



Short Profile

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AUSTRIA

Short Cultural Policy Profile

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1. Facts and figures

Political system: Federal parliamentary republic

Official language(s): German as well as recognized minority languages: Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian (Burgenlandkroatisch), Czech, Slovakian, Romani, and Austrian Sign Language

	<i>Latest available data</i>	<i>-5 years</i>
Population on January 1st	9 197 213 (01.01.2025)*	8 932 664 (01.01.2021)
GDP in million EUR	473 230 (2023)	380 320 (2020) 406 230 (2021)
GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)	116 (2024)	123 (2020) 121 (2021)
General government expenditure (in % of GDP)	56.3% (2024)	57.3% (2020) 56.0% (2021)
Public cultural expenditure	3 262 800 000 EUR (2023)	2 928 380 000 EUR (2020)
Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP	0.69% (2023)	0.77% (2020)
Public cultural expenditure per Capita	357 EUR (2023)	328 EUR (2020)
Share of cultural employment of total employment	4.2% (2024)	3.8% (2020)

Sources:

Population on January 1st, latest data available / <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en> * Source: Statistik Austria

<https://www.statistik.at/statistiken/bevoelkerung-und-soziales/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstand/bevoelkerung-zu-jahres-/quartalsanfang>

GDP in million EUR, latest data available / Statistic <https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/publications/VGR-2023-barr.pdf>

GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100), latest data available / <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00114/default/table?lang=en>

General government expenditure (in % of GDP), latest data available / <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00023/default/table>

Public cultural expenditure / Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP / Public cultural expenditure per Capita: Statistik Austria: <https://www.statistik.at/statistiken/bevoelkerung-und-soziales/kultur/kulturwirtschaft-und-oeffentliche-kulturausgaben> (Public cultural expenditure excluding intergovernmental transfer payments)

Share of cultural employment of total employment / latest data available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/cult_emp_sex/default/table?lang=en

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 Objectives and main features of the current cultural policy model

In Austria, as a federal state, the majority of cultural competences is assigned to the culturally sovereign Bundeslaender, while national cultural policy is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport (BMWKMS). Hence, the national government and most of the Bundeslaender draft their own legislative programmes or strategies for arts, culture, and related policies.

On the federal level, cultural policy guidelines structure national policy objectives into twenty leading guidelines as well as eight key focus areas. The guidelines are a result of an – *ongoing* – strategic, participatory process and were presented in 2024.

In the current government period, national cultural policy follows the strategic outline of the government's programme (current programme: 2025-2029). The programme lists 18 thematic chapters:

- **Infrastructure and Funding:** Creating reliable conditions for dynamic, innovative, and diverse contemporary art production and cultural heritage
- **Education:** Bringing together art, culture, and education
- **Access:** Making art and cultural life accessible
- Strengthening **federal cultural institutions** and expanding cooperation
- **Built heritage:** preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and building culture
- **Fair pay** and social security for artists and cultural workers
- **Gender equality** in the arts and culture
- A clear commitment to **contemporary art**
- Creating sustainable conditions for **youth and club culture**
- Fostering **private investment**
- Strengthening the arts and culture in **rural areas**
- Strengthening Austria's position as a **film and television location**
- Supporting arts and culture in the **digital environment**
- Funding will be made more transparent, simplified, and easier to understand
- Expansion of **Cooperation and Internationalisation**
- Resolutely opposing **anti-Semitism**
- Promotion of **Jewish life**
- Impetus for contemporary remembrance work

With the new government coalition that was formed in 2025, cultural policy priorities are framed within the democracy paradigm. The aim to promote fairness

in the arts and cultural sector (including a fair pay strategy) is continued, as is the support for the sector's digital transformation. The overall budget deficit has a clear impact on the implementation of the aims, for details see below.

