

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

An Austria-wide school project as a contribution to the **World Summit on the Information Society 2005 (WSIS)**, Tunis, 16-18 November 2005

<http://wsis.schule.at>

Basic Idea of the Project

In 2003 in Geneva, the go-ahead was given for the World Summit on the Information Society. Government delegations, representatives of interest groups and specialists discussed the principles on which the fair and just development of the information and knowledge society should be based. The summit meeting in Geneva was also the prelude to a long-term initiative in the schools launched by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture and the resulting Austria-wide school project **Bridging the Digital Divide**.

Bridging the Digital Divide is a project that connects the education sector with innovation and, on the school level, investigates the question of where and how the "digital divide" arises, how pupils deal with it, and what ideas and strategies young people develop in order to bridge the hurdles it presents.

Project Realisation

In the school year 2004/2005, project groups from the first grade onwards, in all provinces of Austria, may participate with interdisciplinary projects. New forms of learning are being tested; all participating classes or project groups will engage in virtual meetings with specialists in topic-related forums. In addition, the pupils have the opportunity to participate in moderated chats, streamings and discussions at school. In primary schools and in level 1 of secondary schools, the realisation of the project takes place in the context of a creative competition, in the form of essays, drawing and photography; in level 2 of secondary schools, the pupils form project groups to examine various aspects of the World Summit in the form of film/animation, scientific reports or Web logs.

Topics

The proposed topics are:

- o Fair and just development of the global information and knowledge society
- o Digital gap / digital divide
- o Access to information and knowledge in the age of information and communication technologies
- o Global learning
- o The world and I in the year 2010
- o Communication and freedom of the press
- o Public knowledge – private capital
- o Literacy

The central communication platform for **Bridging the Digital Divide** is the project portal <http://wsis.schule.at>. Here the project is introduced, and events and submitted projects are documented. The Web site includes **video recordings** of the impetus speeches and pupils' presentations at the start-up event held at the Ars Electronica Center on 2 March 2005, as well as **topic suggestions**, tips and advice on how to realise projects at the individual school levels, links and tools for schools, and latest information about the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) 2005.

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