

Newsletter April 2022

Dear partners and supporters, dear parents and enthusiasts, dear new applicants, candidates, servants abroad and alumni,

At the end of April, our last three volunteers of the cohort 2021 arrived at the halfway point of their service and despite some ups and downs, many corona illnesses, quarantines and in some cases months spent in home office, we are very happy that their overall assessment is very positive nevertheless. Your reports have inspired the office over and over again in the last months and awakened our wanderlust :) Thank you for making the world a little bit better every day with your openness, your commitment and your skills.



Ukraine-conflict

But of course, the Ukraine conflict has also kept us busy at the Austrian Service Abroad in recent weeks. Fortunately, our host organization in Odessa (Past / Future / Art - forumZFD Ukraine) was not occupied at the time, but our two servants abroad in Moscow and Minsk were suddenly in a very unpleasant situation. For a good two weeks, the political situation was examined and discussed internally in daily conferences, partly with locals and experts. Within a week we were able to organize new substitute organizations for both volunteers and they managed to leave safely.

Some of our servants abroad are currently involved in support projects for Ukrainians through their volunteer positions (e.g. in Poland, but also in Germany), and our office manager for international affairs has already driven an aid delivery to the border and brought a Ukrainian family back with him. Of course, our Peace Servants in The Hague and Brussels are also working hard to find solutions. We all wish very much that peace can return soon!

In the meantime, six of our servants abroad have already completed their service and have become alumni. One candidate from the cohort of 2022 has already started his service. Also, some of our volunteers are taking the opportunity to get to know another organization and to continue their service at a second location. Since January, many new partners have been added - not only a Social Service on Saint Lucia or a Gedenkdienst on Mauritius, but also some Peace Service opportunities in foreign offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. We are already looking forward to the first experience reports. Today, we would like to introduce three more host organizations that we recently added to our network:



Gedenkdiener Joachim Neuböck at the European Union of Jewish Students in Brussels, Belgium

Founded in 1978 in Grenoble, the European Union of Jewish Students is a Europe-wide umbrella organization of 34 national Jewish student organizations. As such, the EUJS represents more than 200,000 Jewish students. It carries out educational work on genocide awareness and is a leader in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Joachim Neuböck is currently doing his Gedenkdienst at the EUJS.

Together with his young and international colleagues he is working on far-reaching campaigns. On the occasion of the climate summit in Glasgow, the EUJS launched a call for action on the climate crisis. Furthermore, on January 27, on the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the EUJS published a video that can be seen on various social media platforms.

In addition to political campaigns, the EUJS also organizes various events. These include a Yad Vashem study trip and the event "Summer U", which is the largest event of Jewish youth worldwide.

Joachim enjoys his Gedenkdienst very much and the cooperation with his dynamic work environment is varied and inspiring. In addition, the Gedenkdienst enables him to participate in various events and exciting seminars as well as to meet high-ranking politicians and activists. All of this also contributes to his personal development.



Social Servants Matteo Treichl, Jonathan Biderbost and Tamara Freudlsperger at Step by Step in Tanzania

What began in 2013 with the purchase of a plot of land near Morogoro has now grown into a project. The NGO Step by Step currently employs eight people and our first social servants in Tanzania. Jonathan, Mara and Matteo have been working in Mafiri Vianzi since September 2021. The focus of their work is the orphanage Mafiri Children Home, with the aim to give traumatized orphans and street children a loving and safe home. The NGO wants to provide access to good education and support the children in their development so that they can experience a healthy and happy childhood in safety. Tanzania is home to approximately 1,300,000 AIDS orphans who have lost one or both parents to HIV. Furthermore, malaria and diarrhea are still a common cause of death in Tanzania. There is a lack of hospitals as well as doctors. However, according to the UN Development Report, Tanzania is moving step by step in a better direction. Jonathan and Matteo take care of the technical maintenance of the houses and agricultural activities. For this they can also use their knowledge acquired in the HTL. Mara is additionally involved in administration, organizes donors and spends time with the children. The work on site is very challenging, but also varied, enriching and fun. The servants abroad live directly on site, and they have grown to love the children and the staff like a second family.

Step by Step



Peace Servant Martin Klemenjak at the European Institute of Peace in Brussels, Belgium

The EIP is an independent, non-profit, public organization that helps to shape and manage conflict situations. Its activities range from high-level, discreet talks between political actors, to conflict mediation at the local level. Since its inception in 2014, the Institute has worked globally in over a dozen countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe, providing practical experience, technical expertise, and policy advice on conflict resolution.

Currently, Martin Klemenjak, a law student at the University of Graz, is at the European Institute of Peace ("EIP") in Brussels for six months. He is part of the team "Engagement, Dialogue and Process Design" focusing on the "Eastern Neighbourhood" under the leadership of Stine Lehmann-Larsen and is specifically working on the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

His activities at the EIP are extremely varied and range from administrative tasks to extensive research work. Highlights are above all the background information he gets to see during his work (often extremely discreet information), the exchange with diplomats and experts as well as the insight into the daily work of an international organization.

The peace service offers him a unique opportunity to "give something back" to society and to participate in humanitarian work, while at the same time gaining unique experience for his future career (hopefully in diplomacy).

