

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

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Intercultural awareness

Intercultural education ([Interkulturelle Bildung](#))

Intercultural learning has been **anchored as a teaching principle in the curricula of all general educational schools** (Allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen) **since 1992**. The social, cultural and linguistic diversity in our globalised society leads to an increasing heterogeneity of life plans and family realities, which is reflected in our classrooms. Intercultural education **enables both teachers and students to respectfully deal with diversity in a multicultural society**. It directs the view to both historical and current processes of social change, such as migration movements from the global south to Europe, migration processes in rural regions and population increase in urban areas, diverse biographies and life plans, and intergenerational and social aspects. At the same time, it responds appropriately to the challenges and opportunities that arise in the school system.

The **Framework Decree on Intercultural Education** ([Grundsatzterlass Interkulturelle Bildung, 2017](#)) issued by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), developed in 2017 together with experts from various disciplines, **describes the content and implementation of the teaching principle** of intercultural learning. It helps to ensure that learning together can succeed in an appreciative and respectful atmosphere in everyday school life.

Intercultural education **empowers students to**

- perceive diverse lifestyles and biographies as a social and school normality and to deal respectfully with different ways of life (**developing tolerance and empathy**)
- **recognise that one's own biography shapes one's experience**, thinking and acting (awareness of the conditionality of one's own ways of seeing and acting)
- **analyse one's own (life) history** and to recognise both how it came about and how it can

be changed

- perceive and **analyse social, cultural, linguistic and other similarities and differences** and to recognise their significance
- **trace changing affiliations and multiple identities** in one's own and other biographies
- **adopt a critical and appreciative basic attitude** - as a basis for civil courage and a constructive culture of conflict without cultural attributions
- develop a **calm approach to heterogeneity** (practice in the handling of stereotypes and (foreign) attributions)
- **recognise and question exclusionary, racist and sexist statements and behaviour and to take a stand against them**, and to recognise how power is exercised and domination legitimised through cultural attributions
- **look at social developments in a society shaped by migration and individualisation from different perspectives**, to form opinions and to present points of view
- **apply intercultural competences** in all subject areas as well as in everyday life in and out of school

Ressources ([Schule Mehrsprachig: Ressourcen](#))

The **thematic online platform of the Federal Centre for Interculturality, Migration and Multilingualism** ([NCoC Bildung im Kontext von Migration und Mehrsprachigkeit, BIMM](#)) offers educators and everyone interested **multimedia information and know-how on intercultural education** and other topics. Topic packages include 'Intercultural Learning' and 'Othering'.

The **conference on interculturality and multilingualism in school practice** is aimed at educators of all subjects. The 18th **conference on interculturality and multilingualism in school practice** in 2019 was held on the topic of 'Culturally Reflective Learning'.

Regional initiatives for schools ([Schule Mehrsprachig: Regionale Initiativen](#))

Since the end of 2017, the Private University College of Teacher Education Linz (Upper Austria) has been offering **advice and workshops at local schools** with the initiative '[Gelingendes Zusammenleben – GeZu](#)'. The work on intercultural attitudes and the development of methodological and action competences at the school location is supported with various offers that can be chosen depending on the occasion and include, among others, counselling, in-school teacher training, and information.

In Styria, there are concrete support offers for schools in the form of the [Mobile Support Teams \(MUT\)](#) of the Province. **Teachers receive support and advice on intercultural issues or further training** in workshops.

Dialogue of Cultures and Religions

Contributing to global trust-building and **peaceful co-existence through intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives** marks one of the central goals of Austrian foreign cultural policy. This objective is further underlined in the Strategy Report of the Federal Government 2013-2016 ([Strategiebericht zum Bundesfinanzrahmengesetz 2013 - 2016](#)), which defines the necessity for intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a major challenge for the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and the Austrian Embassies.

