

## Austria

**Europaschule – Linz**

*This secondary school is a pilot school affiliated with a university college of teacher education, and functions both as a centre for practical in-school training of teacher-students and as a school with the objective to offer (and empirically investigate) ideal learning conditions. The school has an emphasis on language learning and international contacts, but students can also choose a science, artistic or media focus. Students learn in flexible heterogeneous groupings, some of which are integrative. Teaching activities aim at ability differentiation and include open teaching during which students work with weekly work schedules. Individual feedback on performance and student behaviour is given in the form of portfolios which include teacher reports and student self-assessments. Based on the feedback, students can prepare a remedial instruction and resources plan with the objective that learning becomes self-managed and intrinsically motivated.*

**Main Focus of Innovation:** TEACHERS, CONTENT, ORGANISATION

**General Information**

**Name of the ILE:** Europaschule – Linz

**Location/Address:** 4020 Linz, Lederergasse 35

**Website:** [www.europaschule-linz.at](http://www.europaschule-linz.at)

**ILE submitted by:** Upper Austrian University College of Teacher Education

**Rationale**

*Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges?*

As a pilot school, Europaschule claims to offer a modern teaching approach. Points of reference are the latest scientific findings in the area of methodology and didactics as well as the skills, leanings and needs of our students. The model character is reflected in the thematic design, organisational implementation and the infrastructure.

Within a Europe that is opening up and growing together, Europaschule attaches great importance to building and maintaining international contacts. In particular, foreign language learning is stressed by means of a foreign language drive in the framework of the Europaschule's own autonomous model under school autonomy. As an integrated part of the University College of Teacher Education, Europaschule sees itself as a research school. In close cooperation with the teachers of the University College of Teacher Education, the entire teaching staff of our school is involved in empirical research in education. The students of the University College of Teacher education also take on central tasks in these projects within their bachelor's degree programmes.

As a Centre for Practical In-School Training, Europaschule is a practice school for students in programmes leading to teacher accreditation for primary, general secondary and special schools. Optimum conditions need to be provided in order to ensure the successful initial training of the university college students, on the one hand, and to offer ideal learning conditions for our school pupils on the other.

**Evidence**

*Is there any evidence or indications showing that this initiative achieves the outcomes that it is aiming at?*

A study is investigating whether a feedback culture developed in connection with alternative performance assessment and conceived as an integral part of learning processes has an impact on the development of personality traits and the general performance progress made in school. For this purpose, students at the beginning of year 7 and at the end of year 8 attending Europaschule and a comparable other school in Linz were the subjects of a research study. Subsequently, the effects of the different performance feedbacks on the further school and occupational careers of school-leavers after finishing compulsory schooling will be researched. The research project is an evaluative survey of the newly developed performance feedback culture at Europaschule as well as a comparative survey between two schools.

Through repeated use of qualitative and quantitative research methods, the various developments of the same students or school-leavers relating to school progress, performance motivation, self-organisation, self-concept, success/failure attribution and the view of students/school-leavers concerning the feedback culture experienced can be captured and documented in the framework of this longitudinal study. As the only New Secondary School in the federal province of Upper Austria, Europaschule sees itself as a pilot school in the field of heterogeneity and internal differentiation. The guiding principles and concepts of Europaschule are currently showing an influence on other schools in terms of promotion of internal school reform and are thus living up to the model character of the school.

### **Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE**

*What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)*

Europaschule is a school promoting educational processes within which the students learn to assume responsibility and in which the development of intelligence and personality are to the fore. In line with an inclusive and holistic approach towards students, there are no ability groups at Europaschule. Students are taught in heterogeneous classes in the framework of flexible ability differentiation. As an alternative form of performance assessment and performance feedback, the following procedures are undertaken:

1. Performance assessment and performance feedback is given in writing and orally without marks.
2. Written feedback is given in the form of a portfolio.
3. The basic structure of this portfolio is the same for all subjects.
4. Placed in front is a general report on the student's work and social behaviour.
5. The portfolio also contains a self-assessment by the student.
6. The written feedback is produced at the end of each half-year.

Oral feedback is given on the two meet-the-teachers days and during weekly office hours. At the end of each semester, a whole day is set aside for the presentation of student work in an exhibition under the motto "We make time for you." On this day, there is an opportunity for comprehensive feedback discussions. Our model allows students in years 5 and 6 the time for general orientation, the focus being on furthering "multiple intelligences". To start with, in-depth coverage only takes place in interdisciplinary projects carried out by all students in the year. Project priorities in the first two years are the topics "health/nutrition/physical activity" as well as "creativity and design". This working method requires students to work in teams and demands that the regular timetable be suspended from time to time.

Under the foreign language focus, French is offered as an optional subject.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> year, the introductory phase up to Christmas takes place under the special focus of "method training". The students acquire learning, communication, organisation and presentation techniques. They practise methods of gathering and presenting information.

Our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> year students are offered 4 optional in-depth strands and add-on courses for further education. Each year, five hours per week are reserved for these in-depth strands.

