

AT – Anti-Eviction Measures in Austria

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1 Key Contextual Issues and Background

1.1 Austria is a federal state.¹

In Austria there are only few legal regulations at federal level which are relevant for the loss of housing property or the legal cancellation of tenancy contracts and eviction. This is the tenancy law and the execution of debt law. In the range of social housing and housing related subsistence benefits as well as the prevention of eviction and homelessness the competences are located at regional level – with only one exception: In the case of excess indebtedness there is a national law to provide the regulation of debts (bankruptcy / Privatkonkurs). Debt consulting can help indebted households to maintain the crucial situation and to provide a new start without debts and financial handicaps. Consultations with the debt regulation services are often used as prevention of a forced sale of housing property (asb 2011).

1.2 Poverty

EU-SILC 2013 (Statistik Austria, press release, 3.11.2014) shows that at all 1.572.000 Austrians (18.8%) are threat by poverty (14.4%), material deprivation (4.2%) or very low income from employment (7.7%). Poverty or poor living conditions are more often to be stated in the urban region of Vienna (22.7%). In rural parts of Austria the poverty rate is much less.

Especially long time unemployed persons are in a high risk of poverty. 45% of persons in long time unemployment have an income of less than 60% of the median income in Austria (EU-SILC 2014, page 36). At all 32% of persons in long time unemployment are confronted with debts and problems to cover the necessary payments (EU-SILC 2014, page 49).

1.3 Unemployment

In November 2014 the unemployment rate in Austria was 8.1%. The unemployment rate in Austria has been increasing in the last years continually, from 11/2013 to November 2014: +7.4%. Especially high was the growth of long time unemployment: +111%. The length of unemployment increased in this period for nine more days (AMS, press release, 3.11.2014).

1.4 Increasing homelessness – in times of financial crisis

In the last few years homelessness has started to increase again. The increase of homelessness in Austria is mainly caused by the consequences of economic crisis and increasing unemployment. At the same time the housing costs (from 2009 to 2013) were rising continually (Statistik Austria, Wohnen 2013):

- communal housing: + 8.3%
- social housing: + 10.0%

¹ Verfassungsgesetz, Art. 2 (1)

- private housing market: + 17.2%

In the course of the last year the housing costs increased with + 4.5% (from 10/2013 to 10/2014) and the relative amount of housing costs to the budget of the households has increased, on average: from 23% to 25%. Once more: Households in privately rented accommodations had to pay a significantly higher share of their budget. It increased from 25% (2009) to 28% (2013).

1.5 Regional strategies on homelessness, homeless services and prevention of eviction

In Austria there is no national strategy to prevent, fight or end homelessness. So some counties of Austria have established regional systems of prevention and support (BAWO 2013). Some regional service schemes are quite elaborated and provide prevention as well as support and rehousing. Especially the counties Vienna, Upper Austria and Vorarlberg have achieved quite professional standards in tackling and preventing homelessness. Still there are few counties like Burgenland and Carinthia with very limited provisions to support homeless persons. The counties Burgenland, Carinthia and Tyrol have only very limited professional provisions to prevent evictions, for instance: only for tenants in communal housing in Klagenfurt.

1.6 Monitoring

Monitoring provisions, surveys and reports on national, regional and local level provide broad evidence on social and housing affairs in Austria. There is quite sufficient evidence on poverty, unemployment and social housing. Specific surveys at national and regional level complete a fundament of empirical evidence (BAWO 2009 & 2013). Counties like Vienna (Magistrat Wien 2013) and Upper Austria (Oberösterreich 2014) have established elaborated monitoring systems which allow an insight into the context of housing market, social services and homelessness. Data on eviction proceedings which are published by the ministry of justice since many years now provide numbers of legal proceedings as well as eviction orders and executed evictions and their regional distribution (BM Justiz 2014).

1.7 Homelessness by eviction

The statistics of eviction proceedings and eviction orders don't note if an eviction takes place in consequence of a forced sale of housing property or a legal cancellation of a tenancy contract. According to the causal connection of eviction and homelessness the given statistics are not linked with each other. Intersection evidence is not provided and statistics of eviction proceedings don't show consequences at an individual level. Risks of becoming homeless in order of evictions as well as effects and effectiveness of homeless services are not sufficiently documented in Austria.

1.8 Unaffordable rents

Accommodations from the private housing market are expensive. In this segment of the housing market also the growth of housing costs is exceptionally high. From 2009 to 2014 the costs of privately rented accommodations has been +17.2%. At the same time the rents in accommodations from communal housing were increasing (+8.3%)

and social housing (+10%). Mainly those tenants are confronted with high housing costs which got their accommodation recently. "Tenancy contracts from 2011 to 2013 meant that up to a third (33%) of the household budget was needed to cover the housing costs. Tenants with contracts from 2000 needed 25% of the household budget for housing costs. If tenants live already longer than 25 years in the rented apartment they will need about 20% of the household budget." (Statistik Austria, press release, 3.11.2014)

1.9 Unsustainable debt

The services for indebted persons and families provide a systematic survey on excess indebtedness in Austria (asb 2014). This survey includes households in contact with debt regulation services.

In 2013 at all 56.419 persons were at least once in contact with a debt regulation office (59% men, 41% women). The number of persons in contact is continually increasing (+4% per year). In the same time the average amount of debts became smaller: € 73.000 (2010) to € 72.500 (2012) and € 70.598 (2013). The share of households with smaller debts than € 50.000 is increasing in the past years. In 2013 67.4% of the indebted households had less than € 50.000. The main causes for excess indebtedness were unemployment (43%); handling finances (19%) and failed entrepreneurship (17%). Divorce (12%) and financing an accommodation (11.5%) were further causes for the financial break down.

1.10 Levels of mortgage and rent arrears

The housing market in Austria is divided into housing property (50%) and accommodations for rent (45%). Further 5% of the households are living in diverse housing conditions like job related flats etc. So the level of credits for housing property is quite small. In the year 2011 the complete amount of housing credits and mortgages was only 27.8% of the monetary national product. (Lugger 2014, p. 45)

1.11 Regional strategies on social housing

Austria has a long tradition in social housing. Since more than 20 years social housing is in regional competence and the legal and administrative frameworks differ between the counties. But still there is one common principle: Social housing in Austria is characterized as a universal model. The conditions of access are relatively broad and include not only households with a small budget but also households with proper income. This strategy is argued with the aim to provide a balanced social mix in the vicinities.

1.12 Supply of rented and social housing / communal accommodations

In the year 2013 47% of the dwellings were small houses, occupied by the owners. Especially in Burgenland (74%) and Lower Austria (57.4%) there is a high proportion of housing property. The situation in Vienna is completely different. In Vienna most households (78%) are living in rented accommodations and only 22% in housing property (houses: 9%; condominiums: 13%). In this context it is to mention that Vienna has much more communal accommodations (25%) than other cities like Graz or Linz (7%). (EU-SILC 2013, pg. 52)

1.13 Role of private housing market

At all 17% of the households are living in private accommodations. In Vienna: 32%; in cities larger than 100.000 inhabitants: 25%; in cities with 10.000 to 10.000 inhabitants: 18%; in villages smaller than 10.000 inhabitants: 9%. (EU-SILC 2013, pg. 52) In the private housing market the rate of persons with another than the Austrian citizenship is very high: 44% (EU-SILC, pg. 52). It is a specialty of the private housing market in Austria that most of the tenancy contracts are limited. The tenancy law permits a limitation of the contract which has to be at least 3 years. The tenancy contracts can be continued after this period but also the new contract has to be at least 3 years.

1.14 Subsidy of housing costs / rents

Affordability of accommodations in general and of rents at the private housing market, is a special challenge for homeless services, but primarily this is a question of social security and benefit schemes, especially in relation to the standards of adequate housing. In the Austrian regions there are different schemes to subsidy housing costs. There is the scheme of housing promotions, especially for tenants in social accommodations provided by a communal housing agency or non-profit housing enterprise. Beside this scheme of housing promotions there are subsistence benefits ('Sozialhilfe' for persons without adequate income). In this support scheme there are fix benefits to cover the housing costs, independent from real housing costs. If the accommodation is more expensive, the tenants have to apply for additional support but there is no legal claim in most counties to get additional funding.

In some regions of Austria like Tyrol and Vorarlberg poor households have a right to get a subsistence benefit but this benefit is limited according to the average level of housing costs ('ortsübliche Miete'). In other regions like Salzburg there is no individual right to get subsidized the whole costs of their accommodation. For example: In Salzburg a subsistence benefit for housing costs can be provided up to a maximal level of officially accepted costs ('höchstzulässiger Mietzins').

