Cultural Profile

Austria

Figures, facts and a cultural pattern approach

Serena Junker, Sindy Würffel, Veronika Fehlinger
Participating countries

Germany: WEQUA GmbH (Co-ordinator), Verein der Freunde und Förderer des Oberstufenzentrums Lausitz e.V., IHK-Projektgesellschaft Frankfurt/Oder

Greece: General Lyceum Lavrio

Portugal: Escuela Profissional, Aveiro

Romania: Colegiul Technik Energetic, Cluj Napoca

Italy: Formaorienta, Marsico Nuovo/Potenza

Turkey: Iskilip Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi (IMTAL), Iskilip/Çorum

Austria: BFI Oberösterreich, Linz

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AUSTRIA

Capital:
Vienna

Geographical size:
83 879 km²

Population:
8 690 076 (2016)

Population as % of total EU:
1.7 % (2016)

Gross domestic product (GDP):
€ 349.493 billion (2016)

Official EU language(s):
German

Political system: federal parliamentary republic

EU member country since: 1 January 1995

Seats in the European Parliament: 18

Currency: Euro. Member of the Eurozone since 1 January 1999

Schengen area member?: Yes, Schengen area member since 1 December 2007


Cultural Profile

Culture Name: Austria

Alternative Names: Republic of Austria; Republik Osterreich

Language: German (Deutsch), several regional dialects

Socio-economic Identity: West European

1 https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/austria_en
1. CULTURAL PROFILE

1.1 THE CULTURAL DIMENSION THEORY OF HOFSTEDER

Culture

- Culture is composed by visible and invisible elements – Hofstede's cultural onion

In the past the term culture and its’ meaning were explored from different points of view. A well-known, widely taught approach comes from Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist. In the 1970s little research about cultural differences had been done. At the same time there was a strong need to understand and cope with those differences due to the worldwide expansion of companies and organizations. In this time Hofstede conducted large scale studies on IBM employees and subsidies to understand differences on “work related values” depending on the national context. From his observations he developed his concept of 4, later 6, different cultural dimensions representing “preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish countries (rather than individuals) from each other”. In this sense he defines “national culture as the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another”. According to his theory national culture is represented in values, rituals, heroes and symbols of a nation while values are deemed to be the deepest level, thus changing only slowly. Cultural differences in organizations are visible as practices. See further down below to check, how Hofstede’s 6 cultural dimensions can be characterized.
According to Hofstede each nation scores with a certain number on a scale from 1 to 120 (or recalculate on Hofstede’s website from 1 to 100). Hofstede puts a strong emphasize on the fact that cultural differences only become visible when comparing different national cultures (“culture can be only used meaningfully by comparison”). His systematic framework for assessing and differentiating national cultures kept being tested and elaborated until nowadays. Although sometimes being perceived critically and old-fashioned Hofstede’s cultural dimensions can be a useful instrument in the VET framework to understand cultural differences. In practice when applying it to work related contexts they can be used to explain relations among colleagues, hierarchies in organizations, how rules are set and followed or how organizations are led strategically. Especially for young people entering the world of work in another country those insights can be of great value to understand and adapt to “new” working habits.

The information you will find in the following paragraphs are taken of publications of Geert Hofstede\(^2\). You will find all relevant sources at the end.

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\(^2\) https://geert-hofstede.com/

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3 Quoted from: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm

Now go and discover the specifics of your own country and compare to your country of destination:

[www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)

Now that you know where you stand, the following tips\(^3\) might be useful once you immerse in the culture of your destination country:
**PDI** = Power distance index: to what extent do people accept that power is distributed unequally among them.

**IDV** = Individualism vs. collectivism: to what extend social bonds are characterized by the focus on collectives (“we”) or individuals (“I”)
MAS = Masculinity vs. femininity: represents the preferences in society for “toughness” (achievement, heroism etc.) or “tenderness” (caring, cooperation etc.)

UAI = Uncertainty avoidance index: to what extent are people able to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity
LTO = Long term orientation versus short term orientation: to what extent societies give priority to preserving what has been established in the past (traditions, norms) or facing the challenges of the future and prepare for those challenges.

