

Reconciliation of care and work

Care Benefit (“Pflegegeld”)

In place since 1993, the Federal Long term Care Benefit Act (Bundespfleugesetz) and the related Laender (provinces) acts replaced the previous system of numerous of cash benefits, which varied both in terms of benefit level and eligibility criteria. Older people in Austria can get governmental funded money in order to pay the care services they need for themselves. This system provides different benefit levels for different care needs in seven care categories.

Currently five percent of the Austrian population receives care benefit. Compared internationally, this is a very high number. But is to be noted that a large part is in the lower categories: 52 percent of the care allowance recipients are in categories one and two.

In addition to professionalized care and the formal care sector, there is also a large range of informal care.

It belongs to the objective of Austria`s long-term care system, to strengthen the position of caring relatives. For this purpose numerous measures have been taken such as coinsuring caring relatives under the health insurance system if they care for an insured person entitled to long-term care benefits of category 3 or higher.

Measures in order to support informal care

Throughout Austria there are certified healthcare and nursing professionals that visit the homes of all recipients of long-term care benefits to inform and counsel all those involved in the specific care situation in order to assure the quality of home caring.

Social services are offered by voluntary welfare associations, Laender (provinces) and local communities. Mobile care services include domestic care, home help, family help, meals on wheels, visitor or counselling services.

These social services can support caring relatives to reconcile working life and care responsibilities.

Since 01.01.2014 caring relatives are able to take **paid care leave** / part-time care. Care leave was created in order to better reconcile informal care and working life.

Care leave is an agreed exemption from work for the purpose of maintenance or care of a close relative. The amount of the care benefit is 55% of the net daily income. It can be purchased for 3 months and extended for another 3 months. In case of deteriorating health this money can be obtained for 6 more months. Expenditures for care allowance are paid from the budget of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

Part-time care is the agreed reduction of the normal weekly working time for the purpose of care or maintenance of a close relative with aliquoting of the salary.

Besides care leave employees can also take family hospice leave/ family hospice part-time.

The term family hospice leave/ family hospice part-time covers both end-of-life care by close relatives as well as the support of seriously ill children.