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| **European Semester 2016/2017 country fiche on disability** |
| **Austria** |  |
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| With comparative data provided by the ANED core team |

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](http://disability-europe.net/) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network support the development of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in the EU.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester from a disability perspective.

*Note:*

*The statistics provided in October 2016 are based on the EU-SILC 2014. This is the most recent microdata available to researchers for analysis from Eurostat. This report may be updated as new data becomes available.*

 

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# Summary of the overall situation and challenges

As reported in the 2015 ANED country fiche, three main aspects of Austrian policymaking remain relevant when discussing the overall situation of persons with disabilities in Austria:

First, the *general lack of specific data*[[1]](#footnote-2) on the living situation of persons with disabilities in Austria makes it hard to evaluate the overall situation as well as the effectiveness of programmes and measures. The evidence base is limited due to the fact that the data situation is quite incomplete. Definitions of ‘disability’ differ between data collection tools, legal frameworks and political practices (i.e. referring to different models of disability). Measures taken are often not seriously evaluated. E.g. the scarce data available on the effectives of the new rehabilitation benefit indicates distinct weaknesses of this new programme in the framework of EU2020 targets.

Second and intertwined with the first point, a main challenge in Austria still is to make persons with disabilities visible as a *distinct ‘target group’ for policymaking* – particularly in the field of employment, education, poverty reduction and social exclusion. There is a lack of disability mainstreaming in the Austrian National Reform Programme 2016 (NRP), where persons with disabilities are almost invisible.[[2]](#footnote-3) To ensure a sustainable inclusion, persons with disabilities need to be explicitly addressed in the NRP (and in the first place, addressed in the Commission’s Country Report and Country-Specific Recommendations) – regarding employment, education and social inclusion. Measures (e.g. to combat unemployment among young people and older people or to ensure tertiary education for young persons with disabilities) should explicitly be tailored to support this (heterogeneous) group.

Third, *federalism* inthe Austrian political system complicates responsibilities in policymaking in the field of disability policy. This is obvious in the context of employment for persons with disabilities where responsibilities are split up depending on the severity of disability. Implementing policy measures which refer both to the federal and to the regional level means there is a need to clarify content-related competencies and financial responsibilities, in practice leading in many cases to stalemate.

The interweaving of these main three challenges for policymaking in the field of disability policy in Austria hinders sustainable and efficient change with regard to the situation of persons with disabilities in areas relevant to the EU2020 priorities. ESF funds are not used to tackle these well-known problems.

In general, the current omnipresent political and public debate about refugees and migrants superimposes sustainable debates about persons with disabilities in Austria – e.g. regarding labour market access, minimum income and the educational system (see e.g. chapter 5.1 on education). This has indeed a significant impact on persons with disabilities in Austria, as they even more fade from the political and societal spotlight.

# Assessment of the situation of disabled people with respect to the Europe 2020 headline targets

## Strategic targets

Table 1: Europe 2020 and agreed national targets for the general population

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Europe 2020 targets | National targets**[[3]](#footnote-4)** |
| Employment | 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed | 77-78% |
| Education | Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10% | 9.5% |
| At least 40% of 30-34–year-olds completing third level education | 38% (including ISCED 4/4a) |
| Fighting poverty and social exclusion | At least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion | 235,000 |

Relevant disability targets from national strategies or sources:

The National Action Plan Disability 2012-2020[[4]](#footnote-5) (NAP) includes a range of relevant policy goals, relevant to employment, education and poverty or social exclusion, but few are quantified as indicators or targets:

**Employment**

* Unemployment among people with disabilities should be reduced.
* All people with disabilities should have the opportunity to receive independent advice on work-related issues – particularly in the form of peer counselling by people who are affected themselves.
* In all issues related to training and employment, special attention must be paid to the special form of the respective disability.
* In the interest of inclusive employment, pilot schemes for permeability should be developed and evaluated which ensure that people with disabilities can gradually find their way (back) into working life while maintaining – as far as possible – the support they receive via income replacement benefits. In this context, it should be ensured that transfer payments can be restored after an attempt to work in the primary labour market.
* In order to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in employment, the approaches of disability mainstreaming and the specialisation of job offers should be meaningfully linked.
* The future of integrative companies should be ensured by means of structural adjustments.
* Integrative companies should be awarded more government contracts.
* Consideration should be given to people with disabilities when creating a modern uniform term for employees.

**Education**

Early school leaving

* Early school leaving is **not** mentioned in the NAP Disability 2012-2020.

Tertiary education

* The inclusion of students with disabilities should, within the framework of the Austrian Universities Act as well as the performance agreements with the universities and the accompanying talks on their implementation, be increasingly made into an education policy goal.
* An essential aspect in this context is the creation of awareness for the inclusion of students with disabilities.
* Due to increasing demand, efforts should be made to expand the training of sign language interpreters and sign language teachers.

**Poverty and Social Exclusion**

* Understandable and accessible information and advice must be offered about all social benefits and services, also for people with learning disabilities.
* People with disabilities should receive special consideration in all measures to avoid and reduce poverty.
* As people with disabilities are particularly threatened by poverty, they will benefit to an above-average extent from the advantages of the means-tested minimum income (BMS) (inclusion in statutory health insurance, limitations on recourse, an allowance for assets etc.).
* The national reform programme for the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy aims to reduce the number of persons who are at risk of poverty and socially excluded by 235,000 or 16 % until 2020. This objective addresses above all sub-objective 2 (Combating long-term unemployment and improving the participation in employment of persons of working age at risk of poverty) and sub-objective 5 (Preventive health care in working life and improvement of labour market opportunities for people with disabilities). The following are cited: improved employment opportunities for recipients of BMS, focused measures for skills training and to obtain qualifications, health promotion measures and a labour market campaign for people whose health is impaired and for people with disabilities.