IND = Indulgence vs. restraint: to what extent a society allows for or restricts opportunities for people to enjoy life.
1.2 Austria in the Hofstede world

“Austria scores very low on the Power distance dimension (score of 11) which means that the following characterises the Austrian style: Being independent, hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, superiors accessible, coaching leader, management facilitates and empowers. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their team members. Employees expect to be consulted. Control is disliked. Communication is direct and participative.

At 79, Austria is classified as Masculine society – highly success oriented and driven. In Masculine countries, people “live in order to work”, managers are expected to be decisive, the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance. Conflicts are resolved by fighting them out. A clear example of this dimension is seen around election time, with ferocious, no-holds barred battles between candidates.

Austria is an indulgent country with a high score of 63. People in societies classified by a high score on Indulgence generally exhibit a willingness to realise their impulses and desires with regard to enjoying life and having fun. They possess a positive attitude and have a tendency towards optimism. In addition, they place a higher degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish.”

Source: https://geert-hofstede.com/

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4 Source: https://geert-hofstede.com/
1.3 Understand Austria from examples

Example 1 – PDI and IDV

“Courtesy is something that Austrians value really much, much more than i.e. Germans do. Parents bring their children up into this polite society. Austrians really love being polite and a typical Austrian would never slam his door into your face, they would most likely lie to you to make you want to leave.”\(^5\)

Example 2 – UAI

Austria has a preference for avoiding uncertainty. It is said that people from Austria have an “emotional need for rules. Time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm. When it comes to innovation it may be resisted. Security seems to be the more important element in individual motivation. Decisions are taken after careful analysis of all available information. The usage of academic titles as part of people’s names is a reflection of Austria’s tendency to avoid uncertainty.”\(^6\)

\(^5\) Source: https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-between-the-Austrian-and-German-mentality

\(^6\) https://geert-hofstede.com/
2. Austrian Society & Culture

Cultural Orientation

Photo from: https://pixabay.com

Austria is a small county in south-central Europe. It is a landlocked, mountainous country due to its location in the Alps and shares borders with Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.

Austria is strongly connected to Germany but tries in the same time to develop and keep an own identity. Germany and Austria not only combine the similarities in language and culture – the main language is German -but also a history that has been intertwined for centuries. In the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation Austrians as well as Germans were represented, and the Habsburgs represented the German Kaiser for several centuries and governed the multi-ethnic state from Vienna.

The Habsburg Monarchy - in its last years called Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a Great Power ruling an Empire of 676,000 km² and 52,8 Mio. It covered and ruled the main parts South-East Europe which were beside Austria and Hungary, the former Czechoslovakia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as parts of Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Italy and Serbia.

On 12 November 1918, at the end of World War I and after the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire after the assassination of its heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, a new German Austrian state—known as the First Republic—was established. It was only about one-fourth the size of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. One heritage of this time is a multinational and multiethnic heritage which remained in many customs and traditions in today Austria.

After World War II, when it had become a part of (Nazi-)Germany, Austria was restored as an independent democratic state – the Second Austrian Republic. Its search for a new identity was characterized by the denial of commitments to Germanism, but instead trying to develop an own identity based on regional and cultural traditions and an emphasis on dialect trying to create an own “Austrian language” comparable probably to the Swiss-German language.

Vienna, Salzburg and Graz are the main cultural centres with an enormously high range in cultural diversity. Vienna has the image to be “multi-cultural”, open-minded and, progressive, Salzburg is said to be more conservative, a place of “high culture” mainly in
classical music (“Salzburger Festspiele”). Graz and Linz are examples for a mix of several cultural directions with a stronger emphasis on modern and contemporary Arts. Linz has been the “European Capital of Culture” 2009.

Music is Austria’s cultural heritage number one. Mozart, Haydn, “Wiener Klassik” are the musical traditions which determined the history of classical music. The “Wiener Philharmoniker”, “Wiener Sängerknaben” and the “Wiener Opernball” are world famous the same as the tradition of operetta and valse connected with the name of Johann Strauß. Austrians enjoy to visit (classical) concerts and they are a well informed and educated audience, to a certain extent also young people.

