

**STATEMENT BY**  
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**PRESENTING AUSTRIA'S**  
**COMBINED SEVENTH & EIGHTH PERIODIC REPORT**  
**TO THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**Geneva, 13 February 2013**

*Check against delivery*

Madam Chair,  
Distinguished Members of the Committee,

It is a pleasure for me to present to you today the measures taken by Austria in its efforts to implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Our delegation consists of representatives of nearly all Austrian federal ministries: the Federal Chancellery, where the Minister for Women is situated, and the federal ministries for European and International Affairs; Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection; Finance; Health; the Interior; Justice; Education, Arts and Culture; Economics, Family and Youth; as well as Science and Research. This fact underscores the high priority Austria attaches to CEDAW. You can find the names and functions of the members of the delegation in a list which has been distributed to you.

Austria was among the first countries to sign CEDAW and it has ratified it already in 1982. This has given the Austrian policy on gender equality tremendous impetus. Today, more than thirty years later, CEDAW continues to be a frame of reference for any action taken on women's rights and gender equality in Austria.

Permit me now to convey the greetings of the Austrian Federal Minister for Women, Ms. Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek, who unfortunately cannot be here today. She wishes us a constructive debate which should help Austria to take further steps towards achieving our common goal of gender equality.

Austria attaches great importance to co-operating with NGOs in the sphere of women's rights. For this reason, the Federal Minister for Women provided financial support to permit NGO representatives to present the main findings of the shadow report to you.

The situation of women in the labour market represents a major challenge. With the "**National Action Plan for the Equality of Women and Men in the Labour Market**" of June 2010, based on our current government programme, an important step was taken to improve the position of women in the labour market.

The National Action Plan contains four strategic goals:

1. Diversification of educational paths and career options,
2. Raising the rate of labour force participation and of full-time employment of women,
3. Appointing more women to executive and managerial positions,
4. Closing the gap between the incomes of women and men.

On the basis of these goals, a comprehensive package of 55 practical measures was elaborated with the involvement of all Austrian ministries, federal provinces, social partners and many NGOs, companies and scientists. Many of these measures have already been implemented and further action is currently being taken.

While the labour market participation rate of women in Austria significantly exceeds that of other EU Member States, it still remains clearly far below that of men. Also, the percentage of women in Austria working part-time ranks amongst the highest in the European Union. In 2011, the employment rate of women stood at 69.6 per cent, compared to 80.8 per cent for men. 44 per cent of the female labour force worked part-time.

In order to raise the labour force participation rate of women, a range of measures is required, such as the creation of high-quality employment opportunities for women, up-skilling programmes, and, in particular, further measures making it easier for women to reconcile work and family obligations.

Therefore, the Federal Government and the Austrian federal provinces concluded an agreement on the extension of institutional child-care facilities for children up to the age of six. Already a previous agreement had provided a significant amount of federal public funds for this goal. The focus of the new agreement is, in particular, on day-care for children under the age of three, allowing parents to remain in full-time employment.

With regard to the responsibility for child-care, traditional role **stereotypes** persist tenaciously. The Austrian 2010 Women's Report has shown that women still do two thirds of child-care and household work although more women than ever before are employed or self-employed. Therefore, the Minister for Women, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the social partners and the Federation of Austrian Industries, launched an information campaign directed at the business community with the aim of motivating more fathers to take parental leave.

Since January 2011, the Austrian federal civil service has been offering all public employees the option of taking one month of unpaid leave during the maternity protection period. Through this so-called "Daddy's month", men are to be encouraged to make their contribution to child-care.

As compared to other EU Member States, Austria ranks amongst the countries with the highest **gender-specific wage gaps**. An important step to counteract this trend was taken on 1 March 2011 with the introduction of the obligation of companies to draw up income reports. To help companies perform this task, a guideline for drawing up such income reports was prepared and workshops were organized. We believe that greater transparency of incomes will contribute to lessening the pay gap.

In addition, job advertisements now have to state the salary offered. In case of non-compliance, sanctions can be imposed. We can observe that the readiness of companies to meet these obligations is very pronounced.

In addition, an **on-line tool allowing interested persons to calculate their incomes** was introduced. At present, an update of this tool is in the planning phase.

Austria pursues a **dual strategy** with regard to achieving the goal of gender equality: gender mainstreaming on the one hand and affirmative action for the advancement of women on the other.

With regard to the **specific affirmative actions for women** as set forth in Article 4 of the Convention, important steps have been taken in Austria.