2.2 Main features

Austrian cultural policy can be divided into three leading conceptual categories:

1. **Basic cultural needs and framework:** freedom of art and artistic expression, (media) pluralism, cultural rights, quality, working conditions, creativity and innovation, and internationalisation.
2. **Governance:** decentralisation, public-private cooperation, participation of civil society, flexibility, longer-term planning options, service orientation, and evaluation.
3. **Socio-political objectives:** sustainability, anti-discrimination, inclusion, diversity, (gender) equality

Main National Actors and Financing Model

As stated above (2.1), cultural sovereignty lies within the Bundeslaender; responsibility for national cultural policy lies on the federal level. Approval and control of the state budget is one of the central rights of Austria's National Council [parliament]. The budget is set in the federal government's budget plan for a fiscal year, including expenditure for culture. It contains the comparison of expected revenue (e.g., taxes) and maximum permissible expenditure (e.g., for transfer payments and personnel). Fiscal equalization is the process by which revenues from certain taxes levied by the federal government are divided among the federal government, the states, and the municipalities. Fiscal equalization is an agreement that must be negotiated and decided by mutual consent between the federal government, the states, and the municipalities. This happens every four to six years. When a fiscal equalization agreement is concluded, the tasks that each level has to assume and finance are also agreed upon.

In 2025, the Arts and Culture Division, previously situated within the *Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport*, is now allocated to the Federal Ministry of Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport. The ministry oversees federal funding programmes for all segments of contemporary art, including music and performing arts, film, architecture, Baukultur, monument protection, literature and publishing, libraries, visual arts, design, fashion, photography, video and media arts, cultural initiatives, museum and folks culture, as well as international cultural policy. The Arts and Culture Division is responsible for promoting contemporary art in Austria

and fostering the presence of Austrian artists abroad; ensuring adequate conditions for artistic and cultural production as well as broad public participation in the arts and culture; safeguarding monuments and cultural heritage; and coordination EU culture policy and international cultural affairs.

On the regional level, all Bundeslaender (federal provinces) have governmental departments responsible for cultural affairs. The legal basis for the promotion of arts and culture are the respective *Cultural Promotion Acts* (except Vienna), which stipulate the establishment of advisory boards and the publication of an expenditure report on the arts and culture. General cultural responsibilities of the federal provinces are: all legal agendas concerning cultural policy (Kulturhoheit, i.e. cultural sovereignty); promotion of cultural activities in the respective Bundesland; promotion of activities to preserve the appearance of villages and towns; maintenance of the old town centres; promotion of contemporary art; foundations and funds owned by the Bundeslaender; music schools; theatres, cinemas and events; heritage, tradition and folk art; and annual festivals. In addition to cultural support acts, several Bundeslaender – as well as local authorities – set out cultural (development) strategies or guiding principles. Political responsibility for culture at the local level rests with either the city/town councilor or, in some smaller municipalities, with the mayor. Their cultural departments (often combined with sports, tourism, science and education) are inter alia responsible for libraries, amateur art, folk culture, traditions and village renewal.

Matters regarding the creative industries (CI) lie within the competence of the Federal Ministry for Economy, Energy and Tourism. The Austrian national support programme for CIs, following the "[Creative Industries Strategy](#)", is implemented by Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH and Kreativwirtschaft Austria. The Advisory Board for the Creative Industries (Kreativwirtschaftsbeirat) advises and supports the Federal Ministry for Economy, Energy and Tourism in implementing the creative economy strategy as well as in monitoring the implementation of the strategy. It is composed of external experts, carrying out an annual monitoring of the creative economy strategy and presenting recommendations. Further, a cultural heritage division within the ministry is via two subordinate agencies ([Burghauptmannschaft Österreich](#), Bundesmobilienvverwaltung) responsible for building and object management.

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram*

Currently not available

2.4 Background

1955-1980

The post-war cultural policy was mainly prestige-oriented and it supported major federal theatres or festivals. With the general European politicisation and radicalisation of the 1960s and 1970s, the post-war attitude toward culture changed. The cultural vanguard became a political factor and cultural policy was recognised as part of social policy. In 1975, a package of national cultural policy measures was adopted, aiming to improve the cultural habits and education levels of the public and to reduce the gap between city-dwellers and the rural population (Keyword: “culture for all”). The decisive step towards the current system of arts promotion was taken at this time, including the establishment of various advisory and intermediary bodies.

