

# DELIVERABLE D.T1.1.2

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**In depth study of refugee policies and  
practices of the five cities involved - Wien**

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**06 2019**



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## 1. Overview of national asylum policies

*Clarification of terminology for Austrian terms with regard to migration and asylum*

(The Expert Council for Integration, 2018, p. 100f):

- **“Asylum seeker”** is a person who has filed an asylum application but the procedure is still ongoing.
- **“Recognised Refugees (Persons entitled to Asylum)”** is a person with a positive decision on their asylum application. A person is granted asylum on the basis of the Geneva Refugee Convention. Grounds are when a person faces persecution in their country of origin based on “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political conviction”. It must be proven, that there is no protection in their country of origin.
- **“Persons entitled to Subsidiary Protection”** is a person who has not been granted asylum but instead international protection according to the European Convention on Human Rights “if his or her life or health is threatened in the country of origin as a result of war or torture” (ibid.).

Austria is known for its restrictive policies in the fields of migration, refugee acceptance and asylum dating back to the 1990s, when the country became a destination country rather than a country of transition (as it was during the 1980s) (Gruber, 2017). Like Germany and Switzerland, the “exclusive model of citizenship regime” makes it hard for both immigrants and refugees to gain naturalisation or to be integrated in the country’s political life. Immigration and asylum laws became even stricter under the right-wing coalition (of ÖVP<sup>2</sup> and FPÖ<sup>3</sup>) in government from 2000 to 2005 and from 2017 to 2019 (Merhaut and Stern, 2018).

Historically, Austria has received some flows of refugees after the Second World War: in 1950s from Hungary; in 1960s from countries of former Czechoslovakia; in the 1980s from Poland; in the 1990s from former Yugoslavia (Bauböck, 1996), and most recently refugees mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. However, a huge share of the refugees from the 1960s until the 1980s

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<sup>2</sup> Österreichische Volkspartei.

<sup>3</sup> Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs.

moved back to their countries of origin. Additionally, guest workers from Turkey were accepted due to specific agreements (*Gastarbeiterverträge*) signed by Austria and Turkey in 1964 to compensate the shortage in labour force (Hahn & Stöger, 2014). As per these agreements, many workers returned, while others reunited with their families and stayed. To smooth the integration of the latter, very few integration measures were taken, and this lack of intervention is still evident today (Peace, 2018).

The newer migration history of Austria begins with the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s where people migrated from Central and Eastern European countries, mainly driven by the Yugoslav Wars. With Austria joining the European Union in 1995 and adopting the Schengen Agreement in 1997, migration within the European member countries, especially Germany as well as Central and Eastern European countries, became one of the biggest regions of origin for labour and student immigration to Austria since then. Since 2008 a diversification of migration patterns can be observed, where particularly migrants from regions in South and East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa came to Austria and especially to Vienna while the migration flows from Germany and from the EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe have solidified. Since the 2000s and until now war refugees from Chechnya and Syria as well as migration caused by societal and military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan constitute the latest migration inflows. The share of foreign-born people in Austria has been rising over the years. In 2008 about 15% (approx. 1.2 M people) and in 2018 about 19% (approx. 1.7 M people) of the Austrian population was foreign born. Population projections predict that immigration to Austria will continue to be an important factor for the population dynamics and composition. Possible migrations flows might come from candidate countries for future membership of the European Union, e.g. Montenegro. (Bauer, Fendt, Haydn, Rimmel, & Seibold, 2018; The Expert Council for Integration, 2018)

Migration policy is a domain where various tiers of government share responsibilities. For Austria, five administrative levels have competencies, although diverse, in this policy sector: international, EU, national, federal, and municipal.

Migration and asylum are phenomena that have been long regulated by international organisations, through international agreements, primarily the *Geneva Refugee Convention* (1973), and the *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) (1958). More importantly, as a member of the European Union since 1995, Austria has incorporated the EU regulations on this matter, such as the *Dublin Regulation* (1990), the *Schengen Convention* (1990), and the *Safe Third Countries Regulation* (1998) (*Drittstaatenregelung*) (Merhaut and Stern, 2018) and the *Charter of Fundamental Human Rights of the European Union* (2009). The latter resulted in directives, such as the *Status Directive*, *Procedural Directive*, and *Dublin III Regulation*, granting or rejecting the individual applications by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, BFA) (BMI, 2019; Josipovic and Reeger, 2018).

The legislative competence on migration lies with the national government. A set of laws and documents regulate migration and asylum seeking. Among them, the main Acts are: the *Asylum Act*, the *Integration Agreement*, and the *Aliens Law Amendment Act*. In what follows, a brief description of these Acts will be provided.

Replacing the Austrian Asylum Act of 1968, the *Asylum Act* (AsylG) came into force in 1991 and regulated all the procedures regarding asylum – a term that acquired a legal meaning since the Act (Merhaut and Stern, 2018). On an institutional level, in the 1990s, the interior ministry took over issues related to migration from the social ministry. This date marks the beginning of stricter policies on migration and asylum in Austria, with increasing numbers of acts/policies as well as the access to Austria being further restricted. The restrictive asylum policies

were applied by the Great Coalition between the Social democratic and Conservative parties (SPÖ<sup>4</sup>-ÖVP) to maintain power and gain further voters. The rationale of AsylG was to make Austria an unattractive destination (e.g. long duration of asylum procedure) and therefore discouraging asylum applications as well as their approvals. The nation-state acts as legislative authority to consolidate the Asylum Act (BMI, 2019; Josipovic and Reeger, 2018; Rheindorf and Wodak, 2018).

More recently, in 2002, the *Integration Agreement (Integrationsvereinbarung)* placed the responsibility to provide welfare benefits to migrants onto the federal states. At the same time, migrants commit to integrate, for instance by advancing their language skills. Underlying this agreement is the aim to protect the state from asylum and welfare abuse (Biffl, 2017; Rheindorf and Wodak, 2018). Not until 2010, the integration of migrants was no longer marginalized at federal level with the National Action Plan for Integration (NAP.I), a collaboration between cities, social partners, NGOs and experts, thus no longer of sole responsibility of the federal government. (OECD, 2018)

A third legislative act regulating asylum seeking is the *Aliens Law Amendment Act* (145/2017), which expanded the original Aliens Law (*Fremdenrecht*). According to the Aliens Law Amendment Act, asylum seekers have to reside in the federal province where they applied for asylum, in order to avoid rural-urban migration. People from defined safe countries (according to the Safe Third Countries Regulation) and people applying for the second time can also be made staying in their accommodation (BMI, 2019; EMN, 2017).

In addition to the legal documents sketched out above, it is worth mentioning the so-called *50-Points-Integration Plan* (50 Punkte-Plan) on e.g. language, education, intercultural dialogue,

<sup>4</sup> Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs.

housing etc. from 2015, a joint plan devised by the Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, BMEIA), and the Expert Commission (*Expertenkommission*). This plan introduced measures on education and language, intercultural dialogue, regional living environment and labour skills (BMEIA, 2015).

As for asylum seeking, the legal framework of deportation and expulsion changed over time. Before the changes in policies in the 1990s, deportations were only possible when there was a violation of the rights or if a migrant was considered as a danger to public safety. Additionally, expulsions (*Ausweisungen*) and deportations were possible on grounds of illegal entry. However, new possibilities for a right to stay for rejected asylum seekers have evolved on a federal level, even though they are restricted to, for instance, humanitarian residence permit or subsidiary protection (Merhaut and Stern, 2018). In 2018, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, BFA) introduced the programme “*Voluntary return – a new start with prospect*”, which provides financial incentives to encourage the assisted return to the countries of origin (OECD, 2018).

At federal level, the granting of the legal status, the entrance and reception, deportation and voluntary return, as well as accommodation and Basic Welfare Support during the whole asylum process are regulated by the immigration and asylum legislation (*Aliens Law, Law on Settlement and Residence, Asylum Law*, see appendix) (OECD, 2018). The federal states (Bundesländer, e.g. Lower Austria or Vienna), where applicants are registered, are responsible for the Basic Welfare

Support<sup>5</sup> (2004) (accommodation<sup>6</sup>, food, clothing, health insurance, sometimes spending money) or social aid (e.g. Needs-Based-Minimum Benefit) for asylum applicants, in case they do not have any private income or financial support. After asylum is granted, the Needs-Based Minimum Benefit (bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung; which varies across federal states) is available for refugees; however, since 2017, integration courses (language courses and value and orientation courses (Wertekurse)) are compulsory to receive this benefit.

All in all, as Josipovic and Reeger (2018, p. 46) argue:

“[t]he federal overall policy goal however, aimed at reducing the number of newcomers in the long run. (...) While the principle of asylum is deeply embedded in the Austrian constitution and European Union law, the governance of immigration and asylum has in recent years been repeatedly impeded by the Constitutional Court (VfGH), which intervened in both federal and provincial laws that aimed at restricting refugee’s rights and entitlements.”

