

Newsletter August 2022

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

We are slowly approaching the final handover of the baton between the 2021 and 2022 cohorts and are looking forward to the conclusion of a record-breaking year in every respect. Neither pandemics nor international conflicts were able to stop our volunteers from representing, actively supporting, and in many cases taking their places of assignment, countries of assignment, the Republic of Austria, and their own personal development to a new level. This is also reflected in the submission of very high quality and lively final reports, which are certainly a great way to look back in the future. We would like to thank our returnees for your openness and dedication, and wish all the soon to be graduates as pleasant an ending as possible and a good and safe journey home!

At this point in time, the majority of the 2021 cohort have completed their service - 15 of the 101 international volunteers are still on assignment - and have once again received a great deal of praise from those responsible at the partner organizations. At the same time, five volunteers from the class of 2022 are already at their host organizations, before a huge crowd of 95 people set off on their journey at the beginning of September. Below, we would first like to introduce three of our unique partner organizations, to which we are again sending servants abroad this year, as well as our volunteers there:



Gedenkdiener Camillo Spiegelfeld at the Žanis Lipke Memorial in Riga, Latvia

The Žanis Lipke Memorial was opened in 2012 and has been welcoming Gedenkdiener since 2021. The museum is located next to the Lipkes' home - Žanis Lipke's daughter-in-law still lives there today - and strives to bring international attention to the story of Žanis Lipke, who hid about 8-12 Jews in a bunker he dug himself in 1942-1944. His network of about 25 helpers managed to save about 50 Jews from imminent arrest and deportation. For his efforts, he and his wife Johanna Lipke were awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nations". The idea for the memorial came up in 2000, when a commemorative plaque was placed on the Lipke House. Today, visitors from all over the world come to the museum and are greeted by Austrian Gedenkdiener. In 2021, this was Camillo Spiegelfeld, who was able to use the linguistic diversity of the audience as an occasion for exciting conversations while distributing the audio guides, and who was able to get to know new perspectives each time during the museum tours he gave, just like the visitors. Apart from the guided tours, Camillo has also contributed to the functioning of the small institution by helping with translations and research.

Žanis Lipke Memorial



Social Servants Peter Berger, Sophia Böck, Philipp Hochedlinger, Niklas Huber and Benjamin Rabl at Bbanga Project in Uganda

In 2014, the Viennese software engineer Hassan Hayatbakhsh and his Ugandan colleague Edgar Kawooya decided to help one of many children in Uganda, whose parents had little time to spend with them, attend school. Thus, on the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria, an Austrian-Ugandan sponsorship program to support school children was born. To date, the Bbanga Project has evolved into a massive education project that has also incorporated aspects of labor market development, sustainable (land) economy, climate protection and sports promotion. This has been made possible through a combination of a dedicated team, creative and ambitious volunteers, and an active community on the islands.

Our five volunteers Benjamin, Sophia, Philipp, Peter and Niklas have actively participated in the countless initiatives - in the program "Baykala Tukole" ("Women, let's work!") concepts for independent production and distribution by mothers, who thereby receive their own independent income, were supported and implemented. In the climate sector, measures for reforestation,

permaculture and recycling were practically applied on a specially purchased plot of land, in the sense of more sustainable agriculture in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Climate Action and Energy. The main aspect - education - was accomplished by the social servants in the form of the expansion of the school library and computer room, as well as the implementation of learning and sports programs for local schools. The boarding school, which should be completed by 2024 and then serve up to 140 elementary school children, will still be important for future service abroad generations.

Bbanga Project



Peace Servant Lucas Rollinson at Haver Srbija in Belgrade, Serbia

Lucas spent five months as a Peace Servant at Haver Srbija in Belgrade. This Jewish institution aims to promote an inclusive, democratic and diverse society in Serbia and to fight prejudice, discrimination, antisemitism and xenophobia through educational work.