1980-2000

In the 1980s, Austria was seized by a veritable culture boom. The number of large-scale events, festivals and major exhibitions increased, and so did the cultural spending, with cultural sponsorship gaining importance. In 1988, public support for the arts was enshrined in the *Federal Arts Promotion Act*. In the 1990s, discussions on privatisation took place, especially in fields better positioned in the market, such as musicals, popular operas and museums. Entrepreneurial thinking became more important and the accession to the EU in 1995 reinforced the primacy of the economy.

2000-2020

The period **2000-2007** brought a political shift with the coalition between the Conservative Party and the right-wing Freedom Party. Its cultural policy objectives focused on the outsourcing of public cultural institutions and a reduction of the cultural budget, while greater emphasis was placed on prestige culture, the creative industries, and the promotion of economically oriented projects. Between **2007-2017**, social democratic culture ministers implemented measures such as scholarships for emerging artists. The main goals were to reform the artists' social insurance; to support the Austrian film industry; to increase subsidies for federal theatres and museums; and to promote the arts and culture education in school. **2017**, the Austrian parliamentary elections resulted in a marked shift to the right. Strategic cultural policy aims were for e.g. the protection of cultural heritage; strengthening the Austrian cultural identity and the younger generation's cultural education.

2020-2024

Between **2020 and 2024**, Austria was ruled by a coalition of the Conservative Party and the Green Party. The task of Austrian cultural policy (government programme 2020-2024) was to create suitable conditions for a lively cultural scene. This includes the promotion of contemporary artwork, fair pay, the preservation of the existing wealth of culture, providing information and education about Austria's cultural heritage and better public access to arts and culture. According to the federal report on culture (2023), the increase in the federal budget for the arts and culture from 2020 to 2024 amounts to over 40 per cent.

As in all European countries, the Austrian cultural scene was severely affected by measures to combat the **coronavirus**, such as entry bans, travel restrictions, and assembly restrictions. Cultural institutions have suffered from a major loss of revenues. The loss of income posed an existential threat to many freelance artists, cultural operators, and NGOs in the field of culture. A study by the Austrian Institute of Economic Research in 2020 estimated that the Corona-crisis caused EUR 1.5-2 billion damage in the field of culture, which is a quarter of the annual added value. The federal government adopted a series of general and sector-specific measures to support the cultural and creative sectors. Various relevant measures were also implemented by regional governments.

2025- ongoing

In 2024, the Austrian Freedom Party (far-right), FPÖ, gained the highest percentage of votes at the national elections (25,3 %), closely followed by the People's Party (ÖVP, 24,52 %) and the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ, 23,33 %). Out of 9 federal states, 2 provincial governments are coalitions led by the Austrian Freedom Party. At the federal level, no coalition with the FPÖ was formed, resulting in a coalition between three parties: ÖVP, SPÖ, and the NEOS (The New Austria and Liberal Forum). The cultural agenda lies with the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Vice-Chancellor, who is also Minister of Culture. Comprehensive austerity measures, including cuts in arts and culture funding marked the start of the term of office.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

The arts and culture sector's development in Austria is marked by cuts across all funding categories and at all funding levels. The two-year budget (2025-2026) entails funding cuts of around 10 million euros in 2025 and 40 million euros in 2026¹. The film sector was particularly affected, with a significant reduction of the ÖFI+ location incentive programme. The discussion about the implementation of an investment obligation and levy for streaming services is ongoing to compensate for a share of the funding cuts in the film sector.

In July 2025, the federal government established the so-called "Funding Task Force."

The aim is to formulate a plan to reduce funding, as well as to propose a strategic realignment of the funding system.

Three interministerial working groups have been established, with the aim of improving the working realities in the arts and culture sector. Simultaneously, the supplementary income to unemployment benefits was eliminated, becoming effective from January 1, 2026, negatively impacting the social security of many artists and cultural professionals, among other professions. The interministerial working groups are presently working on solutions.

