



South-East Styria; Photo Credit: Schiffer/Symbol



# AUSTRIA

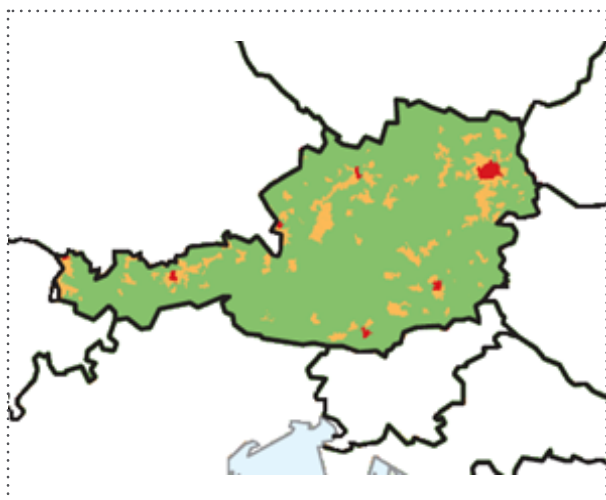
## INSIGHT PAPER

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## RURALITY (1)

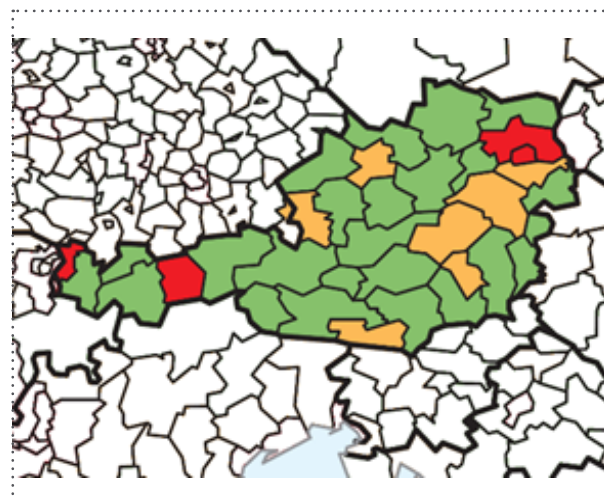
Degree of urbanisation for local administrative units level 2 (LAU2)



- Cities
- Towns and suburbs
- Rural Areas

Source: Eurostat, JRC and European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy, May 2016

Urban-rural typology for NUTS level 3 regions



- **Predominantly urban regions**  
(rural population is less than 20% of the total population)
- **Intermediate regions**  
(rural population is between 20% and 50% of the total population)
- **Predominantly rural regions**  
(rural population is 50% or more of the total population)

Source: Eurostat, JRC, EFGS, REGIO-GIS, December 2016

## DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

30,6%

Share of people  
living in cities

30,3%

Share of people living  
in towns and suburbs

39,1%

Share of people  
living in rural areas

Source: Eurostat, 2017

## GEOGRAPHY

Austria (*Österreich*) is a democratic republic comprised of 9 Federal States (*Bundesländer*) with a population of 8,822,267 residents (as of 01/2018). The capital Vienna is Austria's most densely populated province with 4,500 residents per km<sup>2</sup>. Austria is bordered by Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Italy.

At the beginning of the 2017, 24.3 percent of the Austrian population was 60 years or older. Children and adolescents up to 14 years accounted for 14.4 percent of the population. The share of working age population remained at 61.3 percent. The old age and young age dependency ratios were 39.6 and 23.5, respectively. The Austrian population is growing almost exclusively through immigration. Every year there are more people migrating to Austria than leaving the country.

Austria covers an area of 83,879 km<sup>2</sup> of which almost 80 percent is rural. Of the total area, 32 percent is agricultural land while forests cover 44 percent. 66 percent of the total population live in rural areas. Rural depopulation is an increasing problem in Austria and regions are more and more facing the negative effects of this development. The challenges are to:

- i) strengthen agriculture, forestry, the economy and the environment;
- ii) decentralise administration;
- iii) improve living in rural areas (including tourism, education);
- iv) foster infrastructure, mobility and digitalisation; and
- v) foster social responsibility.

