

Austria

**Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe des Zisterzienserstiftes
Zwettl (HLUW)**

This Catholic boarding school is a secondary school for children from grade 9th to 13th that has a special focus on sustainability management, aiming to educate students to become specialist networkers, analysts and project managers who solve ecological, economic, and social problems in companies and organisations. There is a strong emphasis on practical experiences in projects with practical relevance, like the management of practice firms that operate on the real market, manufacturing furniture for the school, etc. There are four weeks of project instruction per year during which students engage in self-determined, open learning in teams. Students can acquire additional qualifications in cooperation with external institutions.

Main Focus of Innovation: CONTENT, RESOURCES

General Information

Name of the ILE: Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe des Zisterzienserstiftes Zwettl (HLUW)
special focus on Environment and Business

Location/Address: Schulstrasse 13, 3683 Yspertal

Website: www.hlaysper.ac.at

Rationale

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

With its curriculum, the school aims to respond to the issue of globalisation and the dominance of technology in the “world” economy, as well as to related problems of the “surrounding” environment in which we live. At subject level, our objective is to educate “eco-social” = sustainability managers for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The focus lies on laboratory engineering and management engineering skills. At methodological level, the school has implemented the following since the foundation of the school in 1990 in response to societal challenges of the 21st century:

- a) **Primacy of practice over theory:**
Whenever possible, students are confronted with reality and curricular assignments through practical activities, since the life realities of many young people today have little in common with real life (“living” in virtual worlds!)
- b) Theoretical instruction is built around those “practical” experiences.
- c) Theory and practice are, if possible in any way, taught by one and the same teacher.
- d) (Subject) theory and (subject) practice are assessed jointly.
- e) In 4 weeks of project instruction per year, which is blocked in modules, students are to obtain an understanding of how companies actually work. In dedicated learning weeks at the start of the term, at the end of term, and at the end of the year (called “teaching projects”), we use all possible “learner” related pedagogical methods, from self-determined, open learning to team work and developing assessment proposals for the team members.
- f) A structured, pre-scientific project report and its presentation mark the end of at least 15 project assignments students must submit in the course of 5 years at the school.
- g) In the practical exercises for the different subjects, students learn to keep accurate records in line with established standards.
- h) **“The view of the whole is preferable to details”** is another important principle governing the educational work of the school.
- i) Practical courses focus on the completion of such assignments which are necessary for the school and the affiliated boarding school and are of practical relevance (e.g. repairs being done, or furniture being manufactured in the technical workshop, turning biogenic waste into compost and selling it via JUNIOR firms etc.) (*Translator’s note: JUNIOR firms are comparable to practice firms; they are set up for training purposes but operate on the real market.*)
- j) The boarding school that is affiliated to the school promotes life-long learning skills through a variety of different self-reliance activities (e.g. learning support groups, learn-to-learn seminar). (For details please refer to the school’s mission statement and the sustainability report!)
- k) Students acquire additional qualifications and become e.g. toxic substances officer, waste officer, quality manager for SMEs, safety officer, hazardous goods officer, in cooperation with external institutions (WIFI- a provider of further education in business, or AUVA- the Austrian accident insurance agency, etc.)

Evidence

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

- The school took part twice in the PISA assessments.
- The school was one of the first in Austria to become certified according to ISO 9001 and 14000.
- The school has published sustainability reports in the last three years.
- The school participated in a self-description project for schools for the social and services industries (*“Selbstbeschreibung HUM”*).
- The school is an ECOLOG school.
- The school is a member of the Global Marshall Plan initiative.
- The school was awarded the Austrian Environmental Quality Seal.
- Graduates face excellent opportunities on the European and Austrian labour markets; some are recruited for positions requiring a university degree.
- The priorities defined in ISO 9001 and the core objectives are evaluated at year-end and adjusted as necessary.

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)

Professional learning aims: education of

- a) Specialist networkers who solve ecological, economic and social problems in companies and organisations
- b) analysts for ecological, toxicological and similar problems in companies and organisations
- c) project managers for handling the problems under a) and b).

General learning aims:

- a) High commitment, consistency and frustration tolerance
- b) pronounced awareness of values against a Christian background (Catholic private school)
- c) high tolerance vis-à-vis what is unknown and “foreign”
- d) team spirit also at the multinational level (e.g. international junior-eco-expert project with 3 partner schools from 3 Central European countries).

For further details see mission statement, curriculum and school priorities.

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?

Students from year 9 attend the school. It lasts five years and ends with a matriculation and diploma exam (*“Reife- und Diplomprüfung”*) after year 13.