But Austrian culture is more than music. Literature and theatre, architecture, painters have been famous in the past and also as modern arts. Some famous poets, writers and novelists were Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, Thomas Bernhard, Georg, Trakl, Rainer Maria Rilke and the contemporary novelists Elfriede Jelinek and Peter Handke. Elfriede Jelinek received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2004.

Austria has a distinct traditional architecture with extravagance, exemplified in large-scale building which is another heritage of the Habsburg Monarchy and the related institutions of the church, the state, and the nobility. The Italian-inspired architecture of the baroque period reflects a combination of religious piety and worldly opulence. Modern architecture on the other hand is also an item in Austria, Friedensreich Hundertwasser may be the most spectacular one.

People from different fields are admired: sportsmen, like Marcel Hirscher, Nikki Lauda, actors, like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Christoph Waltz or the founder of RED BULL Dietrich Mateschitz.

A typical Austrian’s day begins with a light breakfast of coffee or milk with bread and butter or jam. Sausage served with mustard on a hard roll is a typical midmorning snack. Lunch is usually the main meal of the day and consists of soup and a main course of meat—sausage, the widely popular Wiener schnitzel (breaded veal), chicken, beef, pork or fish.
Fresh vegetables, dumplings, noodles, or potatoes often accompany the main course. A salad may conclude the meal.

**Economic orientation**

Austria is a modern industrial state and comparable to Germany in its industrial structure, workforce, work regime and professions.

Manufacturing is the strongest sector of the Austrian economy, accounting for about 30% of the workforce and about 40 percent of the gross domestic product, the services sector has a share of about 68% and agriculture and forestry 2%. With a per-capita income of 1,666 € (2016) and a revenue of 21.89 billion Euros (21.89 Mrd.) tourism plays a unique role in Austria. About 10% of the workforce work in tourism, it is a sector which occupies traditionally als a big share of migrants mainly from the former Yugoslavia.

*Photo from: https://pixabay.com*

Iron ore is Austria's most important mineral resource, and metal and metal products, especially iron and steel, lead the manufacturing sector. After World War II the primary industry was state owned the iron and steel industry and just in 1990 privatized again. Major industrial products are motor vehicles, locomotives, heavy machinery and equipment, customized electronics, and tools. Other principal manufactured goods include chemicals, petroleum, graphite, wood and paper products, textiles, tobacco products, beverages, and processed foods.

Austria has a strong labour movement. The Austrian Trade-Union Federation (ÖGB) comprises constituent unions with a total membership of about 1.5 million—more than half the country's wage and salary earners. Since 1945, the ÖGB has pursued a moderate, consensus-oriented wage policy, cooperating with industry, agriculture, and the government on a broad range of social and economic issues in what is known as Austria's “social partnership”.

The largest and well know companies end enterprises are OMV Konzern, Spar Österreich, a retail grupup same as Rewe Group Austria, Bauholding Strabag, voestalpine,M agna Steyr and Austria Tabak.

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The professional favourites in Austria are similar with the ones in Germany. They reflect the economic structure of the country using the Dual System of vocational education. A vocational training is often completed in the industry or in industry related sectors. SMEs and craft enterprises play a big role in professional training as well. Often the graduates leave after the vocational training to industrial companies. Tourism and the service sector play also a major role in Austria. Payment in many areas of craft and industry is lower than in Germany, but the tax burden is also lower and social security is on a very high standard in Austria.

Also in Austria there is a tendency to academisation, but many young people are still keeping to the family traditions when searching for vocational education or try to earn money as early as possible.

**Migrant workers**

Migrants and migrant workers came to Austria in several periods. Since 1945, Austria has accepted immigrants, refugees, and trans migrants seeking political asylum from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as well as from South America, Iran, Uganda, and Afghanistan. Gypsies and Jews, who have lived in Austria for centuries, are also considered minority groups. Gypsies maintain much of their life of freedom, and as a result have not become a part of the larger society. Some anti-Semitism still exists in Austria, but attitudes changed somewhat during the 1980s and 1990s.