## RURALITY (2)

13%

Share of people at risk of  
poverty or social exclusion in  
rural areas, **2017**

0,2%

Share of people aged 16 and  
over who reported unmet  
needs for health care in the  
previous 12 months due to  
expense, distance to travel or  
length of waiting list in rural  
areas, **2017**

3%

Unemployment rate, persons  
aged 15–64, in rural areas,  
**2017**

5,7%

Share of young people aged  
18–24 neither in employment  
nor in education or training  
(NEETs) in rural areas, **2017**

Source: Eurostat

## NATIONAL POLICIES RELATING TO RURAL MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Austrian transport strategy evolved over the last 40 years from a sectorial, demand-fulfillment-driven transport strategy towards an integrated multi-modal, demand-management-driven transport strategy including some environmental issues. Already in the year 1991, a document describing the Austrian transport policy named “Das Österreichische Gesamtverkehrskonzept 1991 (**Austrian Transport Masterplan 1991**)” was published. In this document the overall objectives of the Austrian transport policy were laid out and a catalogue of measures to reach these goals were listed. In the year 1996 a new document was published by the Austrian government, which integrated the mode-specific master plans into a common intermodal Austrian Master Plan.

The updated **Transport Master Plan for Austria 2013** describes Austria’s transport strategies, objectives and policies up to 2025 and beyond for all transport modes and operators. The plan’s goal is to develop a safe, efficient and environmentally-friendly transport system designed to meet Austria’s future social and economic needs while minimizing any negative impacts. A key objective is decoupling the positive benefits of transport from its impacts such as noise, pollution, and accidents. An important prerequisite is facilitating constructive cooperation among all stakeholders. The transport plan is being implemented using a package of strategies, policies and programs. It addresses eight dimensions including modern infrastructure; and the future of public transport and security. It assigns special priority to technology and innovation by supporting targeted research for development of new mobility solutions.

The framework for the regional and spatial development in Austria is undergoing radical change as a result of the European integration process, the internationalisation or globalisation, the migration and integration of people of other cultural backgrounds; issues which need to be addressed in regional policy, too. Furthermore, the demographic change (ageing of the population) will – in different ways – pose new challenges for regions also in Austria. In addition, regional and spatial planning policy needs to find solutions to our global challenges, for example to climate change and the scarcity of fossil resources. Therefore, the new **Rural Development Programme 2014-2020** further enhances the self-reliance of the regions. For the first time, social services are also funded.

The main priorities of the programme are the areas of environment and investment as well as competence and innovation. The programme priorities ensure that the agricultural sector remains innovative, professional, and competitive. In this context, attention is paid to ensuring that domestic holdings operate in a particularly environmentally-friendly and sustainable manner. Numerous measures counteract climate change and high resource consumption.

Austria’s demographic development is characterised by a marked growth of the big cities and simultaneous population decline in peripheral rural regions. Every year, rural areas lose over 5,000 well-educated people to the Vienna area alone. If this trend continues, this will bring about a brain drift of over 50,000 persons in the next ten years. The government programme of the Federal Government therefore provides the first **Austrian Master Plan for Rural Areas**. This Master Plan was developed in a broad-based process for stakeholder and citizen participation. The topics addressed showed great diversity as well and reflected the diversity of rural areas: They covered agriculture and forestry just as much as the economy, infrastructure and mobility, and the digital village.

Austria has one of the best health care systems in the world, and access to medical services can be considered exemplary in international terms. **Health care in Austria** is characterised by the cooperation of a large number of actors. Competencies in the health care sector are generally regulated by law. The main actors with regard to health at federal level are the Austrian Parliament (which consists of the National Council and the Federal Council), the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, the social security institutions and advocacy groups (social partners: employers’ and employees’ representatives, as well as professional associations). As far as legislation and its enforcement are concerned, the Federal Government plays a central role; however, many competencies are delegated to the provinces or to the social security institutions. The Federal Ministry of Health prepares laws, is responsible for the protection of the public health as well as overall health policy and functions as facilitator between the different players in the health care system, and also as decision maker and supervisory authority.

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The transport agendas are distributed among different institutions and local authorities. Therefore, one field of action is **to strengthen decentralisation**.

From the side of **the Federal Government**, the BMVIT (Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology) is responsible for the basic orientation. The BMF (Federal Ministry of Finance) is responsible for all tax aspects of the transport sector; the BMI (Federal Ministry of the Interior) is responsible for almost all traffic controls, speed controls and for technical roadside inspections; and the BMNT (Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism) is responsible for implementing the legal framework conditions in the environmental area.

