

Submission

Universal Periodic Review 2025

(Austria - Fourth cycle, 51st session)

(COVER)

by the Austrian League for Human Rights

Topic:

Follow-Up Procedure in Austria and independent monitoring tools

Summary/Abstract:

The **Austrian League for Human Rights** coordinates a large part of civil society in the UPR procedure including the follow-up process with the Austrian authorities. For the material human rights issues, we may refer to our Joint Statement in the UPR 2025, which we have filed on behalf of some 300 civil society organisations.

This individual submission gives an overview about the **follow-up procedure in Austria** from a technical perspective.

The Austrian federal government has taken some **measures to improve the follow-up procedure** on the UPR. There was in particular a very positive and valuable exchange of views and positions in a total of five plenary meetings between all federal ministries, some provincial administrations and organisations of civil society. However, effectiveness in the implementation of any findings was restricted, also because of divided competencies between the different federal ministries and between the federal and regional governments.

It is regrettable the Austria had **not filed a national mid-term-report** in the third cycle of the UPR with the OHCHR contrary to its stipulation in the UPR 2020.

A **monitoring tool** of the UPR-process was established in an online data-base by the Austrian League of Human Rights at the website <https://liga.or.at/upr-en?assignee=UPR-Empfehlungen> ("**UPR-Tool**"). This was made possible by a research cooperation agreement between the Austrian League for Human Rights and the Austrian Ombudsman Board and addition funding by the Austrian Fund for the Future ("Zukunftsfonds"). No federal government funds have yet been provided for the project.

This UPR-Tool enables stake holders to research information, not only about the commitment of Austria in adopting state recommendations, but also about the progress of all recommendations.

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Follow-Up Procedure and independent monitoring tools

A. National follow-up procedure

1. Challenges in the federal structure

1. Austria is a federal state. Legislative and administrative competences are divided between the federal government, nine provincial governments, and regional authorities like cities and municipalities. This makes uniform regulation under a common human rights standard difficult.
2. Also, all federal ministries are generally independent in their field of competence and no directive authority exists by the head of state or the government leader. Many questions of legislative processes therefore require accompanying political coordination between the political parties forming the government, which does not guarantee early involvement of civil society in the legislative process at this time.
3. There are cooperation mechanisms with civil society organisations on different levels of the administration, but no best practice approach has yet been established. In the last 5 years the previous government often included civil society only at a very late stage of the legislative

process. This seems to have improved in the first half year of the new government, but needs to be an ongoing effort.

2. Monitoring and ongoing exchange with civil society

1. Since 2021 the Austrian federal government by organisation of the Federal Chancellery and the Foreign Ministry have organised five plenary meetings on 17.09.2021, 30.06.2022, 06.07.2023, 21.06.2024, and 01.06.2025. In these meetings all of the federal ministries and some provincial administrations, like Burgenland, Carinthia and Vienna participated. The meetings were jointly chaired by the government organisations and civil society organisations represented by the Austrian League for Human Rights, who was also included in the meetings' planning. Participants in those meetings were not only human rights coordinators, but also expert officers of the participating ministries. The meetings were generally a very positive and valuable exchange of views and positions, which contributed to an improvement of communication.
2. For the actual implementation measures civil society organisations were pointed to the individual ministries. This made coordination difficult in any matter falling in the competence of more than one authority, which is the case for most human rights related issues. Willingness to enter into a mutual exchange varied between ministries. However, it is positive that within the format of the plenary meetings at least a first survey of different cooperation mechanisms has taken place. There are efforts to deepen and improve coordination and cooperation between the government and civil society.
3. However, there is no ongoing public monitoring process. The national reports are mostly drafted by collecting data in the individual instance from all stake holders involved. This leads to a high work load in preparing individual reports for a large number of reporting mechanisms.¹
4. There is also no federal funding for the independent monitoring instrument (UPR-Tool)² created by the Austrian League for human rights (see below section B). Financial support, which had been initially promised, was withdrawn on short notice in January 2023. This led to a serious delay in the project, which could only be corrected by huge efforts in alternative funding and volunteer work by the League.
5. Austria has filed no Mid-Term report in the UPR process even though this commitment was stipulated in the UPR 2020 and a draft text had been prepared almost to completion. This seems to have had political reasons in the last government. This situation was only ameliorated, because civil society was able to provide its own Mid-Term Report facilitated by the data collected for the UPR-Tool.³

