

Austria

GTVS Europaschule

It is a school with high levels of poverty and migrant populations. There is a very strong focus on languages, with English as a standard foreign language from year 1 and Italian also as a first modern foreign language. There is an integrative approach to native language teaching in Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Turkish. There is a heavy reliance on project teaching, closely involving the learners in planning via class and school councils. 'Alternative' approaches such as Freinet, Montessori, and Jena Plan are used, but not exclusively. It has partner schools in the Netherlands, Italy, Slovakia, and France, and it is looking to develop another in Turkey. Students from the Vienna College of Teacher Education also mentor one child each in an informal setting to address special social needs. There is a 'cultural café' where especially migrant parents and teachers can meet once a month outside school to form networks of different cultural groups, and there are also 'Mum learns German' courses for migrant mothers.

Main Focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

Other Keywords: alternative philosophy, equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: GTVS Europaschule

Location/Address: Vorgartenstraße 95-97, 1200 Wien

Website: www.europaschule-wien.com

Rationale

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

The standard curriculum has been expanded to cover topical and global issues: technologies of the future, intercultural competencies, climate change, etc. Every year, several projects are carried out by the whole teaching team with all the children in the school.

Learning and recreational activities are interlinked at our all-day school, which focuses attention on new topics: for instance, we have just started a project for obesity prevention in cooperation with a physician, a psychologist and nutritionists.

We have also enhanced our cooperation with parents beyond the formal scope of cooperation in classes or with the parents' association and have set up a **cultural café** where parents (especially those from a migration background) and teachers can meet once a month outside school to discuss relevant topics (e.g. the role of the native language, etc.) and to form social networks between representatives of different cultures.

Our school also offers "Mum learns German" courses (low-level German courses especially for women).

Diversification of languages being taught and improvement of the social standing of migrants' languages: In addition to English as standard foreign language from year 1, we also offer Italian as first modern foreign language. The same has been attempted for Turkish, but has unfortunately not met with sufficient demand by parents, in spite of being advertised via the Turkish embassy. With assistance from our multilingual teaching team, we also provide an integrative approach to native language teaching (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and Turkish) to raise the children's awareness of the importance of their mother tongues in daily life.

We have cooperation agreements with **partner schools** in Eindhoven/Netherlands, Zafferana/Italy, Bratislava/Slovakia, Paris/France, and are preparing a similar cooperation with a primary school in Bzocaada/Turkey.

A **mentoring project** called "Balu und du" has been set up with a focus on children with special social needs. Students from the Vienna College of Teacher Education "mentor" one child each in an informal setting to address special social needs. We are currently looking for ways to continue this project.

Individualised support in all classes is ensured through open, project-oriented teaching as well as through what we call the "support roundabout": Here, all the children from all the forms attend non-form-specific remedial lessons where they are assigned to small groups to cater specifically to their individual needs and problems.

The various forms can choose different **special-focus topics**: outdoor, language or creative activities, sports, therapy units, etc.

Children can choose from a broad range of recreational activities designed to address their different **leisure-time interests**.

The **school council** is a forum where we make important decisions in consultation with the children.

Evidence

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

Evaluation of various modules: The mentoring project is being evaluated by the University of Osnabrück, the cultural café initiative by a graduate of Danube University Krems, the dogs project was evaluated by the University of Vienna, etc.

Participation in various **competitions and award processes** for benchmarking purposes (external evaluation: ESIS award for innovative language projects in 2005 and 2008; Fair School Award 2007 and 2008, UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development Award 2007, LUPAC Foundation Democracy Award 2008, Teachers Award of the Federation of Austrian Industries 2007, as well as numerous arts and sports competitions.

Participation in school-specific **networks** such as “Bildungslandkarte”, “ECOLOG” and “SPIN”.

Community activities, such as the initiative for establishing a “Children’s Rights Square” with a sculpture commemorating children’s rights in the district.

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)

- Promotion of “global citizenship” competencies
- Enhancement of intercultural skills
- Ability and willingness to take on social and ecological responsibility
- Empowerment on a personal level
- Basic skills needed to “master one’s environment” – being able to obtain and assess information, to work in a team, etc.
- Encouragement of critical thinking
- Diversification of language skills and building of meta-linguistic competencies
- Enhancement of scientific and technological understanding based on problem-oriented project work with an interdisciplinary approach
- Familiarity with real-life situations and understanding of interdependencies (work, economy, ecology, etc.).

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?

Our school is a primary school, so the age range is **6 to 10 (11)** years.

All children whose parents are working (or are on parental leave, looking for job) are entitled to attend.

Currently, we have **380 pupils** (16 forms), who all participate in either all or some elements of the “Europaschule” ILE.

Our school is a **state school**, so whoever applies may attend. If demand is too high, admission will be based on geographical distance.

Facilitators

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

All our teachers hold a **teacher's diploma** qualifying them for primary schools.

All **leisure coaches** have adequate education and training.

Some staff members contribute various **additional qualifications to our work**, such as teaching qualifications for special schools, for speech therapy, kinetic learning, drama pedagogy, creative design, Warnke method (dyslexia support), etc.

Some of our teachers hold **university degrees** in sociology, special needs and ortho-therapeutic pedagogy, intercultural competencies (programme at Danube University Krems), etc.

As for native, first or second foreign **language skills**, our teaching staff offers Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, German, English, French, Italian, Kurdish, Iranian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Turkish.

Approaches and role perceptions differ among teachers, with some being extremely interested in school development and showing a high level of commitment, while others have a more conventional attitude.

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?

There is no special curriculum.

We draw on several pedagogical impulses, but are not applying any of them singularly. We make use and modify ideas from Freinet, Montessori, the Jena plan, etc.

Children are taught in classes, with a large percentage of open or independent learning; in addition, there are several special-interest groups and projects regrouping children from all forms.

We rely heavily on **project teaching**, involving pupils in the planning process via form and **school councils**. Other special settings include specifically designed outdoor activities (encounters with real life) and the **interlinking of learning and recreational activities**.

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?

Our school building is newly renovated and features large classrooms, light, airy halls, 2 gyms, a library, a computer room, a kids' kitchen, a large garden and ball games court.

We obtain community funding through prizes from various competitions and awards as well as donations from various institutions, which we use to cover the extra cost incurred through project activities, especially as the parents of our pupils tend to come from a below-average income bracket.

History of ILE

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

The ILE was initiated by Ilse Henner when she became head of the school. Pupils tend to come from a largely underprivileged background in socio-economic terms. Before the changes, the school did not have a particularly good reputation (high percentage of children with a **migration background** and a high **poverty risk**). Together with her team, Ilse Henner worked on changing attitudes, integrated children and parents with their specific competencies and problems in school life and realigned school development activities to the identified needs.

Funding of the ILE*How is it funded?*

As this is a state school, funding is provided only by the government.

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

We plan to take part in educational standard tests.

We undergo external evaluation by participating in competitions and awards processes.

Learning outcomes are assessed and verified also through communication with the secondary-level schools our graduates transfer to.

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)*

- School programme
- Brochures on the Italian project, the Turkish project, and the “Challenge4Change” project
- School history
- Monthly online newsletter
- School newspapers for specific projects
- School website
- Our school is also featured in publications by the Federal Ministry of Education (e.g. ESIS 2007), in an information leaflet published by the Vienna Municipal School Board, etc.

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

For more information on activities at our school, please visit www.europaschule-wien.com