

Civic Education as an Interdisciplinary Subject in Austria – A Review

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Contents

Abstract

1. Interdisciplinary Subjects in Austrian Schools
2. Civic Education: A case study
3. CE in the Austrian School System
4. Future Perspectives: A Critical Review
5. Action Days and the Anniversary Year of 2005

References

Abstract

The article gives an overview of Civic Education (CE) inside the Austrian school system. CE has an interdisciplinary approach as a teaching principle but is also part of regular subjects like history. The introduction of CE as such a principle has been extremely important, but in some cases its existence is willingly used as an alibi for later inactivity. It is argued that there is especially a total lack of initial and further teacher trainings on CE. CE threatens to become an area of contents and didactics chosen by chance. A systematic analysis and evaluation of its interdisciplinary focus is still at the very beginning.

1. Interdisciplinary Subjects in Austrian Schools

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*BMBWK – Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur*) is the supreme executive authority concerning all matters of education in Austria, which is organized in different divisions. Over a long time two Ministries administrated the wide field of education. One Ministry dealt with primary and secondary education (including high schools) and the other with higher academic education (universities etc.). In 2000 a reform of competence combined the two ministries into a single Ministry of Education, Science und Culture (see table 1).

Table 1: The Austrian School System – an Overview

COMPULSORY EDUCATION	9. (14 Years)	Pre-vocational school	Intermediate Secondary Technical and	Training college for non-teaching supervisory staff and Kindergarten	Upper secondary technical and vocational colleges	Academic secondary school, separate upper level	Kollegs	Teacher training colleges (Pädagogische)	Colleges for high-level medical-technical professions and Colleges for midwifery	Universities of applied sciences	Universities
	8. (13 Years)										
	7. (12 Years)										
	6. (11 Years)										

* The term „special school“ includes e.g. schools for handicapped pupils.

Source: BMBWK 2004, 7¹

At first glance the Austrian school system is characterized by a large extent of organisation and structure. Austrian schools are having comprehensive autonomy and various possibilities for implementing independent initiatives and projects. After finishing compulsory education Austrian pupils have the possibility to choose from different offers of further education.

To cut a long story short the Austrian school system provides well-balanced and well-elaborated offers for pupils and students.

All matters of education are shared between the Federation (*Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture*) and the federal states (*Bundesländer*). The Federation is exclusively in charge of the legislation and implementation. For every subject taught at Austrian schools the Ministry issues a decree named curriculum (*Lehrplan*). For cross-curricula subjects like CE teaching principles were implemented.

The following teaching principles currently exist in Austria (BMBWK 2004, 76). Eight of them are legitimated by a special decree:

¹ Table is overworked and completed by the authors.

- Education for Equality between Women and Men (*Erziehung zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern* – decree 1995² – based on Article 4 of the „United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women“³)
- Health Education (*Gesundheitserziehung* – decree 1997)⁴
- Reading and Speaking Education (*Lese- und Sprecherziehung* – decree 1999)⁵
- Media Education (*Medienerziehung* – decree 2001)⁶
- Civic Education (CE) (*Politische Bildung* – decree 1978, published again in 1994)⁷
- Sexual Education (*Sexualerziehung* – decree 1970 , published again and updated in 1990)⁸
- Environmental Education (*Umwelterziehung* – decree 1985, published again in 1994)⁹
- Art and Music Education (*Musische Erziehung* – decree 1990)¹⁰

Five teaching principles are not based on a decree but on various existing curricula:

- Traffic Education (*Verkehrserziehung* – decree in preparation)¹¹
- Economic Education (*Wirtschaftserziehung*)¹²
- Intercultural Learning (*Interkulturelles Lernen*)¹³
- Education for Application of new Technologies (*Erziehung zur Anwendung neuer Technologien*)¹⁴
- Preparation for the Working Process and Profession (*Vorbereitung auf die Arbeits- und Berufswelt*)¹⁵

The original notation¹⁶ and the year of announcement can be found in brackets. Almost all teaching principles are based on a decree by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Decrees have to be based on existing laws – in the case of teaching principles on existing curricula¹⁷. They can interpret existing laws or summarize them under new points of view. The task of teaching principles is always to complete and to complement the various curricula.

² Decree: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/ministerium/rs/1995-77.xml>, (download 7.8.2006), available only in German.

³ Federal Law Gazette, 443/1982.

