

European  
Commission

# Factsheet:

## Access to Base Registries in Austria

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## Austria towards Interoperability

Austria is constantly improving its e-Government through different strategies and initiatives. The Austrian Federal Chancellery chiefly coordinates these improvements, but every Ministry with a base registry are themselves responsible for the implementation and the actions required for each activity.

The establishment of the Austrian public services was an important initiative which represents a common goal among the different initiatives that the Federal Government has agreed to. The approval of the **Austrian Interoperability Framework (AIF)**<sup>1</sup> in January 2015 set a mutual goal to guide, promote and support the delivery of Austrian public services by fostering cross-border, cross-organisation and cross-sector interoperability. The framework addresses issues such as its underlying principles, the conceptual model for the public services, the interoperability levels, the interoperability agreements and the interoperability governance.

Regarding base registries, the framework states that *“the most important components of the conceptual model are base registries that provide reliable sources of basic information on items such as persons, companies, vehicles, licences, buildings, locations and roads. Such registries are under the legal control and maintained by public administrations, but the information should be made available for wider re-use with the appropriate security and privacy measures.”*

The framework advises public administrations to make their authentic sources of information available to others, while fostering both the **Once-Only principle** and the implementation of the **PSI Directive**. The framework also promotes the implementation of access and control mechanisms to ensure that the security and privacy levels are in line with the applicable legislation. When establishing public services, the administrations are advised to develop interfaces to authentic sources and align them at semantic and technical level.

Together with the Austrian Interoperability Framework, the Austrian **e-Government ABC**<sup>2</sup> is an important interoperability enabler offering a detailed **summary** of the Austrian e-Government strategy, including the tools and components it relies on and the challenges it faces. It analyses the legal, organisational and technical framework for e-Government, and states the factors for establishing e-Government services. Some of the principles behind it are a citizen-oriented approach, transparency, usability, technology neutrality and interoperability.

The e-Government ABC also states that different types of systems need to be able to communicate with each other and that e-Government solutions should be designed using internationally recognised standards and open interfaces. Specific examples of these services are online application systems for the Commercial Registry, making documents such as the residential registration form obsolete. The goal of these initiatives is to enable the authorities to exchange information electronically with each other directly.

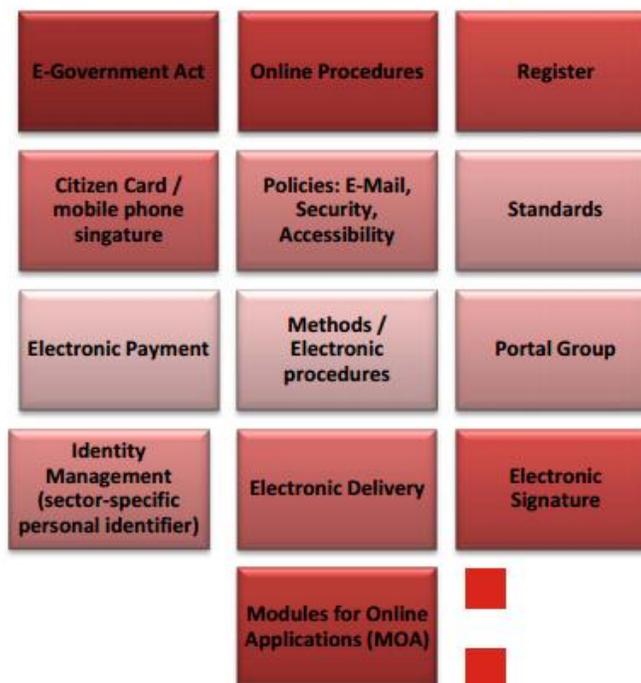
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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ref.gv.at/uploads/media/Austrian\\_Interoperability\\_Framework\\_AIF-1.0.0\\_.pdf](https://www.ref.gv.at/uploads/media/Austrian_Interoperability_Framework_AIF-1.0.0_.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bka.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=56936>

The figure below shows the different sections of the e-Government strategy:

**Figure 1 Areas in the eGovernment strategy**



Source: Digital Austria, Federal Chancellery

The strategy dedicates an entire section to **base registries**, positioning them as a top priority for many e-Governmental applications. Since 2010, the improvement of the registries has been a central theme. The goal is to define a common Core Registry for natural and legal persons with the necessary attributes and processes for entering and updating the data. In Austria, this takes the form of a core registry which holds basic data attributes such as first name, last name, and date of birth, etc., to ensure consistent and coherent data. These already exist and are fully functional for registries containing data on legal persons and partially functional for registries containing data on natural persons. Also, there is an on-going internal project in place to describe the core registries, the processes of synchronisation, etc.

