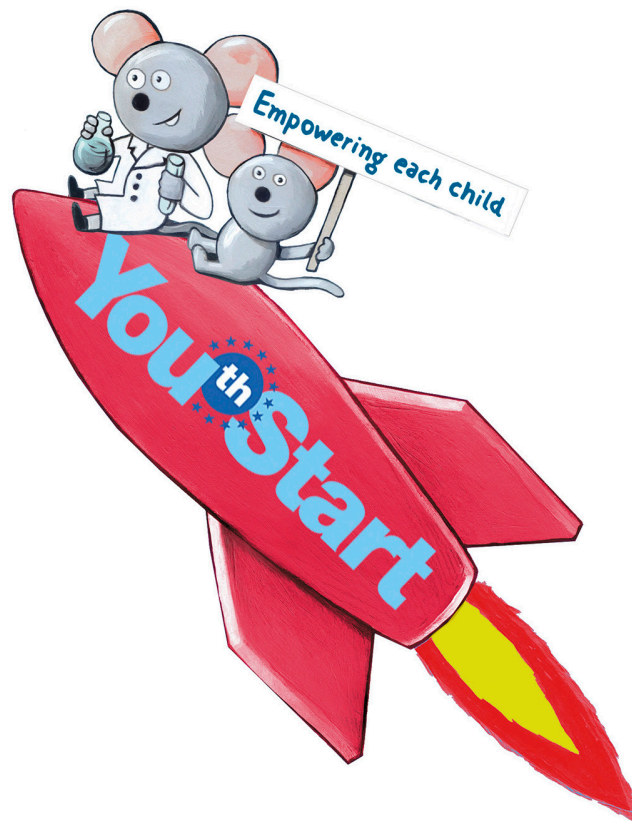




A1 Be A YES Chal-
Concentrate on what is
good for you!

Teacher Guide



Ingrid Teufel (with Eva Jambor)

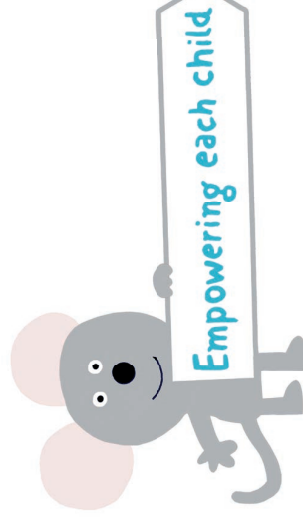
All Challenges of level A1 are also available in a printed version in German. You can find them at www.jedeskindstärken.at (Jedes Kind stärken, volume 1 - 4).



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

 **Bundesministerium**
Bildung, Wissenschaft
und Forschung





with the Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges Programme

**LET'S DEVELOP
AND IMPLEMENT YOUR IDEAS!**

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY NEW THINGS!
ALSO ENCOURAGE OTHERS!**

**USE YOUR IDEAS
TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE!**

IDEA CHALLENGE Get your ideas moving forward! Let's create value! <input type="checkbox"/>	HERO CHALLENGE You're my role model <input type="checkbox"/>	EMPATHY CHALLENGE My feelings – Your feelings <input type="checkbox"/>	STORYTELLING CHALLENGE Creative storytelling <input type="checkbox"/>	BUDDY CHALLENGE Empower others! <input type="checkbox"/>	MY COMMUNITY CHALLENGE Solving problems together <input type="checkbox"/>
MY PERSONAL CHALLENGE What's it worth? <input type="checkbox"/>	LEMONADE STAND CHALLENGE Selling is fun <input type="checkbox"/>	PERSPECTIVES CHALLENGE Tracking 20 Euros <input type="checkbox"/>	TRASH VALUE CHALLENGE Recycling adds value <input type="checkbox"/>	OPEN DOOR CHALLENGE Discovering clues <input type="checkbox"/>	DEBATE CHALLENGE Let's talk to each other! <input type="checkbox"/>
REAL MARKET CHALLENGE Becoming a "junior manager" <input type="checkbox"/>	START YOUR PROJECT CHALLENGE I'm off to a flying start! <input type="checkbox"/>	EXTREME CHALLENGE Assessing oneself <input type="checkbox"/>	BE A YES CHALLENGE This is good for me <input type="checkbox"/>	EXPERT CHALLENGE Learning holistic learning <input type="checkbox"/>	VOLUNTEER CHALLENGE I can volunteer <input type="checkbox"/>

The Youth Start Programme "Empowering each child" promotes the self-initiative and entrepreneurial spirit of children at the primary school level. All teaching materials are available at www.youthstart.eu. A mindfulness programme with video clips is provided in the "Mind & Body" section.



Challenges with a **yellow icon** instruct the children in entrepreneurial thinking and acting. **Pink** stands for personal development: these challenges focus on empathy, teamwork and self-confidence. **Green icons** indicate that social competences are trained: the children learn to assume responsibility for themselves, others and the environment.

Empowering each child ...

... refers to the title, the goal and the content of a practise-oriented, holistic learning programme which was developed for primary school children. Bigger and smaller challenges form the key element of the programme. They function as learning prompts from three key areas that play an important role in empowering our children:

- entrepreneurial thinking and acting,
- personal development and
- social commitment.

Each key area is assigned a different colour to help differentiate between them. A diagram of the entire programme is included on the previous page.



Empowering each child is part of the “**Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges**” Programme which aims to foster personal initiative and the entrepreneurial spirit of young people. It was developed in Austria for both primary and secondary school students, and it has been translated into six languages.

The objective of the **A1 Be A YES Challenge** under the slogan „*Concentrate on what is good for you!*“ is to enable the students to say “Yes” to themselves and their environment at the end of the challenge and to have a positive attitude towards themselves and life in general.

The challenge is based on scientific findings in the field of **positive psychology**, a study exploring the factors that lead to a successful and purposeful life. Appendix 2 consists of the article *From Positive Psychology to a “Positive Pedagogy”*, which contains **scientific background information** about the exercises.