*Photo from: https://pixabay.com*

After World War II, workers arrived from southern Europe, North Africa, and the Balkans to help rebuild northern Europe. Many are still considered "guest workers," although they and their families have made permanent homes in Austria. In 2000, immigrants made up 9 percent of Austria's population. Austria's political conservatives unjustly blame immigrants for taking jobs from native Austrians and for rising crime. Many foreign workers hold low-paying jobs and therefore live in poorer neighbourhoods in urban areas, especially in Vienna.

Because of widespread public concern about immigrants, the government tightened immigration controls and strengthened its border patrol in the late 1990s.
If you decide to work in Austria, then you should bear in mind that appointments are necessary and should be made 3 to 4 weeks in advance when meeting with private companies. Punctuality is taken extremely seriously. If you expect to be delayed, telephone immediately and offer an explanation. Moreover, meetings adhere to strict agendas, including starting and ending times. If you have an agenda, it will be followed. A small amount of getting-to-know-you conversation may take place before the business conversation begins. It is worth mentioning that rank and position are important. Since most companies are relatively small, it is often quite easy to meet with the decision-maker.

Social orientation

The core values of the Austrian society are similar to the ones in Germany, due to the common history over many centuries (see Cultural Profile Germany). Nevertheless, even if the (Prussian) core virtues punctuality, order and diligence are shared and other virtues like sense of justice, sense of order, honesty, cleanliness, determination and reliability are the “canon of virtues” in the German speaking countries a certain rivalry with and distance to Prussian traditions and their felt “coldness” and “stringency” are an important factor in Austrian society. The main points of difference refer to:

*Photo from: https://pixabay.com*

Catholicism where life is not taken too serious. Catholicism is traditionally more morally and politically conservative, but also popular and creating a certain piety. Community awareness and religious-cultural tradition continue to play an important role in Austria. So even if the meaning of religion in Austria nowadays has declined to a sort of “baptismal certificate Catholicism,” in which they are Catholic by baptism and religious formality but do not hold Catholic beliefs on central issues” ⁸ this relativizes the Prussian virtues to a more „Down-to earthiness“, easiness, and keeping it slow and simple.

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The heritage of a **Rural oriented society** is another cornerstone of social orientation in Austria with a focus on house, job, family, hobbies, nature, ownership of land and local goods and food. Traditions are valued highly, social control can be the counterpart of these in general values which affects mainly the young people.

A heritage of the Habsburg Monarchy and the long tradition of courtly life in Austria is an emphasis on politeness, good manners and a sense of keeping a strict protocol for dressing appropriately in different situations, e.g. formal wear for the theatre or a concert, formal wear – or also folkloristic- in the hotel and gastronomy sector or in general on occasions of a more “official” nature.

The Austrian society was traditionally highly stratified, with well-defined social distinctions. In the early 1800s, with three major social classes: aristocrats, "citizens", and peasant-farmers or peasant-serfs.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a small aristocracy remained, along with a small middle class of entrepreneurs, a larger working class, and a large class of peasant-farmers (about 55 percent of the population). During the period between World War I and World War II, these classes developed separate political affiliations which sometimes reached far in the everyday life. The main directions were social democratic, Christian conservative and liberal. Austria has a long history to organize life in a sort of social oriented communities. So some public housing was either reserved to social democratic political followers or „communities“ or to Christian democratic. The same was the case for social institutions or initiatives which were either based on the church and were Christian oriented or had an ideology based more on the ideas of socialism. It is just in the last 20 years that this sort of pillaging of the society.
Prosperity, mobility, and more government benefits in the late twentieth century resulted in a higher standard of living for nearly all Austrians. There are more middle-class citizens than any other group, and education is considered the means to upward mobility. Equality is promoted throughout Austria, although foreign workers, immigrants, and Gypsies are still generally less accepted by the middle class. Titles are important in Austria. People are expected to use them when addressing to Doctors etc. So, people who had completed University studies are highly rated.

Austrian children are raised to reflect the Austrian community spirit of peace and compromise as a means of resolving conflict. They are taught to respect others and to appreciate the arts, their beautiful environment, and their heritage.

