

# The Future of the Family in Austria

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## Introduction

In recent decades, complex and far-reaching family changes have taken place in Austria. It is clear that this process will continue over the coming years. For my forecasts, I have extended trends into the future by comparing old and new data from statistical sources, surveys and family sociological studies (cf. Burkart 2009; Textor 2009). Furthermore, I have considered political, social, economic and technical trends much discussed in recent years.

## Fertility and Age at Birth of First Child

Demographic trends will be of great significance for Austrian families. A trend that we can monitor and analyze for decades is the declining birth rate. According to Statistik Austria, it has leveled off in recent years at the very low level of 1.4 children per woman.<sup>1</sup> It is not expected that the birth rate will rise significantly in the coming years. For example, an insufficient income, the uncertainty due to the economic development and the fear of losing one's job will make many young people to postpone the realization of their desire to form a family. Also the difficulty of finding two jobs in the same place, leading increasingly to a „Living apart together“ may prevent partners from starting a family. Other reasons might be the threats of climate change, the international debt crisis and the fear of terrorism. Thus also fears of the future might negatively affect the willingness to procreate.

Adults will probably marry in the coming years later than today and get their first child at an even higher age. In the 1980s women averaged 24.3 years when they had their first child while in 2010 the median age was 28.5 years – and still rising.<sup>2</sup> Thus many couples will not realize their desire to have children completely because they finally feel too old for having children or become infertile. The latter, however, may also lead to more children coming to life with the help of reproductive medicine.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten/022163.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten/022163.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten/index.html) und [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten/022903.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten/022903.html)

## Number of Households and Family Forms

Despite the low birth rate the number of households has risen from 1984 to 2010, as *Table 1* illustrates. This is partly due to immigration – in the last decade nearly 35,000 people immigrated more than moved away each year.<sup>3</sup> But also the growing number of singles as well as of divorced and widowed persons contributes to this development: *Table 1* shows a large increase in single person households over the past two decades.

**Table 1: Households and Families from 1984 to 2010**

| year    | Households |                       |                        |                            | families |                            |                                  |                            |                                  |   |   |
|---------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|
|         | all        | one-person households | more-person-households | average size of households | all      | couples                    |                                  | non-marital partners       |                                  | mothers in one-parent-families <sup>1</sup> | fathers in one-parent-families <sup>1</sup> |
|         |            |                       |                        |                            |          | without child <sup>1</sup> | with child/children <sup>1</sup> | without child <sup>1</sup> | with child/children <sup>1</sup> |   |   |
| in 1000 |            |                       |                        | in 1000                    |          |                            |                                  |                            |                                  |   |   |
| 1984    | 2765       | 743                   | 2022                   | 2.70                       | 2037     | 593                        | 1107                             | 49                         | 30                               | 226   | 32  |
| 1985    | 2801       | 768                   | 2033                   | 2.67                       | 2052     | 606                        | 1104                             | 45                         | 27                               | 235   | 34  |
| 1990    | 2913       | 814                   | 2099                   | 2.61                       | 2114     | 633                        | 1122                             | 57                         | 29                               | 236   | 37  |
| 1995    | 3093       | 893                   | 2201                   | 2.54                       | 2223     | 667                        | 1101                             | 100                        | 69                               | 251   | 36  |
| 2000    | 3237       | 977                   | 2260                   | 2.45                       | 2265     | 717                        | 1045                             | 124                        | 89                               | 252   | 37  |
| 2005    | 3475       | 1198                  | 2277                   | 2.34                       | 2292     | 718                        | 980                              | 159                        | 135                              | 254   | 46  |
| 2010    | 3624       | 1305                  | 2320                   | 2.29                       | 2334     | 731                        | 975                              | 186                        | 147                              | 254   | 41  |

Source:

[http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/haushalte\\_familien\\_lebensformen/040791.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/haushalte_familien_lebensformen/040791.html)

The definition of family corresponds to the nuclear family concept. This term only includes family members living in the same household.

1) Children are all persons – regardless of age and occupation – living with their two parents or with one parent in the same household without their own partners and children. This includes stepchildren and adopted children.

It is surprisingly, however, that despite the low birth rate the number of family households has increased. *Table 1* shows that while the number of married couples with children has declined steadily from 1984 to 2010 the number of non-marital communities and of single parents with children has risen sharply and has more than compensated this decline. It should be noted that the increase in households has been accompanied at the same time by a decrease in household size. On the one hand this has led to more living space per person in apartments<sup>4</sup>, while on the other hand the demand has increased for housing – which might have contributed to the steady rise in rents.<sup>5</sup>

These trends are likely to dominate the coming decades. Statistik Austria forecasts that the number of households will rise in 2030 to 4.05 million and in 2050 to 4.31 million – that is by 12.5 and 19.8% over 2009.<sup>6</sup> *Table 2* shows that in the next four decades the number of fami-