This challenge can and is meant to be used over the course of **multiple school years**. By working on the challenge, each child develops his/her **individual strengths and happiness portfolio**: during primary school: The exercises and games enable the children to learn more about themselves, recognise their strengths and learn about what elicits happiness. They play “happiness games” and agree on rules on how to live together peacefully. Finally, they are invited to reflect on and to discuss the challenge and to determine personal learning objectives.

The available additional materials for teachers contain explanations of the exercises and copy templates. In appendix 1 (starting on page 21) you will find a **Strengths Treasure Hunt**, which was developed by the author Ingrid Teufel for the initiative “Jedes Kind” (“Each child”) as an inspiration for a number of projects focusing on personal strengths that extend over different subjects and classes.

This Teacher Guide contains explanations of the exercises and copy templates for the children to further explore the topic.

The “Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges” Programme supports children in developing their potential.

This was proven by a scientific field study which was carried out from 2015 to 2018 in Austria, Slovenia, Portugal and Luxembourg with about 30,000 children and teenagers. The research results demonstrate that by working with the programme in primary school, the children's self-esteem is improved and teamwork, creativity and lateral thinking are fostered. The children learn empathic communication and how to be sensitive to their own and others' needs, and they improve their vocabulary.

We wish all the children many inspiring learning experiences working on this challenge!

Eva Jambor and Johannes Lindner, editors

www.ifte.at | www.youthstart.eu

Content:



Be A YES Challenge: Concentrate on what is good for you!

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Be A Yes Challenge








Concentrate on what is good for you!

Children get to know themselves better, discover their potential, and learn how to use their talents and abilities. They train by paying attention to what makes them happy. The children are supported in this by numerous exercises, games, questionnaires and projects – from the “I CAN DO THAT” Flower, via their own personal happiness diary to the “contract with myself”.

Explanatory video on the challenge

www.youthstartchallenges.eu/A1BeAYesEN

7 steps to the finish line:

-  1 Getting to know myself
-  2 Going on a treasure hunt for my strengths
-  3 Learning what makes me happy
-  4 Training happiness
-  5 Playing happiness games
-  6 Getting along well together
-  7 Thinking things over

Core competence for the challenge:

I can say “yes” to myself and those around me.

**What it's all about– the idea behind it**

Knowing one's own strengths and identifying the areas in which one still needs help boosts self-confidence. This challenge provides various exercises, prompts for reflection, games, etc. which help the children recognise their strengths and develop an optimistic basic attitude. The spectrum ranges from drawing and crafts exercises, via reading training to detailed questionnaires. The challenge is based on scientific findings gathered by brain research and Positive Psychology (Martin Seligman, Barbara Fredrikson etc.). For more information, please refer to the article *From Positive Psychology to a "Positive Pedagogy"* (appendix 2).

Explanatory video on the challenge

www.youthstartchallenges.eu/AlBeAYesEN

**Entrepreneurship competencies according to the frame of reference**

www.youthstart.eu/en/whyitmatters/ (Competence oriented learning)

- I can identify my strengths, and I do not let mistakes discourage me.
- I can recognise other people's feelings and needs, and I can deal with them mindfully and compassionately.
- I can work together with others.
- I can describe and explain what I am good at.
- I can describe and explain what others are good at.

Assessment

The children's workbook serves as a competency check of their own learning process in order to guide them towards self-mindfulness and self-awareness. The exercises comprised in the challenge teach them to become increasingly aware of themselves and their needs. At the same time, they recognise their strengths. The children document their learning process in their workbooks which double as their personal strengths and happiness portfolios.

Step 7 ("Thinking things over") encourages the children to evaluate the competencies they have acquired through questionnaires, and to reflect on their own work. At the end of the programme, they are asked to formulate their own learning objectives and thus learn step by step how to assume responsibility for their personal learning process.

Preparation for all tasks:

The children receive student manual containing the exercises for each task. For the children it is their personal strengths and happiness portfolio.

Carry out the exercises from student manual together with the children. **In the following, the titles of the exercises are highlighted in pink and designated with the letter "E":**



- Choose the appropriate content for your class.
- Discuss the material and have the children carry out the exercises.
- Allow the children to work as independently as possible (reading training).
- If the children are asked to think about something or to discuss something with others, always announce when you are going to talk or philosophise about the results of the children's reflections in class.



1 Getting to know myself

It is best to carry out these exercises in the order in which they appear. The “Happiness Corner Game” is an ideal way to start (see step 5 “Playing happiness games” and the template in the game templates).

E: How much do you enjoy the following activities?



Preparation: Discuss the meaning of the smileys in class. Working alone, the children may add activities that are not on the list (using verbs!).

E: How well do you know yourself?

E: Relaxation, calm, peace, quiet – do you enjoy this too?

E: How do you feel when ...

Discuss the individual situations with the children:

Why do you feel like this at that moment?

Is there a difference in how you feel if, for example, you are unfriendly to someone as opposed to someone being unfriendly to you?



2 Going on a treasure hunt for my strengths

E: My Strengths-ABC

Talk with the children about strengths and weaknesses; collect adjectives using the ABC List.

E: My talents – this comes easily to me

Talk about what the children are good at and what comes easily to them. How do the others see this? Do they see other talents?

E: My “I CAN DO THAT” Flower

Create a “decorative page” using the “I CAN DO THAT” Flower. The children's flowers may be used as strengths collections, class decorations, inserts for portfolios, exercise book covers, etc.

E: My strengths in the future

Carry out a guided meditation which is to involve all senses.

The children visualise all the things they want to be better at in the future using all their senses.

Hang up the drawings depicting this imaginary journey as a motivation to keep working on this goal.

Strengths Treasure Hunt

(See appendix 1)

The Strengths Treasure Hunt is meant to inspire talent project days.

Tip: The more classes are invited to participate, the less work is there for the individual teachers.



Preparation: Select the links, material and checklists relevant for the class, print and copy the material, and produce the games.



Learning what makes me happy



The individual building blocks (see the list below) that enable us to lead a successful and meaningful life are taken from Positive Psychology and are based on abundant scientific research.

