



# The Child- and Adolescent Health Strategy in Austria – strengthening children’s rights in health promotion and health care

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# Overview

1. Brief history of the Child- and Adolescent Health Strategy in Austria
2. Seven thematic areas of the strategy
3. The strategy and children's rights to play and participate in artistic activities in healthcare settings



# History of the strategy



- 2010: Austrian health ministry set up a process to develop the first „**Child health strategy**“
  - Aim: The sustainable improvement of child and adolescent health in Austria
  - **Health in all policies approach**, based on **determinants of health** and **children’s rights**
  - First strategy published in 2010 – several updates (2012, 2013, 2014)
  - From 2012: „Child and adolescent health strategy“
  - Consisted of 5 thematic areas

# History of the strategy



- 2016: Implementation of the **Coordination Centre for Child and Adolescent Health** and an **intersectoral Committee for Child and Adolescent Health**
  - Aim: Further development and implementation of the strategy
  - Updated strategy 2016
- 2021: **10 year-anniversary** with “mini updates“ of the thematic areas
  - The strategy is still relevant but needs to be revised in regard to new additional fields of action and additional objectives

## → 2024: New updated strategy

After a thorough revision of the strategy in 2022/2023 a new strategy has been published including **7 thematic areas**:

1. Societal framework
2. A healthy start in life
3. Healthy development
4. Living space for children and adolescents
5. Health Equity
6. Health care for children and adolescents
7. Health care for children and adolescents with specific illnesses



# 1: Societal Framework

*It is important to raise awareness in society regarding the special needs of children and young people.*

**Goal 1: Consider the needs of children and adolescents**

**Goal 2: Take cross-policy responsibility for health**

## 2: A healthy start in life

*Health promotion and prevention are more effective the earlier they begin.*

**Goal 3: Lay the foundations for a good start during pregnancy and birth**

**Goal 4: Set the course for long-term health in early childhood**





# 3: Healthy development

*All children and young people should have the same opportunities to grow up in the best possible way.*

**Goal 5: Strengthen the life skills and health literacy of children and adolescents**

**Goal 6: Understand education as a health-promoting factor**

**Goal 7: Enable and promote physical activity for children and adolescents**

**Goal 8: Enable and promote healthy eating among children and young people**



# 4: Living space for children and adolescents

*In order to grow up healthily, children need safe, appealing and easily accessible spaces in which the framework conditions enable healthy choices, regardless of social differences*

**Goal 9: Create settings that promote health**

**Goal 10: Enable climate-friendly mobility for children and young people**

**Goal 11: Plan and maintain open and natural spaces for children and young people**

**Goal 12: Promote child- and youth-friendly housing and building culture**

**Goal 13: Recognise and use digital space as an influencing factor for health**



# 4: Living space for children and adolescents

- Children and adolescents need **safe, appealing and easily accessible spaces**
- **Play, leisure and activity areas** to develop their full potential
  - learn about their strengths and abilities,
  - learn about their limits and how to deal with dangers
  - acquire the skills to deal with the realities of everyday life and social life
- Applies to **all settings**:
  - Everyday settings: nursery, schools, sports & leisure clubs, hospitals, doctors' practices,
  - Public spaces/ public transportation
- Architecture of buildings, mobility, open spaces need to **consider children and adolescents' needs**



Image: pixabay

## 5: Health equity

*Early identification of support needs is an important cornerstone for supporting children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those with health problems.*

**Goal 14: Ensure equal opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged children and adolescents**

**Goal 15: Ensure equal opportunities for disadvantaged children and adolescents in terms of health**

**Goal 16: Improve early detection and targeted support for children and adolescents**



# 6: Health care for children and adolescents

*The care of sick children and adolescents is guaranteed in Austria. However, there is still a need for optimisation in paediatric primary care and with regard to paediatric expertise in emergency care.*

**Goal 17: Involve children and adolescents in the organisation of care**

**Goal 18: Optimise pediatric primary care**

**Goal 19: Improve the availability of pediatric medicines**

**Goal 20: Strengthen pediatric expertise in emergency care**

**Goal 21: Ensure structured networking and co-operation between all institutions**

**Goal 22: Ensure the supply of medical, therapeutic and nursing professionals and nursing staff**

# 6: Health care for children and adolescents

## Goal 17: Involve children and adolescents in the organisation of care

- Participation and information are children's rights – also/especially in hospital settings
- EACH Charter – 10 points setting out rights of sick children and their families before, during and after hospitalisation
  - Includes: hospital admittance only if necessary, right to have parents with them, right for child adequate information,...
  - Article 7: Children shall have full opportunity for play, recreation and education suited to their age and condition and shall be in an environment designed, furnished, staffed and equipped to meet their needs



Image: Each Charter

# 6: Health care for children and adolescents

## Goal 17: Involve children and adolescents in the organisation of care

- Study on children's rights in hospitals shows main challenges for participation of children and adolescents are:
  - Lack of time
  - Language barriers
  - Developmental status of children
  - Involvement of parents
- Facilities and architecture are often not suitable to fully implement all of the points of the EACH charter
  - Too little space, not patient centered



Image: pixabay

(Gugglberger et al. 2022)

# 7: Health care for children and adolescents with specific illnesses

*Integrated care continues to be a challenge in Austria. This also applies to the area of child and adolescent psychiatric illnesses and for children and adolescents in need of therapeutic interventions.*

**Goal 23: Ensure care for children and adolescents with mental illnesses**

**Goal 24: Ensure care for children and adolescents with developmental disorders**

**Goal 25: Ensure care for children and adolescents with chronic illnesses**

**Goal 26: Improve the rehabilitation of children and adolescents**

**Goal 27: Expand paediatric hospice and palliative care**





# Children's rights to play and participate in artistic activities in healthcare settings

- Children and adolescents need spaces where they can **be themselves** to
  - learn about their strengths and abilities,
  - learn about their limits and how to deal with dangers
  - acquire the skills to deal with the realities of everyday life and social life
- **Healthcare settings are important**
  - during a difficult time, play and creativity is even more important
  - positive experiences within the hospital
  - play and creativity can support **communication** and **healing**
- Austrian strategy for children and adolescent health will support actors in various fields
  - But: more needs to be done in terms of children's rights

# Thank you for your attention

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