Finally, at the lowest level are municipalities, that do not have any formal competencies, but instead planning and (urban) distribution responsibilities (Josipovic and Reeger, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Basic Welfare Support includes: “Accommodation and provision of food; Monthly pocket money for applicants in organized reception facilities and for unaccompanied minors but not in cases of individual accommodation; Medical examination and health care; Measures for persons in need of nursing care; Information, counselling and social support concerning their stay in Austria and voluntary return; Costs of transport in the case of transfers and official summonses; Travel expenses for school attendance and supply of school requisites for pupils; Measures for structuring the daily routine if necessary; Clothing in cash or in kind; Costs of burial; Return travel costs and a single payment by way of interim financial assistance in the event of voluntary return to the country of origin in special cases.” (EMN, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> Asylum seekers are distributed among the federal states according to quota system, where the federal states have to take in and provide accommodation according to their population size. Vienna is exceeding its quota, while other federal states are not providing the number of places required from the quota. (AIDA, 2018) “Asylum seekers are spread across all federal states along the lines of a quota system based on the size of the population in the province. Funding for basic assistance for asylum seekers is divided between the federal level and the federal states at the ratio of 60:40.” (OECD, 2018, p. 48)

## **2. Origin, development and consolidation of refugee policy making**

Being a city and a state at the same time, Vienna has a unique status in decision-making, which grants not only power to regulate and access resources, but to implement policies, e.g. in housing or integration as well as financial subsidies (Merhaut and Stern, 2018). Although the federal level can overrule the local/ city level, the city of Vienna can directly clarify with the federal level because of its special status. (OECD, 2018)

### ***2.1. The regional level***

Austria being a federal state, the regional level corresponds to the nine Austrian states. In the domain of migration policy, the federal states have the power to make decisions about the reception of asylum seekers. With the amendment of the Aliens Law passed in 2015, the federal level has the power to intervene in the accommodation of asylum seekers (Merhaut and Stern, 2018). Being a federal state, the local and state level are responsible for developing and implementing actions in Austria (Josipovic and Reeger, 2018).

Internationally as well as nationally, Vienna is known as a socially responsible city, mostly because of the “Red Vienna” history (cf. Novy et al., 2001), characterised by a high share of social housing programmes and accompanying social policies. For what concerns migration, Vienna adopts an “integration-oriented diversity policy”. From an administrative viewpoint, the Municipal Department 17 of the city of Vienna: Integration and Diversity (MA 17) belongs to the Administrative Group for Education, Integration, Youth and Personnel headed by the Executive City Councillor (*Amtsführender Stadtrat*). The MA17 is a special body responsible for issues related to migration, integration policies, research, and implementation of respective programmes at the federal provincial level (ICMPD, 2018). As observed by the authors of a report published by the OECD (2018, p. 43), “[t]he decision to embed the topic of integration and diversity in the



regular city administration (as MA17) represents its centrality and importance for the city and its population”. The MA17 works with different partners, internally within the city government and externally with other actors, and functions as a point of contact for NGOs.

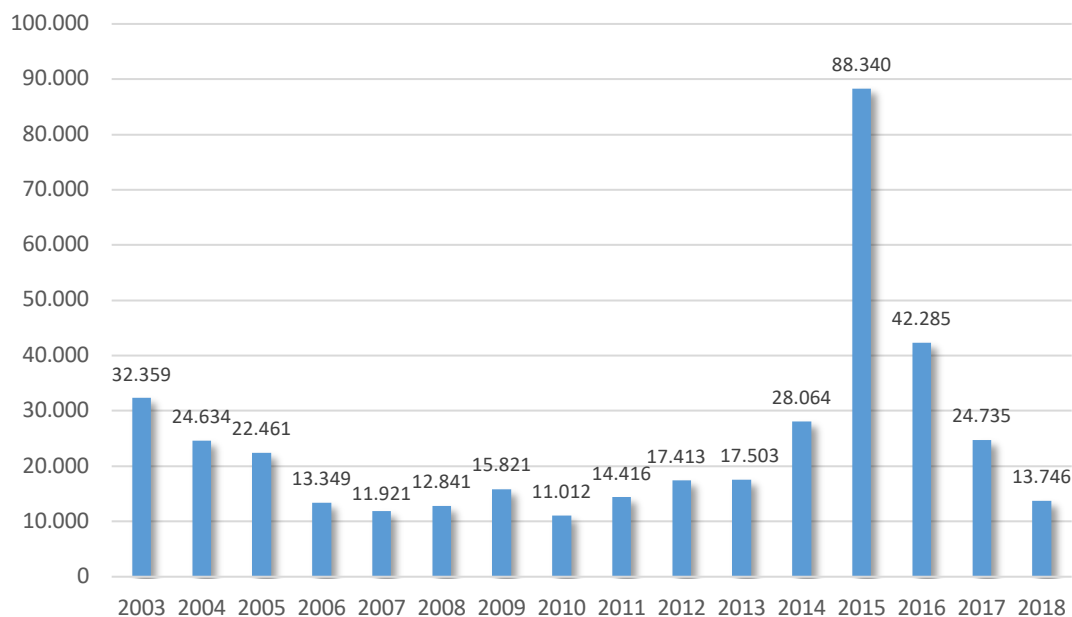
Additionally, since 2010, the MA17 has implemented the biannual “Integration and Diversity Monitoring Report of the city of Vienna” (*Wiener Integrations- und Diversitätsmonitor*) to evaluate the integration in the city of Vienna and to assess the gaps between migrants and non-migrants (OECD, 2018; cf. Stadt Wien MA17, 2016).

“Integration from day 1” is the slogan of the Viennese integration policy since the so called “refugee crisis” in 2015. (Stadt Wien MA17, 2016). Before that, integration measures were available only for people who received a positive asylum status. Vienna’s integration policy is based on four pillars, namely: 1) language learning and multilingualism, 2) education and work, 3) living together and participation and 4) objectivity (assessment and information). Indeed, the city of Vienna implemented the programme “Start Wien” in 2008, which offers coaching, counseling and provides information to help new migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers settle. Within the programme, participants can take a competency check (*Kompetenzcheck*) (after age 21) to assess the skills and previous experiences of the newly arrived. However, in the decision-making process on contents and programs with regard to integration measures, no migrants are involved directly in “Start Wien”, only migrant associations. Often NGOs are entrusted with migration and integration issues by the city government. For these matters, the city set up funds for special target groups, e.g. Vienna Social Fund (*Fonds Soziales Wien*, FSW), Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (*Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds*, WAFF), Interface Vienna, Vienna Business Agency (*Wirtschaftsagentur Wien*), Counselling Centre for Migrants (*Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen*). (Josipovic and Reeger, 2018; OECD, 2018)

## ***2.2. The local (city) level***

To translate from federal provincial to local (city) level it must be pointed out, that the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) holds offices in the city districts, which organize stakeholder meetings, including NGOs, city administration, or the Urban Renewal Offices (*Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung*), especially in those Viennese districts with high shares of migrants (ICMPD, 2018). The local offices of the MA 17 discuss matters related to migration and asylum with the people living in the neighborhoods. A similar task is pursued by the *Gebietsbetreuung*, which facilitate good neighbourhood relations in the districts in the framework of urban regeneration. The Asylum Coordination Austria (*Asylkoordination Österreich*) informs the public about issues like refugees through workshops as well as discussion rounds (OECD, 2018). However, the policy-making process is still top-down. In effect, as the OECD (2018, p. 52) notes, “(i)nstitutionalised entry points for migrant participation in policy-making processes at the local level are still lacking.”

Figure 1 Annual Development of Asylum Applications in Austria 2003-2018



(Source: BMI, 2019)

Table 1 Application and granting of protection status at first and second instance in Austria, 2018

	Applicants in 2018	Refugee status recognized	Subsidiary protection	Other Decisions	Rejection <sup>7</sup>	Total Decisions	Rejection rate
<b>Total</b>	13.746	14.696	4.191	3.259	12.897	30.852	41.80%

Breakdown by countries of origin of the total numbers

Syria	3.329	4.951	414	102	472	5.525	8.54%
Afghanistan	2.120	4.979	2.062	914	3.986	9.879	40.35%
Iran	1.107	1.370	51	172	278	1.820	15.27%
Russian Fed	969	526	109	161	734	1.421	51.65%
Iraq	762	731	536	609	1.314	2.654	49.51%
Nigeria	679	18	29	87	1.070	1.175	91.06%
Somalia	523	768	665	54	693	1.515	45.74%
Georgia	457	3	30	85	531	619	85.78%
Unknown	438	656	56	43	120	819	14.65%
India	272	2	1	79	352	433	81.29%

(Source: BMI, 2019)

<sup>7</sup> In this report, the data provided by BMI, 2019 has been used as official data. As such, the number of rejections differs significantly to the report published by UNHCR, 2019 which is stating a rejection number of 6,804 in the year 2018. This discrepancy will be clarified in the course of report finalization.