Other important objectives are the cleaning up, merging and synchronisation of the registries. Updating the data in the registries are planned to be required by law. Wherever data privacy laws allow it, the transmission of data is to be legalised, and automated queries are to be made possible. Standardised technical interfaces should be created and implemented for all registries. With the creation of these kinds of automated mechanisms, the authorities should assume responsibility to support queries to the registry. This should remove the need for businesses and citizens to submit information which is already saved in central registries (e.g. the Central Registry of Residents), supporting the Once-Only Principle.

Since personal information plays a central role in many different procedures, the Central Registry for Civil Status (including births, marriages and deaths) was implemented in 2004 and was considered as the key to achieving an optimal flow of procedures with a focus on the one-stop-shop approach.

Additionally, the Austrian e-Government platform **Digital Austria**<sup>3</sup> can be considered as the most important tool for e-Government strategy implementation in Austria, as all decisions concerning e-Government strategies are made through it.

<sup>3</sup> <http://digital.austria.gv.at/>

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## Legal Interoperability

In the context of base registries, legal interoperability is about ensuring that the public administrations in charge of registries operate under a harmonised legal framework. The policies and strategies included in this common framework enable base registries to cooperate, resulting in cost and time savings.

There is not a clear distinction between base registries and “other” registries in Austria. In fact, there are registries whose data is more for generic use in the overall e-government context (e.g. registries containing basic attributes of natural or non-natural persons like the central civil status registry or the company registry), while others hold very specific information that is relevant for a comparatively specialised domain. The latter can be considered as registries in the sense of base registries. However, it can be the case that the same data is being held in more than just one registry (e.g. a person’s name). In those cases, it has to be clear which registry is the authoritative one (especially when it comes to handling potential conflicts), which is defined by the respective law. For example, the Austrian Civil Status Act foresees that attributes related to a person’s civil status (e.g. a person’s name) are authoritatively held in the Central Civil Status Registry.

In many cases, the specific legal provisions for base registries state that their data must be made entirely or at least partly available to the public.

- For the **Central Commercial Registry (ZGW)**, the legal bases are the Commercial Code<sup>4</sup> (*Unternehmensgesetzbuch* - UGB) and the Commercial Registry Act<sup>5</sup> (*Firmenbuchgesetz* - FBG). The latter does not exactly provide a clear definition, but Art.1 states that the Commercial Registry consists of the general ledger and a collection of documents. The Registry is used to record and disclose facts which are to be entered under this Act or other legal regulations. It includes information such as which entities are intended to be registered in the general ledger, the collection of documents, the notification requirements, the database of the commercial registry, judicial administration measures, etc.
- The main legislation for the **Central Civil Registry (ZPR)** is the Civil Status Act 2013<sup>6</sup>, section 2, article 43-45, which places the Central Civil Registry as a public registry. It states that the Civil Status Authorities may only use personal data when this is necessary to fulfil the tasks assigned to them. The Civil Status Authorities may order to fulfil the tasks entrusted to them in a local Civil Registry. The Act also provides information regarding the use of the data from the registry, queries, certificates, the structure of the Registry and the keeping and exhibition of the documents.
- The **Land Registry**’s main piece of legislation is the General Land Registry Law (GBG)<sup>7</sup>, but the law does not provide a clear definition. The Land Registry is public and can, therefore, be accessed and extracted copies from by anyone in the presence of an official. The Law also states the types of registration, information regarding certificates, the effect of registration, rectification of data, etc.
- In the case of the **Central Registry of Vehicles (KZR)**, the main law is the Motor Vehicles Act (KFG 1967)<sup>8</sup>, which is a very extensive law covering everything related to motor vehicles.
- For the **Central Residents’ Registry** (Zentrales MeldeRegistry (ZMR), the most relevant pieces of legislations are articles 16, 16a and 18 from the Notification Act (MeldeG)<sup>9</sup> and articles 15 and 17

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.jusline.at/7\\_Fuehrung\\_des\\_Firmenbuchs\\_UGB.html](https://www.jusline.at/7_Fuehrung_des_Firmenbuchs_UGB.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10002997>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20008228>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10001941>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10011384>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10005799>

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from the Registration Act Implementation (MeldeV)<sup>10</sup>. The Notification Act places the Central Registry as a public registry, says it is conducted as a joined information system and states the details regarding the permissibility of using the data from the Central Registry. The second act specifies the administrative charges.