1.15 Housing costs in the self-perception by low income households

The EU-SILC-Survey asked how the people can manage the housing costs. Especially households with another than the Austrian nationality are challenged by the costs of housing, at all 68% are highly challenged and/or use more than 25% of their budget to cover the housing costs (EU-SILC 2014, page 57). In the relation of different housing status one can see that the costs of housing property are a challenge for about 20%. But up to 70% of households living in a privately rented accommodation the costs of housing are highly strained. (EU-SILC 2014, page 58)

1.16 Tenancy law and the prevention of eviction

The tenancy law in Austria is a very important fundament for housing conditions and housing security of a large part of Austrians. It is focused on the protection of tenants and gives housing security according to housing costs, obligations of the owner as well as the tenant, adjustment and maintenance of the accommodation etc. The

tenancy law regulates the terms when the tenancy contract becomes obsolete and how this contract can be canceled.

2 Measures and interventions to prevent, tackle and monitor evictions and dispossessions

2.1 Legal frameworks

2.1.1 The right to housing

The legal framework for housing security and / or the right to housing is a matter of Austrian wide legal regulations, but there is no explicit and individual right to housing stated in the Austrian constitution (Dimmel 2014, pg. 10f.).

Housing security is stated by the law of tenancy (Mietrecht). Conditions of the protection of home owners in risk of homelessness are a matter of the law of execution of debts, rent or mortgage arrears etc. (Exekutionsordnung).

2.1.2 Legal framework for the safeguarding of housing (Wohnungssicherung)

Main reasons for the canceling of a tenancy contract are rent arrears, inadequate use of the accommodation, problematic behavior or stress in the neighborhood. In the case of rent arrears or contraventions against contracted obligations the tenancy law states how the proceeding of the canceling has to be. The protection of tenants and provisions of housing security are very important but in the effect weak. A cancellation of a tenancy contract can result in homelessness. There is no definitive statement in the tenancy law how to prevent homelessness and / or how to handle housing stress or homelessness after the eviction took place. Therefore it is to state that the tenancy law provides protection of tenants and security of housing up to a certain extent but the tenancy law is no substitute for a right to housing.

The tenancy law gives some regulations how provisions to prevent eviction can take place. Prevention services can build their activities on the fact that the tenancy law determines an obligation to inform the communal magistrate where the household in danger of eviction lives before the proceeding can start. In the case of special arrangements the municipality will inform the local prevention service and intervention can start in an early state of the eviction proceeding. The prevention service will invite the tenants. In professional consultation a common search can start how to prevent eviction. But the tenancy law doesn't oblige the local / regional authorities to establish prevention services and / or to inform existing prevention services about ongoing eviction proceedings.

The tenancy law states that a legal cancellation of a tenancy contract has to be stopped if the tenants have fulfilled their obligation to pay the rent arrear before the first session of the court takes place.

In cases of urgency the eviction can be delayed by the court or the bailiff, depending from good will of the judge or the bailiff. Tenants have no right that their needs will be respected.

2.1.3 Legal framework for debt regulation and private bankruptcy

To support families and households in a critical financial debt situation the law on debt regulation and private bankruptcy opens an indebted household realistic chances and instruments to cope with their situation and find a new start.

Debt regulation services are provided in all regions of Austria and offer indebted households consulting and debt regulation. If the indebted family is able to provide a

stable income higher than the existence minimum there is the instrument of private bankruptcy. The family has to live for seven years with the existence minimum and the rest of their income will be executed to cover at least 10% of the debts. After the arranged seven years in extreme poverty these families are able to have a new economic start without any more debts.

In the first stage households with mortgage arrears and problems to pay the credit rates regularly have the possibility to access a debt regulation service. In the context of debt regulation there will be a special focus to prevent homelessness. Housing property is an important and positive factor in this context. If the debt regulation finds that it is not worth or impossible to stay in this accommodation then there is time to look for another home. In the context of debt regulation prevention of homelessness is handled with priority because otherwise there would be no chance to regulate the indebted situation of the household.

If it is not possible to arrange a debt regulation, for example in the way of a private bankruptcy, it comes to the second stage of a forced sale of housing property and the concerned household has no right to stay in the former accommodation. The new owner of the housing property, in many cases this will be a credit institute, can intervene at the court to get an eviction order. At this point of proceeding the court is obliged to inform the communal or district bureaucracy about the date when an eviction will take place. Therefore it is possible that the communal service or a cooperating private prevention service can intervene to provide support, to stop the eviction proceeding or to realize another accommodation.

2.1.4 Legal framework for the monitoring of eviction and the consequences of evictions

In Austria there is evidence about legal cancellation of tenancy contracts and eviction proceedings in consequence of canceled tenancy contracts or a loss of housing property. Monitoring is part of the regular business of the courts and provides evidence about the main figures like quantity, regional distribution and development in the course of the years. The monitoring scheme ends at the level of the execution of the evictions by the bailiff. So there is no evidence about the outcome and/or the consequences of evictions.

At all there is no further monitoring provided and many important aspects of eviction proceedings are not documented. Especially there is no evidence about the situation of households in threat of eviction, about the usage of the dwellings, the effects of strategies to cope with the existential crisis by families and / or prevention services etc. Last but not least there is no evidence about the living and housing situation of evicted families.

2.2 State/Public Rescue measures

2.2.1 Mediation and conciliation measures

The prevention of eviction is based as an informal support for families which are threat by eviction in consequence of legal cancellation of tenancy contracts or loss of housing property. That means that households in danger of homelessness can be supported by a prevention service, a debt regulation office or a homeless service to

prevent an eviction or to realize an alternative accommodation. But the contact with a prevention service is voluntarily.

The principle of voluntariness is also given in the context of homeless services. Hence it is a central target of services like that to organize a low-threshold entry to provide that households in threat of eviction and homelessness can easily access the service and get in contact with the support provisions.

Prevention services are mainly focused (Sozialabteilung 2005, pg. 7) on consultation in the context of the budgetary behavior of their clients and to check the income - expenditure relation on the one hand. Especially it is to look for additional income, for example from housing subsidies or other financial claims. On the other side prevention services have to analyze the housing relevant aspects like affordability of the accommodation, rent arrears and/or other reasons for the ongoing eviction proceeding. The main target is to assure the given tenancy contract, otherwise it will be necessary to provide alternative housing if an eviction cannot be avoided and to prevent homelessness.

2.2.2 Subsidies and benefits to cover rent arrear and mortgage delays

Prevention of eviction is mainly depending on the fact if it is possible to cover rent arrears or mortgage delays. So the prevention offices will start the intervention with a check how much money is needed and if the households are able to provide some of this arrear.

If it is realistic to safeguard the living situation of the household which is threat by eviction then the prevention service will try to support the households in the funding process. In Austria there is no right to gain money and cope with rent arrears or debts so it is necessary to verify formal as well as informal ways how to provide the needed money.

In the regional laws on subsidize benefit (Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung) there is no legal claim to support these households and to cover rent arrears or mortgage delays. But there is a special funds provided, called "help in special needs". In many cases it is essential that the prevention service is able to provide additional funds to cover the whole amount of the missing money. That is possible in the range of charitable institutions and some private funds.

2.2.3 Provision of emergency accommodations to house evicted families

In some cities / regions of Austria it is provided that evicted households can be housed temporarily and that homelessness as a consequence of evictions can become prevented. These accommodations, for example in the cities of Vienna and Graz, are part of the communal housing stock and dedicated to be available in the case of emergency. In Upper Austria there has been a social planning initiative of the regional government to provide a stock of 100 accommodations spread over the regional districts. In regions like Vorarlberg there is a regional project to provide a couple of emergency dwellings, funded by the regional government and managed by a social service. In these cities and regions it is possible that prevention services can use temporary resources to bridge the gap between the dwelling threat by eviction and a new housing solution. Mainly this intervention will take place when the former accommodation doesn't correspond with the housing situation, for example in

consequence of divorce, domestic violence etc. of if the rent is too high and the household cannot afford it.

