

Open youth work

Infosheet

Open youth work in Austria is a field of action of social work with a social-territorial connection and a political, pedagogical and sociocultural mission. It supports and encourages young people on their way to adult independence and maturity. The accessible and voluntary access to open youth work services facilitates the acquisition of educational content that is important for day-to-day competence and social skills. Open youth work therefore makes a significant contribution to social integration and participation, particularly for educationally and socially disadvantaged young people.

Open youth work also offers a wide range of technically differentiated and tried and tested services and innovative concepts and measures to help develop the community.

Open youth work has various different names: youth centre, youth club, youth café and mobile youth work. The term “(youth) street work” is also used as the combination of space and outreach work can be found in both open youth work and youth street work. Street work is often associated with being more problem-oriented and is part of child and youth welfare while open youth work is primarily defined as educational and sociocultural. Another facet of youth work is “park supervision”, as this plays an important role for youth work in Vienna in particular. Youth and district centres show the transition of youth work to community work or social-territorial work.

Specialists from various social pedagogical and pedagogical fields work in open youth work settings. The interdisciplinary nature and the introduction of life skills is an important success factor in open youth work.

Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in Austria (bOJA)

The Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in Austria (bOJA) has represented the field of action of open youth work since 2009. bOJA sees itself as a centre of competence for open youth work, as a service and networking centre, as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and information and a specialist unit for the development of quality in the field of open youth work.

bOJA works closely with the umbrella organisations and national networks centres of competence for open youth work in the provinces. These province structures are represented by the 17-member bOJA board. bOJA is predominantly funded by the Federal Chancellery.

In Austria, bOJA currently comprises 341 supporters of open youth work with a total of 637 location facilities. The majority of the facilities (87%) are youth centres and youth clubs, which mainly work in specific locations. Thirteen percent of the facilities operate mobile open youth work. Of the 341 supporters of open youth work, 72% are associations, 25% municipalities and 3% sectarian supporters. They are primarily funded by provinces and municipalities.

The open youth work facilities in Austria employ around 2,050 specialists who reach an average of 250,000 young people per year with their work.

Further information

- Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work in Austria www.boja.at/english/
- Quality handbook for open youth work (5th edition, 2017, in German only)
www.boja.at/fileadmin/download/Projekte/Uploads_Qualitaet/1_Handbuch_Qualitaet_OJA_2017.pdf
- Open youth work in Austria. An overview. (2018, in German only)
www.boja.at/fileadmin/download/Projekte/Uploads_Qualitaet/bOJA_FF_web2.pdf

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The task of the Youth Competence Centre is to implement and coordinate the Austrian Youth Strategy and provide data and facts on youth policy and youth work. Among other ways, this is done in the form of infosheets as short and concise overviews of individual topics.

If you have any suggestions about the infosheets, please contact jugendstrategie@bka.gv.at