3. Missing strategic coordination / National Action Plan for human rights

1. In the eyes of the Austrian League for Human Rights, the main issue with Austrian human rights politics is the lack of strategic planning. In an ideal follow-up procedure, achievable aims for the improvement of human rights should be set jointly by the government administration and civil society. Measures can then be implemented in a targeted manner with less influence of day-to-day politics.
2. The Austrian League for Human Rights also promotes an approach that human rights shall be

¹ compare <https://cms.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/human-rights/austrian-state-reports>

² <https://liga.or.at/upr-en?assignee=UPR-Empfehlungen>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/midtermreports/ngosmidtermreports/2023UPR-Mid-Term-Report-Austria-en.pdf>

considered first and as a priority at the start of the drafting phase of an any legislative project. It is the obligation of government to research and consider any potential effects of its measures on human rights. Human rights should not only be an afterthought, after a legislative draft had been politically approved (“Human Rights First”).

3. This is why a National Action Plan for human rights would be urgently necessary in Austria (“NAP human rights”). Such National Action Plans have already been described in the closing declaration of the World Conference for Human Rights in 1993⁴ and further elaborated in guidelines⁵ and handbooks⁶ of the OHCHR. Six states in the UPR 2020 have explicitly recommended Austria to implement a NAP human rights.⁷ After no progress had been made by the last government, the Austrian League of Human Rights and other organisations have advocated strongly for a NAP human rights in the negotiations for the new government.⁸ It can be seen as a first success that the new government program contains the commitment to “revive” the NAP human rights.⁹ Efforts to develop this NAP human rights are still to begin.

B. UPR-Tool of the League for Human rights

1. Structure of the UPR-Tool

1. With the UPR Tool at the web-address <https://liga.or.at/upr-en>, the Austrian League for Human Rights is providing, a comprehensive and transparent instrument that systematically documents and monitors the implementation of the recommendations made to Austria by the UN Human Rights Council within the framework of the UPR. The tool makes it possible to track the status of implementation of all recommendations – regardless of whether they have been accepted by the government or merely taken note of.
2. The UPR tool makes progress visible, reveals shortcomings and provides civil society actors and the interested public with a sound basis for further demands and measures to be taken by the government. With this innovation, the League is providing important impetus for the continuous involvement of civil society in the UPR process and for the sustainable improvement of the human rights situation in Austria.
3. Any specific view of the UPR-Tools data can be exported by using the button “share filters”; e.g. this exported link gives the implementation status of all recommendations within the 3rd cycle of the UPR proposed by Belgium <https://liga.or.at/upr-en?assignee=UPR-Empfehlungen&cycle=3&proponent-id=S-16>.
4. Annex I contains a graphic, visualising the user interface of the UPR-Tool.

2. Generation of Content in the UPR Tool

1. The tool's content is primarily based on the input of the participating organisations in the joint submissions and midterm reports coordinated by the League in the UPR process.
2. Additionally, direct input can be provided by any stake holders including civil society organisations but also federal ministries. Such input will be crosschecked and verified by the

⁴ Vienna Declaration and Programm of Action dated 25.06.1993, A/CONF.157/23, para 71

⁵ Guidelines for national plans of action for human rights education vom 20.10.1997, A/52/469/Add.1 Guidelines for national plans of action for human rights education dated 20.10.1997, A/52/469/Add.1

⁶ Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action, Professional Training Series No. 10 dated 29.08.2002

⁷ Recommendations 140.9 to 140.14 UPR 2020

⁸ https://liga.or.at/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/20241210-Regierungsverhandler_innen-offener-Brief.pdf

⁹ Government Program 2025-2029, page 135, <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/die-bundesregierung/regierungsdokumente.html>

editing team.