Still true in September 2016: No information or overview is publicly available on the progress of implementation with regard to these NAP-targets.

In the Austrian 2015 NRP, no disability specific targets, addressed in Table 1 (above) in the underlying report that relate to employment, education, poverty and social exclusion are mentioned.

### A note on the use of EU data

Unless specified, the summary statistics presented in this report are drawn from 2014 EU-SILC micro data.[[5]](#footnote-6) The EU-SILC sample includes people living in private households and does not include people living in institutions. The proxy used to identify people with disabilities (impairments) is whether ‘for at least the past 6 months’ the respondent reports that they have been ‘limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do’.[[6]](#footnote-7) Responses to this question vary between countries and national data sources are added for comparison, where available.

Table 2: Self-reported ‘activity limitations’ as a proxy for impairment/disability (EU-SILC 2014)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

It should be noted that Austrian estimates for persons with limitations fall above the EU average, notably for persons of working age, and this may affect estimations of national equality gaps also.

In subsequent tables, these data are used as a proxy to estimate ‘disability’ equality in the main target areas for EU2020 – employment, education and poverty risk.[[7]](#footnote-8) The tables are presented by disaggregating the estimated proportion of people who report and do not report limitations for each indicator (e.g. among those who are employed, unemployed, at risk of poverty, etc.).

Comment on the reliability of EUSILC to estimate persons with disabilities: The question focusing on self-reported activity limitation corresponds to the CRPD but not to national definitions. The results of EUSILC correspond to the results of the national survey on health status (2006) according to which about one third of Austrian population aged 15+ is limited in daily activities (8% of men and 10% of women are strongly limited).

## Employment data

Table 3: Most recent employment data, aged 20-64

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

Table 4: Employment rate data, by age group

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

Table 5: Trends in employment by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016 (and preceding UDBs)

The table above shows a comparison of national employment trends for disabled and non-disabled women and men, and compares this with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU as a whole.

Alternative data on disability and employment provided by the national expert:

As a preliminary point: The definition of disability used in different policy fields and by different political actors differs a lot in Austria: E.g. the definition used in LFS ad-hoc module does not match the definition of disability used in employment policy. Employed or unemployed persons may apply for the status of officially recognised persons with disabilities. This status is regulated in the Federal Disability Employment Act (Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz; BEinStG; BGBl. Nr. 22/1970) and includes specific protection against dismissal, additional holidays and the right to get support (e.g. counselling) or funding for necessary workplace adaptation. Individuals lose the status when they leave labour force (retirement). Officially recognised persons with disabilities constitute the group of persons with disabilities in a narrower definition. Additionally, persons with health problems are included in data collection. They would probably not define themselves as persons with disabilities and would not be eligible for support as defined in the Federal Disability Employment Act. However, they are particularly often referred to with regard to employment or un-employment.

Data on disability and employment are provided on a specific website on work and disability.[[8]](#footnote-9) Data is currently available for the year 2015 as well as for September 2016: In 2015, 100.859 persons with disabilities were officially recognised as persons with disabilities according to the Federal Disability Employment Act. This indicates an increase of 3% compared to 2014.[[9]](#footnote-10) 64.094 of these persons with disabilities were employed in 2015, the employment rate among officially recognised persons with disabilities was thus 63,55% (employment rate: own calculation). This is exactly the same rate as reflected in the EUSILC data from 2014.

In September 2016, no new data on the overall number of officially recognised persons is available. A total of 60.538 officially recognised persons with disabilities was employed (no gender specific data available) in this month.[[10]](#footnote-11)

### Unemployment

National administrative rules and definitions of ‘unemployment’ vary, and these may affect the way in which disabled people are categorised in different countries. The following tables compare national data with the EU2020 headline indicator for the EU.

**Table 6: Most recent unemployment data, aged 20-64**

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

**Table 7: Unemployment rate data, by age group**

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

**Table 8: Trends in unemployment by gender and disability (aged 20-64)**

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016 (and preceding UDBs)

Fluctuations in the gendered tends for people with impairments should be treated with caution, although the pattern is somewhat similar for those without.

Alternative data on disability and unemployment from national sources:

In 2015, a total of 12.073 officially recognised persons with disabilities was unemployed (7.563 men, 4.510 women). Compared to 2014, this indicates an increase of 15% (14.7% men, 15.4% women).[[11]](#footnote-12) This equals an unemployment rate of 11.97% (own calculation; no gender specific data available for the overall number of officially recognised persons with disabilities) which is distinctly lower than the rate provided by EUROSTAT. However, in the national data provided for 2015, there is a difference of 24.692 persons between the total of officially recognised persons with disabilities and the number of those who are employed or unemployed. It is unclear if these persons are looking for a job or if they are available for the labour market. We assume that they are not registered as unemployed persons at the labour market service. If we add these officially recognised persons for the calculation, the unemployment of persons with disabilities on the Austrian labour market dramatically rises to 36.45% (own calculation). This is another example of how poor data on persons with disabilities is in Austria. In September 2016, a total of 12.081 officially recognised persons with disabilities was unemployed (7.458 men, 4.623 women).[[12]](#footnote-13)

In addition to the unemployed officially recognised persons with disabilities 54.571 persons with health problems were unemployed (33.151 men, 21.420 women). This indicates an increase of 15.9% (15.8% men, 16% women) compared to 2014.[[13]](#footnote-14) In September 2016, 58.174 persons with health problems were unemployed (34.496 men, 23.678 women). This indicates an increase of 8.87% (7.5% men, 10.8% women).[[14]](#footnote-15)

In 2015, persons with disabilities amounted to 19% of all unemployed persons in Austria, compared to 18% in 2014.[[15]](#footnote-16)

Data provided by EUROSTAT indicates a decrease of unemployment among disabled men, however, national data indicates a distinct increase of unemployment for both men and women.

