2014, this age group represented 18.5% of the population; by 2024, the proportion had fallen to 16.8%. Although the absolute number of young people stabilised in the final years of the period, their relative weight

in the population continued to decrease, confirming a long-term structural trend towards population ageing.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna had a population of 2,005,760 in 2024, up from approximately 1.77 million in 2014, representing an increase of about 239,000 persons. Over the same period, Austria recorded an overall population increase of approximately 651,000, meaning that Vienna accounted for around 37% of national population growth during the decade. As a result, Vienna's share of Austria's total population rose from 20.8% in 2014 to 21.9% in 2024, reflecting its growing demographic weight and its role as a major centre of internal and international migration. The gender composition of Vienna's population remained stable over the period, with women accounting for 51.0% of residents in 2024, compared with 51.9% in 2014, closely mirroring the national trend.

Vienna retains a comparatively younger age structure than Austria as a whole and followed a different trajectory over the decade. The median age of the city's population declined slightly, from 40.3 years in 2014 to 39.6 years in 2024, while the national median age increased over the same period. The median age of women in Vienna also remained lower than the national average, at 41.1 years in 2024 compared with 45.2 years in Austria overall. In 2024, people aged 15–29 accounted for 19.9% of Vienna's population, compared with 16.8% at national level. However, this share has also declined moderately over the past decade, from around 20.2% in 2014, indicating that demographic ageing is present in the capital as well, albeit to a lesser extent than at national level.

Overall, population and age structure indicators confirm a gradual ageing of the Austrian population over the past decade, reflected in a rising median age and a declining relative share of people aged 15–29. At the same time, Vienna exhibits a distinct demographic profile within this national context. The capital combines sustained population growth with a comparatively younger age structure and a higher concentration of young people than the national average. These differences indicate that Vienna's demographic profile is not fully representative of national population patterns.

3.1.2. Marriage and fertility

TABLE 2: Marriage and fertility data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Mean age at first marriage - females	32.7	No data
Mean age at first marriage - males	35.3	No data
Mean age of women at childbirth	31.2	No data
Proportion of live births outside marriage	40.0	No data
Proportion of live births from 15 to 29 years in the total live births	34.8%	36.5%

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2023, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2023, where data are available. If data for the full period are not available, the available years are indicated in brackets under each indicator. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *demo_nind (Marriage indicators) for statistics on Mean age at first marriage for females and males for **Austria** (Available data 2014-2019 and 2023)*
2. *demo_find (Fertility indicators) for statistics on Mean age of women at childbirth and Proportion of live births outside marriage for **Austria***
3. *demo_fager (Live births by mother's year of birth (age reached) and legal marital status) for statistics on Proportion of live births from 15 to 29 years in the total live births for **Austria** (Available data 2018-2023)*
4. *demo_r_fagec (Live births by mother's age and NUTS 2 region) for statistics on Proportion of live births from 15 to 29 years in the total live births for **Vienna***

At national level, Austria has experienced a clear postponement of key family formation events over the past decade. Marriage is occurring increasingly later in life, reflecting broader changes in partnership behaviour and life-course trajectories. Between 2014 and 2023, the mean age at first marriage rose steadily for both sexes. For men, the average age increased from 33.6 years in 2014 to 35.3 years in 2023, while for women it rose from 30.9 to 32.7 years. Despite some data gaps in the time series (no data for 2020-2022), the available observations point consistently towards delayed entry into marriage for both men and women.

A similar postponement trend is observed in fertility behaviour. The mean age of women at childbirth increased gradually over the period and from 30.4 years in 2014 to 31.2 years in 2023. This confirms a long-term shift towards later motherhood, in line with rising educational attainment, extended labour market participation and changing family norms. Although annual changes are moderate, the overall trend since 2014 indicates a sustained increase in the age at which women have children.

The proportion of live births outside marriage remained high throughout the period 2014–2023 but showed a slight downward trend. After reaching its highest levels in 2015 (42.1%) and 2016 (42.2%), the share declined gradually, falling to 41.3% in 2018, 40.6% in 2019, and reaching 40.0% in 2023.

Age-specific fertility patterns further underline these developments. At national level, the proportion of live births to women aged 15–29 declined markedly over the period 2014–2023, falling from 42.3% in 2014 to 34.8% in 2023. This indicates that an increasing share of births is occurring at older ages, reinforcing the trend towards delayed childbearing. The decline is gradual but consistent with the observed increase in mean age at childbirth.

At NUTS 2 level, comparable indicators are available only for age-specific fertility. In Vienna, the proportion of live births to women aged 15–29 declined steadily from 44.7% in 2014 to 36.5% in 2023, indicating a sustained shift of childbearing towards older age groups, despite remaining above the national average throughout the period.

No regional data are available for Vienna on mean age at first marriage, mean age of women at childbirth or the proportion of live births outside marriage.

Taken together, marriage and fertility indicators point to a continued postponement of family formation in Austria over the past decade, reflected in rising ages at first marriage for both women and men, as well as a declining contribution of younger age groups to total live births. These trends are also present in Vienna, where delayed partnership formation and childbearing are even more pronounced. In the capital, the share of births to women aged 15–29 has declined more sharply than at national level, underscoring Vienna's role as a forerunner of demographic change within Austria. As a result, fertility and family-formation patterns observed in Vienna reflect a more advanced stage of postponement compared with the national average.

3.1.3. Life expectancy and infant mortality

TABLE 3: Main life expectancy data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Life expectancy at less than 1 year_Total	81.9	81
Life expectancy at less than 1 year_Males	79.5	78.6
Life expectancy at less than 1 year_Females	84.2	83.2
Infant mortality rate	2.8%	4.5%

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2023, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2023. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *demo_r_mlifexp (Life expectancy by age, sex and NUTS 2 region) for statistics on Life expectancy at less than 1 year: Total, males and females for both **Austria** and **Vienna***
2. *demo_minfind (Infant mortality rates) for statistics on Infant mortality rate for **Austria***
3. *demo_r_minfind (Infant mortality rates by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on Infant mortality rate for **Vienna***

At national level, Austria experienced small but measurable changes in life expectancy at birth over the period 2014–2023. Life expectancy at less than 1 year (life expectancy at birth) increased slightly over the decade, despite short-term fluctuations. In 2014, total life expectancy at birth stood at 81.6 years, rising to 81.9 years in 2023. Over the same period, life expectancy for men increased

from 79.1 to 79.5 years, while for women it rose from 84.0 to 84.2 years. Throughout the period, women consistently exhibited higher life expectancy than men, and the gender gap remained broadly stable.

Infant mortality in Austria showed an overall downward trend between 2014 and 2023, despite some year-to-year variation. The infant mortality rate declined from 3.0 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 2.8 in 2023, reaching a low point of 2.4 in 2022. Temporary increases were observed in 2019 and 2020; however, the longer-term trajectory indicates a gradual reduction in infant mortality over the decade.

At NUTS 2 level, available indicators for Vienna point to similar patterns to national patterns over time, although levels and fluctuations differ. In 2023, total life expectancy at birth in Vienna was 81.0 years, with 78.6 years for men and 83.2 years for women compared to a total of 80.5 years in 2014, with 77.9 years for men and 82.8 years for women in 2014. As at national level, women in Vienna consistently recorded higher life expectancy than men throughout the observed period.

Infant mortality in Vienna showed a general downward trend over most of the period, declining from 4.5 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2014 to 3.9 in 2018. This improvement was interrupted in 2019 and 2020, when the infant mortality rate increased to 4.7 deaths per 1 000 live births in both years. Following this temporary rise, infant mortality declined again, reaching 3.3 in 2022, before increasing to 4.5 in 2023. The increase observed in 2019–2020 coincides with the onset of the COVID-19 period, although the data do not allow for causal attribution. Overall, the series highlights greater volatility in infant mortality at regional level compared with national patterns.

Overall, life expectancy and infant mortality indicators point to a generally favourable health situation in Austria, characterised by high life expectancy at birth and low levels of infant mortality. Vienna broadly follows these national patterns in terms of life expectancy, although differences by sex persist in line with national trends. At the same time, infant mortality rates are consistently higher in Vienna than in Austria overall, indicating less favourable outcomes in the capital despite comparable life expectancy levels. This contrast suggests that aggregate longevity indicators may coexist with persistent disparities in early-life health outcomes at urban level.

3.2. General economic accounts

3.2.1. National economic accounts

TABLE 4:Main national economic accounts data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices (Euro per capita)	51,800	59,500
Euro per inhabitant in percentage of the EU27 (from 2020) average	136%	156%
Current prices, purchasing power standard (PPS, EU27 from 2020) per capita	45,700	52,500

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2023, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2023. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *nama_10r_2gdp (Gross domestic product (GDP) for all the indicators included in the table above for both **Austria** and **Vienna**.*

At national level, Austria recorded a steady increase in GDP per capita over the period 2014–2023, with a temporary interruption around 2020. GDP at current market prices per inhabitant rose from €38,600 in 2014 to €51,800 in 2023, corresponding to an increase of over one third over the decade. After continuous growth up to 2019, GDP per capita declined in 2020, before resuming its upward trajectory in the following years.

In relative terms, Austria's GDP per capita remained consistently above the EU27 average throughout the period, although a gradual decline in relative position can be observed. Expressed as a percentage of the EU27 average, GDP per capita decreased from 145% in 2014 to 136% in 2023, indicating that economic growth in Austria was slower than the EU average over the decade, despite remaining at a high absolute level.

When adjusted for price level differences, GDP per capita expressed in purchasing power standards (PPS) also increased over time. Austria's GDP per capita in PPS rose from 34,700 PPS per inhabitant in 2014 to 45,700 PPS per inhabitant in 2023. As with nominal GDP per capita, a temporary decline was observed in 2020, followed by a strong recovery in subsequent years.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna consistently recorded higher GDP per capita levels than the national average throughout the period. GDP at current market prices per inhabitant increased from €46,900 in 2014 to €59,500 in 2023, following a broadly similar trajectory to the national trend, with sustained growth up to 2019, a dip in 2020, and renewed growth thereafter.

In relative terms, Vienna's GDP per capita remained well above the EU27 average but showed a gradual downward trend over the decade. The indicator declined from 176% of the EU27 average in 2014 to 157% in 2023, mirroring the national pattern of relative convergence despite continued absolute growth.

GDP per capita expressed in PPS confirms this development. In Vienna, GDP per capita in PPS increased from 42,100 in 2014 to 50,500 in 2023, again with a temporary decline in 2020 followed by recovery. Overall, the data indicate sustained economic growth in both Austria and Vienna over the period 2014–2023, accompanied by a gradual reduction in their relative advantage compared with the EU27 average.

National economic accounts show that Austria has maintained levels of economic output and income above the EU average over the observed period. Vienna occupies a central position within this national economy, accounting for a disproportionate share of total economic activity relative to its population size. At the same time, the data indicate a gradual weakening in the relative position of both Austria and Vienna compared with the EU average, reflecting slower growth dynamics in recent years. Taken together, the indicators point to a context of continued economic strength combined with a loss of relative momentum.

3.2.2. Business statistics

TABLE 5: Main business statistics

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Number of enterprises	605,644	No data
Business churn - birth and death rate - percentage	15.71%	No data

*Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year **2023**, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period **2021–2023**, reflecting the availability of the data. Only data for the economic activity "Industry, construction and market services (except public administration and defence; compulsory social security; activities of membership organisations)" are shown. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:*

1. *sbs_sc_ovw (Enterprise statistics by size class and NACE Rev. 2 activity (from 2021 onwards)) for statistics on the number of enterprises in industry, construction and market services (except public administration and defence; compulsory social security; activities of membership organisations) for **Austria**.*
2. *bd_salge1_l_form (Employer business demography by legal form and NACE Rev. 2 activity) for statistics on business churn, defined as the combined enterprise birth and death rate (percentage), for **Austria***
3. *bd_salge1_size (Employer business demography by size class and NACE Rev. 2 activity) for statistics on the size structure of employer enterprises, including the distribution of enterprises by employment size class for **Austria**.*
4. bd_hg *(High-growth enterprises by NACE Rev. 2 activity) for statistics on the number of high-growth enterprises for **Austria**.*
5. *bd_hg_micro (High growth micro enterprises and related employment by NACE Rev. 2 activity) for statistics on high-growth micro-enterprises and their associated employment for **Austria.***

At national level, Austria's enterprise structure in industry, construction and market services is characterised by a large business population dominated numerically by very small firms, alongside continuous firm turnover. In 2023, the total number of enterprises reached 602,673. Comparable

data are available only from 2021 onwards; over the period 2021–2023, the number of enterprises fluctuated within a narrow range, indicating a broadly stable enterprise base rather than rapid expansion or contraction.

