AUSTRIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNESCO´S MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAMME (MAB)

SUMMARY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JULY 2025 - JUNE 2026

Austrian National Committee of the MAB Programme
c/o Austrian Academy of Sciences
International Research Programmes
Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2, 1010 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +43 1 51581 2772
joerg.boeckelmann@oeaw.ac.at
verena.radinger-peer@boku.ac.at

Austrian Commission for UNESCO
Georg-Coch-Platz 2
1010 Vienna, Austria
Tel.: +43 1 526130119
walder-wintersteiner@unesco.at
www.unesco.at

Website of the Austrian MAB Programme: *www.biosphaerenparks.at*

Table of content

National Committee organisation and institutional embedment **2**
Members of the Austrian MAB National Committee **2**
Activities of the Austrian MAB National Committee **4**
Current funding **4**
Youth **4**
Gender **5**
Current funding of research projects **5**
Current status of Biosphere Reserves in Austria **6**

Vienna, June 2026

National Committee organisation and institutional embedment

The Austrian MAB Committee was established in 1972, just one year after the founding of UNESCO´s MAB Programme, on the basis of a contract with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). Austria was thus among the first nations to participate in the MAB Programme.

Since 2011 MAB-Austria is part of the research structure "Earth System Sciences (ESS)". ESS, an initiative of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, financed by the BMFWF aims at studying the physical, chemical, hydrological, biological, social, technological and economic processes of the Earth System and their interaction. ESS is an interface between Austrian science and international research and is directly integrated in international research programmes and cooperation (e.g. UNESCO´s MAB, IGGP and IHP programmes, WCRP, LTER, LTSER, ISCAR, and Future Earth) through its three National Committees (NCs) Global Change, Geo/Hydro-Sciences, and Man and the Biosphere (MAB). These NCs, made up of renowned scientists and representatives of several ministries and federal organizations, monitor the Austrian research community, analyse its strengths and knowledge gaps and work out targeted new research foci. The MAB National Committee supports and advices Austrian biosphere reserves (BRs), develops guidelines and criteria, stimulates and funds research projects and assists research in BRs.

Members of the Austrian MAB National Committee

Chair

Ass.-Prof. Dr. **Verena Radinger-Peer**, Institute of Landscape Development, Recreation and Conservation Planning, Department of Spatial-, Landscape-, and Infrastructure-Sciences; University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna. Peter-Jordan-Straße 65, 1180 Vienna, Austria. Phone +43-1-47654-85314 Mail; Web

Vice Chair

Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Michael Getzner**, Research Unit Public Finance and Infrastructure Policy, Department of Public Finance and Infrastructure Policy, Technical University of Vienna. Karlsgasse 11, 1040 Vienna, Austria. Phone +43 1 58801 280320
Mail; Web

Secretary:

Dr. **Jörg Böckelmann**, Austrian Academy of Sciences, International Research Programmes, Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2, A-1010 Vienna, Tel. ++43 1 51581-2772; Mail; Web

Members (Scientists):

Verena Radinger-Peer	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
Michael Getzner	Technical University of Vienna
Elisabeth Haring	Natural History Museum
Harald Pauli	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
Katharina Gugerell	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
Michael Jungmeier	University of Applied Sciences of Carinthia
Miriam Hofer	University of Graz
Valerie Braun	Austrian Academy of Sciences
Franz Essl	University of Vienna
Robert Musil	Austrian Academy of Sciences

Delegates:

Martin Fritz	Austrian Commission for UNESCO
Karolina Begusch-Pfefferkorn	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
Ernst-Peter-Brezovsky Until 02/2026	Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs
Martin Rauchbauer from 02/2026	Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs
Jan Köck	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management
Helmut Kudrnovsky	Federal Environment Agency
Ingrid Loacker	Liaison office for federal states
Arno Mohl	World Wide Fund for Nature

BSP Management:

Heinrich Mayer	BR Salzburger Lungau & Carinthian Nockberge (rep. Carinthia)
Andreas Weiß	BR Wiener Wald
Josef Kirchner until 05/2026	BR Salzburger Lungau & Carinthian Nockberge (rep. Salzburg)
Markus Schaflechner from 06/2026	BR Salzburger Lungau & Carinthian Nockberge (rep. Salzburg)
Matthias Merta	BR Großes Walsertal
Andreas Schuster	BR Unteres Murtal

Activities of the Austrian MAB National Committee

During the reporting period, the Austrian MAB NC held two meetings. Representatives from the management of Austrian Biosphere Reserves (BRs) participated, providing updates on regional activities and discussing future research strategies with committee members.
In October 2025 the second meeting of the year, traditionally held at an Austrian BR, was hosted at BR “Wienerwald".
A strong Austrian delegation from the Management, Science, Youth and Politics joined the WorldMAB 2025 in China and hosted a side event “Sustainable Governance, Products, and Practices in Biosphere Reserves: From Local Innovation to Global Learning” in which all Austrian BRs were represented. The BRs will coordinate the implementation of the Hangzhou Stratecic Action plan along a national strategy together with the NC.
The spring meeting took place in April 2026 at the Austrian UNESCO Commission in Vienna.

