

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS AREAS OF THE X SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING:

Social protection and social security (including social protection floors)

National legal framework

1. What are the legal provisions in your country that recognizes the right to social security and social protection, including non-contributory and contributory old-age benefits? Do they have a constitutional, legislative or executive foundation?

*Austria has a comprehensive system of social security. and is characterized by a mixture of centralized and decentralized elements operating at two levels: The **benefits granted according to social insurance law** (comprising pensions, health, accident and unemployment, based on regular employment and mainly covering also the worker's dependents) – which are the responsibility of the central government level – predominate, as do benefits without means testing for the entire resident population (**universal benefits**). Regional authorities (the provinces, local authorities, town and city councils) are responsible above all for part of the health care system, housing, most social services, child care facilities and minimum income benefits.*

Austria reformed its pension system in 2004. The Law on the Harmonization of Austrian Pension Schemes, which came into force in January 2005, provides for a uniform pension law for all professional groups.

In addition, there are efforts to adapt the retirement age for women to that of men. It will be increased by six months a year from 1 January 2024 and harmonization will be completed by 2033. The reform also introduced a bonus / penalty system for deferred and early retirement.

Availability

2. What steps have been taken to guarantee universal coverage, ensuring that every older person has access to social security and social protection schemes including non-contributory, contributory and survivor old-age pensions, to ensure an adequate, standard of living in older age?

The quantity and quality of social services varies across regions, particularly between urban and rural areas. In terms of provision of services, some local governments run social services, while other services are outsourced to non-profit organizations, associations or private providers. The public sector plays a dominant role in the area of homes for the elderly and nursing homes.

3. What steps have been taken to ensure that every older person has access to social security and social protection schemes which guarantee them access to adequate and affordable health and care and support services for independent living in older age?

Coordination between the various providers and provinces in the provision of these services remains a problem. While most cash benefits and healthcare services are legal entitlements in Austria, the claim to the majority of social services, most of which are the responsibility of the federal states, does not appear to exist.

Adequacy

4. What steps have been taken to ensure the levels of social security and social protection payments are adequate for older persons to have access to an adequate standard of living, including adequate access to health care and social assistance?

There is a needs-tested minimum income scheme, which is a subordinate safety net of last resort within the social security system. These benefits include, for example, assistance with housing.

Accessibility

5. What steps have been taken to ensure older persons have adequate and accessible information on available social security and social protection schemes and how to claim their entitlements?
6. The design and implementation of normative and political framework related to social security and social protection benefits included an effective and meaningful participation of older persons?

The Austrian Senior Council is the official representation of older persons and has the same status as social partners, in all matters affecting the interests of older persons. It is a mechanism for dialogue between political decision makers and the representatives of older persons to ensure that the concerns of older persons and the proposals on how to address them are brought to the attention of the Government. This body helps to ensure the political participation of older persons.

Equality and non-discrimination

7. Which are the measures adopted to ensure equitable access by older persons to social security and social protection, paying special attention to groups in vulnerable situation?

Accountability

8. What mechanisms are in place to ensure social security and social protection schemes are effective and accountable?

The sustainability of pensions in Austria is monitored by the Pension Commission. The Commission has been set up under the General Social Insurance Act and has been publishing reports every three years since 2007 on the long-term funding prospects of statutory pension insurance until 2050. The Commission's task is to propose sustainable reform measures if it identifies financing problems.

9. What judicial and non-judicial mechanisms are in place for older persons to complain and seek redress for denial of their right to social security and social protection?

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