**The Federal States** are responsible for a range of tasks from road construction and maintenance to the implementation of environmental regulations.

The **District Municipal Authority Offices** acts as an approval authority for some transport infrastructure projects.

The **Municipalities** are particularly important as providers of local transport, respectively, in their role in transport networks and associations.

Especially in the area of infrastructure, responsibilities of the Federal Ministries and the Federal States are outsourced to **public-sector companies**. For example, ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG (maintenance, construction, modernisation and operation of most railway lines), ASFINAG (construction and maintenance of highways), FFG (Austrian Research Promotion Agency), AustriaTech (provider of technology policy measures). The coordination of the various **public agencies** whose work has an impact on spatial planning and development is the responsibility of the BMNT, which is assisted by the office of the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK).

## ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Rural areas are characterised by an **extremely high individual motorisation rate**.

**Public transport** is mainly used for school transport, to work, shopping and leisure activities. Such buses are mainly organised through contracts between a village and a public transport operator. In rural areas with no train connection, also commuter buses are often provided. Good accessibility in public transport is usually tied to the direct proximity to the centers and a correspondingly dense settlement structure. However, around one fifth of the rural population (without their own car) are dependent on external help in satisfying their needs (especially ride-sharing).

Especially in rural areas, **call/dial systems** are in place. These buses are services with licensed routing and defined stops, circulating only after a call to the requested destination or circulating without a call according to fixed time schedules and on a fixed route.

When a call comes in, the dial-on bus may deviate from the route and may also drive to the 'requested stop' and afterwards return to the original route. Hailed shared taxis circulate after a call with a fixed time-schedule and for a fixed price to a requested destination within a certain operation area. The taxis and stops need to be labeled as a hailed shared taxi (or hailed shared stop).

Finally, the **Master Plan for Rural Areas** states that reliable local public transport is indispensable for the sustainable development of rural areas as living and working places. The development of mobility networks between small and medium-sized rural centers is an important future project. In rural areas, there should be the possibility of achieving individual day-to-day destinations in combination with different mobility options.



## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The legal basis for the organisation of public transport is the **Austrian Federal Law concerning the organisation of local and regional public transport** (Öffentlicher Personennah- und Regionalverkehrsgesetz 1999 – ÖPNRV-G 1999). It regulates in addition to the organisation especially the financial basis for the operation of public transport in (but not the infrastructure).

Various **integrated transport alliances** (Verkehrsverbünde) offer the passenger (under the application of a uniform tariff system) the benefit of a joint ticket at a discounted rate covering all involved scheduled transport operators (rail; public and private bus operators; and municipal transport companies). Overall, there are currently eight such integrated transport alliances in Austria that, from the territory covered, mostly align with the Federal States boundaries.

These alliances are cooperative institutions by virtue of private law contracts between the (alliance financing) authorities on the one hand and the regional authorities and the individual transport companies on the other hand.

The transport companies participating in the respective transport alliance may be organised into a cooperative association of transport companies, which is then responsible for the implementation of the alliance measures.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the ÖPNRV G-1999, it is a basic function of the **Federal Government** to ensure that a basic range of public and regional transport is made available. This is performed through the conclusion of transport service contracts with the individual rail passenger transport companies concerning provision of public services.



Photo by Joss Woodhead on Unsplash

## FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Apart from European funding, such as Horizon 2020 or Interreg Europe, Austria provides a wide range of financial support to mobility services in rural areas at national, regional and municipal level. The following examples refer to national funding.

One of the most important programmes to provide financial support is **klimaaktiv mobil**. It is the Austrian Action Programme for Mobility Management to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; to promote environmentally friendly and energy efficient mobility; and to stimulate

new innovative business opportunities and green jobs. klimaaktiv mobil is undertaken by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism, and supported by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns and the Austrian Association of Municipalities as part of the implementation of the Austrian Climate Strategy and the EU Climate and Energy Package. klimaaktiv mobil provides a national framework to motivate and support the following to develop and implement measures to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from related transport activities:

## FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

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companies; public services; cities; municipalities and regions; leisure and tourism operators; construction companies and real estate developers; schools and youth groups ([www.klimaaktiv.at/mobilitaet.html](http://www.klimaaktiv.at/mobilitaet.html)).