Figure 1: Increase in unemployment

Source: Arbeitsmarktservice (Employment service), national unemployment statistics

### Economic activity

Table 9: Most recent economic activty data, aged 20-64

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

Table 10: Activity rate data, by age group

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

Table 11: Trends in activity rates by gender and disability (aged 20-64)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016 (and preceding UDBs)

Alternative data on disability and economic activity provided by the national expert:

No new data is available. Regarding the economic activity rate (Erwerbsstatus), Statistics Austria does not address persons with disabilities in their statistical overview,[[16]](#footnote-17) but addresses the issue in another source that provides new EU SILC data.[[17]](#footnote-18) In the category ‘severely impaired by disability’ (stark beeinträchtigt durch Behinderung)[[18]](#footnote-19) for people between the age 20 and 64, Table 4.3b shows 352.000 persons (7% of the overall mentioned population of 5.152.000 persons). Regarding the economic activity rate in this category of persons, Table 4.3b refers to 176.000 persons (4%) economically active (erwerbsaktiv) persons, and 17% economically inactive persons (nicht erwerbsaktiv).

It is important to mention that persons with disabilities who are in sheltered workshops, which are the responsibility of the nine Laender, are not included in any labour market or labour force data. In 2012, 20.563 men and women with disabilities attended sheltered workshops.[[19]](#footnote-20) These persons are defined by the Federal Disability Employment Act[[20]](#footnote-21) as not employable and are thus excluded of all measures for vocational integration. No exact data is available, but in a respond to a parliamentary request the Minister for Social Affairs assumed that in 2014 about 23.000 persons with disabilities were in sheltered workshops.[[21]](#footnote-22)

## Education data

EU statistical comparisons are more limited concerning the education of young disabled women and men in the EU2020 target age groups. Data is available from EU-SILC (annually) as well as the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad-hoc disability module (for 2011), but with low reliability for several countries on the key measures.[[22]](#footnote-23) Using a wider age range can improve reliability but estimations by gender remain indicative. EU trends are evident but administrative data may offer more reliable alternatives to identify national trends, where available.

### Early school leavers

The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 18-24) includes the following number of people reporting activity ‘limitation’ (as a proxy for impairment/disability).

Table 12: EU-SILC sample size in the target age group 18-24 versus 18-29

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Age 18-24 | Age 18-29 |
|  | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ |
| EU sample | 33,905 | 2,608 | 56,110 | 4,738 |
| National sample | 857 | 132 | 1,419 | 218 |

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

Table 13: Early school leavers aged 18-24 (indicative based on above sample size)

Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016

Alternative data on disability and early school leavers provided by the national expert:

As reported in previous years, specific data on the education of persons with disabilities is scarcely available in Austria. This has not changed recently: young people with disabilities are not identified in data on early school leaving. Data available on the general population differs from the above EU SILC data: For the age group of 18-24 the national average of early school leavers was 7.3% (women: 6.8%, men: 7.8%) in 2015.[[23]](#footnote-24) No national data is available for the age group 18-29.

As already mentioned, early school leaving of students with disabilities is not mentioned in the NAP Disability.

### Tertiary education

The EU-SILC sample for the target age group (aged 30-34) includes the following number of people reporting activity ‘limitation’ (a proxy for impairment/disability) although the number of missing observations is larger than the number of observations for activity limitation.

**Table 14: EU-SILC sample size for the target age group 30-34 versus 30-39**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Age 30-34 | Age 30-39 |
|  | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ | No activity ‘limitation’ | Activity ‘limitation’ |
| EU sample | 23,740 | 2,744 | 50,243 | 6,572 |
| National sample | 647 | 115 | 1,250 | 286 |

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016*

**Table 15: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (indicative based on above sample)**

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016*

The survey sample is not sufficient to provide robust trend data disaggregated by gender in the narrow EU2020 target age group. In only 12 out of 28 Member States are there more than 50 observations in the sample for both women and for men in aged 30-34 who also declare impairment/limitation. In 5 there are fewer than 20 observations for women or for men, which cannot be reported. In all Member States except Austria the achievement of tertiary education was higher for women than for men in both disabled and non-disabled groups.

**Table 16: Trends in tertiary education by disability (aged 30-34)**

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016 (and preceding UDBs)*

*Fluctuations in trends for people with impairments should be treated with caution at the national level.*

**Alternative data on disability and tertiary education provided by the national expert:**

As previously reported in 2012-2015, specific data on the education of persons with disabilities is scarcely available in Austria. This has not changed recently: persons with disabilities are not identified in official statistics on tertiary education. We can only refer to micro census data from 2007 according to which persons with disabilities have a significantly lower level of education than non-disabled people in Austria. 32% men and 46% of women with disabilities have only finished compulsory school compared to 12% men and 23% women without disabilities. 14.6% men and 15.7% women with disabilities hold a university degree compared to 31.4% men and 33.3% women without disabilities.[[24]](#footnote-25) According to EU SILC Data from 2010, 14.4% of persons with disabilities between 30 and 40 years of age held a university degree compared to 26.5% of persons without disabilities. This is lower than the EU-average of 22.3% and 34.4% for persons with disabilities (Grammenos 2013, 90).[[25]](#footnote-26)

According to the Austrian student survey 2011 (Zaussinger et al. 2012)[[26]](#footnote-27) 12% of all students at Austrian universities (including colleges of teacher training) face hindrances in their studies due to disability, chronic illness or other health problems (women: 13%; men: 11%). This applies in total to about 36.500 students. 11% of all students with disabilities, chronic illnesses or health problems are formally recognised as disabled (6% with a reduction of employability of 50% or more, 5% with a reduction of less than 50%). They represent 1.3% of all Austrian students (4.000 students). This share has slightly increased compared to the surveys 2009, 2006 and 2002. However, according to the most recent survey on students at Austrian university, this share did not change in 2015.[[27]](#footnote-28) There is no data available on health status of graduates.