### ***2.3. Discussion***

Refugee policy-making in Vienna is based on a long experience that developed over time into a process with shared competences at regional and local levels. Its strong policy competences both as a state and a city, coupled with its long-standing reputation as a “social city”, shape Vienna’s migration policy-making. The city’s “Integration from day 1” programme, with its welcoming approach, stands contrast to the restrictive policies at the national level. Not only for internal quality assessment, but also as a legitimisation tool for negotiations e.g. with federal politics, the “Integration and Diversity Monitoring Report of the city of Vienna” (Wiener Integrations- und Diversitätsmonitor) is characterised by a managerial approach to refugees’ integration at the city and state level in Vienna.

### 3. The multi-level dimension of refugee policy-making

In the realm of migration policy, the multi-level structure of governance is particularly evident when it comes to the sharing of responsibilities in social policies, e.g. payments or distribution of refugees, between the federal state and the Austrian provincial states. The resulting agreements are called “§15a agreements” according to the federal constitutional law<sup>8</sup>. Due to the special status of being a federal state and a city at the same time, the city of Vienna has significant powers on policy development. Therefore, the nation state (Republic of Austria) and federal states (e.g. Lower Austria) cooperate on funding opportunities, also for refugees. Since 2010, the National Action Plan for Integration (NAP.I) tries to bring together all levels of government into integration measures by connecting ministries, municipal departments, and agencies. The Advisory Board within the NAP.I established a network to meet regularly with the government, the states, and social partners (OECD, 2018).

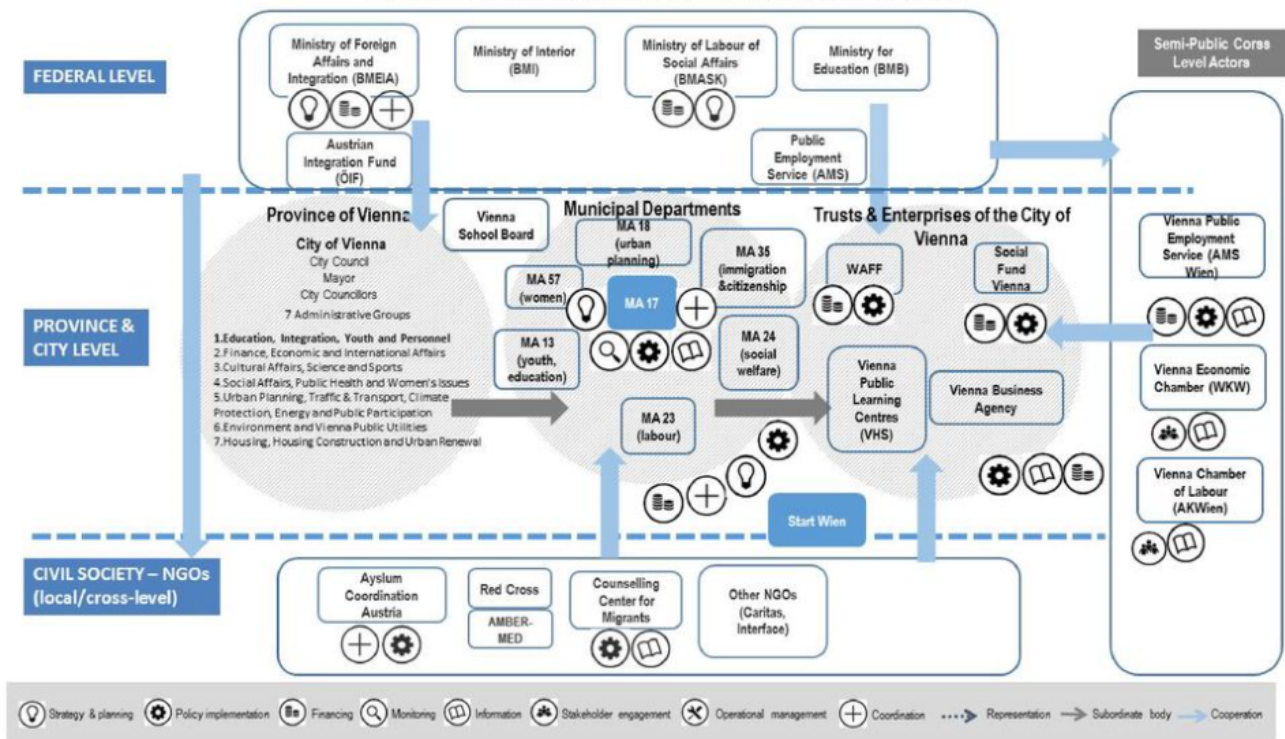
Figure 20 shows the institutions involved in migrant integration in a multi-level governance environment. As can be seen, the state / city level is particularly important, with many actors engaging in the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers. Especially at the city level, the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) and other organisations involved meet regularly to discuss issues related to migration and integration (ICMPD, 2018). The MA 17 “(...) develops and implements its own measures and project for migrants, facilitates

<sup>8</sup> Vereinbarung zwischen dem Bund und den Ländern gemäß Art. 15a B-VG über gemeinsame Maßnahmen zur vorübergehenden Grundversorgung für hilfs- und schutzbedürftige Fremde (Asylwerber, Asylberechtigte, Vertriebene und andere aus rechtlichen oder faktischen Gründen nicht abschiebbare Menschen) in Österreich. (Grundversorgungsvereinbarung - Art. 15a B-VG)

Agreement between the nation state and the federal states pursuant to Art. 15a B-VG on joint measures for temporary basic care for vulnerable and vulnerable strangers (asylum seekers, persons entitled to asylum, displaced persons and other persons not deportable for legal or factual reasons) in Austria (Basic Care Act - Art. 15a B-VG), see: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20003460> (latest access: 24-09-2019)

mainstreaming of integration and diversity matters into local policy making and conducts diversity and integration monitoring to evaluate progress made in the city” (OECD, 2018, p. 48).

Figure 2 Multi-level institutional mapping for migrant integration



(Source: OECD, 2018, p. 41)

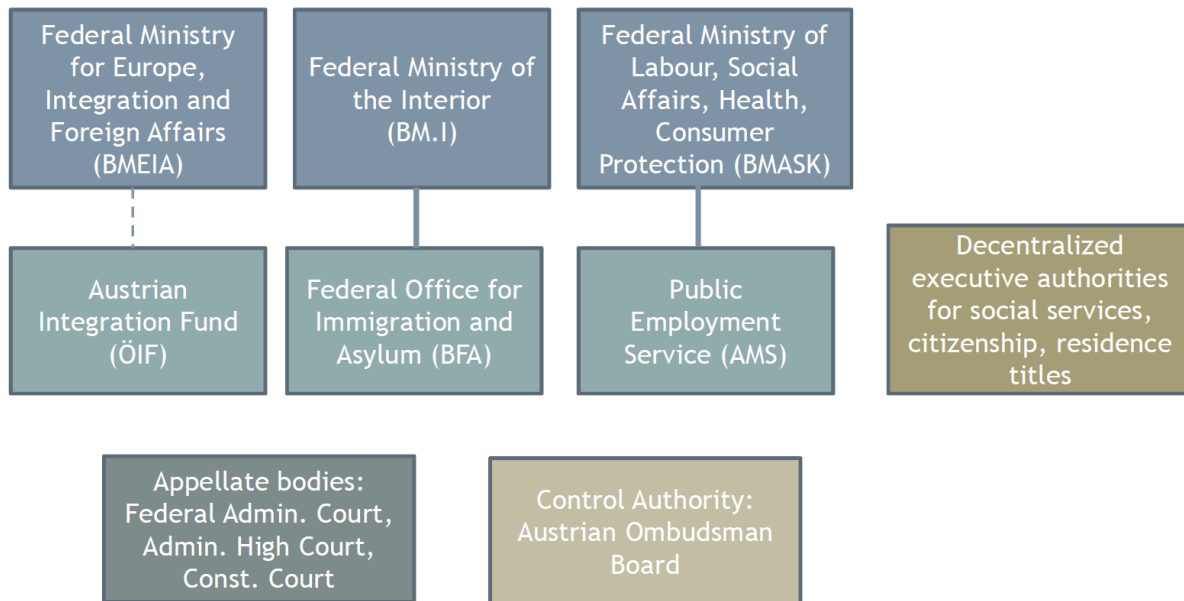
A relevant feature of the multi-level governance in Austria is the so-called “social partnership” (Sozialpartnerschaft), which strives to reconcile all interests from the employers and employees association (Trade Unions, Chamber of Labour, Economic Chamber, Federation of Austrian Industry), the Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer) and the Austrian Federal Chamber Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich) in a cooperative manner. (OECD, 2018)

### ***3.1. The levels of government***

State actors (see Figure 3 and Table 2) include the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium für Inneres, BM.I) and the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, BFA). They hold the main responsibilities in the policy fields of migration and asylum (EMN, 2015) and are responsible for border protection, migration, return migration, citizenship and asylum. The Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, BMEIA) processes visa and the Red-White-Red-Card (an income-dependent residence permit). Since 2014, the integration agenda is assigned to the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds), which was outsourced from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The ÖIF is “a fund of the Republic of Austria and a partner of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs along with many responsible authorities on integration and migration in Austria”.<sup>9</sup> The ÖIF finances and manages integration projects on behalf of the BMEIA, and was responsible for the Integration Agreement. Other state actors are the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASKG), which issues work permits and help refugees with attending qualification courses (free of charge) in cooperation with the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) which is an affiliated partner of ÖIF. (EMN, 2015; Josipovic and Reeger, 2018)