Pressure on protected areas seems to be increasing, and the Austrian BRs are confronted with a range of construction and infrastructure expansion projects. In this context, the National Committee may issue coordinated position statements (where relevant) to support the interests of the Biosphere Reserves and contribute to informed decision-making. This situation may further intensify due to necessary cuts in national budgets, which could reduce available resources for conservation, management, stakeholder engagement, and research. The Austrian BRs are seeking to position themselves in ongoing budget negotiations related to rural development funding and the implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The workshop session “Social Change in Biosphere Reserves: Involvement, Local Acceptance and Participatory Governance Across Generational Transitions” has been submitted to the EuroMAB 2026 in Canada, and Austria will be represented by a delegation several scientists, Biosphere Reserve management, and Youth representatives. This topic is particularly relevant for long-established (“older”) protected areas, where generational change can challenge continuity, institutional memory, and long-term community acceptance and engagement.

Current Funding

The annual funding for the MAB Committee, provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry, of Women, Science and Research and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, for the years 2024-26.

EUR 180.000 = USD 209.010 for **Research Funding**
and
EUR 33.000 = USD 38,318 for the **governance** of the NC and **additional funding** of MAB related activities (Exchange rate 03.06.2025)

The budget is managed autonomously by National Committee.

Youth

Austria has a long tradition of strengthening young people's engagement within the sphere of UNESCO's programmes. In 2006 already, a youth advisory panel was set up, since 2019 youth representatives of the Austrian Commission further include the representation and dissemination of UNESCO topics among young people throughout Austria, the monitoring of UNESCO-relevant topics from a youth perspective, and active participation in (inter)national working groups.

To further strengthen young people's engagement with the Austrian MAB initiative Jakob Mohl, youth Representative of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO was appointed as Austrian Youth Focal Point in 2025. In these roles, he participates at meetings of the Austrian MAB NC, is part of the Austrian delegation for both the WCBR and the ICC 2025 and an active member of the Austrian preparatory group. In informing the Austrian public about the MAB-Programme and the goals of the WCBR 2025, he launched a social media campaign, addressing in particular a young audience.

Following the world-conference Mr. Mohl will be involved in the project of translating the new MAB Strategic Action Plan into national guidelines. He will also join the EuroMAB in September 2026.

Gender

The Austrian NC is committed to achieving gender parity within its area of responsibility and sphere of influence. In line with the Committee's statutes, due consideration is given to maintaining a balanced gender representation when appointing members. With the appointment of two additional female scientists during the reporting period, gender parity has been achieved among the voting members whose nominations fall within the NC's remit.

Current funding of research projects

MAB Call 2022

The four two years long projects of the MAB Call 2022 were finished successfully.

1. Multi-hazards in Biosphere Reserves - Management of multiple hydro-climatic risks to improve the social-ecological resilience
   Multi-Bios – Thomas Thaler – IIASA – 169.500 €

2. Valeriana celtica subsp. norica - Sustainable and equitable use of an endemic plant in the Salzburger Lungau & Kärntner Nockberge UNESCO Biosphere Reserve: co-creating a historical review, analyzing the status and co-creating future perspectives
   SPEIK – Michael Jungmeier – FH Kärnten - 119.794 €

3. Integrating learning with geoinformation for a digitized and spatially enabled education for sustainable development
   ESDPlus - Sabine Hennig – University of Salzburg - 158.574 €

4. Alpine pasture-analysis for a sustainable future
   Alpanach - Markus Immitzer – BOKU - 117.850 €

MAB Call 2025

The Austrian MAB NC received for the years 2024-26 a total of EUR 540.000 for the MAB Call. The research projects have to collaborate with the Biosphere Reserves in Austria and an additional funding of CHF 10.000 from Switzerland was possible if a Biosphere Reserve there is involved.
While the last two calls topics addressed conflicts of use and best practise examples for their solution, this time a transdisciplinary approach was chosen. The Management of all BRs had to name potential topics and agreed on the examination of the different governance and funding models of BRs. A comparison on all levels (regional, federal, national and international) is desired. Additionally, projects regarding the governance questions in the context of adaptions to climate change and flood protection in the case of extreme weather events are sought.
An international jury with experiences in Science and Governance choose from eleven applications the following two for funding and both collaborate with all Austrian and BRs in Switzerland and Germany. Both two-year projects started in May 2026 and a joint evaluation with members of the jury, PIs and Stakeholders is planned at the end of the projects.

1. Reconciling Governance for Conservation and Sustainable Development in Biosphere Reserves
   REGO – Valentin Fiala – BOKU – 264.290 €

2. Land-use and Nature-based Solutions for Flood Risk Management in Biosphere Reserves
   Flow-Bios – Thomas Thaler – BOKU - 275.798 €

Current status of Biosphere Reserves in Austria

The 10-year periodic review for the Wienerwald Biosphere Reserve, including commendations, has been approved and the funding for could be secured with a slight increase in the contributions of the two involved federal states. In the five-country Lower Mura River Biosphere Reserve, Austria currently holds the chair and will hand over the presidency to Hungary in October 2026. In the Carinthian Nockberge Biosphere Reserve, a half-time scientific position was established.