



## Austria - 'School starter parcels' support for the most deprived families

Red Cross Austria

### WHY?

The FEAD Managing Authority of Austria has opted to dedicate its resources to address the **material deprivation** experienced by Austria's most deprived families and their difficulties in purchasing school supplies at the beginning of the school year. These are mainly single-parent families or parents with labour market issues, mental or physical health problems or of a migration background (in combination with the non-recognition of their skills). As a result, they have limited financial stability and school supplies pose an additional financial burden on these deprived families, especially at the start of the new school years, when the pressure is very high.

### WHAT?

Families dependent on social benefits receive parcels containing basic educational materials (e.g. a school bags, stationary supplies, painting materials, etc.) depending on the age of the children. In 2015, there were 19 different parcels that the applicants were able to choose from and the value of each parcel was approximately €70. In 2016, 11 varieties were offered. It is important to note that every item in the parcel is also sold in regular shops, so as to avoid the issue of **stigmatisation**.

In addition to the parcel, families receive a "For Me" brochure which has relevant information on further measures fostering social inclusion. This brochure is tailored according to information relevant to each region of Austria. They provide, for instance, information on other services that the Red Cross offers such as financial training, food aid, clothing distribution, etc.

In terms of outputs, in 2015 there were 47,840 pupils eligible to receive the school starter parcels and 33,213 (69%) parcels were collected. Red Cross Centres also distributed a questionnaire among the end recipients that showed that 98% of respondents felt that the service provided offered useful support and 97% indicated that they were satisfied with the composition of the parcel. Overall, there was a 92% rate of satisfaction with the organisation of the service. One of the key objectives of the project is to support large families, and the survey indicated that approximately 45% of the end recipients were from households with three or more children.

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The organisation of this activity is very complex and it is only possible thanks to the high engagement of our volunteers who support the distribution of the school starter parcels. The high take up rate show us that the measure is useful for the families and we are glad that we have the possibility to support those deprived families.”

Monika Wild, Head of Health and Social Service,  
Red Cross Austria

## WHO?

The school starter parcels are funded with EU means and cofinanced by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, the FEAD Managing Authority in Austria. The partner organisation responsible for distributing the parcels is the Austrian Red Cross.

## HOW?

The process is divided into three key steps. Firstly, letters are sent to potential beneficiaries together with an application form for every child as well as an explanatory note on how the process works. The target group are families dependent on social welfare assistance (“means-tested minimum income”). There are in total 19 different parcels that an applicant can choose from, depending on the needs of the child.

In the second step, applicants visit one of the 138 Red Cross distribution offices in Austria with their vouchers and application forms. The applicants’ identities are verified and they receive advice in determining which **parcel** is most suitable.

After a delivery period of roughly 1-2 weeks, applicants are then able to pick up the parcel at one of the Red Cross distribution offices.

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