## Poverty and social exclusion data

EU SILC data provides indicators of the key risks for people with disabilities. In addition to household risks of low work intensity, there are risks of low income (after social transfers), and material deprivation. These three measures are combined in the overall estimate of risk. The risks for older people do not include work intensity (Eurostat refers to the age group 0-59 for this measure). The survey does not distinguish ‘activity limitation’ (the proxy for impairment/disability) for children under the age of 16. Relevant data provided by the national expert is added where available.

**Table 17: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and risk (aged 16-59)**

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016*

**Table 18: People living in household poverty and exclusion by disability and gender (aged 16+)**

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016*

**Table 19: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)**

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016*

**Table 20: Trends in household risk of poverty and exclusion by disability and age (EU-SILC 2014)**

*Source: EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016 (and previous UDB)*

*Note that the Austrian prevalence data may slightly underestimate the number of older people with impairments (Table 1)*

Alternative data on disability and risk of poverty or social exclusion provided by the national expert:

Table 4.3a in the Austrian document on EU SILC 2015[[28]](#footnote-29) - shows 338.000 persons (6% of the overall population of 5.213.000 persons) in the category of ‘severely impaired by disability’ (stark beeinträchtigt durch Behinderung).

Table 5.6b in the Austrian document on EU SILC 2015[[29]](#footnote-30) refers to persistent risk of poverty by living conditions, showing that persons ‘severely impaired by disability’ (stark beeinträchtigt durch Behinderung) comprise a group of 628.000 persons (with a temporary risk of poverty, lasting at least for 1 year, with a group of 88.000 persons). In addition, persons who are chronically ill (chronisch krank) and hence, might also be affected by disability related barriers, are a much larger group, comprising 2.450.000 persons (with a temporary risk of poverty, lasting at least for 1 year, with a group of 370.000 persons).

Table 8.20 in the Austrian document on EU-SILC 2015[[30]](#footnote-31) refers to Risk-of-poverty-and-social-exclusion for children and adolescents up to 24 years. In so called households at risk with disability (Risikohaushalte mit Behinderung), 203.000 persons are at risk of poverty, 22.000 persons out of this group are affected by severe material deprivation (erheblich materiell depriviert). As Table 10.2a[[31]](#footnote-32) and Table 10.4 shows in sum, 804.000 persons live in households with disability (Haushalte mit Behinderung), 99.000 of these persons living in manifest poverty (manifeste Armut).

Regarding social exclusion, it has to be mentioned that at least 13.000 persons with disabilities live in smaller and larger institutions.[[32]](#footnote-33) In our 2014 and again in our 2015 report we strongly recommended initiatives and efforts for de-institutionalisation and independent living of persons with disabilities in Austria. This issue got completely lost in the NRP as well as the CSR. Thus, we repeat our last year’s proposal: Distinct programmes or measures need to be presented to reduce the number of persons with disabilities who live in institutions and to establish effective structures for community oriented support.

New alternative data could not be found.

# Description of the situation and trends in relation to each target area

Trends in relation to employment, education, poverty and social exclusion are discussed in chapter 2 (please see above).

Trends can only be described in a meaningful way when sufficient data – in line with the CRPD – is available. Data collection in line with the CRPD needs to be carried out and published. Specifically, the term ‘disability’ has to be used (e.g. in data collection) in line with the CRPD – understood as societal attitudes that hinder persons to participate fully in society. Currently, different models of disability are in use (regarding legal framework and regulations on the one hand and political practices on the other hand), leading to the fact that personal ‘deficits’ instead of barriers are addressed. Persons with disabilities of all ages should be effectively and distinctively included in data collection. In this context, research institutions, bringing together scientists and persons with disabilities need to be set up to carry out data collection and studies on the living situation of persons with disabilities in Austria. Intersections between different categories such as gender, age or language need to be included in the provision and the analysis of data collected.

## Employment

Still true for 2015, the recent economic development is characterised by an ongoing struggle with consequences of the economic crisis and persistent high unemployment which worsened labour market chances of persons with disabilities or health problems. This is illustrated by the increasing unemployment of persons with disabilities or health problems that make them difficult to place. As already mentioned in chapter 2.2.1, the trends over time show that unemployment increased more for persons with disabilities compared to the national average. While total unemployment increased from 2006 to 2014 by 33%, the unemployment of persons with disabilities doubled.

The lower the educational level the higher the risk of being unemployed. This holds for unemployment in general and also for unemployment of persons with disabilities (Wroblewski 2012: 20).[[33]](#footnote-34)

Another fact which impedes labour market participation of persons with health problems is the attempt to reduce early retirement and retirement due to invalidity. By now there is no empirical evidence that shows a causal relation between reforms of retirement system and increasing unemployment of persons with disabilities or health problems. We can only assume that there is a causal relation between the above mentioned measures and the significant increase of unemployed persons with disabilities.

An additional factor is the reduced willingness of employers (private as well as public sector) to employ persons with disabilities. A 2012 study focusing on employment prospects of academics with disabilities showed that the ‘closing’ of the public sector not only worsens employment prospects of the target group but also influence the public discourse if the state does not follow its legal obligation (Wroblewski et al. 2012).[[34]](#footnote-35)

However, persons with health problems are increasingly recognised as a target group for employment policies. The main aim is to prevent people with health problems from leaving employment early (invalidity retirement) and to support employers to create adequate workplaces for elderly or people with health problems. Fit2work is an example of a policy in that context that addresses workers and employers through advice and support.[[35]](#footnote-36) Considering a distinct disability perspective with a focus on officially recognised persons with disabilities, it has to be doubted that these measures are effective. They are too unspecific and aim at improving health at the workplace on a very general level. Issues for persons with disabilities are much more complex.

