



European
Commission

THE AUSTRIAN FOOD BASKET

VIENNA

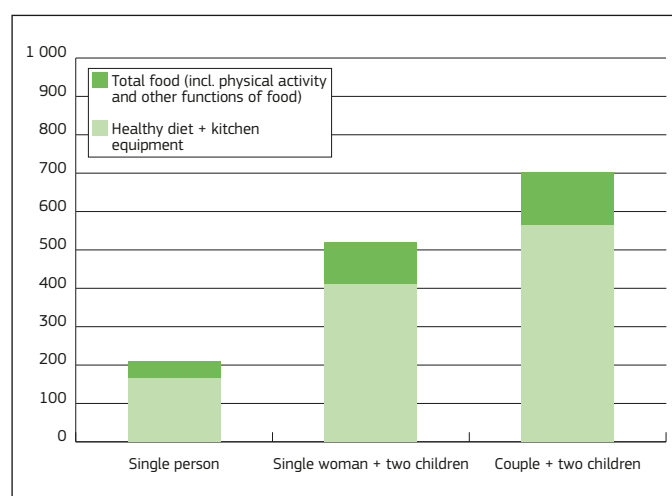
- The European Reference Budgets Network is a project financed by the European Commission that aims to develop cross-national, comparable reference budgets in all EU Member States. Reference budgets are baskets of goods and services considered necessary for an individual household to reach an acceptable standard of living within a given country, region or city. Preparing reference budgets with a common methodology can help EU Member States to design effective and adequate income support measures and to encourage mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. More information about the project as well as the full country reports can be found on the European Commission website: <http://europa.eu/!CC79TD>

The Austrian food basket indicates the monthly budget required for an adequate food intake by three reference households (consisting of children and people of working age, in good health, without disabilities and living in the capital city). The basket includes a budget for food and for the kitchen equipment required to prepare, serve, consume and preserve this food. Furthermore, it takes into account the necessary budget for physical activity

and for other functions of food, such as its social function for example. The food basket has been developed in accordance with nutritionist recommendations and national dietary guidelines and takes into account the cultural specificities of Austrian eating habits. The feasibility and acceptability of the basket have been verified through focus group discussions involving citizens with different socio-economic backgrounds.

1. Key findings

The Austrian Food Budget: monthly amounts in euros, Vienna, March 2015



- The monthly budget required for a healthy diet in Austria is **EUR 164 for a single person** and **EUR 563 for a family of two adults and two children**. If the budget needed for physical activity and other functions of food (eating out, holidays, etc.) is taken

into consideration, the **total monthly food budget** amounts to **EUR 210 for a single person** and **EUR 704 for a family of two adults and two children**.

- Recently Austria has developed two other food budgets: one in the framework of the PROGRESS Project on Standard Budgets in 2008/2009 and another one for the development of the Austrian reference budget according to the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) method. These two budgets are higher than the budget developed by the European Reference Budgets Network, with a respective budget of EUR 348 and EUR 219 for a single person. These differences can be explained by diverging pricing decisions and by the fact that the MIS budget includes more meals eaten out as well as items typical of unhealthy dietary habits.

2. National specificities

Developing cross-national, comparable European reference budgets requires the differences between the respective budgets of the

Member States to be explained according to the institutional, cultural, climatological and economic context of the country concerned. The Austrian food basket takes the following factors into account:

➔ Dietary habits

The Austrian national survey is an important tool for health reporting in Austria. It gives information about changes in dietary habits over time and indicates deviations from expert nutrition recommendations. According to the 2012 results, Austrians have a too high intake of fat and salt and consume too few fruits and vegetables, even though the general nutrient status is satisfactory. Their consumption of carbohydrates and fibres is below the recommended amount, but the intake of proteins, vitamins and mineral nutrients is sufficient. Compared to the previous years, the survey also revealed an increase in overweight rates among children, while obesity rates have stabilised. Overweight, adiposity and bad eating habits are more prevalent in the eastern part of the country.

➔ National food guidelines

The exact composition of the healthy food basket has been developed in accordance with the national food guidelines. Created to support a health-promoting policy framework, the National Commission on Nutrition advises the Federal Minister of Health on nutrition policy and on the implementation of the National Action Plan for Nutrition, laid down in 2011. To remove uncertainty and misunderstanding associated with the circulation of various food pyramids in Austria, the Ministry of Health commissioned the development of a standardised food pyramid. All leading organisations in the health and nutrition sector were involved in the process and a graphic was made available in March 2010. The pyramid is divided into seven food groups: low-calorie beverages; fruit, vegetables and legumes; grains; dairy products; meat, fish and eggs; fat; and residuals (sweets and salty snacks).

➔ The pricing of the basket

The pricing of the food basket was conducted in March 2015. The choice of the shops was based on suggestions made by focus group participants. One discounter was selected, as it offers good quality products at low prices and is present throughout Vienna. Some items were not available in the first shop and were priced in a second supermarket chain, more expensive but also popular as mentioned in focus group discussions. Furthermore, 10% has been added to the prices of the selected products in order to give people the freedom to shop in other supermarkets.

➔ Physical activity

Besides the budget needed for a healthy diet, the food basket also includes a minimum budget for physical activity, as this is presented in the national guidelines as a general requirement for a healthy lifestyle. In accordance with Austrian recommendations, adults should have at least 150 minutes of moderate to intense physical activity weekly. Children and teenagers should undertake sporting activities for at least 60 minutes per day. EUR 15 per month has been identified by focus group participants as an adequate monthly budget for taking sport classes or joining a sport club. The food basket also includes the costs of two monthly entrance tickets to a public swimming pool for the summer months and to a skating rink for the winter months.

➔ Other functions of food

The food basket also takes the emotional, social and cultural functions of food into account, which have been identified by focus group participants as necessary for adequate participation in Austrian society. Eating out once in a while, inviting friends and family over and cooking festive meals for important holidays and celebrations such as Carnival or New Year's Eve are seen as constitutive functions of food.