

Pro Juventute Educational Fund Concept



1. Initial position

1.1. Importance of Education

In today's society, the acquisition of formal education in the form of school qualifications, vocational training and tertiary or post-secondary education is regarded as an essential prerequisite for the realisation of life options and for leading a successful, independent life. Ensuring equal educational opportunities is therefore a central task for a society that claims to enable the inclusion or, as far as possible, comprehensive social participation of all members of society (UNICEF 2016).

1.2. unfavorable conditions

However, children and young people in institutional care often have unfavourable conditions for the best possible development of their potential. In this group, aggravating conditions such as socio-structural stress factors, risk situations and individual coping problems often accumulate. These children and youth therefore first need to secure or restore elementary basic needs and have catching up to do in their social and/or emotional development. Only then is it possible to deal productively with coping tasks and social and educational demands. In short, **children and youth in institutional care usually need more time** than others with more favourable conditions.

1.3. Legal situation

Unfortunately, Austrian legislation (B-KJH Act 2013) takes little account of the situation of children and youth in institutional care. The legal entitlement to governmental benefits ends when the child reaches the age of majority (18). Although it is possible to extend institutional care up to the age of 21, but the granting practice is non-transparent, inconsistent and partly subject to conditions. This restrictive regulation and the resulting uncertainty put young people under pressure to be financially independent when they reach the age of majority. There is little scope for longer educational paths, experiments or failure and reorientation. In short, **children and youth in institutional care need more time, but they have less.**

1.4. General social developments

These unfavourable conditions and the legal situation face a number of societal changes that generally affect young people today. An increasing proportion of young people in western countries are seeking higher education (Lassnig 2011, 138) and the completion of educational careers is being postponed until later in life. Young people today live longer in their parental homes, enter working life later, become financially independent later and later start their own families (see Geserick, 2011).

This succeeds where young people or their parental homes are equipped with sufficient economic, cultural and social capital (cf. Bourdieu 1983; 1992). The liberalisation of labour relations makes it more difficult for young people to enter working life and increases the likelihood of temporary, atypical and precarious employment, especially where educational qualifications are low or lacking. Higher educational qualifications generally go hand in hand with better income and employment opportunities (cf. Lassnig 2011, 138).

These social developments, together with the above-mentioned disadvantages and the educational situation of children and youth in institutional care, create a situation of multiple disad-

vantages. This results in **increasing inequality of opportunity and educational disadvantages** compared with the population as a whole.

2. Research findings

Since 2017, the first research results from Austria on the educational level of Care Leavers between the ages of 20 and 29 have been available (Sting et. a. 2017). They show that Care Leavers have a significantly lower educational level compared to the total population. Furthermore, there is a clear preference for a career via compulsory schooling. Intermediate or higher educational qualifications are very rare.

3. An educational mission for institutional care

The family has always been the central place in the educational process of children, long before the formal education system. If institutional care now assume responsibility in cooperation with or on behalf of families, then family education agendas will also migrate to institutional care (cf. Rauschenbach 2007; Sauer 1979). Thus education becomes the task of social pedagogy and of the facilities of institutional care (cf. Thiersch 2009; Zeller 2009). Consequently, an educational mandate is derived for institutional care, which they must fulfil in cooperation with the families of origin, the formal education system and in the interest of the children and youth.

Education could be defined as a lifelong process of the appropriation of the world and the shaping and development of the person in this world, as work on the life plan (Thiersch 2002). Education pursues the goal of acquiring life skills, enabling young people to educate themselves and beyond that to shape their lives and the world within the horizon of individual possibilities (cf. Thiersch 2009; BMFSFJ 2005). Education is thus immanent in all fields of social pedagogy and a broad field of educational agendas is opening up (Zeller 20012). Education encompasses a continuum from informal¹ to non-formal² and to formal aspects of learning, before, during and after school, and includes cognitive, physical, emotional, social and practical aspects (cf. Thiersch 2009).

4. A „Pro Juventute Educational Fund“

From the situation of multiple disadvantages of children and youth in institutional care and in awareness of the educational mission of the child and youth welfare, the **"Pro Juventute Education Fund"** was created on 01.01.2018.

4.1. The aim of the „Pro Juventute Educational Fund“

The aim of the Education Fund is to support children, young people and young adults in their educational biographies and efforts. In this way, disadvantages and uncertainties caused by structural deficiencies in Austrian legislation are to be defused. This form of support is based on an image of man, as it is formulated in ...

- a) ... the "Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care in Europe". (Quality4Children),
- b) ... the „UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child“ (UNESCO),
- c) ... the „Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union“ (EU),
- d) ... the „Universal Declaration of Human Rights“ (UNO).

These explanations demand prerequisites and framework conditions for the best possible development of the personality, talents, mental and physical abilities of children and young adults. They also demand the right and unhindered access to education and vocational training.

¹ **Informal learning** means learning that takes place in everyday life, at work, in the family or in leisure time. It is not organised or structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases not explicitly intended from the learner's point of view.

² **Non-formal learning** is learning that is embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly referred to as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning facilitation), but involve a distinct "learning element". Non-formal learning is intended from the learner's point of view.

4.2. Target group of the „Pro Juventute Educational Fund“

The target group are all children, adolescents and young adults (Care Leavers) who are or have been in care by Pro Juventute. Care Leavers are those who were last cared by Pro Juventute. Care Leavers have the opportunity to submit an initial application up to three years after leaving the company. Since January 2018 about 15 children, teenagers and care leavers have been supported by the fund.

The target group is also Pro Juventute facilities, provided that their funding objectives correspond to the objectives mentioned under chapter 4.1.

4.3. What is supported by the „Pro Juventute Educational Fund“

In accordance with the broad definition of education set put above, the „Pro Juventute Educational Fund“ will, in principle, support all measures which are suitable for the full development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities. As a result, it does not make sense to define support for precisely defined individual measures. Instead, three areas are defined. Instead, three areas are defined: "educational measures" means support in the formal school sector. "Promotional measures" are based on the promotion of interests, hobbies and talents. "Supporting measures" promotes the development of personality in order to create the conditions for a successful educational biography. All three areas are backed by prototypical and contrasting examples in order to make the decision easier for the members of the award committee. The „Pro Juventute Education Fund“ was filled annually, starting 01.01.2018, up to a cap of € 25,000.

