



June 2015



**The European Committee
for Au Pair Standards**

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INTERNATIONAL AU PAIR
ASSOCIATION

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www.iapa.org/policy-work/ecaps/

INTRODUCTION

The European Committee for Au Pair Standards (ECAPS) was established in April 2006 with the objective of defining au pair standards within Europe. It aims to establish one set of rules and guidelines for au pairs, host families, pair agencies, and national au pair associations. Existing recognised European national au pair associations participate in ECAPS.

One seat is available on the committee for each European country. National au pair associations that wish to join ECAPS are required to meet the participation criteria. In addition, there is an advisory board to support the committee's activities.



ECAPS aims to formulate standardised definitions for au pairs, host families, au pair agencies and national au pair associations; creating a common standard for the development of quality au pair programmes throughout Europe.

With these general definitions ECAPS provides orientation in order to improve the professionalism and image of au pair exchange programmes.

Beyond establishing definitions, ECAPS wishes to engage in a dialogue on a European level to ascertain the fact that au pairing is to be considered as intercultural exchange, and not as employment. ECAPS' activities include lobbying and discussions with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and individual governments to ultimately establish recognition of the au pair exchange as a cultural exchange programme throughout Europe.

ECAPS publishes this booklet to bring a voice to the continuously expanding au pair industry within national and European institutions, to raise awareness among the major stakeholders in the industry and to provide a new impulse to the cultural exchange programme that has existed since 1969.

Special thanks are given to the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the International Au Pair Association (IAPA), and the dedicated committee members who have actively supported ECAPS over the years.

Annie Deroo
ECAPS Chairperson

COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS

ECAPS BOARD

Annie Deroo
Chair of the Committee

Ellen Heesen-Hiemstra
Vice-Chair of the Committee

PARTICIPANTS

FRANCE

Union Française des Associations Au Pair
(UFAAP)

GERMANY

Au pair Society

ITALY

Associazione Nazionale Italiana Alla Pari
(ANIAP)

IRELAND

Au Pair Agencies Council of Ireland (APAC
Ireland)

NETHERLANDS

Branche Organisatie Nederlandse Au Pair
Agentschappen (BONAPA)

SPAIN

Asociación Española del Programa Aupair
(AEPA)

UNITED KINGDOM

British Au Pair Agencies Association (BAPAA)

ADVISORY BOARD

International Au Pair Association (IAPA)

Represented by the Chair of the Executive
Board Patricia Brunner and Vice-Chair
Delphine Vaills

Gütegemeinschaft Au Pair e.V. (RAL gütezeichen)

Represented by Karin Gloeckner/Esther Peylo

ECAPS MEETINGS

March 2005 | Prague, Czech Republic

March 2006 | Barcelona, Spain

April 2006 | Lille, France

September 2006 | Bonn, Germany

March 2007 | Riga, Latvia

September 2007 | Berlin, Germany

March 2008 | The Hague, The Netherlands

November 2008 | Berlin, Germany

March 2009 | Vienna, Austria

March 2011 | Brussels, Belgium

June 2013 | Skype meeting

October 2013 | Berlin, Germany

March 2014 | London, United Kingdom

November 2014 | Berlin, Germany

POSITION OF THE AU PAIR PROGRAMME

ECAPS, the European Committee for Au Pair Standards, has drafted a set of definitions, rules and regulations pertaining to au pairs, host families and au pair agencies.

Within this uniform set of standards each individual European country will implement their au pair programme. National Au Pair Associations or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the au pair sector are to be established, where they do not already exist, in order to assist, stimulate and control correct implementation of this legislation.

Au pairing, the oldest known cultural exchange programme in the world, is a very specific programme with particular demands for both au pairs and host families. Therefore, both parties will need to adhere to and respect all definitions, rules and regulations stipulated by ECAPS.