**With a view to raising the share of women on supervisory boards of state-controlled companies** an important measure was introduced on 14 March 2011. The Federal Government committed itself to increasing the share of women on supervisory boards of companies in which the State has a minimum stake of 50 per cent to one quarter by the end of 2013 and to 35 per cent by the end of 2018. One year after the adoption of this decision, the target of the first phase has already been attained. This measure also has a positive impact on efforts to reduce gender-specific wage differences.

The amendment of the Universities Organization Act of 2009 provided for a women's quota of 40 per cent for all university staff and bodies. In the event of non-compliance, a sanctioning process is triggered: an arbitration commission may be seized on the ground of improper composition of a university body. As soon as such a plea is made, the body concerned cannot act until a decision is taken. This procedure has proved an extremely effective instrument for the advancement of women.

In the Austrian federal civil service, the provisions governing affirmative action for women have stipulated a women's quota since 1993. As of 1 January 2012, this quota was raised to 50 per cent.

In order to effectively promote the increasing trend of women assuming management positions, the Federal Chancellery has taken several concrete measures. These include an Austria-wide, indicator-based controlling system under which the federal ministries set concrete targets for the proportion of women in the highest salary groups to be reached over the next few years. These targets, as well as the current percentages, are subject to an annual audit and are to be published in the staffing plan.

With regard to **gender mainstreaming** I would like to stress one particular area, namely gender budgeting:

Gender budgeting is one of a series of instruments destined to bring about de-facto gender equality. Already since 2005, gender budgeting pilot projects have been implemented. 1 January 2009 marked a milestone: A new budgetary state objective was defined in the Federal Constitution, which requires the Federal Government, the federal provinces and the local communities to take into account the principle of de-facto equality in drafting and implementing their budgets.

From 2013 onwards, gender budgeting at the federal level means that de-facto equality of women and men shall be reached through outcome-oriented budgeting. Every federal ministry has the obligation to draw up equality objectives. Subsequently, measures designed to reach these objectives and indicators for monitoring are to be defined. The Austrian Parliament and the interested public thus gain insight into the priorities pursued by the federal ministries.

With a view to fostering continuous gender-differentiated data collection and analysis in Austria, a "Gender Index" was introduced by the Federal Minister for Women in 2011 and is published every year. The index gives a survey of gender-specific segregated data for various areas.

In the sphere of **education** it can be seen that women are better educated than ever before. They have benefitted most from the expansion of education options in recent decades. Nevertheless the share of individuals who have completed only compulsory schooling is higher for women than for men, however it is smaller for younger than for older people.

Austrian girls are, on average, more successful than boys in school. Girl's drop out rates are much lower, their achievement – taking the form of better grades - is better, boys repeat classes more frequently. Girls perform better on final examinations, even where they are a minority. Women now account for 60 per cent of the total number of holders of the secondary education certificates, whereas their share in apprenticeships amounts to mere 34.5 per cent.

Austrian girls and boys show a stereotypical behaviour when choosing a type of school, and later an occupation. Girls are overrepresented in business, social and commercial vocational schools, but vastly underrepresented in industrial-technical schools.

According to the Austrian National Action Plan for the Equality of Women and Men in the Labour Market the equality measures of the Ministry for Education concentrate on the diversification of educational and career

choices, the breaking down of role stereotypes, the furthering of gender competence and a reflective attitude of teachers and disseminators in the field of education.

The extension of a gender-sensitive vocational orientation and educational counselling is currently a priority of the Ministry for Education.

Women tend more strongly than men study at universities or colleges of applied sciences; since 2000/2001 they have been overrepresented among university students, and in the academic year 2004/2005 they overtook their male counterparts in completing their studies.

A very strong gender-specific segregation can also be observed with regard to the choice of subjects studied. The proportion of female students enrolled in technical courses amounts to mere 21.5 per cent.

Amongst university professors, the quota of women climbed from 16 per cent in 2007 to 20.6 per cent in 2011.

A milestone in the fight for the equality of lesbian and gay couples was the Act on Registered Partnerships which entered into force on 1 January 2010. For the first time it established a **comprehensive legal framework** for the **co-habitation of same-sex couples**. By mid-2012, 1,316 couples had availed themselves of this opportunity.

Permit me now to turn to a central concern of the Austrian Federal Government: the **prevention of and fight against violence directed at women**.

The comprehensive approach adopted by Austria aims, in particular, at protection against domestic violence, criminal prosecution of perpetrators, safeguarding the rights of victims and giving them support, as well as ensuring prevention and awareness-raising.

