

Austria's Universities of Applied Sciences Presented Research Achievements

The 14th FH Research Forum at FHWien der WKW illustrated the wide range of scientific projects at universities of applied sciences on the topic of sustainability.

Vienna, April 12, 2021 – Austria's universities of applied sciences not only offer practical academic training for tomorrow's professionals and managers, but also play an important part in the country's research landscape. This became clear once again at the 14th Research Forum of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (Forschungsforum der österreichischen Fachhochschulen 2021 – FFH 2021) on April 7 and 8, 2021. The theme "Shaping the future responsibly!" was the common thread running through the conference, which was organized by FHWien der WKW and held online due to corona.

From wind energy to digital assistants for senior citizens to sustainable SME management

Scientists from 16 universities of applied sciences, 10 national and international universities, and 11 companies presented research projects at the FFH 2021 that aim to provide sustainable solutions to challenges facing our society, such as climate and environmental protection and digital transformation. Researchers from the fields of engineering and information technology took part as well as economists, social scientists and health scientists. The wide range of scientific achievements at the universities of applied sciences was reflected in 15 panels with 70 lectures and 20 poster presentations. The spectrum ranged from the efficient use of wind energy, digital assistance solutions for the elderly and responsible consumption to sustainable corporate management in Austrian small and medium-sized enterprises.

In their live statements at the research forum, Leonore Gewessler, Federal Minister for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, and Heinz Faßmann, Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research, emphasized the importance of universities of applied sciences as sites of application- and solution-oriented research.

Practical relevance as a strength of research at universities of applied sciences

"In recent years, the topic of sustainability has made a triumphant advance through more and more areas of life," explained Michael Heritsch, CEO of FHWien der WKW and thus host at the FFH 2021. "More and more people are realizing: We can only cope with the major tasks facing the world if we focus on the consequences of our actions for society and the environment. Highly qualified researchers work at the universities of applied sciences who are convinced of this and scientifically explore questions of sustainability." FHWien der WKW has been focusing on sustainability for years: "As a university of applied sciences for management and communication, we are particularly concerned with ecologically, economically and socially responsible corporate management against the backdrop of globalization, climate change and digitalization. In doing so, we cooperate closely with companies." This practical relevance is one of the strengths of research at universities of applied sciences, Heritsch continued.

Keynote emphasized key role of education for SDG achievement

Wolfgang Lutz, Director of the Institute for Demography at the University of Vienna, an internationally recognized expert on population development, gave the keynote address at the FFH 2021. He described education and health as the priorities for the 21st century. Education, he said, is key to

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increasing life expectancy as well as to curbing high population growth, and central to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The scientists' lectures and presentations at the FFH 2021 were complemented by a science slam. This showed how creative science communication can help to make research work and its results understandable to a broader public beyond expert circles.

Specially developed online platform enabled the conference to take place despite the lockdown

The 14th edition of the Research Forum of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences should have already taken place in April 2020 at FHWien der WKW. Due to the first lockdown, it was postponed to 2021. While a combination of face-to-face events and virtual elements was originally planned for the new date, the lockdown in Vienna meant that the on-site program elements also had to be moved to the Internet at short notice.

Thanks to the conference platform specially developed by FHWien der WKW, the FFH 2021 was a success also in a purely virtual setting and enabled the participants to gain enriching insights as well as inspiring impulses and to engage in stimulating discussions.

Photos:

Climate Protection Minister Leonore Gewessler and Education Minister Heinz Faßmann (pictured with Raimund Ribitsch, President of the Austrian Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences, and Karin Bauer from the daily newspaper "Der Standard") emphasized the importance of universities of applied sciences as research institutions at the FFH 2021.

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The conference platform specially developed by FHWien der WKW made it possible to hold the meeting of the research community of Austrian universities of applied sciences purely virtually.

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FHWien der WKW has been Austria's leading university of applied sciences for management & communication for over 25 years. Working in close contact with Austrian corporations, FHWien der WKW offers comprehensive and practice-oriented academic programs to over 2,800 Bachelor's and Master's students. Two thirds of our teaching staff have a background in business. Our programs are tailored to the needs of companies, optimally preparing our graduates – around 11,800 to date – for their future careers.

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