

## AUSTRIA [3] - 2013 ACHTPLUS

### A. BASIC INFORMATION

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| <b>Country:</b>                                                                                                                     | Austria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Title of initiative:</b>                                                                                                         | [DE] <i>ACHTplus</i><br>[EN] 8plus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Coordinator/<br/>Organization:</b>                                                                                               | BSI (Supervisor of School District) Christian Kompatscher MA,<br>State education authority of Vorarlberg<br>Dr. Klaus Mathis, BIFO Vorarlberg                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Key competences<br/>addressed:</b>                                                                                               | European key competences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Competence in the national language and mother tongue (German)</li> <li>· Foreign language competence (English)</li> <li>· Competence in math and basic STEM</li> <li>· IT competence</li> <li>· Social competence and citizenship</li> <li>· Initiative and entrepreneurship</li> <li>· Cultural awareness and expression</li> <li>· Interests</li> <li>· On-the-job competences</li> <li>· Personal achievements</li> </ul> |
| <b>Type of initiative and<br/>channels used for<br/>implementation</b> (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.) | <i>ACHTplus</i> started as a pilot project in 11 pilot schools (on a voluntary basis): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Introduction to the goals and implementation strategies during teacher conferences</li> <li>· Expansion of pilot schools (on a voluntary basis)</li> <li>· Specific <i>ACHTplus</i> instruments tested in selected classes</li> <li>· Starting in 2016/17, <i>ACHTplus</i> will be implemented in every middle and technical school in Vorarlberg.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Partners:</b>                                                                                                                    | BIFO – Institute for Education and Career Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Scope:</b><br>(student/teacher/school level; local/regional/national)                                                            | All students and teachers mainly in grades 7 to 9, with preparation beginning in grade 5; this is a regional initiative and <i>ACHTplus</i> is only offered in Vorarlberg                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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| <b>Learning context:</b><br>(formal or non-formal)                              | Formal                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>School education level/s:</b><br>(primary, lower secondary, upper secondary) | Lower and upper secondary mainly from grade 7 to 9 (middle schools, technical schools, secondary academic schools, vocational schools)                                                 |
| <b>Target groups:</b>                                                           | Students aged 12 to 16                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Time frame:</b><br>(start and end date)                                      | September 2011 to present                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Relevant links:</b>                                                          | <a href="http://www.achtplus.info">www.achtplus.info</a><br><a href="http://www.individualisierung.org">www.individualisierung.org</a><br><a href="http://www.bifo.at">www.bifo.at</a> |

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## B. SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project is to enable students, parents and teachers to determine the students' competence levels at the transition from grade 8 to 9 and to provide pupils with career guidance and additional information related to their future professional and educational career. Young people aged 14-15 should be well prepared for their future professional career, being aware of the options that are available to them and what they want to do.

With the help of the *ACHTplus* assessment tool, the documentation of their development and progress in their portfolio, and individual career advice sessions, young people are offered support in recognising their competences, potential and abilities and in presenting them in a manner that is helpful and useful for themselves, parents, teachers and the economy.

### CORE ELEMENTS

- Competence determination beginning in grade 7 and continuing through grades 8 and 9 for all pupils of various types of secondary schools through various assessment methods.
- Assessment results, certificates, competence verification etc. are collated in students' portfolios.
- A specially trained teacher prepares a report based on this documentation.
- During a careers advice session, the current learning and development status of the student is discussed from the perspective of all participants (students, parents and teachers). Based on this session, an individual learning focus and agreed objectives are defined.
- If necessary, further assessments are carried out at the beginning of grade 9. The results of these assessments are used together with the *ACHTplus* documentation as the basis for a careers advice session. The joint meeting is conducted by the form teacher or a careers advisor.
- *ACHTplus* is a comprehensive standards tool. Additional educational and careers advice with an analysis of potential will still be required for specific issues and in-depth considerations for some pupils.

## C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

### Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

The idea behind the *ACHTplus* test is that students, parents and teachers should be able to determine students' competence levels at the transition from grade 8 to 9. The initiative, which is implemented in addition to traditional career guidance services offered at schools, aims to provide students with the information needed to make well-informed decisions regarding their careers. At the age of 14-15, students should be well prepared for their professional careers, being aware of what they are good at and what they want.

Using the *ACHTplus* test, documenting progress through a portfolio and exchanging in individual discussions about their strengths, weaknesses and potential for development, students should identify their competences and potential in order to present these elements as an added value to parents, teachers and the business world.

### Objectives:

- Promoting self-organised learning
- Promoting improved self-evaluation (competences and potential for growth)
- Promoting the education competence (learning to learn and development of competences)
- Enabling teenagers to identify their competences and possible opportunities for growth.
- Equipping teenagers to be able to make the best decisions regarding their future education.

### Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

- Development of competences starting at grade 5 (portfolio of strengths)
- Supervision of development of competences (pupil-parent-teacher discussions obligatory since 2012/13 in middle schools)
- Introduction for all teachers involved in the project during a one-day training session
- Regular feedback events in order to exchange opinions and experiences
- Evaluation by students, parents and teachers in 2012/13
- Design of a concept for the overall evaluation, if possible with BIFIE Graz (Federal Institute for Education Research, Innovation and Development)

### Overall approach (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

The aim is a comprehensive implementation within the school system, taking into account different designs depending on the type of school. In conjunction with other initiatives (youth-coaching) it focuses on early school leavers and at-risk teenagers.

## Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:

All eight European competences are addressed in this project;

- Professional competences 1 to 3 are assessed by the *Swiss Stellwerk-Check* tool, adapted to the Austrian context in terms of orthography and the curriculum.
- Digital competence is transferred via the Austrian E-Learning concept.
- Concerning the interdisciplinary competences 5 to 8, a working group has been established in order to develop examples of best practice for implementation in class.
- Two very important focuses of *ACHTplus* are interest and professional competences. These two areas are covered during career guidance classes.

## Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:

- *ACHTplus* should be implemented in all subjects in order to uncover/show capabilities and competences
- Career guidance should be in line with *ACHTplus*.

**How the initiative/reform is being implemented** (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

In order to pinpoint their competences, from grade 8 onwards students should use the *ACHTplus* workbook, which serves as a portfolio of their strengths. Becoming an important part of each class, the workbook should help students to reflect on their individual development and enable a better self-evaluation. In each middle school in Vorarlberg the different competences are measured with various instruments from grade 7 onwards.

During the status discussions, students are able to reflect about their competences, focusing on strengths, weaknesses and potential for improvement and growth. Results from various tests are discussed with everyone involved (students, parents, and teachers), focusing on the students' further education path. During these discussions for students in grades 7 and 8, individual targets are drawn up with all involved. As part of these target agreements, the promotion of a needed competence for the further education path is also agreed upon.

The project is strategically managed by a steering group composed of representatives from the political and economic fields, and from regional education authorities and educational development institutions as well as teachers. The operative work of the initiative is also carried out by this group. Various working groups are developing materials to support the implementation of the day-to-day activities of the initiative. Teachers participating with their classes in the *ACHTplus* pilot phase receive a full-day training session during which they discover the goals of *ACHTplus* and the different instruments used, as well as receiving a guide for the status discussions.

*ACHTplus* coordinators in 16 pilot schools provide support for teachers in their respective schools in order to help with the coordination within schools as well as with the BIFO Institute for Education and Career Guidance and the regional education authority. An important part of the work of these coordinators is to gather constant feedback in order to improve the project.

## Present stage/phase of implementation:

Currently 16 middle schools (8<sup>th</sup> grade), 3 technical schools (9<sup>th</sup> grade), 5 secondary academic schools (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and 12 vocational schools (9<sup>th</sup> grade) are taking part in *ACHTplus*. Only a few of these schools use all of the *ACHTplus* instruments in their work. However, every school does at least one assessment (either for professional competences or the *Stellwerk-CHECK* in German, Maths and English) and implement the status discussions with students, parents, teachers or BIFO-consultants.

## Pedagogical issues (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

- *ACHTplus* working book, assessment of interests, project proposals for interdisciplinary competences, etc.
- Training events for teachers who plan to participate with their classes.
- Further training offers for teachers

## What works well (to identify enablers):

- Use of different assessments in schools
- Status discussions have received very positive feedback from parents and teachers

## Challenges and how these are being addressed (to identify obstacles and solutions):

The *ACHTplus* project aims to transform education in the classroom and to alter the school culture concerning the acquisition of key competences. This is a time-consuming process.

## Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used (e.g. internal/external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

- Two feedback events with questionnaires for school administrators and teachers (01/12, 04/13)
- Feedback questionnaires on training events (04/12, 04/13)
- Online questionnaire for students concerning the status discussions (05/13)
- Feedback questionnaires concerning the status discussions for parents, teachers and students (06/13)

## Impact (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

Teenagers should be enabled to better plan and reflect upon their transition to the next stage of education. They should take into account their strengths and skills, using these to help them make the best decision regarding the most suitable education path for them.

## Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:

- Targeted information for parents in schools implementing *ACHTplus*
- Press release from the federal state of Vorarlberg
- Information on the BIFO homepage
- Information in the BIFO newsletter and the annual report
- Information shared during Chamber of Commerce events
- Inclusion of the Chamber of Commerce and training officers from companies in order to further develop the *ACHTplus* tools.

## Next steps/follow-up:

### Start of implementation phase I:

- During the course of the next school year, more schools should take part in the *ACHTplus* project.
- Every school in Vorarlberg should be involved in the project by the school year 2016/17.

### From autumn 2013:

- The idea to implement *ACHTplus* in technical schools that was developed this spring will be piloted in two technical schools.