1. Language and communication: intensified foreign language instruction in the compulsory subjects English and French
2. Science and engineering: priorities in chemistry, physics, mathematics, biology, technical drawing and CDT (craft, design and technology)
3. Music and creative design: priorities in music, arts, physical education and sport, nutrition and domestic science as well as CDT
4. Applied media design: priorities lie in project-based work, e.g. publishing a school newspaper, hosting a bi-monthly radio show, production of films and use of new media.

### **Learners**

*Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?*

Europaschule, as a public general compulsory school, basically caters without restriction to all children who are entitled to move on to the 5<sup>th</sup> year. In the academic year 2008/09, 234 girls and boys were attending our school. We organised three "New Secondary School" classes for the 5<sup>th</sup> year, two of which were inclusive classes. In the other years we had two parallel classes with one inclusive class in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> years respectively.

**Facilitators**

*Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?*

All teachers at Europaschule have the basic qualification for primary, special or general secondary school teachers. Four teachers who are employed in the New Secondary School have completed higher education. Some of our colleagues have obtained additional qualifications in Montessori education, furtherance of gifted students and counselling and coaching, while others have university training in sociology, psychology, educational science or pedagogy.

All teachers see themselves as mentors or learning designers, their principal task being to guide, support and accompany learners as knowledge and educational managers.

**Organization of the ILE**

*How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?*

The teachers of Europaschule accept the differences among learners and are willing to secure learning for all. Instead of concentrating on deficits and shortcomings, they focus on strengths, thus activating the talents and interests of students. Teachers and students think in terms of flexible grouping instead of labelling, and try to avoid "pigeonholing". Through a new type of class work, understanding is developed and intensified. Mistakes may be made in and during the learning process. What is assessed are applications and performance in work phases. Performance assessment as such offers an opportunity to give learners useful feedback and readjust the learning environment.

**Learning Context**

*In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?*

Open teaching methods, which are necessary for the existing requirements of differentiation, are a basic principle of teaching at the primary level. Weekly work schedules combined with self-managed learning and methodological skills for working within changing social structures are indispensable requirements for the necessary differentiation and individual furtherance of all children. However, classroom instruction also takes place. We have basic knowledge and practical experience in the design and implementation of a wide range of different forms of teaching.

Structures created: new design of libraries for primary and secondary level; creation of group rooms by restructuring the administrative premises; computer islands; rainbow room for mixed-age learning groups. Measures planned: complete wiring of Europaschule for internet access and creation of infrastructure to optimise all-day offer.

**History of ILE**

*Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?*

Europaschule Linz, due to its structure and tasks, sees itself as a school where school development and school innovation are a fundamental principle at all the various levels. In line with this philosophy, the school management initiated the development process, which was driven forward by various steering groups. This development process was motivated by the need to position the school in the educational landscape.

This innovation process is seen as a permanent, dynamic process, so ongoing change is a logical consequence.

**Funding of the ILE***How is it funded?*

As part of the Upper Austrian University College of Teacher Education, Europaschule is funded solely by public funds within the financial management of the University College of Teacher Education.

**Learning Outcomes***What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?*

The responsible players at Europaschule strive to create a school where the transmission of course content not only serves to acquire incremental knowledge and skills but also brings the act of transmission as such to the fore.

One of the essential criteria of differentiation characterising Europaschule Linz is the shift away from marking systems towards a more differentiated form of performance feedback, which has gradually led to an increase in the quality of teaching.

“ ‘Productive teaching’ is not slavish ex-cathedra teaching but an optimum blend of clear demands, learn ability of the contents and targeted performance enhancement. For most students, the decisive advantage is that learning is structured” (Oelkers, 2003, page 70). The structuring of teaching is based on a detailed feedback on the level of skills acquired under the various learning aims. Students welcome this form of response, stating that they now know exactly where their weaknesses lie and can learn and practice in a targeted manner. Parents respond in a similar vein, saying they are now better able to support their children. For a whole academic year following initial feedback about skills acquisition and a discussion with the teacher in charge, the students may prepare a remedial instruction and resources plan with the objective of addressing the content to be learned in greater depth and for a longer period.

This involves a recurring phase of self-managed and independent learning with an intrinsically motivated objective.

“By marks for the behaviour of the students at school, one shall assess to what extent their personal conduct and fitting into the class community meets the requirements of the school rules or house rules. The assessment shall consider the students’ aptitudes, age and efforts for an orderly conduct” (§ 21(3) SchUG [School Education Act]). The assessment is made as provided by law on the basis of a 4-grade scale which expresses how satisfactory the student’s behaviour is. In this aspect as well, the teaching staff of Europaschule Linz decided to implement another form of feedback and to seize the opportunity of presenting the subjective view of the teacher on students’ behaviour as well as their progress in all the subjects. Thus the students are asked twice a year to deliver a self-assessment of their social behaviour. Separately, the respective teacher classifies the student according to seven specified criteria. Discrepancies in the perceptions of the child’s social and working behaviour finally lead to a lively and solution-oriented discussion at school and at home. In this way, students are taught a very impressive and subtle lesson about the problem of self-perception and perception by others.

**Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE***Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)*

- Documentation of a national research project on the issue of performance feedback and performance assessment
- Master's thesis on documentation of the school development process
- Website: [www.europaschule-linz.at](http://www.europaschule-linz.at)