European Institute of Peace

In addition, a number of events have already taken place this year, all of which serve to prepare our candidates as professionally as possible for their time abroad. There are still a few more on the agenda before their service begins in September:



Social Service seminar

This year's Social Service seminar took place from April 11-13, 2022. About 40 candidates participated in order to prepare for their time in projects of development cooperation. The program included, among other things, meetings with alumni, talks with project leaders, presentations of partner organizations and WeltWegWeiser and SADOCC seminars. Topics were stress, strain and crises in the field, violence and child protection, settler colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa as well as intercultural communication. Of course, there was also time for getting to know each other, discussions and reflections. Many thanks to all participants for the interesting exchange!



Israel Academy

Instead of a one-time Understanding Israel seminar, the Israel Academy was launched this year as a preparatory program for candidates for Israel. Monthly meetings are held alternately online and offline on topics related to Israel. It is also open to all other candidates (Gedenkdienst, Social Service and Peace Service).

This year there has already been an introductory workshop on Judaism, a meeting with an alumna of the Understanding Israel program (Sara Hummel), a discussion on the international legal situation regarding Israel/Palestine with the head of the Israel Desk of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Martin Gärtner, and a visit to the Jewish Museum Vienna followed by a visit to the Israeli restaurant Maschu Maschu.

In the coming weeks and months there will be a discussion with Rabbi Joseph Pardes, a service at the Misrachi Synagogue, meetings with Mena Watch Austria, the Center for Israel Studies and the Jewish youth organizations Hashomer Hatzair, Bnei Akiva, LIKRAT, the Jewish Austrian University Students. Also, a city tour through Jewish Vienna, a source study on Israel with Prof. Awi Blumenfeld and Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister, a reception at the Israeli Embassy Vienna, a visit to the Austrian-Israeli Society, and a conversation with Rabbi Jacob Biderman of Chabad House Vienna are on the agenda.

The following books serve as accompanying literature:

- Judentum. Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen, by Andreas Brämer.
- Fast ganz normal: Unser Leben in Israel, by Ben and Daniela Segenreich.
- Israel: Ausnahme- oder Normalstaat, by Anton Pelinka.
- My Promised Land: Triumph and Tragedy of Israel, by Ari Shavit.
- Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth, by Noa Tishby.

Other events:

- MoRaH Poland Holocaust Study Tour: From April 26 - 28 for the first time 10 Gedenkdienst candidates + two of our office managers took part in the Poland study trip organized by MoRaH (March for Remembrance and Hope) - we are very excited to hear what they have to report.
- Peace Service Seminar Friedensburg Schlaining: In May (from 26. - 29.05.) a seminar especially for Peace Service candidates will take place in the Friedensburg. The program will be delivered by local experts.
- Cohort meeting 2022: We have already put together an exciting program for this as well. From July 4 to 6, the entire cohort of 2022 will meet in Vienna to participate in several workshops, meet alumni, and prepare intensively for their upcoming services. In addition, the traditional farewell ceremony with Federal President Van der Bellen will take place on July 6!
- Gedenkdienst Poland study trip: Like last year, an Austrian Service Abroad group

will go on a Gedenkdienst study trip to Poland from July 16 - 24. This year, hopefully, South African students from Cape Town University will also be able to participate.

Last but not least, we would like to introduce two of the many teams / units / interest groups that make our association so unique.



Film team

The film team is responsible for producing content for the association's YouTube channel. Our responsibilities include producing videos, contacting servants abroad, and creating clips for special events.

The team is divided into a number of projects.

- 7-Minute Insights

The name of this series is self-explanatory. In it, servants abroad present the work at their host organization and everyday life in 7 minutes. Everything is illustrated with footage from the field and personal anecdotes.

- A Year Abroad

In these videos, produced in cooperation with the radio team, volunteers talk about their experiences after a year abroad. This project has been running for a long time, and in the meantime a considerable library of videos has been accumulated.

- Austrian Stories Abroad

A brand new series. It was launched only recently. Servants abroad are asked to tell a funny anecdote of their life abroad in less than a minute. Whether it's tips on how to tie ties in frigid Stockholm or where to see the most beautiful northern lights, this series has it all.

- Interviews with Holocaust survivors

A particularly important task is to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. That is why the association has conducted interviews with Holocaust survivors such as Gabriella Karin. These clips are edited by the film team into short documentaries.

All our videos can be found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxthcj82jHjVujX99brXPQA>). To stay informed about our work, it is worth subscribing.



Quality Assurance and Inclusion team

Promotions of WeltWegWeiser (a network of different sending organizations), creation of a feedback form, inclusion of more people and much more. The responsibilities of the Quality Assurance & Inclusion team are very diverse. Time to shed some light on them!

Basically, the team's main goal is to ensure that the quality of the preparation, the actual service abroad and follow-up is improved. One of the ways we achieve this is by working together with WeltWegWeiser, who not only organize workshops etc., but also aim to raise the quality standards of their members. Specifically, some of our tasks and projects are as follows:

- Communication with WeltWegWeiser, promotion of grants, workshops, trainings and much more
- Creation and further development of crisis safety plans and protection concepts
- Creation, further development and implementation of feedback opportunities
- Setting measures so that inclusive operations become possible
- And many more smaller and larger projects :)

Hopefully it is now clearer what the work of the team is about, because even though the name for the team is logical and appropriate, it is not so easy to conceive its actual meaning.

We hope you can all enjoy the spring and that the sun will soon show itself again a little more often after the crazy April!

And we wish our graduates all the luck in the world next week! Keep your cool, you can do this! Toi, toi, toi!

All the best from the Content Team & the Vienna Office.

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