



EuCheMS Division of Chemical Education

Austrian Chemical Society – 2007 Report of the Working Group for Chemical Education

1. National educational policy

In 2007 the universities in Austria were still busy with preparing the new curricula according to the Bologna model. The Bachelor studies in chemistry were implemented at the University of Vienna and the Vienna University of Technology in the academic year 2006/07 and at the Universities of Graz (together with the Graz University of Technology) and Innsbruck in 2007/08. They are followed by a wide range of Master studies (e.g. Biochemistry, Food Chemistry, Materials Chemistry etc.).

However, up to now there was still no Law passed which would include the university studies for teaching of chemistry in this Bachelor-Master scheme. The teachers for elementary schools and extended elementary schools (classes 5 to 8/9, "Hauptschule") are currently trained at "Pedagogical Faculties" (formerly "Pedagogical Academies"). At these newly structured institutions students will be able to take a Bachelor of Education degree, but it is still uncertain under which conditions students may continue their studies at a University.

2. Events in chemical education

From April 11 to 14, 2007, the 9th European Chemistry Teachers Conference organized by the Association of Austrian Chemistry Teachers took place in Leoben. It was attended by approximately 500 persons not only from Austria, but also from the neighboring countries. This successful event is organized every two years, the 10th Conference will be held in Salzburg in 2009.

A Workshop focused on school experiments was organized within the Teachers Training Week 2006 of the Society for the Promotion of Physics and Chemistry Teaching in Vienna.

From May 29 to June 14, 2007, the 33rd Austrian Chemistry Olympiade took place in Strasswalchen (Salzburg). 24 students, who were chosen in competitions in the nine provinces of Austria and South Tyrol before, participated and the best four of them were qualified for the 39th International Chemistry Olympiade in Moscow/Russia. The Austrian team was quite successful and won two silver, and two bronze medals.

Do it yourself chemistry labs for school children were organized by the University of Graz and the Vienna University of Technology. Furthermore the Didactics of

Chemistry Group of the University of Vienna participated in the Kids' University with a "Do it Yourself Chemistry Lab" for children of the age from 8 to 12.

Several diploma theses on didactics of chemistry topics are currently under preparation at the Universities of Vienna and Graz.

The IMST3 project (Innovations in Mathematics and Science Teaching) has been established by the Ministry of Education in co-operation with several Universities and Pedagogical Faculties in order to promote innovative Science teaching projects.

The Ministry of Education has decided in 2005 to establish National Educational Competence Centers for several subjects including chemistry. The Centers for chemistry, physics and biology were awarded to the University of Vienna and substantial financing was granted. A position of a professor for didactics of chemistry is due to be established in March 2008. This will be the first chair for didactics of chemistry in Austria and thus a major step forward.

3. Activities of the Austrian Chemical Society

The Working Group for Chemical Education of the Austrian Chemical Society has currently approximately 70 members from universities, schools, and chemical industry. The Working Group co-operates closely with the Association of Austrian Chemistry Teachers.

As in previous years the Working Group collected and evaluated about 50 "Fachbereichsarbeiten" which had been prepared for the school-leaving examination ("Matura") in chemistry. These papers – usually about 40 pages describing a problem not only from the chemical point of view, but in a wider context provided by different relevant fields – can replace an oral "Matura" examination. From all over Austria the authors of the best papers (and their chemistry teachers) were invited to Vienna where prizes were awarded in a ceremony in the presence of representatives of the Austrian Chemical Society, the chemical industry, the Association of Austrian Chemistry Teachers as well as the Ministry of Education.

Contact information:

Dr. Christoph Luef
Austrian Educational Competence Center Chemistry
Dept. of Inorganic Chemistry / Materials Chemistry of the University of Vienna
Waehringerstr. 42
A-1090 Wien, Austria
Tel.: +43-1-427771212
Fax: +43-1-42779529
E-mail: christoph.luef@univie.ac.at