

Activities of the social partners 2021/2022

The social partners are active in a **multitude of thematic areas**, for example:

- COVID-19 crisis and its impacts on Austria's economy
- Labour market and skilled workers
- Education & vocational training
- Climate, energy, and environmental issues
- Collective bargaining

In 2021 and in the first quarter of 2022, the social partners were able to achieve and/or implement the following issues of relevance under the National Reform Programme:

- The **Corona short-time work model**, which is a showcase project internationally, was implemented, enhanced, accelerated, and successfully further developed with major contributions from the social partners. The model also encompasses solutions for apprentices. Implementation covered several stages, the most recent of which (short-time work phase V) will be applicable until summer 2022. The initiative helped safeguard a total of 250,000 jobs threatened by the crisis.
- Conclusion of a **new general collective agreement** in September 2021, which will remain in effect until the end of April 2022. The general collective agreement regulates important accompanying measures, under labour law and at company level, for the implementation of the governmental strategy for nationwide regular COVID-19 testing (for instance, regular testing for certain professions), the rules about access to the workplace, and the rules concerning the wearing of protective masks.
- Urging the government for a decision to **pay COVID-19 bonuses** to members of professions disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. in healthcare).
- Winning political acceptance for the introduction and repeated extension of the **special release from work due to Covid-19 for pregnant women and vulnerable at-risk groups**.
- Development and preparation of a **home office package of measures**, which includes solutions for problems concerning labour law, social security law, tax law, accident insurance, and the use of work equipment.
- Participation of the social partners in the development of new features for apprenticeship training and in the **preparation of new apprenticeship packages** (new rules for job profiles, stronger focus on digitalisation requirements).
- Agreement on **longer notice periods for temporary workers**.
- Successfully influencing the federal government to **establish labour foundations**, e.g. an **environmental foundation**, to train unemployed persons for green jobs.
- Successfully influencing the federal government to bring forward the agreed **reduction in wage and income tax brackets** to the beginning of 2022 instead of mid-2022 as originally planned (mixed rate).

- Joint position paper of the social partners concerning the **creation of a legal entitlement to a childcare place from the 1st birthday**. These demands are also being brought forward by the social partners in the currently ongoing negotiations on the extension of the Art. 15a agreement in the area of elementary education, which runs until August 2022.
- Completion of a **study commissioned with WIFO**, the Austrian Institute of Economic Research, on the question of "What conclusions can be drawn from current workforce demographics for labour demand in the future? An analysis of the age structure in Austrian businesses".
- **Joint social partner package of demands for energy cost measures** to counteract price hikes for private households and businesses, of 23 March 2022.
- **Collective bargaining:** The social partners conduct negotiations on collective agreements for roughly 98% of Austrian workers in industry and commerce as well as in agriculture and forestry. On the employer side, collective agreements are, as a rule, concluded by the respective division of the Economic Chamber or the employer associations in agriculture and forestry, and on the employee side, by the specific trade unions on behalf of the Austrian Trade Union Federation. Collective agreements regulate the key elements of employment contracts.

In Austria, the social partners include, on the employer side, the **Austrian Federal Economic Chamber** (WKÖ) and the **Austrian Chamber of Agriculture** (LKÖ), and on the employee side, the **Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour** (BAK) and the **Austrian Trade Union Federation** (ÖGB).

See <https://www.sozialpartner.at/>.