COUNTRY OVERVIEW

AUSTRIA 2014

KEYCONET
Key Competence Network on School Education

European Schoolnet
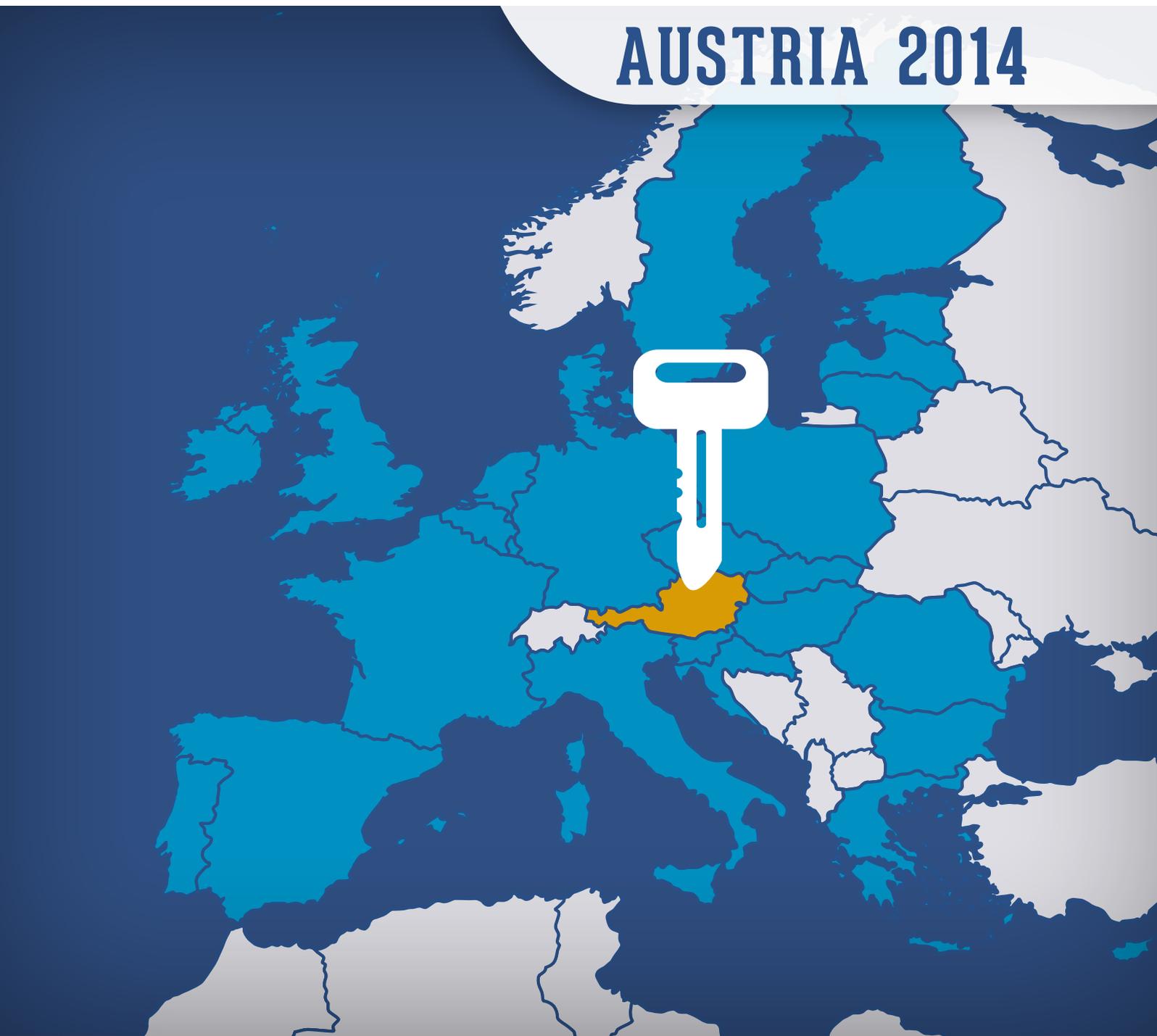
SHORT SUMMARY
Providing a national description contextualizing key competence development in your country [rationale, objectives etc.]:

The current Austrian national policy to support young people's acquisition of key competences, as defined by the European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, includes a number of variations in the implementation of key competences. In the 2008/09 school year Austria launched a national implementation strategy for educational standards, the 'Bildungsstandard' (Education Standards), which deals with certain core competences.

