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## **The Situation of Psychotherapy in Austria**

Psychotherapy is an independent profession regulated by Austrian law since 1990 (Psychotherapy Act, 361st Federal Act of June 7, 1990 on the Exercise of Psychotherapy).

The Psychotherapy Act regulates the training, practice and exercise of professional psychotherapy, as well as the legal framework for the Psychotherapy Advisory Council („Psychotherapiebeirat“) and brought about the psychotherapists' equal footing with doctors.

Furthermore, the competent supervisory authority, namely the Federal Ministry of Health (Link: <http://bmgf.gv.at/>), issues additional professional guidelines on a regular basis which ensures that not only the legal framework, but also the exercise of psychotherapy in practice comply to very high standards. One of the key documents is the Professional codex („Berufscodex“).

## **Training**

To qualify as a psychotherapist in Austria candidates have to complete their professional training which comprises two stages:

1. a general training („Propädeutikum“) which is followed by
2. a specialist training („Fachspezifikum“).

Both, the general part (preparatory instruction in psychotherapy, duration: 1-3 yrs) and the specialist part (specialist instruction in psychotherapy, duration: 3-6 yrs), are taught in theory and in practice and include personal psychotherapy, as well as supervision.

Accepted preparatory trainings for entry are not restricted to undergraduate courses in medicine or psychology, allowing for a broader access route.

Applicants should have completed training at one of the following institutions or have completed one of the listed courses, respectively:

- academy for social workers or a former teaching institute for advanced social occupations
- academy of pedagogy
- teaching institute with public teaching authorisation for marriage and family counselling
- short study course in music therapy or a university training course in music therapy
- university studies in medicine, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, publishing and communication science, or theology.

In Austria psychotherapy training is by tradition mainly provided by private training organisations; i.e. associations, societies and institutes for psychotherapy, which have to seek accreditation by the Ministry of Health. Over the past decade tendencies to academicise psychotherapy training have intensified.

In total the Ministry of Health has accredited 18 training organisations to provide the general training and 39 to provide the specialised training.

The list can be accessed online: <http://einrichtungen.ehealth.gv.at/>

### **National Register**

In keeping with section 17 of the Psychotherapy Act the Federal Ministry of Health keeps a list of psychotherapists authorised to exercise psychotherapy in Austria: <http://psychotherapie.ehealth.gv.at/>

As of October 2017, there are currently approximately 9,100 accredited psychotherapists in Austria out of which a significant number does not actually practice their profession.

### **Accepted modalities**

At the moment there is a total of 23 accredited psychotherapy methods in Austria:

1. Analytical Psychology
2. Group Psychoanalysis
3. Individual Psychology
4. Psychoanalysis/Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy
5. Psychoanalytically oriented Psychotherapy
6. Autogenic Psychotherapy
7. Daseinsanalysis
8. Dynamic Group Psychotherapy
9. Hypnotherapy
10. Catathym-Imaginative Psychotherapy
11. Concentrative Movement Therapy
12. Transactional Analysis
13. Existential Analysis
14. Existential Analysis and Logotherapy
15. Gestalttheoretical Psychotherapy
16. Integrative Gestalttherapy
17. Integrative Therapy
18. Client-centred Psychotherapy
19. Person-centred Psychotherapy
20. Psychodrama
21. Neuro-linguistic Psychotherapy
22. Systemic Family Therapy
23. Behavioural Therapy

### **Costs of psychotherapy sessions**

Fees for professional private psychotherapy are not regulated and vary enormously. Fully qualified psychotherapists tend to charge between € 80,00 - € 120,00 for a 50 minute session.

There exists no general agreement covering the complete funding of psychotherapy by Austrian social insurance institutions/national health service. Currently only a fraction of all patients get a full refund, the majority receive a small subsidisation (in most cases in € 21,80 per session) which has not been indexed since 1992. A current study shows that out of the 400,000 Austrians in need of psychotherapeutic treatment only 65,000 are currently in therapy. More than half of these clients fund their psychotherapy themselves.

### **Future developments**

The Psychotherapy Act has been scheduled for a comprehensive amendment for some years which is expected to bring major changes to current training regulations (i.e. further academicisation in line with EU-wide Bologna criteria) and other important aspects concerning the profession.

At the moment work on this first major amendment is still ongoing. At the core of the review is the reform of the current training regulations which looks set to lead to its academisation. Another core element constitute the responsibilities and the composition of the Psychotherapy Advisory Council. On the part of the ÖBVP (Austrian NAO Link <http://www.psychotherapie.at/>) we wish for a stronger involvement of the professional representation. Further more numerous details are being incorporated which are partly already covered in existing guidelines.

The Austrian Psychotherapy Act has contributed a lot to the development of psychotherapy as a distinct and independent profession. Its weakness lies in the fact that up until now the establishment of a Federal Psychotherapists' Chamber has not been enacted with this act.

The ÖBVP is unremittingly lobbying for improved provision of psychotherapy as part of the national health service.

Mag. Karl-Ernst Heidegger  
ÖBVP Vicepresident and ÖBVP Delegate to the EAP