

## Good PISA results for the Austrian Waldorf pupils

Since the year 2000 all Austrian Waldorf pupils of the age of 15 take part in the PISA tests. PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) is an internationally standardised assessment by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) for 15 year old school pupils. PISA assesses how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society. Reading, mathematics and scientific literacy are covered by the tests, not only in terms of the school curriculum, but in terms of important knowledge and skills needed in adult life.

The PISA Centre Austria contacted the Federation of Austrian Waldorf schools and requested a special evaluation on the results of Waldorf pupils in comparison to the results of the Austrian state school pupils. All the costs for this special research were covered by the PISA Centre Austria. In order to obtain comprehensive research results the Austrian Waldorf schools agreed that 100% of the 15 year old pupils take part. The open and fruitful discussion between the scientists of the PISA Centre Austria and the Austrian Waldorf schools led to an additional questionnaire about social emotional competences, which was incorporated into the last PISA test, together with questions about school autonomy and financial support for the schools.

In March 2009 the Austrian PISA centre released the detailed results of the PISA-study 2006 and presented also the very positive part about Waldorf pupils compared to pupils of Austrian state schools. The results concluded that:

- Austrian Waldorf pupils show on average the same level in reading and mathematics as the state school pupils, although there are fewer pupils in the critical groups in reading and mathematics than in other schools.

- Very significant results in science, where the Austrian Waldorf pupils are clearly above the Austrian average. The Waldorf pupils also fare the best in understanding the questions raised by science and the ability to solve scientific problems. They were also above the OECD average for their joy and interest in the subject of science. The researchers came to the conclusion that the very positive results in science must be the result of a good method of teaching and ended in their research report with the sentence: "The state schools could learn from the Waldorf schools, especially concerning science teaching" and added that there is a lack of research work on Waldorf pedagogy in Austria and in the German speaking countries. They noted that these alternative schools could bring potential to the whole school movement and they recommended further research work.

The whole research report on PISA Waldorf Austria can be found (only in German) on [www.bifie.at/pisa2006eb-9-6](http://www.bifie.at/pisa2006eb-9-6).

### Cross border activities of the Austrian Waldorf schools

The Austrian Waldorf schools are a relatively small school community with only 13 schools and 2200 pupils, but cross border activities do play an important role in the school activities. The Schönau school (near Vienna) has been organising the Olympic games for class 5 for years now. It started off with a few schools in the neighbourhood, but now Class 5 pupils from all the Austrian schools take part and Waldorf schools from Hungary, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia have also joined. The class 7 pupils from the Waldorf schools in Klagenfurt and Ljubljana are undertaking a rowing week in Slovenia for the 4th time this year



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### Lifelong Learning Programme

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and for more than ten years the colleagues of the Waldorf schools in the so called "Alpen-Adria-Region" (South of Austria, Slovenia, North of Italy) meet at regular intervals for common teacher conferences.



Austrian and Czech students working together- EU Comenius project

The Waldorf School in Klagenfurt (South of Austria) has taken a lead in EU-projects, starting in 1999 with the first EU-Comenius project. Since then the school has had EU-Comenius-partnerships every year and each upper school student has benefited from the financial support of the European Commission leading to increased mobility within Europe. Furthermore, since 2002, the Austrian upper school students also have the possibility to do their practical training, mostly in a social setting in another European country. This is carried out with the financial support of the European Commission as part of the Leonardo da Vinci EU-project. For the 5th time such a Leonardo da Vinci mobility project has just been accepted by the European Commission for the years 2009 - 2011. Seven Austrian Waldorf upper schools take part in this common project and this grant will mean 100 pupils will have the possibility

to choose their placements within 13 different European Countries. For more details on all the EU-projects so far

go to [www.waldorfschule-klagenfurt.at/index.php?nr=17](http://www.waldorfschule-klagenfurt.at/index.php?nr=17)  
**Rosmarie Bluder** - Austria

## European Portfolio Certificate (EPC) - Potsdam Conference, October 2009

The third International Conference on the "European Portfolio Certificate (EPC)" recently took place in Potsdam (Germany) to disseminate the project results so far and evaluate the progress made to date.

The Conference was part of a European Project supported financially by the Life Long Learning - Comenius Programme of the European Union. The aim of the 2 year project has been to create and implement a **European Portfolio Certificate (EPC)** for students who complete a Steiner Waldorf School education at the end of the secondary level and is open to adaptation by other interested schools.

The partnership of 12 Steiner Waldorf Schools, the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE) and two British accreditation organisations (ASDAN and N-OCN) has been working on common criteria for a European Portfolio, taking into

consideration the Europass framework for the transparency and transferability of qualifications and competences and the need to reflect the individuality of each school locality.

### Project update

Quite a number of schools have now begun with portfolio work and more countries are joining the EPC project. The three Comenius subgroups and seven task-groups have been working hard. Ambitious agendas were tackled successfully and enthusiastic cooperation based on mutual understanding across borders has made the project proceed faster than originally imagined.

The EPC-folder will be introduced in the current school year and tested in at least eight countries, although more will be invited to join.

The prototype of the EPC-folder was presented at the conference. In 12 workshops, the various dimensions of

portfolio and competence portfolios as well as the implementation and dissemination of the EPC-idea and folder were explored.

Short papers from some of the workshops were included in a tool box and were distributed with the folder prototype, along with a draft of the EPC guidelines and a statement of some of the principles of Steiner Waldorf education. Some workshops focused on the effects of EPC on a school's profile, the role of awarding bodies working beyond national borders and ways to support the teachers college in developing portfolio and implementing the EPC-Folder. Other workshops reported on independently developed school leaving certificates based on portfolios that have been developed over the last years.

For more information and documentation, please contact **Thilo Koch**, EPC coordinator  
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## Identifying Teacher Quality - ITQ project

In August 2009, the Identifying Teacher Quality (ITQ) project drew to a close. The project was financially supported by the Life Long Learning Program of the European Union and involved experts within teacher education from 21 institutions in 12 countries, among which was the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education.

The aim of the project was to develop a toolbox for teachers and student teachers to reflect on their professional teaching quality. In many European countries teacher quality is a key element in policies to raise the quality of education and in doing so enhance student outcomes. However, in many national or European processes to identify teacher quality, active involvement of teachers is rather limited. The risk therefore is that teachers feel no ownership towards developing their own professional quality. The ITQ project aimed to increase the awareness, involvement and ownership of the

process by teachers. As teachers are the main stakeholders with respect to their professional quality, it is important to give them a voice in the (inter)national debates on teacher quality. Moreover, awareness, involvement and ownership of teachers towards professional quality will not only lead to a stronger self-efficacy of teachers, but can also be a stimulus to professional development and growth of teachers.

The project has been focusing on two topics:

- What is teacher quality? We have carried out research into what teachers, student teachers and others think that teacher quality is. In this way we have information on what teachers say, compared to what governments have issued in their national standards on teacher quality.
- The second topic is the toolbox with reflection tools. We have developed and gathered reflection tools and tested them in various settings in various countries. They are published on the web site now in their final form and the link is provided below.

The project has now come to a conclusion and many partners in the

project are now implementing the reflection tools into their own teacher education curriculum, either in the universities or in school based forms of teacher education.

*Identifying teacher quality: reflection toolbox for teachers*

The reflection tools have been designed to be used by teachers and student teachers, and are accessible through a web site:

[www.teacherqualitytoolbox.eu](http://www.teacherqualitytoolbox.eu). The tools there can be freely used and the web site gives much more information on the outcomes of the project.

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