A music sector strategy is being developed in a participatory process. The goal is to bring about lasting improvements in the living and working conditions of musicians and everyone else working in the music sector.

In the case of the *Bundesland* Styria, funding cuts have greatly impacted the cultural scene. Additionally, current plans envisage eliminating the regional ORF-fee (public broadcasting), which amounts to 30 million euros annually and entails an earmarked sum for culture. If abolished, the cultural budget in Styria would lose 22.5 million euros, which is around a quarter of the overall cultural spending. No compensation plans have been presented yet. Furthermore, the ongoing developments have given rise to questions regarding political neutrality and artistic freedom, such as the change in the Styrian Cultural Board.

¹ IG Kultur Österreich, 2025: <https://igkultur.at/politik/kulturministerium-kuerzt-10-millionen-euro-fuer-die-freie-szene-zum-budgetbeschluss-202526> [accessed 17.04.2026]

3.2 Key themes

Access & Cultural Education

Austrian cultural policy emphasizes access and cultural education as focus areas, following a democratic policy paradigm. The guiding objective is to ensure that participation is open, low-threshold, and socially inclusive. This includes a strong commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities, both in practice and within the funding system. Cultural institutions are explicitly recognized not only as places of artistic production but also as active agents in promoting social inclusion.

The cultural policy framework extends beyond traditional institutions to encompass Austria's diverse club and live music scene as well as youth cultures. Club culture is recognized as a distinct form of cultural expression, with international, national, regional, and municipal cooperation aimed at securing its future. Strengthening the cultural infrastructure across rural and urban areas is another priority. In this regard, the cultural achievements of amateur and semi-professional ensembles—including brass bands, choirs, folk music groups, and orchestras—are recognized as fundamental actors in the cultural sector.

Cultural education is central to the long-term cultural strategy. Greater integration of the arts and culture into elementary and school education is pursued through closer cooperation between the education and culture departments, ensuring that cultural education is embedded from kindergarten to the tertiary level. Cooperation between the regular school system and music schools, cultural institutions, and the arts scene is expanded, making better use of existing offerings. Furthermore, the federal government supports the development of music schools into comprehensive arts schools, broadening their scope and deepening cooperation with general education schools. The goal is to create an inclusive, diverse, and sustainable cultural ecosystem that serves both heritage and contemporary expression.

Digital Environment

Austrian cultural policy supports a successful transition to the digital age, recognizing digitization as both a challenge and an opportunity for cultural institutions. Central to this effort is the continued implementation of the *Digital Cultural Heritage Strategy* and the promotion of interdisciplinary cooperation, knowledge transfer, and pooling of expertise in digitization and artificial intelligence. Kulturpool is a flagship initiative on digital cultural heritage. As the national aggregator for Europeana, it functions as a central platform, merging cultural heritage data from heritage institutions nationwide and making them digitally available to the public. The funding programme "Digital

Cultural Heritage” allowed the use of digital technology to make Austria’s cultural heritage more accessible and available to a broad national and international audience. Funding was provided for the digital preservation of collection items, their digital recording, cataloging, publication, presentation, and interpretation, as well as the development of online collections. Legal frameworks are being examined, including a potential revision of copyright law to reflect direct remuneration claims in light of the European AI Act and measures to strengthen the position of artists in copyright contract law.

Governance: Infrastructure and Institutions

Austrian cultural policy is committed to creating reliable conditions for dynamic, innovative, and diverse contemporary art production while safeguarding cultural heritage. *Essential cultural institutions* are to be sustained in the long term, ensuring both stability and development. Furthermore, funding systems across Austria are continually evaluated, simplified, and made accessible transparently. The aim is to achieve the best possible coordination between funding bodies through a joint funding strategy, thereby strengthening cultural formats of supraregional importance. Alongside these measures, Austria acknowledges the importance of sustainable practices in cultural production. The *Klimafitte Kulturbetriebe* support programme (co-funded by the EU) and the creation of incentives for resource-efficient cultural production contributed to the Strategy. The renovation of the Praterateliers reflects, among other things, the Government’s sustainability principles. Construction began in early November 2023 and was completed in 2025 (also co-funded by the EU).

