



Peace Education at the ACP

Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP)

www.ac4p.at

In 2007, the Austrian media reported extensively on the increased propensity for violence among children and youth. The ACP saw this as an opportunity to enhance its peace education efforts. This was the time when the “Peace Weeks” project was invented and designed. 18 years later, the ACP has welcomed more than 22.000 pupils and 1000 teachers in this project.

The Peace Weeks’ focus is put on violence prevention. Renouncing violence requires diverse skills that are taught in all these trainings, including conflict competencies and peace skills, appreciative, non-violent communication, respect, solidarity, appreciation of diversity as opportunity, and team building.

With interactive and innovative methods appropriate for the respective age and knowledge levels of students from the first to thirteenth grades (ages 6 to19), experts and pupils together work on challenges such as: What rules are essential for non-violent cooperation? How should classmates work together to ensure a good learning atmosphere? How do we deal with conflict? How can we give each other positive feedback? How do we envision a fair and just (global) society and what can we contribute to it?

The class as a group is very important, but so is the individual. Awareness of oneself and of others, as well as self-esteem, is fortified. In the unique Peace Castle and in the peace museum, the students experience community as enrichment and diversity as opportunity. They learn how to interact with one another, to work together towards common goals, to support each other – but also to say “no” to perceived injustice. Conflicts are not experienced negatively, but rather as an opportunity for positive change.

And: violence, in any form, is never an option!

Students as well as facilitators give positive testimony on the peace education project. Astonishment is often expressed about the positive change occurring in such a short time. The teachers themselves are trained in their own module (conducted in cooperation with the University College of Teacher Education Burgenland) and receive relevant know-how on methods and content, which they can sustainably apply in their classroom.

In this sense, the Peace Weeks – an award-winning UNESCO Decade Project – make an important contribution to society. They are an investment in a non-violent present and a peaceful future, in which community and careful interaction with each other (and with the environment, as well) are not only buzzwords but can become a reality.

In addition to the Peace Weeks, the ACP conducts the following peace education activities:

- A Master of Science Continuing Education “Peace & Life-Skills-Pedagogy” (120 ECTS) for teachers.
- The “Holocaust History Project”, in cooperation with the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism.
- The annual Peace Education Conference “7 days for Peace”.