Austria

Austria will undertake its 1st Voluntary National Review in July 2020. With a focus this year on development accelerators and transformative action, it is a key moment to consider activities and tools which can unlock progress, for all, across the board.

Access to information – understood as the physical possibility and right for all to seek and find information, and the skills to use it – can make just such a contribution. This access can help at all levels. It supports individuals to take better decisions about how to farm, where to look for work or how to look after their own and their families' health. It gives governments the possibility to define better policies. It allows researchers to understand the world around us, establish new insights and innovate. Libraries are a key part of the infrastructure for ensuring that this is the case.

But where does Austria stand today as concerns its libraries and access to information? This data sheet provides background based on data from the Development and Access to Information report produced by IFLA in partnership with the Technology and Social Change Group at the University of Washington, as well as IFLA's own Library Map of the World.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- *Austria has a relatively dense network of public and community libraries, above the average for Western and Central Europe, but a relatively low number of professional staff. Instead, the country makes considerable use of volunteers. Only around a third of public and community libraries offer internet access, but they remain well-used by the population. Similarly, while the number of academic libraries per 100 000 people is higher than the regional average, the number of staff is lower.*
- *Austria is a relatively strong performer across the pillars of the development and access to information framework, in particular as concerns equality. Nonetheless, it scores below the average for developed countries on numbers of mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people, and around the average on skills. There is also a four point gender gap in terms of internet access. Connected and well-equipped libraries can help in terms of offering more options for accessing the internet and developing skills.*

LIBRARIES IN AUSTRIA

Austria has over 1600 libraries in total, including over 1000 public and over 250 community libraries. This places the country just above the average for Western and Central Europe at 15.6 per 100 000 people (compared to 15 for the region), and well above the global figure of 6.9 per 100 000 people. Numbers of paid public and community library staff are somewhat lower at 9.4 per 100 000 people (compared to a regional average of 28.7 and a global average of 11.8, but the country does have high numbers of volunteers. Roughly a third of Austria's public and community libraries offer internet access (compared to an average of 2/3 globally), but the average Austrian visits a public library around once a year, and borrows two books a year.

Austria also has a strong academic library field, with 2.5 libraries per 100 000 people (compared to 1.3 in Western and Central Europe and globally), although with 11.6 academic library workers per 100 000, Austria has a lower figure than for the region (15), but still higher than the global figure (10.6). Given that, in general, there tends to be stronger correlation between numbers of librarians and positive outcomes for innovation, as opposed to libraries, ensuring that Austria's university libraries have a strong complement of professional staff could represent a useful goal.

DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN AUSTRIA

The Development and Access to Information report draws on a range of indicators highlighting where countries stand on four key pillars of access to information: connectivity, equality, skills and rights. For meaningful access to information to be a reality for all, performance needs to be strong across all of these categories.
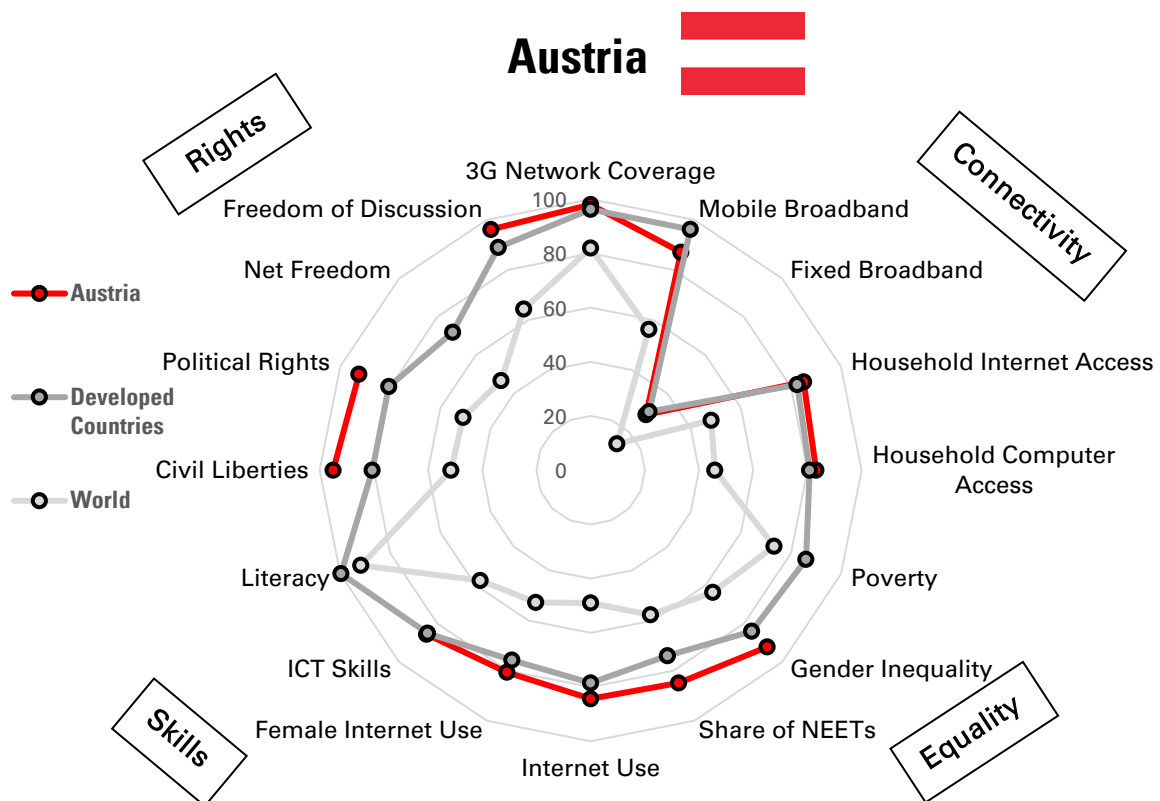
Austria is a strong performer across the four pillars of the development and access to information framework. On **connectivity**, 3G network coverage, and household internet and computer access are higher than the average for developed countries, although the number of mobile broadband subscriptions per capita is below average for the region (but higher than the global average). With internet use also above average, this suggests that the challenge now will be to help ensure that those who remain offline are not excluded – a task for which connected libraries can be well-suited.

Concerning **equality**, Austria performs well both on gender equality and the share of young adults not in employment, education or training, while comparable figures on poverty are not available. This indicates that levels of

exclusion are relatively low. Nonetheless, there is a four percentage point gap in internet use between men and women which deserves exploration.

On **skills**, while comparable literacy figures are not available, Austria scores solidly at the regional average on the skills pillar of the ICT development index, although this does of course leave room for improvement. On **rights**, Austria is a very good performer compared to global and regional figures on civil liberties, political rights and freedom of discussion, indicating that citizens are broadly free to use information.

On the basis of the data, it appears that key challenges for Austria are likely to be working further to build digital skills and close the digital gender divide, in order to ensure that everyone can benefit to the maximum from access to information.

How to read the graph: this graph displays a range of indicators used within the DA2I framework, adjusted to fit on a scale of 0-100, where 100 is the most positive outcome in terms of access to information.

TABLE OF DATA

See below for explanations. * = or latest available year. Regional averages are based on available data.

PILLAR	INDICATOR	AUSTRIA	Year	DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	Year	WORLD	Year
CONNECTIVITY	3G Network Coverage	98.00	2016	96.23	2016	81.92%	2016
	Mobile Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	87.07	2016	96.15	2016	56.22	2016
	Fixed Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	28.96	2016	30.55	2016	13.71	2016
	Household Internet Access	85.10	2016	82.49	2016	48.16%	2016
	Household Computer Access	83.20	2016	80.82	2016	45.88%	2016
EQUALITY	Poverty (Share of pop'n below national poverty line)			13.99	2015*	26.69%	2015*
	Gender Inequality (0 = More equal, 1 = Less equal)	0.08	2015	0.16	2015	0.36*	2015*
	Share of NEETs	7.52	2015	12.95	2015*	21.12%	2015*
	Internet Use	84.32	2016	78.50	2016*	49%	2016*
	Female Internet Use	80.70	2016	75.85	2016*	52.79%	2016*
SKILLS	ICT Skills	8.56	2017	8.51	2017	5.76	2017
	Literacy			99.67	2015	91.75	2015
RIGHTS	Civil Liberties (0 = least free, 60 = most free)	57.00	2018	48.33	2018	30.9	2018
	Political Rights (0 = least free, 40 = most free)	37.00	2018	32.24	2018	20.37	2018
	Net Freedom (0 = most free, 100 = least free)			28.02	2016	53.29	2016
	Freedom of Discussion	0.96	2016	0.89	2016	0.64	2016