The school is best suited for good all-rounder, provided they have an interest in the subject matters taught. We cater particularly to girls, since in our experience they tend to outperform boys in all subjects. The school has 15 classes which are attended by approx. 400 students from all over Austria (in particular from Lower Austria, Upper Austria). Female students account for approx. 35%.

The school has 50 teachers (some of which work part-time); 25 non-teachers work at the school and the boarding school.

All use the innovative learning environment.

Facilitators

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

Standard -teacher training or professional training, internal and external preparation for the specific challenges. As the entire institution is geared towards an innovative aim, there are no established roles; teachers are open for new things, flexible and innovative.

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 organisation of learning is fully driven by the specific goals. The arrangements set up specifically for the implementation of the goals “force” the facilitators to adjust their methods to the goals.

The specific learning objectives of our school originate in HLUW Yspertal’s mission as a Catholic private school. In this sense our overall learning objective must be the “preservation of creation”. This spiritual aspect of our training is emphasised in our educational routine as well as in our school related ceremonies such as masses, blessings, prayers at school et cetera. The purpose of this is not to convert students to the Catholic faith but to make them realise that taking responsibility for our environment has an effect on future generations.

One other overall learning objective at the HLUW Yspertal is the primacy of practical experience over theory.

Some examples:

Subjects/Areas Covered	Practical Work/Desiderata	Theory
German <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to write the minutes/to keep records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tour of a company, memorial et cetera • students write the minutes/keep records 	learning objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to write the minutes/to keep records • aspects and accurate use of language in this context
teacher assumes role of coach using example of sample minutes		
Biology/Environmental Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soil as a basis for life • layers of soil • classification of types of soil 	learning objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to collect soil samples with a soil-drill • ergonomics • appropriate posture in physical work • conservation of samples taken • sample description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergence of soil types • practical examples
teacher assumes role of instructor and coach	introduction into the appropriate handling of tools	manuals, text-books, library, lecture, coaching
Physics/Measurement Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • efficiency of photovoltaic power-stations 	learning objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to construct a measuring stand by assembling its components according to instructions • conducting measuring • to write the minutes/to keep records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lecture and discussion • function and production of photovoltaic tiles • reviewing the minutes/the records
teacher assumes role of consultant		

<p>Physics/Environmental Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> energy management 	<p>learning objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to work in teams and measure results to write the minutes to write an energy report 	<p>discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how to save energy energy management
<p>teacher assumes role of awarding authority and consultant</p>		
<p>Company Structure/Junior Firm (Training Company)</p>	<p>learning objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to procure and order local produce and produce from developing countries to administer the school cafeteria to sell snacks to carry out accounts to write the minutes/to keep records to write the business-report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management quality-management systems terminology lecture discussion
<p>teacher assumes role of awarding authority and consultant</p>		

Also see curriculum of HLUW Yspertal as well as core objectives according to school-related QM (ISO 9001).

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?

Learning takes place in an open, theme-related context.

We use the natural environment of the school as well as specifically designed places of learning in the school building and outdoors (e.g. the composting plant, the hydroelectric plant, etc.). Cooperation with the local municipality, other public authorities such as the province of Lower Austria and the Federation are a matter of course. Projects are often commissioned by these institutions as well as by private-sector companies.

Learning in the context of the school’s objectives can only happen in a cooperative effort between the learning sites and institutions described (=leading students to the realities of life of the 21st century).

History of ILE

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

The school was founded in 1990 based on the following conceptual ideas:

- a) An upper secondary school in a rural area (town of 1800 inhabitants) should prevent further exodus and incubate business.
- b) A Catholic school should form the setting for value-oriented learning.
- c) The educational objective, environmental protection, sustainability, laboratory analytics should empower adolescents “practically” to redesign the economy towards sustainability. All objectives have been met. A new priority area = educational objective (water management) is being planned.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

In cooperation with the municipality of Yspertal, the school (a Catholic school of the Cistercian monastery of Zwettl) provides for the school building, open premises and non-teaching staff (supported by public and private-sector sponsors, support often takes the form of cooperation in projects). As laid down in the concordat, teaching staff is provided by the Federal Ministry of Education via the province school board. The curriculum has been officially recognized.

Learning Outcomes

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

Additional qualifications are assessed through external evaluation. The learning outcomes are evaluated internally in the sustainability report, and externally via an annual feedback of the alumni organisation (approx. 70% of the 860 graduates are members of the alumni organisation).