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/wanderungen/022920.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/wanderungen/022920.html)

<sup>4</sup> around 46m<sup>2</sup> per person for the Austrian and 31m<sup>2</sup> for the immigrant population ([http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/dynamic/statistiken/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstruktur/bevoelkerung\\_nach\\_migrationshintergrund/057229](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/dynamic/statistiken/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstruktur/bevoelkerung_nach_migrationshintergrund/057229))

<sup>5</sup> e.g. [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/wohnen\\_und\\_gebaeude/wohnungsaufwand/mietwohnungen/023047.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/wohnen_und_gebaeude/wohnungsaufwand/mietwohnungen/023047.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/demographische\\_prognosen/haushalts\\_und\\_familien\\_prognosen/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/demographische_prognosen/haushalts_und_familien_prognosen/index.html)

lies will continue to increase – with the exception of married couples with children in the household, i.e. the „traditional” nuclear families.

**Table 2: Families According to Family Type From 2010 to 2050**

| year | all families | of it                                     |  |  |   |                     |
|------|--------------|---|--|--|---|---------------------|
|      |              | couples with no children in the household | non-marital partners with no children in the household | couples with children in the household | non-marital partners with children in the household | one-parent families |
| 2010 | 2 293 860    | 722 005                                   | 164 580  | 889 182                                | 139 248   | 378 845             |
| 2015 | 2 318 870    | 762 692                                   | 184 791  | 824 951                                | 158 699   | 387 737             |
| 2020 | 2 332 084    | 801 513                                   | 202 856  | 754 391                                | 177 834   | 395 490             |
| 2025 | 2 362 101    | 842 625                                   | 205 158  | 733 811                                | 178 752   | 401 755             |
| 2030 | 2 388 194    | 875 807                                   | 205 786  | 722 625                                | 176 353   | 407 623             |
| 2035 | 2 410 557    | 898 854                                   | 206 990  | 715 173                                | 175 321   | 414 219             |
| 2040 | 2 428 862    | 911 889                                   | 208 219  | 712 076                                | 175 100   | 421 578             |
| 2045 | 2 443 010    | 916 228                                   | 208 909  | 713 402                                | 175 234   | 429 237             |
| 2050 | 2 451 598    | 914 711                                   | 209 449  | 716 169                                | 175 639   | 435 630             |

Source: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/demographische\\_prognosen/haushalts\\_und\\_familienprognosen/023527.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/demographische_prognosen/haushalts_und_familienprognosen/023527.html)

In the coming years there will be more and more second and third families among married couples with children – in 2009 there were already 9.8% (Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung 2010). Furthermore, there will probably be more „rainbow families“ (with same-sex parents) and because of immigration more families with partners from different cultures – whereby the increasing diversity of cultures is not only due to the enlargement of the EU, but also due to international migration. Currently, 928 000 inhabitants of Austria are foreigners, which represents a share of 11.0% of the total population. Altogether 18.6% of the population has an immigrant background: 1.54 million Austrians have at least one parent from abroad (Statistik Austria, 2011).

In the coming decades, children will have more ‘parents’ and grandparents – due to separation, divorce, remarriage, donor sperm, surrogate mothers, the higher divorce rate in blended families, etc. – and great-grandparents – caused by rising life expectancy. Vertical relationships within a four-generational framework are becoming increasingly important. An increasing number of grandmothers and grandfathers will still be in work or will live in distant places due to the ever increasing mobility. The latter is true especially for immigrants.

The extent and quality of relationships will become increasingly dependent on physical distance and emotional factors. In some cases, the „sandwich” generation<sup>7</sup> must support three or more generations: Many seniors will need help from their children due to Alzheimer and other disabilities or because of low pensions. However, there will be also many old people bequeathing relatively large assets to the next generation.

## Population Growth and Public Debt

According to forecasts by Statistik Austria (2010), the population will grow from 8.39 million people (2010) to 9.02 million in 2030 and to 9.45 million in 2050, as *Table 3* illustrates. This

<sup>7</sup> the working generation

prognosis assumes an annual net immigration of about 30,000 people and an increase in life expectancy. For example, in 2050 the life expectancy will be 89.5 years for women and 85.9 years for men.