Fair Pay

Austrian cultural policy seeks to improve the labor and social security protection of artists and cultural workers by addressing the specific realities of their employment within the legal framework. The revision of the federal funding guidelines (2025) aimed at further strengthening fair pay in the regulatory framework. Further, the benefits of the Artists’ Social Security Fund are to be secured, and the fair pay strategy further developed as part of funding conditions.

Remembrance Culture

Austrian cultural policy places strong emphasis on remembrance culture, with regard to the country’s historical responsibility. A feasibility study has been initiated for the possible establishment of a Holocaust museum, in close dialogue with organizations such as the Jewish Community of Austria, ensuring that Austria’s role as a perpetrator is explicitly addressed. Overall, ongoing measures to combat anti-Semitism and

promote Jewish life will be continued and further developed, while national Jewish cultural assets are to be secured both institutionally and financially. This includes a firm commitment to the Austrian-Jewish Cultural Heritage Act, the examination of a national Jewish cultural heritage fund to raise awareness of Jewish life and heritage, and the continued promotion of §58c citizenship for descendants of Shoah victims seeking Austrian citizenship.

3.3 International Cultural Cooperation

The agendas of international cultural cooperation are handled by various ministries in Austria. The main actors are the Department "European and international cultural policy" of the Division IV 'Arts and Culture' of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport, as well as the International Cultural Policy Division.

International cultural policy is an important instrument of Austrian foreign policy. Geographically, Austrian international cultural policy is currently focusing on the European Union, the Western Balkans and Southeast Europe. The International Cultural Policy Division of the Ministry for European and International Affairs is in charge of numerous Austrian cultural facilities abroad, such as 33 Cultural fora. The newest forum was opened in Accra, Ghana in February 2026. This is in line with the development of a national Africa Strategy. The Ministry for Arts and Culture provides, for instance, international studio programmes for outgoing artists, scholarship programmes as well as travel, stay and touring grants. The residency programme "FOCUS INTERNATIONAL" has expanded its programme to participants from South Africa, in addition to participants from Moldova, Ukraine, and Kosovo (until 2025).

In the field of European and international cultural cooperation and exchange, the Department "European and international cultural policy" of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for cultural affairs in the framework of the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO as well as for bilateral and multilateral cultural cooperation, to some extent (for e.g. bilateral agreements) together with the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs.

International cultural exchange also takes place at provincial and city levels and, alongside the promotion of events and projects, includes support for the activities of Austrian artists abroad and places for artists-in-residence. The Bundesländer maintain their own European and external relations and are represented in networks like the Assembly of European Regions.

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

Public and private cultural institutions

The federal cultural institutions (Bundesmuseen, National Library and Bundestheater, mostly based in Vienna) play a crucial role in Austria's arts and culture sector. In 2018, The House of History Austria was established as the first contemporary history museum of the federal government. Public responsibilities for cultural affairs have been re-allocated by sector to different institutions or bodies. Depending on the allocated tasks and responsibilities, different models of institutions or partnerships have been adopted. In 2002, the federal museums (as well as the Austrian National Library) were outsourced and have been managed as private law entities since then. They are owned by the federal state, which allocates substantial legally determined public subsidies. The umbrella organisation of the Austrian federal theatres is the Bundestheater-Holding, (since 1999) owned and controlled by the state. The restructuring of the Association of Austrian Federal Theatres is an example that demonstrates the trend towards "divestment" between the public and private sectors. The theatres are legally independent, and the holding is responsible for strategic management and financial hedging according to the cultural policy mission.