In cases like that an intervention at the court by the prevention office has good chances to realize an delay of the eviction and so it is possible just to master the existential crisis of the household without additional stress. For example there is a local or regional resource like emergency accommodations provided in:

- Vienna: managed by the communal housing agency „Wieder Wohnen“
- Vorarlberg: emergency accommodations for women (with children), managed by ISD
- Graz: managed by social workers of the subsistence benefit office of the magistrate
- Upper Austria: The project line “100 accommodations” is provided by the regional government, managed by the regional prevention networks

2.2.4 Administrative frameworks and levels of ambitions of prevention services

When prevention services were established in Upper Austria the social planning office worked out a written program with definitions and standards of prevention services (Sozialplanung 2005). This definitions and proposals are still the fundament of the regional provisions to prevent eviction and homelessness in the cities and rural regions of Upper Austria. In this administrative framework there is a distinction between services for clients of prevention services on the one hand like financial consulting, to build up a rational and realistic relation of income and disposal of finances. On the other hand this compendium of targets and ambitions defines the goal to build up supportive networks which can be used to prevent evictions and homelessness.

- **Services for clients:** Consultation and support in managing the finances, assistance in housing and tenancy related challenges, empowerment to realize, that the persons in need of support can help themselves, intervention in contact with landlord, court and / or bailiff etc.
- **Networking:** Establish a supportive network of services in the vicinity of the families in existential crisis; organize support by debt regulation services, youth welfare, subsistence benefits etc. In order to prevent eviction and homelessness it is stated as a challenge for the prevention service to provide information security and binding exchange of information between different services which are part in the context of eviction proceeding. This line of prevention service includes also provisions of monitoring, to provide reports and public relation.

2.2.5 Instruments and procedures of prevention services

Prevention services get the information about legal cancelations of tenancy contracts and eviction proceedings by the local authorities. The flow of information is stated by the law of tenancy (§ 33a) and the law of court organization (§ 569) and allows the local authorities to act in the sense of prevention by themselves or in cooperation with prevention services as it is arranged in Vienna (FAWOS 2008).

- Responsibility: The information about legal cancellation of tenancy contracts and about eviction proceedings (including also eviction of apartment owners) goes in the most cases directly to the local authority where the household is situated. There is only the exception in Vienna.
- Special arrangement in Vienna: The prevention service FAWOS has the mandate by the city of Vienna to organize the specific intervention in all eviction proceedings. They get all information in advance and have to sort which office is responsible to take care. In cases where families with small children are threat by eviction it will be the youth welfare office that is responsible to get in contact and start to protect these families. If a family threat by eviction lives in a communal accommodation the responsibility goes to the office for subsistence benefit. In all other cases, for example families living in privately rented accommodations or in social housing, FAWOS will start to get in contact with these families.
- Information policy: In the beginning the prevention service will send an invitation letter to inform the household threat by eviction about the responsible prevention office. The family is invited to accept consultation and build up an arrangement how to prevent eviction or homelessness.
- Repetition of information: In the case that there is no response from the invited household the invitation will be repeated, families with children will be visited by social workers from the youth welfare office. But it is strictly voluntarily if the invited families come to the prevention service and accept the offered support.
- Making contact at their home: Some prevention services (ARGE ReWo, 2014; BEWOK 2014) try to get in contact with the households in housing troubles at their home.
- Background of cancellation / eviction proceeding: In the first session of consultation the situation will be analyzed that caused troubles with the tenancy contract and / or led to an eviction order. In this context it has to be checked if there is a chance to prevent cancellation of the tenancy contract and to stay in the accommodation. At this stage of consultation it will be the task for the counsellor to check what kind of support is needed and to build up an agreement with the members of the family what to be done next.
- Suitability of housing conditions: Before the prevention service starts to support the tenants to stay in their accommodation it is necessary to check if this accommodation is adequate and affordable so that it makes sense to behold on it. Especially in those cases that divorce or unemployment have caused a decrease of the household income so that the rent is not affordable any more then it is appropriate to start with the search for an adequate and affordable new accommodation and to prevent homelessness.
- Check of resources: In the counselling process it is important to get an insight into the income situation of the household. Especially it has to be checked if there is a possibility to increase the income because the household did not claim on special benefits until then. So the question must be answered if there is a possibility that the family can afford a financial contribution to cover the rent arrear by own resources, probably in the way of deferred payment.

- Contact with landlord: In a proper contact with the landlord the prevention service will try to find a mutual agreement so that the cancellation of the tenancy contract can be stopped.
- Regulation of debts and rent arrears: If the legal cancellation of the tenancy contract is just in the beginning it might be easier just to cover the rent arrear. In this case the cancellation will be denied by the court.
- Legal control of the rent: In cases of a high rent the prevention service can initiate a legal control of the rent (for example: FAWOS / Volkshilfe 2014). This proceeding is determined by the law of tenancy and is only possible if the tenancy law can be applied (for example: newly built accommodation are out of appliance)
- Mediation of conflicts in the vicinity: In cases where conflicts in the vicinity have caused the trouble with cancellation or eviction order it will be the challenge for the prevention service to start with mediation and to try to solve the conflict.
- Follow up care: In the case that a prevention intervention was successful and the tenants could stay in their accommodation most prevention services (for example: Volkshilfe 2104) will stay in contact with these families at least for a short period of follow up care to provide a sustainable effect of the consultation and to prevent a backslide into rent arrears and eviction order.

2.2.6 Cost effectiveness of prevention of eviction

When services to prevent eviction were started in Salzburg (esage 1995) and Vienna (FAWOS 1997) there was no evidence about feasibility in the urban and regional context, about effects and costs, about necessary standards and competences. So the social planning offices in Salzburg and Vienna initiated studies, financed from funds for social housing. When the results of these studies were published the outcome was quite surprising. At least it became evident that the funding of € 1 for prevention of evictions could save € 7 which otherwise would have to be spent for tackling homelessness. Beginning with these studies the first prevention services in Austria could start. Few years later other regions like Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria and Vorarlberg followed. Just now the county Tyrol has announced to start with a prevention service in the coming year.

2.3 Other special measures to prevent evictions and to protect evictees

2.3.1 Affordability of housing

Regulation of rents and prices: In Austria rents and prices of accommodations are influenced in different ways which are constituted by the tenancy law.

- Communal and social housing: The Austrian model of social housing has a long tradition, starting in the 1920^{ths} with the instruments of communal housing policy and was continued in the 1950^{ths} as construction of public utility housing (gemeinnütziger Wohnbau). In the second half of the 20th century the social housing companies produced a great stock of dwellings for rent and owner occupied accommodations. Housing subsidies and binding rules for rents in the social housing market grant a low price level. The communal and social

housing market is an important provision of affordable accommodations. Housing subsidies and binding rules grant a relatively low price level and are the basics for affordable housing. Especially in cities like Vienna, Graz and Linz there is a communal housing stock used as resource for homeless services. In other cities and regions it is the social housing market that has to be used by homeless services to provide housing for their clients but the amount of available subsidized accommodations is quite small and insufficiently. This segment of the housing market is together with the stock of communal flats an important fundus to provide affordable housing. Especially in Vienna the communal housing stock is huge and an important resource for homeless services (Harner 2014, p. 29). In other regions and especially in urban areas of Austria the subsidized segment of the housing market and the cooperation with social housing corporations play an important role in the housing strategies of homeless services (BAWO 2013).

- **Legal regulation of rents and prices:** The tenancy law gives another frame to regulate the costs of housing. Though in the last decades there has been a successful influence of neoliberal economists to weaken the protection of tenants and to regulate the costs of housing, the legal aspect is still stronger than in other European countries (Dimmel 2014, page 11). The tenancy law constitutes three levels of application. Each of these levels is characterized by different schemes of tenancy protection and prices.
 - **Level of total application:** In this part of the housing market, especially communal and subsidized accommodations, the price is fixed according to categories of standards like heating and (warm) water installation. For each category of standards (category A = high standards; category B = quite good standards in terms of living but no central heating; category C = no central heating, water installation and toilet in the accommodation but no bathing room; category D = no heating and no water installation in the flat) there is a fix-price per square meter. The tenancy contracts in these accommodations will be mainly unlimited and – last but not least – in this market segment it is possible to get a legal control of the housing costs if the tenant thinks that he/she pays too much in relation to the given standards.
 - **Level of partially application:** Most accommodations for rent (category A) belong to the level of partially application. The prices of these accommodations can be constructed along a target value (Richtwert) with special aspects like extra adjustment, sunny or shady situation of the accommodation, limited or unlimited contract, well or bad recommended vicinity etc. can cause additional costs or have to be accounted to reduce the rent. In many cases the tenancy contracts will be limited (minimum limit = 3 years). If the accommodation (category A) is situated in a listed building constructed later than 1945 the system of regulation and pricing is binding according to a reasonable price.