⁴ Decree: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/902/gesunderl.pdf>, (download 7.8.2006), available only in German.

⁵ Decree: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/prinz/Leseerziehung1594.xml>, (download 7.8.2006), available only in German.

⁶ Decree: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/5796/Medienneuerlass.pdf>, (download 7.8.2006), available only in German.

⁷ Decree: http://www.eduhi.at/dl/Grundsatzterlass_Politische_Bildung_deutsch.doc, (download 7.8.2006). English version: http://www.eduhi.at/dl/Grundsatzterlass_Politische_Bildung_englisch1.doc, (download 7.8.2006).

⁸ Decree: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/918/sexuerzi.pdf>, (download 7.8.2006), available only in German.

⁹ Decree <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/ministerium/rs/1994-35.xml>, (download 7.8.2006), available only in German.

¹⁰ No document online available.

¹¹ For further information: http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/prinz/Unterrichtsprinzipien_Ve1598.xml, (download 7.8.2006).

¹² Decree: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/prinz/wirtschaftserziehung.xml>, (download 7.8.2006).

¹³ For further information: http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/prinz/interkult_lernen.xml, (download 7.8.2006).

¹⁴ No document online available.

¹⁵ No document online available.

¹⁶ For many teaching principles no official translation is existing. So in some cases a translation was made by the authors.

¹⁷ In the case of CE you can find a comprehensive insight – in how the Austrians are dealing with CE in the various curricula – by visiting: <http://www.politische-bildung.schule.at>, (download 7.8.2006). This site will give you extensive and detailed information about fixing CE in the curricula.

2. Civic Education: A case study

The Austrian way of implementing CE in school is laid down in a principle CE-decree. CE is inevitably incorporated with individual development and the development of the society as a whole. "In a time characterised by growing complexity in all spheres of life, civics education contributes proactively towards shaping society and translating democracy into practice. A major concern of civics education is to educate students towards a democratically inspired awareness of Austria, towards pan-European thinking and open mindedness supported by an understanding of the existential problems of humankind. CE takes its lead from an understanding of democracy which sees no contradiction in recognising, on the one hand, legitimate government and authority and, on the other hand, the postulated identity of those who govern and those who are governed. However, it focuses on the issue of how governance and authority are recognised as rightful by society. A democratic community will be guided by the unchanging principle that the source of authority and governance can only be the right of those governed or of their appointed bodies to appoint, supervise and recall those who govern. A democratic system of government will be the more successful the more profoundly the concept of democracy is recognised in other spheres of society."¹⁸

This short quotation is a good example for illustrating that nearly 30 years after its implementation the decree is still up to date. For a better understanding of today's CE-situation we have to have a look at the history. The dilemma of CE in Austria started in 1945 (Filzmaier 2002; Wolf 1998, 13-74). After World War II the Allies stated that Austria was the first victim of the National Socialistic aggression. This assumption gained broad acceptance instead of tending to a "perpetrator theory". So the Austrian continuity has only been interrupted from 1938 to 1945 and no one found it necessary to work off the incidents of the immediate history. In contrast the later Federal Republic of Germany has been obligated to start a re-education program (Gagel 1998) which was focused on a comprehensive policy of political rehabilitation and re-socialization. In Germany the Allies even decided which contents of democracy learning have to be treated and what kind of institutional framework has to be implemented. The Austrian situation was quite the contrary. Neither particular contents nor particular institutions were implemented in the field of CE. For example the cruelties of World War II have been blinded out in school education during the late 1960s.

In the 1970s CE has slowly arouse public interest. In 1973 party academies were set up and relatively extensive resources for CE were at their proposal. In the same year the Department for Civic Education – part of the Ministry for Education – was founded.

At the same time the discussion about the implementation of CE as own subject in schools started. The ambitious goal provoked a lot of resistance and the implementation of CE as own subject was a distant prospect. As a compromise the preparation of a CE-decree started. 1975 the first draft was published and immediately criticized by politicians and officials.

Before its implementation in 1978 the CE-decree underwent controversial and hot-tempered discussions and demanded numerous modifications and adaptations. The final version of the decree is denoted by many compromises and gives way to a wide range of interpretation. This process – namely the agreement to a least common denominator – can be respected as typical for the Austrian way of decision making.