Example: Brain research confirms what we have actually known for a long time – feelings are contagious! “Mirror neurons” in our brain help us to empathise with others. This is an important prerequisite for getting along well together. The precondition to this, however, is that we are able to recognise and distinguish between our own feelings. Being aware of one’s own emotions and those of others, and being able to deal well with them, is necessary for a good and happy life. (For more background information, see the article *From Positive Psychology to a “Positive Pedagogy”* in appendix 2).

Discuss the individual building blocks (in whichever order you prefer) in depth with the children. Give the children exercises to do at home to involve their parents!

E: Thankfulness makes you happy

E: Helping others makes you happy

E: Mindful eating makes you happy

E: Being in a good mood makes you happy

E: Being friendly makes you happy

E: Staying calm makes you happy

E: All helps you stay calm and collected

(„Youth Start Mindfulness Programme“, www.youthstart.eu, „Mind & Body“)

E: Encouraging someone makes you happy

E: Not giving up pays off and makes you happy

E: This makes me happy when I...

E: Collect moments of happiness

E: Happiness diary

The happiness diary is an essential part of the „Be A YES Challenge“.

Help the children create happiness diaries. The scientific basis for this exercise is the “Three Blessings Exercise” or “Three Good Things Exercise” devised by Martin Seligman. Its aim is to make children aware of daily moments of contentment and to capture them in writing. For such moments not only trigger feelings of happiness but also help us build up strength for possible setbacks, thus enhancing our resilience. The sustainable effectiveness of this exercise has been proven by numerous scientific studies.

Get the children started on their happiness diary by asking them to consider the following questions:

What nice things did you experience?

Who were you able to do something good for?

What were you good at?

What were you pleased with?

And the most important question: What are you thankful for?



Training happiness

The following exercises can be done in the subjects reading, writing, drawing, etc.:

E: The Chinese symbol for happiness



Neck exercise: This exercise derived from Tuina, a form of Chinese manual therapy, relaxes the neck and improves breathing. It enhances concentration, cardiac function and attention.

The short video "Neck Exercise" and other exercises for "Activate & Concentrate", including descriptions of all physical exercises and their effect, can be found in the section "Mind & Body" at www.youthstart.eu

E: Rudy, the Luck Raven

E: Write a happiness poem

E: Choose a happiness poem



Playing happiness games

Happiness Corner Game *(not included in the student manual)*



Preparation: Write the prepared answers on 4 sheets of different coloured paper. Place the sheets in the corners of the classroom. The game is suitable as an initiation to step 1 ("Getting to know myself").



Preparation for all other games: Make as many colour copies of the games as necessary and laminate them. For "Dance into Happiness" cut out the cards, laminate them and prepare dance music. Make all the games accessible to the children in a games basket in class or use the workbooks for playing. Hang the exercise game in several appropriate places in class or in the hallway, so that the children can exercise during breaks.

E: Dice game "Identifying and Exercising Your Strengths"

E: Dice game "My Resolution for the Day"

E: Exercise game "Moving Helps with Learning"

E: ABC-Happiness!

Dance into Happiness *(not included in the student manual)*

The game allows for different learning content to be revised at the end of a teaching unit. "Dance into Happiness" allows the children to revise learning content from the Be A YES Challenge.



Getting along well together

E: Getting to know others well

This questionnaire can also only be answered verbally.

E: Think first – then act

Discuss Kant's imperative with the children in class:
What would happen if everyone did what I do?

E: Working on these strengths

E: Talking to each other in a friendly way



E: Getting along well together

The children sign a contract with themselves promising to stick to certain rules they have come up with together.



Thinking things over



Prepare the video clip "Inside Out Meet the Zones: Green, Blue, Red, and Yellow": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0e-oMZi000>

The student manual contains texts that encourage them to think about the film, to talk about it and philosophise about it.

E: Thinking and discussing

E: Talking to others about it

E: Philosophising about happiness

E: Inside out - meet emotions

Watch the video with the children and talk and philosophise about it with them. Encourage them to use the drawing and writing prompts found in the student manual.

E: Questionnaire for "Be A YES Detectives"

Use the questionnaire to think about and discuss the entire challenge.

E: How well can you do that already?

The children evaluate which strengths they have already developed and how well. Before they start, discuss the meaning of the smileys with them.

The questionnaire repeats all the essential factors for a successful life as defined by Positive Psychology and based on empirical research.

E: Reach your personal goal in a few steps ...

Motivate the children to search for their own learning objectives and to practise perseverance together. This strengthens the children's sense of self-reliance and is proven to have a highly positive impact on their learning success (see, among others, Hattie's study "Visible Learning").

Based on their self-evaluation using the questionnaire "How good are you at this already?", the children choose something they do rarely or have never done before. They write down their goal, e.g.: *I am thankful for many things and express my thankfulness.*

Guide the children towards imagining with all their senses what it will be like once they have achieved what they have set out to do. It is best if the children close their eyes (cf. exercise "My strengths in the future", student manual, p. 14). Example: *Smile if you are thankful for something. You will feel a pleasant warmth in your belly and others will smile at you when you thank them, etc. You are welcome to write down how you will be feeling and to draw a picture of it.*

Discuss with the children how important it is that they tell someone about their endeavour, as it encourages them to keep going.

The resolution to train daily helps them make a habit of their new behaviour – making it as natural as brushing their teeth.

Thinking about what they have achieved each day in the evening also helps them persevere. The children are thus meant to learn to motivate themselves.

Talk with the children about who or what may further help them to keep going, and celebrate every success together!

**The TRIO Model for Entrepreneurship**

According to the holistic definition of entrepreneurship – the TRIO Model – the Be A YES Challenge is part of **Entrepreneurial Culture**. It is aimed at personal development: teaching children self-initiative, self-belief, empathy, team spirit, and to help them encourage themselves and others.

Duration of the challenge

2 to 15 teaching units, depending on how much of the material is used.

The “Strengths Treasure Hunt” may be implemented as a project and take longer (from one week to several weeks to the entire school year).

Requirements

none

Context within the Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges Programme

All Challenges: www.youthstart.eu

The “A1 Be A YES Challenge” is closely linked to the “A1 Empathy Challenge” and the “A1 Expert Challenge”. There is also a close connection with the “Youth Start Mindfulness Programme” (see the section “Mind & Body” at www.youthstart.eu). As the challenge is ideally implemented as a project for the entire year, we recommend you start it at the beginning of the school year. The “A1 Be A YES Challenge” provides the foundation to the “Be A YES Challenges” at A2 and B1 level.