- **Level of non application**: Accommodations in privately budgeted buildings as well as single houses for rent are completely free in pricing. So the rents will be as high as the market condition allows.

2.3.2 Subsidized social housing and housing benefits

The Austrian model of social housing is focused on universal targets like “social city” and a “well-balanced social mix” and only secondarily on the target to provide poor households with affordable accommodations. The model of subsidized housing is understood as an instrument of city development. Therefore the Austrian social housing policy provides an open access for a broad target group, consisting of low income households up to the level of middle class households (Weninger 2014, pg. 236f.).

In the centre of social housing policy there is the funding of multiple storey residential buildings (‘Objektförderung’) which still is the domain of social housing companies. Since neoliberalism started to influence housing policy in Austria in the 1990ies the regions opened the system of housing subsidies for private housing companies and allowed subsidies in the context of condominiums with privately owned apartments.

Social housing in Austria is primarily not an instrument to provide housing for low income households (Roumet 2014, pg. 116). On the contrary the financial limits are quite broad so that also households with higher income can access social housing, for example in the context of privately owned accommodations. In most regions of Austria there is a fix relation between subsidized accommodations for rent (70%) and apartments to own (30%). Just recently this system has become criticized by private construction companies and also the EU commission (Almunia decree) has stated that the subsidy for well off households is an infliction to the free competition and has to be changed into support for poor households only (Weninger 2014).

There are high financial thresholds to access social housing. So for all households, independently from the income situation, it is necessary to pay a contribution to the construction costs up to € 3.000 before you are accepted as tenant. Therefore it is almost impossible for poor households to master the access to social housing.

Housing benefits are the instrument to support households with low income so that they can afford an adequate accommodation without paying more than 25% of their budget for the costs of housing.

In some regions like Lower Austria the housing benefits are strictly reserved for tenants of social accommodations. Tenants in freely rented accommodations are therefore excluded from housing benefits – without respect if they will need monetary support to prevent rent arrears and / or homelessness. In other regions like Salzburg the access to housing benefits is open also for tenants in freely rented accommodations but there is no legal claim. There are additional conditions like unlimited tenancy contracts and reliable costs of the rent. Tenants with limited tenancy contracts and rents which are higher than the average of housing costs in the region are excluded from access to housing benefits.

2.3.3 Models of good practice to prevent eviction

Social and communal Housing agencies active in the prevention of evictions

In the practice of prevention services it is very important to realize a good cooperation with housing agencies. In the past years of regularly contact the prevention services were able to build up good schemes of information, communication and cooperation with communal and social housing agencies (for example FAWOS / Vienna and esage / Salzburg). In a way it is a supportive cooperation when the housing agencies realize that there is a constructive care relation with households with rent arrears and in threat of eviction.

Prevention services by the social benefit office in Graz (Haslauer 2014)

The local authorities in Graz have established a service to prevent eviction from communal housing. This office will be in charge when there are rent arrears in a communal dwelling and if persons / families are threat by eviction which are on supplementary benefit for longer than six months. The prevention of legal cancellation and / or eviction will be provided by social workers from the local office for subsistence benefit.

In cases where tenants of communal housing are concerned it is granted that prevention work can start at an early stage. The social workers will get the information about rent arrears and can start with consultation before a legal cancellation proceeding has started.

Communal office for social benefit cooperates with prevention service / Vienna

FAWOS, prevention service in Vienna, has special arrangements of cooperation with the communal office for social benefit. Officials from the social benefit office are located at FAWOS and can grant financial aid in cases of tenants with rent arrears and limited chances to cover the debts by own or additional funds. Hence it is possible to act in one office without delay and / or insecurity if the applied funding will be granted or not. In this way there is a model of a one stop office where agenda of different offices and intersectional cooperation can be realized. (FAWOS 2014)

Social housing agencies providing consulting and preventive work

Some social housing agencies have started to provide special offices for the legal intervention. So it is possible to save costs for lawyers or debt collecting agencies. Some social housing agencies even started to prevent legal cancellation and / or eviction and installed an office for social work. In the case of rent arrears the household will be invited to access consultation. In the focus of this prevention service stands the check of the budgetary situation of the household and the search for additional support to cover rent arrears and to handle the regularly obligations to pay the rent (GSWB / Salzburg).

Contact and follow up services to provide sustainable prevention

In Austria there are only few services which provide contacting households in threat of eviction at home and a follow up service after the eviction could be prevented. The service at home in the beginning of the intervention as well as in the way of follow up contacts seems important in rural parts without social infrastructure in the surrounding villages. In cases like that the threshold to come in contact and to keep contact will be high so it is necessary to alleviate the first contact. Ongoing and follow up contacts are provided by **ARGE ReWo** in **Upper Austria** and by **BEWOK** in **Lower Austria**.

Coordination and networking as basis for prevention work (IfS 2014)

In the region of **Vorarlberg** the prevention of eviction is not the issue for one service provider but is established in a coordinated way by social consultation offices spread out through the region and the providers of homeless services which are situated in the central districts of Vorarlberg. The coordination of prevention services is done by a provider of different social services from child welfare on to services for old and handicapped persons (IfS). The coordination of prevention services includes support in networking, training of colleagues, public relation and building up cooperation schemes with social housing agencies. The coordination office provides measures and instruments of standard and quality development, monitoring the prevention services and effects. Also the report on a yearly basis is provided by the coordination office.

Supported bank-account provided by debt consultation offices (asb)

Debt consultation offices in Austria are confronted with the fact that many indebted households cannot provide enough income to offer a guaranteed back-payment. Hence these households are excluded from a possible legal solution of their financial problems in the way of a private bankruptcy. They have no chance to end the indebted situation after 7 years living with the legal minimum income. There is no new start into a debt free live and at the same time these households are confronted with rent arrears, delay of alimentary pension etc. and the risk of eviction etc. To beware these households from risks like that the debt consultation offices have established the instrument of a supported bank-account. That means that important payments like rent, energy costs or alimentary pension will be paid regularly from the bank account and the household can only use the rest of their minimum income for a living. In this way it is not possible to provide a way out of the indebted situation but to save the existentially important resources like housing and energy.

Legal control of rents (FAWOS / Vienna):

In the last years FAWOS has started to realize a legal control of the rents. This is possible for those accommodations where the tenancy law is fully applicable. In these cases FAWOS could proof that very often the rents were too high. So the tenants got back money which they have paid in the last three years and quite often it was possible that there was no more rent arrear afterwards.

2.4 Monitoring measures

The monitoring by the ministry of justice is focused to document the legal cancellation proceedings and eviction orders. The documents show the development of evictions over the years and differentiate between regions and cities. So it becomes evident that eviction proceedings are mainly an urban issue. Most eviction proceedings take place in Vienna. The numbers show an enormous difference between the different stages of the legal proceeding. There are much more households threat by cancellation proceedings than those confronted with an eviction order. Only few households are definitely evicted. But the given monitoring doesn't give evidence about the strategies of these households to tackle the risk of becoming homeless or the effects of an eviction. In effect it doesn't become evident if households, threat by the legal cancellation of tenancy contract, can manage to stay

in their accommodation or to find a new home and to leave the accommodation before the eviction takes place (Schoibl 2013(2)).

3 Potential measures that could be effective

The following proposals are the result of a session with colleagues from prevention services in Austria. This session was part of a prevention conference which took place in Burgenland, 30.9.2014.²

3.1 Right to housing

The human right to housing is not established in the constitution and in the reality of the communal and regional housing market there is no individual right to realize adequate and affordable housing. Austria has ratified the European Social Charta but explicitly denied to ratify the Articles 30 and 31. It would be an important step to realize a right to housing. Austria should rethink its rejection and improve the ratification of the European Social Charta.

3.2 Affordable Housing

The instruments to provide access to housing and housing security like housing subsidies and subsistence benefits are not sufficiently and there is a need to facilitate the access to these benefits on the one hand and to improve the monetary support on the other hand. This concerns first the fact that housing benefits are – in some regions – restricted to households living in subsidized accommodations. In some other counties housing benefits will not be granted for households in temporary limited tenancy contracts. In the second place subsistence benefits to support the costs of housing are only granted up to a limit which is in some counties less than the costs of available accommodations (for example: Salzburg). As long as the access to adequate and cost covering benefits is restricted the effects of prevention and homeless services is questionable.

3.3 Provision of emergency accommodations

In certain cases it doesn't make sense to secure given accommodations – if these accommodations are too expensive or in other reasons not adequate (for example in the case of divorce) it will be much better to provide an alternative housing. Therefore it would be necessary that prevention or homeless services are adjusted with emergency accommodations to realize a change of the accommodation and prevent homelessness – in effect of an eviction (for example: Upper Austria, Vienna, Graz).