Important to mention in the context of employment and the labour market situation of persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities who are in sheltered workshops, which are the responsibility of the nine Laender, are not included in any labour market or labour force data (see chapter 2.2.2). Still, no efforts are taken to reduce the number of persons with disabilities in sheltered workshops.

## Education

As there is no national data on early school leaving of young persons with disabilities, we can only refer to EU SILC data which indicates that young persons with disabilities are more likely to drop out of the school system than non-disabled young persons.

Few new data is available on tertiary education of persons with disabilities in Austria either, EU SILC provides an unclear picture, with striking differences between single years which might be due to the unspecific definition of “activity limitations” of the sample. Thus, trends cannot be seriously described.

It has to be mentioned in this context, that the Austrian education system is rather segregating. Many children with disabilities attend special schools with the negative effect of a low educational attainment and a lifelong disadvantage on the labour market (see chapter 4.2).

## Poverty and social inclusion

Although persons with disabilities are not explicitly mentioned, the Armutskonferenz[[36]](#footnote-37) (Netzwerk gegen Armut und soziale Ausgrenzung/Poverty Conference; Network against Poverty and Social Exclusion) stated already in October 2014 that persons affected by poverty and social exclusion represent a group of around 400.000 to 500.000 persons with poor health conditions or chronic illness, living in the most difficult situations. It is important to note that in 2014 the Armutskonferenz highlighted the fact that it is unknown how many persons are affected because persons with disabilities are counted as and grouped with children.[[37]](#footnote-38)

Persons with disabilities have to be explicitly mentioned in reports on and evaluations of the poverty situation in Austria. So far, this has not taken place in an adequate way. Intersectional aspects of disability – being a person with disabilities and at the same time, being at risk of poverty and unemployed – have to be taken into account when including persons with disabilities into data collection on poverty.

In a document from April 2014,[[38]](#footnote-39) the Armutskonferenz states that two of the Austrian Laender (Upper Austria and Carinthia) ignore federal regulations regarding higher family allowance (erhöhte Familienbeihilfe), saying that family allowance must not be relevant for the calculation of the needs-based minimum benefit system. With regard to the risk of poverty, households with persons with disabilities have less money available, which increases the risk of poverty even more. In a decision from November 2014, the Austrian Constitutional Court suspended the Upper Austrian regulation, arguing that this leads to injustice between persons with and without disabilities.[[39]](#footnote-40) The Constitutional Court decided (decision no. V75/2014 ua; 26.11.2014)[[40]](#footnote-41) that it is against the law to count the higher family allowance as part of the needs-based minimum benefit system.

In December 2015 but also again in April 2016, the Armutskonferenz pointed out with regard to minimum income in the context of a still ongoing discussion in Austria to the fact that reforms are needed for persons with disabilities. The Armutskonferenz argued that minimum income is not effective to cover higher costs of living for persons with disabilities.[[41]](#footnote-42)

In July 2016, the NGO-Forum of the Austrian Ombudsman Board[[42]](#footnote-43) discussed the situation of persons with disabilities, highlighting the mutual relationship between disability and poverty, and also between existing barriers and social deprivation of persons with disabilities.

Still true for 2015 and 2016, in the context of a statement on the Enquete Commission ‘Strengthening democracy in Austria; Enquete-Kommission ‘Stärkung der Demokratie in Österreich’), the Armutskonferenz listed disadvantaged societal ‘groups’ which need to be involved in participatory projects. What is obvious in the context of this list (mentioning persons with disabilities, persons at risk of poverty, persons without jobs etc.) is that persons with disabilities often are also at the same time at risk of poverty, do not have a job etc. Hence, in Austria, generally speaking, the intersection of diverse forms of exclusion influencing the lives of persons with disabilities is not yet a recognised issue.[[43]](#footnote-44)

# Assessment of policies in place to meet the relevant headline targets

The NRP needs to address disability related issues explicitly. So far, persons with disabilities are rarely mentioned in the NRP (still true for 2016) and are thus invisible as a specific target group. And, in this context, the CSR also need to address this lack of reference to the situation of persons with disabilities in Austria.

## Employment

Regarding employment policies, the NRP 2016 does not focus explicitly on persons with disabilities. As a consequence, no new measures or policies have come into force which focus explicitly on the needs of persons with disabilities. Instead, some measures are increasingly broadened to a larger target group, entailing a scattering of resources which should be used for fostering opportunities for persons with disabilities to get jobs and to stay employed. Still true for 2016 (and already discussed in our 2015 report), current examples are youth coaching and production schools,[[44]](#footnote-45) that was originally only provided for young persons with disabilities and have recently been broadened to all young persons. Already mentioned in our 2015 report, the Austrian Disability Council was critical about this step and was worried that young persons with disabilities would no longer receive the specific support they need.[[45]](#footnote-46)

NRP Annex 1 (on p. 4/measure 3) and 2 (on p. 1 and p. 4/employment target) refer to persons with disabilities insofar as the disability pension new (Invaliditätspension Neu/IP-Neu) focuses on the principle of rehabilitation and re-integration before pension.[[46]](#footnote-47) Important to note here, this obviously does not refer to persons with disabilities who have not yet entered the labour market. Thus, a large group of persons with disabilities is excluded. The concept of employability which is addressed in Annex 1 and 2, does only refer to persons with disabilities who have already been part of the labour market.