Happiness Corner Game

Game instructions:

- All the children stand in the middle of the room.
- The teacher asks a question and proposes four answers. Each answer is assigned one corner of the room (pink, yellow, green, blue).
- Each child is to choose an answer and to go into the corresponding corner.
- Those who cannot decide on an answer remain in the middle.

What do you work hardest for?

good grades	a reward
to help others	praise

What is most important to you?

friends	performing well
fun	money

What do you like to do best after school or on weekends?

reading	being lazy
doing sports	being creative


Who do like to spend your spare time with?

alone	with friends
with family	with animals

Where do you feel most comfortable?

by the water	in the woods
in the city	in a garden or park

Dice game “Identifying and exercising your strengths”

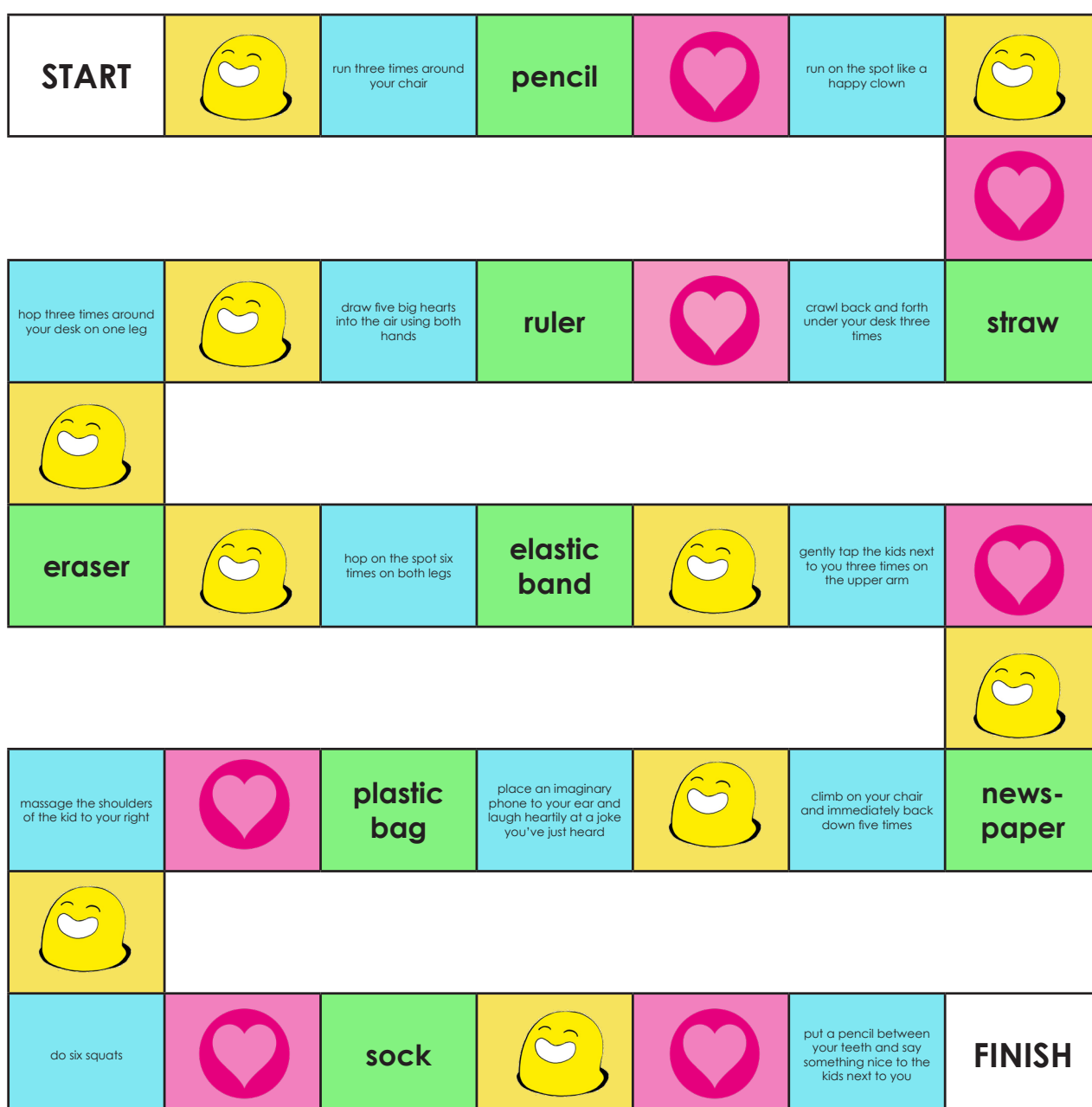
-  Fetch small stones as playing pieces and a die. Place the stones on the START square and roll the die. Advance your stone according to the number on the die. Then act according to the colour or the instruction on the square. The colours mean the following:

YELLOW (humour): Make others laugh.

BLUE (exercise): Follow the instructions given in “small print”.

GREEN (creativity): List the things one can do with that object.

PINK (empathy): Tell others what you like about them.











Dice game “My Resolution for the Day”







Fetch a die. Every day, roll the die for your resolution of the day. Think about what it says on the square and resolve to do it. You can also talk to others about the resolution.



