
Austria: Paulovics (Bishops' Conference of Austria), "let psychosocial support be provided to our religious schools as well"

After the Minister of Education Martin Polaschek (Övp) announced that he would have used more psychosocial specialists in the school systems, religious schools have stepped in. "I truly hope our religious schools will be taken into account when psychosocial support is extended", Clemens Paulovics, director of education and religious schools at the Bishops' Conference of Austria, wrote in an open letter to the Minister. All too often, private schools are neglected when support measures are created or extended in the educational system, Paulovics pointed out. On Monday, to coincide with the start of the school year, Minister Polaschek announced that preventative measures will be taken as part of the yearly focus on the prevention of violence and mental health as well as further promoting reading and German language. Under the banner of the motto "Looking at, instead of looking away", concepts of child protection and multidisciplinary teams should become compulsory in schools, even if details of the measures will only be announced in the next few weeks and months. In the open letter, the education expert of the Bishops' Conference of Austria, Paulovics, pointed out that the planned teams should include not only experts in psychology, psychotherapy and social work, but also doctors and, above all, experts in school pastoral care. The people who work in the latter area are "important and reliable people, and, as such, they can handle many things ahead of time", the director of education and religious schools at the Bishops' Conference of Austria said. For some time now, the problem of mental health has been dealt with in Austria's 189 religious schools, with their approximately 50,000 students: for instance, with 111 school centres taking part in the "Mental Health Days", with teachers' lifelong learning, and with school pastoral care being firmly rooted in prevention and support efforts. Additional training courses have been organised and concepts of preventions have been worked out in the last two years, since religious schools want "to be definitely pioneers" here.

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