² Participants of the session: Oliver Altmayer (Tyrol), Renate Kitzman, Kurt Feichtner, Christa Pairitsch, Johannes Schuster-Gundacker (all from Vienna), Gertrud Lämmerer, Johannes Brudnjak, Markus Haidinger (all from Styria), Renate Pitz, Monika Matuschek, Helga Furlinger-Nagl, Anna Humer, Oliver Jungwirth, Karl Föschl, Ingrid Ulrich (all from Upper Austria), Elisabeth Gabriel, Kurt Lenitz (all from Lower Austria), Sieglinde Trannacher (Carinthia); moderation and protocol of the session by Heinz Schoibl (Salzburg)

3.4 Perspectives for the development of prevention services

The colleagues from prevention services state that the practical experiences show very clearly that prevention of eviction is feasible, that it saves a lot of money (the cost relation is very impressive = 1 € for prevention saves € 7 for rehabilitation) and prevents existential crisis of many families. Therefore it can be argued that it is necessary to improve the resources for preventive activities, to realize prevention in all Austrian regions and to provide additional approaches in the sense of follow up support after the prevention took place.

3.5 Formal / legal status of prevention services

The tenancy law states an obligation of justice to inform local authorities of eviction proceedings and the law on justice organization defines a duty of justice to inform local authorities of eviction orders and the date of eviction. But neither the tenancy law nor the justice organization law respects the role of prevention services. Hence the prevention of eviction and homelessness in Austria is situated in an informal status. Even the simple aspect how prevention service get information about eviction proceedings, orders or dates of eviction depends on the good will of housing companies, local authorities and / or the bailiff. According to this fact prevention services have no legal position in the eviction proceedings. Therefore a legal intervention by prevention services is impossible.

3.6 Assistance in the context of evictions

The legal framework of tenancy and / or eviction doesn't mention the needs of these households threat by eviction and – in this sense – doesn't provide any provisions to further housing security and/or the prevention of homelessness.

3.7 Temporary limits

The legal frameworks of eviction proceedings regulate the possibility of temporary limits and the delay of eviction in case of special needs and living conditions. But there is no right the households and / or the prevention service can hold on. If their wishes and needs will be heard is a question of good will.

3.8 Information policy

In the practice of eviction prevention it is very important to get the information about rent arrears and eviction proceedings as soon as possible. This is also a question of the costs of proceedings, lawyers and debt collection agencies. A short term intervention can also make sure that the rent or mortgage arrears don't become too high. Simply it would be best to get the information already at the stage before a legal cancellation of the tenancy contract has started. Therefore it would be necessary to realize rules and norms to improve the flow of information. Landlords and housing enterprises should be committed to involve prevention services at an early stage of the proceeding, probably when the cancellation letter is to be sent.

3.9 Monitoring eviction proceedings and the prevention of eviction

The monitoring of the prevention of eviction is not regulated at national level. In the regions of Austria where prevention services are established there is also a regional

monitoring provided. Therefore in six of nine regions in Austria there are regional reports about practical experiences and observations in the context of housing security and the effects of prevention of eviction. These reports are – as it is now – not linked with the national monitoring of eviction proceedings. So the status of monitoring the eviction proceedings and the prevention of eviction and homelessness is very unsatisfactory because it is not possible to provide an overview on proceedings and effects in both areas – the cancellation of tenancy contracts and the loss of housing property. Monitoring provisions should become improved and include

- data about the use of the accommodations / the housing property
- constitution of the households
- reasons why eviction proceedings don't take place
- causes which lead to the eviction proceedings and / or the final eviction
- detailed description of the execution of evictions
- the consequences of evictions for the households concerned by eviction – esp. what is happening after the eviction took place.

So it should be possible to get valid evidence about all households, concerned with eviction proceedings and / or loss of housing property.

3.10 Costs of proceedings

Legal proceedings to cancel tenancy contracts and / or to finish housing conditions are very simple but formal acts. In this sense it doesn't make sense that in this context high costs are resulting – for the lawyer, for debt collection agencies, for the court and the bailiff, for transport and storage of furniture and the holdings of the evicted households. It would be necessary to take care that proceedings are as simple and without high costs as possible.

3.11 Standards and perspectives of the prevention of eviction

In some regions of Austria social administration and policy have defined standards and targets (for example: Sozialabteilung OÖ 2005). These standards are the basics for a qualitative social work to prevent eviction and homelessness. Many regions, for example Salzburg, have not established stringent standards and therefore there is no clear perspective for the development of the provisions to prevent eviction. The colleagues from prevention services stated some aspects of innovative standard development:

- **Follow up services** are an important factor to provide sustainable housing security after successful intervention to prevent an eviction
- **Accompanying measures** to support persons who wouldn't be able to take up these services by themselves
- **Retrospective effects of funding:** Housing benefits can only be provided beginning with the date of the application for funds, independently if their economic situation has not changed since the rent arrears started. It would be an important improvement of the prevention of eviction if households treat by eviction could get funding from housing benefits with retrospective effect because the debt would be much less.

- **Control of housing costs:** The tenancy law allows landlords to define the costs of accommodations along a system of target values. There are some aspects standardized when it is possible to increase or to decrease the rent. One of these aspects is the limitation of the tenancy contract. In this case the rent has to be cheaper than in the case of an unlimited contract. Especially in the private housing market it can be observed that the rents are too high and that standardized aspects like limitation of contracts are not respected. The problem in Austria is that it is not scheduled to control the determination of rents in a legal and obligatory way. It would be necessary to amend the tenancy law and to redefine the field of application. Especially it needs a new definition of the term 'dwelling in new housing development'. Newly built dwellings are excluded from the application of the tenancy law (FAWOS 2014).
- **Prioritization of housing costs:** In the context of banking transactions it is necessary to realize that housing related transfers have to be dealt with priority in order to prevent rent arrears.
- **Funding of rent arrears:** Housing subsistence and housing related subsistence benefits in Austria don't accept rent arrears as justification for regularly funding. A benefit can be provided but the tenants with rent arrears have no legal title. So in the practice of prevention services it is necessary that private donations and charitable funds have to be asked for a monetary support to prevent eviction. In this sense the colleagues from prevention services ask for a change in the monetary frameworks of prevention of eviction to make it easier to provide funding of rent arrears, best in the way of a legal title and common criteria for granting money.
- **Limitation of the validity of the eviction title:** If an eviction order is stated by law but not executed for different reasons this title will hold for 30 more years. The landlord or the housing agencies can at any time and without any certain reason reactivate the eviction title. So the tenants are living in continual insecurity. This is the reason why colleagues from prevention services ask for shortening of the validity of the eviction title.

3.12 Improving the conditions of debt regulation and private bankruptcy

In 2013 the minimum income of households which could not become executed by law was € 837. At all 29.3% of the clients of debt regulation services earned less than this minimum income. Hence these households have no chance to realize a regularly payback of their debts, they are not able to provide a rate of at least 10% return on their debts and so they are excluded from a private bankruptcy. On long distance these families will stay indebted and have no chance to provide a financial new start. The instrument of the supported bank-account is therefore only a measure to prevent further negative developments like eviction and homelessness but is – at least – no real way out of the existential crisis.