It is to question if the policy change with regard to invalidity pension has the targeted effects (staying in the labour market instead of early retirement). Data published in November 2015 indicate that the effect of the reform of invalidity pension in Austria is disappointing. Considering the implementation for the first 20 months, only very few people actually returned to employment or received alternative vocational training.[[47]](#footnote-48) Only 0.51% of those who receive rehabilitation benefit started a training and only 4.18% received specific medical rehabilitation measures. For all other (more than 95%) the recommendation was to wait and observe (own calculation). There are no new or re-conceptualised measures to improve working conditions for persons with disabilities or health problems.

In 2015, there was a significantly high increase of unemployed persons with disabilities older than 45 years: +14.9% compared to +3.2% among young persons with disabilities; the increase is higher among older women: +18.6% compared to +12.8% among men with health problems.[[48]](#footnote-49) It can be assumed that this is directly linked to the change from invalidity pension to rehabilitation benefit. Thus, the actual effect of the invalidity pension reform that can currently be observed is not employment but rather long-term unemployment.

A recent study shows that persons with psycho-social disabilities constitute the main group who receives rehabilitation-benefit or limited invalidity pension: In 2015, 69% of all women and 57% of all men who received rehabilitation benefit or limited invalidity pension had a psychosocial disability. Compared to Denmark and Switzerland, this rate is significantly higher. Also, unemployment among persons with psychosocial problems is high in Austria compared to other countries. There is a profound lack of data on persons with psychosocial disabilities in Austria, also assessment is not according to international standards. Measures taken are not evaluated. The authors recommend a bunch of measures with regard to improve the assessment and health care for persons with psychosocial disabilities as well as measures at the workplace to adapt to employees with psychosocial disabilities.[[49]](#footnote-50)

As mentioned in our 2015 report, it would be necessary to profoundly analyse the significant increase in unemployment of persons with disabilities to develop more targeted policies. The significant increase of unemployment among persons with disabilities (in relation to persons without disabilities) in 2015 quite clearly indicates that currently applied measures and policies are insufficiently addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in the context of an education system that does not prepare persons with disabilities for a life in the first labour market.

In a press release the Attorney for Persons with Disabilities confirmed this assessment. He said that “neither the Public Employment Service nor the Federal Social Office pay enough attention to persons with disabilities. (….) This group (….) is not considered a distinct target group with specific targets and resources.”[[50]](#footnote-51)

Furthermore, persons in sheltered workshops should be included in programmes and policies of the general labour market. In this context, it is important to mention that persons with disabilities who are in sheltered workshops, which are the responsibility of the nine Laender, are not included in any labour market or labour force data. The situation of persons with disabilities in sheltered workshops has been repeatedly criticised by the Austrian Ombudsman Board which described it as not according to human rights standards. In its report on 2015, the Ombudsman Board confirms this critique and states that the Austrian government both on federal as well as on the Laender level has not taken any effective measure so far to change this situation.[[51]](#footnote-52)

## Education

The Austrian education system is rather segregating. Many children with disabilities attend special schools with the negative effect of a low educational attainment and a lifelong disadvantage on the labour market. In line with the CRPD, Austria should stop building special schools. In addition, a truly inclusive education (not just renaming the old system) system has to be developed. Recently, there has been a major focus on pupils with migration-background. Data on persons with migration-background and their educational achievements has been collected widely, but there is no systematic research on children and young people with disabilities in the Austrian education system.

The 2016 NRP mentions the two measures to support young persons in the transition from compulsory school to higher education or vocational training and to combat early school leaving: Youth coaching and so-called production schools (both measures are co-funded by ESF and comprehensively described and discussed in our 2015 report). Although persons with disabilities are not mentioned as a distinct target group, they constitute a large number of the participants. With regard to the Austrian education system, the main critique is that both youth coaching and production schools are additional measures that are not part of the education system. Thus, they may only compensate for failures of the education system but do not actually change or improve it. Both measures discriminate against young persons with severe or multiple disabilities: One result of youth coaching may be the proposal to attend a sheltered workshop, production schools explicitly exclude young persons with severe or multiple disabilities as well as those with acute psychosocial disorders.

With regard to education policies for persons with disabilities, the NRP Annex 1 mentions on p. 20 under the heading of measure 14 (Improve and implement an inclusive school system) that an ongoing participatory dialogue is taking place to develop a detailed concept of inclusive regions. It has to be noted that this dialogue consisted of only a few round tables involving different stakeholders which took place in the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education. It is neither ongoing nor sustainable.

## Poverty and social inclusion

Chapter 4.5. (Poverty and social exclusion) of the 2016 NRP[[52]](#footnote-53) mentions the increase of the supplement to the family allowance for children with disabilities. This is an important step, however, as the family allowance is not indexed-linked on a regular basis it must be considered a necessary adjustment not a new or profound measure to reduce poverty among families with a disabled child.

 Regarding policies to reduce poverty, (identified risk factors that are mentioned are low education and migrant backgrounds) and social exclusion of persons with disabilities in Austria, it has to be stated that policies do not explicitly refer to persons with disabilities but subsume these persons in a much broader category, indicating that needs of persons with disabilities are not addressed in a sufficient way. What is evident in the context of a lack of effective measures to reduce the high level of poverty among persons with disabilities is the fact that poverty is related to many other aspects of life which are also not sufficiently addressed by Austrian policymakers: without a solid education, persons with disabilities will always be at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

It has to be added, that social exclusion comprises much more than the economic aspect of live. Persons with disabilities are not only less likely to work but less likely to live in a household where work intensity is high. When evaluating the degree of social exclusion of persons with disabilities, societal and political challenges for an inclusive society also need to be included in the debate.