The size structure of enterprises highlights a high degree of fragmentation. Micro-enterprises (fewer than 10 employees) accounted for 91.9% of all enterprises, while medium-sized and large firms represented only a very small share numerically. Despite this, turnover data reveal a strong concentration of economic activity among larger firms: Enterprises with 250 or more employees, representing less than 0.3% of all firms, generated nearly half (48%) of total net turnover in 2023. Taken together, these figures point to a dual enterprise structure, in which a large number of small firms coexist with a limited group of economically dominant large enterprises.

Business demography indicators underline the dynamic processes underlying this stable aggregate structure. In 2023, the business churn rate, defined as the sum of enterprise birth and death rates, stood at 15.71%. This indicates that a substantial proportion of firms entered or exited the market within a single year, reflecting ongoing renewal and competitive pressures within the enterprise population. Available data for 2021–2023 suggest that churn remained relatively stable, with no sharp acceleration or contraction in firm turnover over this short period.

Additional employer business demography indicators further illustrate the small-scale nature of Austria's business landscape. Among employer enterprises, more than four out of five firms employed fewer than 10 people, and this structure remained largely unchanged between 2021 and 2022. At the same time, data on high-growth enterprises point to a limited but increasing segment of highly dynamic firms. The number of high-growth enterprises rose from 3,322 in 2021 to 4,278 in 2023, indicating some strengthening of employment-expanding firms in recent years. However, the short time series prevents assessment of longer-term trends in business dynamism.

At NUTS 2 level, no Eurostat data are available for Vienna for the number of enterprises, business churn, firm size structure, or high-growth enterprises for the economic activity considered.

The size structure of enterprises in Austria is characterised by a high degree of fragmentation. In 2023, enterprises with fewer than 10 employees accounted for 91.9% of all firms, while medium-sized and large enterprises represented only a very small share of the total business population. Enterprises with 250 or more employees accounted for approximately 0.25% of all enterprises. At the same time, turnover data point to a strong concentration of economic activity among larger firms. In 2023, enterprises with 250 or more employees generated around 48% of total net turnover, despite their limited numerical presence. Taken together, the business structure is marked by the coexistence of a very large number of small enterprises and a small group of economically dominant large firms.

3.3. Labour market situation

3.3.1. Employment

Table 6: Main employment data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Employed persons (total, 15 - 29 years old)	62.9%	54.8%
Employed persons (females, 15 - 29 years old)	60.8%	55.8%
Employed persons (total, 15 - 64 years old)	74.1%	No data
Employed persons (females, 15 - 64 years old)	70.7%	No data
Employed persons (total, 15 - 24 years old)	465.5	91.7
Employed persons (females, 15 - 24 years old)	217.7	46.2
Employed persons (total, 15 - 74 years old)	4,476.5	930.1
Employed persons (females, 15 - 74 years old)	2,127.0	446.6

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2024, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2024. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *yth_empl_030 – NUTS 2 (Youth employment rate by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on employment rates of 15-29-year-olds by sex (percentage) for **Austria** and **Vienna***
2. *lfsi_emp_a (Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data) for statistics on employment rates of 15-64-year-olds by sex (percentage) for **Austria***
3. *lfst_r_lfe2emp (Employed persons by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on employment rates of 15-24-year-olds and 15-74-year-olds by sex (in thousands persons) for **Austria** and **Vienna***
4. *tesem070 (Employment rate by age group) for statistics on the current employment rate among young adults aged 20–29 (percentage) for **Austria**.*

Austria's labour market has shown a high degree of stability and resilience over the period 2014–2024. At national level, employment among the core working-age population has remained strong. In 2024, the employment rate of persons aged 15–64 stood at 74.1% (compared to 71.1% in 2014), while the rate for women reached 70.7% (compared to 66.9% in 2014), indicating a persistent but moderate gender gap. Over the past decade, overall employment increased gradually, with a temporary weakening around 2020, followed by a recovery in subsequent years, reflecting short-term economic disruptions rather than a structural deterioration of labour market performance.

Focusing more specifically on young adults, Austria displays consistently high employment rates among those aged 20–29. Between 2014 and 2024, the employment rate for this age group fluctuated within a narrow range of approximately 73% to 77%, reaching around 76% in the most recent years. This stability suggests that, at national level, the transition from education to employment for young adults is generally well integrated into the labour market, with limited cyclical volatility.

Youth employment in the broader 15–29 age group follows a similar, though slightly weaker, pattern. The youth employment rate remained above 60% throughout the decade, standing at 62.9% in 2024. Gender differences are evident and persistent: Young men consistently record

higher employment rates (65.1% in 2024) than young women, with the female rate reaching 60.8% in 2024. The gender gap, averaging around five percentage points, has shown little tendency to narrow, pointing to enduring structural differences in early labour market participation.

Beyond employment rates, the quality and form of youth employment reveal important structural characteristics. Part-time work among young people aged 15–29 has increased steadily over the past decade, rising from 23.8% in 2014 to 27.9% in 2024. This trend is strongly gendered. Among young women, part-time employment expanded from 32.8% to 37.2%, while among young men it increased from 15.3% to 19.4%. These patterns indicate that labour market participation among young women is more frequently associated with reduced working hours, reflecting a combination of educational trajectories, care responsibilities, and labour demand characteristics.

Temporary employment among young people aged 15-29 has remained relatively stable over time. Between 2014 and 2024, the share of employees on temporary contracts moved within a narrow range, standing at 22.5% in 2024. Male and female trends differ slightly, but no pronounced upward or downward trajectory is evident, suggesting that employment flexibility among young people in Austria has not intensified structurally over the past decade.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna presents a less favourable picture of youth labour market integration. The employment rate of persons aged 15–29 in Vienna consistently lagged behind the national average, ranging between 51.8% and 56.0% over the period 2014–2024 and standing at 54.8% in 2024. Gender differences in Vienna are less systematic than at national level: Male and female youth employment rates alternate over time, with young women recording slightly higher rates in some years, including 2024. Nevertheless, both sexes remain several percentage points below their national counterparts throughout the period.

In absolute terms, Vienna accounted for 930.1 thousand employed persons aged 15–74 in 2024, including 446.6 thousand women. Among younger cohorts, 91.7 thousand persons aged 15–24 were employed, of whom 46.2 thousand were female. While these figures underline the demographic and economic weight of the capital, the absence of regional employment rate data beyond youth cohorts limits further assessment of labour market performance across age groups at regional level.

Employment among young people aged 15–29 in Austria has remained at relatively high levels over the observed period, with some variation over time. Employment rates for young men are consistently higher than those for young women, indicating a persistent gender gap. In Vienna, employment rates for young people tend to be lower than the national average, while broadly following similar temporal developments. With regard to employment characteristics, the share of young employees working on temporary contracts has remained relatively stable since 2014, fluctuating within a narrow range, while part-time employment remains more common among young women than young men. Overall, the employment situation of young people in Austria is characterised by stable participation levels combined with persistent gender and territorial differences.

> “ While both experts stated that they do not know about reliable data with regard to the extent of atypical employment and low job security (including part-time and marginal employment under

ten hours per week, fixed-term, occasional, and seasonal work) with regard to the COOPOWER target group, it was mentioned that young people from vulnerable groups tend to have Saturday jobs in parallel to school attendance in order to improve their financial means and social participation. For some, this could be a factor that impedes educational success.

3.3.2. Trainees

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the most recent year available (2024, where indicated), while the descriptive analysis covers the period 2014–2024. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicator:

1. *lc_ncostot_r2 (Labour cost, wages and salaries (including apprentices) by NACE Rev. 2 activity) for statistics on labour cost levels (in euro) for **Austria**.*

At national level, Austria has a long-established apprenticeship system that is structurally embedded in vocational education and training and widely used across industry, construction, and services. Rather than focusing on the number of apprenticeship contracts, the available Eurostat evidence highlights the cost structure and economic position of apprenticeships within the labour market.

Labour cost data show that apprentices represent a substantially lower cost category for employers compared with regular employees. In 2016, the average annual labour cost per employee in Austria amounted to €56,272, while the corresponding cost for apprentices was €14,105, meaning that apprentices accounted for 25.1% of the cost of a standard employee. By 2019, overall labour costs increased to €59,718 per employee, while apprentice costs rose to €16,021, corresponding to 26.8% of the cost of a regular employee. This indicates that, despite rising wages and non-wage labour costs, apprenticeships remained a relatively low-cost form of employment for firms over the period.

The persistence of this cost differential underlines the economic attractiveness of apprenticeships within the Austrian labour market. Apprentices are remunerated well below the average employee level, reflecting their training status, yet they are fully integrated into formal employment relationships and social security systems. This cost structure supports the continued use of apprenticeships across sectors, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises, where labour costs play a critical role in hiring decisions.

Unlike in countries where apprenticeships rely heavily on temporary subsidies or project-based funding, Austria's system is anchored in collective bargaining and sectoral wage agreements. Apprentice wages are regulated through collective agreements and increase with training progression, providing predictability for both employers and trainees. As a result, the apprenticeship system appears less sensitive to short-term policy changes or economic shocks, including the period around 2020.

No comparable regional data are available for Vienna.

Participation in traineeships and apprenticeship-type training among young people aged 15–29 in Austria shows clear and persistent patterns over the observed period. Apprenticeships remain a significant component of youth participation in education and training, with participation levels displaying some variation over time. Marked gender differences are evident, with young men more frequently represented in apprenticeship training than young women.

> One expert highlighted a cooperation project between their organisation and companies, offering information stands and work experience days for NEETs and compulsory school pupils. However, companies received fewer applications than expected, largely due to inadequate public transport or unreasonable commuting times. In the region, access to a car is often essential for reaching workplaces, posing a significant barrier for vulnerable youth due to the high costs of obtaining a driving licence and maintaining a vehicle.

3.3.3. Unemployment

TABLE 7: Main unemployment data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Unemployed persons (total, 15 - 74 years old, less than primary, primary and lover secondary education)	11.5%	19.6%
Unemployed persons (females, 15 - 74 years old, less than primary, primary and lover secondary education)	10.1%	18.3%
Unemployed persons (total, 15 - 74 years old, all ISCED 2011 level)	5.2%	9.4%
Unemployed persons (females, 15 - 74 years old, all ISCED 2011 level)	4.7%	8.1%

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2024, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2024. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *lfst_r_lfu3rt (Unemployment rates by educational attainment level and NUTS 2 region) for statistics unemployment rates of persons aged 15–74 by education level and sex, including both less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 0–2) and all ISCED levels for **Austria** and **Vienna**.*
2. *yth_empl_100 (Unemployment rates of 15–29-year-olds by sex) for statistics on the unemployment rate of young people aged 15–29, disaggregated by sex (percentage) fpr **Austria**.*
3. *yth_empl_110 (Unemployment rates of 15–19-year-olds by sex and NUTS 2 region) for statistics on the **unemployment rate of adolescents aged 15–19**, disaggregated by sex (percentage) for **Vienna.***
4. *yth_empl_120 (Long-term unemployment rate of 15–29-year-olds, unemployed for 12 months or more) for statistics on the long-term unemployment rate among unemployed young people aged 15–29 (percentage of unemployed youth) for **Austria***
5. *yth_empl_130 (Long-term youth unemployment rate by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on the long-term unemployment rate of young people aged 15–29, unemployed for 12 months or more (percentage) for **Vienna**.*

6. *edat_lfse_20 (*Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) by sex, age and labour status*) for statistics on the NEET population among young people, disaggregated by sex and labour status (unemployed or inactive for **Austria**.*
7. *edat_lfse_21 (*NEET rates by sex, age and educational attainment level*) for statistics on NEET rates among young people, disaggregated by sex and educational attainment (ISCED 2011) for **Austria**.*
8. *edat_lfse_22 (Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) by sex, age and NUTS 2 region) for statistics on NEET rates among young people, disaggregated by sex (percentage) for **Vienna**.*
9. *lfsa_igar (*Inactive population by sex, age and reason for inactivity*) for statistics on the reasons for inactivity among young people, including education or training, family responsibilities and discouragement, disaggregated by sex for **Austria**.*

Austria's unemployment situation over the period 2014–2024 has been characterised by low overall levels, limited volatility, and pronounced differences by educational attainment, rather than by widespread labour market exclusion. At national level, the unemployment rate for persons aged 15–74 across all ISCED 2011 levels fluctuated within a relatively narrow band, declining from 5.6% in 2014 to 4.5% in 2019, before rising temporarily during the pandemic to 6.2% in 2021. By 2024, the rate had stabilised at 5.2%, with female unemployment consistently lower (4.7%), indicating a modest but persistent gender gap in favour of women.

By contrast, unemployment among persons with low educational attainment (ISCED 0–2) remained substantially higher throughout the entire period. In Austria, the unemployment rate for low-educated persons stood at 11.4% in 2014, increased to a peak of 13.8% in 2021, and declined thereafter to 11.5% in 2024. Among low-educated women, unemployment followed a similar trajectory, remaining persistently elevated (10.1% in 2024) compared with women across all education levels (4.7%). This stable education gradient highlights the continued vulnerability of low-skilled groups in the Austrian labour market, even in periods of overall economic resilience.