Other relevant pieces of legislation in the context of e-Government are:

- The **e-Government Act**<sup>11</sup> came into effect on March 1st, 2004, and it forms the central legal foundation for electronic procedures and simplifies electronic communication between public administrative bodies. It enables closer cooperation between all e-Government service providers and gives them the opportunity of interconnecting together. Many mechanisms such as the citizen card, sector-specific personal identifiers and electronic delivery are also able to be put to use in the private sector.

The e-Government Act states that there is a Registry of SourcePINs, which is defined as a “*Registry used for the purpose of uniquely identifying data subjects and comprising the technical components used, where necessary, for the generation of source identification numbers*”. It is also identified as a Supplementary Registry, meaning that all natural persons who do not have a registered address in Austria and legal persons who do not appear in the Commercial Registry or the Central Registry of Associations can register themselves in the Supplementary Registries to participate in e-Government. Local and other authorities can register themselves in the Supplementary Registry to receive documents using an electronic delivery service. Furthermore, there are specific regulations such as the SourcePIN Registry Authority Regulation 209, specifying the tasks of the SourcePIN Registry Authority which are necessary for the implementation of the citizen card concept and the cooperation with its service providers. The same goes for the Supplementary Registry Regulation 2009.

- The legal basis for the data protection aspects is the **Data Protection Act 2000**<sup>12</sup>. Under section 1 of the DSG 2000, everyone is entitled to non-disclosure of personal data, if a protectable interest exists. Other important cornerstones of the DSG 2000 are the use of data, data security, publication of data processing, rights of persons’ concerned and legal protection.
- The Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy coordinates the implementation of the PSI Directive at a national level through the **Re-use of Information Act** (Informationsweiterverwendungsgesetz; IWG)<sup>13</sup>. To achieve the complete transposition of the PSI Directive, pertinent legislation was passed in all 9 Austrian Länder (States) and on 7 September 2007, Austria notified the last pending implementation (State Law of Salzburg), thereby completing transposition of the PSI Directive.

In May 2011, the first municipal administration opened its non-personal data to the general public of Vienna. This was later followed by other provinces, cities, municipalities and federal ministries. The national **Open Government Data portal**<sup>14</sup> provides freely accessible, national, non-personal data of public administration. The portal brings together the metadata of the decentralised, open data catalogues in Austria. The principles on which the open government data is based constitute completeness, data collected from primary sources, prompt provision, easy access, machine-readable file formats, open standards, licensing and freedom from discrimination.

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20001806>

<sup>11</sup> <http://digital.austria.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=31191>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10001597>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/austrian-federal-law-implementing-psi-directive>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.data.gv.at/>

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Austria is a country that implements the **Once-Only Principle**, both through legislation, via the e-Government Act of 1 March 2004, as well as via initiatives such as the e-Government ABC strategy. The strategy was pushing the creation of automated mechanisms that would remove the need for businesses and citizens to submit information which is already saved in central registries. Accordingly, the Only-Once Principle is considered common practice in Austria, however, because not all regional bodies have connected to central registries, there is still room for improvement.

## Organisational Interoperability

Administration of the main base registries in Austria takes place at the national level through their respective Ministries/Authorities. The following table gathers the main base registries in Austria, the Public Administration bodies to which they belong to and the Master Data Type(s) they handle:

Base Registry	Authority	Master Data
The Central Registry of Residents(ZMR) / Central Civil Registry (ZPR) Central Civil Status and Nationality Registry	Ministry of Interior	PERSONAL DATA (NATURAL AND LEGAL PERSONS)
Central Registry of Vehicle (KZR)	Ministry of Interior	VEHICLES
Central Commercial Registry (ZGW) Trade Registry (FB) Companies' Registry (UR)	Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour Ministry of Interior Statistics Austria	BUSINESS
Central Registry of Associations	Ministry of Interior	ASSOCIATIONS
Land Registry (GB)	Ministry of Justice	LAND

The **Central Registry of Residents (ZMR)** holds people's basic data along with the location of residence. The ZMR is highly relevant in Austria, as it is one of the first Registries to be created with e-ID and interoperability in mind. Additionally, through its connection with the Central Civil Status Registry, the ZMR is regularly synchronised with data regarding persons' names, dates of birth and academic degrees.