Austria's education system is one of the world's best, and Austria has a literacy rate of 99 percent. All children have an equal right to free education, with free transportation to and from school and free textbooks provided. Schooling is coeducational and is compulsory through the ninth grade. Between ages six and ten, all children attend a primary school. After age ten, children are separated through a “two-track” system in which some students attend a general secondary school for four more years, and the remainder attend an upper-level secondary school until age eighteen. The decision about which secondary school to attend was once made by children and their parents immediately after primary school, but education reforms since the 1980s have made this decision more flexible, resulting in a larger percentage of children choosing the upper-level schools. Debate over the two-track system continued in the 1990s.

After secondary school, students have the option of attending a university or a vocational school to pursue a specific career. In addition to public schools, the Roman Catholic Church also operates primary and secondary schools that make up about 10 percent of Austria's schools.

Students who graduate from upper-level secondary schools may apply to a university. Austria has twelve universities and six fine arts colleges. A university education is free for Austrians, although foreign students pay tuition. Once available only to wealthy males, university training is now available to all Austrian students who pass an entrance exam. As a result, since the 1960s annual enrollment at universities has increased from about 19,000 to 200,000. Women account for about half of the university students, although nearly all professors are male.
Young people in Austria identify themselves with traditions (Dirndl, Lederhosen, dialect, songs in mother-tongue (Austropop). However, new cultures are coming into the country (self-defined “Jugostyle”). It is worth mentioning that people from eastern Europe focus more on family, while they are less inclined to work hard. The main issue of the change of values is the individualization and the pluralisation social milieus and lifestyles. Young people no longer establish their lives according to the traditional collective ways of life, which they have mostly taken over from their parents. Now it is a question of individual choice or creation of one's own lifestyle, which educational path you take, which career choices you make, if and when you enter into a relationship, whether you get married or not, if you have children or not, if you are socially and politically engaged or not.

In their free time young people choose to go out with their friend, to have a drink (or more) or to engage themselves in different kinds of hobbies (sports, hiking, ski etc.). However, the majority spends a lot of hours in front of a screen, either their computer’s or their mobile phone’s.

Austria saw a boom in marriages from 1945 through the 1960s, a golden age for the economy. Today, however, fewer young people marry, more couples divorce, and more live together and raise children without marrying. More women are opting for having a child but not marrying. Couples marry later in life, and many educated women choose their profession over a family. No-fault divorce was legalized in the 1980s, and divorce has increased, especially in urban areas. Most weddings are still held in a Roman Catholic Church, although religion plays a lesser part in the lives of urban residents in the late twentieth century.

The domestic unit varies in Austria. Added to the basic unit of husband, wife, and children are households with a single parent and child, homes of divorced or widowed women and men, single professionals, and households where a man and woman live and raise children outside of marriage. Households in rural areas are still usually conventional, with married couples and several children and possibly grandparents and other relatives living under the same roof.

Infants are well cared for by Austrian parents, with both mother and father allowed paid time off from work when a child is born. Families in urban areas tend to be small, and each child receives plenty of attention. In larger farming families, siblings and other relatives may be available to help care for infants. Most infants receive a traditional baptism in the Roman Catholic Church.

Young people are expected to have a family and a profession that provides for them and their family. In this case, they are thought to be successful in their lives. However, people who grow a career and become famous are also looked upon, like the Red Bull founder.
Everyday life

Austrians get up early. Working hours between 7.00 - 16.00 are quite common, some people start their work already at 6 o’clock or 6.30 and tend to leave the work place at 15.30. Friday is traditionally a short day, the start to the weekend is at about 14.00 or 15.00. The work regime in the industry can be different when shift work comes to fruition.

They often eat at the workplace if a canteen is offered, in some families the main meal is at night, when all family members are back from work or school. At the weekends the main meal is lunch and the family takes time for an extended breakfast.

Austrian city dwellers often take a mid-afternoon coffee break at a national institution, the coffeehouse. Part of the Austrian way of life, the coffeehouse serves as a meeting place and a source for breakfast or a snack or light lunch. Most coffee-houses, which usually also serve alcohol, have their own distinctive atmosphere. The evening meal usually consists of light fare, perhaps cold meats, cheese, or smoked fish with bread and wine or beer.

