

The Austrian programme for early childhood intervention: supporting families in need

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Objectives of the Austrian Model

To reach and support families during pregnancy and early childhood (focus: 0-3 years), especially those that live under burdened life circumstances

Specific Objectives:

- To strengthen resources and reduce strains/burdens of families with children
- To promote and ensure well-being and development of children at an early stage
- To contribute to a healthy upbringing including the right to be protected, supported and to be able to participate
- To promote health and social equity

Guiding principles:

- Non-stigmatizing, resource-orientated
- Focus on empowerment
- voluntary and free of costs



Key characteristics of “Frühe Hilfen”

Needs-based support for families in stressful situations by **networks established at regional level: outreach, free of charge, voluntary and resource-oriented**

- ➔ reach families actively and systematically = **Raising awareness** among those who can identify and refer families in need
- ➔ provide continuous and comprehensive support = **Family support** (mostly as home visits) throughout a longer time span; builds up mutual trust; provides model for bonding; refers to specific services within the regional network one by one
- ➔ general as well as case-related cooperation and networking = **network-management** for establishment and continuous maintenance of the regional network (= multiprofessional support system with well coordinated manifold services for parents and children)

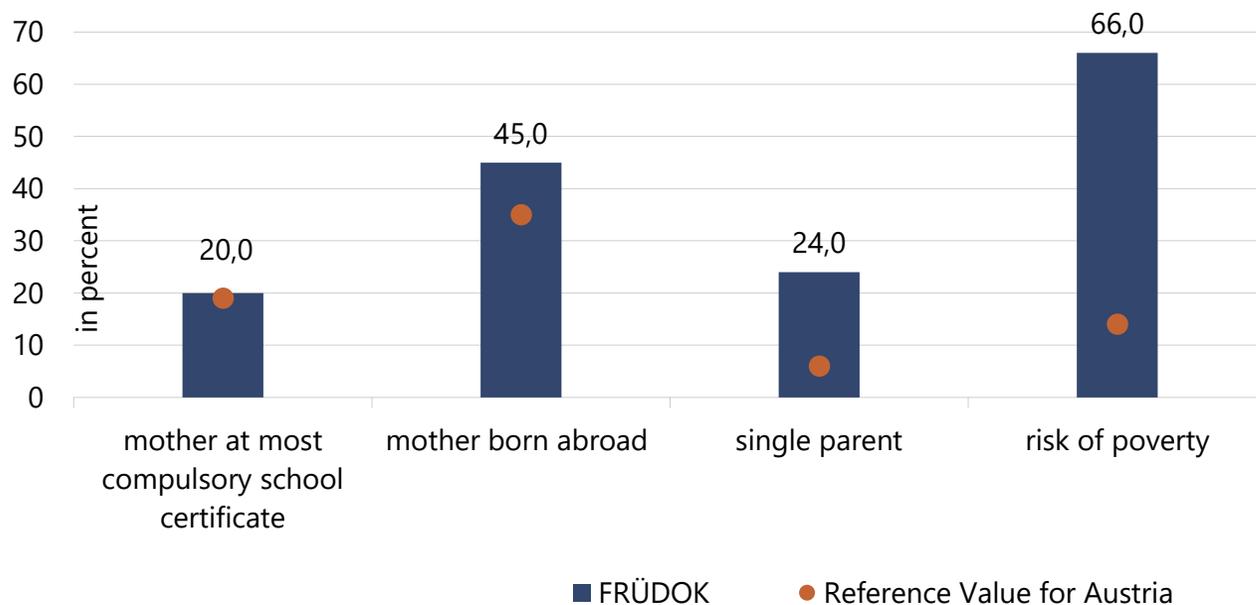


Implemented since 2015 in model regions, since 2024 in whole country; since 2015 about **17.500 families** (up to 28.000 children) supported

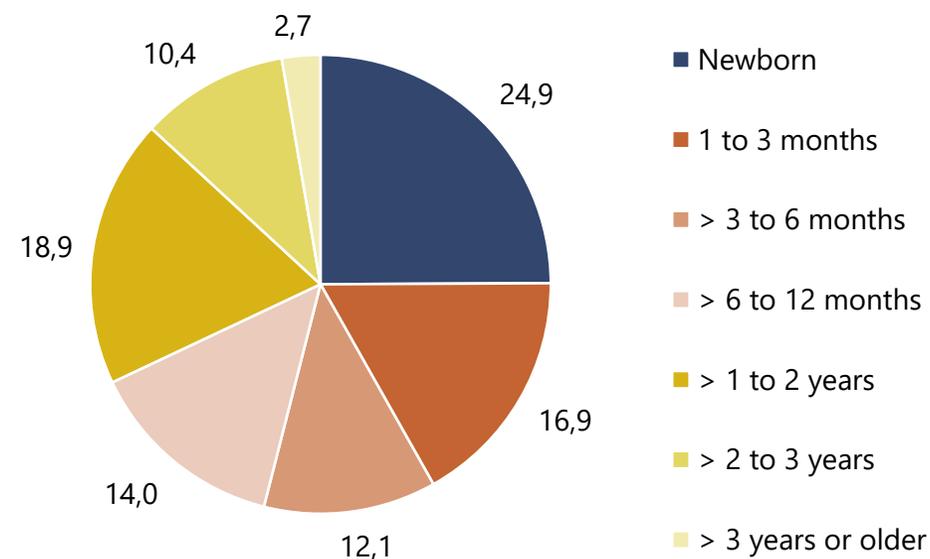
Financed in partnership of federal government, provinces and social insurance institutions; roll-out with help of EU (NextGenerationEU)