In terms of the registration of a business, Austria uses mainly three registries: The **Central Commercial Registry** (Zentrales GewerbeRegistry - ZGW) under the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, the **Trade Registry** (Firmenbuch - FB) under the management of the Ministry of Interior and the **Companies' Registry** (UnternehmensRegistry (UR)) under the responsibility of the Statistics Austria. The Central Commercial Registry (ZGW) registries the business owners, the business licenses and operating sites. The Central Commercial Registry is connected to the Trade Registry (FB) and the Registry of Insurance intermediaries. The Trade Registry (FB) contains data about companies that are trading under a business name, legal form, seat, address, branch, institutions, power of attorney, personal data, capital, legal facts and deletions. The Companies' Registry (UR) provides evidence of assets in Austria and manages operators, businesses, workplaces, state institutions and non-profit organisations. For this purpose, it summarises the basic data stocks from the Trade Registry (FB), the Central Commercial Registry, the Central Registry of Associations and the Supplementary Registry of other interested parties.

The **Central Civil Registry** is centralised and since 1 November 2014, it is interconnected to the Central Civil Status and Nationality Registry. The Central Civil Registry ZPR provides data on personal status cases (birth, marriage, registered partnership, death). The Central Civil Status and Nationality Registry is operated by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and contains information on civil status and nationality of predominantly Austrian citizens. Through the central filing of civil status and nationality data, as well as the corresponding query options for individual administration units, there is often no longer any need for citizens to present certain documents or certificates (birth certificate, proof of nationality, etc.). Also, the Central Civil Status and Nationality Registry provides all Austrian administration systems with the core registry for natural persons that stores the core personal data of all citizens at a central point. A comprehensive link of the

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Registry to other Registries means that the quality and up-to-date of the data processed by the Austrian administration authorities is improved, and thus the efficiency of the public administration is increased in the long term.

The **Central Registry of Vehicles (KZR)** is a centralised Registry that contains data such as identification, address, license plate, registration, and technical data. The registry transmits data to tax authorities and Statistics Austria. There is also a **Driving License Registry (FSR)** under the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology.

The **Land Registry (GB)** which is publicly accessible and under the management of the Ministry of Justice contains the Registry numbers of the parcels together with the rights of ownership. There is also a **Land Database (GDB) - digital cadastral map (DKM)** under the Federal Ministry of Economics, Family and Youth which contains data related to land boundaries.

Additionally, there is an **Address Registry (ADR)**, under Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying (BEV), contains the addresses of lands and buildings. It is interconnected to the **Buildings and Dwellings Registry (GWR)** which contains the addresses to lands, buildings, apartments and structural data for buildings, homes and other functional units.

Other central registries in Austria are: Asylum Information System (AIS), Education Registry, Supplementary Registry of Individuals (ERNP), Supplementary Registry other interested parties (ERSB), Commercial Information System Austria (GISA), Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions Personal Data, Identity Document Registry (IDR), SourcePIN Registry (SDR), Criminal Registry (STR), Central Asset Registry, Central Registry (ZMR) / Standard Documents Registry, Central Registry of Associations (ZVR). It must be noted that legal provisions regulating the Supplementary Registries are also included in the e-Government Act of 2004.

In some cases, the before mentioned base registries **are interconnected, and they exchange data**. However, this happens on an ad-hoc basis: *need-driven approach*. This means that if there is a need for the exchange of information between two base registries, the connection is made bilaterally. There is no governance body, structure, nor formal procedure to manage this. One of the main reasons for this absent is the cost tied up with such management.

There is no **Catalogue of Base Registries** in Austria, but the e-Government representatives have acknowledged the need for it. Nevertheless, there is a Best Practice Catalogue<sup>15</sup> (2008) from which one could extract the list of base registries in Austria.