<sup>9</sup> See [www.integrationsfonds.at](http://www.integrationsfonds.at)

Figure 3 National Institutions involved in immigration and asylum



(Source: own illustration, based on Josipovic and Reeger, 2018)

### 3.2. *The public and private actors*

In Austria, migration policy and governance are fields to which multiple actors contribute in their capacity. In addition to the public actors, whose responsibilities have been outlined in the previous sections, non-governmental organisations play an important role. The dominant NGOs supporting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are Caritas and Diakonie. The main NGOs tend to have either a Christian social background, e.g. Caritas or Diakonie, or social democratic background, e.g. Volkshilfe, SOS Menschenrechte, Asyl in Not etc. (see Table 2). These NGOs receive financial subsidies by the government to support migrants through consultancy, welfare services, integration programmes or voluntary return programmes. Their primary source of funding comes from European Refugee Fund (ERF) and the Ministry of Interior (BM.I) (Josipovic and Reeger, 2018).

NGOs and NPOs supporting and advocating for refugees and asylums seekers in the public discourse are, for instance, Asylkoordination Österreich, Forum Asyl, Integrationshaus, the United



Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Amnesty International. The UNHCR holds a special status, because it “(...) has to be (...) informed immediately when asylum proceedings are initiated” (Merhaut and Stern, 2018, p. 32). As the organisation is listed in the Austrian Asylum Act, it has the right to ask for information on every procedure, to assess the files and to contact the asylum seeker. Most of these organisations were founded in the 1990s, when, as discussed previously, the main changes in the field of migration and asylum occurred. As at that time a strict approach to migration was taken, many small initiatives organized by civic associations emerged as a counter-force against the hostile climate towards refugees and asylum seekers (Gruber, 2017; Merhaut and Stern, 2018).

Table 2 Migration governance stakeholders at local level

<b>Public migration governance stakeholders at the federal level</b>	
*Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA)	Responsible for policy matters on migration, asylum, integration, issues Red-White-Red-Card and residence permits
*Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)	Manages projects on behalf of the BMEIA; responsible for Integration Agreement, funds language courses, organizes workshops, offers counselling
<b>Public migration governance stakeholders at local level</b>	
*Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17)	Coordination of integration and diversity policies
*Center of Refugee Empowerment (CoRE)	EU-funded project in the realms of Urban Innovation Action (UIA), supports labour market integration, cooperates with former refugees on peer-to-peer mentoring
Municipal departments <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Planning (MA 18)</li> <li>• Housing (MA 50)</li> <li>• Women (MA 57)</li> <li>• Employment (MA 23)</li> <li>• Education and Youth (MA 13)</li> <li>• Immigration and Citizenship (MA 35)</li> <li>• Social Wellbeing (MA 24)</li> </ul>
School Council	Schooling
*Vienna Social Fund (FSW) (Fonds Soziales Wien)	Management of social support, refugee integration

*Umbrella Organization of Viennese Social Services (DWS) (Dachverband Wiener Sozialeinrichtungen)	Interest representation of social policy, administration and social businesses funded by FSW
WAFF (Viennese Funds for the Advancement of Workers and Employees)	Organises labour-market related vocational training for unemployed and employed, acts as employment promotor and employment agency
*Labour Market Service Vienna (AMS Vienna)	Viennese Branch of Federal Labour Market Service
Chamber of Labour Vienna	Interest representation of workers and employees of companies located in Vienna, compulsory membership, important policy actor in the field of employment and protection of workers' rights
Verband Wiener Volksbildung Die Wiener Volkshochschulen (VHS)	Adult education centers sponsored mainly by the City Government, offer broad range of adult education and training, and free afternoon – care and support for pupils, with a specific focus on children from migrant families
<b>Private organisations active in the areas of migration and integration in the city</b>	
*Caritas Vienna	Aid organisation of the Catholic Church, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the City, and several projects on immigrant integration, supports projects for schoolchildren
Volkshilfe Vienna	Aid organisation of the Social-democratic Party, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the City, and several projects on immigrant integration, supports projects for schoolchildren
Evangelische Diakonie	Aid organisation of the Protestant Church, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the City, and several projects on immigrant integration
*Hilfswerk Österreich	Non-profit organisation for health, social and family aid in Austria
Association of Industrialists	Representation of industrial companies in Vienna, advises the City on the needs of employers with regard to migration
Counselling Center for Migrants (Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen)	NGO advising migrants with regard to labour market issues, funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the City of Vienna

<sup>1</sup>Besides the Municipal departments mentioned here, there are a number of others departments which have an important role in the area of migration. (cf. ICMPD, 2019). \*Stakeholder being interviewed for SiforREF

(Source: adapted from ICMPD, 2019, pp. 5–6)

Initially, a welcoming approach was provided by the civil society when an influx of refugees arrived to Vienna in 2015 and the following years. But the atmosphere changed rapidly,

due to the anti-migration campaign made by populist, far-right parties, supported by some of the media (e.g. Kronen Zeitung). In particular, in 2015, the vast influx of refugees from Hungary (Keleti train station) to Austria (Western and Central train station) led to the refugees welcome attitude, advertised by prominent figures throughout a lot of spheres of public life, e.g. CEO of the Austrian Federal Railways. Even politicians from the center left and center right greeted refugees at the Central Train Station in Vienna, with NGOs, civic society organisations and citizens helping at the train stations, providing help and services (e.g. shelter, food, clothes, etc.). Even tabloid newspapers (e.g. Österreich, Heute) wrote about the welcoming of refugees at the train station as a prime example of solidarity. The wave of solidarity was quickly overtaken by hostility towards refugees, driven by the more conservative political parties (e.g. ÖVP, FPÖ). The latter proposed more restrictive migration regulations (see Chapter 1) and the end of the welcoming policy. Since 2016, stricter border controls, the shutdown of the “Balkan route”, limits to the share of refugees (except for those cases in which the safety of refugees is under threat) etc. were introduced (Gruber, 2017).

### ***3.3. The benefits of the system***

The multi-level dimension of refugee policy-making in Vienna is based on a very strong network of actors being involved in service provision and initiatives for labour market and social integration. As shown in Figures 3 and 4 illustrating the multi-level governance system in the realm of refugee policy, the network of actors is made up of a plurality of public and private actors, mostly at the local level historically grown who share long-term experiences in cooperation. The interviews with stakeholders<sup>10</sup> undertaken in Vienna suggest that coordination of actors is crucial

<sup>10</sup>For the full list of the interviewees see Table 6 in the Annex.

in order to make the multi-level governance system working efficiently. Responsibilities and tasks – also for what concerns funding – are today more clearly communicated by the respective actors in charge. As interview partners in the realm of refugee integration confirm, the system of social service provision and refugee policymaking in Vienna is unique in international comparison, thanks to the social partnerships (Sozialpartnerschaften). These long-term cooperative relations are crucial for quick response from the main public actors to devise solutions for disruptive moments such as in autumn 2015 when the number of arriving refugees during a very short time period exceeded the expectations.

### ***3.4. The disadvantages of the system***

While overlaps in coordination, service provision and funding availabilities are inevitable in a multi-level governance system, the robust system of service provision – as it was confirmed in stakeholder interviews - might be seen as a strength and weakness at the same time. Interviews with stakeholders indicated inequalities entrenched in the system, considers refugees as one of the most vulnerable groups within the system of distributed welfare services. In addition, the network of public and private actors (consisting of mostly long-established NGOs and social partnerships), create a system in service provision that might be interpreted as “paternalistic” with very low permeability to integrate migrants and refugees in the society. Interviews show that trust in newly-established civic participation (e.g. privately organized German language courses) had to be created within this established regime of multi-level governance. As interviews indicate, public institutions had to learn about the needs and logics of individual volunteers that differ to institutionalized actors who follow rather long-term strategies. Obviously, funding was indicated in the interviews as a critical asset for sustaining projects overtime. In this regard, the decentralized system in Vienna provides districts with limited financial capacity. While districts in Vienna would

like to fund more services to promote social or labour market inclusion, their budget is relatively scarce, inasmuch as districts are not in charge of a “social budget” (Sozialbudget) and do not hold the financial competencies for social policies. Consequently, the district council may only support NGOs and activities by civic associations or by individual citizens at an administrative level, without significant financial support but with the support to lower bureaucratic barriers (e.g. finding rooms, authorizations).

### ***3.5. Discussion***

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Austrian migration policy is characterised by a dichotomy between a well-established multi-level governance system and a strong dependency on access to financial means at the local level. While the responsibilities and financial resources at the federal level seem to be communicated transparently by the public actors, the regional level (Vienna) is largely dependent on strong communication skills amongst municipalities being involved in refugee policy-making and its significance in terms of refugee numbers.