The criteria for an au pair placement are based upon participation in this unique cultural exchange programme. This programme ensures that the au pair is treated as a family member during their stay with the host family abroad, and that the au pair also acts accordingly towards the recipient host family.

The au pair will be given the opportunity to explore another culture and the possibility to study while being placed in the protective environment of a host family. Host families inviting an au pair to their home are expected to share their culture with the au pair and show interest in the culture and cultural background of the au pair.

In exchange for the benefits and opportunities provided by the host family, the au pair is expected to carry out a specified amount of light household duties and childcare.

Expectations of both the au pair and the host family need to be determined in advance of the placement. Therefore both parties, host family and au pair, must provide each other via the respective au pair agencies involved, detailed written information.

Definitions defined by ECAPS are based on the existing European Agreement on Au Pair Placement from 1968 (Ets 068), though updated and detailed to modern standards.

The au pair is treated as a regular family member, on par with the host family and within the philosophy of the cultural exchange programme.

Au pairs and/or host families not acting in accordance with the complete defined rules and regulations set out by this Committee abuse the philosophy of 'au pairing' and might be breaching rules and regulations on a national level.

MISSION



- 1.** To lobby to ensure the au pair sector is recognised within European countries as a cultural exchange programme.
- 2.** To establish guidelines and minimum standards for a European au pair programme, including definitions of au pairing.
- 3.** To increase public awareness of the European au pair programme within its individual countries.
- 4.** To promote the au pair sector and support the formation of national associations active in the au pair industry.
- 5.** To secure mutual understanding and co-operation between all national associations.
- 6.** Where possible to assist in the development of au pair programmes in countries where they do not exist or are newly developed.
- 7.** To encourage governments and official bodies to sanction au pair programmes to and from countries within Europe.

NATIONAL AU PAIR ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA DEFINITIONS

To participate in ECAPS a national au pair association should fulfil the following criteria:

- 1.** The national association is officially registered, licensed and/or recognised according to national legislation in the European Union. National associations from outside Europe (EU/COE) cannot participate in ECAPS meetings, unless co-opted for a specific purpose or project.
- 2.** ONE seat is available within ECAPS for every European country with an existing national association (or national body representing the interests of the au pair community).

Extra seats are available for a representative of the International Au Pair Association (IAPA), a representative of Gütegemeinschaft Au Pair e.V., representatives of the European Parliament and/or a representative of the European Council through an advisory board.

The IAPA representative has an extraordinary vote in the situation where unanimous decisions cannot be achieved. Other seats on the Advisory Board can be made available if decided by ECAPS.
- 3.** The national association respects and acts according to the ECAPS rules and regulations for host families, au pairs and au pair agencies (see definitions for au pair, host family and au pair agency).
- 4.** The language of ECAPS shall be English and all correspondence will be conducted in this language. ECAPS national association representatives must have a good command of the English language to enable them to liaise at an international level.
- 5.** National associations must have a governing body ie Board/Committee, which shall consist of a Chair, a Vice-Chair and/or a Treasurer.
- 6.** The constitution and membership of the national association is completely orientated towards the au pair sector. The national association must have at least three members active in the local au pair sector. Consideration will be given to small countries.
- 7.** Every national association has one vote. The advisory board seats have no vote. If the committee cannot agree due to equal voting, the vote of the IAPA representative will be decisive.
- 8.** National associations are expected to finance their own activities.
- 9.** National associations will inform ECAPS about developments regarding national au pair legislation.

AU PAIR | DEFINITIONS

CRITERIA

- An au pair must be between the ages of 18 - 30 when they arrive in the host country (the au pair may not have reached their 30th birthday before arriving in the host country).
Note: Different age limits may apply in different European countries.
- An au pair may be male or female.

DURATION OF THE AU PAIR PROGRAMME

- The length of stay shall be between 3 - 12 months depending on the country.