 <p>We can only reach big goals together.</p>	 <p>Always keep on task with joy and commitment.</p>
 <p>Don't give up when things get difficult.</p>	 <p>Treat everyone with the same respect you wish to be treated with.</p>
 <p>Be happy about the successes of others as if they were your own.</p>	 <p>Be honest – to others as well as to yourself.</p>




Exercise Game

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Do 10 jumping jacks.	Shake your body while counting to 10.	Touch your left knee with your right elbow.	Jump 10 times on the spot.	Massage your right arm with your left hand.
	With your right hand tightly press your left hand.	Support yourself against a wall with your hands and push away from the wall 5 times with your arms.	While standing, twist your upper body alternately towards the right and the left 10 times.	Place a piece of paper on your head and walk around your chair 3 times without it falling off.	Touch your right foot 3 times with your left hand.
	Only move the right side of your body.	Spread your legs and look through them.	Trace 10 big circles with your arms.	Jump sideways 20 times over a pen on the floor without touching it.	Hug yourself affectionately for 10 seconds.
	Massage your left arm with your right hand.	Touch your left foot with your right hand 3 times.	Swing your arms backwards and forwards.	Turn around yourself 5 times.	Trace 10 big circles with your arms.
	Touch your left shoulder with your right hand and your right shoulder with your left hand.	March on the spot and lift your knees up 10 times as high as you can.	With your left hand tightly press your right hand.	Only move the left side of your body.	Alternately touch your right foot with your left hand and your left foot with your right hand 5 times.
	Run on the spot while counting to 20.	Only move the lower part of your body and keep the upper part perfectly still.	Fold your hands above your head while standing on one leg. How long can you hold this position?	Do 10 squats.	Deeply breathe in and out 10 times.



ABC-Happiness!

A child says "A" and then silently goes through the alphabet until another child calls out "stop". The first child then tells the others which letter they stopped at. All the children now look for suitable words beginning with this letter to complete the list below. Write down the words on a piece of paper or in a notebook. 

This makes me happy when I ...	
... think about it:	
... do it:	
... see it:	
... hear it:	
... taste it:	
... smell it:	
... feel it:	
... make others happy with it:	
... am together with others:	
... have done it:	



Dance into Happiness

You'll need: up-beat music, happiness cards for each child

Game instructions: The children dance to the music. When the music stops, all the children stand still. The children closest to one another read out their cards to each other. They swap their cards and talk about them until the music starts up again. Then they all dance until the music stops again. The children closest to one another read their cards out to one another, swap the cards, talk about them, etc.

The game lasts as long as previously determined or until each child has had each card.

HAPPINESS-CARDS	
Every time you want to do something, think: "What if everyone did this?"	
Don't always think about what once was or what will be.	Take responsibility for something.
Look around you to see what is agreeable to you or makes you happy NOW!	This is guaranteed to make you happy.
Whatever you do, ask yourself if you really want to do it.	You are ok the way you are.
Some things you do without thinking about them – or because you want to impress others.	Think about what you can be proud of.



When you want to have something,
ask yourself if you really need it!

Sometimes you only want things to
impress others.

Go outside often.

Notice the changes
throughout the seasons.

Be honest!

But voice your opinion in such a
way that you don't hurt anyone.

Observe everything around yourself
attentively and mindfully.

Think about what you can be
thankful for.

Make sure you eat healthily.
Enjoy every mouthful.

Sleep is important,
because when you sleep
you allow your body
and mind to recover.

Physical exercise keeps you fit,
and helps you study and memorise
things.

Exercise makes you happy!



Singing and dancing
– alone or with others –
makes you happy.

Being in a good mood makes you
and those around you happy.

Being creative makes you happy!

Writing, doing crafts, dancing,
painting ... – all these things make
you more creative.

Drink enough water.

This is very important for your
concentration and health.

Laughing showers you
with happiness.

Laughing is fitness training
for body and mind.

Assume responsibility for everything
you do!

Every time you want something,
think about whether it is important
or unimportant.

Appendix 1:

Strengths Treasure Hunt

Appendix 2:

From Positive Psychology to a “Positive Pedagogy”

From Positive Psychology to a “Positive Pedagogy”

When educating children, we focus all too often on their shortcomings and weaknesses. While identifying shortcomings does allow us to draw up education plans, focussing primarily on weaknesses – especially in “main subjects” – discourages and demoralises many students.

What happens to their strengths then?

Are they discovered “despite” this approach?

Are the students given enough time and scope to develop their strengths?

Concentrating solely on diagnosing problems and then focusing on them is not productive.

Research indicates that it is high time we re-considered our approach to education and supported the schools and pedagogues who have already embarked on a path to harnessing their students’ potential.

Evidence for an urgent need for action abounds:

- **A severe increase in psychological problems during childhood and adolescence**

To young people, a lack of drive and motivation poses a problem they are often not able to overcome by themselves. It may result in a refusal to learn and perform, an increased propensity towards violence, substance abuse, and dropping out of school. Teachers face ever greater challenges. **They are not only called upon to impart knowledge but are also expected to teach (and set a personal example of) certain life skills essential for a successful future.** Children and adolescents must learn to control their energy balance and to recognize and tap into personal sources of motivation, so that they may deal with stress, listlessness and dejection in a constructive way. There are also more and more reports of decreasing social skills. A reason for this is that **feelings and emotions are not dealt with sufficiently.** The ability to independently find creative solutions for problems is another skill that needs to be promoted.

- **Prevention is easier than cure**

This motto also holds true for mental disorders. Studies have shown that nothing equips people better to deal with the fallout from misfortunes than an optimistic and dynamic attitude to life.

- **A close connection between psyche and immune system**

People with a positive attitude are more **resilient**, recover more quickly and are proven to live longer. Therefore, investing in the population's well-being is highly recommendable and much in keeping with a modern and sustainable healthcare policy.

- **Being happy must not be mistaken for “having fun”**

Short-lived highs and “kicks” are not the key to fulfilment. Those who rely on supposedly old-fashioned virtues, such as courage, humanity, helpfulness, temperance and justice, are on the right path towards life satisfaction and happiness, which are also prerequisites to a peaceful coexistence.

- **Subjective well-being** affects people's life satisfaction, health and performance. Sonja Lyubomirsky of the University of California has described this connection as follows: “People are not happy because they are successful, but are successful because they are happy.”

- **Positive emotions promote learning**

Owing to imaging technology, we are now able to understand the origin, effect and impact of **feelings** and **emotions**. They play an important part in studying, as they accompany learning processes and are unconsciously stored with them. When recalling the stored information, these feelings also resurface as “accompanying emotions”:

- If they are negative, they trigger stress and thoughts of running away.
- If they are positive, they make the information pleasant and easy to remember!