EXPLANATION OF INDICATORS

3G Network Coverage: this provides a measure of whether one part of the basic infrastructure for connectivity exists, although in itself is not enough to guarantee access (users need a device and a relevant subscription to be able to get online). Source: ITU

Mobile Broadband (Mobile Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how many people can use mobile internet, opening up many – if not all – of the possibilities that internet access brings. One person may have more than one subscription. Source: ITU

Fixed Broadband (Fixed Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how widespread home or business internet access is. Fixed access is often associated with the possibility to connect computers to make more advanced uses of the internet. Source: ITU

Household Internet Access (Share of Households with Internet Access): access to the internet at home allows for access to information at any time without having to go outside, but may be controlled by some members of the family. Source: ITU

Household Computer Access (Share of Households with a Computer): this focuses on access to computers. This is crucial for people to be able to carry out more advanced activities on the internet that might be impossible on a phone, such as writing resumes or analysing data. Source: ITU

Poverty: this indicator measures the number of people living below the national poverty line, which varies from country to country. It is a measure of economic inequality in a country. The indicator is inversed in the chart (i.e. the share of people not under the poverty line). Source: World Bank

Gender Inequality: this is calculated using the Gender Inequality Index. This index uses a basket of indicators in different areas of social development including: reproductive health, proportion of women in parliament, relative shares of men and women with at least some secondary education, and labour market participation in order to provide a broad idea of the extent of gender inequality in a country. The indicator runs from 0 (most equal) to 1 (least equal) and is inversed and adapted in the chart above. Source: UNDP

Share of NEETS (People aged 15-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training): this measures the share of young people cut off from education or the job market. Being 'NEET' can bring long-term scarring effects, and so reducing numbers is a key priority. The indicator is inversed and adapted in the chart (i.e. the share of young people who are not NEET). Source: ILO.

Internet Use (Share of People Using the Internet): looking beyond household access data (which will be affected by the structure of households in general), this gives a figure for the number of people using the internet. Source: ITU

Female Internet Use: this measure, in conjunction with the share of the overall population using the internet, allows us to understand to what extent there is a gender digital divide. Source: ITU

ICT Skills: there are relatively few global metrics of ICT skills, with those that exist only focusing on certain regions. The Skills Sub-Index of the ICT Development Index created by the ITU aims to work in this direction using levels of secondary and tertiary education enrolment, plus mean years of schooling, as proxies. Source: ITU

Literacy: this measures literacy among 15-24 year olds – i.e. people who have finished formal education. While there are online resources available for people with low literacy, being able to read, type, and understand information remains a fundamental skill. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Civil Liberties: this provides an indication of the degree to which citizens of a country enjoy fundamental civic rights, including freedom of expression and association, as well as the strength of the rule of law, based on expert judgements. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 60 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Political Rights: this provides a measure of the rights people have to participate in the political process, including fair and free elections, political pluralism, and the functioning of government in general. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 40 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Net Freedom: this metric assesses the level of restrictions on rights online by both public and private actors. It draws on assessments of obstacles to access (legal, economic and practical), limits on content, and violations of rights. Scores run from 100 (least free) to 0 (most free) and so are inverted in the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Freedom of Discussion: this indicator looks at whether people are able to hold private discussions without fear of repercussions either from the authorities or society in general due to cultural restrictions or norms. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 1 (most free), and so are adapted to fit int the graphic above. Source: V-Dem dataset codebook.