The aim is to improve education by moving towards a more competence-based teaching, through a systematic and comprehensive approach that includes assessment and quality assurance. Other key competences are addressed by a range of actions that have been developed and implemented by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (now Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs). The eight key competences also form the basis for the life long learning (LLL) approach in Austria, and therefore play an important role. The competences are placed within five overall guidelines: focus on different phases in life, student-centred learning, guidance for life-long learning, focus on competences, encouraging participation in LLL. Based on these five guidelines, action plans were drawn up to help ensure that students will gain, consolidate and continuously develop the eight key competences within an integrated and holistic process.

KCD INITIATIVES:

What relevant key competence related initiatives (e.g. curricular reform/national strategy/pilot project/public consultation etc. in relation to students' curricula and assessment, teacher training, school organisation, and learning resources) have taken place in your country over the past five years, and which are planned in the future? You may also refer here to the 2012 case notes produced for your country, and any other initiatives which will be the focus of the 2013 case notes.

With the amendment of the national school education act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz* – SchUG), a legal basis for the implementation of educational standards (and therefore the eight key competences) in Austrian schools has been established. This act primarily determines the framework for quality standards in three subjects (mother tongue, 1st foreign language and mathematics) for students in year 8, and two subjects (mother tongue and mathematics) in year 4. Regular evaluation of the standards allows adaptation in order to ensure quality of education also by feeding back students' learning results to teachers. An integrated programme for further education and teacher training has therefore been developed and has already been partly implemented.

The Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School System *(Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens* – BIFIE) is responsible for the development of these standards

as well as for the further education and training of teachers, in close cooperation with the teacher training colleges (pädagogische Hochschulen - PH). PH are the bodies through which all educational and training measures in this area are implemented and they also serve as the guidance and advisory board for teachers who change their teaching by using a competence-driven approach.

After a period of detailed planning, the first steps towards implementation have finally been taken. The key competences have been integrated into the curricula, teaching materials have been published, and competence-driven teaching methods have been integrated for some time (see detailed implementation below). An essential step forward towards the full implementation of the key competences in the Austrian educational system is the new centralised matriculation examination (also included in the amended education act). Within the 2013-14 school year the new examination has been introduced (in total 392 schools) standardised and competence-based, corresponding well with the educational standards competence development of school years 4 and 8.

Furthermore, the Neue Mittelschule (new secondary school) has been introduced in most of the schools by now. These schools will allow for individual learning approaches and special assistance and coaching for students. This new approach will clearly aid the integration of the key competences into the education system.

OVERALL KCD APPROACH:

How would you characterise the overall approach to key competence development in your country? Is it a holistic approach characterised by an overarching strategy, or rather a targeted approach focusing on one or more specific dimension of the education system (student curriculum, assessment, teacher training, school organisation, learning resources etc.)? Does it cover formal and non-formal learning, both primary and secondary school levels?

Like the majority of European countries, Austria provides national guidelines to help teachers implement the eight key competences.

The Austrian strategy is an overarching one that tackles all levels of the education system; from new ways of learning for students to political decisions at government level. Some key competences – especially those that are part of the curricula (mother tongue, first foreign language, mathematics/natural science) – are well embedded in this holistic approach, which targets primary as well as secondary schools and vocational training schools, and which is also closely connected with efforts to improve life-long learning. The structural change is clearly defined in the education act, which outlines necessary changes as well as standards that should be reached and required assessment. Other key competences – transversal competences – are not included in this overarching process but receive great support through different measures from a range of projects, institutes and other initiatives. The reason for this different but strategic approach is that these competences are not directly linked to school subjects from traditional academic disciplines. One institution (BIFIE) is responsible

for designing and developing the implementation of the three main key competences. The Austrian approach deals with all areas involved in this essential change. Many resources are invested into teacher training and further education as well as into supporting the change by providing guidelines for teachers. An important aspect of this approach is the provision of student curricula as well as lesson plans and examples of best practice, exercises, etc. These examples are taken from concrete experience and can therefore easily be implemented into the new curricula. National standardised assessment of students' learning performance and feedback to the teachers is an essential part of the quality assurance of the Austrian implementation strategy.