Austria's labour market outcomes for young people have remained comparatively stable over the period 2014–2024, with unemployment levels fluctuating within a moderate range and no sustained post-pandemic deterioration. At national level, the unemployment rate of young people aged 15–29 declined slightly over the decade, from 8.9% in 2014 to 8.2% in 2024, despite a temporary increase during the COVID-19 period. Gender differences persist: In 2024, unemployment among young men stood at 8.9%, compared with 7.5% among young women, indicating a higher exposure of young men to labour market risk. Compared with earlier years, youth unemployment increased during the pandemic period but subsequently declined, returning close to its pre-pandemic level by 2024.

At NUTS 2 level, youth unemployment in Vienna has remained consistently higher than the national average throughout the decade. In 2014, the overall youth unemployment rate in Vienna stood at 14.6%, compared with 8.9% nationally. The rate peaked at 15.7% in 2016 and declined gradually thereafter, reaching 13.0% in 2024. This gap is particularly pronounced among young men: Unemployment among males aged 15–29 in Vienna reached 17.3% in 2014, peaked at 19.1% in

2016, and remained relatively high at 15.6% in 2024. Among young women, unemployment in Vienna was lower but still substantial, declining from 11.9% in 2014 to 10.3% in 2024, after peaking at 15.8% in 2019.

Long-term unemployment among young people has shown a clear downward trend over the same period. At national level, the long-term youth unemployment rate (unemployed for 12 months or more) declined from 1.5% in 2014 to 1.0% in 2024, despite a temporary peak at 1.9% in 2016. Among young men, long-term unemployment increased from 1.4% in 2014 to 2.5% in 2016, before declining steadily to 1.2% in 2024. For young women, the rate decreased more continuously, from 1.5% in 2014 to 0.7% in 2024.

In Vienna, long-term youth unemployment has remained higher than at national level but followed a similar declining trajectory. The overall rate for 15–29-year-olds stood at 3.0% in 2014, peaked at 4.4% in 2016, and declined to 1.6% by 2024. Among young men, the rate reached 5.9% in 2016 and remained elevated at 2.7% in 2024 (no data available for 2022-2023), while for young women it declined from 3.3% in 2014 to 2.8% in 2016 and 3.6% in 2021 (no data available for 2015, 2017–2020 and 2022–2024), limiting trend interpretation in later years.

Broader labour market exclusion among young people is reflected in Austria's NEET rate. At national level, the proportion of young people aged 15–29 neither in employment nor in education or training ranged between 8.3% and 9.5% over the period 2014–2024, reaching its lowest level in 2019 (8.3%) and peaking in 2020 (9.5%). NEET rates were consistently higher among females, fluctuating between 9.2% and 10.3%, compared with 6.8% to 9.4% among males.

Disaggregation by labour status shows that inactivity constitutes the larger share of NEETs. Between 4.7% and 5.8% of the youth population were inactive NEETs, with female inactivity consistently higher (6.0% to 7.0%) than male inactivity (3.2% to 4.8%). The unemployed NEET component accounted for 3.0% to 4.2% of the youth population, with slightly higher shares among young men.

At NUTS 2 level, NEET rates among young people aged 15–29 in Vienna have remained consistently above the national average throughout the period 2014–2024. In 2014, the overall NEET rate in Vienna stood at 12.9%, compared with 9.3% nationally. The rate increased to 13.4% in 2016, declined temporarily to 11.5% in 2019, and rose again during the pandemic period to 13.3% in 2020. Following a short-lived decline to 12.2% in 2021 (break in series), the NEET rate increased to 13.3% in 2023 before easing slightly to 12.7% in 2024.

Gender differences are persistent. Among young men, the NEET rate in Vienna stood at 11.7% in 2014, increased to 13.2% in 2015, and declined to 9.9% in 2019. During the pandemic, the rate rose to 12.9% in 2020, stabilising at 12.7% in 2023–2024. Among young women, NEET rates have been consistently higher. The rate stood at 14.0% in 2014, peaked at 13.9% in 2016, and declined to 13.1% in 2019. After increasing to 13.6% in 2020, the rate reached 13.9% in 2023 before declining to 12.8% in 2024.

Reasons for youth inactivity further underline gendered patterns. Among young people outside the labour force but willing to work, education or training was the dominant reason, accounting for 56% to 72% of cases. Care responsibilities were markedly more prevalent among young

women, affecting 13.5% to 19.2% of inactive females, compared with lower shares among males. By contrast, young men were more likely to report discouragement, with 11.6% to 13.3% believing that no jobs were available, compared with 8.8% to 10.3% among young women.

Unemployment among young people aged 15–29 in Austria has shown marked fluctuations over the period from 2014 to 2024, with clear increases during periods of economic disruption followed by partial recoveries. Throughout the period, youth unemployment rates have remained consistently higher in Vienna than at national level, indicating a persistent territorial gap. Gender differences are observable, with unemployment levels and volatility differing between young men and women across years, although no uniform pattern of convergence is evident.

> One interviewee pointed out that certain groups are systematically less likely to be hired, including young women entering traditionally male-dominated occupations and early school leavers without formal qualifications. In the Austrian context, origin-based discrimination remains a significant barrier, with employers' perceptions often shaped by prior experiences with specific social groups. This extends not only to international migration backgrounds but also to internal mobility, where prejudices against urban youth, particularly those from Vienna, persist in other regions and are associated with stereotypes such as perceived arrogance or excessive intellectualisation. Moreover, individuals with a religion-based migration background, especially visibly Muslim women, were described as facing heightened disadvantages in hiring processes. Young people within the neurodivergent spectrum, including those with ADHD and autism, also encounter structural obstacles. However, it has to be mentioned that labour market integration of these groups varies considerably depending on the sector and the size of the company. Overall, the expert stressed the importance of adopting a differentiated analytical perspective, as unemployment outcomes are shaped by multiple interacting variables and cannot be explained through monocausal interpretations, but rather emerge from complex, multi-layered processes with numerous intermediate forms and nuances.

3.4. Education system

3.4.1. Participation in education and training

TABLE 8: Main enrolment data

	Country level	NUTS2 level
Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education, total	350,703	76,101
Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation - general	109,185	31,909
Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation - vocational	241,519	44,192

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2023, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2023. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *educ_uoe_enrs06 (Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation, sex and NUTS 2 region) for statistics n total enrolment in upper secondary education and enrolment by programme orientation (general and vocational) for both **Austria** and **Vienna**.*

At national level, participation in upper secondary education in Austria has shown a moderate decline over the past decade, followed by partial stabilisation. In 2014, a total of 363,188 pupils were enrolled in upper secondary education. Enrolment decreased steadily to 346,135 pupils in 2018, before recovering slightly in subsequent years. By 2023, enrolment stood at 350,703 pupils, representing a net decline of 12,485 pupils over the period 2014–2023. It's highly probable that the observed trends are a result of a complex interplay between demographic shifts, evolving educational and career preferences, economic incentives, and policy decisions, rather than solely a reduction in the eligible age population.

Throughout the decade, vocational education has clearly dominated upper secondary enrolment. In 2014, 253,506 pupils were enrolled in vocational programmes, compared with 109,682 in general upper secondary education. Vocational enrolment declined to a low of 236,857 pupils in 2018, before increasing again to 241,519 in 2023. Despite this partial recovery, vocational enrolment in 2023 remained 11,987 pupils below its 2014 level. By contrast, enrolment in general upper secondary education remained remarkably stable, fluctuating within a narrow range of approximately 108,800 to 110,200 pupils, and standing at 109,185 pupils in 2023. As a result, vocational programmes consistently accounted for around two thirds of all upper secondary pupils over the entire period.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna followed a distinctly different trajectory. Total enrolment in upper secondary education increased steadily over the decade, from 72,187 pupils in 2014 to 76,101 pupils in 2023, corresponding to an increase of 3,914 pupils. This growth contrasts with the national trend of declining enrolment and highlights Vienna's role as a major educational centre. Programme orientation in Vienna also differs from the national pattern. Although vocational education remains the larger track, the share of general education is consistently higher than at national level. It's probable that Vienna's higher share of students in general education is primarily

due to a larger number of upper secondary schools, many of them with a specific topical focus. This increased availability makes general education pathways more common in Vienna than the national average. In addition, those youth that do not find an apprenticeship may opt to stay in school longer. In 2014, 29,731 pupils in Vienna were enrolled in general upper secondary education, compared with 42,456 in vocational programmes. By 2023, general enrolment had increased to 31,909 pupils, while vocational enrolment rose to 44,192 pupils. Over the period 2014–2023, general upper secondary enrolment in Vienna increased by 2,178 pupils, while vocational enrolment grew by 1,736 pupils, indicating that both pathways contributed to overall growth, with a slightly stronger expansion of general education.

Overall, the data show that Austria's upper secondary education system remains structurally vocationally oriented, with stable participation in general education at national level. Vienna stands out both for its growing upper secondary student population and for its higher relative weight of general education, reflecting its stronger linkage to academic pathways and subsequent participation in tertiary education.

> Around 40% of apprenticeship seekers in Austria live in Vienna, a disproportionately high share compared to the population percentage of the capital (around 22%). While rural areas face objective mobility constraints due to poor public transport, young people in Vienna experience subjective barriers, often lacking the financial means for a youth travel pass and as a consequence having limited knowledge of other districts. Parental concerns over long commutes or attending vocational schools in other regions may stem not from strict or patriarchal attitudes, but from the vital caring support the youth provides within the family, making it difficult for the family to manage when block-based vocational school attendance in other regions is required.

3.4.2. Out-of-school rate and early leavers from education and training

*Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above cover the period **2014–2024**. All statistics are derived from the following **Eurostat indicators**:*

1. *edat_lfse_16 (Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS 2 region) for statistics on early school leaving among 18–24-year-olds, disaggregated by sex (percentage) for both **Austria** and **Vienna**.*
2. *edat_lfse_14 (Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status) for statistics on early school leavers by labour-market status (employed, non-employed, willing to work) for **Austria**.*
3. *edat_lfse_15 (Early leavers from formal education by sex and labour status) for statistics on early leavers from formal education, disaggregated by sex and labour status for **Austria**.*

At national level, the rate of early leavers from education and training among 18–24-year-olds in Austria has shown a gradual upward trend over the past decade, with a clear deterioration during and after the pandemic period. In 2014, the early school leaving rate stood at 7.0%. After fluctuating

between 6.9% and 7.4% during 2014–2018, the rate increased to 7.8% in 2019 and 8.1% in 2020. Following a slight decline to 8.0% in 2021, the rate rose again to 8.4% in 2022, 8.6% in 2023, before declining marginally to 8.1% in 2024. Overall, the rate in 2024 remained 1.1 percentage points above its 2014 level, indicating a reversal of earlier progress.

Clear gender differences persist. Early school leaving has consistently been higher among men than among women. In 2014, the rate among men was 7.6%, compared with 6.5% among women. Male early school leaving increased steadily to 9.5% in 2019 and peaked at 10.0% in 2020, before declining to 9.2% in 2024. Among women, the rate declined from 6.5% in 2014 to 5.7% in 2018, before increasing to 6.3% in 2020, peaking at 7.9% in 2023, and declining to 7.0% in 2024. Despite this recent increase, female early school leaving remained 2.2 percentage points lower than the male rate in 2024.

Labour-market status strongly differentiates early school leavers. Among the employed population aged 18–24, early school leaving increased from 3.3% in 2014 to 4.8% in 2023, before declining slightly to 4.3% in 2024. Among non-employed young people, the rate remained consistently higher, fluctuating between 3.7% and 4.3% over the period and standing at 3.8% in 2024. A smaller but persistent subgroup of early leavers reported a willingness to work, accounting for 2.8% in 2014, rising to 3.4% in 2020, and declining to 2.6% in 2024. Those not willing to work constituted a comparatively small group, fluctuating between 0.9% and 1.7%, and standing at 1.2% in 2024.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna consistently recorded higher early school leaving rates than the national average throughout the entire period. In 2014, the early school leaving rate in Vienna stood at 9.0%, compared with 7.0% nationally. The rate increased to 10.2% in 2015, declined temporarily to 8.7% in 2016, and rose again to 10.8% in 2018. A pronounced peak was observed in 2019 (12.3%), followed by a decline to 10.6% in 2020 and 9.9% in 2021. The rate increased again to 12.2% in 2022, remained high at 12.1% in 2023, and declined slightly to 11.9% in 2024. Thus, in 2024, early school leaving in Vienna exceeded the national rate by 3.8 percentage points.

Gender disparities are more pronounced in Vienna than at national level. Among young men, early school leaving increased from 10.1% in 2014 to 14.3% in 2018, peaked at 14.9% in 2022, and remained high at 14.0% in 2024. Among young women, the rate stood at 7.9% in 2014, declined to 7.2% in 2017, and increased thereafter to 10.6% in 2019 and 10.6% in 2023, before declining to 9.8% in 2024. Although female rates are consistently lower than male rates, early school leaving among young women in Vienna remains substantially above the national female average.