Moving to the upper level of authority, the redistribution of funding from the regional level to local level creates a strong dependency on financial support for public and private actors. This puts policies and services aiming at refugee integration into a very vulnerable position as projects might not receive long-term financial support. As such, the Viennese case is characterised by the strong cooperation of public and private actors across multiple levels of government and the availability of public funding to subsidise policies and measures aimed at migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. However, the non-permeability for new actors (such as civic associations) and non-sustainability of long-term funding creates a structural weakness, overall.

#### **4. Current and future pathways on refugees' integration**

One of the latest programmes launched by the Ministry of Integration (Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, BMEIA) in November 2015 is the “50 Action Points - Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria”. This plan constitutes an important step forward in terms of migration policy. In effect, this plan emphasises labour market integration, language skills, and cultural values as key elements of integration (BMEIA, 2015).

##### ***4.1. The effects of refugee policy-making on labour market integration***

The main aim of the national asylum policies (as in other EU Member States) is a quick integration of all people entitled to protection into the labour market (Eurofund, 2019). The positive effects of being integrated successfully in the labour market range from having more money to spend up to being able to participate in (paid) leisure activities, which may result in social integration and building a social network being less exposed to discrimination based on employment status (OECD, 2018).

When Austria adopted its first asylum act in the 1960s, asylum policy and labour market policies were considered as separate policy domains. Therefore, the access to the labour market was regulated. Shifts in policies in the 1990s affected both migration and labour market policies, which are now tied together in one policy field. Issues regarding the labour market, also with regard to labour market integration, are regulated at the federal level (Biffl, 2017; Kraler, 2011; OECD, 2018).

Since 2012, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASKG) and the Secretary of State of Integration have strived to accredit skills obtained abroad

to ensure easier labour market integration for immigrants. Nonetheless, gaps between immigrant and non-immigrant workers are evident in the labour market data. The Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS), the Counselling Center for Migrants and the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds, WAFF) cooperate in order to get immigrants integrated in the labour market. The Counselling Center for Migrants, for example, assesses and recognizes refugees' skills via the Recognition and Assessment of Qualifications Obtained Abroad (AST). The challenges of the Viennese labour market in particular are addressed by the so called "Vienna 2020 Qualification Plan" (OECD, 2018).

Additionally, mandatory education (Ausbildungspflicht), which in Austria is until the age of 18, helps reducing low skilled (immigrant) youth (Biffl, 2017). Further, the compulsory "value and integration courses" (Wertekurse) provided by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) enables immigrants "(...) to raise their employability and facilitate long-term integration" (Biffl, 2017, p. 167).

During the asylum procedure, asylum seekers have no access to the formal labour market in Austria. However, they can only engage in voluntary work, seasonal work (although a work permit is required<sup>11</sup>) in tourism, agriculture or forestry for maximum 6 months. Such voluntary work is subject to quotas and internships, and it is allowed whenever labour shortage is evident and the refugee/ asylum seeker is under the age of 25. Additionally, asylum seekers can work in private households. The sectoral restrictions are based on a labour market test (Ersatzkraftverfahren) (AIDA 2018), which evaluates if there are enough Austrians and other EU citizens who could do the same job. Skill checks are mainly provided by the public employment service (AMS).

<sup>11</sup> The employment permit can be obtained via the AMS (public employment service) three months after the asylum application is admitted. (AIDA, 2018)

After being granted asylum or subsidiary protection, there is free access to the Austrian labour market. The public employment service (AMS) shall help the refugees to find work with so called Competence Checks<sup>12</sup>. In Vienna, the AMS introduced other initiatives, Job-chance, Equal and Step2Job, to access the labour market more easily, especially for recipients of social welfare. Nonetheless, there are a lot of obstacles to overcome, such as language proficiency, unfamiliarity with Austrian formal requirements or the job search process, lack of receiving official recognition of education and work experience<sup>13</sup>, mental health issues, a mismatch between employment and education or discrimination (AIDA, 2018; Eurofund, 2019; Verwiebe et al., 2018). “Since September 2017, beneficiaries of international protection who are able to work but cannot secure employment are required to complete a one-year standardised integration programme focusing on language acquisition, career orientation and vocational qualification” (AIDA, 2018, p. 118).

Another challenge for labour market integration is the imbalance between urban and rural areas, as most of the refugees relocate to urban areas (Die Presse, 2018b). The employment effect of migrants working in jobs they are overqualified for intensifies with asylum seekers, as they have limited job opportunities and often not recognized skills or degrees (AIDA, 2018; OECD, 2018)

Self-employment is another option for migrants to access the Austrian labour market. In Vienna, the Migrant Enterprises (part of the Vienna Business Agency, Wirtschaftsagentur Wien) helps migrants with their start-ups, from the initial concept to its implementation. Although self-employed migrants may find themselves in problematic situations, e.g. self-exploitation. Those

<sup>12</sup> The Competence Checks are tailor made for recognized refugees and “(...) check language proficiency, educational level, professional experience, personal interests and motivations. Furthermore, they help with and inform individuals about applying for a job as well as norms and values in Austria.” (OECD, 2018, p. 47)

<sup>13</sup> With the 2016 Act on Recognition and Evaluation Act (Anerkennungs- und Bewertungsgesetz AuBG) it is possible to get qualifications recognized, even without having documents. (AIDA, 2018)



who choose this path are most likely driven by the lack of opportunities (AIDA, 2018; OECD, 2018)

The Expert Council states that there is a successful integration of Syrian refugees who are employed, in training programmes or registered for unemployment. Still, the unemployment rate is comparatively high to the nationals. Refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan seem to be less integrated into the labour market, with only 35% employment rate (The Expert Council for Integration, 2018). Refugees do not receive money from the unemployment insurance because they receive benefits from the based minimum benefit system. Also, access to the labour market penalises women, with female labour force participation is lower than for their male counterparts. (The Expert Council for Integration, 2018).

#### ***4.2. The effects of refugee policy-making on social integration***

Social integration covers dimensions such as “social inclusion and public acceptance, civic education and participation, access to services and access to social assistance” (Eurofund, 2019, p. 37). The Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, BMEIA) is responsible for issues and policies related to social integration in Austria (EMN, 2015). Before 2015, no integration measures were provided to asylum seekers (OECD, 2018). In 2015, the government rolled out the pilot project “value and orientation courses” (Wertekurse) in Vienna. A year later, it was expanded across the whole country, and in 2017, the Integration Act (BGBI 2017/68) made this scheme compulsory for refugees. Accordingly, migrants who want to settle in Austria permanently, have to participate in language course (CEFR levels A1 and A2) and value courses and successfully complete them within two years. The courses cover key topics of everyday life in Austria, including values like democracy and equality, in order to ensure a “peaceful coexistence of all people” (BMEIA, 2015, p. 14). On a voluntary basis,

refugees may attend secondary courses, focusing on specific topics like labour market, culture, health or gender equality (Biffl, 2017; BMEIA, 2015; Eurofund, 2019). Further, asylum seekers may engage in voluntary work to proof their integration practices, for which they earn an allowance of 200€/month (allowance for charitable work) (FSW, 2019). Engaging in charitable work constitutes another opportunity to foster social integration and to get in contact with the wider society.

### ***4.3. The effects of refugee policy-making on housing integration***

In Austria, asylum seekers are distributed among the states according to a quota system. Accommodation for asylum seekers is provided in inns, boarding houses or reception centres. For refugees, it is also possible to rent a flat, which is the most common form of accommodation for refugees in Vienna. Refugees are only entitled to the Basic Care (Mindestsicherung) and therefore accommodation is provided by NGOs for another four months after being granted asylum. Instead, asylum seekers granted subsidiary protection have no time limit on the Basic Care support. As there are almost no financial resources after the Basic Care support and the rents in Vienna are rising, there is a “virulent accommodation problem” (AIDA, 2018, p. 116).

In general, refugees are allowed to reside in every Austrian federal state. However, access to social housing, for instance in Vienna, is restricted and depends on a distinct duration of main residency at one (not changing) registered address. Until 2006, foreigners (including EU-citizens) could not benefit from Vienna’s social housing services. Since 2006, refugees may apply for social housing; however, due to the long waiting lists, refugees may obtain emergency flats when they are at risk of becoming homeless. Nonetheless, persons with subsidiary protection have no access to municipal housing. (AIDA, 2018; Josipovic and Reeger, 2018; OECD, 2018)

To get a property, the applicants must have lived in Austria for five years and in Vienna for two years at the same address, and not exceed a certain income level. Although the regulations apply equally to refugees as well as to citizens, getting a social housing unit often fails due to the circumstances of granting them. (AIDA, 2018; Josipovic and Reeger, 2018; OECD, 2018)

Despite the considerable high share of social housing properties, migrants mostly live in private accommodation. However, due to their considerable costs, refugees change flats very often, and they are more likely to be discriminated and exploited in the private housing sector, and even sometimes excluded from the municipal accommodations. Aigner (2019) analyses the modalities through which refugees obtain a property in Vienna.