The [Task Force 'Dialogue of Cultures'](#) aims to foster understanding. **Strengthening pluralism within society and eliminating stereotypes and prejudices** – in Austria, Europe as well as in the Muslim world - also play an important role in this context. Therefore, dialogue must be open to different views and be challenging in order to explain its complexity and enable a differentiated perception. It is indispensable to refer to the universal application of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These priorities are implemented through a combination of internal and external projects.

The main aspects of the preparation and implementation of dialogue initiatives may be summarised as follows:

- The **inclusion of interest groups**, i.e. the civil society, people coming from non-urban areas and participants that have usually not been taken into consideration for dialogue projects
- **Tackling concrete social and political challenges** in a solution orientated and practical way and promoting co-operation with civil society activists, including the media.
- **Dialogue as an important aspect of social, regional and global conflict prevention**, conflict management and peacebuilding also includes aspects of development co-operation.
- **Strengthening the role and participation of women in society and the integration of young generations** (multipliers)
- **Co-operation with key partners** on a national and international level in order to strengthen and expand existing networks.

The „[Intercultural Achievement Award](#)” (IAA) is a key project of intercultural dialogue. The award **honours successful, innovative projects in the field of intercultural dialogue, both in Austria and on a global scale**. The award is open to all those who identify and make use of opportunities within intercultural communal life. It is also designed for those who have successfully explored new avenues within the intercultural dialogue, who have mastered a specific challenge through intercultural actions, and who have promoted the dialogue of cultures and religions through their media presence.’

Young people's rights

In November 2004, the Council of Ministers of the Federal Government approved the **National Action Plan on the Rights of Children and Young People** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan für die Rechte von Kindern und Jugendlichen](#)), which was initiated following the ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**. In 2011, the **Federal Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children** ([Bundesverfassungsgesetz über die Rechte von Kindern](#)) was passed. It elevated central provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to constitutional status.

The **central challenge** in the area of children's rights (as well as with human rights in general) is the **actual realisation of these rights**. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind. Children's rights are human rights applicable worldwide to all young people up to the age of eighteen. Children are not dependent on the goodwill of adults. Rather, they have a **right to receive appropriate care, assistance and protection and participate in community life**. Children are competent personalities and have their own rights, which they may assert themselves.

[Austrian State Reports](#)

On a regular basis, **Austria submits state reports to the international human rights monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations and the Council of Europe on the measures taken** to fulfil its obligations derived from the ratification of international human rights conventions and treaties. Austria cooperates with all monitoring mechanisms, whose recommendations constitute an important basis for Austria's continuing efforts to improve its own system of human rights protection.

The Austrian state reports are coordinated within a special coordinating body, the group of **[human rights co-ordinators](#) of all Austrian Federal Ministries as well as from the nine federal regions**. For each state report, one Ministry is the main responsible authority and leads the process. Upon the recommendation of the monitoring mechanisms, **Austria increasingly applies a shortened reporting procedure** in which the respective monitoring mechanisms transmit a list of issues to Austria prior to the submission of the Austrian report.

Ombudsman for children and young people and Federal Children and Youth Advocacy

In 1995, ombudsman offices for children and young people ([Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaften](#)) were established in **all nine federal provinces** as central, **politically independent institutions reviewing and enforcing compliance** with the rights of children and young people based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act ([Bundes-Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz 2013](#)) also provides that each federal province must establish an ombudsman office for children and young people. The **[ombudsman offices for children and young people](#)** are contact points for all problems of children and young people. Their **tasks include raising awareness and lobbying for children's rights, information, networking and advice**

in case of problems between parents and children. The **Federal Children and Youth Advocacy** ([Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft des Bundes](#)) has been established as a department of the Section for Families and Youth in the Federal Chancellery. Its central tasks include the cooperation with the ombudsman offices for children and young people in the provinces, **the public representation of the principle of non-violent education, public lobbying for a child-friendly society, as well as counselling of children and young people** and their parents or legal guardians.