HOURS, ACTIVITIES, AND DUTIES

- Up to a maximum of 30 hours a week including childcare and babysitting in the evenings.
Note: By definition babysitting is an evening activity.
- If an au pair has no option in undertaking a task then that activity must be considered mandatory, ie not a voluntary action undertaken by the au pair.
- When host parents leave an au pair unsupervised (and the au pair is expected to care for the children), the au pair is officially on duty, and this time should be included as part of the 30 hours/week maximum.

LEISURE TIME/HOLIDAYS

- Based upon a 12 month stay the au pair receives a minimum of two weeks holiday. If an au pair stays less than 12 months with an individual host family, this period is to be determined pro rata.
- The length and duration of vacations are to be discussed and agreed with the host family in advance of any holiday taken.

THE ROLE OF THE AU PAIR

- Help with routines and childcare
- Help the family with light household duties
- Act and integrate as a family member
- Take part in family activities
- Share their own culture with the host family and vice versa.

AU PAIR | DEFINITIONS CONTINUED

AU PAIR ACCOMMODATION

- The au pair receives full room and board from the family throughout the duration of the placement.
- Other criteria can be set on a national level.

INSURANCE

The au pair and host family should be aware of insurance options and they should supply it according to the country regulations.

POCKET MONEY

- The minimum and maximum levels of pocket money are set by country.
- Pocket money will be paid in instalments throughout the duration of the au pair agreement.

STUDY

In spirit of the cultural exchange the au pair is expected to take the opportunity to study and/or participate in local cultural activities.

OTHER OBLIGATIONS

- The motivation of the au pair is based on enrichment of their knowledge of another culture and language, while he/she has no financial reasons and/or other reasons.
- To respect and accept the host family's cultural backgrounds and activities.
- To emerge themselves into another culture in the widest sense of the meaning, taking into account the house rules, expectations and local rules of the au pair programme and host country.
- To be aware of the rules and regulations of the local au pair programme, including making sure that legal requirements are known.
- In the case that the au pair requires a visa, all expenses involved in obtaining the visa (for example documents arranged in the home country of the au pair) are to be paid by the au pair.
- Depending on the country, light household duties are to be defined beforehand by the host family, approved by the placing agency and explained to the au pair before arrival.

HOST FAMILY | DEFINITIONS

HOST FAMILY

- A host family must consist of a minimum of two family members.
- The family members must have residency in the host country throughout the duration of the au pair placement.

THE ROLE OF THE HOST FAMILY

- To treat the au pair as a family member.
- To provide adequate opportunities for the au pair to participate in local cultural activities.
- To share its culture with the au pair.

HOST FAMILY FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

- Pay the pocket money on time (weekly or monthly) as agreed in advance.
- In the event of illness, pocket money shall be paid until termination of the agreement.
- The host family is responsible for providing adequate health, accident, repatriation and liability insurance during the time the au pair and host family are sharing the cultural exchange (see also: Au pair - Definitions: Insurance).



OTHER OBLIGATIONS

- Register the au pair with the appropriate authorities (if required) to ensure the au pair is legally registered at all times and/or apply for the required visa/residence permit.

AU PAIR AGENCY | DEFINITIONS

REQUIREMENTS

- The agency is registered according to national requirements.
- The agency can be contacted by phone during regular working hours at least 10 hours per week.
- Agencies will provide customers with their general terms and conditions, opening hours and contact information.
- Has an emergency telephone number that may apply.

DUTIES

- Provide complete information about the au pair programme, including the roles and responsibilities of the au pair and host family.
- Inform host families and au pairs about visa and registration requirements.
- Screen host families to ensure they are suitable to receive an au pair.
- Screen au pairs to ensure they are suitable to take part in the au pair programme.
- Provide support services to both the au pair and host family for the duration of the placement.
- Ensure appropriate insurances are in place.
- Has a replacement/rematch policy.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The agency is at least a member of a recognised national association and/or NGO and/or international au pair organisation.
- Ideally agencies should work as much as possible with partner agencies.

