

Austria

Health System Review 2018

Health Systems in Transition series

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- Wide-ranging review of the Austrian health system
- Explores how the health system has adapted to recent challenges

On the occasion of Austria's EU Presidency, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies has released a new (HiT) health system review. It highlights reforms that aim to improve governance, increase healthy life expectancy and improve quality and efficiency of service delivery.

Health status improving but threatened by unhealthy lifestyles

The Austrian population has a good level of health. Life expectancy at birth (81.6 years) is increasing and above the EU average. Low amenable mortality rates indicate that health care is more effective than in most EU countries. Yet, the number of people dying from cardiovascular diseases and cancer is high compared to the EU28 average. Tobacco and alcohol consumption are declining among adolescents but represent the major health risk factors. Also rising obesity rates represent a major challenge.

Good access to care but growing inequalities

The Austrian health system provides good access to health care services. Austria's residents report the lowest levels of unmet need for medical care across the EU. Virtually the whole population is covered by social health insurance and enjoys a broad benefit basket. Yet, rising socioeconomic and regional imbalances may contribute to inequalities in accessing care. The number of physicians with a social insurance contract is stagnating while non contracted physicians are increasing.

Changing the model of care

The Austrian health system is relatively costly compared to EU average. It has a strong focus on inpatient care as characterized by high hospital utilization and imbalances in resource allocation between the hospital and ambulatory care sector. In recent years important steps have been taken to strengthen primary health care also by improving skill mix within the health workforce.

Containing costs and strengthening governance

Reforms aim to contain publicly financed health expenditure growth by imposing a global budget cap, reducing over-utilization of hospital care, and increasing transparency and accountability. Despite efforts to strengthen coordination and cooperation between different levels of government and self-governing bodies, the Austrian health system remains complex and fragmented in its organizational and financial structure (see figure 2.1 on the back).



FIGURE 4.3 Hospital discharges per 1 000 population in the EU, 2015

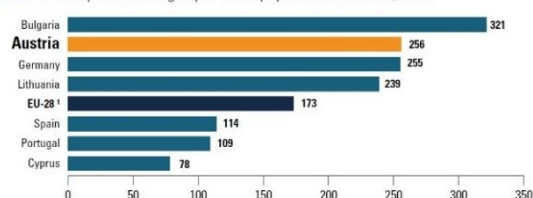
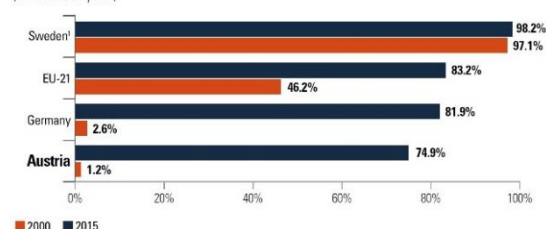


FIGURE 7.5 Share of cataract surgeries carried out as day cases, 2000 and 2015 (or nearest year)



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HiT health system reviews are country-based reports that provide a detailed description of a country's health system and of reform and policy initiatives in progress or under development. Up-to-date information on many countries and Austria, in particular, can be found on our Health Systems and Policy Monitor website at: <http://www.hspm.org>

The health system remains complex

The Austrian health system is complex and shaped by shared responsibilities between the federal and the Länder level. Many responsibilities have been delegated to self-governing bodies (social insurance and professional bodies of health service providers). Health care financing is mixed, with the state (federal and Länder level) and social insurance funds as the main contributor to the budget.

FIGURE 2.1 Organization of the Austrian Health System, 2017