Given the problematic access of refugees to the housing market, a new sub-market of sleeping places (within rooms) has emerged. Homelessness among refugees is an urgent issue. The Counselling Centre for the Homeless (“bzwo”) was set up by the Vienna Social Funds (FWS). Additionally, there are the Viennese Assistance to the Homeless (Verband Wiener Wohnungslosenhilfe), that helps with emergency shelters, soup kitchens etc. (AIDA, 2018; OECD, 2018).

The residence and settlement law of foreigners (Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz, NAG 20045) places the responsibility for organising and financing accommodation for migrants to the federal states (Biffl, 2017). Since 2015, the federal government has the power to intervene in accommodation policy of asylum seekers admitted to the in-merit procedure given by the federal states. In 2016, the right to reside in Austria has been restricted for recognized refugees, from permanent residence to three years, thus decreasing the number of asylum seekers and hindering family reunifications (Merhaut and Stern, 2018).

#### **4.4. Discussion**

As interviews with public actors and members of NGOs show, the future pathways of refugees' integration are built on a well-integrated, yet top-down and restrictive multi-level governance system in Austria. As for the labour market integration, the Integration Agreement (Integrationsvereinbarung) clarifies rights and responsibilities of both the public actors and the recipients of benefits and services. This quasi-legal too had the twofold merit of introducing a contract of “goodwill”, committing the service provider and the end-users, and placing integration on the political agenda as self-standing policy field. The value and orientation courses go into the same direction, trying to make integration smoother.

Another issue to be solved to improve refugees' labour market integration is the process of recognition of qualifications. As public debates on reports provided by the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) indicate, labour market integration tends to be a long process. Most of the refugees find occupations not linked to their qualifications, due to the long duration of recognition of education qualifications and the need to find a job.

Future efforts to improve refugees' labour market integration could be the provision of lifelong education possibilities, employment opportunities that match prior education qualifications better as well as a better understanding of the “logics” in the labour market (e.g. career planning and skills development). While entrepreneurs who hire refugees within their companies apply a “training-on-the-job” approach, this education process takes some time. To improve the efficient integration into labour market, a better collaboration between private sector and public sector (as job-preparing institutions) is needed to meet the specific skills required in the labour market more efficiently.

Finally, the possibilities of self-employment will remain most likely quite low due to excessive bureaucracy also challenging non-refugee start-ups. Although services are offered to refugees to help them implement their entrepreneurial ideas, the bureaucratic burden remains very high compared to the already challenging employed labour market segment. Consequently, refugees mostly orient their efforts towards the employed labour market options.

For what concerns housing, the future pathways of refugees' integration into society largely depend on the overall improvement of the housing market, especially at local level. The housing supply in Vienna becomes more and more limited for both locals and newcomers, due to population growth, increasing housing costs and a general shortage in affordable housing options.

As local stakeholders emphasized in the interviews, a mix of duties (as an employee) and dependencies (as a tenant) is not recommended. It affects two important domains of life that cannot be separated, e.g. in employer-provided housing: the professional work environment and the private housing environment. If potential conflicts arise in one domain, it immediately affects the other domain and vice versa.

As such, an easier access to the social housing market for refugees would improve their chances to get a property. With regard to access, the private housing market is much more efficient to cater to refugees, although it presents severe drawbacks, such as high costs, the potential exclusion of migrants, and quality of housing. Therefore, more incisive efforts must be made to make both in the social housing as well as private housing market more inclusive.

## **5. Assessment/ positions on/of local policies**

As the report shows, integration remains a difficult task in Austria. Although the administrative structures and the services in place at regional and local level are exceptional (in international comparison), worrying exclusionary effects play out. These may be explained by the presence of a strong welfare state system that tend to marginalize non-citizens, providing few opportunities for integration. The concept of integration is not properly defined in policy and legislative documents in the sense of when does “successful integration” come to an end. Integration in Austria is mainly pursued through official contracts, such as the “Integrationsvereinbarung”, which emphasize the “two-tier approach” of integration: it is an obligation to provide and to pursue at the same time.

### ***5.1. The role of pre-existing local policies and administrative structures on refugee policy making***

Even before the large influx of new refugees, important local policies and ad hoc administrative structures (see chapter 3) were in place and could be quickly mobilized to meet the disruptive moment in autumn 2015. Since the “Nationaler Aktionsplan für Integration” (NAP.I) was developed in 2010, the ÖIF gained more competencies and importance with regard to integration policies. In particular, the “Expertenrat für Integration” (*Expert Council for Integration*) as well as the “Integrationsbeirat” (*Advisory Committee on Integration*; a group consisting of public actors at federal, state and local levels as well as social partnerships and NGOs) complement ÖIF’s activities.

As mentioned previously, at the local level, the “Start Wien” programme set up by MA 17 in 2008, aims at integration measures already from the very first day (already in the asylum-seeking process). Also, the Training Certificate (*Bildungspass*) is a well-established tool that documents

skills and qualifications of refugees to avoid redundancies in qualification courses as well as “missing gaps” in education. This tool relies on the involvement of multiple actors, including the MA17, the social partnerships, or the Labour Market Service (AMS). The “Bildungspass” including the education vouchers for language courses (Wiener Sprachgutscheine für Deutschkurse) were implemented before 2015. However, these tools were adopted to meet the needs of the new refugees from 2015 onwards. Also, the official political position “integration from day 1” in Vienna declared by the mayor was built on the *Wien Charta* and supported by already existing activities (i.e. language and education trainings) to foster social cohesion at local level.

## ***5.2. The effects of welfare and social local policies on refugee policy-making***

The Austrian case – and Vienna at the local level – is a prime example of a conservative welfare state model, which provides relatively generous cash and in-kind benefits tied in with social insurance payments. This welfare system model appears to engender some degrees of welfare state chauvinism, thus stigmatizing non-citizens benefits recipients. At the local level, benefit distribution is more elaborated and follows the self-conception of investing into social integration to secure social cohesion. As such, the local level seems to be more inclusive and less stigmatizing with regard to the groups of asylum-seekers and refugees.

As mentioned in our interviews, Vienna is exceptional with regard to social service provision in international comparison. Conceptually, this derives from the long-standing legacy of the Red Vienna and the idea of social cohesion. Nevertheless, the variety of services and inter-actor relations in the city of Vienna ensured a quick reaction in autumn 2015 that represents an exceptional experience in terms of numbers of refugees arriving in Vienna in a very short period.

In general, most of the immediate needs could be met quickly while long-term demands were faced by the reorganization of already existing services (e.g. Bildungsdrehscheibe).

### ***5.3. Critical aspects of refugee policy-making***

One of the most critical aspects is funding, which affects the services offered to refugees/asylum seekers to support their integration process, such as language courses. In this respect, publicly funded language training is only provided up to CEFR level A2, thus providing language skills not sufficient to communicate (Eurofund, 2019).

As discussed above, in the city of Vienna, additional barriers to refugees' integration are labour market access and recognition of qualifications obtained abroad (OECD, 2018). In particular, the uneven distribution of job opportunities between the urban and the rural areas hinders the access of refugees to the labour market, especially in the rural Western parts of Austria, where there is a strong reliance of seasonal jobs in the tourism industry. Furthermore, the evaluation of small civic initiatives is seen as improvable and participation of migrants in policy-making/design only works indirectly through involved organisations, which are not legitimised.

### ***5.4. Discussion***

As this chapter has outlined, the strong multi-level governance of integration policies in Vienna is proven by a robust governance of pre-existing relations, policies and practices. Future challenges may lie in the consolidation of services and resources to be invested in refugee integration.



## **6. The implementation of refugee policies: Practices and perspectives on local politics**

### ***6.1. The political debate on refugees***

Immigration is a major topic in Austrian politics since the so-called “migration crisis” from 2015 and even before, especially during election time. The political discourse on migration and asylum revolves around the notions of security and national identity (Rheindorf and Wodak, 2018). The recent refugees inflow spurred a heated political debate during the campaign for the 2017 elections. In this regard, UNHCR mentions the ongoing “xenophobic debates” and “exclusionary tendencies” in Austria’s political landscape before the parliamentary election in 2017, where the conservative People’s Party and the far-right Freedom Party (ÖVP-FPÖ) gained power (Reuters, 2019). The victory of the conservative and populist parties expressed the widespread voters’ concern about the integration of newcomers and the consequential demand for simple but radical solutions to the migration and refugee crisis.

Especially the vocabulary used by the right-wing party (FPÖ) constituted a tool to stigmatise newcomers. The latter are often described as “economic refugees” “stealing jobs” to Austrians, or “bogus asylum seekers”, questioning the validity of asylum applications. Even further, the FPÖ also campaigned to deport “criminal foreigners” and to increase border protection to keep “poverty migrants” out of Austria. This rhetoric has been fiercely opposed especially by the Green Party, calling for a “Bleiberecht” (humanitarian right to stay) for integrated migrants, who work or study or live in Austria for a long time, or refugees (Merhaut and Stern, 2018).