Children's rights Website and Brochure (www.kinderrechte.gv.at)

The Website by the Federal Ministry of Youth provides **information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child**, its implementation in Austria, the monitoring of children's rights, and the Children and Youth Ombudsman's Office. The former Ministry for youth has also published a brochure on children's rights ([Broschüre – Die Rechte von Kindern und Jugendlichen](#)).

Children's Rights Network

The Children's Rights Network Austria - National Coalition (NC) ([Netzwerk Kinderrechte](#))— is an **independent network of 44 children's rights organisations and child institutions** for the support of the implementation of the UN children's rights convention in Austria. It takes a stand for the rights of all children and young people without discrimination. The network was founded in 1997 to provide the 'complementary report ([ergänzender Bericht](#))' parallel to the state report of the Federal Government within the scope of the monitoring process of the UN-children's rights committee.

Youth information campaigns ([Jugendportal](#))

The Austrian Youth Information Centres as well as their umbrella organization, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth information centres, **provide young people with reviewed information on their rights**. Their **Website** ([Jugendportal](#)) features a thematic focus named 'Know your right!' (Kenn' dein Recht!), which is specifically edited to inform young people on their general and youth-specific rights. It thus provides them with an information platform for the most important questions that concern young people in particular. The answers are explained briefly and simply, and additional useful links and contact persons are provided. The online platform also provides children and young people with a [link collection](#) on their rights. The information is also disseminated through regional Youth information centers, such as [wienXtra](#) in Vienna. Furthermore, information on all matters regarding young people's rights is accessible at the government platform [österreich.gv.at](http://oesterreich.gv.at).

Democracy workspace by the Federal Parliament ([DemokratieWEBstatt](#))

The Federal Parliament provides an **online information point**, as part of its project on political education, on children's rights that offers a thematic overview and **worksheets** on the subject.

Federal Youth Council ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)): campaigns and media guide

In 2005, the [Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung, BJV\)](#) launched a **children's rights campaign entitled 'Children need respect'** (Kinder brauchen Respekt). It intensified its commitment in 2009, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the CRC, with the campaign **'ALL children's rights into the constitution!'** ('ALLE Kinderrechte in die Verfassung'). Since 2013, the BJV has also been a **member of the steering committee of the children's rights monitoring process**, the Children's Rights Board.

In the course of its campaign 'Poverty is not a child's play' („Armut ist kein Kinderspiel“), the [Federal Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung\)](#) prepared the **media guide 'Children's Rights in Reporting'** ([Medienleitfaden „Kinderrechte in der Berichterstattung“](#)). The guide is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and contains the voices of experts and journalists as well as the results of a media study by the Ombudsman Board on socially disadvantaged children and young people.

Private youth work initiatives

Both the association 'Children's Friends' ([Kinderfreunde](#)) and the young catholic church ([Katholische Jungschar](#)) have started children's rights initiatives. The Children's Friends offer, among other things, **educational materials, a children's rights party set and training for multipliers** on the topic of children's rights. The young catholic church runs a **Austria-wide children's rights campaign every autumn**, in order to inform children, young people, but also parents and adults about children's rights. Activities include building blocks for group lessons, media work, campaigns, and exhibitions.

Cities of human rights

The Austrian cities of [Graz](#) (2001) and [Vienna](#) (2014) have become Cities of Human Rights. As such they are committed to human rights and guarantee a high standard of human rights. In the long term, they aim to **ensures respect for human rights, recognise needs for action and provide an international role model**. Moreover, the city of [Salzburg](#) has signed the European Charter of Human Rights to become Austria's third City of Human Rights. In 2020, Graz became home to the worldwide second **UNESCO Center for the Promotion of Human Rights in Communities and Regions** at the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. Its work focuses on regional and local human rights work, particularly human rights education. Regional focuses are the education for Roma children in South Eastern Europe, human rights training for cities in Africa in cooperation with the African Academy of Administration, and a toolkit for 'Inclusive Cities' in the Arab world.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

Civic Education in schools ([Politische Bildung](#))

In Austrian schools, civic education is anchored in various ways. It is a **teaching principle for all school types and levels**

as well as an **independent or combined subject** in school forms of secondary level 1 or 2. Moreover, **school democracy** should make its contribution to civic education. The basic principles, objectives and implementation of civic education in schools are set out in the **Basic Decree for the Teaching Principle of Civic Education**. In addition to Austrian standards, the decree also refers to the **Council of Europe Charter on Civic Education and Human Rights Education**.