Furthermore, the Research Program **Mobility of the Future** is undertaken by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, and focuses on the search for integrated solutions designed to help build the mobility system of the future, a system that must balance social, environmental and economic needs.

The focus of the newly launched **Zero Emission Mobility** programme, undertaken also by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, is aimed at projects related to 100 percent electrification of vehicles as well as the development and testing of intelligent e-mobility infrastructure. One focus is on integrating electrified, automated, publicly available mobility services into urban and rural transport services ([www.ffg.at/zero-emission-mobility](http://www.ffg.at/zero-emission-mobility)).



This integrated approach helps create systems that contribute significantly to ensuring mobility while minimizing the negative impacts of transport. The complex interactions inherent in transport systems require interdisciplinary research approaches aimed at developing both technological and social-organizational innovations. Thus the programme focuses on new markets, generating solutions that respond closely to the essential needs of society ([www.ffg.at/programme/mobilitaet-der-zukunft](http://www.ffg.at/programme/mobilitaet-der-zukunft)).



## OTHER INFORMATION

- Through the integrated transport alliance, Austria was the first country worldwide to have a comprehensive tariff system covering all public transport services.
- Since 2007 klimaaktiv mobil supported more than 8,400 mobility projects with EUR 89 million. It helps to save 640,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

### Best practice example 01: SAMO: Soft mobility offers in the model destination Werfenweng

Werfenweng is located in a tranquil high alpine plateau surrounded by beautiful nature and majestic mountain peaks and can be easily accessed by train. In the model community for gentle mobility lots of soft mobility measures have been implemented to go towards a car-free holiday. Werfenweng is a founder member of the "Alpine Pearls" association, which is an amalgamation of 25 holiday villages in the alpine region. They all have committed themselves to environmentally-friendly travel. Focus is put on environmentally-friendly railway transfer first and foremost.

### Best practice example 02: GO-MOBIL: A PPP for public transport in rural areas in Carinthia

Since 1999, GO-MOBIL is a successful mobility model for (currently 36) rural communities with inadequate public regional transport in Carinthia. It is a targeted public private partnership (PPP) model whose functionality has been impressively proven over the years. It leads to a noticeable structural improvement in the communities, is available to all citizens and guests within the municipal boundaries and / or the service area. In addition to the municipalities, local businesses also contribute to the costs. GO-Mobil Certification supports as an umbrella organisation the communities during the introduction and operation ([www.gomobil-kaernten.at](http://www.gomobil-kaernten.at)).

### Best practice example 03: GUSTmobil: Part of the public transport in Graz surrounding

On behalf of all 36 municipalities in the Graz-Umgebung (Graz surrounding) district, the Regional Management Metropolitan Area of Styria commissioned a district-wide micro-mobility study in 2016.



Photo from Envato Elements

Moreover, vacationers arriving by car are asked to hand-in their car keys for the time being on holidays in Werfenweng. In turn, guests have the possibility to use the "soft mobility" concept, which stands for eco-friendly travel. SAMO enables guests to either arrive by bus or train. A shuttle service from the train station to the accommodation facilities in the centre of Werfenweng guarantees comfortable holidays. Even those arriving by car can leave it behind after arrival and take advantage of the SAMO services during their holidays. The SAMO concept includes not only free shuttle services, but also offers all kinds of electric vehicles which can be used for free during the stay in Werfenweng ([www.werfenweng.eu/SAMO](http://www.werfenweng.eu/SAMO)).

A year later, 29 communities started using the common system called GUSTmobil. GUSTmobil works in a similar way to a collective taxi with the aim to foster both the local accessibility, as well as the connection to the public transport network. It therefore allows both a drive to the nearest doctor or supermarket in their own community, as well as access to regional bus or suburban trains on the nearest main traffic nodes. Over 1,700 breakpoints are available and form the micro-public transport network of the service area. Around 10 regional taxi operators provide fixed service vehicles or standby vehicles that are used as needed (<https://istmobil.at>).

