



Austria

Dr. Claudia Schmied
Minister of Education, Arts and Culture



Dr. Claudia Schmied was born on 10 May 1959 in Vienna. She obtained her PhD at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration in 1983. She started her professional career as a corporate account manager in the Innovative Finance Department of Investkredit in 1983. Subsequently, she became Head of the Corporate Finance Department in 1995. In 1997 she took the position of economic-policy advisor in the Office of the Federal Minister and the State Secretary of Finance, before she returned to the Investkredit in 2000. Since July 2004 she has been a Member of the Executive Board of Kommunalkredit Austria and of Dexia Kommunalkredit Bank since 2005; she also served on the supervisory boards of several companies. Moreover, Claudia Schmied was a lecturer at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, her research priority was "The Role of the Economy in Literature". Experience and acknowledgment she got also in

cultural institutions as member of the Kuratorium of the Salzburg Festival, member of the supervisory board of the ARTfor ART Theaterservice and member of the executive board of the Association Wiener Symphoniker. Dr. Claudia Schmied is chairman of the Association for Society and Economic Science (VGW) and member of the executive board of the BSA (Federation of social-democratic university graduates) of which she was vice-president from 2002 to 2004. Since 11 January 2007 Dr. Claudia Schmied is Federal Minister for Education, Arts and Culture.

Inclusion – an international commitment

"Inclusion is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education". The UNESCO's Guidelines for inclusion explain very precisely what education policy shall aim at when providing a framework for Education for All. Promoting inclusive education means to respect the principles of equity, diversity, non segregating access to education and securing quality of education.

From my point of view establishing inclusive education requires a range of strategies and measures to be achieved on the national level:

- a clearly stated education policy towards inclusion
- a legal framework and funding arrangement that support inclusive education
- effective arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and accountability
- widening access to education and providing a variety of flexible training opportunities for all learners
- promoting positive attitudes in education and encouraging all teachers and educational staff to assume responsibility for all learners
- facilitating quality relationship between all members of a school community

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- taking account of European/international level policies and recognising international references such as the "UN – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" or the "Salamanca Statement"
- co-operation with relevant European/international institutions and bodies to learn from each other and to provide and disseminate evidence based information

Being aware that Austria, like many other countries, too, has made remarkable good progress in educating learners with specific needs in mainstream classes we are still dealing with the transformation process from integration to inclusion. Despite some still existing barriers – ideological and practical ones – that need to be removed it is my goal and my commitment to help developing a "School for All" in our country where no child is excluded or left behind.

Best wishes for a successful conference whose results will certainly be important milestones for the further promotion of inclusive education.