Overall, the data indicate that early school leaving in Austria has worsened since 2019, with particularly unfavourable outcomes for young men and for young people living in Vienna. While some short-term improvements are visible, especially after 2021, early school leaving rates in both Austria and Vienna remain above their pre-pandemic levels, pointing to persistent structural challenges in retaining young people in education and training.

3.4.3. Access to information and obstacles to participation in education and training

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to Eurostat Adult Education Survey–based indicators, with reference years within the period 2014–2024, depending on data availability. Missing years reflect the periodic nature of the survey. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *trng_aes_182 (Search for information on learning possibilities by type of learning and sex) for statistics on access to information on formal, non-formal and informal learning, by sex, for **Austria**.*
2. *trng_aes_183 (Search for information on learning possibilities by type of learning and age) for statistics on access to learning-related information by age group, for **Austria**.*
3. *trng_aes_184 (Search for information on learning possibilities by type of learning and educational attainment level) for statistics on access to learning-related information by ISCED 2011 educational attainment, for **Austria.***
4. *trng_aes_179 (*Persons who wanted to participate in education and training but did not, by age*) for statistics on unmet demand for participation in education and training among young people aged 18–24 (percentage), for **Austria**.*
5. *trng_aes_181 (*Reasons for not participating in education and training despite interest, by age*) for statistics on reported obstacles to participation in education and training among young people aged 18–24, including work-related, family-related and financial constraints (percentage), for **Austria**.*
6. *trng_aes_192 (*Persons not participating and not wishing to participate in education and training, by age*) for statistics on non-participation due to lack of interest among young people aged 18–24 (percentage), for **Austria**.*
7. *trng_aes_193 (*Reasons for not wishing to participate in education and training, by age*) for statistics on reported reasons for non-participation among young people aged 18–24, including perceived lack of need for further education or training (percentage), for **Austria**.*

At national level, patterns of access to information on education and training in Austria indicate a stronger orientation towards formal and non-formal learning than towards informal learning alone. According to Adult Education Survey (AES) data, in 2016, 53.8% of people aged 25–64 reported searching for information on formal and non-formal education and training, compared with 15.7% who searched exclusively for informal learning opportunities. By 2022, the corresponding shares had increased to 54.6% and 20.5%, respectively, indicating a growing interest in learning opportunities outside exclusively formal contexts.

Gender differences are limited. Among men aged 25–64, 49.2% searched for information on formal and non-formal education and training in 2016, rising to 51.0% in 2022. Among women, the corresponding shares were higher and more stable, at 58.5% in 2016 and 58.2% in 2022. Informal learning-only searches were reported by 14.0% of men and 17.1% of women in 2016, increasing to 22.0% and 18.9%, respectively, by 2022. The share reporting no learning activity remained relatively low, at 6.2% of men and 10.0% of women in 2016, and 9.9% of men and 9.5% of women in 2022.

Age plays a significant role in information-seeking behaviour. Among young people aged 18–24, 63.9% reported searching for information on learning opportunities in 2022, compared with 54.4% among those aged 25–34. When considering formal and non-formal education and training only, the share rose to 68.6% among 18–24-year-olds, compared with 64.2% among those aged 25–34. Conversely, no learning activity was reported by 22.6% of 18–24-year-olds in 2022, highlighting a non-negligible group of young people disengaged from learning-related information channels.

Educational attainment further differentiates access to information. In 2022, 38.6% of the population across all ISCED 2011 levels searched for information on learning opportunities, compared with 20.8% among those with lower secondary education or below (ISCED 0–2). Among individuals with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3–4), 32.0% searched for learning-related information, while the share rose to 54.3% among those with tertiary education (ISCED 5–8). Engagement in formal and non-formal education and training followed the same gradient, ranging from 39.3% among low-educated individuals to 63.6% among those with tertiary education in 2022.

Despite relatively high levels of information-seeking, Adult Education Survey data indicate that a measurable share of young people in Austria experience unmet demand for participation in education and training. In 2022, 16.8% of young people aged 18–24 reported that they would have liked to participate in education or training activities but were unable to do so. Among those reporting unmet demand, the most frequently cited obstacles were difficulties in combining education or training with work or family responsibilities (41.2%), followed by financial costs (28.6%) and the unavailability of suitable courses or programmes (21.4%). These patterns suggest that non-participation among interested young people is primarily associated with structural constraints rather than a lack of motivation. As information on unmet demand and reported obstacles is available only for 2022, no analysis of developments over time can be undertaken.

The AES further distinguishes between young people who do not participate in education or training due to a lack of interest and those who face concrete barriers. In 2022, 23.5% of young people aged 18–24 reported that they had not participated in education or training and did not wish to do so. Among this group, the dominant reason given was the perception that further education or training was not needed (64.7%), while only a small minority cited negative past learning experiences or lack of information as decisive factors. At the same time, 58.9% of young people who were already participating in education or training indicated an intention to continue learning activities, pointing to a clear distinction between voluntary non-participation and constrained participation within the youth population.

No NUTS 2–level data (Vienna) are available for access to information on education and training or for reported obstacles to participation. As a result, no regional analysis can be undertaken for this section.

The data indicate that access to information on education and training in Austria is relatively widespread, particularly among younger and higher-educated groups. At the same time, a notable share of young people aged 18–24 report unmet demand for participation in education and training, primarily due to structural constraints such as time pressures, costs and limited

availability of suitable offers. In contrast, non-participation without interest is mainly associated with a perceived lack of need for further learning rather than with barriers to access.

3.4.4. Education and training outcomes

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2014–2024, depending on data availability. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *edat_lfse_03 (Population in private households by educational attainment level - main indicators) for statistics on educational attainment levels (ISCED 0–2, 3–4 and 5–8) among young adults aged 25–34, by sex, for **Austria**.*
2. *edat_lfse_33 (Employment rates of young people not in education or training by educational attainment) for statistics on employment rates by ISCED 2011 educational attainment level among young people aged 15–34, for both **Austria** and **Vienna**.*
3. *edat_lfse_22 (Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) by sex and age) for statistics on NEET rates among young people aged 15–29, by sex, for both **Austria** and **Vienna**.*

At national level, Austria displays a comparatively favourable educational attainment profile among young adults aged 25–34, although important structural shifts are evident over time. In 2014, 10.0% of individuals in this age group had attained less than primary, primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 0–2). This proportion increased slightly over the decade, reaching 10.3% in 2024, indicating a modest but persistent share of low-educated young adults. The majority of the cohort holds at least upper secondary education: in 2024, 89.7% had attained ISCED 3–8, though this represents a marginal decline compared with 90.0% in 2014.

Within this group, the structure of attainment has changed noticeably. The share of young adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3–4) declined steadily from 51.6% in 2014 to 45.5% in 2024. This contraction is largely driven by vocational tracks: attainment in upper secondary vocational education (ISCED 35 and 45) fell from 43.3% to 36.4% over the same period. In contrast, tertiary education (ISCED 5–8) expanded continuously, rising from 38.4% in 2014 to 44.1% in 2024, confirming a sustained shift towards higher education.

Gender differences in educational outcomes are pronounced and widening. Among women aged 25–34, the share with tertiary education increased from 41.1% in 2014 to 50.2% in 2024, while among men it rose only marginally, from 35.8% to 38.3%. Conversely, men remain over-represented in vocational upper secondary education: in 2024, 40.8% of men held vocational ISCED 3–4 qualifications, compared with 31.8% of women. Low educational attainment declined more strongly among women, falling from 11.3% to 8.7%, whereas among men it increased from 8.7% to 11.9% over the decade.

Educational attainment is closely linked to labour-market outcomes. In Austria, employment rates for 15–34-year-olds increase sharply with education level. In 2024, the employment rate of those with tertiary education (ISCED 5–8) stood at 88.7%, compared with 87.1% among those with at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3–8) and only 54.9% among individuals with low education

(ISCED 0–2). This gradient has remained stable since 2014, underlining the strong association between higher education against labour-market exclusion. Gender gaps persist across all education levels, with men exhibiting higher employment rates than women, particularly among those with lower educational attainment.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna presents a less favourable labour-market integration profile for young adults, despite its relatively high educational levels. Among 15–34-year-olds, the overall employment rate in Vienna was 72.6% in 2024, substantially below the national figure of 82.2%. Even among tertiary-educated young adults, employment outcomes lag behind the national average: in 2024, 82.9% of tertiary-educated young people in Vienna were employed, compared with 88.7% nationally. The employment penalty associated with low education is particularly severe in the capital: only 48.1% of low-educated young adults (ISCED 0–2) were employed in 2024, compared with 54.9% at national level.

The risk of exclusion from both education and employment remains significant. At national level, the proportion of young people aged 15–29 who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) stood at 9.2% in 2024, broadly in line with its level a decade earlier (9.3% in 2014). A persistent gender gap is evident: in 2024, 9.4% of young women were NEETs, compared with 9.0% of young men. In Vienna, NEET rates are consistently higher. The total NEET rate reached 12.7% in 2024, compared with 12.9% in 2014, indicating limited long-term improvement. Young women in Vienna are particularly affected: 12.8% were NEETs in 2024, compared with 12.7% of men, and consistently above national female rates throughout the period.

Overall, the Austrian data point to a clear polarisation in education and training outcomes. While tertiary attainment has expanded markedly, especially among women, upper secondary vocational pathways have weakened, and low-educated young adults continue to face substantial disadvantages in employment. In Vienna, these challenges are amplified, with systematically lower employment rates across all education levels and persistently elevated NEET rates, indicating structural barriers to labour-market integration despite comparatively high educational attainment.

> From an expert perspective, the observed educational landscape in the Vienna region offers a remarkably broad and well-developed range of educational opportunities and thus functions as a strong pull factor for young people and families moving to urban areas. However, the main challenge does not lie in the availability of provision itself, but rather in the limited awareness of this infrastructure and in the complexity of navigating the wide array of options in order to identify an appropriate and individually suitable pathway. In practice, many learners and their families struggle to achieve a “perfect match” between personal needs, abilities and the existing offers, which may reduce the effective use of an otherwise highly developed system. Inappropriate school choices can intensify disengagement.
>
> In addition, educational trajectories are shaped by broader socio-economic conditions, such as financial pressure to enter employment early, which may conflict with continued schooling. Importantly, one interviewee stressed that within the education sector, particularly for vulnerable groups, progress requires substantial time and is strongly relationship-based, making individualised guidance and sustained support essential. Finally, a critical reflection on the

education system itself was raised, emphasising that not only what is taught but also how it is taught matters, as certain pedagogical approaches, including extensive reliance on self-directed learning, may inadvertently disadvantage vulnerable groups.

3.4.5. Adult learning

Source: All statistics in the table above refer to the year 2024, while the descriptive analysis below covers the period 2014–2024. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *trng_lfs_09 (Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by type, sex and age) for statistics on participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training among 15–29-year-olds, by sex, for **Austria** across 2014–2024. Job-related and not job-related non-formal learning are available only from 2021 onwards*
2. *trng_lfs_10 (Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by type, sex, age and educational attainment level) for statistics on participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training among 15–29-year-olds, by sex and ISCED 2011 educational attainment, for **Austria** across 2014–2024. Job-related and not job-related non-formal learning are available only from 2021 onwards.*
3. *trng_lfse_04 (Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on overall participation in education and training among 15–29-year-olds, by sex, for both **Austria** and **Vienna**; a break in series is indicated for 2022 in the regional data.*

At national level, participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training among young people aged 15–29 remained broadly stable over the period 2014–2024. The participation rate declined from 52.9% in 2014 to 50.8% in 2020, followed by a recovery to 53.5% in 2023 and 54.2% in 2024. Across the observed period, participation has been consistently higher among young women than young men; in 2024, 56.3% of females participated in education or training in the last four weeks, compared with 52.1% of males.

Participation is mainly driven by formal education and training, which remained comparatively stable, decreasing slightly from 45.7% in 2014 to 45.0% in 2024. By contrast, non-formal education and training exhibited stronger medium-term variation, increasing from 13.3% in 2014 to 17.2% in 2024, after a marked decline in 2020 (10.3%). Where the breakdown is available, non-formal participation is predominantly job-related: in 2024, job-related non-formal learning accounted for 11.3% of young people (12.2% among females and 10.6% among males), while not job-related non-formal learning accounted for 5.9% (6.4% among females and 5.4% among males).

Participation patterns differ substantially by educational attainment. In 2024, participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training was 74.2% among young people with ISCED 0–2, compared with 45.4% among those with ISCED 3–8, reflecting the fact that many individuals with low educational attainment in this age group are still enrolled in initial education. Within ISCED 3–4, participation was markedly higher in general programmes (71.2%) than in vocational programmes (29.7%), while among those with tertiary education (ISCED 5–8) participation stood at

49.9%. Across attainment levels, participation rates were consistently higher among women than men.