- **Mirror neurons**

We mirror actions and attitudes we observe in others. This triggers feelings of empathy and sympathy, and causes us to inwardly act along. The phenomenon of “**self-fulfilling prophecies**” too, is often based on the effect of mirror neurons.

- **Modelling**

By imitating their caregivers, children not only mimic their actions but also adopt their attitudes and positions.

- **Feedback**

Children learn from **exchange**, from the **feedback** of their environment. Consciously or unconsciously, caregivers show children what they think of them and their actions. The children's attitudes, self-esteem and motivation develop in keeping with this feedback from their environment, the “image of themselves” that is reflected back to them. If the children perceive themselves to be loved and appreciated, they will develop a positive self-image, which they will also exude. If they are rejected and treated humiliatingly, they will develop a negative self-image.

- **Relationships**

To be able to feel at ease, appreciated and safe around other people (with family, in class, at work...) is more important than material wealth.

- **Flow**

Becoming so engrossed in an activity that we forget time and space often triggers exhilarating flow sensations which also increase creativity.

- **Positive emotions** cause the release of (happiness) hormones which strengthen the immune system. Seeing as positive emotions are highly contagious, they can do a lot of good within social systems.

Negative emotions have the opposite effect! The hormones released by stress weaken the immune system and dampen motivation. This leads to blocks and a paralysis of body and mind – and may even cause depression. Unfortunately, negative emotions are also highly contagious.

- **Resilience¹**

There are children who grow up in the most adverse circumstances (experiencing violence, poverty, etc.) and still develop in a positive way. What makes these children so strong? What keeps them healthy? From where do they draw the strength to not only survive but to emerge from these difficult conditions stronger than before?

¹Resilience is the ability to overcome crises and misfortunes, and to emerge from them stronger than before. It may be described as the psyche's immune system or as a protective screen of the soul. 67

Research into resilience demonstrates how important it is to have an optimistic perspective oriented on strengths rather than weaknesses. People who mirror this positive viewpoint (► mirror neurons) and show children (self-)confidence, strengthen them for a successful life. Being able to think positively, to laugh, to hope, to invest life with meaning, to be proactive, to ask for help, to say thank you and to forge positive relationships, forms the basis for a positive development even under adverse circumstances

One of the aims of a “positive pedagogy” must be trying to overcome the one-sided orientation on shortcomings. **Children/adolescents must be allowed to recognise and develop their talents and strengths, and to assume responsibility for themselves and others** (cf. Schubert & Burow, 2015).

Positive Psychology² is a recent field of psychology which has provided an important scientific basis for the development of a “positive pedagogy” since the 1990s. Martin Seligman, the former president of APA (American Psychological Association), urged that psychology should not only focus on “mental illness” and negative emotions, such as mourning, fear and anger. He demanded that we help the increasing number of young people suffering from depression. For this, he argued, often led to listlessness, a susceptibility for substance abuse and dropping out of education, as well as to health issues (all the way to an early death). **Seligman recommends focusing at least as much on the power of positive feelings** – on which conditions they are attached to, on what characterizes them and on **how people can increase their individual happiness levels**. Rather than merely correcting weaknesses, strengths must be expedited.

Positive Psychology explores paths and factors that enable every person to lead a positive, successful and meaningful life, thus ensuring that we all get along well together.

Together with other researchers, Seligman developed **(school-) programmes** promoting positive emotions, optimism, positive thinking, life satisfaction and resilience, with the aim of protecting children from depression and increasing their ability to learn.

- **Penn Resilience Programm (PRP)**

This programme teaches children and adolescents to cope with stress and conflicts, and to confront problems in a realistic and flexible manner. They train optimism and assertiveness, as well as the use of various problem solving methods (e.g. techniques to promote creativity, decision-making and relaxation).

- **Positive Psychology Programm (PPP)**

This programme helps children recognise and utilise their character strengths, such as friendliness, courage, wisdom and perseverance. This increases their resilience and enhances positive emotions. Together, the children think about what characterises a good and meaningful life.

Martin Seligman and his colleague Christopher Peterson developed a scientifically validated test for ascertaining **character strengths** (<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths>). The two researchers based their classification of strengths on philosophical, religious and psychological sources from different cultures. They determined 24 character strengths and assigned six virtues to them, which are meant to afford individuals and communities a successful (co)existence.

Find below an overview of the virtues and character strengths attributed to them:

- **Wisdom and knowledge:**
Creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, love of learning, foresight
- **Courage:**
Bravery, perseverance, authenticity, capacity for enthusiasm
- **Humanity:**
Teamwork, fairness, leadership
- **Justice:**
Teamwork, fairness, leadership
- **Temperance:**
Forgiveness, humility, self-regulation, prudence
- **Transcendence:**
Appreciation of beauty, gratitude, optimism, humour, spirituality

In the A1 Be A YES Challenge we use exercises and interventions from Positive Psychology, whose effectiveness has been empirically researched and proven. The book doubles as a **strengths portfolio** for primary school pupils. Because **strengthening strengths automatically weakens weaknesses!**



In step 1 the children get to **know themselves better**.



In step 2 they go on a **treasure hunt for their strengths**. This Teacher Guide offers additional suggestions for **strengths projects** that can be carried out across subjects and classes (appendix 1).



In step 3 children learn what may make them happy. This includes the **thankfulness letter**, known as “Gratitude Letter” in Positive Psychology, which involves writing a letter thanking someone, and perhaps even delivering the letter in person.



In step 4 the children **train happiness**. This includes: **helping one another, eating mindfully, being in a good mood, being friendly, staying calm, being courageous and encouraging others, as well as keeping going** even if something is hard.

Another intervention for a successful life, whose effectiveness has been scientifically proven, is keeping a **happiness diary** (Seligman calls this the “Three Blessings Exercise”).

The children place a notebook or diary along with their favourite pen next to their beds, and every evening write down at least 3 things that made them happy and which they are thankful for (e.g. something they were good at or a situation in which they were able to help someone...).

At www.youthstart.eu, in the section “Mind & Body”, you will find a short video telling the story of the “Beans of Bliss”, involving children recalling their happiness moments of the day each evening, much like with the happiness diary.