3. CE in the Austrian School System

Today CE in the Austrian school system is still based on the already quoted CE teaching principle. On one hand the CE has to communicate values, on the other hand CE is established between three inter-dependent areas (Filzmaier 2002; Wolf 1998, 13-74):

1. Civics education means providing knowledge and understanding:

Students should learn about the systems and arrangements of political, cultural and economic life. They should receive factual information on the historical and societal roots of such systems and perceive the forces and interests acting within them.

2. Civics education means developing skills and insights:

Students should learn to recognise the political, cultural and economic interaction and make critical judgements. Insight into the elements of socio-political decision-making processes (the

¹⁸ See the Grundsatzlerlass Politische Bildung by the Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten (BMUK) – today Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (BMBWK)– in 1978, GZ 33.464/6-19a/78, published again in 1994, GZ 33.466/103-V/4a/94. Or visit: http://www.eduhi.at/dl/Grundsatzlerlass_Politische_Bildung_deutsch.doc, (download 7.8.2006). English version: http://www.eduhi.at/dl/Grundsatzlerlass_Politische_Bildung_englisch1.doc, (download 7.8.2006).

bodies vested with social and in particular political responsibility, their objectives and values, their interests; decision-making and action processes; distribution of power) are to provide the foundation for the development of personal opinions which enable the individual to assume personal responsibility in shaping our society.

3. Civics education means inspiring individuals with the will to act responsibly:

Civics education intends to awaken and foster willingness in the students to contribute actively to the shaping of political processes. Students should be willing to translate decisions which are prompted by their own value judgements into politically responsible action, even when they are exposed to pressure and when they have to disregard their own interests.

The CE decree tries to find a combination of basic knowledge and the development of insight in real political processes. In-depth knowledge is essential for a better understanding of legislation and political decision making. A comparative study published by Euridyce and named "*Citizenship Education at School in Europe*" deals with nearly the same approach which is necessary to develop a framework of Citizenship Education in European Schools. "Citizenship education is normally meant to guide pupils towards (a) political literacy, (b) critical thinking and the development of certain attitudes and values and (c) active participation" (Euridyce 2005, 10).

Based on these two approaches different core competences of CE respectively of Citizenship Education are created (see table 2).

Table 2: Core Competences of Civic Education/Citizenship Education (Filzmaier 2002)

Core Competence	Aspects of Democratic Civic Education/Citizenship Education
Knowledge and Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concepts of democracy - concepts of democratic citizenship - functioning of democracy (incl. civil society) - legislation and political decision-making - citizens' rights and duties - role of political parties and interest groups - options for participation in decision-making - influence on policy-making - current political problems
Attitudes and Opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interest in social and political affairs - national identity with regard to democracy/towards democratic citizenship - political confidence - political efficacy - self-discipline - loyalty - tolerance and recognition of own prejudices - respect for other individuals - value of EU-ropean civilization values on which Europe is founded (democracy/social justice/human rights)

Intellectual Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collecting and absorbing political information by various media - critical approach to information, policies, views - communication skills (be able to reason, and argue and express own views) - describe processes, institutions, functions etc. - resort to non-violence conflicts - take responsibility - ability to judge - make choices/take a position
Participatory Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - influence policies and decisions (petitioning and lobbying) - build coalitions and co-operate with partner organizations - taking part in political discussions - participation in social and political processes (membership of political party, interest groups, voting, writing letters, demonstrating etc.)

To sum up the main goal of CE is to improve and to support the ability to participate and consequently to build up competences for influencing politics and political decision-making processes. A classic example for influencing and controlling politics from outside the system would be citizen's action groups. Another example would be the growing numbers of various NGO's specifically young people are interested in collaborating. But nevertheless membership in political parties and the attendance in elections are also examples for political participation. Disenchantment with politics or political apathy and political cynicism are regarded as negative examples. However, a functioning political participation depends on the readiness to cooperate and form a coalition because insisting on "take it or leave it"-points of view can either lead to inability to make decisions or result in authoritarian (majority-) decisions without considering minority rights (ibid.).

Table 2 demonstrates that knowledge is the fundamental basis for CE work and that core competences of CE are interlocked and cannot be separated. The development of core competences is inseparably linked with the aims of CE.