Each Bundesland has a publicly funded regional theatre, museums and galleries, e.g. the Landestheater Niederösterreich, the Stadttheater Klagenfurt, Kunsthaus Graz or the LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz. In the cities and towns, there is a wide range of theatre stages as well as numerous self-managed cultural institutions, partly under agreements with different levels of government. Vienna has numerous other cultural institutions, like municipal facilities (Wien Museum, Kunsthalle), concert halls (Musikverein, Konzerthaus), private theatres (Vereinigte Bühnen Wien, brut Wien, Schauspielhaus), and many galleries, art and cultural centres, stages and venues.

A trend towards outsourcing cultural institutions can also be observed in the federal provinces and municipalities. For example, the Niederösterreichische Kulturholding (NÖKU) brings together almost 40 artistic and scientific institutions under common strategic objectives.

According to the Official Culture Statistics 2023 (Statistics Austria) the ownership structure of museums accounted for 249 public museums and 226 private museums (Of total of participants in the survey).

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural Institution	Public Sector		Private Sector	
		Number (2023)	Number (2020)	Number (2023)	Number (2020)
Cultural Heritage	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)*1	39114	38799	N/A	N/A
	Archaeological sites*	1009	972	N/A	N/A
Museums	Museum institutions*2	249	236	226	236
Archives	Archive institutions*3	603	786	N/A	N/A
Visual arts	Public art galleries / exhibition halls ⁴	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Performing arts	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre	16 ⁵	16 ⁵	42 ⁶	42 ⁶
	Concert houses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Theatre companies*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dance and ballet companies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Symphonic orchestras	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Libraries	Libraries*8	1273	1254	68	79
Audiovisual	Cinemas			136	140
	Broadcasting organisations ⁹	1 (ORF) with: 12 Radio channels and 3 TV channels (and regional channels)	1 (ORF) with: 12 Radio channels and 3 TV channels (and regional channels)	79 (radio) 145 (TV)	72 (radio) 157 (TV)
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses ¹⁰			977 (2023) 1121 (2025)	928

Sources: Statistic Austria, Kulturstatistik 2020 and 2023.

Notes: N/A: not available / * no distinction between public and private

1) immovable objects under protection 2) Kulturstatistik 2023 accounts 475 museums (249 public, 226 private) – these are the institutions which participated in the annual survey of STATISTIK AUSTRIA; 770 are all registered museums including public art galleries and exhibition halls; the internet portal [museen-in-oesterreich](https://www.museen-in-oesterreich.at) by ICOM counts 797 museums 3) Number of archives that were contacted 4) available up to 2013, since then included in the statistics on museums 5) federal theatres, regional and municipal theatres including Vereinigte Bühnen Wien 6) Other theatre and concert venues; (Weitere Theater- und Konzertbühnen) 8) public libraries vs. academic and special libraries 9) RTR <https://www.rtr.at/de/m/Verzeichnisse> (Hörfunk und TV) 10) members of IG Kultur Österreich

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

The **Federal Arts Promotion Act**, adopted in 1988, includes the provision that the federal budget must include the requisite funds for public arts promotion and that the social situation of artists and the framework for private sponsoring need to be improved. For more information see section “cultural legislation” below. **Funding** is provided in accordance with the funds available at the time. There is no individual entitlement to funding. The Ministry for Arts and Culture gives direct subsidies and grants on a continuous basis. The objectives are, first, to ensure a stable and sustainable framework for contemporary artistic creation and its dissemination, and, second, to safeguard cultural heritage and state cultural institutions and ensure broad public access to art and cultural assets. Since July 1, 2025, new guidelines for granting subsidies under the Arts Promotion Act have been in effect. The changes concern inter alia measures to combat power abuse, child protection, sustainability and fair pay. With the exception of Vienna, every Bundesland has its own cultural promotion act, most of which were implemented during the 1980s. The Bundeslaender are active in promoting culture in all relevant fields, based on elements of private law. In 2023, public expenditure lay at 34.0 % federal, 36.7 % municipal, and 29.3 % local level.