The Protection against Violence Act of 1997 created the legal basis for rapid and efficient protection of the victims of domestic violence. In 2009 a series of further important provisions was introduced: It is now deemed a crime if a perpetrator exercises persistent violence directed at another person for an extended period of time. This crime carries punishment of up to three years in prison and even longer in some specifically defined cases.

With the 1997 Act, so-called Centres for Protection against Violence were established in all federal provinces in order to offer comprehensive support to persons exposed to the threat of violence. Since 2004, these Protection Centres have been extended and the funds earmarked for them have been more than doubled. In the Violence Protection Centres the number of victims of domestic violence increased from 8,623 in 2004 to 15,533 in 2011.

Since 2008, specifically trained public prosecutors have been recruited to deal with proceedings involving violence in the immediate social environment of victims. Important steps in this direction were also taken in the training of judges. Since 2009, candidate judges, in taking their qualifying examinations, have to prove their expertise in all relevant matters relating to preventing and combating violence against women.

If a woman has fallen victim to an act of violence, she can address herself to a close-knit network offering legal and practical support. In addition to the round-the-clock free **women's helpline** staffed by experts in this field, regional counselling centres specialised on women and female teenagers who fell victim to sexual violence are installed in Austria.

To date, no specific institution is existing in Austria which offers protection and safety to girls and young women threatened or affected by **forced marriage**. In the meantime, it has been possible to reach an agreement on suitable **accommodation** for such girls and women; the costs are being borne jointly by the Federal Minister for Women and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. In the year 2013, emergency housing will be established for girls and women threatened by forced marriage. This offer will comprise not only accommodation, but also 24 hour counselling, support, assistance and crisis intervention services for threatened or affected girls and young women. Women who have become victims of human trafficking or cross-border trafficking for prostitution, can address themselves to the Intervention Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Women.

This leads me to one of the last areas that I would like to address: combating trafficking in women and girls.

In 2004, an inter-ministerial task force entrusted with combating human trafficking was set up. This task force which is under the leadership of the Foreign Ministry discusses human trafficking from the different

perspectives of the relevant federal ministries and the authorities of the federal provinces together with independent experts. In addition, the task force endeavours to continuously develop and improve measures aimed at fighting human trafficking.

With a view to achieving this goal, the task force has, in the meantime, already worked out three National Action Plans for Combating Human Trafficking, which were subsequently adopted by the Federal Government. These action plans are based on a comprehensive approach to the fight against human trafficking and define Austria's objectives in the areas of prevention, prosecution, victim support and international co-operation.

With the **Amendment to the Act Governing Compensation for Crime Victims** which is currently being debated in the Austrian Parliament, further improvements, especially for victims of trafficking, will be achieved. Under certain circumstances, they are to be granted compensation in the future even if, at the time the crime was committed, they were illegally present in Austria. With the amendment, the standard amounts of flat-rate compensation for pain and suffering will be significantly increased. Victims and their dependents who immediately after a crime receive psychological counselling are to be entitled to coverage of these costs by the Federal Government up to a defined ceiling.

Promoting women's participation and protecting women's rights have been among the priorities of **Austria's foreign policy** for many years. Austria was among the first countries worldwide to adopt a National Action Plan on Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2007. In 2010, Austria decided to undertake a comprehensive review of its national targets and activities aimed at implementing the resolution. This review process resulted in the adoption of the "Revised National Action Plan on Implementing SC Resolution 1325" in January 2012.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2009 and 2010, Austria was strongly committed to the topic "Women, Peace and Security" and was actively involved in the establishment of the position of a UN Special Representative and the adoption of "Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements" for sexual violence occurring in conflicts. Furthermore, Austria, by taking a number of concrete steps, supported the elaboration of indicators to measure progress made in the implementation of Resolution 1325. Continuing its commitment, Austria made the promotion and protection of women's rights one of the priorities

of its current membership of the UN Human Rights Council. Ultimately, in December 2012, Austria, for the first time, nominated a candidate for the **CEDAW-Committee** in the person of Dr. Lilian Hofmeister.

**By way of concluding** permit me to state that we cannot overemphasize how important it is to address the issue of women's rights, both nationally and internationally. In order to move forward with the full implementation of women's rights and to protect what has already been achieved, we have to go on fighting, not least because attempts are being made to call these achievements into question.

We are looking forward to your questions and to providing more details on the measures described in our State Party Reports and on the initiatives launched in the meantime by the Austrian Federal Government.

I thank you.