Regional participation rates are presented using the NUTS 2 indicator trng_lfse_04, which differs in level from the national series combining formal and non-formal learning and is therefore interpreted in terms of regional differences and trends rather than direct level comparability. Using this indicator, participation in education and training among 15–29-year-olds is consistently higher in Vienna than at national level. In Vienna, the participation rate increased from 19.6% in 2014 to 23.4% in 2024, with a decline in 2020 (16.5%) followed by a sustained recovery from 2021 (20.2%) onwards. In 2024, participation reached 24.8% among females and 22.0% among males in Vienna, compared with 19.4% and 15.9%, respectively, at national level. A break in series is indicated for 2022, and comparisons around this year should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Overall, participation in education and training among young people aged 15–29 in Austria remained relatively stable between 2014 and 2024, with a temporary decline in 2020 followed by recovery to pre-pandemic levels. Participation is consistently higher among young women than young men and is largely driven by formal education, while non-formal learning has gained importance over time. Strong differences by educational attainment persist, with particularly high participation among those still in initial education and substantially lower rates among those with vocational upper secondary qualifications. At regional level, participation rates are higher in Vienna than nationally on the regional series, with persistent gender differences and a clear rebound after 2020.

3.5. Health, poverty and social exclusion

3.5.1. Health issues

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above cover the period 2014–2024 (or latest available year). All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *hlth_silc_01 (Self-perceived health by sex, age and labour status) for statistics on national-level health perceptions among 16–29-year-olds for **Austria**.*
2. *hlth_silc_02 (Self-perceived health by sex, age and educational attainment level) for statistics on national-level educational gradients in health among young people for **Austria**.*
3. *demo_minfind (Infant mortality rates) for statistics on national infant mortality in Austria.*
4. *demo_r_minfind (Infant mortality rates by NUTS 2 region) for statistics on infant mortality for **Vienna**.*

At national level, health outcomes among young people in Austria (aged 16–29) do not indicate an alarming situation, although clear social gradients are observable. Based on EU-SILC self-perceived health data, the share of young people reporting "bad" or "very bad" health remains low throughout the period 2014–2024. In 2024, 2.4% of young people assessed their health negatively, while 87.0% reported "very good" or "good" health. Over the decade, the proportion reporting good or very good health declined moderately from 90.3% in 2014, with a peak of 94.0% in the mid-period, suggesting slight deterioration rather than a structural crisis. Gender differences persist but are limited: in 2024, 88.5% of young men and 85.3% of young women reported good or very good health.

Labour-market status is strongly associated with health perceptions. Among unemployed young people, self-perceived health is consistently worse than among the youth population as a whole. In 2024, only 70.3% of unemployed young people reported good or very good health, while 12.3% rated their health as bad or very bad. This contrasts with employed young people, among whom 88.0% reported good or very good health. These differences are persistent across the observation period and underline the close link between labour-market exclusion and health vulnerability among youth in Austria. Educational gradients further reinforce this pattern: young people with low educational attainment (ISCED 0–2) systematically report poorer health outcomes than those with upper secondary or tertiary education, although exact regional breakdowns are not available.

At NUTS-2 level, Eurostat does not provide regional data for self-perceived health among young people, including for Vienna. Consequently, the analysis at regional level relies on infant mortality as a standardised and internationally comparable indicator of population health and healthcare performance. At national level, Austria's infant mortality rate remained consistently low between 2014 and 2023, fluctuating between 2.4 and 3.1 deaths per 1,000 live births, with no data available for 2024. This stability reflects the overall strength of maternal and child healthcare systems.

In contrast, Vienna records persistently higher infant mortality rates than the national average. In 2014, the rate in Vienna stood at 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with 3.0 nationally. Although a gradual decline was observed up to 2018, followed by renewed volatility, the gap

between Vienna and Austria remained substantial throughout the period. In 2023, Vienna again recorded 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with 2.8 at national level. These figures show that infant mortality is persistently higher in Vienna than in Austria overall during the observed period, indicating a sustained territorial disparity.

While Austria shows favourable health outcomes for young people at aggregate level, both self-perceived health and infant mortality data point to persistent inequalities by labour-market status and territory. Vienna, in particular, exhibits systematically less favourable infant health outcomes than the national average, mirroring broader patterns of social vulnerability in the capital.

3.5.2. Disability - Access to education and training

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to 2022 and 2024, as no continuous time series is available for this indicator. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *edat_lfs_9920 (Population by educational attainment level, sex, age and level of disability – activity limitation) for statistics on educational attainment among young people aged 15–24 by disability status and sex at national level for **Austria**.*

At national level, Eurostat data on educational attainment by disability status are available for young people aged 15–24 years. These data show a clear and persistent educational disadvantage for young people living with activity limitations in Austria.

In 2022, 43.7% of young people aged 15–24 had attained at most lower secondary education (ISCED 0–2). By 2024, this share declined to 41.4%. Among young people with some or severe activity limitations, the corresponding proportion was markedly higher and increased over time, from 48.9% in 2022 to 50.9% in 2024. By contrast, among young people without activity limitations, the share with at most lower secondary education fell from 43.3% to 40.6% over the same period.

The disadvantage is even more pronounced for those reporting severe activity limitations. In 2022, 59.5% of young people with severe limitations had attained at most lower secondary education; in 2024, this rose sharply to 70.5% (both values flagged by Eurostat as having low reliability). For young people with some limitations, the corresponding shares were 46.1% in 2022 and 44.8% in 2024.

Gender-disaggregated data confirm this pattern. Among young men with some or severe activity limitations, 40.5% had at most lower secondary education in 2022, increasing to 52.8% in 2024. Among young women with some or severe limitations, the share decreased from 56.5% in 2022 to 48.9% in 2024, but remained substantially above the level observed among women without limitations (37.4% in 2024).

Looking at higher levels of attainment, 58.6% of young people aged 15–24 in Austria had completed at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3–8) in 2024. Among those with some or severe activity limitations, this share was lower, at 49.1%, compared with 59.4% among those without limitations. Tertiary attainment (ISCED 5–8) among young people with some or severe limitations remained

limited, increasing from 8.4% in 2022 to 14.9% in 2024, while the corresponding share among young people without limitations rose from 15.9% to 17.3%.

At NUTS 2 level (Vienna), Eurostat does not provide educational attainment data by disability status for young people. As a result, no subnational analysis of access to education and training for disabled youth can be conducted for Vienna, and the assessment is limited to national-level evidence.

The available Eurostat data for 15–24-year-olds indicate a clear educational disadvantage associated with activity limitations in Austria, with higher concentrations at ISCED 0–2 and lower shares reaching ISCED 3–8 and ISCED 5–8 among young people with limitations.

> From an expert standpoint, young people with cognitive impairments experience a high(er) vulnerability within the education system. One interviewee identified this group as facing the greatest structural barriers, notably due to rigid expectations concerning learning pace and performance, while the education system often fails to accommodate the additional time many individuals require to process information and develop competencies. Furthermore, young people within the neurodivergent spectrum, including those with ADHD and autism, were described as encountering significant uncertainty during educational transitions and career orientation, making intensive counselling and continuous guidance essential.

3.5.3. Disability - Access to the labour market

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis refer to 2022 and 2024, as no longer time series are available for disability-specific labour market indicators for young people. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *hlth_dlm200 (Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex) for statistics on employment disadvantages of young people with disabilities for **Austria** (2014–2024).*
2. *lfsa_argaeddl (Activity rates by level of disability (activity limitation) and educational attainment level) for labour force participation among 15–29-year-olds for **Austria** (2022 and 2024).*
3. *lfsa_ipgaeddl (Inactive population by level of disability (activity limitation) and educational attainment level – % of total population) for inactivity among 15–29-year-olds for **Austria** (2022 and 2024).*
4. *lfsa_urgaeddl (Unemployment rates by level of disability (activity limitation) and educational attainment level) for unemployment among 15–29-year-olds in **Austria** (2022 and 2024).*
5. *lfsa_upgadl (Long-term unemployment by level of disability (activity limitation) – % of total unemployment) for long-term unemployment among 15–29-year-olds for **Austria** (2022 and 2024).*

At national level, young people with disabilities in Austria face substantial barriers in accessing the labour market. Differences in employment outcomes between young people with and without activity limitations are pronounced and persistent over time. For young people aged 15–29 with some activity limitations, the employment disadvantage fluctuated over the period 2014–2024, with the gap reaching 10.8 percentage points in 2014, rising to a peak of 17.1 percentage points in

2023, and standing at 11.9 percentage points in 2024. Among those with severe activity limitations, the disadvantage was considerably larger throughout the period, remaining above 44 percentage points until 2018, increasing to 49.2 percentage points in 2019, peaking at 55.4 percentage points in 2021, and declining to 47.6 percentage points in 2024. For the combined group with some or severe limitations, the gap increased from 19.3 percentage points in 2014 to 20.7 percentage points in 2024, with the highest value observed in 2021 (26.3 percentage points). Across all categories, the employment disadvantage was consistently higher among young men than among young women.

Labour force participation data further illustrate restricted access to the labour market for young people with disabilities. Among all young people aged 15–29 in Austria, the activity rate was 69.1% in 2022 and 68.5% in 2024. For young people without activity limitations, participation remained stable at 69.6% in 2022 and 69.5% in 2024. In contrast, among those with some or severe activity limitations, the activity rate declined markedly, from 64.4% in 2022 to 58.3% in 2024. Participation was lowest among young people with severe limitations, for whom only 35.4% were active in the labour market in 2022, decreasing further to 31.1% in 2024.

This pattern is mirrored by inactivity rates. Overall inactivity among young people aged 15–29 was 30.9% in 2022 and 31.5% in 2024. Among young people without limitations, inactivity remained broadly unchanged, at 30.4% and 30.5%, respectively. Among those with some or severe activity limitations, inactivity increased from 35.6% in 2022 to 41.7% in 2024. For young people with severe limitations, inactivity was particularly high, rising from 64.6% to 68.9% over the same period, indicating that more than two thirds of this group were outside the labour force.

Unemployment indicators point in the same direction. Among young people aged 15–29, the overall unemployment rate increased from 7.6% in 2022 to 8.4% in 2024. For young people with some activity limitations, unemployment rose from 11.6% to 13.2%, while for those with some or severe limitations it increased from 10.9% to 14.0%. Young people without limitations experienced lower unemployment rates, at 7.3% in 2022 and 7.9% in 2024. Long-term unemployment also became more prevalent: the share of unemployed young people who had been unemployed for at least 12 months increased from 14.4% in 2022 to 17.8% in 2024, with higher proportions observed among young men. Data availability for young women is limited, with only a single observation for 2024.

At NUTS 2 level, no data are available on labour market participation, employment, inactivity, or unemployment by disability status for young people in Vienna. Consequently, the assessment of disability-related access to the labour market is restricted to the national level.

> The available evidence points to persistent and substantial labour market disadvantages for young people with activity limitations in Austria. Across all indicators, employment outcomes are systematically less favourable for this group than for young people without limitations, with particularly pronounced gaps among those reporting severe activity limitations. Lower labour force participation, higher inactivity and elevated unemployment characterise the situation of disabled youth, and these disparities have not narrowed in recent years. While some fluctuations are observable over time, the overall pattern indicates structural barriers to labour market integration rather than temporary or cyclical effects. Due to the absence of disability-disaggregated youth data

at NUTS 2 level, no assessment of territorial variation within Austria can be made for this dimension.

The challenges mentioned with regard to access to education and training for people with disabilities extend equally to access to the labour market, where insufficient understanding, persistent stigma and limited flexibility in workplace structures often hinder successful integration. According to one expert, addressing these barriers requires extensive awareness-raising, sustained dialogue and the implementation of inclusive practices in the employment sector, in order to improve understanding and ensure equitable access to learning and work opportunities for young people with disabilities and diverse cognitive profiles.

3.5.4. Risk of poverty

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2014–2024, with the most recent values for 2024, unless otherwise stated. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *ilc_peps01n (Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex) for national trends and gender differences for **Austria**.*
2. *ilc_peps04n (Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by educational attainment level – population aged 18 and over) for education-related disparities among young people aged 18–24 for **Austria**.*
3. *ilc_peps02n (Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by most frequent activity status – population aged 18 and over) for differences by employment status in Austria.*
4. *ilc_peps11n (Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by NUTS 2 region) for regional comparison between **Austria** and **Vienna**.*
5. *ilc_li41 (At-risk-of-poverty rate by NUTS 2 region) for differences in monetary poverty between **Austria** and **Vienna**.*

At national level, Austria recorded a clear downward trend in the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion over the past decade, despite short-term fluctuations. Between 2015 and 2024, the overall rate declined from 21.1% to 17.5%, after reaching a peak of 22.5% in 2016. Following this peak, the rate decreased steadily, falling to 16.5% in 2019, before rising temporarily during the pandemic period and subsequently declining again to its lowest level in 2024.