| year | population structure |                |                |                   |                |                |                   |
|------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
|      | overall              | under 15 years | 15 to 60 years | 60 and more years | under 15 years | 15 to 60 years | 60 and more years |
|      | absolutely           |                |                |                   | in %           |                |                   |
| 2010 | 8 388 478            | 1 240 019      | 5 209 559      | 1 938 900         | 14.8           | 62.1           | 23.1              |
| 2015 | 8 556 493            | 1 222 763      | 5 268 388      | 2 065 342         | 14.3           | 61.6           | 24.1              |
| 2020 | 8 725 556            | 1 241 013      | 5 214 299      | 2 270 244         | 14.2           | 59.8           | 26.0              |
| 2025 | 8 877 361            | 1 264 892      | 5 068 237      | 2 544 232         | 14.2           | 57.1           | 28.7              |
| 2030 | 9 021 228            | 1 280 249      | 4 946 955      | 2 794 024         | 14.2           | 54.8           | 31.0              |
| 2035 | 9 147 775            | 1 277 668      | 4 929 445      | 2 940 662         | 14.0           | 53.9           | 32.1              |
| 2040 | 9 262 622            | 1 266 878      | 4 961 947      | 3 033 797         | 13.7           | 53.6           | 32.8              |
| 2045 | 9 364 229            | 1 260 834      | 4 959 738      | 3 143 657         | 13.5           | 53.0           | 33.6              |
| 2050 | 9 447 226            | 1 266 382      | 4 955 268      | 3 225 576         | 13.4           | 52.5           | 34.1              |

Source: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/demographische\\_prognosen/bevoelkerungsprognosen/027308.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/demographische_prognosen/bevoelkerungsprognosen/027308.html)

The age structure of the population will shift significantly towards older people: According to *Table 3* currently 23.1% of the population is aged 60 and over; it will be 31.0% in 2030 and 34.1% in 2050. The proportion of people of working age will fall by contrast from 62.1% (2010) to 52.5% (2050).

So an ever decreasing number of people of working age will have to support more and more retirees: In 2010 100 people aged 15 to under 60 years had to pay for 37.2 seniors – in 2030, however, they have to support 56.5 and in 2050 65.1 seniors (Statistik Austria 2010, 13 f.). If you consider that not all people between 15 and 60 years are fully employed, but that some study, others are unemployed or earn little, and still others are in the family phase, then the tendency is that in the middle of this century one employee must pay for one retiree.

This is obviously not possible. So it is inevitable that in the coming decades people have to work far above their 65th birthday one the one hand and that pension benefits will be reduced on the other hand (Veselsky 2006). Even then, the outlays of pension and health insurances will continue to rise. Parents will need an ever larger share of their earned income for social security contributions, since the increasing number of older people requires not only higher pension expenditures, but also more spending on health care.

The state will hardly be able to subsidize social security from general tax revenues, since the financial margins are getting smaller: The national debt in Austria has risen to more than 215 billion or 28.754 € per citizen.<sup>8</sup> According to Statistik Austria, the debt ratio in relation to gross domestic product<sup>9</sup> has risen from 66.5% in 2000 to 72.2% in 2010<sup>10</sup> – and continues to grow.

<sup>8</sup> date: 20 November 2011, <http://www.staatsschulden.at>

<sup>9</sup> „Gross domestic product (GDP) refers to the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross\\_domestic\\_product](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_product))

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/oeffentliche\\_finanzen\\_und\\_steuern/maastricht-indikatoren/oeffentlicher\\_schuldenstand/019895.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/oeffentliche_finanzen_und_steuern/maastricht-indikatoren/oeffentlicher_schuldenstand/019895.html)

To the officially reported national debt, however, the so-called „implicit debt“ has to be added, which results from promises of the social security system which cannot be backed by future revenue according to current tax rates. According to the brochure „Austria after the Economic Crisis“ of the Federation of Industry<sup>11</sup> the total public debt ranges – depending on assumptions about interest rates and population growth – between 258% and more than 300% of the gross domestic product. Then the debt per citizen would be at least 94,000 € per person – regardless of whether infant, employee or retiree.

The debt of private households was 147.4 billion € at the end of the first quarter of 2010, according to the Austrian National Bank.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the public and private debts add up to about 113,000 € per person. In the coming decades there will not be only fewer workers who can repay the debt by their tax contributions, but also more retirees who want the money back borrowed by the government, in order to supplement their pensions. So an always decreasing number of employees will have to pay ever higher taxes, because the state cannot make new debts but has to reduce old debts and pay accrued interest.

## Financial Burdens of Families

Besides higher taxes and social security contributions other family expenses are increasing, for example:

- higher rents, especially in urban areas, as long as the number of households is still rising,
- higher housing costs, as energy prices will rise due to declining crude oil, natural gas and coal reserves and increasing demand from emerging economies,
- accordingly, higher costs for driving one's car or higher expenses for public transportation,
- higher costs of living, as food will become more expensive as a result of rising global demand and climate change-related erosion and production declines – and other products for daily use because of higher commodity prices,
- increasing expenditures for child care, school and university education, as the state will need money formerly spent in the field of education for supporting the elderly.