However, local governments – mostly in rural areas – act sometimes against their party politics, when integrated families face deportation, e.g. the Zogaj-Family. Also, low involvement in protests and low civic engagement is observed within the Austrian society, that mainly occurs

with singular events on personal level or individual cases rather than protesting against policies (Merhaut and Stern, 2018).

## ***6.2. The position of the city mayor and his cabinet on refugees' integration***

The mayor of Vienna holds a double function being both the mayor of the city of Vienna as well as the representative of the federal state (*Landeshauptmann*) of Vienna. For 25 years, Michael Häupl (SPÖ) was the mayor and the governor of the state of Vienna. Häupl introduced the initiative “Starting Integration from Day 1” in 2015, which seeks to help asylum seekers integrate faster. About 90,000 applications were registered in Austria in 2015 (The Expert Council for Integration, 2018), which slowed down waiting times, pushing forward the provision of integration measures after the end-users are granted asylum (OECD 2018). The city of Vienna launched the “Start Wien” package in 2008, “which includes language courses and targeted counseling” and constitutes “a good example facilitating an early integration process that is adapted to the needs of different migrant groups” (OECD, 2018, p. 52). Michael Ludwig (SPÖ) – who succeeded Häupl in 2018 – has a slightly more conservative approach on immigration, asylum and integration.

Table 3 Municipal Elections in Vienna 2010, 2015

Results of last municipal elections in Vienna (Year: 2015)					
Political parties that have obtain at least one seat in the city council	English translation	Position	Share of vote (%)	Number of seats	Is the party in the governing coalition?
SPÖ	Social Democratic Party of Austria	Center left	39.59%	44	Yes
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria	Center right	30.79%	34	No
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party	Center right	9.24%	7	No
Grüne	The Greens – The Green Alternative	Center left	11.84%	10	Yes
Neos	NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum	Center	6.16%	5	No
Results of previous municipal elections in Vienna (Year: 2010)					
Political parties that have obtained at least one seat in the city council	English translation	Position	Share of vote (%)	Number of seats	Is the party in the governing coalition?
SPÖ	Social Democratic Party of Austria	Center left	44.34%	49	Yes
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria	Center right	25.77%	27	No
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party	Center right	13.99%	13	No
Grüne	The Greens – The Green Alternative	Center left	12.64%	11	Yes

(Source: Stadt Wien, 2015)

### 6.3. *The actions of the city government for implementing its agenda on refugee-related issues*

“The city’s efforts to help asylum seekers — coordinating the work of different agencies and finding ways around restrictive federal rules — are a testament to the power of local government. But the challenges Vienna has faced, as national policy continues to grow harsher, also paint a stark picture of the limits of local initiative” (apolitical, 2018).

This excerpt from *apolitical* (2018) emphasizes the conflict between the national and local position towards refugees’ integration and migration more broadly, with the city of Vienna opting for a more welcoming approach.

Although widely dependent on the distribution system of public funding, the city of Vienna (see Table 4) implemented new services targeted to refugees and asylum seekers, such as the already mentioned ‘*Bildungsdrehscheibe*’. In addition, the city of Vienna is significantly engaged in international collaborations, which led to the implementation of joint projects, such as the Centre of Refugee Empowerment (CoRE) project<sup>14</sup> - funded under the EU initiative Urban Innovation Action.

Table 4 Actors of the Government of the City of Vienna

<b>Actors of the city government - Municipal Departments</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Resources</b>
MA 17	Integration and Diversity	Decentralized municipal budget*
MA 13	Education and Youth	Decentralized municipal budget
MA 18	Urban Planning	Decentralized municipal budget
MA 23	Economics, Employment and Statistics	Decentralized municipal budget
MA 24	Social Wellbeing	Decentralized municipal budget
MA 35	Immigration and Citizenship	Decentralized municipal budget
MA 57	Women	Decentralized municipal budget

(Source: own illustration); \*in German: ‘Kommunalbudget’

#### **6.4. The political and social actors supporting the refugees’ integration in the City**

The political and social actors being involved in refugees’ integration were described in great details in Chapter 3. As the multi-level governance system approves to support integration within

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/vienna>

a well-coordinated institutional framework, a few structural challenges between the federal and local level became obvious. Nevertheless, the private and social actors being involved might be called in general terms “supporting actors” (see Table 5 below).

Table 5 Political and Social Actors Supporting the Refugees' Integration in the City

	Political Actor	Responsibility	Resources
Federal Level	Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA)	Policy matters on migration, asylum, integration, Red-White-Red-Card and residence permits	National revenue
	Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)	Manages projects on behalf of the BMEIA; Integration Agreement, language courses, workshops, counselling	Funded by the BMEIA
	Federal Ministry of Interior (BM.I)	Holds the main responsibility in the policy fields of migration and asylum; border protection, im-/emigration, return migration, citizenship and asylum	National revenue
	Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA)	Implements asylum and foreign-law proceedings, processes visa matters and issues residence permits	National revenue
	Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)	Education and training from elementary education to university colleges of teacher education, adult education and lifelong learning	National revenue
	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASKG)	Responsible for labour market policies and laws, social policies and insurances	National revenue
	Public Employment Service (AMS)	Viennese Branch of Federal Labour Market Service, labour market integration	Funded by the BMASKG
State & City Level	Vienna Social Funds	Management of social support, refugee integration	Funded by the City of Vienna
	Vienna Public Learning Centers (VHS)	offer broad range of adult education and training, and free afternoon – care and support for pupils, with a specific focus on children from migrant families	Partly self-funded and funded by the City of Vienna
	Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (WAFF)	Organises labour-market related vocational training for unemployed and employed, acts as employment promotor and employment agency	Funded by the City of Vienna
	Vienna Business Agency (Wirtschaftsagentur)	Offers funding and advice for start-ups, with a special focus on migrant enterprises	Funded by the City of Vienna

	<b>Social Actor</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Local/cross-level	Caritas Vienna	Aid organisation of the Catholic Church, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the City, and several projects on immigrant integration, supports projects for schoolchildren	Mostly public funds
	Evangelische Diakonie	Aid organisation of the Protestant Church, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the City, and several projects on immigrant integration	Mostly membership proceeds and public funds
	Volkshilfe Vienna	Aid organization of the Socialdemocratic Party, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the City, and several projects on immigrant integration, supports projects for schoolchildren	Mostly membership proceeds and public funds
	Asylum Coordination Austria	advocates for refugees and asylum seeker, offers support, informs the public	Funded by MA17
	Red Cross	Ambulance service, health and social service, disaster emergency service, development cooperation and several projects on immigrant integration	Mostly public funds
	Counselling Centers for Migrants (Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen)	NGO advising migrants with regard to labour market issues	Funded by BMASKG

(Source: own illustration adapted from Table 2 and Figure 2 Multi-level institutional mapping for migrant integrationFigure 2)

### ***6.5. The political and social actors opposing the refugees' integration in the City***

Although refugees' integration at the city level is mainly supportive and robust in structural terms, the main barriers to refugees' integration might be found in the coordination problems associated to the multi-level governance structure, engendering overlaps in competences and responsibilities.

A second barrier is political; as discussed before, former members of parties in government, the FPÖ as well as the ÖVP, hampered the implementation of policies and practices targeted to refugees and asylum seekers, especially in Vienna, governed by the social-democratic party.

## **6.6. Discussion**

As this chapter has pointed out, the implementation of refugee policies is a constellation of different actors, whose responsibilities may overlap. While this system can benefit from the diverse experience and expertise of the actors involved, its weakness lies in its dependency on funding (mostly from federal to local level) and the limited participation of civic society organisations.

## 7. Conclusion and Debate

The Austrian migration policy is characterised by a dichotomy between a well-established multi-level governance system and a strong dependency on access to financial means at the local level. While the responsibilities and financial resources at the federal level seem to be communicated transparently by the public actors, the regional level (Vienna) is largely dependent on strong communication skills amongst municipalities being involved in refugee policy-making and its significance in terms of refugee numbers. Moving to the upper level of authority, the redistribution of funding from the regional level to local level creates a strong dependency on financial support for public and private actors. This puts policies and services aiming at refugee integration into a very vulnerable position as projects might not receive long-term financial support. As such, the Viennese case is characterised by the strong cooperation of public and private actors across multiple levels of government and the availability of public funding to subsidise policies and measures aimed at migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. However, the non-permeability for new actors (such as civic associations) and non-sustainability of long-term funding creates a structural weakness, overall.

Internationally as well as nationally, Vienna is known as a socially responsible city, mostly because of the “Red Vienna” history (cf. Novy et al., 2001), characterised by a high share of social housing programmes and accompanying social policies. For what concerns migration, Vienna adopts an “integration-oriented diversity policy”. Refugee policy-making in Vienna is based on a long experience that developed over time into a process with shared competences at regional and local levels. Its strong policy competences both as a state and a city, coupled with its long-standing reputation as a “social city”, shape Vienna’s migration policy-making.