The Austrian Competence Model for Civic Education aims to **build up (self-)reflective political awareness throughout school learning** by means of exemplary approaches to problematic cases of politics. The life and experience world of the pupils is taken into account. Political education deals with **contemporary political issues**, their historical contexts and the **possibilities of influencing decisions**. In a time characterised by increasing complexity in all areas of life (e.g. globalisation, media democracy, non-national or multiple identities of citizens, changed socialisation of children and young people, unequal distribution of power and resources between genders and generations), civic education provides an active contribution to the shaping of society as well as to the realisation and further development of democracy and human rights.

Historical competences

Political competences are closely related to historical competences, which aim at examining judgements with regard to their historical context of origin and the **ability to recognise, analyse and reflect on one's own convictions in their historical conditionality**. In this context, the project 'Memory and the Present' (Gedächtnis und Gegenwart' on erinnern.at) of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) for **dealing with National Socialism and the Holocaust** provides a comprehensive and methodological offer that promotes the transfer of historical knowledge and reflection on its significance for the present.

European Union education

Dealing with the European Union as well as with pan-European issues and topics is part of political education and, like the global dimension, contributes to a comprehensive view of the world. The **network 'Europe in Schools' ([Europa in der Schule](#)) supports teachers in the task of promoting awareness and responsibility for European and global interrelationships**. Its offers include a guide. The Network is an initiative of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#), the Representation of the European Commission, the Liaison Office of the European Parliament in Austria and is managed by [Zentrum polis](#).

Extremism prevention ([Schulpsychologie: Jugend und Extremismen](#))

In a pluralistic society, it is important to **promote a responsible, critical, open-minded and tolerant attitude in schools**. Pupils who come into contact with destructive ideologies and attitudes such as right-wing extremism, Islamism or anti-Semitism represent a major challenge for many teachers. **All extremist tendencies are resolutely countered** through long-term educational prevention work. In the case of a temporary readiness of pupils to follow destructive

ideologies, a **well-coordinated approach by teachers, school management, school psychologists and other experts** is needed.

Apart from the Extremism Counselling Centre (depicted separately bellow), the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) provides a number of offers and materials. This includes the **National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence in Schools** ([Nationale Strategie zur Gewaltprävention an Schulen](#)), a guide to improve the culture of relationships between all persons in the school community ([Guide Vereinbarungskultur an Schulen](#)), a **dossier on extremism with links and materials for teachers** ([Zentrum Polis – Extremismus](#)), a multilingual folder 'Islam must not be misused for war and terror' ("Islam darf nicht für Krieg und Terror missbraucht werden") in cooperation with the Islamic Faith Community, materials on the topics of interculturality and multilingualism ([Schule Mehrsprachig](#)), and the **Austrian Strategy for the Prevention of Extremism and Deradicalisation** ([Österreichische Strategie Extremismusprävention und Deradikalisierung, 2018](#)).

Action Days on Civic Education ([Aktionstage Politische Bildung](#))

The **Austria-wide campaign** of the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) is coordinated by [Zentrum polis](#). It takes place **annually** between 23 April (World Book Day) and 9 May (EUrope Day). **New materials are presented** throughout the event, e.g. on women's rights, public health, young people's participation, language rights, and freedom rights. Further materials include **studies, videos, podcasts, padlets, workshops, and games**.

Politics Encyclopaedia for Young People ([Politiklexikon für Junge Leute](#))

A reference book for pupils with **reliable initial information on political terms and topics**. The encyclopaedia is primarily aimed at young people aged 12 and over. It is also a helpful tool for those who support children and young people in learning politics. The contents are not dictated by a curriculum as is the case with school books, but cover the entire world of politics. The encyclopaedia was commissioned by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#).