At the organisational level, the Austrian Interoperability Framework also recommends that all public administrations should document their business processes and agree on how these processes will interact to deliver an Austrian public service. Public administrations should clarify their organisational relationships as part of the establishment of an Austrian public service. Public administrations working together to provide Austrian public services should agree on a set of change management processes to ensure continuous service delivery.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://digital.austria.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=41869>

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## Semantic Interoperability

The Austrian Interoperability Framework encourages the use of both EU (e.g. SEMIC<sup>16</sup>) and national Semantic Initiatives. Public Administrations establishing public services should verify at an early phase of any given project whether existing semantic interoperability assets can be reused or not. If not, they can use the national semantic interoperability platform<sup>17</sup> or the EU Semantic Initiatives to advertise their goals, seeking contact and cooperation with other projects with similar needs.

Furthermore, Public administrations should support the establishment of sector-specific and cross-sector communities that aim to facilitate semantic interoperability and should encourage the communities to share results on Austrian and international platforms.

Given that base registries' applications require several lists that contain the same reference data (e.g. academic grading scales or country codes) as part of the supporting infrastructure, an application for central reference tables is currently in development in which this type of data will be maintained and distributed automatically. This central store of semantic assets will drastically reduce the amount of routine maintenance effort that, until now, had to be done by each application.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/community/semic/description>

<sup>17</sup> <http://reference.e-government.gv.at>

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## Technical Interoperability

The technical interoperability is also taken into account in both the Austrian Interoperability Framework and the e-Government ABC strategy. The aim is to advise the public administrations to agree on formalised specifications to ensure technical interoperability upon establishing Austrian public services. These formalised specifications should comply with the characteristics of openness and reusability and are published on the platform.

For further compliance, all available resources for the exchange of information between public administration systems and other parties are published in a dedicated communication platform which is called the **e-Government Reference Server**<sup>18</sup>. This platform is properly maintained and updated, and is one of the most important information resources for the federal government, provinces, municipalities and local communities. All the recommendations that the working groups coordinate on are published on the portal in the form of conventions, information, best practices, white papers and previous cases. These include the Legal Information System<sup>19</sup>, the FinanzOnline Platform<sup>20</sup> and the Land Registry in the Justice Department<sup>21</sup>.

The portal also covers, among many other things, the technical aspects for linking information systems. It includes aspects such as interface specifications, interconnection services, data integration services, data presentation and exchange.

Today, base registries and public administration applications, considered primarily as tools that make it easier for public administrations to carry out their legal mandates and are implemented as Web Applications. More and more frequently, they contain Web Services interfaces based on the SOAP protocol. As part of the cooperation efforts in e-Government projects, data structures have been normalised for non-application-specific cross-sector elements which are available in the architecture section. These elements are responsible for communication between authorities' applications, such as sending personal data, searching for information or returning error messages.

### *Base Registries in Austria*

Based on the results of the discussion in the Working Group "Infrastructure & interoperability" on the landscape of Austrian authorities managing registries, the following classification was published. It represents which registries are accessible and how (Identifier, Web Services, Identification and Authentication, etc.). More details can be found in the report<sup>22</sup>, outcome of the discussion.

Registry	Availability of the interface description	Availability of usage scenarios
Central Registry	yes	yes
Central Registry of Associations	no	no
Identity Data Registry	no	no
Supplementary Registry of natural persons	yes	yes

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ref.gv.at/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://ris.bka.gv.at>

<sup>20</sup> <https://finanzonline.bmf.gv.at>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.justiz.gv.at/internet/html/default/8ab4a8a422985de30122a90f642f6204.de.html>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.ref.gv.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Verwaltungsregister -  
Schnittstellen und Nutzungsszenarien\\_2016-06-16\\_.doc](https://www.ref.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Verwaltungsregister_-_Schnittstellen_und_Nutzungsszenarien_2016-06-16_.doc)

SourcePIN Registry	yes	yes
Commercial Information System Austria	yes	yes
Central civil status and nationality registries	yes	yes
Business registries for the purpose of managing	yes	yes
Supplementary Registry for other stakeholders	yes	yes
Address Registry (linked to Buildings and Dwellings)	no	no
Buildings and Dwellings (linked to the Address Registry)	yes	yes
Land Registry	no	no
Registry the taxpayer	no	no
Company's Registry	no	no
Centre Partners Management	no	no
Central Registry of Vehicles	no	no

Both the report and the e-Government strategy provide an e-Government architecture. XML specifications are given such as XML Entry Protocol, XML Structures for Business Objects, XML Toolbox, XML Structure for Personal Data, and the EDIAKT II / EDIDOC standards.