These are both used for evaluative purposes and, longer term, to monitor the Austrian education system. The strategy exclusively covers formal learning.

KEY COMPETENCES ADDRESSED:

Is there a focus on any particular EU key competence/s or a combination of them, or perhaps there is more of a focus on alternative/complementary competences defined at national level?

In Austria, the focus in primary and secondary schools is on individual competences (mother tongue, first foreign language and maths/natural science), since they are also subjects in the Austrian curricula. As for vocational schools, the competences are differentiated by general competences, competences in connection with the job and social/personal competences. The material provided by the BIFIE and other sources like projects or initiatives is very clearly focused on the educational aims and quality levels that were set. Within these three competence areas, the majority of material is focused on a single competence as a subject in itself, although this does not necessarily mean that they exclude other competences. Within these subjects, Austria has developed detailed materials that are adapted to the curricula, which reflect teaching practice in classrooms and include clear instructions for teachers.

As mentioned previously, there are several initiatives and projects that combine different competences. Some examples of these are:

- **Literacy** (*http://www.literacy.at*), a long-term programme aimed at tackling low reading skills in Austria, is the new national coordination point for further education and training. This new action plan to foster these skills was put into place at the training college PH Vienna and aims to develop competences that go beyond basic reading and writing skills but also ensure the achievement of quality standards (based on the key competences), as well as developing language competence and skills in new media.

- **Sparkling Science** (*http://www.sparklingscience.at/en*) is one of several projects and initiatives that have been launched with the aim of raising interest in natural science and maths. Sparkling Science is a unique research programme, launched in

2007 by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF – now Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy), which adopts unconventional methods to encourage young scientists.

fti (*http://www.fti-remixed.at*) aims to develop learning in research. With the need to strengthen key competences, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Woman's Affairs decided to begin with the 'Digital Competences, basic education in ICT' initiative (*http://www.digikomp.at*) in cooperation with the Upper Austria regional education authority. A stakeholder panel was established with representatives from universities, teacher-training institutions and regional education authorities. A decision was made to set up a pilot project in lower secondary schools, with the aim of encouraging student participation, using the EDUMOODLE platform and providing resources for teachers. This pilot will be the basis for further decisions on a political level. In Austria the transversal key competences of citizenship, entrepreneurship and ICT education are integrated into the curriculum for primary and secondary education. The strategies for digital competence are wide-ranging, encompassing several areas such as infrastructure and broadband connectivity, ICT safety and e-Skills development as well as ICT in schools. The development of digital competence is integrated into existing curriculum subjects. Projects like 'mobile Lernbegleiter' (mobile learning tutors *http://www.eeducation.at/netbook.php)* – just to name one of many - are fostering the digital competences – complemented by self-organisation and ability of critical thinking - by the use of notebooks, netbooks, tablets and mobile devices learning with digital educational content in different curriculum subjects. There is also a national ICT strategy ('eFit'/'eFit21'). The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Woman's Affairs has encouraged the participation of schools in various national and international digital learning projects combining this competence with different other subjects and competences (e.g. eTwinning, *www.etwinning.at*; and Virtuelle Schule, *http://virtuelleschule.at/ projekte-international*). The 'Innovationen Machen Schulen Top' (Innovations Make Top Schools, IMST *https://www.imst.ac.at*) is a flexible support system in Austria that encourages a culture of innovation in five different competences (maths, ICT, natural science, German and technology) in order to ensure a sustainable integration. LMS (Lernen mit System - Learn with System at *http://www.bildungsserver.com*) is a highly visible project with more than 10 million hits to the page each month. LMS offers learning modules for teachers that are compatible with competence-orientated teaching. In 2005, the Austrian government launched a national centre for personal development and social learning (ÖZEPS, *www.oezeps.at*) to encourage the development of two key competences: social competences and learning to learn. ÖZEPS aims to develop these competences through individual learning, constructive learning assessment, the development of personality and social learning in the classroom. In addition, ÖZEPS tackles the problem of preventing violence in schools. Many different initiatives and institutions are strategically developing the key competence of sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. The main objective of their activities is to strengthen the quality and scope of entrepreneurship educa-