Step 5 includes **happiness games**.



Step 6 comprises exercises on the topic „**getting along well together**“.

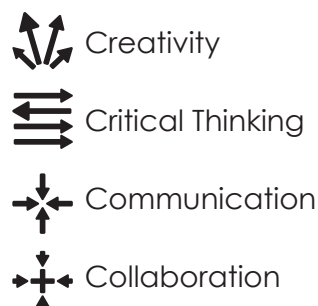


Step 7 encourages children to think and reflect. They learn to evaluate themselves and to **find personal learning objectives**.

Placing an emphasis on what is positive and makes us happy is scientifically proven to have many positive effects. These findings have been incorporated into the „**Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges**“ Programme, especially into the following learning programmes:

= A1 Expert Challenge at www.youthstart.eu – abbreviated to: **Learning Holistic Learning** (http://youthstart.eu/en/challenges/learning_holistic_learning/)

The exercises from the programme with the following symbols promote the key competencies defined for learning in the 21st century (“21st Century Skills”, see the chart at the end of this text):



- **Why Mindfulness?** (section “Mind & Body” at www.youthstart.eu / including 8 short films with students training the programme)
- **Be A YES Challenge** (= A1 Be A YES Challenge at www.youthstart.eu/en/challenges/concentrate_on_the_things_which_are_good_for_you/, as well as A2 Be A YES Challenge at www.youthstart.eu/en/challenges/how_to_flourish/ and B1 Be A YES Challenge at www.youthstart.eu/en/challenges/my_character_strengths/)

The learning programmes cited in the right column of this table are available for free at www.youthstart.eu:

Optimistic, happy people with a positive attitude ...	You th Start
... work better together with others (University of Illinois). They are happier with their work and build relationships with others more quickly. This means that they get along more peacefully and work better together as a team.	Learning Holistic Learning Key competencies Communication and collaboration
... are more creative (Harvard Business School). In an ever more complex and dynamic world, creativity and the ability to solve problems are skills that are increasingly important for achieving personal, economic and social objectives. Teresa Amabile, of the Harvard Business School, proved in her research that people with a positive attitude think in a more creative, flexible, quick and interconnected way.	Learning Holistic Learning Key competencies Creativity
... solve problems rather than complaining about them (University of California). If we are unhappy with our life and work, the difficulties we encounter can quickly appear insurmountable. When people with a positive attitude are confronted with problems, they will actively search for solutions.	Learning Holistic Learning Key competencies Communication and collaboration

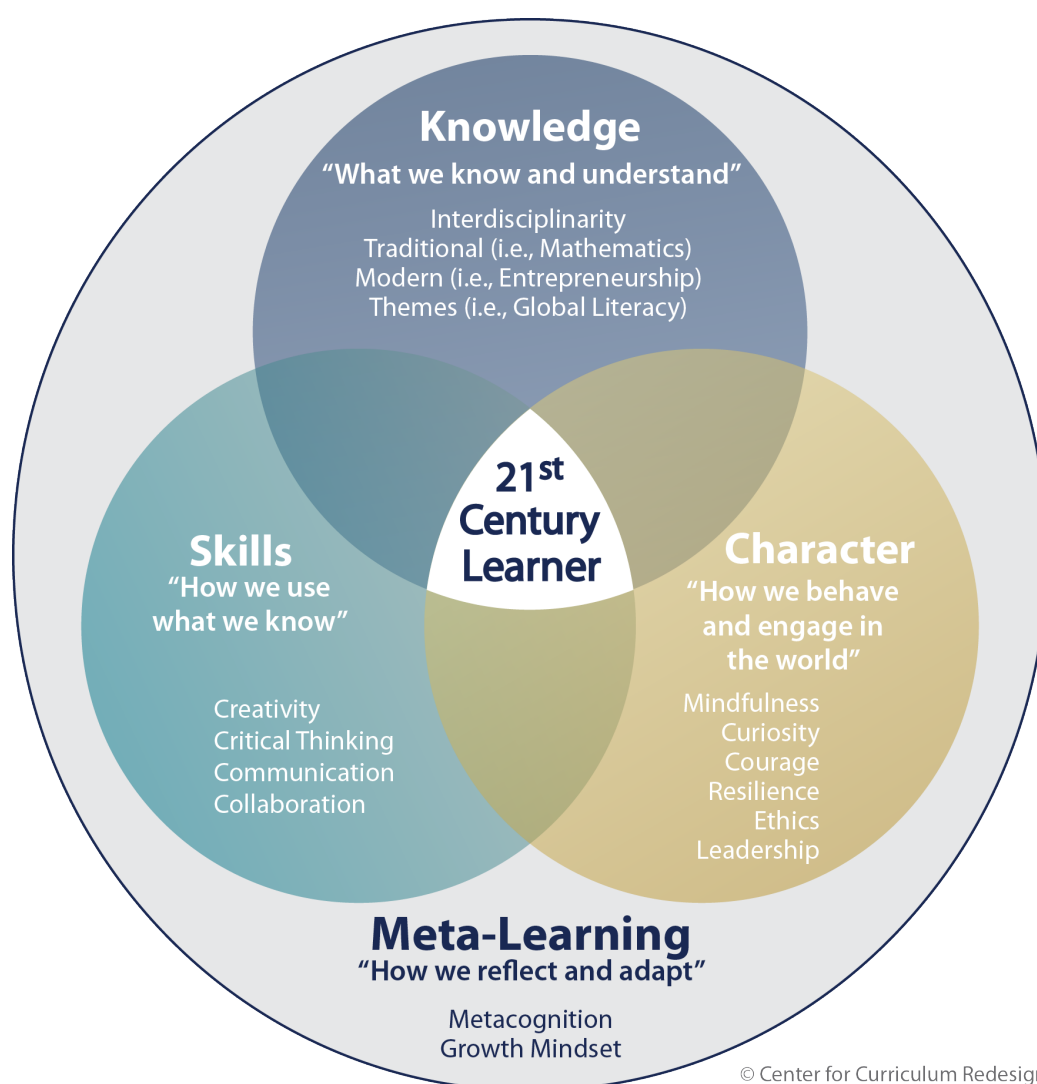
<p>... have more energy (Harvard Public School of Health).</p> <p>They are more active and have more energy. This also benefits their health. Moreover, they do positive things for themselves and their environment.</p>	<p>Why Mindfulness?</p> <p>Self-competence and self-efficacy</p>
<p>... are more optimistic (Penn State University).</p> <p>Studies show that optimistic people are more successful and productive. "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right." (Henry Ford)</p>	<p>Be A YES Challenge</p> <p>Self-competence and self-efficacy</p>
<p>... are more committed (Gallup Institute Germany).</p> <p>Diminished motivation equals diminished performance. Having a positive attitude towards what we do (or have to do) motivates.</p>	<p>Be A YES Challenge</p> <p>Self-competence and self-efficacy</p>
<p>... are sick less often (Harvard Public School of Health).</p> <p>If we are unhappy, we are more prone to illness and more likely to suffer from stress and burn-out. A study conducted by the Harvard Public School of Health measured the influence of emotional strain on our health, and found that people who do not like their life and work have the highest risk of illness.</p>	<p>Why Mindfulness?</p> <p>Self-competence and self-efficacy</p>
<p>... learn more quickly (University Magdeburg).</p> <p>If we feel well, we are readier to learn new things and absorb them more quickly. Being able to learn all our lives and in a manner appropriate to any given situation is becoming increasingly important.</p>	<p>Learning Holistic Learning</p> <p>Key competencies Creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration</p>
<p>... make fewer mistakes – and learn more from them (Harvard University).</p> <p>If optimistic people make mistakes, they do not worry about them for too long. They quickly recover, admit to their mistakes, assume responsibility for them and learn from them – and are thus less likely to make mistakes in the future.</p>	<p>Learning Holistic Learning</p> <p>Key competencies Creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration</p>
<p>... make better decisions (University of Iowa).</p> <p>Unhappy people operate in "crisis mode". They focus on the negative and lose sight of the bigger picture. They make rash, ill-advised decisions in the hope of making things better quickly.</p> <p>Happy people are more likely to stay on top of things and make judicious decisions.</p>	<p>Why Mindfulness? Self-competence and self-efficacy</p> <p>Learning Holistic Learning Key competencies Creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration</p>

