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Science linking with School
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INTERCULTURAL TRACKING
Pupils Research Migration
(Hi)stories

LEADING INSTITUTION

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SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION PARTNERS

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Migration affects us individually and as a society. There is hardly a family in which no migratory movements have taken place – whether from Upper Austria to Vienna, from the Czech Republic to Gmund, from abroad to Austria or vice versa. Migrations take place on the regional, national and international level and shape the Austrian immigrant society. The research project Intercultural Tracking was dedicated to this complex issue which brought together teachers and researchers, as well as 90 students from Vienna and Gmund. For two years – from late 2008 to autumn 2010 – they explored together Austrian migration story/stories.

On the Track of the Family History

What migration means can be explained especially on the individual level. With the support of academics, the students developed a questionnaire at the beginning of the project, with which they turned to their parents. In this way they could learn more about their family history as well as about migration movements and motives of their parents and grandparents. Irene Ecker, a teacher at the HTL Ettenreichgasse in Vienna, explains, "The biographical accounts of the project enabled the students to become micro-researchers of their own migratory history." The questionnaire was not only a research tool, but also a mean to deal with one's own origins and identity. At the same time, a memorable image of the Austrian immigrant society has arisen. If one adds the internal migration, only 15 % of all respondents had no immigrant background.

Pluralisation of Historical Events

The variety of migration histories, however, can be seen not only on the level of family biographies. Very different forms and stages of migration have shaped the younger Austrian immigration history – the search of work, trying to escape from poverty, war and persecution, or personal reasons encouraged the immigrants to come to Austria. The project asked about the way the pluralisation of society caused by migration affects the images of history of young people. This demonstrated the high relevance of family traditions that prove to be particularly visible in the context of war and flight as predominant. In the context of Europe and immigration issues, the great impact of contemporary media debates on young people's perceptions became clear. What has also been conveyed is the fact, that school not only teaches history but is also a place in which Austria, as a country of immigration, is being experienced every day.



From the Classroom into the Lecture Hall

During the Intercultural Tracking the students were given an insight into social scientific work. They developed analytical issues, conducted surveys and interviews, and evaluated questionnaires. As part of a lecture by Heinz Fassmann, migration researcher at the University of Vienna, some of them could also take on the role of a teacher: in front of students of the subject geography, they presented results of the project and answered their questions. As a "unique opportunity" described Harun Keles, student at the school Ungargasse, the experience of speaking to expert audience, "They were all specialists on migration!"

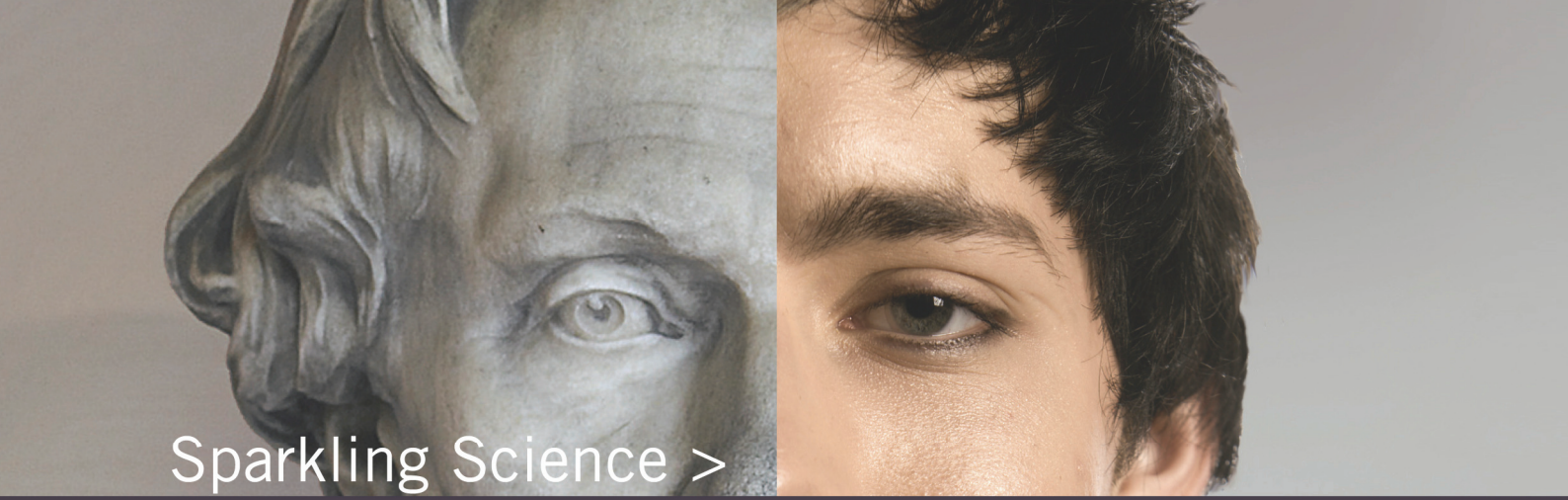
Migration on Tour

Together with project partner Minorities Initiative a travelling exhibition on the subject has been developed. Under the name "Migration on Tour" it can be seen from autumn 2010 onwards in schools, universities and other public institutions in Austria. At the beginning of the exhibition the students who were involved in the project shared insights into their own and their families' migration histories. The individual migration stories represent altogether general migration trends in Austria – their parents came to Austria as so-called "Gastarbeiter" to escape the wars in former Yugoslavia or they moved for professional reasons into the country. Apart from exploring the development in Austria, the exhibition also examines European and global phenomena of migration and informs about legal developments and circumstances. For the internet module, which accompanies the exhibition, students developed an interactive migration-quiz. "The exhibition will bring the concept of migration much closer to us," the student Petra Duvnjak is convinced.

Intercultural Learning

"The exhibition has been designed as a learning tool and is intended to contribute to the acquisition of intercultural competences," said project manager Gertraud Diendorfer. An accompanying exhibition guide for students and special teaching materials facilitate the educational use in schools. The aim is to enable in this way a more inclusive education. The two-year cross-cultural tracking has contributed a lot in this regard, stated teacher Irene Ecker, "The work on the project has led the students to rethink their prejudices and has contributed to a more thoughtful use of media reports and statistics." Even after completion of the project the research cooperation will be continued and the exhibition, which travels from school to school, continues to be written.





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