Concerning the Austrian school system the subject "CE" exists at the pre-vocational schools (*Polytechnische Schule*), the vocational schools (*Berufsschule*) and – with differently named combinations (for example with Economic Education or with Law) – at secondary professional and technical schools (*Berufsbildenden Mittleren und Höhere Schulen/BMHS*). In secondary academic schools (junior and senior high schools; *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen/AHS*) for the 11th and 12th grade a subject called "History and CE" was introduced at the beginning of the school year of 2001/2002. Before that merely the possibility of an optional class or a non-committal exercise existed in the AHS upper grades (see table 3) (ibid.). As a matter of fact it is impossible to reduce topics of CE in schools within one subject. In the case of secondary academic schools CE is not just focused on the subject mentioned above, but also "geography and economics" contains a lot of topics concerning CE. In addition also the teaching of the native language (*Unterrichtsfach Deutsch*) deals with a wide range of CE contents.

Table 3: survey – formal curriculum provision (Euridyce 2005, 74):

Country	Educational Level	Terminology	Approach	Time Allocation
Austria	Primary	civic education	cross-curricular theme	not prescribed
	lower secondary	civic education	cross-curricular theme	
	upper secondary	history, social studies and civics	separate subject	1 lesson per week in year 9; 2 lessons per week in years 10,11,12
	References: Primary and lower secondary: Schulorganisationsgesetz. Upper secondary: 77 th Federal Act modifying the School Organisation Act and the 12 th amendment of the School Organisation Act, § 39 paragraph 1,1).			

Source: Euridyce 2005

In addition to table 3 in the Austrian school system it is possible for pupils to deepen their political education in a “*Wahlpflichtfach*” (optional courses for pupils in 10th, 11th and 12th grade) or to choose some lessons in their curriculum (personal compulsory subjects).

The introduction of the subject in 2001/2002 was of enormous importance as an optional class always depends on the engagement of the instructing teachers and the participating students and is not at all equivalent to a compulsory class. Under consideration of the fact that a “politicization” of the Austrian society has to be suspected taking into account the background of current political developments, the existence of the subject is important but must not replace the principle neither in AHS nor in BMHS. It would be dangerous to restrict the various and interdisciplinary contents of CE to a few lessons per week. In this case the consequence could be that CE is reduced to a superficial institutionalism and both the consideration of greater correlations and the competence for a putting into action of contents in the social everyday life are lost. Complex topics like the understanding of the meaning of democracy by Austrian citizens cannot be treated in a few teaching units per week but have to be refurbished as general projects.

Related to the concept of Euridyce named “*Citizenship Education at School in Europe*” – performed by all members of the European Union, three EFTA /EAA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and the two candidate countries Bulgaria and Romania – three distinct approaches concerning teacher education in CE can be located (Euridyce 2005, 48):

- (1) included in the initial education of all teachers
- (2) a special programme taken only by those intending to teach citizenship education
- (3) included solely in in-service teacher education

Teacher education for primary and lower secondary education includes only aspects of citizenship education. As mentioned before in Austria CE in these fields is based on the teaching principle “CE” and has been implemented as cross-curricular theme. In addition teacher education for upper secondary education intends certain courses in CE during the study of history.

The question is which qualification teachers need for instructing CE at schools. At the moment Austrian universities do not offer special regular studies which are able to prepare future teachers to give lessons on CE at secondary academic schools. Only the postgraduate *Continuing Education Course/Master of Science for Civic Education*¹⁹ implemented in cooperation with the Austrian Universities of Krems and Klagenfurt is an exception in the area of further education. The continuing education course is characterised by its interdisciplinary approach and the individual option for every student to choose his or her own focus. After completing the general and obligatory part students can deepen their interests in the following areas:

- Politics (*Bereich Politik*)
- Social Competence and Organisation (*Bereich Soziale Kompetenz und Organisation*)
- History and Society (*Bereich Geschichte und Gesellschaft*)

¹⁹ A detailed information can be found: <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at>, (download 7.8.2006).

The interdisciplinarity of the course is of central importance. The curriculum of broad diversified seminars does not see itself as a stringing together of technical contents. It rather offers the chance to go beyond the expansion of political knowledge and to deal with central problems of the present society. It allows finding possibilities for reflection and/or an exchange of views and experiences with colleagues in order to realize CE in the everyday school practice or in the every day life of professional action.