Gender differences persisted throughout the entire period. Among men, the share at risk of poverty or social exclusion declined markedly, from 19.4% in 2015 to 14.3% in 2024, with the highest value recorded in 2016 (21.7%). Among women, the trend was less favourable. The rate peaked at 23.4% in 2016, decreased to 20.0% in 2021, and then stabilised at a higher level than that observed for men, standing at 20.9% in 2024. As a result, the gender gap widened towards the end of the period, driven by continued improvement among men and stagnation among women.

Educational attainment plays a decisive role in shaping exposure to poverty and social exclusion among young people. For those aged 18–24, the overall risk declined from 20.6% in 2015 to 17.3% in 2024, but substantial differences by education level remain. Young people with less than primary, primary or lower secondary education consistently faced the highest risk, with values

peaking at 34.6% in 2016, remaining elevated at 31.4% in 2023, and declining to 23.4% in 2024. Those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education recorded lower and more stable levels throughout the period, while young people with tertiary education faced the lowest risk, which declined to 14.3% in 2024. Gender differences are again evident: among young men, the risk fell from 19.5% in 2015 to 11.6% in 2024, whereas among young women it remained higher and increased slightly over the period, reaching 23.1% in 2024.

At regional level, Vienna shows substantially less favourable outcomes than the national average. While Austria as a whole recorded a risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate of 16.9% in 2024, the corresponding figure for Vienna was 28.2%. Since regional data became available, Vienna has consistently exhibited rates well above the national level: 26.3% in 2021, 26.2% in 2022, 29.5% in 2023, and 28.2% in 2024. This indicates a persistent regional disparity, with the capital facing markedly higher exposure to poverty and social exclusion than Austria overall.

A similar pattern emerges when focusing specifically on monetary poverty. At national level, the at-risk-of-poverty rate fluctuated between 13.3% and 14.9% between 2014 and 2024, standing at 14.3% in 2024. In Vienna, the corresponding rate was consistently higher throughout the period, ranging between 20.3% and 24.6%, and reaching 23.9% in 2024. This confirms that the higher vulnerability observed in Vienna is not limited to broader social exclusion but also reflects a significantly elevated risk of income poverty.

The data show that the risk of poverty and social exclusion among young people in Austria has declined over the past decade, although progress has been uneven across population groups and territories. While national rates have trended downward, marked disparities persist by gender, educational attainment and region. Young people with low education remain substantially more exposed to poverty and social exclusion than their higher-educated peers, and women consistently face higher risks than men. Regional inequalities are particularly pronounced, with Vienna recording persistently higher levels of both poverty and social exclusion and monetary poverty than the national average.

> The experts interviewed expressed the opinion that poverty risk among young people is not merely an income issue, but a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by limited financial capital, constrained living conditions, inherited educational disadvantage and early socio-economic pressures, all of which significantly reduce equal opportunities in education and employment. The most vulnerable groups are those growing up in socio-economically weak families, where financial resources are extremely limited or have to be shared among several children, significantly constraining access to educational support and material resources. This disadvantage is often, though not exclusively, correlated with migration backgrounds, while low parental educational attainment further reinforces intergenerational inequality, as education in Austria remains strongly socially inherited.

Poverty is considered one of the most important factors rendering young people vulnerable, alongside unemployment, family problems, and loneliness. In Austria, however, poverty is often hidden, even though it severely affects housing, nutrition, health, and social participation.

3.5.5. Housing cost overburden rate

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2014–2024, with the most recent values for 2024, unless otherwise stated. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *ilc_lvho07a (*Housing cost overburden rate by age, sex and poverty status*) for housing affordability among 15–29-year-olds for **Austria**.*
2. *ilc_lvho07b (*Housing cost overburden rate by income quintile*) for income-related differences in housing cost pressure for **Austria**.*
3. *ilc_lvho07c (*Housing cost overburden rate by tenure status*) for differences between owners and tenants for **Austria**.*
4. *ilc_lvho07d (*Housing cost overburden rate by degree of urbanisation*) for urban–rural contrasts in housing affordability for **Austria**.*
5. *ilc_lvho07e (*Housing cost overburden rate by household type*) for differences by household composition for **Austria**.*
6. *ilc_lvho07_r / edat_lfse_21 (*Housing cost overburden rate by NUTS 2 region*) for comparison between **Austria** and **Vienna** (total population).*

At national level, the housing cost overburden rate among young people aged 15–29 in Austria fluctuated over the analysed period, without showing a sustained downward trend. For the total population in this age group, the share living in households where housing costs exceeded 40% of disposable income ranged between 6.6% and 10.4% between 2014 and 2024. The highest value was recorded in 2017 (10.4%), while the lowest occurred in 2021 (6.6%). In 2024, the housing cost overburden rate among young people stood at 7.8%.

Income position is the most decisive determinant of housing cost pressure. Among young people aged 15–29 below 60% of the national median income, housing cost overburden was extremely high throughout the period. The rate stood at 45.7% in 2014, increased to 52.3% in 2017, remained above 50% in 2019 (51.0%), and then declined sharply to 31.5% in 2021, before rising again to 33.2% in 2024. By contrast, among young people above 60% of the median income, housing cost overburden remained consistently low, fluctuating only between 1.4% and 3.4% over the entire decade.

Gender differences among young people were limited but persistent. Among young men below the poverty threshold, the housing cost overburden rate increased from 45.3% in 2014 to a peak of 53.3% in 2019, declined to 31.0% in 2021, and rose again to 35.4% in 2024. Among young women below the threshold, the rate peaked at 53.6% in 2017 and stood at 31.7% in 2024. For both sexes, housing cost overburden rates among those above the poverty threshold remained below 4% throughout the period.

Patterns observed for the total population reinforce these findings. Housing cost overburden was concentrated among low-income households, with rates between 26.5% and 32.3% for individuals in the lowest income quintile, compared with values close to zero in the highest quintiles. By household type, single-person households consistently faced the highest burden, with rates between 15.2% and 18.2%, while single-parent households experienced particularly high and volatile levels, peaking at 24.3% in 2018 and declining to 12.8% in 2024. Multi-adult households,

especially those with two or more adults without dependent children, recorded substantially lower housing cost overburden rates, typically below 5%.

At regional level, no housing cost overburden data are available for young people aged 15–29. However, for the total population, Austria's overall housing cost overburden rate fluctuated between 8.3% and 9.5% between 2014 and 2024. Vienna consistently recorded higher values than the national average, reflecting stronger housing cost pressure in the capital. This pattern corresponds with the national urban–rural gradient, where residents of cities faced housing cost overburden rates between 9.9% and 12.6%, compared with 4.4% to 6.7% in towns and suburbs and 2.4% to 4.2% in rural areas.

Housing cost overburden among young people in Austria remained relatively limited at aggregate level over the past decade but was highly concentrated among economically vulnerable groups. While the majority of young people did not experience excessive housing cost pressure, those living below the poverty threshold faced persistently high overburden rates, with only partial and temporary improvements over time. Gender differences were modest, but income position strongly shaped exposure to housing cost stress. Patterns observed for the total population reinforce these findings, highlighting particularly high risks among low-income households, single-person households and single-parent households. At regional level, Vienna consistently recorded higher housing cost overburden than the national average, reflecting stronger affordability pressures in urban contexts.

3.5.6. Material and social deprivation

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2014–2024, with age ranges 16–29 or 18–29 stated explicitly where required by data availability. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *ilc_mdsd01 (Material and social deprivation rate by age, sex and most frequent activity status) for deprivation among employed, unemployed and inactive young people for **Austria**.*
2. *ilc_mdsd03 (Material and social deprivation rate by age, sex and educational attainment level) for education-related differences in material and social deprivation among young people for **Austria**.*
3. *ilc_mdsd08 (Material and social deprivation rate by NUTS 2 region) for comparison between **Austria** and **Vienna**.*
4. *ilc_mdsd12 (Severe material and social deprivation by age, sex and most frequent activity status) for severe deprivation among young people by labour market status for **Austria**.*
5. *ilc_mdsd14 (Severe material and social deprivation by age, sex and educational attainment level) for educational disparities in severe material and social deprivation among young people for **Austria**.*
6. *ilc_mdsd18 (Severe material and social deprivation by NUTS 2 region) for **Austria** and **Vienna**-level trends in severe material and social deprivation.*

Material and social deprivation among young people in Austria declined markedly during the first part of the analysed period but remained strongly differentiated by labour market status and

educational attainment, with renewed increases observed after 2021. Among young people aged 16–29, deprivation was consistently lowest for those in employment and substantially higher for those without work. Between 2014 and 2024, deprivation among employed young people generally remained below 6%, reaching a low of 1.5% in 2022 and increasing again to 5.4% in 2024. By contrast, non-employed young people faced considerably higher rates, typically between 6% and 12%, with unemployed youth being the most affected group. Among unemployed young people, deprivation exceeded 30% in 2015 and 2016, declined sharply to 11.1% in 2021, and then rose again to over 23% in 2024. This indicates a strong association between unemployment and material and social hardship among Austria's young population.

Educational attainment represents a second major dividing line. Across all young people, the overall material and social deprivation rate declined from 7.6% in 2014 to 3.4% in 2022, before rising again to 6.6% in 2024. Young people with low educational attainment (ISCED 0–2) consistently experienced the highest deprivation levels. In this group, the rate reached 18% in the mid-2010s, fell below 7% by 2021, and increased again to 11.7% in 2024. Those with upper secondary education (ISCED 3–4) recorded moderate values, mostly between 3% and 6%, while tertiary-educated young people (ISCED 5–8) faced very low deprivation throughout the period, typically below 3%. Gender differences were limited but persistent, with young women slightly more affected than young men, particularly among those with lower education.

At national level, considering the total population, Austria's material and social deprivation rate fell steadily from 9.1% in 2014 to 4.4% in 2021, before increasing again to 7.5% in 2024. At NUTS 2 level, Vienna displayed consistently less favourable outcomes during the years for which data are available. Between 2015 and 2018, the deprivation rate in Vienna declined from 13.9% to 12.3%, but remained substantially higher than the national average, which fell from 7.0% to 5.7% over the same period. This indicates a persistent urban disadvantage in material and social living conditions.

A similar pattern emerges for severe material and social deprivation. Among young people aged 16–29, severe deprivation remained low overall but was highly concentrated among disadvantaged groups. For the total youth population, the rate increased from 2.0% in 2015 to 4.0% in 2017, declined to 0.7% in 2022, and then rose again to 2.3% in 2024. Young people with low education (ISCED 0–2) were by far the most affected, with severe deprivation peaking at 15.8% in 2017 and remaining elevated at 6.0% in 2024, compared with values mostly below 1% among tertiary-educated youth. Among unemployed young people, severe deprivation reached 10–16% in 2015–2017, spiked at 19.2% in 2020, and stood at 9.2% in 2024, confirming the strong link between labour market exclusion and extreme hardship.

At regional level, severe material and social deprivation in Vienna worsened notably in recent years. While Austria as a whole recorded relatively stable and low values, fluctuating between 1.8% and 3.7% between 2015 and 2024, Vienna's rate increased steadily from 3.4% in 2021 to 7.6% in 2024, more than double the national level in the final year. This divergence suggests a growing concentration of severe deprivation in the capital.

Material and social deprivation among young people in Austria declined substantially during the first part of the past decade but increased again in more recent years. While deprivation remained relatively low for young people in employment and for those with higher educational attainment,

it was consistently concentrated among unemployed youth and those with low education. Severe material and social deprivation affected a comparatively small share of young people overall but was highly prevalent among the most disadvantaged groups and showed renewed growth after 2021. Regional patterns further highlight persistent disparities, with Vienna recording less favourable outcomes than the national average for both moderate and severe deprivation. Taken together, the evidence points to a strong association between labour market exclusion, low education and urban residence and heightened deprivation risks among young people.

> Experts underline that material and social deprivation among young people is often concealed but deeply structural, closely tied to family resources, migration background and intergenerational inequality. Beyond financial hardship, deprivation manifests in limited mobility, reduced access to educational support and additional caring responsibilities within families, which cumulatively restrict young people's opportunities for stable labour market integration and social participation.

3.6. Digital economy and society

3.6.1. Personal and household access

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2014–2024, unless otherwise stated. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *isoc_ci_in_h (Households – level of internet access) for household internet access by household type, degree of urbanisation and income quartile for **Austria**.*
2. *isoc_r_broad_h (Households with broadband internet access) for broadband internet coverage among households for **Austria** and **Vienna**.*

At national level, Austria shows very high and largely saturated levels of household internet access over the analysed period, alongside a steady expansion of broadband connections. The share of households with internet access remained close to full coverage throughout 2014–2024, increasing from 98.0% in 2014 to 95.8% in 2021, and standing at 94.96% in 2024. Over the same period, the share of households with broadband internet rose markedly, from 79.38% in 2014 to 91.01% in 2021, reflecting the continued upgrading of connection quality, although no broadband figures are available after 2021.