3. And finally, the editing team is actively looking for additional sources like published studies on relevant human rights topics and national and civil society reports in other relevant international instruments, like the CEDAW or CRPD reporting procedure.
4. The mode of work in its newest iteration leads to general comments to a standardised list of human rights issues, which can then in a second step be attributed to specific recommendation touching on this issue. This saves valuable time and improves consistency and quality of any comments.

3. Financing of the UPR Tool

1. At the moment a large part of editing work is only possible because of unsalaried and voluntary work of members of the League and because of the input of our partner organisations.
2. It was possible to finance IT overheads and a part-time position of a research assistant by a research cooperation agreement between the Austrian League for Human rights and the Austrian Ombudsman Board and additional funding by the Austrian Fund for the Future (“Zukunftsfonds”). Both forms of financing were fixed-term and need to be extended this year.

C. Conclusions and Recommendation

In conclusion the Austrian League for Human Rights Build recommends:

1. *to build on the positive examples of cooperation with civil society and expand it to include more inter-ministerial coordination, monitoring and documentation of results.*
2. *to involve civil society organisations in all measures in relation to human rights as early as possible within the conception phase of draft legislation (“Human Rights First”).¹⁰*
3. *to establish and maintain a general National Human Rights Action Plan for human rights as a strategic coordination tool.¹¹*
4. *to financially support and expand the existing independent monitoring instruments on the development of the human rights situation in Austria, like the UPR-Tool as described in this Statement.*

Vienna, this 14 July 2025

¹⁰ compare also PoA 14 in the Joint Submission to the UPR 2025 coordinated by the League

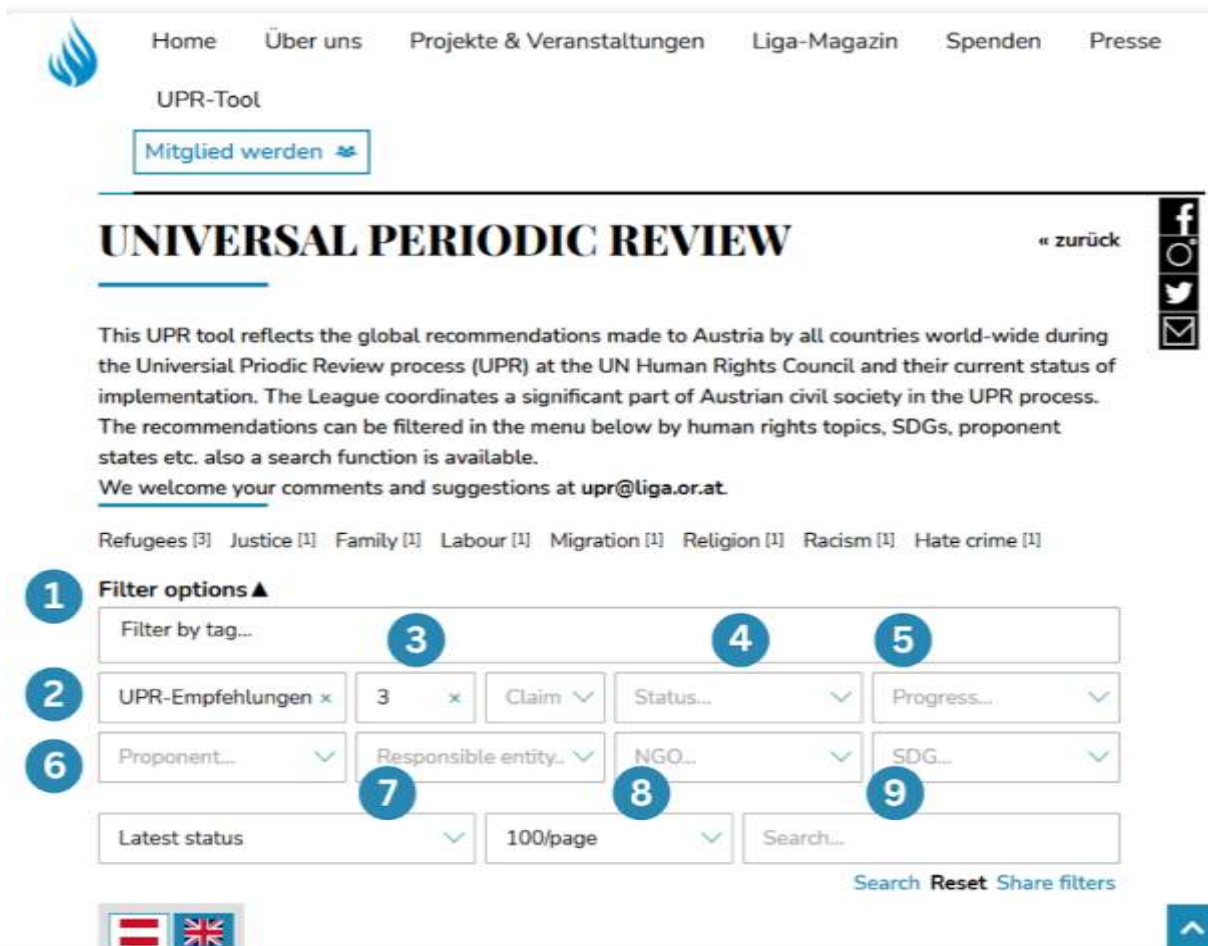
¹¹ compare also PoA 19 and 22 in the Joint Submission to the UPR 2025 coordinated by the League