tion and training, especially for students aged 14+ in vocational schools. The Ministry has put the EESI centre (Entrepreneurship Education for School Innovation - *http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at*) in charge of developing this key competence as well as of personal development in all secondary schools in Austria. EESI produces materials for schools in the form of school books, competitions, workshops and scientific papers that are presented at the Entrepreneurship Symposium, teacher training (in close collaboration with the teacher training colleges) and also software tools that measure personal attitudes and entrepreneurship skills.

In order to develop the key competence of cultural awareness and expression, the Austrian government has made a great investment in launching several projects and initiatives. Since 2007 more than 20 000 new projects have been launched by schools, artists and cultural institutions (see list of projects and initiatives at: *http://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/site/7984/default.aspx*). The aim is to foster also students' creativity, innovation and artistic expression.

A specific project that is targeted to address all eight key competences is ACHTplus (*http://www.achtplus.info*). ACHTplus is a holistic package of actions and activities for students that support them in detecting their abilities and potentials, developing them further and choosing the appropriate educational career. Students aged 12 – 16 are working with different tools (working book, checks, questionnaires and a face2face interview) in the defined eight competences to disclose interests, strengths and aptitude, develop and extend abilities, as well as document, present and communicate them.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED:

Who are the main stakeholders involved in key competence development in your country?

The national education act has brought a substantial change at every level of education. This process is currently taking place at several levels and involves a range of different bodies. The implementation of the Bildungsstandard will bring substantial change that will affect all educational stakeholders in Austria; it will affect the teaching and learning approaches of teachers and students, directors and other members of school management and national/regional political stakeholders, as well as influencing educational initiatives and projects.

KCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES:

How does the implementation of key competence development/reform in school education function in your country? (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.)

Implementation of key competence reform is based on a national education act that affects all levels of educational stakeholders. Austria has national guidelines on what should be taught or learnt in schools, which are already partially included in the new curricula. These guidelines are supported by teacher training as well as concrete learning materials for schools. Several institutions are responsible for the implementation of the key competences (see section 'Key competences addressed'). Several steps need to be taken to ensure the full implementation of the three main key competences:

With the aim to extend as well as to improve the system of the assessment concept, the first assessment for quality assurance began (BMBF - former BM:UKK - and BIFIE) in the key competences of maths (2013) and mother tongue (2014) in year 4, and in maths (2012), first foreign language (2013) and mother tongue (2014) in year 8. With the new formation of the recent ministry, also the teaching of the Austrian language is fostered to ensure the diversity of the German language.

The assessment is designed under the principle to 'assess FOR learning' instead of 'assessment OF learning'. This principle is implemented by the inclusion of the individual learner in giving immediate feedback as well as to disclose individual strengths and needs for learning improvement.

Commitments must also be made by all supervising school authorities, PH training colleges and the school supervisory board to support the development of a common understanding of the function of the Bildungsstandards. A challenge is to clarify the different roles and tasks of different stakeholders (e.g. regional coordinators for teacher training, bridging between schools, PHs, ministry and school authorities, etc.) as well as the setting up of competence teams to support the PHs in their tasks. Changing the system also requires a change in the allocation of budgets for the education and training of teachers. Some initial training, which will be improved and revised in due course, is already in place for the advisers, evaluators and moderators who will be involved in testing and evaluation, and in feeding back results to teachers and students. Finally, the introduction of further acts in national law regarding the administration of testing in the SchUG will need to be established.