Disaggregation by household type reveals persistent but narrowing differences. Single-person households consistently recorded lower access rates than multi-person households, increasing from 68.41% in 2014 to 91.49% in 2024. In contrast, households with dependent children displayed very high access throughout the period. For example, two adults with dependent children recorded values above 97% in all years and reached 99.38% in 2024, while three or more adults with dependent children reached 100% from 2021 onwards. Households without dependent children also showed strong improvement, rising from 75.58% in 2014 to 93.40% in 2024.

Clear gradients are also visible by degree of urbanisation. In cities, the share of households with internet access increased from 82.95% in 2014 to 95.81% in 2024. Towns and suburbs followed a similar trajectory, rising from 80.27% to 95.13% over the same period. Rural areas started from slightly lower levels but converged steadily, increasing from 79.79% in 2014 to 94.00% in 2024. By the end of the period, differences between urban and rural areas had narrowed to less than two percentage points.

Income-related disparities were more pronounced in the earlier years. Households in the lowest income quartile increased their internet access rate from 61.74% in 2014 to 83.21% in 2020, after which no data are available. In contrast, households in the highest income quartile already recorded very high access rates in 2014 (96.33%) and reached 97.40% by 2020, indicating that income-related gaps diminished primarily through improvements among lower-income households.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna closely mirrors the national pattern, albeit with slightly lower values in some years. The share of households with internet access in Vienna stood at 97.8% in 2014, reached 100% in 2016, and was 96.19% in 2021, with no data available thereafter. Broadband

access in Vienna increased from 82.61% in 2014 to 92.49% in 2021, remaining consistently above the national broadband average in the same years. Overall, Vienna exhibits high and stable connectivity, broadly in line with Austria as a whole.

Austria exhibits very high levels of household internet access, with coverage approaching saturation over the past decade and differences between population groups narrowing over time. While disparities by household type, degree of urbanisation and income were more pronounced in the mid-2010s, these gaps diminished steadily as access expanded among traditionally less connected groups, particularly single-person and lower-income households. Broadband connectivity also increased markedly, indicating improvements not only in access but in connection quality. Vienna broadly mirrors national patterns and, for broadband access, consistently performs at or above the national average, confirming a high and stable level of digital infrastructure in the capital.

3.6.2. Information society

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2014–2024, with specific reference to 2024 where indicated. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *isoc_ci_ac_i (Use of internet) for internet activities among individuals aged 16–29 by sex for **Austria**.*
2. *isoc_iiot_use (Use of Internet of Things) for the use of internet-connected devices among individuals aged 16–24 by sex for **Austria**.*

At national level, internet use among young people in Austria is very widespread and stable, with consistently high participation across most online activities over the analysed period. Among individuals aged 16–29, the share using the internet for sending or receiving e-mails remained above 91% throughout 2014–2024, standing at 92.51% in 2024. Participation in social networks also showed persistently high levels, increasing from 82.92% in 2014 to 90.94% in 2024. Similarly, the use of the internet for finding information about goods and services remained common, reaching 84.14% in 2024 after some fluctuations during the decade.

More interactive and communication-intensive uses expanded notably over time. The proportion of young people making internet-based voice or video calls rose sharply, from 34.62% in 2014 to 86.05% in 2024, reflecting the rapid diffusion of video communication tools. The use of instant messaging services reached near-universal levels once data became available, standing at 97.04% in 2024. By contrast, civic and political engagement online remained limited. Participation in online consultations or voting reached 12.36% in 2024, while expressing opinions on civic or political issues online stood at 15.32% in the same year, indicating that such uses are far less common than communication- or information-related activities.

Gender differences are generally modest but visible for certain activities. Among young men aged 16–29, internet use for telephoning or video calls increased from 40.99% in 2014 to 86.61% in 2024, while among young women the corresponding rise was from 28.08% to 85.44%. Women

consistently showed slightly higher participation in social networking, reaching 94.67% in 2024, compared with 87.51% among men. Reading online news declined for both sexes after 2021, falling to 66.42% for men and 64.98% for women in 2024. In contrast, the use of instant messaging was nearly identical across genders, exceeding 96% for both in 2024.

Looking at younger cohorts and newer forms of digital use, data for individuals aged 16–24 in 2024 indicate a growing engagement with internet-connected devices. In that year, 66.90% used an internet-connected TV, 45.95% used an internet-connected game console, and 29.71% used a virtual assistant such as a smart speaker or app. Usage of smart home technologies remained more limited: 10.72% used an internet-connected home energy management system, 6.41% a home security or safety system, and 8.41% an internet-connected household appliance. Gender differences are visible in this domain, with young men more likely to use internet-connected game consoles (56.14%) and young women more likely to use internet-connected TVs (69.92%) in 2024.

No regional data are available for these indicators at NUTS 2 level, and therefore no separate assessment for Vienna can be made.

Young people in Austria make extensive and routine use of the internet, with very high participation in communication, information-seeking and social networking activities throughout the past decade. Uses related to interpersonal communication, messaging and video calls expanded particularly strongly and reached near-universal levels in recent years. By contrast, forms of online civic and political engagement remained limited, with only a minority of young people participating in activities such as online consultations or expressing opinions on public issues. Gender differences were generally modest, but followed consistent patterns, with young women more active in social networking and young men more engaged in gaming-related and certain device-based uses. The uptake of newer internet-connected devices has increased among younger cohorts, while the absence of regional data prevents any assessment of territorial variation within Austria.

3.6.3. Digital economy

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to the period 2020–2024, with a focus on 2024 where available. All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *isoc_ec_ib20 (Internet purchases by individuals) for the share and frequency of online purchases among individuals aged 16–24 for **Austria**, by sex.*
2. *isoc_r_ec_evaln2 (Value of e-commerce sales by NACE Rev. 2 activity) for the share of enterprises' turnover from web sales (enterprises with 10 persons employed or more) for both **Austria** and **Vienna** (NUTS 2).*
3. *isoc_r_ec_eseln2 (Enterprises with web sales by NACE Rev. 2 activity) for the proportion of enterprises engaged in web sales for both **Austria** and **Vienna** (NUTS 2).*

At national level, available data show that online purchasing is widespread among young people in Austria, with consistently high participation since data became available. Among individuals aged 16–24, 73.05% reported having made an online purchase in the last three months in 2020. This

share fluctuated slightly in subsequent years, reaching 75.07% in 2023 and standing at 71.02% in 2024. When a longer reference period is considered, the prevalence is higher: 78.14% of young people reported an online purchase in the last 12 months in 2024, compared with 87.43% in 2020 and 84.39% in 2023.

Gender differences are present but limited. In 2024, 66.77% of young men and 75.51% of young women aged 16–24 reported an online purchase in the last three months. Over the same year, 76.35% of men and 80.04% of women had made an online purchase in the last 12 months. The frequency of online purchases shows that moderate use is most common. In 2023, among young people aged 16–24, 29.76% made three to five purchases in the last three months, while 14.38% made six to ten purchases and 12.71% made more than ten purchases. Comparable frequency data for 2024 are not available.

Turning to the enterprise side, the data indicate that e-commerce remains a growing but still limited component of total turnover in Austria. For enterprises with 10 persons employed or more, the share of turnover from web sales in all activities excluding agriculture and mining increased from 4.27% in 2022 to 7.33% in 2023 at national level. Considerable sectoral variation is observed: in accommodation and food service activities, the share rose from 15.89% in 2022 to 22.40% in 2023, while in wholesale and retail trade, it increased from 5.32% to 8.39% over the same period. In contrast, construction recorded much lower values, rising only from 0.41% in 2022 to 0.81% in 2023.

At NUTS 2 level, Vienna generally shows similar or slightly higher engagement in e-commerce activities compared with the national average. In 2023, enterprises in Vienna (10 persons employed or more, all activities excluding agriculture and mining) generated 9.42% of their turnover from web sales, compared with 7.33% nationally. Sectoral data confirm strong performance in accommodation and food service activities, where the share of turnover from web sales reached 25.74% in 2023, and in information and communication, where it stood at 7.61%. Data gaps remain for several sectors and years, limiting detailed trend analysis at regional level.

Overall, the digital economy is well established among young people in Austria in terms of online consumption, while the integration of e-commerce into business activity remains more limited. Online purchasing is widespread among young people aged 16–24 and has remained consistently high since data became available, with only moderate year-to-year variation and small gender differences. On the enterprise side, web sales account for a growing but still relatively modest share of total turnover, with substantial variation across sectors. Vienna generally shows similar or slightly stronger engagement in e-commerce than the national average, particularly in services such as accommodation and food activities. Data gaps for certain years and sectors limit detailed trend analysis, but the overall pattern points to a mature consumer market alongside a more gradually expanding digital sales channel among enterprises.

3.6.4. Personal digital skills

Source: All statistics in the descriptive analysis above refer to young people aged 16–29. The descriptive analysis covers the period 2014–2024, but data are available only for 2021 and 2023; all other years are not available (n/a). All statistics are derived from the following Eurostat indicators:

1. *isoc_sk_dskl_i21 (Individuals' level of digital skills) for statistics on overall digital skills and component skill domains among young people for **Austria**.*
2. *isoc_sk_cskl_i21 (Individuals' level of computer skills) for statistics on computer-related activities carried out in the last three months by young people for **Austria**.*

For Austria, data on personal digital skills are available only at national level and only for the years 2021 and 2023 for young people aged 16–29. No information is available for earlier years in the period 2014–2020, nor for 2022 or 2024. Subnational data (NUTS 2 or local level) are not available.

Overall, the available data show that basic digital competences are widespread among young people, while advanced digital skills are less evenly distributed. In 2021, 78.86% of young people had at least basic overall digital skills, meaning that all five competence domains reached at least a basic level. In 2023, this share declined to 74.88%. Within this group, the proportion with above-basic overall digital skills decreased from 44.66% in 2021 to 39.83% in 2023, while those with basic but not above-basic skills increased slightly from 34.20% to 35.05%.

At the lower end of the skills distribution, 13.04% of young people in 2021 and 15.08% in 2023 showed low overall digital skills, meaning that at least one competence domain was below basic level. A further 5.79% in 2021 and 5.56% in 2023 had narrow digital skills, while 1.75% and 3.92%, respectively, had limited digital skills. The share of young people with no overall digital skills remained very small, at 0.55% in 2021 and 0.47% in 2023.

Looking at specific competence domains, information and data literacy was widespread but weakened over time. In 2021, 94.05% of young people had at least basic skills in this area, compared with 88.79% in 2023. The share with above-basic proficiency declined from 79.57% to 76.74%. Communication and collaboration skills were almost universal in both years, with 99.57% in 2021 and 99.60% in 2023 reaching at least basic level, and more than 98% attaining above-basic competence. For digital content creation, 87.52% of young people had at least basic skills in 2021, falling slightly to 86.20% in 2023, while the share with above-basic skills dropped more markedly, from 72.35% to 65.97%. In the area of digital safety, 87.73% in 2021 and 85.92% in 2023 reached at least basic competence, with a modest shift from above-basic towards basic levels. Problem-solving skills were the most widespread domain, with 98.61% in 2021 and 98.94% in 2023 achieving at least basic proficiency.

More advanced, practice-oriented activities were notably less common. In 2021, 21.32% of young people reported having written code in a programming language in the previous three months; by 2023, this share had fallen to 14.36%. Routine computer activities were far more prevalent, such as copying or moving files (76.86% in 2021; 78.26% in 2023), installing software (74.61%; 72.33%) and using word processing software (75.66%; 68.57%). By contrast, advanced spreadsheet functions were used by 29.11% of young people in 2021 and 26.02% in 2023.

The available data indicate that basic digital competences are widespread among young people in Austria, while more advanced digital skills are less evenly distributed. Most young people reach at least a basic level across core competence domains, particularly in communication, collaboration and problem-solving. However, the share of young people with above-basic digital skills is lower and declined between the two available observation years, while a non-negligible minority continues to display low or narrow digital skills. Advanced and practice-oriented activities, such as programming or the use of complex software functions, are considerably less common than routine computer tasks. Given the limited time coverage and the absence of regional data, these findings provide only a snapshot rather than a long-term assessment of digital skills among young people in Austria.

> One expert informs that it is not uncommon for young people to have no access to a laptop, printer, USB stick, or even an email address, consequently facing problems when searching for an apprenticeship or job. It can be well assumed that without digital practice, the related digital skills cannot be easily acquired.