News for Political Education ([Nachrichten für Politische Bildung](#))

In loose succession, **news for practice are presented** by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) on its Website. They inform on new materials and events for civil education.

Extremism Counselling Centre at [bOJA](#) ([Beratungsstelle Extremismus von bOJA](#))

The Centre is the **first point of contact for anyone fearing a young person** – whether child, friend, pupil or other - **might have joined a radical religious group or an extremist political group, or might sympathise** with extremist right-wing or radical Islamist ideas. The centre is free of charge and calls are handled anonymous and confidential. The Centre also

offers support in building regional counselling and network structures.

The Centre **provides comprehensive counselling services for family, friends and teachers and training** for communicators on the following key points:

- **Diversity** – handling differences in a constructive manner
- **Religiously motivated extremism** such as Islamism, Salafism, Jihadism – ideologies, terminology, symbols, groups
- **Politically motivated extremism** such as right-wing extremism and National Socialism
- **Racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Islamism**

National Committee 'No Hate Speech'

The No Hate Speech Movement was launched in 2013 on the **initiative of the Council of Europe**. Since then, activists in over 40 countries have been campaigning against hate speech on the internet and for respectful coexistence. The national committee aims to **sensitise people to hate-speech online**. It thematises the cause and context in order to counteract the acceptance of Hate Speech and thus fights racism, sexism and discrimination on the internet. The No Hate Speech Committee has **formulated recommendations to the federal and provincial governments**.

With the support of the former Federal Ministry for Families and Youth the **handbook** [Bookmarks – Combating hate speech online through human rights education](#) ([Bookmarks – Bekämpfung von Hate Speech im Internet durch Menschenrechtsbildung](#)) has been translated into German.

Zentrum polis - Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools

The Centre is the central education service institution for citizenship education in schools. It **helps teachers to bring citizenship and human rights education into the classroom**, serves as an information platform and advisory centre, develops new materials for the classroom on a regular basis, plays a part in the European and Austrian discussions on citizenship education, has an influential role in teacher training, and organizes events for students.

With the activities offered, polis supports skills-oriented teaching. The aim is political awareness, which the students reach through careful deliberation. In this respect, a **broad range of knowledge as well as learning activities, which enable the student to learn about, think about and deal with political themes**, is provided. The activities are therefore linked to the lives and experiences of the students.

Civil Courage and Anti Racism Work ([ZARA - Zivilcourage und Antirassismusarbeit](#))

Zara was founded in 1999. Its mission is to **combat racism and to promote civil courage** as well as a **positive approach to cultural diversity**. As one of its many tasks, ZARA undertakes social information and awareness activities. ZARA offers [training courses](#) to businesses and educational institutions, as well as an annual training course in anti-racism work. Topic fields for training include awareness raising and/or sensitisation, building courage in one's convictions, legal situation, and language (ab)use.

Online Democracy workspace by the Federal Parliament ([DemokratieWEBstatt](#))

The Federal Parliament's **online information point** does not only provide information on children's rights (as mentioned above). It focuses on **political and democracy education** as a whole and **enables pupils to learn more about politics, democracy, laws and elections**. Its offers include a virtual walks through the Parliament, workshops, information on the Parliament and its members, an interactive political diary, a democracy encyclopedia, news and numerous games.

Youth information campaigns ([Jugendportal](#))

The Austrian Youth Information Centres as well as their umbrella organization, the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres, **run campaigns for civic education and against hate speech and extremism**. Their **Website** includes a list of information points for civic education ([Politische Bildung](#)) and against disinformation ([Gib Fake News keine Chance](#)). The Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres has also organized a '**Get Active Team**' ([Mitmachen](#)) together with the [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). Through this project, **a group of young Austrians is enabled to take part in workshops of political participation**, where they can weigh in their own ideas.