4 Table I: Anti eviction measures

Name of the measure	Source of the measure Law, court decision, policy, NGOs, etc.	Type of measure Preventive, tackle, monitor	Nature of the measure 1. Existing effective measures 2. Existing measures which are not effective 3. Recommended but not yet existing measures.	Reason for the measure	Scope of the measure No. of benefitted people, target population, etc.	Advantages	Disadvantages
right to housing	definition of targets in laws on 'social housing' but not in the constitutional law of Austria protection of tenants is provided by the tenancy law	soft appeal to provide affordable and available accommodations for all inhabitants legal protection of tenants	1. subsidized social housing in all regions = important resource for prevention and homeless services 2. social housing market is only partly open for low income households 3. the tenancy law is in force for small parts of the housing market and needs to become amended fundamentally	Subsidized social and communal accommodations are relatively cheap. Hence it is necessary to improve the cooperation with prevention and homeless services The thresholds to access the social housing market are too high. Low income families cannot afford the entrance. Those parts of the housing market where the tenancy law doesn't protect tenants or regulate the price show a steady increase of housing costs.	About 50% of the Austrian lives in rented accommodations but only about 20% in subsidized social or communal dwellings. Therefore a large part of the Austrians would profit from improvements in the context of a regulated housing market.	easier access to social housing better protection of housing and housing security affordable housing costs	neoliberal housing production insecure rent and eviction
legal framework for safeguarding housing / prevention of legal cancellation of tenancy contracts and eviction	tenancy law and execution law	national housing laws regulate widely the context of cancellation of tenancy contracts and / or the proceeding of cancellation and eviction	at national level there is no framework to regulate prevention and homeless services in Austria	regional frameworks are only in two of nine regions in force, but these frameworks are weak and cannot found a legal basis and/or a profound role of prevention service in the legal proceedings of cancellation and eviction	It would be necessary to realize at least legal frameworks at the regional level in all provinces of Austria. But it would be much better to establish a national law on prevention and ending homelessness.	Legal frameworks on preventing, tackling and ending homelessness would guarantee that prevention services get information about threat of eviction at an early stage of proceeding. An adequate role and position of prevention in the legal proceeding on cancellation and eviction could be defined.	
debt regulation and bankruptcy	legal based at national level by law on bankruptcy	consultation with legal defined role and position in the legal regulation proceeding	1. consultation and preparation of a bankruptcy 2. bankruptcy is only possible if there is some more income than the legal minimum 3. improvement of the access to	households without enough income (because of unemployment, divorce etc.) to reach at least 10% of the debts after living at the existence minimum for seven	indebted households with low income like irregular labour conditions, unemployed persons etc.	chances to live without continually threat of execution, rent arrears and eviction	

Name of the measure	Source of the measure Law, court decision, policy, NGOs, etc.	Type of measure Preventive, tackle, monitor	Nature of the measure 1. Existing effective measures 2. Existing measures which are not effective 3. Recommended but not yet existing measures.	Reason for the measure	Scope of the measure No. of benefitted people, target population, etc.	Advantages	Disadvantages
			private bankruptcy, low threshold and/or other methods and instruments	years are excluded from private bankruptcy. This target group needs other instruments to grant a living after the debt crisis			
national frameworks for monitoring the legal sphere	justice and bailiffs are obliged to document the activities in the context of legal proceedings and eviction	documentation of simple facts like numbers of proceedings and regional distribution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> overview about numbers and regional distribution no information about the type of household, strategies to tackle the threat of cancellation and/or eviction, activities of prevention, effects of eviction and living conditions after the eviction took place new monitoring system 	to improve the knowledge and build up a contextual understanding of households in extreme poverty, housing stress and in threat of homelessness / ways into homelessness	In the year 2013 at all 36.000 households were confronted with legal proceedings to cancel the tenancy contract. At all almost 5.000 households were evicted, but there is no evidence what happened between the start of the proceedings and the real eviction. There is no evidence about the effects of evictions at all.	to develop evidence based strategies to prevent and to tackle homelessness	
regional frameworks for monitoring the practice of prevention and homeless services	In the regions Vienna, Lower and Upper Austria the law on social benefit gives the framework to build up a regional report on prevention and tackling homelessness	data of prevention and homelessness services are combined into a common regional report and allows an insight on strategies and effects of the fight against homelessness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> overview and basis for analyse and planning many regions of Austria are not at the same level of monitoring; important links to services beside the homeless area are not respected national framework for nationwide monitoring including important services and support schemes beside 	provision of an Austrian data base on homelessness and strategies of prevention, tackling and ending homelessness		knowledge and evidence based development of national strategies against homelessness	
informality of prevention tools and methods	regional laws on social benefit regulate existing services or not	in six of nine Austrian regions there are services established to prevent evictions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> in six regions the prevention services are spread over the whole county access to the services is voluntarily, information about households in threat is crucial but insecure, the role / position of prevention in the eviction proceeding is not defined there is a need to build up prevention services in all 	It is simple injustice and discrimination that in some regions there are no provisions to support families in threat of eviction and homelessness. The development of standards and quality of prevention services depends on information security, clearness of the role and position in the	Regions like Tyrol, Burgenland and Carinthia have a delay to establish prevention services, so the scope of this measure will be all households in the cities and villages of these regions. Local authorities, justice and bailiffs have to	It is crucial that information about proceedings of cancellation and / or eviction is given at an early stage of the proceeding to reduce costs and to improve the chances to intervene	

Name of the measure	Source of the measure Law, court decision, policy, NGOs, etc.	Type of measure Preventive, tackle, monitor	Nature of the measure 1. Existing effective measures 2. Existing measures which are not effective 3. Recommended but not yet existing measures.	Reason for the measure	Scope of the measure No. of benefitted people, target population, etc.	Advantages	Disadvantages
			Austrian regions and to improve information policy as well as the role / position of prevention in the legal proceedings	legal proceedings. If prevention services become informed of cancellation and eviction proceedings depends on the local authorities, hence it is necessary to improve role / position of prevention services in the legal proceedings.	develop new information strategies	effectively.	
Subsidies and benefits	regional laws on social benefit	The regional laws on social benefit in all Austrian counties provide access to additional benefits to cover rent arrears but not for a delay of mortgages.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. there is no legal claim on benefits to cover rent arrears but in most regions it is possible to get a monetary support 2. It is not granted that the monetary support from social benefit covers all the rent arrears, so the prevention services have to find additional monetary funds with different thresholds, regulations and conditions 3. nationwide standards of social benefits to cover rent arrears; harmonize the different funds for additional funding of rent arrears. 	injustice and discrimination according to inequality of the regional laws development of standards and quality of prevention services depends on adequate regulation of funding	regional laws on social benefit additional funds to cover rent arrears	improvement of prevention	
emergency accommodation to house eviction families	regional laws on social policy / administration of communal accommodations / regional housing policy	local and regional authorities provide empty accommodations to realize emergency activities to house evicted families	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some cities and regions of Austria provide emergency accommodations 2. Most of Austrian cities and regions don't provide emergency accommodations 3. Realize a contingent of emergency accommodations in all Austrian cities and regions 	inequality and discrimination of families living in regions without equal provisions to prevent homelessness	many cities and regions provide emergency shelters but no emergency accommodations	Resources like that could help prevention and homeless services to stop the entrance into homelessness at a very early stage.	
development of standards and targets of prevention services	social planning at regional / communal level	systematic planning and establishing provisions of prevention services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Few cities and regions in Austria have started a systematic planning and establishing process (for example: Upper Austria) 2. In most cities and regions the 	nationwide strategy to prevent evictions and homelessness provision of nationwide standards and targets of prevention services	Austria need planning strategies at national level to provide nationwide development of standards, instruments and methods	chances to end homelessness	

Name of the measure	Source of the measure Law, court decision, policy, NGOs, etc.	Type of measure Preventive, tackle, monitor	Nature of the measure 1. Existing effective measures 2. Existing measures which are not effective 3. Recommended but not yet existing measures.	Reason for the measure	Scope of the measure No. of benefitted people, target population, etc.	Advantages	Disadvantages
			<p>process of establishing prevention services can be described as trial and error based development / not evidence based</p> <p>3. Some cities and regions of Austria still have not established prevention services but should start in the next time, so that an Austrian wide process of standard development can be initiated</p>				
Assistance in the context of eviction	regional law on youth welfare / social benefit	When a family with young children becomes evicted in some cities and regions it is usual that social workers from youth welfare will take part to assist the family to find a housing solution, probably in an emergency accommodation	<p>1. Assistance in the process of eviction doesn't only help small children in a traumatic situation but the whole family. At least in this situation support can be started and critical situation for all can be prevented.</p> <p>2. Individual support should start earlier in the process. Participation in the eviction process cannot provide a necessary contact with the family-members because in many cases the accommodation is left alone.</p> <p>3. In the case of eviction proceedings it should be granted that every family should be contacted, if necessary at home.</p>	At all there is a need on different levels, starting with low threshold services, stringent information about prevention services and personal invitation to contact the service, contact at home, if families are not able to access the service	Only few prevention services provide a contact at home, if families need help to access an office.	Eviction proceedings mean that there is need for support, help and intervention. Hence a contact with services should be granted.	
initiative contact at home	regional law on social benefit	if households threat by eviction don't react in time according to the invitation to access an intervention / prevention office in some services there will be an initiative contact at home	<p>1. An initiative contact at home is an additional service to provide low threshold access and to get sure that a family / person in need can get the support they need.</p> <p>2. The provision of an initiative contact at home is dependant from high mobility of the service line which should be placed in a</p>	Especially in rural parts of Austria it is evident that housing stress and eviction can lead to a displacement of the families into urban areas – without a chance how to settle there. An initiative contact at home can provide support in the social net where these families live and can help	Only few prevention services provide a contact at home, if families need help to access an office.	come into contact with clients at a very early stage of the development of housing stress	