The city's "Integration from day 1" programme, with its welcoming approach, stands contrast to the restrictive policies at the national level. Not only for internal quality assessment, but also as a legitimisation tool for negotiations e.g. with federal politics, the "Integration and Diversity Monitoring Report of the city of Vienna" (Wiener Integrations- und Diversitätsmonitor) is characterised by a managerial approach to refugees' integration at the city and state level in Vienna.

To reflect on the three dimensions of housing market, labour market and social integration, recommendations for future improvement are manifold. As for labour market integration, the process of recognition of qualifications must be improved to shorten labour market integration of refugees. Most of the refugees find occupations not linked to their qualifications, due to the long duration of recognition of education qualifications and the need to find a job. Future efforts to improve refugees' labour market integration could be the provision of lifelong education possibilities, employment opportunities that match prior education qualifications better as well as a better understanding of the "logics" in the labour market (e.g. career planning and skills development). While entrepreneurs who hire refugees within their companies apply a "training-on-the-job" approach, this education process takes some time. To improve the efficient integration into labour market, a better collaboration between private sector and public sector (as job-preparing institutions) is needed to meet the specific skills required in the labour market more efficiently. Also, the possibilities of self-employment will remain most likely quite low due to excessive bureaucracy also challenging non-refugee start-ups. Although services are offered to refugees to help them implement their entrepreneurial ideas, the bureaucratic burden remains very high compared to the already challenging employed labour market segment. Consequently, refugees mostly orient their efforts towards the employed labour market options.

For what concerns housing, the future pathways of refugees' integration into society largely depend on the overall improvement of the housing market, especially at local level. The housing supply in Vienna becomes more and more limited for both locals and newcomers, due to population growth, increasing housing costs and a general shortage in affordable housing options.

To conclude, the implementation of refugee policies is a constellation of different actors, whose responsibilities may overlap. While this system can benefit from the diverse experience and expertise of the actors involved, its weakness lies in its dependency on funding (mostly from federal to local level) and the limited participation of civic society organisations. As this report has highlighted, refugee integration requires the adaption of the institutions involved, in order to be able to cater refugees' specific needs. Although there is a trend towards more restrictive integration measures, overall the Austrian system of service provision in the realm of refugee policy still remains supportive. Nevertheless, future elections (general election in September 2019; state election in Vienna in 2020) may pave the way to even stricter measures affecting a well-established and historically grown set of integration policies.

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## 9. Annex

Table 6 Overview of interview partners (interviews conducted between May – August 2019)

Local authority	2
Interest groups	5
General public	3
Higher education and research	1
Regional public authority	5
National public authority	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

*(Source: own illustration)*

Table 7 Policies in Austria regarding Deportation, Reception and Possibility to Stay

	Deportation	Reception	Possibility to Stay
Policies	1990 <i>Aliens Police Act</i> (FrPolG): Expulsion	2004 <i>Basic Welfare Support Agreement</i> : Regulation of joint action of the federal government and federal states for the reception and temporary provision of asylum seekers	1991 <i>Asylum Act</i> : Limited residence permit (cornerstone for subsidiary protection status)
	1991 <i>Asylum Act</i> : Safe third-country regulation	2014 BFA <i>initial reception centers</i> ( <i>Erstaufnahmestellen</i> )	1997 <i>Aliens Act</i> : Residence permit on humanitarian grounds in cases of exceptional circumstances ( <i>ex officio</i> )
	1997 <i>Asylum Act</i> : <i>Dublin Convention</i>	2015 <i>Aliens Law Amendment Act: Right to intervene</i> ( <i>Durchgriffsrecht</i> )	2005 <i>Asylum Act</i> : Subsidiary protection
	2003 <i>Amendment to the Asylum Act: Dublin II</i>		2009 <i>Amendment to the Asylum Act 2005, Aliens Police Act 2005, and Settlement and Residence Act (Bleiberechtsregelung)</i> : Residence permit on humanitarian grounds (upon application)
	2005 <i>Aliens Legislation Package</i> : Acceleration of asylum procedures; <i>Qualification Directive</i> to establish common grounds within the EU to grant protection; facilitation of detention pending deportation		2009 <i>Aliens Law Amendment Act: Toleration (Duldung)</i>

2009 *Aliens Law  
Amendment Act  
(FrÄG)*: Tightened  
regulations  
regarding detention,  
appeals, and  
subsequent appeals

2015 *Aliens Law  
Amendment Act*:  
Possible  
disallowance of  
appeals against a  
dismissal decision  
on an asylum  
application

2016 *Amendment to  
the Asylum Act  
2005, Aliens Police  
Act 2005, and BFA-  
Procedural Act*:  
Limit on the right  
of residence to  
3 years (*temporary  
asylum*)

(Source: Merhaut and Stern, 2018)

Table 8 Division of competencies between levels of government

Policy Area	National Government	State/ Municipality Vienna
Asylum seekers and refugees	<p>Aliens Law, Law on Settlement and Residence, Asylum Legislation (Ministry of Interior, BM.I)</p> <p>Initial Reception</p> <p>Allocation of asylum seekers negotiated with states “\$15-Agreements”</p> <p>Basic assistance – Funding is divided between the federal state and the federal states at the ration of 60:40</p> <p>The national agency BFA (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl) subjected to the BM.I is responsible for Austria for processing and decision on asylum application</p>	<p>Implementation of Aliens Law, the law on residence and settlement, asylum law (“mittelbare Bundesverwaltung”)</p> <p>Allocation of asylum seekers negotiated with the federal government “\$15-Agreements”</p> <p>Basic assistance – Funding is divided between the federal level and the federal states at the ration of 60:40.</p> <p>Organizing accommodation for vulnerable groups (including unaccompanied minors)</p> <p>Support unaccompanied minors (custody)</p> <p>Early integration opportunities (Start Wien), i.e. organizing language and integration courses for asylum seekers</p>
Education	<p>Design of the education system, supervision of higher education system</p>	<p>Partial design of education system</p> <p>Preschool and primary education (City Councils)</p> <p>Transitional- and summer classes for newcomers to integrate into Austria’s school system</p>
Language learning	<p>Provide migrants and refugees with grants for language classes: people from third countries have to sign the “Integration Agreement”, which includes the obligation to acquire sufficient German language skills within two years</p> <p>Funding of preschool linguistic assistance</p>	<p>Provision and organization of language courses through various offers (<i>inter alia</i> with EU funding), MA 17, preparation = for the Austrian Language Diploma (ÖSD) exam for refugees, special courses for vulnerable groups and with different foci (i.e. women)</p> <p>Funding and implementation of preschool linguistic assistance</p>



Policy Area	National Government	State/ Municipality Vienna
Vocational training policy	Funding offers such as b.mobile	<p>Asylum seekers, recognized refugees and other migrants beyond compulsory school age (15-21), such as through Interface Vienna and the Vienna Public Learning Centers, “Women's college”, Start Wien – Youth College and other college offers</p> <p>Measures in Vienna 2020 Qualification Plan, such as “catching up on graduations”</p>
Social policy	<p>BM.I is based on an agreement with federal states</p> <p>Funding and design of measures for social inclusion</p>	<p>Social services administration Vienna model of BMS (EUR 838, couples EUR 628 per person and for each child EUR 226)</p> <p>Funding and design of measures for social inclusion</p> <p>Youth policies</p> <p>Co-ordination of integration matters on the provincial level</p>
Employment	<p>Labour migration regulation “Red-White-Red Card”, Foreigners' Employment Act (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, BMASK)</p> <p>Recognition of qualifications obtained abroad</p> <p>The means-tested minimum income scheme (Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung BMS) (welfare benefit) is based on an agreement between the national level and the federal states that sets out key aspects to be transposed into laws on the federal-provincial level</p> <p>Service and programmes offered by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)</p>	<p>Contact Point for the Recognition and Assessment of Qualifications Obtained Abroad (AST)</p> <p>The Vienna model of BMS foresees that people are excluded who are not trying to get a job</p> <p>Local measures for access to and participation in the labour market</p> <p>Training and stimulation of entrepreneurship as a module of Start Wien</p> <p>Dialogue for co-operation between the public authorities and business</p>

Policy Area	National Government	State/ Municipality Vienna
Housing	Provides funding for building social housing	Building and management of social housing and municipal land, in collaboration with private companies  Allocation of quota (social housing) and municipal subsidies

*(Source: OECD, 2018, pp. 77–78)*

Table 9 Asylum Applications per Month in Austria 2018-2019

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>January</b>	1018	1509	-32.58%
<b>February</b>	877	1220	-28.11%
<b>March</b>	986	1321	-25.36%
<b>April</b>	946	1060	-10.75%
<b>May</b>	992	1114	-10.95%
<b>June</b>	980	1014	-3.35%
<b>July</b>	1150	1196	-3.85%
<b>August</b>	1117	1113	0.36%
<b>Total</b>	8066	9547	-15.51%

*(Source: BMI 2019)*