#### *EDIAKT II and ELAK*

EDIAKT was developed as a standard format for communication between different public institutions specific to the manufacturer of the software and not built according to a uniform standard. In the course of further development and increased distribution of ELAK systems, the standard was updated to its current format, EDIAKT II. Data is packaged as EDIAKT objects which are comprised of meta-data that describes a record, business cases, process data and activities by the XPDL standard of the Workflow Management Coalition.

ELAK<sup>23</sup> is the document and workflow management tool that enables the communication between public authorities and other governmental service points, including the private sector. Public Administrations in Austria use this tool to perform their day-to-day work. Each public body or Ministry customises its instance of ELAK for its specific proposes, connecting the base registries if applicable and needed.

ELAK shortens the reaction and processing time, enabling the tracing of e-Documents and their status in the workflow, thus improving the overall transparency. ELAK is a generic tool that is linked to national registries and which can be integrated with the e-Delivery systems of the institutions that use it. The main focus is document management, where the main users of the system are staff members of various organisations of the Austrian public administration. Thus, ELAK serves as the main back-office solution which is connected to as many registries as possible to improve the efficiency of public bodies performing their activities. In line with this, each Ministry and base registry customise ELAK for its purposes by enriching it with basic functionalities necessary for performing their relevant activities.

<sup>23</sup> Elektronischer Akt: <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/community/epractice/case/elak-e-filing-system-austrian-federal-ministries>

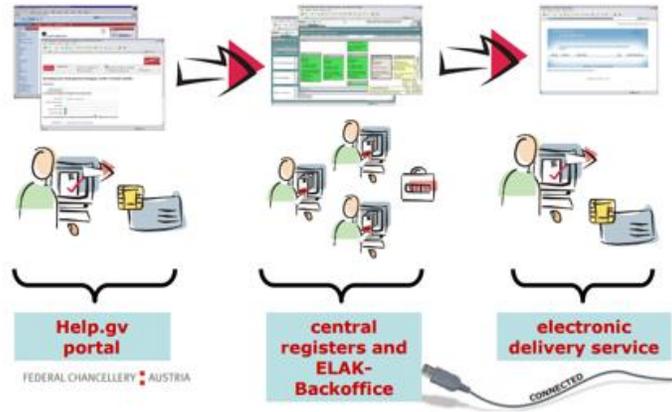


Figure 1 - ELAK Overview

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## Cross-border Interoperability

The EU members can access the data from the Business Registry in Austria through the European Business Registry (EBR).

Austria is also a member of EUCARIS<sup>24</sup>, ECRIS<sup>25</sup> and it also has full connection to the EULIS<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.eucaris.net/countries/austria/>

<sup>25</sup> [https://e-justice.europa.eu/content\\_criminal\\_records-95-en.do](https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_criminal_records-95-en.do)

<sup>26</sup> <http://eulis.eu/>

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## E-Government Public Services making use of Base Registries data

The platform **Digital Austria**<sup>27</sup>, which was created in 2005, is the centre point as for information, but also for coordination and strategy for e-Government in Austria by the Federal Government. All e-Government projects in Austria now run under this platform. This portal is of great importance because it provides a sort of catalogue of the main base registries<sup>28</sup> in Austria with providing information such as content, providers, access, cost and legislation. Furthermore, the legal enabler for connecting base registries to the platform as well as data exchange can be found in the agreed conventions in Digital Austria, which imply a standardised interface and a common interface connection. The functional enabler is the base registry itself, as it is up to the base registry to identify the need to connect to the platform as well as to inform the coordination platform of this need.

The access to the citizens is granted via target-group-specific themed tabs, that get extended from the general “e-Government” section to “Citizens”, “Businesses” and “Administration”.