Name of the measure	Source of the measure Law, court decision, policy, NGOs, etc.	Type of measure Preventive, tackle, monitor	Nature of the measure 1. Existing effective measures 2. Existing measures which are not effective 3. Recommended but not yet existing measures.	Reason for the measure	Scope of the measure No. of benefitted people, target population, etc.	Advantages	Disadvantages
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regional contact and / or in a network with services spread out in the vicinity. 3. In this sense the prevention services recommend an organisation of the services to reach also far off villages. 	them to stay at their home.			
follow up services and sustainability	regional law on youth welfare / social benefit	Prevention service ends in the most regions and cities with the fact that an evicted could be prevented, but many families need follow up support and care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow up services can help families to build a rational budgeting and to keep their housing situations stable. 2. Most prevention services have only small personal resources. Hence it is not possible to provide long term contact. 3. It would be helpful if prevention services are integrated in a broad network of wide spread social services and local / regional authorities. 	Families with experiences of legal cancellation and eviction proceedings are in danger to repeat these experiences. Hence it would be necessary that there is a stable contact line with social services and/or if necessary with prevention services.	Only few prevention services can provide a follow up service, if a family needs support to keep in the arrangements and to provide sustainable results of consultation.		
Prioritization of housing related costs in the context of banking	ABGB – national law on managing business affaires	regulation of a ranking to guarantee that housing related payments will be provided first	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. informal arrangements by debt consultation 2. there is no legal claim to accept housing related payments as existentially important 3. at least it should be a gentlemen agreement arranged with bank institutes / better: a norm in the legal framework of banking 	indebted households can be secure that housing related costs will be covered before the money is (mis)used for debt-payments	reliable instrument for all debt regulation and prevention services		
Supported bank account	informal arrangement between consultation office and indebted households	in the context of debt regulation it can be necessary to realize a systematic support in managing the bank account of the client and to provide that important payments will be paid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Up to now this is an informal arrangement in the context of debt regulation. Sometimes this strategy is copied by prevention and / or homeless services 2. there is no legal regulation of these support method, only in the range of incapacitation by legal act when handicapped persons have to be protected in handling money 3. legal base for supporting adult 	indebted households without an adequate income higher than the minimum income cannot access private bankruptcy and have no chance to realize a financial new start. For this target group it would be very helpful to have a budget managing tool to provide important payments (like housing related) and to keep the	This could become a reliable instrument for all debt regulation and prevention services.		

Name of the measure	Source of the measure Law, court decision, policy, NGOs, etc.	Type of measure Preventive, tackle, monitor	Nature of the measure 1. Existing effective measures 2. Existing measures which are not effective 3. Recommended but not yet existing measures.	Reason for the measure	Scope of the measure No. of benefitted people, target population, etc.	Advantages	Disa
			persons in handling their budget	money they need for their living at hand – protected from execution.			

5 Country Sheet

As in Germany and other European countries has started to implement measures and strategies to prevent homelessness in the beginning 1990ies. Because homelessness and homeless services are a regional competence also the prevention services were established by the regional authorities. Initiatives to implement prevention services started in Salzburg (1994) and only few years later in Vienna (1997). Other regions like Styria, Lower and Upper Austria, Vorarlberg established prevention initiatives some years later, 2005 onwards.

At the same time also debt regulation were implemented, but in difference to the prevention of legal cancellation of tenancy and eviction the debt consult services in Austria are provided by a national law.

1. anti-eviction and early intervention measures for households and follow-up support measures

Prevention of homelessness is a matter of different housing relevant critical situations. In these fields of social services there are completely different frameworks given. Also the chances for innovation and the development of innovative methods are completely different. Therefore it is necessary to differ between services to prevent the legal cancellation of tenancy contracts, provisions of debt regulation and prevention of homelessness in the context of stationary treatment in psychiatric clinics, prison and/or therapeutic care of alcohol or drug addicts.

Prevention in the context of cancellation of tenancy contracts and eviction orders

In the last few years the prevention services in Austria have started a process to develop professional standards. Regular conferences provide exchange of experiences and the possibility to learn from each other (Kitzman 2014). In the focus of these prevention services as established in the counties Vienna, Lower and Upper Austria, Styria, Salzburg and Vorarlberg stands a professional intervention in the context of legal proceedings to cancel tenancy contracts and to evict households with rent arrears etc. Rent arrears are the main causes for this kind of housing stress. Meanwhile the prevention services have started to build up a differentiated monitoring system but still there is no sufficient connection to the monitoring of legal proceedings.

Prevention of homelessness in the context of stationary treatment or stay

The release from prison or stationary treatment in order for many persons is a critical challenge. In the past years there has been progress to provide a release service and to take care of the housing situation and to realize that there is an adequate accommodation for the time after the stationary stay. But still there are no national or regional frameworks in force to provide exchange of practical experiences, standard development and / or systematical monitoring.

Prevention of homelessness in the context of debt regulation, mortgage delays and sell out of housing property

Households in housing stress and / or threat of eviction as consequence of debts and delay of mortgage obligations are mainly challenged to access debt regulation

services to get support and prevention from homelessness. The access to debt regulation is relatively low threshold but the financial limits to support households to realize an economic new start in the way of private bankruptcy are very high. The debt regulation services in Austria are organized in an umbrella organization (asb) which provides standard development, exchange of practical experiences and monitoring. Obviously prevention of homelessness is a side product of these services. Until now prevention of homelessness is no special focus in the context of monitoring and is not highlighted in the reports (asb 2014).

2. Legal and regulatory provisions regulating eviction procedures

Prevention of homelessness in the context of legal proceedings to cancel tenancy contracts, of eviction orders, of debt related loss of housing property and in the context of release from stationary residence (prison, hospital, stationary care) is not sufficiently based by legal frameworks.

Prevention of eviction: At national level there are laws to regulate the proceedings of cancellation and eviction. But in the context of homelessness there is only the obligation to inform communal authorities about this threat. In the national frameworks there is no basis for prevention of homelessness, no definition of role and position of prevention services in the eviction proceeding and there is no word about necessary resources how to intervene successful. In the legal framework of the tenancy law, the execution order and/or the law of justice organisation the agenda of prevention of homelessness is not even mentioned.

Prevention in the context of the cancellation and eviction proceedings is in regional competence. But the situation in the regions of Austria is completely different. So there are few counties (Vienna, Upper Austria) where prevention of eviction is regulated in regional laws (for example: Wiener Wohnungssicherungsgesetz 2012). So there is a well-defined framework which provides regulations for information, funding and competences – especially in the context of social benefits and temporary housing in the case that an eviction cannot be prevented. In regions like Lower Austria, Styria, Salzburg and Vorarlberg there are administrative frameworks on the level of social planning and administration which regulate some standards like monitoring and professional intervention at regional level but not in relation to competences of funding, housing etc. At the same time regions like Burgenland, Carinthia and Tyrol have not realized prevention services in a binding way and covering the whole region. A nation-wide development of standards, methods and measures of professional intervention and monitoring of effects and experiences is not provided until now.

Debt regulation and the loss of housing property: The national legal frameworks concerning debts and debt regulation as well as private bankruptcy offer a good basis to handle these critical situations, provide clear rules about the role and position of the debt regulation services in the legal proceedings. But these national regulations don't take into account that indebted households are in threat of homelessness. The debt regulation services hence have no competencies and / or resources to prevent homelessness which is only of secondary importance in the agenda of debt regulation.

Prevention of homelessness at the interface between stationary residence and release: In Austria the provisions to regulate the release from stationary residence is not consistently regulated. In some cases like release from imprisonment there are national laws (Bewährungshilfegesetz and Strafvollzugsgesetz 2013) to regulate provisions how to take care of living situations and housing after the release. These provisions consists of intern (social work in jail) and extern services (probation office). In both levels there are at least no sufficient resources and competences how to manage an adequate housing.

The release from stationary treatment like psychiatric wards, therapeutic care of addicts etc. is not regulated at national level. Provisions at this field of social services are completely in regional competence and there are huge diversities between the counties. Some of the nine Austrian counties have established extra-mural services to prevent homelessness as a consequence of a release from stationary residence. But, for example in Salzburg, there are huge problems to provide an affordable accommodation for the time after the release. In some cases social workers from psychiatric wards report that patients have to stay for weeks in stationary treatment because there is no adequate and affordable accommodation available.