## Technical Development

The scientific and technological development will accelerate in the coming decades (Textor 2010). Robots will not only be used in factories but also increasingly in other areas such as offices, shops, hospitals, and nursing homes. There will be more and more cars running on batteries, fuel cells and hydrogen as well as more cars that can run automatically, at least on certain routes. A high proportion of fuel and electricity will come from alternative sources. Household appliances, heating, air conditioning and monitoring systems will be centrally controlled in many homes. The power of computers will become larger, in the next decade they will already have artificial intelligence. The Internet will be used increasingly on mobile devices; data transfer will continue to accelerate. Movies will be loaded from the Internet; e-

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<sup>11</sup> <http://activepaper.tele.net/vntipps/Budgetsanierung.pdf> (p. 46)

<sup>12</sup> or 53 % of GDP; [http://www.oenb.at/de/stat\\_melders/statistische\\_publika/gfr/gfr\\_berichte\\_20100811\\_finanz\\_verhalten\\_der\\_privaten\\_haushalte\\_im\\_ersten\\_quartal\\_2010.jsp](http://www.oenb.at/de/stat_melders/statistische_publika/gfr/gfr_berichte_20100811_finanz_verhalten_der_privaten_haushalte_im_ersten_quartal_2010.jsp)

books will be used more frequently. Thus, the professional and private lives of family members will be characterized increasingly by technology.

The leisure behavior includes, increasingly, the use of technical media. This is supported by the following data:

- „With an average TV viewing time of 162 minutes per day in the past year the Austrians spent significantly more time watching television than in 2009 (153 minutes per day). The dwell time – the duration of use by persons watching TV on a specific day – increased from 244 to 254 minutes per day and recorded with more than 4 hours a historic high“.<sup>13</sup> Children aged three to 11 years had, according to ORF Media Research, the lowest average viewing time with 66 minutes per day.
- According to a Gallup survey in 2010 men spent three hours and women two hours per day at the computer.<sup>14</sup> The Austrians mostly used the Internet – on average for just over two hours.<sup>15</sup>
- According to the 2008/09 Time Use Survey of Statistik Austria about a quarter of all 10- to 19-year-olds played at the computer – on average for 1 ½ hours a day. Boys played for 1 ¾ hours and girl for one hour.<sup>16</sup>

In the future, probably even more time will be spent playing computer and console games as well as for online role-playing. In a few years, the complete immersion in virtual worlds will become a reality. More and more people will take on new roles and develop additional identities. Traveling into past or future artificial worlds will feel „life-like“ (Textor 2010).

Furthermore, the family members will increasingly communicate with other people on social sites, in chat rooms or via Instant Messenger, Internet telephony and smartphones. For children and adolescents also real contact with friends, playing together, and sports activities will be important. Adult family members will likely spend less time in sports clubs – but more on non-organized sports and in fitness centers (Zellmann and Opaschowski 2005). Other important leisure activities will be visits to special events such as festivals, open-air concerts, sporting events, entertainment parks, special exhibitions, cabarets, etc. People will rather put more emphasis on a healthy lifestyle and spend more money on anti-aging, relaxation and spa treatments (ibid.).

The scientific and technological development will accelerate in areas such as biology, neuroscience and medicine (Textor 2010). For example, there will be more genetically modified crops. But also the genomes of humans will be manipulated (e.g., „gene therapy“). Brain research is likely to have deciphered most of the secrets of the brain until 2030; then a „reverse engineering“ of the brain might be possible. Through medication and later by neural implants the cognitive performance of people will be improved. There will be medicines for cancer, Alzheimer’s disease and other presently incurable diseases, artificial limbs and sensory organs, synthetic blood, artificial hearts, lungs and kidneys. Biosensors will constantly review the health of people. Nanorobots will swim in blood, e.g. in order to remove plaque in the arteries or destroy viruses and bacteria. Thus almost all family members will be healthy; disabilities will play almost no role. Most babies of today who reach middle age will be 90 years and older.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://mediaresearch.orf.at/index2.htm?fernsehen/fernsehen\\_nutzungsverhalten.htm](http://mediaresearch.orf.at/index2.htm?fernsehen/fernsehen_nutzungsverhalten.htm)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.news.at/articles/1048/543/283416/so-pc-nutzer-computer-geissel-menschheit>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.werbeplanung.at/news/news\\_32259.de.html](http://www.werbeplanung.at/news/news_32259.de.html)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/dynamic/statistiken/soziales/052105](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/dynamic/statistiken/soziales/052105)

## Work and Society

In the looming knowledge society high-skilled workers will be in high demand in the labor market. Thus they can choose between different job offers. Less qualified workers, however, will have great difficulty in finding a job, as ever more simple tasks will be done by robots and other machines. Thus in coming years the number of long-term unemployed, marginally employed, long-term interns, temporary workers, etc. will increase (Zellmann and Opaschowski 2005). Multiple career changes will be the rule. Accordingly, the career will be more frequently interrupted by periods of retraining, a new training or further study.

In the coming years high-skilled parents will be able to compete in the labor market. Many parents who are less qualified will lose their jobs, accept a lower paying job or start a new career. More and more parents will be self-employed, often with a lower income than before, and often without the financial resources to build an adequate retirement fund.

