

---

# Explaining subnational differences of deinstitutionalization in Austria

Angela Wegscheider\*<sup>1</sup> and Melanie Schaur\*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Johannes Kepler University Linz (JKU) – Altenberger Strasse 69 4040 Linz, Austria

<sup>2</sup>Johannes Kepler University Linz – Austria

## Abstract

While some countries are already in the phase of post-deinstitutionalization, Austria is still on its way out of traditional institutional forms of housing. Although larger and complex residential care institutions for persons with disabilities are undergoing change and transformative processes, segregated forms of housing continue to exist in regionally varying forms, contrary to strong demands for deinstitutionalization. In the nine Austrian federal states, different perspectives on deinstitutionalization and a different understanding of the meaning of community-based services can be found.

The conservative-corporatist and federal character of the Austrian welfare state influences the design and offer of services for persons with disabilities, as provincial states are responsible for legislation and funding of social services. Different strategies towards deinstitutionalization and its opposite are active – differing from various existing housing services alongside distinct normative guidelines for all nine federal states.

Although differences in the housing sector for persons with disabilities are identifiable, the inhibiting or promoting factors in de- or institutionalization processes in Austria have not yet been investigated. Therefore, in the proposed paper we aim to present: Which endogenous (from the inside of institutions) and exogenous factors (policy) work in favor of deinstitutionalization or institutionalization in Austria?

The applied subnational comparison is based on primary data analysis, secondary data analysis and comparative document analysis. At the macro level, the focus of analysis is on the political orientation of the federal states, the normative guidelines and the existing structures of disability care and assistance; at the meso level, the range of services and the service providers are examined with the help of primary data.

The document analysis shows that different kinds of services have been developed on the subnational level. The variety of service types differs within Austria, but strategies favoring institutionalization can be found in all federal states, as the option for residential care is provided in all federal disability laws. Furthermore, the comparative document analysis shows that financial limitations and a maximum of service hours for assistive and mobile services - which inhibit the process of deinstitutionalization - can be found in the normative guidelines.

Services are provided almost exclusively by private providers. The primary data analysis illustrates that the structure of the providers is heterogenous from federal state to federal

---

\*Speaker

state and alternates between church and charitable providers as well as civil society providers. In each federal state, at least ten different providers offer housing services. The results also indicate that housing services of civil society providers tend to enable approximate deinstitutionalization, as they try to offer smaller supported shared flats and thus enable more independent living.