## Synergies between developments in the different areas

As in 2015, in sum and referring to the points made above, negative synergies can be observed in the Austrian context:

As long as persons with disabilities are perceived as an appendix to society and not as an equal part of society, policies will not address the living conditions of persons with disabilities in an adequate way (highlighted by the fact that in the 2016 NRP, persons with disabilities are only scarcely mentioned as such and usually included in terms like ‘disadvantaged groups’). Persons with disabilities are not perceived as a distinct and important target group, thus, they are often invisible in programmes or data collection. Disability policy has not yet been acknowledged as a distinct policy field that needs particular attention. A recently presented media analysis on the representation of persons with disabilities in Austrian mass media strongly confirms this assessment. It showed that disability policy is extremely marginalised in Austria: Only 3% of all media coverage on disability issues was set by political actors.[[53]](#footnote-54)

Thus, on a federal as well as regional level, disability issues are usually only one issue of social policy in general and likely to be neglected, in the field of education as well as in employment and social inclusion. Mainstreaming policies include the danger of reinforcing this situation. Mainstreaming persons with disabilities without providing distinct and specialised support structures often leads to the reinforcement and perpetuation of exclusionary practices.

The still slow and insufficient implementation of the CRPD is not only a sign of unwillingness to change the living conditions for persons with disabilities in Austria, but also a barrier for the development of sustainable policies and policy change: an exclusionary education and training system inevitably leads to an exclusionary labour market and employment situation. The argument of the economic crisis evoked in the context of the debate about the development of an inclusive society (i.a. in the context of the costs of the National Action Plan Disability 2012-2020) is often used to conceal the fact that several changes could be made nearly cost-neutral[[54]](#footnote-55) (in restructuring for example the Austrian parallel education system of regular and special schools), but for which there needs to be the will for change.

# Review of the European Semester from a disability perspective

## Progress on disability-specific Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

There are no disability-specific CSRs for Austria. As long as this is the case, it is highly unlikely that Austria will address disability related issues and persons with disabilities as a relevant target group for diverse political sectors and policies.

Similar to the NRP, persons with disabilities are not a specific ‘target group’ in the CSRs. Of course, in several cases persons with disabilities and other ‘groups’ overlap with regard to specific *needs and support*, but are not congruent with other (for example, Country-Specific recommendation 1 mentions refugees as a specific group, Country-Specific recommendation 2 mentions women and also disadvantaged young people, especially migrants). Also, *policy fields* such as healthcare and employment (mentioned in Country-Specific recommendation 1) or education (mentioned in Country-Specific Recommendation 2) obviously are also relevant for persons with disabilities, but they are not mentioned as a ‘target group’. As long as persons with disabilities are not mentioned explicitly, they remain invisible for policymakers which means that no political steps need to be and will be taken to improve their situation or to adapt measures that have been relied on so far.

## Progress on other CSRs from a disability perspective

No progress is detectable from a disability perspective, as persons with disabilities are not a specific target group in the CSRs.

Regarding the four recommendations formulated in the Council Recommendation on the 2016 National Reform Programme of Austria, and already mentioned in our 2015 report, recommendation no. 2 refers to an increase of the labour market participation of older workers and women. This recommendation should also explicitly focus on persons with disabilities and the improvement of provisions for these persons (e.g. regarding personal assistance or a review of the legal framework that currently defines people with disabilities who are either employable or unable to earn their living, introduction of full social insurance coverage for persons with disabilities who are currently in sheltered workshops). This also applies to the second aspect mentioned in recommendation no. 2, namely improving the educational achievements of disadvantaged groups: this should also explicitly be extended to young persons with disabilities.

## Assessment of disability issues in the Country Report (CR)

Please see sub-chapter above (non-mentioning of persons with disabilities).

The main aspects with regard to disability issues in the country report are:

* A lack of specific reference to young people and adults with disabilities as a distinct target group for measures and programmes.
* The CR mentions that the business environment is not always adapted to the employment of older workers (p. 56). This is also true for persons with disabilities in general. As already mentioned in section 4.1. a recent study confirms that workplaces are not adapted to meet the needs of persons with psychosocial disabilities.
* The CR seems to overestimate the positive effect of the newly introduced rehabilitation benefit. As already mentioned in section 4.1. data available indicates failures and distinct weaknesses of this measure. The effect is much more long-term unemployment that remaining active in the labour market.
* The CR does not mention persons with disabilities as a target group for labour market activities.
* Problems for persons with a migration background on the Austrian labour market are discussed in detail (p. 57ff), like discrimination, however, labour market issues for persons with disabilities are not mentioned at all.
* The tightening of access to long term-care cash benefits has distinct negative effects particularly for persons with intellectual or sensory impairments (p. 60) as they may now loose entitlement to this benefit which increases their poverty-risk and their risk for social exclusion. This is particularly critical for men and women with intellectual disabilities who are in sheltered workshops with social security schemes. There is a complete lack of data on the living situation of this particular group of people as well as on people living in institutions.
* Children, young people and adults with disabilities are not mentioned in the section on education of the CR. There is no reference to the negative effect of special schools.
* The CR includes a distinct chapter on integration of persons with migration background and refugees, however, the integration of persons with disabilities is no issue at all.

# Assessment of the structural funds ESIF 2014-2020 or other relevant funds in relation to disability challenges

As stated in the 2014 report, persons with disabilities are mentioned explicitly in the ESF programme 2014-2020.[[55]](#footnote-56) The focus is on the following issues and measures:

* The ESF 2014-2020 programme mentions persons with disabilities as a population that is particularly at risk of poverty (p. 7).
* Students with disabilities are mentioned among those for whom measures to prevent early school leaving shall be established (p. 10).
* Specific target 09 (p. 24): support for integrated vocational training for young people with disabilities.
* Specific target 18 (p. 25): support for qualification and training of higher quality for young people with disabilities.
* Basic principles include the consideration of women with disabilities; accessibility must be provided for by those who carry out projects (p. 36).
* Equal chances and anti-discrimination on the grounds of disabilities are included as basic principles (p. 230).
* Disability is “mainstreamed” meaning that disability is considered a cross-cutting issue (p. 231).
* Accessibility for persons with disabilities is a guiding principle (p. 232).