Already in recent years a shrinking of the middle class could be observed: „In the income statistics this change is slow: The percentage of middle (included in the third to eighth deciles of gross income) fell between 2004 and 2008 from 49.7 percent to 47.5 percent“.<sup>17</sup> This trend toward a shrinking middle class is likely to dominate the coming years. Thus income-related differences between families will become larger.

The number of families living in poor circumstances will increase accordingly. Statistik Austria reports, that 11% of all households with children currently are at risk of poverty – that would be 457 000 people.<sup>18</sup> There were as many as 26% of the population in this situation at one time between 2005 and 2008. The risk of poverty is particularly high in single-parent households and in households with at least three children (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz 2011, 85).

If the financial support for the unemployed and for low earners gets lowered, because of the high public debt and high costs for seniors, the number of vulnerable families will increase. As highly skilled and well paid workers are having fewer children as the unskilled and the poor, even more children and adolescents will suffer. According to the Poverty Conference currently 142 000 children are really poor – 8% of all children in Austria.<sup>19</sup> A further 5% are at risk of poverty, for a total of 238 000 children and adolescents.

Persons with high skills and specialists, however, will earn more and more (Zellmann and Opaschowski 2005). For them new worlds of experience and consumer industries will be created. However, the pressure to perform and the stress caused by this will continue to increase. And even those workers will not feel secure: First, companies reduce the layers of management – the number of manager positions is decreasing. Secondly, research and development will increasingly migrate to Asia in the coming years, because ever more highly qualified specialists are available there. Thus in 2006 approximately 700 000 newly trained engineers and scientists graduated from universities in India and 550 000 from universities in China. „This shows that the number of graduates in both countries tripled within ten years and is now three times higher than the corresponding number of graduates in the United States“.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://diepresse.com/home/wirtschaft/economist/606436/Oesterreichs-schrumpfende-Mittelschicht>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/soziales/armut\\_und\\_soziale\\_eingliederung/022859.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/soziales/armut_und_soziale_eingliederung/022859.html)

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.armutskonferenz.at/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=243&Itemid=236](http://www.armutskonferenz.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=243&Itemid=236)

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.zeit.de/2006/17/Chindia\\_neu/seite-5](http://www.zeit.de/2006/17/Chindia_neu/seite-5)

Due to increasingly divergent income levels – but also because of the increasing proportion of migrants who want to live *their* culture – people in different milieus will develop life styles which are more and more diverse. In the future, the members of a subgroup of the population will become less and less aware of the subculture of another subgroup. Segregation will increase as more and more members of a population group will settle down in a particular district.<sup>21</sup> In addition, around 80% of migrants live in only 10% of all Austrian municipalities.<sup>22</sup>

Especially if members of a subculture feel disadvantaged or discriminated against, major social tensions could arise. Such conflicts may not necessarily involve Austrians and migrants, but could well be fought between different immigrant groups. In particular, if many Asians should immigrate because of staff shortages or if many („climate“) refugees from Africa should come to Austria, these newcomers might be experienced as undesirable „competitors“ by subgroups from East European countries and from Turkey who immigrated in the 20th century.

## Family and Career

On the labor market, the position of women relative to men will improve further. Younger women have accomplished a higher educational level than their male peers since the 1980s.<sup>23</sup> More and more women hold important positions and can help other women to climb up the career ladder. Better opportunities for educated women on the job market will increase further the career orientation: Women will have the impression that job-related performance is worthwhile. Fun at work and enjoyment of their success will contribute to the sense of fulfillment.

Many (especially less qualified) women also *have to* work, since they have to contribute to the family income as *one* earner per family often is too little due to the increasing burden of taxes and social security contributions and because of the high cost of living (Veselsky 2006).

Professional work is now considered to be a more useful, satisfying and rewarding experience than household chores and child rearing – and it is paid work. The more job-related work is valued in society, the more work in the family gets devalued. While at the beginning of the 20th century a woman who had to go to work was pitied, one is now surprised when she does not have a job (Hochschild 2002, 212). In the coming years, women will increasingly define themselves through their work – and this regardless of whether they work for financial constraints, in order to enjoy their job or for self-realization. Thus, the job is becoming increasingly important in comparison to family-related work.

In 2008, 67.9% of all women with children under the age of 15 years were economically active in Austria (Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung 2010, 24). „Of the working population 127 200 were self-employed and 809 700 were salaried ... The part-time rate, of employed women without mothers on parental leave, was 63.3 percent“ (ibid.).

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<sup>21</sup> This development was shown for Vienna in a study of the Technical University Vienna, Department of Urban and Regional Research (<http://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/grundlagen/stadtforschung/sozialraum/segregation.html>).