At the weekend Austrians like to go out for sporting or other outdoor activities like cycling, walking, swimming, sports or to follow other hobbies. Also family meetings or meeting friends are normally scheduled for the weekend. Only close friends and relatives are invited into the house, so it is a place where more informal communication may occur.

Photo from: https://pixabay.com

Another important issue in Austria is holiday. The legal holiday is 25 days per year. In many companies and industries, more holidays are granted, depending on the relevant tariff agreements. 30 days per year are not unusual, plus about 10 public holidays like Easter, Christmas, Pentecost which usually cover several days. Austrians like to take several holidays a year, normally an extended summer holiday of about 2 or 3 weeks and one or more winter or mid-season holidays of about 1 week. During this period, they choose to travel abroad to countries with warmer climate or to visit summer resorts in their country.
3. Read more about Austrian Culture, History and Work and Business Life

3.1 Austrian Political System, Culture and History

Austrian political country profile by the BBC (regularly updated):

Austria in the EU
https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/austria_en

A comprehensive and deep cultural analysis and description of Austria is offered here:
http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Austria.html

3.2 Guide to Austrian—Etiquette, Customs, Culture & Business

Etiquette and Business Culture in Austria

- https://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/austria-guide

3.3 Going for work and vocational training to Austria

https://www.aboutaustria.org/living/traveltips.htm
Sources:

1) https://geert-hofstede.com/


Annex: Austrian Society & Culture – Practical hints around Austrian homes, etiquette and negotiation

Austrian Family Values

- The family forms the basis of the Austrian social structure.
- The family is generally small and, due to lack of migration, generally closely knit within a certain town or village.
- Weekends are generally devoted to family activities such as outdoor activities.
- Eating dinner together in the evening is very much the norm.
- Sundays are usually bookmarked for visiting grandparents for dinner, and/or, enjoying a hike in the country together.

The Austrian Home

- Austrians take much pride in their homes, keeping them neat and tidy.
- In a formal culture such as theirs, the home is the place where people relax and let their hair down.
- Only close friends and relatives are invited into the house, so it is a place where more informal communication may occur.
- Neighbourly etiquette also has its rules that must be observed. It is imperative that common areas such as sidewalks, pavements, corridors (in flats), and steps be kept clean at all times by all associated with them.

Conservatism

- Austrians are generally conservative people.
- They are prudent and moderate in their behaviour.
- 'Regimentation' and 'compartmentalization' are a useful ways of describing how they organise their lives.
- They extend social invitations in advance of the event, and the more formal the occasion the greater the time between the invitation and the event itself, so that they can be certain that their guests do not have a prior engagement.
Appearances Matter

- Presentation and dressing well are important to Austrians.
- Even when dressed informally, they are neat and conservative; their clothes are never ostentatious.
- There is sometimes a strict protocol for dressing appropriately in different situations: formal wear for the theatre or a concert, and semiformal wear for better restaurants.
- Some high level events may have a dress code and will turn away patrons who are not dressed properly.
- Most Austrian women dress up to go shopping, since they dress elegantly, if conservatively, at all times, especially when they will be public.

Austrian Etiquette & Customs

Etiquette in Austria

- Greetings are formal.
- A quick, firm handshake is the traditional greeting.
- Maintain eye contact during the greeting.
- Some Austrian men, particularly those who are older, may kiss the hand of a female.
- A male from another country should not kiss an Austrian woman's hand.
- Women may also kiss men, but men never kiss other men.
- Titles are very important and denote respect. Use a person's title and their surname until invited to use their first name.
- When entering a room, shake hands with everyone individually, including children.

Gift Giving Etiquette

- In general, Austrians exchange gifts with family and close friends at Christmas (generally Christmas Eve) and birthdays.
- Children receive gifts on December 6th, the feast of St. Nicholas
• If invited to dinner at an Austrian's house, bring a small gift of consumables such as chocolates.