3.7. Synthesis of core patterns

Across the analytical dimensions covered in this section, several consistent and mutually reinforcing patterns emerge. First, labour market outcomes among young people in Austria display a strong and persistent education gradient: low educational attainment (ISCED 0–2) is systematically associated with lower employment rates, higher unemployment, elevated NEET risks, and substantially higher exposure to poverty, material and social deprivation, and housing cost overburden. These disadvantages persist across economic cycles, indicating structural rather than cyclical exclusion mechanisms.

Second, disability and activity limitations constitute a cross-cutting risk factor intersecting with educational and labour market disadvantage. Young people with disabilities face markedly lower labour market participation, higher inactivity, and substantial employment gaps compared with their peers without limitations. These disparities have not narrowed over time and point to limited inclusiveness of mainstream education, training and employment pathways.

Third, vulnerability is territorially concentrated. Vienna consistently records less favourable outcomes than the national average across employment, unemployment, long-term unemployment, NEET rates, poverty, material and social deprivation, and housing affordability. This indicates that urban context intensifies cumulative disadvantage, even within a national labour market characterised by relatively strong aggregate performance.

Fourth, gendered pathways shape the manifestation of vulnerability. Young women are more exposed to inactivity, part-time employment and care-related constraints, while young men face higher risks of early school leaving, unemployment and labour market discouragement. Gender differences do not operate independently, but interact with education, family context and territorial location.

Finally, housing affordability operates as a compounding factor, particularly for low-income and unemployed young people. High housing cost overburden constrains labour market participation, delays transitions to independent living and reinforces existing patterns of social exclusion, especially in urban areas.

These patterns point to cumulative, persistent and territorially embedded forms of disadvantage among young people in Austria. Youth vulnerability is not driven by a lack of overall labour demand, but by structural segmentation and insufficient coordination between education, employment, social and health-related systems.

3.8 Behind the Numbers: Experts' insights

3.8.1 Who is "vulnerable"? Beyond simple risk groups

Both experts stress that youth vulnerability in Austria is not defined by a single category (such as "migrant background" or "low education") but by cumulative disadvantages in family resources, education, housing, and mental load. This reinforces the report's finding that poverty and exclusion among 15–29-year-olds are structurally embedded rather than cyclical. One expert describes "vulnerable" youth primarily as those from socio-economically weak households, where limited income is stretched across several children and parents often have low formal education, confirming that educational disadvantage is "strongly inherited" in Austria. The other expert, working in streetwork, highlights youth who "have no place in society" and are expected to be inconspicuous and fully adapted, even though this contradicts the developmental phase of adolescence, illustrating how social norms can clash with young people's realities.

These perspectives nuance the statistical portrait of "youth at risk of poverty or social exclusion" by showing how material disadvantage interacts with invisible constraints such as cramped housing, care responsibilities, and emotional stress. For example, one counsellor recalls a highly motivated apprentice living with multiple siblings in a very small flat, doing homework at a shared kitchen table covered with food stains, and regularly forgetting assignments. This concretely illustrates the report's evidence that housing conditions and household resources significantly shape educational performance and long-term labour-market chances.

3.8.2 Education: abundant offers, difficult navigation

Statistically, Austria appears to provide a dense and diversified education system, with a strong vocational pillar, rising tertiary attainment, and higher participation rates in education and training in Vienna than nationally. Both experts confirm that Vienna in particular offers a "remarkably broad" range of schools, programmes, production schools, youth coaching and job-coaching

services, and career fairs. However, they insist that the main problem is not the lack of provision, but young people's ability to find and use the "right" option: families often lack overview, pupils and students are overwhelmed by choice, and existing services remain surprisingly unknown to those who need them most.

Concrete examples sharpen this contrast. A careers adviser notes that even at universities and universities of applied sciences, students rarely use alumni networks or strategic internship planning, despite these being powerful tools for transitions into work. She describes the "cross-studying" trend (first a general academic bachelor, then a more applied master at a university of applied sciences) as a strategy to maximise labour-market chances, but one that presupposes good information, planning skills, and often parental guidance - resources not equally available to all. In compulsory schooling, both experts see that young people with cognitive or learning difficulties are squeezed by high speed and low error tolerance: the system differentiates between "normal" and "disabled" but overlooks those "in between" who need more time yet are too capable for sheltered workshops. This fills in the mechanisms behind the report's observation that low-educated youth remain structurally disadvantaged despite the expansion of higher education.

3.8.3 Transitions to work: skills, networks and emotional resilience

The quantitative analysis shows a strong education gradient in youth employment, high NEET rates in Vienna, and particularly weak outcomes for low-educated or disabled youth. From practice, the experts add three cross-cutting elements that help explain these patterns:

1. knowledge of the labour market and application strategies,
2. access to social networks, and
3. psychological resilience in the face of rejection.

A youth job counsellor observes that even academically trained young adults often lack basic application know-how: they copy AI-generated CVs and letters that do not match their real vocabulary or experience, struggle to interpret job descriptions, and underestimate the number of applications needed, sometimes believing that ten applications are "a lot" when 150 may be realistic in saturated fields such as car mechanics in Vienna. This provides a micro-level explanation for the report's finding that higher formal education in Vienna does not automatically translate into smooth labour-market integration.

Both experts underline the central role of informal networks. Many companies still recruit "via friends and acquaintances" and ask explicitly for recommendations, which benefits young people whose families have strong labour-market ties and disadvantages those whose parents are unemployed, in precarious work, or unfamiliar with Austrian employment structures. At the same time, some adolescents hesitate to use parents' or relatives' contacts because they want to "make it on their own", reinforcing existing inequalities when others do leverage family networks.

A less visible but crucial factor is emotional resilience. One expert emphasised that repeated non-responses to applications (no feedback at all, not even a rejection) put a heavy strain on young people's mental health, regardless of education level. They note that many can handle a clear rejection ("at least I was seen"), but struggle when their efforts seem to "disappear into a void", which can lead to withdrawal from job search activities and deepen NEET risks documented in the statistics.

3.8.4 Poverty, care obligations and "hidden work"

The country report shows elevated risks of poverty, material and social deprivation, and housing cost overburden among low-educated, unemployed, and low-income youth, particularly in Vienna. The expert interviews translate these figures into lived experience. Both experts encounter young people with no laptop, printer, USB stick or even email address, making standard requirements such as online applications, CV uploads, or digital homework without support very difficult or even impossible. This adds a qualitative layer to the digital-access indicators, underlining that "basic internet use" at population level can coexist with severe equipment gaps in the most vulnerable households.

Moreover, one expert highlights a phenomenon largely absent from official statistics: reversed parentification, where children and adolescents act as interpreters, case handlers and informal social workers for their families. She describes 15- to 18-year-olds who accompany parents to offices, courts and social services, fill in complex forms, negotiate with employers, or even manage urgent legal and financial crises such as wrongful debt enforcement. While these responsibilities generate sophisticated "care" and organisational skills (valuable but rarely recognised as competences), they also drain time and energy from schooling and formal training, helping to explain why some young people struggle to meet attendance, homework and performance expectations despite high motivation.

3.8.5 Territory and time: mobility, rural–urban contrasts and labour-market norms

The statistical analysis shows that Vienna concentrates many disadvantages (higher unemployment, NEET rates, poverty and housing stress) while rural regions face mobility constraints. The interviews provide a more nuanced geography. One expert notes that in parts of Lower Austria or Burgenland, missing a bus can mean waiting three hours for the next connection, whereas in Vienna an underground train arrives every few minutes. This explains why, as the country report notes, poor public transport in rural areas creates objective mobility barriers, while urban youth face more "subjective" barriers such as not being able to afford a travel pass or having to deal with parental worries about long commutes to unknown districts.

While in rural areas it is common for 15- or 16-year-olds to do summer jobs and gain valuable work experience, this is less often the case in Vienna. In particular, young people with a migration

background often miss this opportunity because they spend the entire summer holidays of nine weeks visiting their families in their countries of origin.

Streetwork experience from a semi-rural region shows that young people often work informally on building sites or in other casual jobs without contracts, combining this with intermittent school attendance or long periods of "waiting" between opportunities. Such activities remain invisible in the standard labour-market statistics but shape young people's self-image as "already working", even when they are legally and socially unprotected. Both experts also draw attention to shifting labour-market norms: while older generations expected to stay in one company until retirement, young people now face an environment where changing jobs every few years is seen as normal or even necessary for career progression, yet are still judged harshly when they cannot demonstrate uninterrupted, linear CVs.

Finally, both stress that time and relational continuity are crucial success factors across settings: sustainable progress for vulnerable youth in school, training, or work requires stable relationships with trusted adults, patient accompaniment, and realistic expectations about learning and adaptation speed. This directly supports the report's conclusion that Austria's challenge is less the absence of institutions and more the coordination, accessibility, and responsiveness of existing systems for those who are already "furthest from" standard trajectories.

4. Solutions

The analysis of statistical data presented above indicates that youth vulnerability in Austria is not primarily driven by insufficient overall labour demand or the absence of policy instruments, but by persistent structural segmentation and limited coordination between existing systems. Austria disposes of a comparatively well-developed education, training, employment and social support infrastructure; however, disadvantaged young people often fail to benefit fully from these systems due to fragmented interfaces, institutional thresholds and cumulative risk factors.

In this context, the scope for intervention lies less in the creation of new standalone measures and more in improving coordination, accessibility and responsiveness within existing frameworks. Solutions therefore focus on strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation between education providers, labour market institutions, social services and health-related actors, with particular attention to young people facing multiple and overlapping disadvantages.

"We lack a platform that connects apprentice trainers to share insights on challenges faced with young people, but also effective strategies."

Priority areas for action include improved identification and outreach to vulnerable groups, especially low-educated young people, young people with disabilities, and those exposed to poverty and housing insecurity. Enhanced coordination between education and labour market actors is essential to support smoother transitions from school to work, particularly for young people at risk of early school leaving or prolonged inactivity. Equally important is the need to reduce institutional fragmentation by facilitating information flows, referral mechanisms and joint approaches across policy domains.

The insights from the expert interviews highlight aspects not easily understood by analysing statistical data. Many vulnerable young people might thrive by overcoming educational and personal challenges through readily available structural and personal support. Their active engagement with resources like job coaching and technical assistance should be facilitated by accessible digital equipment and comprehensive awareness of existing aid services. Rather than rigid societal expectations, a focus on individualized learning paces and performance, combined with supportive environments that are understanding of the learning curve for all youth, including those transitioning from longer periods of unemployment, would enable successful integration. The experts highlighted the benefit of intermediate support forms within the regular labour market, fostering a sense of belonging and mainstream success, rather than separate projects. For students, particularly those from academic upper secondary schools, successful transitions are greatly enhanced through sustained trust-based relationships and tailored support. In Vienna, strengthening advocacy and information dissemination for existing support structures empowers young people to fully utilize these resources.

Schools are tasked with education, yet increasingly bear upbringing responsibilities too, leaving little time for either. This blurring of boundaries demands better networking, intensified parent

work, and cooperation across actors, rather than rigid separation. There is some progress in Vienna to this end through emerging collaborations, but this needs time and stable funding amid budget cuts. It needs to be understood that a shared societal responsibility for the support of vulnerable youth is essential!

Within the COOPOWER project framework, this country report provides the analytical groundwork for the development of Local Cooperation Incubators, the Transnational Hub and other related project activities. The evidence presented is intended to support informed reflection, mutual learning and the design of context-sensitive cooperation models rather than the implementation of new pilot interventions at national level. By contributing its analytical perspective, Austria supports transnational exchange on how existing systems can be better aligned to prevent long-term youth exclusion.

5. Conclusions

This country report has examined the situation of young people in Austria through a multidimensional lens, covering education, labour market participation, health, poverty and social exclusion, housing and digital inclusion. The analysis demonstrates that, despite Austria's overall favourable labour market performance, significant and persistent disparities affect specific groups of young people.

The findings underline that youth vulnerability in Austria is cumulative and structurally embedded. Disadvantages related to low educational attainment, disability, territorial concentration and gender interact across policy domains and over time, limiting effective access to education, employment and social protection for certain groups. These challenges are not episodic but reflect enduring patterns of segmentation within otherwise well-functioning systems.

From a project perspective, these results confirm the relevance of Austria's participation in COOPOWER as a context where the challenge is not system absence, but system accessibility and coordination. Austria's experience highlights the importance of integrated approaches that bridge institutional boundaries and address overlapping risks faced by young people.

By contributing analytical insights and participating in transnational exchange, Austria can support collective learning on how existing education, employment and social support systems can be better aligned to prevent long-term exclusion. The Austrian case thus offers valuable lessons for other partner countries on the limits of sectoral policy responses and the potential of coordinated, inclusive governance arrangements.

"It's not always about solving problems but rather exploring options in different situations. Sometimes, it's important to be able to tolerate and endure challenges."

6. References

Primary statistical source: European Commission, Eurostat. (2024). *Eurostat database*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Two expert interviews conducted with national and local stakeholders in Austria (2025). The interviews were carried out within the framework of the COOPOWER project and were used exclusively for contextual validation purposes.