

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT, SOIL INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE AUSTRIAN SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY (ASSS)

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Organisation of conferences and excursions, knowledge exchange among experts as well as teaching students or informing the general public plays a major role in soil protection. The ASSS and its partners provide various tools for these activities.



Teaching material has been developed to raise awareness on soil protection among students aged 8 to 18. In these workshops students may actively explore soil properties, soil formation, soil functions and soil organisms by doing small physical experiments or playing soil games followed up with creative tasks. Teacher trainings with an introduction into running soil lessons are offered as well.

The adaption of the Scottish **Soil Characters** developed by the James Hutton Institute to the Austrian soil classification by Sigrid Schwarz is one of the recent activities of the ASSS in cooperation with Anett Hofmann. A sample of Austrian soils were drawn as cartoon figures of soil profiles with faces, legs, arms and funny names. Names and colours of the comics represent typical characteristics of the soils. The 'hair' shows vegetation and the context with common land use.

The **Soil Compass** is a virtual soil nature trail (www.bodenkompass.at). It combines soil knowledge and interactive soil profiles providing a three dimensional video-supported “outdoor experience” of life in the soil. It offers various kinds of soils including the typical soil animals.

The **Austrian Soil Platform** (www.bodeninfo.net) supports knowledge exchange among soil experts providing news, dates, meetings or projects as well as legal provisions, background information and the administration of working groups. In 2015 it further provides an overview of the Austrian activities concerned with the International Year of Soils.

An **Overview** of the available **teaching programmes** in Austria has been compiled in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs. The report “Lernmöglichkeiten Boden” consists of a list of teaching material as well as workshops from regional providers and destinations for school excursions (education trails) and soil exhibitions. As the link has been passed on to all schools teachers easily find material for soil lessons. The report may be obtained from <http://oebg.boku.ac.at>

In memory of the great Austrian pioneer of Soil Science, Walter **Kubiena**, the Austrian Soil Science Society **awards** a prize for outstanding achievements in soil science to promote excellent and outstanding students research work. All submitted entries undergo evaluation by a commission. This price may be awarded annually.