At all it is to state that there is no binding regulative to provide a nation-wide monitoring, a strategy to develop standards and innovation etc. Furthermore: an effective and sufficient prevention of homelessness after the release is not realized in Austria and not in sight in the next future.

3. Trends, profiles and reasons / risk factors

In different respects there are affords and trends to state to improve conditions and changes of the prevention of homelessness:

- legal level of national as well as regional laws,
- social services and prevention practice in the regions
- debt regulation and low threshold access to private bankruptcy
- problems in the context of the release from stationary residence
- ending homelessness – a vision without likelihood

Legal level / national law of tenancy

The political parties in Austria have announced recently to amend the tenancy law. Important targets like regulating the price development and abolishing some complicate and sometimes even contradictory rules are prominent chapters in the program of the government. But the ideological positions of the parties which build the coalition government are in central respects very controversy. The social democratic party wants to fix prices by law and to strengthen the protection of tenants. The Christ-democratic party stands for liberalisation of regulations to allow the market dynamics to take over completely. This controversy is one of the reasons why a working group established by the ministry of justice in the beginning 2014 was not able to work out a proposal. In the meantime the ministry of justice worked out a “small” amendment to clear roles and duties of landlords and tenants in concern of maintenance of warm water installations.

Legal level / national law on right of housing

The umbrella organisation of homeless services in Austria, BAWO, has started an initiative to implement the right of housing in the constitutional law but the answers of

the political parties in parliament and the representatives of the government were not successful. Almost all political clubs in the parliament showed confidence that a legal right on housing would have no effect and that the actual form of general targets to provide housing for all – without legal claims of the single person – would be sufficiently. Only the green party in parliament showed interest and promised to support this initiative (BAWO 2013 (2)).

At the same time BAWO started to work out a proposal to implement a legal basis for homeless services and prevention of homelessness at national level. One chapter of this proposal is headed on the role and position of prevention services in the context of eviction proceedings. The discussion with experts in constitutional law is still in progress, hence until now there are no responses from the political authorities (BAWO 2014).

Legal level / regional laws on homeless and prevention services

In six of nine regions in Austria there are prevention-services established but until now only two countries have realized a legal basis for the support of families, threat by eviction.

In **Vienna** the competences for prevention of homelessness as a consequence of eviction is split into two segments of the housing market. Tenants of communal dwellings, threat by cancellation of the contract and / or eviction will get support by the communal offices for social benefit or youth welfare (if children are living in these households). Tenants from other segments of the housing market can get support by a private prevention service – in binding cooperation with the social benefit office and the communal housing agency (FAWOS 2007). Hence prevention services are concentrated but not in one hand. It is planned for the next future to bring the prevention provision together and to provide professionalization and development of methods and standards (Kitzman).

In **Upper Austria** there are only few cities but large rural parts. According to these circumstances the social-planning office realized a special approach to provide a county-wide prevention service. There are five districts and for each district a private homeless-service provider was charged to build a network of cooperating local and regional social services. Hence local, charitable and non-profit organisations are working together to prevent eviction and / or homelessness. In addition the regional government has started the project “100 accommodations”. So the regional networks of prevention services can provide a transfer-housing for those families where a preventive intervention failed. In rural parts of the county without social infrastructure additional services were established to provide a visit at the home of families, threat by eviction proceedings, who are not in contact with prevention services (Oberösterreich 2014). After a successful intervention to prevent eviction took place a mobile follow-up care can be provided by colleagues from the prevention service if this is necessary to secure a sustaining effect and if there are no social services in the vicinity (ARGE ReWo 2014).

The prevention services in Vienna and Upper Austria are models of good practice and show that legal frameworks for prevention tools and measures are a basis to improve cooperation with social benefit and (social / communal) housing agencies, to

secure information and to further sustainability. Hence the regions Salzburg, Styria, Lower Austria and Vorarlberg should profit from these practical experiences.

Social services and prevention practice in the regions

At all there are prevention services in six from nine Austrian regions. The regions where prevention services intervene in the eviction proceedings have established quite different models of prevention:

- Some of the counties, for example Salzburg, provide a centralistic model. One service provider, located in the city of Salzburg, operate small consulting offices in the rural parts of Salzburg (esage 2014).
- Other counties, for example Lower Austria, divided the agenda of prevention on five regional service providers, which are organized in the regional prevention network (ARGE Wohnungssicherung 2014).
- In the counties Styria and Vorarlberg cooperative models are established.
 - In Styria the prevention service is provided by Caritas, located in the regional capital city Graz and connected with catholic parishes in the rural parts of Styria.
 - In Vorarlberg prevention services are provided by regional homeless services in cooperation with local service centres in the villages and rural districts. The prevention services in Vorarlberg are coordinated by IfS, a region wide active provider of social services (IfS 2014).

At least two of the three remaining counties without sufficient prevention services, Burgenland and Tyrol, just recently announced that in 2015 a regular prevention service will start. In Carinthia there is only a very restricted prevention service provided. A private social service provider (Volkshilfe) is charged by the city of Klagenfurt to take care of tenants in communal accommodations (Trannacher). But all these different models of prevention practice are characterized by certain lacks of resources:

- Information that an eviction proceeding has started: It depends on the awareness of the local authorities that the prevention services will be informed in time to start an effective intervention.
- Low threshold services: In many cases the prevention services are not able to contact tenants, threat by eviction but unable to access the service, at their home.
- Funding of rent arrears: In many cases there are quite large rent arrears; then it will be very difficult for the prevention service to provide a sufficient funding in time to prevent eviction
- Time limits and delay of eviction: The tenancy law allows that an eviction can be delayed in case of certain circumstances, for example: threading homelessness in winter time. But prevention services have no competences in the eviction proceedings and can only ask the judge / the bailiff to grant a delay in order to have time to fix funding of rent arrears or to provide an alternative accommodation
- Affordable housing: In many cases the rents of the accommodation are incorrect high, but only in a small segment of the housing market a legal correction of the price is possible. On the other hand also social benefit can

only be provided when the rent is not higher than the prescribed maximum. In these cases the securing of the tenancy contract by the prevention service doesn't make sense and a new affordable accommodation has to be found.

- Emergency housing: In some cases it will be necessary to provide alternative (transfer) housing for evicted families. But only few prevention services have sufficient resources to cope with the risk of homelessness.
- Sustainability: Only some prevention services are able to provide follow up care after a successful intervention to prevent eviction took place.

Debt regulation and low threshold access to private bankruptcy

When the debt regulation services in Austria celebrated 20 years of practice of private bankruptcy, the umbrella organisation (asb 2014) reminded the new minister of justice that already some years before the ministry of justice has started to prepare an amendment of the law of private bankruptcy. An amendment of this law should allow low threshold access to debt regulation for families with an income lower than necessary to provide at least a rate of 10% of the debt amount in the limited period of seven years, living at minimum income. Persons with too low income are excluded from effective debt regulation and will stay in an indebted crisis lifelong. But until now, end of 2014, there are no signs from the ministry of justice that an amendment will be forced.

Problems in the context of the release from stationary residence

In the most counties of Austria prevention and homeless services report that it is a challenge to provide an affordable accommodation in time to house persons after a stationary residence. Prevention of homelessness in the context of a release from stationary residence can be marked as one of the most pressing needs to be realized in Austria in order to realize prevention of homelessness.

Ending homelessness – a vision without likelihood?

In the last decade in some regions of Austria it looked like ending homelessness could be realistic. But the last years brought a turn around. Homelessness is increasing again, at least because of a shortage of affordable dwellings. Prevention and homeless services report about a serious bottle neck effect in the context of homeless services and that there are problems to realize an exit from homelessness. Clients of homeless services stay longer in homelessness or in precarious housing situations (Forum Wohnungslosenhilfe 2014; Harner/Hammer 2014).

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7 Interviews and participation at workshop and conference

To produce this report I got the chance to participate at the conference of prevention services in Austria, which took place at 30. 9. 2014 in Rust / Burgenland. About 40 colleagues from prevention services in almost all Austrian regions participated and about half of them worked together in a common workshop which I led to explore needs and proposals to improve the frameworks, measures and resources of prevention of homelessness.

In October 2014 I visited prevention services in Linz / Upper Austria, Krems / Lower Austria and Vienna. The colleagues from ARGE ReWo (Linz), BEWOK (Krems) and FAWOS (Vienna) answered my questions about the practical experiences of prevention services. I hope that I was able to reproduce their contributions in this report without failure.