The **Business Service Portal**<sup>29</sup> (UPS) provides all the necessary information for businesses via a one-stop web portal. Since May 2012, the most important e-Government applications of the federal government (e.g. **FinanzOnline**, the services of the social insurance, data processing registry, e-invoicing to the federal government, etc.) can be reached by all the registered businesses after an identification step at the **USP-portal**<sup>30</sup>. A fundamental component of the Business Service Portal is the business Registry that summarises the basic data of all Austrian companies, associations and other non-natural persons at a central point. The business Registry is the basis for the registered section of the USP.

The **Civil Service Portal**<sup>31</sup> (HELP) is the central portal or one-stop-shop of the Austrian government that acts as an interface between authorities and citizens, with special emphasis on transparency, user-friendliness and clarity of information. It offers information on all interactions with Austrian bodies divided in frequent life situations such as pregnancy, childbirth, marriage or housing, and permits the electronic processing of some of these procedures.

An interesting mechanism that the portal provides is the one referred to as content syndication that allows Web content to be distributed and reused. Any content that is updated on HELP will automatically be updated on other sites without the need for further maintenance or administration. As a consequence, the HELP partners gain high-quality and up-to-date content, while simultaneously allowing providers to extend the reach of their content. HELP.gv.at offers content sharing not only to partner agencies but also to businesses, as all free-of-charge.

**Commercial Registry portal**<sup>32</sup> may be accessed by everyone via the Commercial Registry database to obtain **information on entries** in the registry.

A copy of the current data can be retrieved by entering the commercial Registry number. Public access to the commercial Registry database is provided by firms<sup>33</sup> known as “clearing houses” contracted by the Ministry of Justice. They provide chargeable services such as providing certified copies of entries in the Registry that are equivalent to officially produced certificates.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://digital.austria.gv.at/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.digitales.oesterreich.gv.at/register>

<sup>29</sup> [www.usp.gv.at](http://www.usp.gv.at)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.usp.gv.at/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.help.gv.at/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/home/e-government/firmenbuch~8ab4a8a422985de30122a90fc2ca620b.de.html>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/html/default/2c9484852308c2a601240b693e1c0860.de.html>

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But a public document certifying the status of a firm in the commercial Registry for the use of a public authority **can be issued only** by a regional court (Commercial Registry office).

The **Land Registry** and its electronic document archive can be consulted both via the Austrian Justice<sup>34</sup> Homepage and the Help.gv.at portal<sup>35</sup>. HELP portal provides all the relevant information regarding the registration in the registry, the services it offers, etc.

The **Vehicle Registry**<sup>36</sup> can be also accessed via HELP portal, which again provides a lot of general information.

The **Central Registry** can be accessed via the Ministry of Interior portal<sup>37</sup> where the citizen can find information such as the required documentation for registration or the fees for queries from the local and central registry. Direct access to the Registry as well as additional information about the Central Registry is available through the HELP.gv.at portal<sup>38</sup>.

### *Best Practice*

An innovative tool promoted by the strategy and worth mentioning is the mobile phone signature, which becomes a form of electronic identification with which citizens can provide a valid electronic signature to authorities and the private sector. The signature means that the signed electronic documents are legally just as valid as paper documents with a handwritten signature. For businesses too, the mobile phone with mobile phone signature becomes a form of electronic identification with which citizens can sign contracts or applications electronically in a legally binding manner. The mobile phone signature is also key for businesses in order to registry at the Business Service Portal ([www.usp.gv.at](http://www.usp.gv.at)) – the central one-stop business portal of the federal administration – to retrieve customised, company-relevant information and to use the pooled e-Government applications (e.g. official channels) of the federal government with single sign-in function conveniently and securely via the Internet. As an innovative tool, the mobile-phone signature has proven extremely popular in Austria with over 700 000 users already. In addition to the functionalities mentioned above, it allows for the retrieval of extracts from a number of base registries in Austria, among which are the Central Registry of Residents, the Central Registry of Civil Status and the Registry of Criminal Records.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/home/e-government/grundbuch~8ab4a8a422985de30122a90f642f6204.de.html>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/60/Seite.600000.html>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/6/Seite.060000.html>

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI\\_ZMR/buerger/ueberblick/auskunft/start.aspx](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_ZMR/buerger/ueberblick/auskunft/start.aspx)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/94/Seite.940000.html> and <https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/94/Seite.940100.html#contentA>