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND MINISTRIES ADDRESSING RURAL AREAS

TITLE	ROLE
<b>BMVIT</b>	Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Innovation und Technologie ( <b>Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology</b> ) – in charge of railways, transport policy, and the postal system
<b>BMNT</b>	Bundesministerium für Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus ( <b>Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism</b> ) – responsible for agriculture, forestry, environment and water management, plus energy and tourism
<b>BMI</b>	Bundesministerium für Inneres ( <b>Federal Ministry of the Interior</b> ) – responsible for civilian protection, citizenship, elections and law enforcement agencies
<b>BMF</b>	Bundesministerium für Finanzen ( <b>Federal Ministry of Finance</b> ) – executive authority for finance for Austria
<b>Landeshauptleute</b>	9 Landeshauptleute ( <b>9 Federal State Governors</b> )
<b>Gemeindebund</b>	Österreichischer Gemeindebund ( <b>Austrian Association of Municipalities</b> )
<b>Städtebund</b>	Österreichischer Städtebund ( <b>Austrian Association of Cities and Towns</b> ) – the principal task is to represent the interests of local government in negotiations over the sharing of budgetary funds and taxing rights between the federal government, the provinces and local authorities
<b>ÖROK</b>	Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz ( <b>Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning</b> ) – established to coordinate spatial development at the national level
<b>FFG</b>	Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft ( <b>Austrian Promotion Agency</b> ) – for the promotion of research and innovation in the field of applied and industrial research
<b>WKÖ</b>	Wirtschaftskammern Österreichs ( <b>Austrian Economic Chambers</b> ) – functions as the federal parent organization for the nine State Chambers and 110 trade associations for different industries within Austria's system of economy
<b>AK</b>	Arbeiterkammer Österreich ( <b>Austrian Chamber of Labour</b> ) – represents the interests of 3 million Austrian employees and consumers
<b>VOR</b>	Verkehrsverbund Ost-Region ( <b>Transport alliance Eastern-Region</b> ) – covers Vienna and the surrounding areas of Lower Austria and northern Burgenland
<b>OÖV</b>	Oberösterreichischer Verkehrsverbund ( <b>Transport alliance Upper Austria</b> )
<b>SVV</b>	Salzburger Verkehrsverbund ( <b>Transport alliance Salzburg</b> )
<b>VVT</b>	Verkehrsverbund Tirol ( <b>Transport alliance Tyrol</b> )
<b>VVV</b>	Verkehrsverbund Vorarlberg ( <b>Transport alliance Vorarlberg</b> )
<b>VST</b>	Verkehrsverbund Steiermark ( <b>Transport alliance Styria</b> )
<b>VVK</b>	Verkehrsverbund Kärnten ( <b>Transport alliance Carinthia</b> )



## LINKS TO WEBSITES

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- Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Innovation und Technologie [www.bmvit.gv.at](http://www.bmvit.gv.at)
- Bundesministerium für Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus [www.bmnt.gv.at](http://www.bmnt.gv.at)
- Bundesministerium für Inneres [www.bmi.gv.at](http://www.bmi.gv.at)
- Bundesministerium für Finanzen [www.bmf.gv.at](http://www.bmf.gv.at)
- Österreichischer Gemeindebund <https://gemeindebund.at>
- Österreichischer Städtebund [www.staedtebund.gv.at](http://www.staedtebund.gv.at)
- Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz [www.oerok.gv.at](http://www.oerok.gv.at)
- Master Plan Rural Areas [www.bmnt.gv.at/land/laendl\\_entwicklung/zukunftsraum\\_land\\_masterplan/masterplan-laendlicher-raum.html](http://www.bmnt.gv.at/land/laendl_entwicklung/zukunftsraum_land_masterplan/masterplan-laendlicher-raum.html)
- Regional policy in Austria [www.bmnt.gv.at/english/agriculture/Regional-Policy/Regional-policy-in-Austria-.html](http://www.bmnt.gv.at/english/agriculture/Regional-Policy/Regional-policy-in-Austria-.html)
- Rural Development Programme [www.bmnt.gv.at/english/agriculture/Rural-development/New-Rural-Development-Programme.html](http://www.bmnt.gv.at/english/agriculture/Rural-development/New-Rural-Development-Programme.html)
- FFG – Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft [www.ffg.at](http://www.ffg.at)
- AEA – Austrian Energy Agency [www.energyagency.at](http://www.energyagency.at)

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