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/presse/057229](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse/057229)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/volkszaehlungen\\_registerzaehlungen/bevoelkerung\\_nach\\_dem\\_bildungsstand/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/volkszaehlungen_registerzaehlungen/bevoelkerung_nach_dem_bildungsstand/index.html)



Professionally successful women and men less and less work 'standard hours' – they must work more often in the evenings and on weekends (Zellmann and Opaschowski 2005). Thanks to phone and Internet, they can be reached at any time. More and more workers will also take job at a remote location. Thus the travel time will become longer, but also the number of weekend-marriages will increase.

Less qualified workers are increasingly required to work in shifts, because – at least in the major cities – more and more services are offered until well into the evening or even around the clock. Increasingly partners will work at different times. Thus they can spend only a fraction of their leisure time together.

## **The „New” Mother Role and the „Old“ Father Role**

The increasing employment of women will have a particular impact on the mother role. Mothers will work earlier and earlier after the birth of their children, and also the number of hours of her working will increase. Thanks to the expansion of child day care facilities, mothers are delegating more and more educational tasks: Many toddlers are no longer learning to crawl, walk and talk at home, but at crèches and day nurseries. Teachers at nursery schools increasingly take over potty training or teach young children how to get their clothes on and off and how to eat properly. Since more and more schools have full-day programs, mothers can also delegate the homework. Already now homework is increasingly guided and monitored by third parties: Nearly one in four students receives tutoring in Austria – parents spend 140 million € per year for this service.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the „new” mother role more and more resembles the „old“ father role: Just as men (formerly) delegated child-rearing to their wives, mothers increasingly delegate child-rearing to „experts“ such as (preschool) teachers.

In 2009, working women in couple households with children under 16 years practiced their professional activity for 3 hours and 47 minutes per day<sup>25</sup> (Statistik Austria 2009, 75). They spent just under 1 ½ hours less time on household chores than non-working mothers – and 1 hour less on child-rearing. However, they take a little bit more time for recreation, leisure, and sport activities. Since mothers will spend more and more time at work in the coming years, the time spent on household and child-rearing chores will continue to decrease.

The father's role will probably change little. Despite many years of intensive discussion on a more intensive involvement of fathers in child-rearing the average time spent for child care is still far below that of the mothers (Statistik Austria 2009, 74). Only when playing with child/ren fathers spent nearly as much time as mothers (32 versus 37 minutes). Thus the number of „new“ fathers will probably remain small, and the other fathers will rather have less time for their children than today due to the increasing stress of work and longer working hours.

Because of the great instability of couple relationships many fathers will live separately from their children. The intensity of the father-child relationships will be very different – as this is today in divorced families.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.zeit.de/2008/27/Schulschluss?page=all>

<sup>25</sup> with respect to the whole week (seven days)

## Household Management

As parents spend more hours at work, time spent on household activities will continue to fall.<sup>26</sup> Already today meals often consist of frozen foods and junk food, are bought at take-off restaurants or brought by delivery services. In addition, many parents eat five days a week at work or in its vicinity. With increasing day-care more children get their meals in the day nursery or school.

If both partners are (full time) employed, they often delegate the cleaning of the apartment by employing a cleaning woman. Many high-earning professionals bring dirty laundry to a dry-cleaner's, with shirts, blouses and trousers to be ironed after washing. Thus there will be not only fewer housewives, but also fewer household activities will still be practiced by family members.

Already now one can buy robots for vacuuming or mowing the lawn. However, they are rarely purchased in Austria. In contrast, robots are far more commonly used in Japan and South Korea – in very different areas of life. The governments of Japan and South Korea are pursuing the goal, that there will be a robot in every home by 2015 or 2020, respectively.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, household chores will be increasingly be done by robots. They will probably take over care functions for young children and for seniors in need for help, too.

The less domestic work is appreciated and the less time is available for it, the more convenient and cool the apartments will be designed. Thus they will be less cozy and homely. The apartment will no longer be a home but a (further) residence or a place to sleep. The family members will arrive at different times at home, pick some food in the kitchen, and retreat to their rooms for the purpose of media use, homework, hobbies or talking to friends. Meals with the family or collective household activities will become increasingly rare.

However, there also will be families who will eat organic foods and natural products due to concerns about food laced with pesticides and herbicides as well as due to the increased processing of foods and their „enrichment” with artificial substances. Often they will grow their own food. In these families gardening, cooking and common meals will play an important role.

## Family Relationships

The increasing stress at the work-place, different working hours of partners and long commuting times have an impact on family relationships. Thus the partners have less and less time to care for the couple's relationship and for mutual recreational activities. Stress and alienation will make marriage and cohabitation unstable, often resulting in separation and divorce.