The continuing education course has been existing for more than 20 years. With starting the cooperation in the academic year of 2005/06 a new organisational structure has been implemented. A Control Board (*Steuerungsgremium*) consisting of four researchers from both cooperating universities is responsible for the organisation, the finances and the formal and content orientation. Additionally an interdisciplinary composed Advisory Board (*Beratungsgremium*) has been installed. The Advisory Board supports the work of the Control Board. At the moment the implementation of a Think Tank has experimental character and is now in a pilot phase. The continuing education course offers the only CE programme in Austria and completes with an academic degree. The master programme takes at least six semesters and after writing a masters thesis the students are awarded the international degree: Master of Science (Civic Education). Additionally to the MSc grade a short-cycle version is also offered and completed with the academic title "Academic Civic Educator" (*Akademischer politischer Bildner*).

Providing this special CE programme we are confronted with some direct impacts of Austrian "school reality". School authorities do no care for this degree, when they choose teachers for several positions. The allocation of teachers in schools, in further education or for jobs in commissions e.g. for approbation for school-textbooks at the BMBWK are not based on additional qualifications. Furthermore there is a tremendous surplus of teachers of history in most of the schools. They have to teach CE-lessons in the classes, with or without an adequate education. Neither the Academic Civic Educator nor the Master of Science (Civic Education) guarantees a professional advancement and at least financial aid. The main reasons for teachers to participate the university programme are private and personal engagement, willingness in further education and interest in CE.

It has to be stated critically that there is a lack of common initiatives by school administration and universities (e.g. there are no regular studies for teachers as well as there is usually no participation of political scientists in the preparation of teaching curricula for CE and hardly no cooperation for writing textbooks etc.). CE threatens to become an area of contents and didactics chosen by chance. As long as teachers for CE have their knowledge from completely different initial trainings –from courses in studies of law, current history, geography, or economics etc. – a common approach is impossible. Besides the system of continuing education usually focuses on subject teachers but not on interdisciplinary courses.

It is easy to recognize that CE in Austria is not handled as a high priority issue. The demands for an intensification of CE in the initial and vocational training for teachers as well as for strengthening the subject in the school area are not a current development but were already expressed 1978 when introducing the teaching principle. So in nearly three decades there have been only a few innovations.

In January 2007 a new type of higher education institution will complete the Austrian higher education landscape. Teacher Training Colleges (*Pädagogische Akademien*) will become the status of universities and will be allowed to award academic grades. The main task of these Colleges is to train teachers for compulsory education. This will be the same for the future Universities. Universities of Teacher Training will offer courses up to bachelor and master-degree. At present the implementation of courses is focused on the main subjects. Time will show how the Universities of Teacher Training will deal with CE. But nevertheless the development of a particular new Higher Education segment can be an important chance to rethink and revise teacher training in the field of CE.

4. Future Perspectives: A Critical Review

One step forward to achieve top priority for CE in Austria but also within the European Union could be the implementation of the project "Education for Democratic Citizenship"²⁰ induced by the Council of Europe (*Europarat*) in the year 1997. The aim of the project is to support democratic participation and strengthen responsible European citizenship.

2005 was proclaimed to be the European Year of Citizenship through Education. Austria has dedicated each month to a certain topic of CE (see table 4)

²⁰ For further information please visit: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/>, (download 7.8.2006). At this site also a summary of the European Year of Citizenship through education is available: <http://www.coe.int/eyce>, (download 7.8.2006).

Table 4 – Overview monthly changing topics²¹

Learning and Living Democracy	January
Democracy and Minorities (History and Present of Roma and Sinti)	February
Women: Majority as Minority?	March
The Political Book for Children and Teenager (At the same time the CE-Action Days “ <i>Aktionstage Politische Bildung</i> ” took place.)	April
Commemorate and Celebrate	May
People in Motion (People Travelling – People Fleeing)	June/July
Peace: Arising – Creating – Obtaining	August/September
Constitutions	October
Human Rights and Tolerance	November
United Nations – The Balkans (South-East Europe)	December

Besides the “Action Days for CE” (*Aktionstage Politische Bildung*) are one national initiative which was founded three years ago by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in cooperation with other institutions dealing with CE. This initiative will be described in the following chapter.

5. Action Days and the Anniversary Year of 2005

For the first time in the year 2003 the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture put the idea of CE-Action Days – “*Aktionstage Politische Bildung*”²² – into action. Aim of the implementation was to present initiatives dealing with CE and furthermore to sensitize for various measures in the field of CE in Austria. Linking and networking within involved institutions lead to a collection of CE offers. The collection is documented in a booklet giving information and survey to different multipliers involved in CE.