Documentation: Families are reached early and esp. vulnerable groups

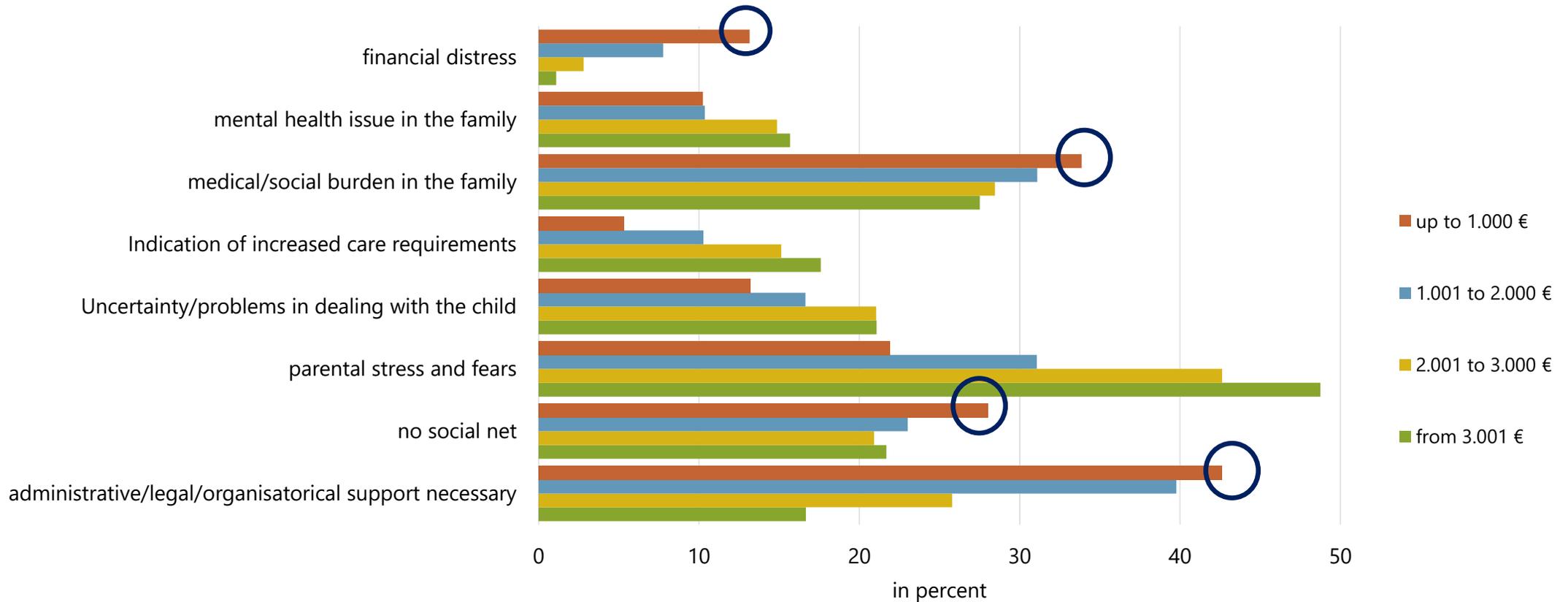


- More than **25 %** of the family supports already start during **pregnancy**
- When entering the programme, **~ 70 % of the children already born are younger than one year old**



Notes: Data in percent of contacts in 2024 that resulted in family support, n = 2,816. The Austrian reference values were taken from the following data sources: ; STATISTIK AUSTRIA – Bildung in Zahlen 2022/2023, Familien in Zahlen 2024, EU-SILC 2024; mother here refers to the primary main caregivers, who are the biological mothers in most families.

Documentation: Reasons for referral



The lower the income, the more likely families are referred due to administrative support, medical and social burdens, as well as financial problems.

Evaluation: Families do benefit from early childhood intervention networks

Impact on health determinants (material, social and societal environment) by **increase in available resources** as well as **reduction of strains/burdens**:


resources
+ self-esteem
+ health, health literacy
+ parenting skills, parent-child-bonding
+ child development
+ familiar relations/atmosphere
+ social net
+ perspectives for parents life/future


strains/burdens
- anxiety and exhaustion
- financial burden/distress

Particularly helpful were from family perspective:

- Talks with the family supporter
- the knowledge that there is someone who can help
- that the families are not alone with their worries and problems
- Tips and advice as well as referral to specific support (incl. health care sector)

Thank you for your attention!

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EU Best Practice Portal: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dyna/bp-portal/best-practice/395>



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