



Scientific support, soil information and education provided by the Austrian Soil Science Society

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The Austrian Soil Science Society (ASSS), founded in 1954, is a non-profit organisation aiming at furthering all branches of soil science in Austria. The ASSS provides information on the current state of soil research in Austria and abroad. It organizes annual conferences for scientists from soil and related sciences to exchange their recent studies and offers a journal for scientific publications. Annually, ASSS awards the Kubiena Research Prize for excellent scientific studies provided by young scientists. In order to conserve and improve soil science in the field, excursions are organized, also in cooperation with other scientific organisations. Due to well-established contacts with soil scientists and soil science societies in many countries, the ASSS is able to provide its members with information about the most recent developments in the field of soil science. This contributes to a broadening of the current scientific knowledge on soils. The ASSS also co-operates in the organisation of excursions and meetings with neighbouring countries. Several members of the ASSS teach soil science at various Austrian universities. More detail on said conferences, excursions, publications and awards will be given in the presentation.

Beside its own scientific journal, published once or twice a year, and special editions such as guidebooks for soil classification, the ASSS runs a website providing information on the Society, its activities, meetings, publications, awards and projects. Together with the Environment Agency Austria the ASSS runs a soil platform on the internet. It is accessible for the public and thus informs society about soil issues. This platform offers a calendar with national and international soil events, contacts of soil related organisations and networks, information on national projects and publications. The society has access to products, information material and information on educational courses. Last but not least information on specific soil themes as well as a photo gallery of the Austrian soil types is available. Selected content from the website and the internet platform will be presented.

During the past years the ASSS has perceived a growing need to educate pupils on soil issues and started projects to develop concepts and materials for education. In one project a soil workshop for secondary schools was developed. The workshop comprises four stations which allow the children to see, feel and understand soil by doing simple experiments, looking for soil biota or drawing examples of soil functions. The project was awarded by the Austrian UNESCO Commission as a project of the UN decade of education for sustainable development. In addition to that project an overview of nearly 100 programmes introducing children to the topic of soils in Austria was made available as report on the ASSS website. Results of the project and information on its implementation in schools will be provided.