Use of ESI Funds:

In our 2015 report, we presented a detailed analysis of two main projects that are currently co-financed by ESF in Austria: youth coaching and production schools. As already mentioned in 2015, youth coaching directly recommends sheltered workshops to young people. According to the annual report, 738 young persons were advised to attend a sheltered workshop, this amounts to 3% of all participants.[[56]](#footnote-57) This does neither support the qualification nor the inclusion of young people with disabilities into the general labour market. Referring to young persons with disabilities in sheltered workshops, this increases their risk of social exclusion, poverty and lifelong dependency on social security.

With the information available on official websites of the ESI funds[[57]](#footnote-58) it is impossible to assess their use with a focus on persons with disabilities. There are neither comprehensive lists of all projects co-funded by ESI funds nor enough information on any particular disability issues available. Only a few individual projects are presented and it is not possible to assess the overall use of ESI funds on the basis of a few projects. On the basis of the scarce information available we are worried that ESI funds are used to co-finance sheltered workshop kind of projects. As an example. this seems to be the case with resources of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in so called Green Care projects where farming and gardening activities for persons with disabilities are provided as an innovative approach to sheltered workshops. However, persons with disabilities are not properly employed but only receive pocket money.[[58]](#footnote-59)

# Recommendations

With reference to chapter 1 (Summary), and besides recommendations formulated in the chapters above, the following general recommendations in order to change disability policies and practices with regard to persons with disabilities in Austria are important:

Persons with disabilities have to be addressed as a *distinct ‘target group’* for policymaking in Austria, not only in special programmes only for persons with disabilities like the NAP Disability, but in all policy programmes and documents like the NRP. Still, disability is mainly treated as an appendix of social policy, which leads to the situation that specific measures tailored for persons with disabilities do not exist on a large scale. Specific measures need to be formulated and implemented for persons with disabilities to be able to overcome disadvantaging circumstances. The change or further development of specific measures may not lead to a neglect of persons with disabilities, particularly not under the term of mainstreaming.

*Federalism* (a general problem in the Austrian political system) and hence, competencies and responsibilities of different political levels in Austria need to be rethought, as this hinders sustainable policymaking. With regard to provisions, regulations and services for persons with disabilities, this was directly criticised by the UN CRPD committee. It recommended in 2013: “The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that federal and regional governments consider an overarching legislative framework and policy on disability in Austria in conformity with the Convention.”[[59]](#footnote-60) In its report on 2015 the Austrian ombudsman board confirms this critique and emphasizes that there are no obvious efforts to improve the situation.[[60]](#footnote-61)

The use of ESF could have a much stronger focus on developing new measures to overcome federally split up competences.

Persons with disabilities and their organisations have to be included in *policymaking* in the field of disability policy in Austria, ranging from data collection issues to the evaluation of measures and political practices. So far, participatory forms of policymaking do not take place in a systematic and continued way.

1. No new national data is available. A micro census that was carried out in 2015 is expected to be published at the end of 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See section 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020. Strategy of the Austrian Federal Government for the Implementation of the UN Disability Convention. Inclusion as a human right and a mandate. For download in English: <http://www.sozialministerium.at/cms/site/attachments/7/7/8/CH2477/CMS1332494355998/nap_behinderung-web_2013-01-30_eng.pdf> (25 October 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. EUSILC UDB 2014 – version 2 of August 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\_explained/index.php/Glossary:Minimum\_European\_Health\_Module\_(MEHM)](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary%3AMinimum_European_Health_Module_%28MEHM%29) (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. The methodology is further explained in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. See <https://www.arbeitundbehinderung.at/de/arbeitsmarktdaten/> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Employment data on 2015: Officially recognised persons with disabilities and person with other health problems. Personen mit gesundheitl. Einschränkungen - Jahresdaten: <http://www.dnet.at/elis/Arbeitsmarkt.aspx> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Employment data on 2016: Personen mit gesundheitl. Einschränkungen – aktueller Monat: <http://www.dnet.at/elis/Arbeitsmarkt.aspx> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Employment data on 2015: Officially recognised persons with disabilities and person with other health problems. Personen mit gesundheitl. Einschränkungen - Jahresdaten: <http://www.dnet.at/elis/Arbeitsmarkt.aspx> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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13. Employment data on 2015: Officially recognised persons with disabilities and person with other health problems. Personen mit gesundheitl. Einschränkungen – Jahresdaten: <http://www.dnet.at/elis/Arbeitsmarkt.aspx> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Employment data September 2016: Officially recognised persons with disabilities and person with other health problems. Personen mit gesundheitl. Einschränkungen – aktueller Monat: <http://www.dnet.at/elis/Arbeitsmarkt.aspx> (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Source: Annual Report of the Employment Service, p. 20, [http://www.ams.at/\_docs/001\_JB-2015.pdf](http://www.ams.at/_docs/001_JB-2015.pdf%20) (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Statistik Austria. Arbeitsmarktstatistik 2. Quartal 2015. Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung <http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/arbeitsmarkt/erwerbsstatus/index.html> (16 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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22. For the LFS AHM data see, Early school leavers <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de010&lang=en> and tertiary educational attainment <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_de020&lang=en>. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
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formales\_bildungswesen/fruehe\_schulabgaenger/index.html?ssSourceSiteId=null](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung_und_kultur/formales_bildungswesen/fruehe_schulabgaenger/index.html?ssSourceSiteId=null) (17 October 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
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29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020, p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Wroblewski, Angela (2012), Arbeitsmarktintegration von Menschen mit Behinderung. Hintergrundbericht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bundesländerebene, Studie im Auftrag der Essl Foundation, Wien. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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