Since Antiquity, the aim of education has been to train people to become confident, empathetic and social beings, who are able to learn, contribute to society and espouse character strengths, virtues and values.

Today, in times of rapid change, in which traditional knowledge is deemed less and less significant, these competencies and strengths are more important than ever.

How can schools empower young people for an uncertain future?

Children and adolescents require knowledge, competencies and character strengths which allow them to develop a dynamic self-image so that they may respond in a flexible and open manner to the challenges of the future. This is illustrated by the chart “21st Century Learner” developed by the Center for Curriculum Redesign⁴.



The “Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges” Programme takes the four dimensions shown in the chart into consideration in order to empower children and adolescents for a successful future.

Ingrid Teufel | author

⁴ Source: <https://curriculumredesign.org/our-work/papers/>

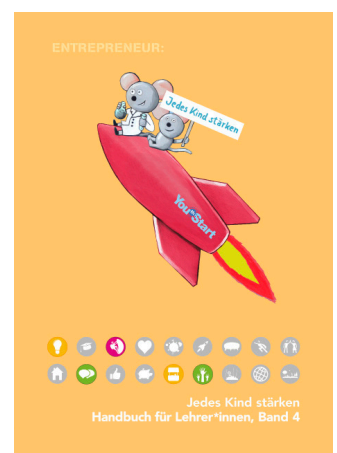
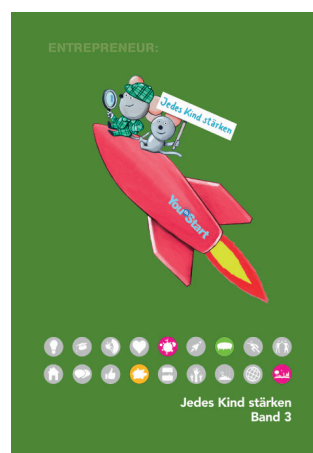
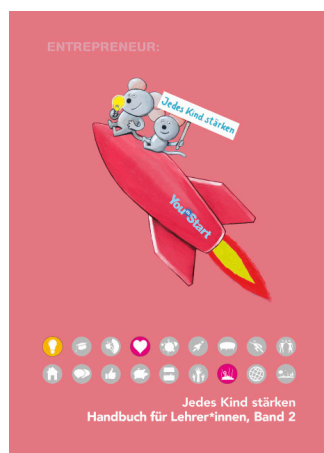
All Challenges of level A1 are also available in a printed version in German. You can find them at www.jedeskindstärken.at (Jedes Kind stärken, volume 1 - 4).

„Empowering each child“ is a holistic learning programme for children at primary school level. It is part of the “Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges” Programme.

All parts of the programme are available as Challenges at competence level A1 (= primary level) at www.youthstart.eu including also video clips explaining the challenge.

The **“Mind & Body”** section provides short video clips with physical “activate & concentrate” exercises and the “Youth Start mindfulness programme”.

Explanatory video for this challenge
www.youthstartchallenges.eu/A1BeAYesEN





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Editors: Eva Jambor, Johannes Lindner
 Authors: Ingrid Teufel, www.jedeskind.org (with Eva Jambor)
 Translation: Teresa Krainer, Agnes Vukovich
 Redaction: Maureen Maher-Wizel
 Graphic Design: Valentin Mayerhofer, Raphael Lorenzi (Layout), Helmut Pokornig (cover und illustrations), Lukas Philippovich (overview Youth Start Entrepreneurial Challenges Program), Peter Stromberger (Icons Youth Start), Stefan Torreiter (Smileys), Ingrid Teufel (ALI and Illustration of Games and Poems), Footprint-Icon by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

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The Youth Start Team would love to hear from you: if you want to network with national partners and learn more about their offers or support the implementation of the project please write to office@ifte.at.

The implementation of the programme "Empowering each child" at primary schools in the region of Salzburg is supported by the provincial government of Salzburg.