ANNEX I (Visualisation of the UPR-Tool)

On the first page, you see the start view of the UPR tool.

Here, users can set various filters to search the recommendations in a targeted way:
(from left to right):

1. Filter option by topic area
2. UPR recommendation or Point of Action
3. Cycle
4. Status (whether it was Adopted or Acknowledged by Austria)
5. Progress
6. Proponent (state)
7. Responsibility (entity)
8. Responsibility (NGO)
9. SDGs



The screenshot shows the UPR-Tool interface. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Home, Über uns, Projekte & Veranstaltungen, Liga-Magazin, Spenden, Presse. Below this is a sub-header 'UPR-Tool' and a button 'Mitglied werden'. The main title is 'UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW' with a '« zurück' link and social media icons. A paragraph describes the tool's purpose. Below this is a list of tags: Refugees [3], Justice [1], Family [1], Labour [1], Migration [1], Religion [1], Racism [1], Hate crime [1]. The filter section is annotated with numbers 1-9: 1. Filter options ▲, 2. UPR-Empfehlungen ×, 3. 3 ×, 4. Claim ▾, 5. Status... ▾, 6. Progress... ▾, 7. Proponent... ▾, 8. Responsible entity... ▾, 9. NGO... ▾, 10. SDG... ▾, 11. Latest status ▾, 12. 100/page ▾, 13. Search... (with Search, Reset, and Share filters buttons). At the bottom are flags for Austria and the UK, and an upward arrow button.

On the second page you see the detail view of a single recommendation.
It includes the following information:

- The exact wording of the recommendation.
- Status of Austria/ Austria's response (accepted or only noted).
- The current implementation status.
- Additional comments or progress updates.
- This detail view makes it clear what Austria has committed to and how far implementation has progressed.

Progress of the recommendation	Recommendation of the state	Status of Austria
<p>✓ Progress: Success</p> <p>139.6</p> <p>Tags: International agreements Children War</p> <p>SDG: 8 – Decent work and economic growth</p>	<p>Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict</p> <p>Proponent: ► France</p> <p>Remarks to progress by Liga (last modified Dec 31, 2024): Austria ratified the relevant protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2002: BGBl III Nr 92/2002 or Ratification list of the UN.</p>	<p>Status: Adopted</p> <p>► Government statement</p> <p>Responsible entities: ► BMEIA</p>

State, that made the recommendation

Remarks to progress by Liga