

Submission for Best Practice Award XII

**Project: Forschung macht Schule  
(Research Goes to School)**

**Contractor:** Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and  
Technology (bmvit)

**Agency/Implementation:** communication matters

**Project period:** January to March 2008

**Agency contact partner:** Petra Eibensteiner

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## Start Situation

Communication matters conceptualized the open days for Research Goes to School (Forschung macht Schule), an initiative by bmvit and the Federal Ministry Education, Arts and Culture (bmukk) designed to anchor the topic of research in kindergartens and schools. Special attention was given to children and young people, with teachers and educators being the second target group.

Communication matters developed a comprehensive communications campaign targeted on the initiative called “Demonstration, Dialog and Discussion” (open days). Kindergarten and primary-school children (3 to 10 year-olds) and secondary-school students (14 to 17 year-olds) should be made aware of the modern image of scientists and researchers via the “Forschung macht Schule” open days. Potential scientists of the future should delve into the world of science and research to get an overview of daily life and of scientists’ work, as well as imagining what it is like to be a researcher themselves.

## Definition of Goals and Dialog Groups

- To allow science and research to be experienced by the two target groups
- To stimulate interest in both primary target groups – children at kindergarten and elementary school (aged 3-10) and school students (aged 14-17) - in natural sciences and research
- To generate interest in 14 to 17 year-olds in sciences and research on a general level, and in the study of natural sciences and technology, in particular
- To get both primary target groups – especially the group of 14- to 17-year olds – enthusiastic about careers in science/research
- To increase the number of students in natural and technical sciences in the long-term
- To change the existing professional image of scientists and researchers in society and make these careers more attractive
- To update science teachers on the latest scientific findings
- To get all relevant players (ministry representatives, social partners, affected persons such as teacher and student representatives and educators, and political representatives and decision makers) together; increase awareness of the significance of this issue and convince them to take part in a focused, two-year program called “Forschung macht Schule”
- To raise media resonance of this issue further

## Implementation

A uniform-corporate design, corporate-identity and print-material program (posters, invitations, flyers, stationery etc.) and T-shirts were developed, in addition to the open-day concept by communication matters.

*Schedule for “Action Days”*

10 March, 2008	<i>“Forschung zum Angreifen” – (Experiencing Research) Action Day for 3- to 10-year olds at</i>
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	<i>the Museumsquartier</i>
11 March, 2008	<i>“Meet the Scientists” – 1st Action Day for 14- to 17-year olds</i>
12 March, 2008	<i>2nd Action Day 14- to 17-year olds – reflecting on the previous day’s experiences</i>
13 March, 2008	Symposium

## **Day 1 Monday**

“Forschung zum Angreifen” – (Experiencing Research) – day for 3- to 10-year olds  
Supervised stations providing interactive activities for children from kindergartens and elementary schools.

## **Day 2 Tuesday**

“Meet the Scientists” – 1st action day for 14 to 17 year-olds.  
Ninety students from the 7th year of nine different schools, general secondary schools and vocational schools – delve into the world of science and research – experiencing the world of work, as well as working conditions in research

## **Day 3 Wednesday**

2nd action day for children aged 14 to 17 – reflecting on the experiences of the previous day  
Starting off with a film summary of the experiences of the day before – reflecting on experiences – moderated discussion and compiling a presentation – distribution of presentation to all students (snowball principle)

## **Day 4 Thursday**

Symposium

Issues: looming shortage of specialists; background of false clichés and perceptions about the image of scientists/researchers; low number of university students in technical and natural-science studies – Looking for strategies and solutions – platform for children and teenagers to present their impressions of the open days.

Participants: among others, Minister Dr. Claudia Schmied, State Secretary Christa Kranzl, Professor Rudolf Taschner, Martin Vonlanthen (Nano-4-Schools, Switzerland), Leo Steiner (General Manager, IBM Austria), Sophie Lojka (student representative)

*Documentary of the open week and individual action days:*

During the open week, everything was recorded on camera to produce an atmospheric summary of the event and to distribute a record of it to all parties (teachers, students etc.) on DVD afterwards.

### **Success Control**

Communication matters and the Ministry for Transport, innovation and Technology (bmvit) aimed to familiarize children and teenagers with the daily life of researchers and show all the positive aspects of it. The young people were able to experience what research means, what opportunities there are and what training is necessary to become a researcher because of the personal contact with researchers at institutions such as ARC Seibersdorf, Arsenal Research, Otto Bock and IBM.

Additionally, the symposium allowed for an exchange of ideas between scientists, politicians and students. The event and the exchange strengthened the awareness of all the participants of the importance of supporting young people in science.