According to the fundraising report 2024 of the Austrian Fundraising Association, in 2022 8.0 (2020, 8.8, and 2021, 8.7) million euros were donated to culture (donations with tax deductibility). Overall donations with tax deductibility account for 40 per cent of Austrian donations. Numbers on total private sponsorship are not available. According to the fundraising report 2025 4% of all donations are given to culture (for eg. 29,5% to the church, 23% to education and human rights). Tax deductibility of donations was introduced in 2009; with the non-profit extension in 2016, cultural organisations (exceeding the exceptions already mentioned directly in the law) were included; the conditions are regulated in §§ 4a iVm 18 of the Income Tax Act 1988. In 2022 a guideline on the handling of sponsorship and other third-party funds was presented by the federal ministry. In 2024, the nonprofit reform act (Gemeinnützigkeitsgesetz) came into force, opening access to tax benefits for donations for all non-profit associations, including cultural associations.

[Figures by Statistics Austria] The combined public spending on culture by local authorities amounted to about 3.26 billion euros or 0.69% of GDP in 2023. [Central Government Figures]

Expenditures by the Federal Ministry for Arts and Culture increased from 569.873 million euros in 2023 to 632.490 million euros in 2024, an increase of 62.61 million euros, or 10.9%. This increase is mainly due to the cost coverage of the general renovation of the Bregenz Festival and the Salzburg Festival Halls, the increase in the basic compensation for the federal theatres and federal museums as well as the Austrian National Library, the federal share for the European Capital of Culture Bad Ischl Salzkammergut 2024, the increased investment promotion ÖFI+ (film funding), and the funds for fair pay².

The austerity package approved by the national council in 2025 impacted arts and culture funding. According to the 2025 federal budget, federal funding amounted to 670.7 million euros. The overall budget for arts and culture increased slightly that year, due to the value adjustment of subsidies for federal theatres and museums. In contrast to these increases, grant funding for arts and culture declined. The 2026 federal budget provides for an amount of 629.8 million euros, demonstrating a decline from 2025. Main cuts concern the funding programme ÖFI+ (film funding) and arts and culture funding³.

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in EUR, 2020 and 2023

Level of government	2023		2020	
	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total	Total expenditure in EUR*	% share of total
State (central, federal)	1 109 570 000	34.0	1 081 660 000	36.9
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	1 197 959 000	36.7	1 058 220 000	36.1
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	956 190 000	29.3	788 510 000	26.9
TOTAL	3 262 800 000	100	2 928 380 000	100

Source: (Statistic Austria: Kulturstatistik 2020/2023 (F1), excluding intergovernmental transfer payments)

Note: * At the date of expenditure

² <https://www.bmwkms.gv.at/themen/kunst-und-kultur/service-kunst-und-kultur/publikationen/kunst-und-kulturberichte.html> [accessed: 17.04.2026]

³ [Bundesfinanzrahmengesetz 2025 bis 2028 – BFRG 2025-2028, Bundesfinanzrahmengesetz 2026 bis 2029 – BFRG 2026-2029 \(66 und Zu 66 d.B.\) | Parlament Österreich](#), [Bundesfinanzgesetz 2025 – BFG 2025 samt Anlagen \(67 d.B.\) | Parlament Österreich](#)

5.3. Public cultural expenditure per sector

Table 3: Public cultural expenditure*: by sector, in EUR, 2020 and 2023

Field / Domain	2023		2020	
	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total	Total expenditure in EUR*	% share of total
Cultural Heritage				
Building Cultural Heritage	197 440 000	6.1	183 310 000	6.3
Folk Culture	37 450 000	1.1	25 120 000	0.9
Museums	435 200 000*	13.3	395 040 000	13.5
Archives	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visual Arts	46 410 000	1.4	33 420 000	1.1
Performing Arts	601 150 000	18.4	507 990 000	17.3
Audiovisual and Multimedia	63 730 000	2.0	71 610 000	2.4
Cultural Initiatives and Centres	176 700 000	5.4	153 040 000	5.2
Cultural Relations	38 890 000	1.2	27 180 000	0.9
Cultural Education	981 550 000	30.1	839 900 000	28.7
Adult Learning	220 000	0.0	280 000	0.0
Literature	23 470 000	0.7	18 720 000	0.6
Libraries	123 650 000	3.8	105 300 000	3.6
Press	13 370 000	0.4	28 860 000	1.0
Music	140 050 000	4.3	113 760 000	3.9
Broadcasting	430 000	0.0	180 000	0.0
Big events	81 800 000	2.5	52 970 000	1.8
Other	301 210 000	9.2	371 700 000	12.7
TOTAL	3 262 800 000	100	2 928 380 000	100

Source: Statistic Austria: Kulturstatistik 2020/2023 (F1).