• If giving flowers, always give an odd number as except for 12, even numbers mean bad luck.

• Do not give red carnations, lilies, or chrysanthemums.

• Gifts should be nicely wrapped.

• Gifts are usually opened when received.

Dining Etiquette

• If you are invited to an Austrian's house:

• Arrive on time. Punctuality is a sign of respect.

• Dress conservatively and elegantly.

• In some houses you may be asked to remove your shoes, although the custom is not as prevalent as it once was.

Watch your table manners!

• Remain standing until invited to sit down. You may be shown to a particular seat.

• Table manners are Continental -- the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating.

• Put your napkin on your lap as soon as you sit down.

• Do not begin eating until the hostess says 'Mahlzeit' or 'Guten Appetit'.

• Cut as much of your food with your fork as possible, since this compliments the cook by saying the food is very tender.

• Finish everything on your plate.

• Indicate you have finished eating by laying your knife and fork parallel on your plate with the handles facing to the right.

• The host gives the first toast. Everyone lifts and clinks glasses, looks the person making the toast in the eye and says, 'Prost!'..

• An honoured guest offers a toast of thanks to the host at the end of the meal.
Business Etiquette and Protocol in Austria

Relationships & Communication

- First impressions are important and you will be judged on your clothing and demeanour.

- Although Austrians prefer third-party introductions, they do not need a personal relationship in order to do business.

- They will be interested in any advanced university degrees you might have as well as the amount of time your company has been in business.

- Austrians show deference to people in authority, so it is imperative that they understand your level relative to their own.

- It is imperative that you exercise good manners in all your business interactions.

- There is little joking or small talk in the office as they are serious and focused on accomplishing business objectives/goals.

- Communication is formal and follows strict rules of protocol.

- Always use the formal word for you 'sie' unless invited to use the informal 'du'. Address people by their academic title and surname.

- You may be referred to simply by your surname. This is not a culture that uses first names except with family and close friends.

- Austrians are suspicious of hyperbole, promises that sound too good to be true, or displays of emotion.

- In many situations, Austrians will be direct to the point of bluntness. This is not an attempt to be rude, it is simply indicative of their desire to move the discussion along.

- Expect a great deal of written communication, both to back up decisions and to maintain a record of discussions and outcomes.
Business Meeting Etiquette

- Appointments are necessary and should be made 3 to 4 weeks in advance when meeting with private companies.

- Do not try to schedule meetings in August, the two weeks surrounding Christmas, or the week before Easter.

- Punctuality is taken extremely seriously. If you expect to be delayed, telephone immediately and offer an explanation.

- It is extremely rude to cancel a meeting at the last minute and it could ruin your business relationship.

- Meetings are formal.

- Presentations should be accurate and precise.

- Have back-up material and be prepared to defend everything: Austrians are meticulous about details.

- Meetings adhere to strict agendas, including starting and ending times. If you have an agenda, it will be followed.

- Follow-up with a letter outlining what was agreed, what the next steps are, and who is the responsible party.

Business Negotiation

- Do not sit until invited and told where to sit. There is a rigid protocol to be followed.

- Meetings adhere to strict agendas, including starting and ending times.

- A small amount of getting-to-know-you conversation may take place before the business conversation begins.

- Austrians are more concerned with long-term relationships than making a quick sale.

- Rank and position are important. Since most companies are relatively small, it is often quite easy to meet with the decision-maker.

- Business is conducted slowly. You will have to be patient and not appear ruffled by the strict adherence to protocol.

- Austrians are very detail-oriented and want to understand every innuendo before coming to agreement.

- Avoid confrontational behaviour or high-pressure tactics. It can work against you.
What to Wear?

- Business dress is conservative and follows most European conventions.
- Men should wear dark coloured, conservative business suits with white shirts.
- Women should wear either business suits or conservative dresses, complimented with elegant accessories.

Business Cards

- Business cards are exchanged without formal ritual.
- Have one side of your card translated into German. Although not a business necessity, it demonstrates an attention to detail.
- Include any advanced academic degrees or honours on your business card.
- If your company has been in business for a long time, include the founding date on your card as it demonstrates stability

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