A specific project to strengthen the development of key competences and facilitate formative assessment is IKM (informelle Kompetenzmessung; informal competence diagnostics), which is targeted to year 3 and 7. Its aim is to prepare students as well as teachers for the

standard assessment by providing tests based on the education standards. IKM is on a voluntary basis and gives immediate feedback to teachers thus giving them the opportunity to make corrections in their teaching approach.

OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS:

What would you identify as obstacles and/or facilitators to developing and implementing a key competence approach in your country's education system, or to more generally introducing any type of educational reform related to the definition of key competences and revision of the curriculum, and to joint collaboration on such issues relying on the input from those working on different dimensions (e.g. teacher training, learning resources etc.)?

Implementing key competences into the new curriculum is a challenging task for teachers and educational staff since it implies important shifts in the way teaching is envisaged. Support in the form of a strategic and coherent approach that tackles all areas (such as teacher training, the formation of a common understanding, guidelines and support systems) help make the implementation process easier. The implementation of key competences is a different concept for Austria and involves the introduction of the concept to all stakeholders, as well as the adaptation of policies to improve the quality of education. Considering the broad range of stakeholders, it is not surprising that this implementation needs time. Transversal key competences information/initiatives are difficult to identify since they are not covered in one single subject like maths or foreign languages, but rather are integrated in different subjects.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/USEFUL URLs:

ACHTplus check was in dir steckt:
http://www.achtplus.info

Bildungsstandards Berufsbildende Schulen:
http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at

Bundesinstitut BIFIE:
http://www.bifie.at

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, 2014: (Österreichisches) Deutsch als Unterrichts- und Bildungssprache. Wien, 2014:
https://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/oed.html

Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur und Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2011: „Strategischer Rahmen für die europäische Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet der allgemeinen und beruflichen Bildung ('ET 2020') - Österreichischer Fortschrittsbericht 2011". Wien 2011.

Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur und Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2009: Österreichischer Fortschrittsbericht 2009 über die Umsetzung des EU-Arbeitsprogramms „Allgemeine und berufliche Bildung 2010". Wien, 2009.

Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur und Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung, BMUKK:
http://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/site/7984/default.aspx.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen und Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung, BMBF:
http://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/ba/bildungsstandards.xml

Digi.Komp – Digitale Kompetenzen Informatische:
http://www.digikomp.at

EESI centre - Entrepreneurship Education for School Innovation:
http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at

eTwinning:
http://www.etwinning.at

Fti:
http://www.fti-remixed.at

🔗 Innovationen Machen Schulen Top (Innovations Make Top Schools, IMST:
ttps://www.imst.ac.at

🔗 LITERACY:
http://www.literacy.at

🔗 LMS Lernen mit System:
http://www.bildungsserver.com

🔗 Mobile Lernbegleiter - mobile learning tutors:
http://www.efit21.at/news/mobile-lernbegleiter-im-unterricht

🔗 ÖZEPS:
http://www.oezeps.at

🔗 Sparkling Science:
http://www.sparklingscience.at/en

🔗 Virtuelle Schule:
http://virtuelleschule.at/projekte-international

KeYCoNe
Key Competence Network on School Education

ABOUT EUROPEAN SCHOOLNET

European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet project.

European Schoolnet is a network of 31 Ministries of Education from across the European member states, leading educational innovation at European level. As a major international think tank, European Schoolnet operates key European services in education on behalf of the European Commission, member Ministries of Education and industry partners.

European Schoolnet's activities are divided among three areas of work:

- Policy, research and innovation: information sharing and evidence building.

- Schools services: enhancing cooperation between schools across Europe.

- Advocacy: how ICT and digital media contribute to transforming teaching and learning processes.

Join us on

🔗 http://europeanschoolnet.org

in **Key Competence Network on School Education – KeyCoNet**

🐦 **#21skillscourse**   🐦 **#KeyCoNet**

🖥 **http://www.europeanschoolnetacademy.eu/web/keyconet**

http://keyconet.eun.org