



## European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination

### NEWS REPORT

<b>Country:</b>	Austria
<b>Title:</b>	Short outline of gender related topics of the new government for the legislative period of 2017-2022
<b>Date:</b>	26 February 2018
<b>Expert:</b>	Martina Thomasberger
<b>Context</b>	
<b>Issue at stake:</b>	Government policies concerning women and gender related issues.
<b>Ground of discrimination:</b>	Sex
<b>Sources:</b>	Policy development; " <i>Zusammen Für unser Österreich. Regierungsprogramm 2017-2022</i> "
<b>Field:</b>	Other

### Content

**New government presents their agenda:** From the parliamentary elections of 16 Oct 2017, the conservative People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP*) emerged as the strongest political party. The chairman, Sebastian Kurz, who had rescinded the former coalition with the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ*) in May of 2017, entered into coalition negotiations with the third populist right wing Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ*). After extended talks, the two new coalition partners presented their government program and the new ministers on Monday 18 December 2017.

The new government program requires re-structuring of the previous range of authority of federal ministries. The Ministry for Health and Women's issues is discontinued and its competences are transferred to the Federal Ministry for Social and Labour Affairs and Consumer Protection.

The government consists of fourteen ministers in total of which five are women. The new female Federal Ministers are instated for federal administration in the areas of Science, Research and Economy (Margarete Schramböck, ÖVP), Agriculture and Environment (Elisabeth Köstinger, ÖVP), Foreign Affairs, Europe and Integration (Karin Kneissl, independent), Health, Women's Issues, Social and Labour Affairs, and Consumer Protection (Beate Hartinger, FPÖ), Family and Youth Affairs (Juliane Bogner-Strauß, ÖVP). Additionally a female undersecretary has been appointed to the Federal Ministry of Interior (Karoline Edtstadler, ÖVP).

The new coalition partners also presented their working program for the coming legislative period. In its preamble the program stresses the values of freedom, homeland, effort and equal educational opportunities and family which is considered as one of the principle governmental tasks defining it as the "community of men and women with mutual children" (p. 9).

Under the heading "Fairness and Justice" family and women policies are presented in the same chapter which also covers generational equality, social security in general, and pensions. The analysis shows that family oriented policies take a much more central and important role than women's issues. In detail some of the family-oriented policies show a tendency to re-inforce the populist messages that contributed to the election success of the populist right, e.g. the adherence to the plan for indexation of family benefits in cases of benefit export to other European countries. The government also plans a new income tax reduction for families with children.

The new government also plans to evaluate Austrian parental leave legislation with the goal to extend protection against dismissal until the third birthday of the child for which a parent receives a small children's benefit (*Kinderbetreuungsgeld*).

The program puts much weight on reconciliation of work and family life, e.g. by promising improvement and extension of child care institutions and an extension of care facilities during school vacations. While these plans need further specification, the new government has announced to proceed immediately with the plan to extend school vacations by another week during autumn covering the public holidays of 26 October and 1 Nov.

One of the most controversial and most discussed plans of the new government, was the announcement to extend the possibilities for longer working hours (up to 12 hours per day and up to 60 hours per week with shortened break and rest periods).

Under the sub-heading "Women" (p. 105), the first bullet-point is "same wage for work of same value". For this the new government intends to evaluate collective agreements in coordination with the social partners in order to find and eliminate hidden discriminations and especially the consideration of unpaid parental leave for regular advancements in pay schemes. Additionally, the new government intends to re-structure the existing federal requirements for gender-related income reporting.

Under the bullet-point "social security for women, also in old age" (p. 106) the top priority is an improvement of public payments substituting child alimony (*Unterhaltsvorschuss*).

**Internet link source:**

[https://www.bundestkanzleramt.gv.at/documents/131008/569203/Regierungsprogramm\\_2017%e2%80%932022.pdf/b2fe3f65-5a04-47b6-913d-2fe512ff4ce6](https://www.bundestkanzleramt.gv.at/documents/131008/569203/Regierungsprogramm_2017%e2%80%932022.pdf/b2fe3f65-5a04-47b6-913d-2fe512ff4ce6)