Since 1951, the numbers of divorces and the divorce rates have risen in Austria.<sup>28</sup> Since 2008, however, both have sunk.<sup>29</sup> However, it is unlikely that this will be a lasting trend. As

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<sup>26</sup> As mentioned before, working mothers now use about 1 ½ hours less time for doing household chores than mothers staying home (Statistik Austria 2009, 75)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.homeroboter.de>

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/scheidungen/022171.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/scheidungen/022171.html)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/scheidungen/022912.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/scheidungen/022912.html)

mentioned earlier, a further decline in „traditional” families and an increase in the number of one-parent families are expected (see *Table 2*).

The earlier parents start work after the birth of a child, the longer they are away from home the more they work on evenings or weekends, the less time there is for their children. Bonds will weaken more quickly or do not form at all. Parents and children will live more or less separate lives. Children will have to become independent at an early stage of life and will have to take care of themselves.

The needs of more and more children will be neglected due to their parents’ lack of time – even if they grow up in relative prosperity. In many cases the child’s development will be affected. Therefore, the number of children with mental health problems and behavioral disturbances will increase. At present approximately 15% of all children and teens need therapeutic support due to developmental delays or mental and behavioral disorders. This need is, according to the Austrian Society for Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine and the Austrian Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry<sup>30</sup> not covered yet.

## **Child-Rearing**

In recent years, more and more parents name independence as the most important goal of their child-rearing – probably because children need to become responsible for themselves from early on (see above). Parents also want their children to develop both personal skills such as neatness, courage or self-discipline as well as social skills such as honesty, courtesy, tolerance and assertiveness.<sup>31</sup>

Due to the growing fear of job loss or social descent parents’ expectations of the cognitive development and school performance of their children are becoming higher.<sup>32</sup> Parents want the best development opportunities for their children, so that they will be able to meet the ever-increasing performance expectations of the global knowledge society and achieve a good income. Most parents have also read about relevant findings of brain research and developmental psychology: For example, there is a greater emphasis on early childhood learning; bilingual education is valued more; positive effects of music or sports on cognitive competencies is stipulated; and „deliberate practice” – the purposeful practice under the guidance of a mentor or coach – is now seen as more important to success than talent (Ziegler, 2008). Accordingly, children will be registered early in day nurseries, sports clubs, music and language schools.

The pressure on children to perform is likely to increase. Simultaneously they are made responsible for meeting the requirements. Thus, a high motivation to learn, a great effort, a lot of self-discipline and staying power are required. However, in the coming years many parents will experience problems when trying to reach their child-rearing goals. The risk of having conflicts with one’s children or to develop problematic parenting styles will remain large. The need for family education and child guidance will be high in the future.

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.docs4you.at/Content.Node/PresseCorner/2009/PK\\_Einladung\\_Kostenfreie\\_Kindertherapien.pdf](http://www.docs4you.at/Content.Node/PresseCorner/2009/PK_Einladung_Kostenfreie_Kindertherapien.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <http://derstandard.at/1263705791769/Kindererziehung-Gehorsam-out-Selbststaendigkeit-in?seite=7>

<sup>32</sup> for Germany see Merkle and Wippermann (2008)

## The Institutionalization of Childhood

In the coming years, child care will begin earlier and last longer in order to help parents to combine family and career.<sup>33</sup> Because of pressure from parents, businesses and politics day care centers will have more flexible opening hours – in the long run it cannot be ignored that more and more parents are working in the evening or on weekends. Thus preschool teachers will increasingly work shifts.

During their – flexibly designed care time – young children usually will be supervised by several preschool teachers. This may complicate the emergence of bonds or of close relationships. Since each nursery school teachers covers only part of the care time of a child, it will also be difficult to understand and to assess his/her development and to promote it appropriately. Furthermore, children may have difficulties in maintaining friendships, as the composition of their group will change again and again during the week.

Socialization, rearing and education of children will increasingly be taken over by preschool teachers; child-rearing in the family will lose its importance. This is clearly shown in *Table 4*.

| age                         | 1 year             | 2 years  | 3 years           | 4 years            | 5 years           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| sleep duration <sup>1</sup> | 13 hours<br>45 min | 13 hours | 12 hours          | 11 hours<br>30 min | 11 hours          |
| waking hours                | 10 hours<br>15 min | 11 hours | 12 hours          | 12 hours<br>30 min | 13 hours          |
| full day care               | 8 hours            | 8 hours  | 8 hours           | 8 hours            | 8 hours           |
| TV time <sup>2</sup>        | 0 min              | 0 min    | 73 min            | 73 min             | 73 min            |
| family time                 | 2 hours<br>15 min  | 3 hours  | 2 hours<br>47 min | 3 hours<br>17 min  | 3 hours<br>47 min |

1) according to Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (2010)  
2) according to Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2008)

When a child is in full day care, the family time on weekdays is between two and four hours, depending on the age of the infant or child – and part of this family time is needed for the transportation to the day care center, for shopping on the way home, for feeding two meals and for personal care. The day care center, therefore, is nearly solely responsible for the education of children – at least on weekdays.