The results of this project are the development of an European Quiz game, the realization of a seminar with contemporary witnesses of World War II and the horror of the Nazi period, activities on the different commemoration days, various projects, seminars and workshops performed in schools and also a number of publications were published. As mentioned before the Action Days are part of the project *Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC)*.

Originally Action Days were an initiative of the European Council. A handful of ambitious employees of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture picked up the idea and transformed it without having financial support. The lack of sufficient financial aid resulted in a booklet which just collected projects by chance and was not able to give an overview of the Austrian activities in the broad field of CE. At the same time the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture shortened class hours for CE and curtailed the financial support for teacher training. It seemed that the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture was working in the opposite direction to its own initiative of Action Days. Nevertheless the experience of the last years shows that the Action Days have become a relevant part inside the Austrian CE-scene. In 2005 the Federal Republic of Germany also decided to implement Action Days based on the Austrian model and its experiences. This example may be an important step to spread out the idea to many other European countries and to support the ideas of the EDC-project.

The anniversary year 2005 was an indicator how the Action Days have achieved the goal to become a substantial part of CE work in Austria. The year 2005 could be esteemed both a chance and danger for the prospectively spreading of CE within Austria. Three anniversaries were celebrated:

- 60 years Second Republic of Austria
- 50 years Austrian National Treaty (*Staatsvertrag*)
- 10 years Membership in the European Union

For each anniversary various smaller and extensive events were realised. Most of them were performed under certain focuses relating to the three anniversaries. Initiatives related to the

²¹ Overview made by the authors based on the information on the website: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at>, (download 7.8.2006).

²² See also: <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/prinz/pb/aktionstage.xml> (download 14.9.2006).

described topics are commendable, but within just content related CE initiatives the flexibility of CE measures got lost. Other initiatives went down and were not recognised by clients outside the different ceremonies. Another urgent problem was that initiatives were absorbed by the government or different political parties. The government decided to proclaim a “Year of Austrian Identity” based on the intention of concluding a new Austrian constitution and the ratification of the European constitution. Concretely political parties realised different programs concerning the jubilees. In some cases the programs represented alternatives or could be seen as a competition between political parties. It seemed to be simple to put various ceremonies under a merely political motto and to lead a contest to become the most public furore.

In Austria no independent scientific discussion referred to the implementation of a theory on transfer of political information is established. Uniform criteria for CE do not exist. As a role model the way of Germany can be mentioned. Currently national education standards for CE in schools were discussed but and a first draft is published.²³ The absence of standards within CE and the missing of responsible CE institutions is leading to the phenomenon that CE outside school education is left to academics with political science background or to other ambitious and interested persons linked to the field of CE.

Finally we can say that apathy not partiality is the primary problem of CE in Austria (Dachs 1996). Non-political teachers who are only administrators of a curriculum are more detrimental to CE than teachers who work on the basis of subjective opinions too much in individual cases due to over-engagement. The introduction of CE as a teaching principle and as a subject has been extremely important, but in some cases its existence is willingly used as an alibi for later inactivity. Austria was not able to give CE high priority. There is still no powerful lobby for CE whilst other subjects and principles are pushed by their interest groups like teacher associations etc. That was why political decision-makers were not under pressure to continue further steps on strengthening CE.

Therefore for a substantial progress an expansion of the subject besides the teaching principle in the schools as well as strengthening CE in the adult education are absolutely necessary. Besides regular studies for CE at Austrian universities a module system of courses about society, politics and state has to be introduced. This module system must contain possibilities to combine courses from different programs in a useful way. Finally only satisfactory results can be achieved by a constant discourse between persons who are part of the school community (e.g. students, teachers and parents), theoretical researchers and/or empirical workers (e.g. scientists and adult education trainers) as well as critics and “sceptics”.

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²³ See Gesellschaft für Politikdidaktik und politische Jugend- und Erwachsenenbildung – document: Nationale Bildungsstandards für den Fachunterricht in der Politischen Bildung an Schulen, Ein Entwurf, Schwalbach 2004. The draft is written by well known german CE experts like Wolfgang Sander, Joachim Detjen, Hans-Werner Kuhn, Dagmar Richter and Georg Weißeno.

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Important websites at a glance

Actions Days Civic Education: <http://www.aktionstage.politische-bildung.at>,

Council of Europe: <http://www.coe.int>,

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