*including archives and science

6. Legislation on Culture

6.1 Overview national cultural legislation

Federal Constitutional Act (1930) + Basic Law on Civil Rights (1982)

The Austrian federal constitution does not explicitly mention arts and culture. Statutory provisions regulating the cultural sector have not been laid down in a comprehensive cultural act, nor have they been systematically collected. Therefore, the statutes referring to the cultural sector are found throughout the legal system. Article 15, para. 1 of the Federal Constitution Act states that all matters not assigned to the national government are to be paid by the Bundeslaender, including culture. In Article 10, responsibility over 'sovereign' matters such as scientific and technical archives and libraries, artistic and scientific collections and federal facilities (federal museums, the National Library), federal theatres, historic monuments, religious denominations, foundations and funds are assigned to the national government.

Federal Arts Promotion Act (1988)

The Federal Arts Promotion Act, adopted in 1988, includes the provision that the federal budget must include the requisite funds for public arts promotion and that the social situation of artists and the framework for private sponsoring need to be improved. The law stipulates that promotion has to be directed mainly at "contemporary art, its spiritual changes and its variety" and lists the fields to be supported by way of production, presentation, dissemination, and preservation of works and documents. Facilities that serve this purpose have to be similarly supported. The law also lists individual measures that may be taken (e.g., funds, grants, acquisitions, loans, commissions, and prizes awarded

Promotion Acts by the Bundeslaender (1980)

With the exception of Vienna, every Bundesland has its own cultural promotion act, most of which were implemented during the 1980s. The legal basis for the promotion of arts and culture are the respective Cultural Promotion Acts (except Vienna), most of them were implemented during the 1980s. They stipulate the establishment of advisory boards and the publication of a report on the expenditures on the arts and culture. The Bundeslaender are active in promoting culture in all relevant fields, based on elements of private law. All Bundeslaender governments have at least one department that deals with cultural affairs, in some cases they are associated with science, education or sports. A member of the provincial government generally assumes the political responsibility for this

department. Occasionally, some cultural competence is reserved for the governor.

Künstler-Sozialversicherungsfonds (KSVF, Artists' Social Insurance Fund)

Due to the amendment of the social security law with the Labour and Social Law Amendment Act (Arbeits- und Sozialrechts-Änderungsgesetz ASRÄG) in 1997, all self-employed workers – and thus also the artists – were included in a statutory social insurance system. Therefore, in December 2000 the Künstler-Sozialversicherungsfonds (KSVF) was established in order to support the artists, who are now insured under the Industrial Social Security Act (Gewerbliche Sozialversicherungsgesetz GSVG) at the Sozialversicherungsanstalt der Selbständigen (SVS).

In 2023, with the replacement of the broadcasting fee with the household fee (ORF contribution), the Arts Support Act (1981, Kunstförderungsbeitragsgesetz) was repealed, and the Artists' Social Insurance Fund Act amended: The federal levy, as previously regulated in the Arts Support Act 1981 has been integrated in the Federal Arts Promotion Act. Further, the provisions concerning federal levies to finance the tasks of the Artists' Social Security Fund, which were enshrined in the 1981 Act, were incorporated directly into the Artists' Social Security Fund Act⁴.

6.2 Overview international cultural legislation

Austria has ratified numerous key cultural conventions and treaties. Austria has ratified all major UNESCO's cultural-related conventions except for the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. It has further signed or ratified most of the Council of Europe's conventions related to cultural matters, including the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

⁴ <https://www.parlament.gv.at/gegenstand/XXVII/ME/267>