Most parents who use day care centers have high expectations for the education and individual support of their children. Thus the importance of early childhood education for later school success is now well known – and thus the pressure on child care centers to provide high-quality early childhood education is increasing. The Federal Education Master Plan for Elementary Institutions in Austria<sup>34</sup> and the curricula of the Austrian states show which competences of children have to be trained and what subjects have to be covered. In the coming years, the implementation of these curricula will be promoted and improved.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> e.g. <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Familie/Kinderbetreuung/Seiten/F%C3%B6rderung.aspx> und <http://www.familieundberuf.at/Bedarfsgerechte-Kinderbetreuung.35.0.html>

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.noel.gv.at/bilder/d48/BP1\\_Rahmenplan\\_Oesterreich.pdf?19367](http://www.noel.gv.at/bilder/d48/BP1_Rahmenplan_Oesterreich.pdf?19367)

<sup>35</sup> e.g. <http://derstandard.at/1295570976377/Oberoesterreich-Sozialpartner-wollen-fruehkindliche-Bildung-foerdern>

In order to miss nothing in promoting the development of their children, many parents register them in institutions such as computer, music and ballet schools or sports clubs. Young children often have a weekly schedule, which leaves little room for „spare time“. Thus young children will spend more and more time in institutions and in other „educationally occupied“ locations. But even for older children adventure in the outdoors, meeting with friends on the street, rollicking and unsupervised play will become increasingly rare.

Due to the segregation tendencies mentioned before, children with immigrant backgrounds are increasingly clustered in some child care centers. The pressure on preschool teachers to support these children in their (language) development will continue to grow.<sup>36</sup> Here again the findings of brain research and developmental psychology play a role which emphasize the importance of early childhood for language development – and later success in school.

The same applies for the compensatory education, which plays a minor role today in comparison to the 1970s. However, the pressure on child care centers will increase to further the development of disadvantaged children, until they have the same educational opportunities as children from the middle class. Therefore children of immigrants and children from socially disadvantaged families will increasingly be subjected to language training and compensatory programs. Their educational opportunities will become better.

Nevertheless, children of educated parents are likely to be overrepresented in higher schools and universities in the coming years.<sup>37</sup> These parents work harder than other parents to offer their children the best opportunities and therefore invest more money in their education. In addition, the more intellectual family climate will continue to have positive effect on language development, learning, interests and achievement motivation (Textor 2005).

In the coming years more and more students will attend full-day schools. Thus the SPÖ and ÖVP – the ruling parties in Austria – agreed in November 2010 to increase the number of full-day places by 15 to 20% annually.<sup>38</sup> According to a survey by the Institute for Empirical Social Research from 2011 78% of Austrians favor the expansion of the school afternoon care – in 2009 it were 10% less.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, nearly two-thirds of parents would use all-day schools if offered the chance.<sup>40</sup>

Thus teachers will increasingly take over care responsibilities, cooperating with other professional groups such as leisure educators. Since – as already mentioned – the number of children with behavioral problems will get larger, teachers will increasingly have to control the behavior of their students. This task will become a growing burden on teachers – unless they manage to compensate for the diminishing impact of child-rearing in the family by accepting more responsibility for the emotional, social and personality development of their students.

As mentioned above, only (high) skilled workers will have good chances in the knowledge society. Thus the Austrian government has decided in October 2010 to increase the number of graduates from universities – especially with degrees in economics, natural sciences and engineering – during the next decades aiming at 38% of 30- to 34-year-olds having completed

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Familie/Kinderbetreuung/Seiten/Ausbauintiative.aspx> and <http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/pwi/pa/sprichmitmir.xml>

<sup>37</sup> for the present situation see [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/presse/056158](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse/056158) and [http://www.bifie.at/sites/default/files/publikationen/2010-12-07\\_pisa-2009-zusammenfassung.pdf](http://www.bifie.at/sites/default/files/publikationen/2010-12-07_pisa-2009-zusammenfassung.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> <http://news.orf.at/stories/2039698/2039699/>

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.ifes.at/upload/1308517520\\_Schulreformen2011.pdf](http://www.ifes.at/upload/1308517520_Schulreformen2011.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> <http://kurier.at/karrieren/berufsleben/2097859.php>

a university education.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the percentage of young people leaving school without qualifications shall drop to 9.5%, and all secondary school students shall receive a basic education which fulfills the expectations of businesses. Thus the pressure on students to perform will continue to increase in schools, in vocational education and at universities.

## Conclusion

In the coming years, families will be subjected to intense influences by industry, society and politics which will bring major changes regarding the financial situation, the partnership, the child-rearing and the family life. Parents are asked to consciously deal with these effects and to draw consequences for their relationships and for their parenting efforts. Experts who work with families, employers and politicians also have to deal with these future developments, promoting positive and compensating negative effects.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Wirtschaftspolitik/Wirtschaftspolitik/Documents/Nationales%20Reformprogramm.pdf>

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