Since the organization is relatively small, his work was quite varied because he was allowed to decide for himself where best to contribute. During his time at Haver, there was a seminar series through which volunteers would later be able to give city tours focusing on Jewish history in a wide variety of cities in Serbia. Lucas was partly responsible for implementing the seminars as well as documenting them (photos and summaries). The most time-consuming activity was the production of educational materials for five different posting series that were published on social media. Otherwise, he was also busy supporting the Belgrade Jewish community with various different tasks.

Haver Srbija's work is extremely difficult because the organization tries to combine the traditional, Jewish side with a progressive side of LGBTQ+ tolerance and general equality. Lucas was able to take away an incredible amount from his colleagues, who dedicate their lives to this difficult mission. Specifically, he also learned about the work of NGOs and the difficulties with financing various projects and raising funds.

Haver Srbija

In the last few months, a number of exciting events have taken place; all with the purpose of preparing our candidates as intensively and professionally as possible for their service abroad and to connect them with each other in the best possible way. Some more are still to come - the reports will follow!



MoRaH - Poland study trip

In April 2022 (26-28), eleven service abroad candidates and office staff took part in the Poland study trip of MoRaH (March of Remembrance and Hope) for the first time. Together with members of the Jewish organization Likrat, they were given a guided tour of Krakow, visited the Auschwitz I Memorial and the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oświęcim, took part in a meeting with Austrian students, and finally, on the last day, attended the Great March of the Living from the former Auschwitz I camp to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial. At this touching event - where the Austrian delegation including "our" participants consisted of a total of about 800 people - those present

were allowed to talk to the 96-year-old Auschwitz survivor Stanisław Zalewski at the end. The study trip was closely accompanied educationally by Professor Awi Blumenfeld and, in addition to imparting knowledge and forming friendships, also led to increased awareness of the culture of remembering the victims of the Shoah.



Leadership team retreat, Vienna

Our leadership team met again this year - on May 7 and 8, 2022 in Vienna within the framework of the leadership team retreat of the Austrian Service Abroad. At this retreat, various responsible people of our association such as department heads, team leaders and our office staff got together in order to not only get to know each other personally, but also to analyze the current status and discuss plans for the future. Concrete topics were, among others, the remarkable growth of the association in recent years, mechanisms for the selection and evaluation of candidates, the final introduction of a Code of Conduct as well as the work and continuous self-evaluation of the management team. The creative and intensive content of the program was complemented by lunch and evening discussions. We would like to thank the leadership team for the many valuable insights and ideas, as well as the lively discussions and the commitment to the continuous improvement of the association!



Peace Service seminar

At the end of May (25 - 28), an eagerly awaited Peace Service seminar took place at Friedensburg Schlaining (www.aspr.ac.at) in Stadtschlaining, Burgenland. The numerous and instructive program points were attended by 35 Gedenkdienst and Peace Service candidates from our association as well as guests from Ukraine and the historian Prof. Awi Blumenfeld. Topics were in general the handling of conflicts, procedures and actors of peace and conflict work (for example EU, UN, OSCE, AU, NATO, NGOs etc.), as well as their different approaches, self-care interventions, dialogue and mediation, human rights and gender, and conflict analysis. In addition to valuable content inputs with subsequent discussions and reflections, the seminar also served to help participants get to know each other better, strengthen cohesion in the upcoming cohort, and raise awareness of their own (future) role as (peace) servants in international conflicts.



2nd cohort meeting 2022

From July 04 to 06 2022, the second meeting of the cohort of 2022 took place in person in Vienna. The venues were the House of Engineers, seminar rooms of the Vienna University of Technology and the Presidential Chancellery of the Vienna Hofburg. The numerous participants - the cohort consists of 132 people - had the opportunity to take part in 11 different workshops, to talk to Austrian Service Abroad alumni as well as graduates of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and to strengthen the connections amongst each other and make plans for their time abroad. Many thanks to Teach for Austria and WeltWegWeiser for their support!

The workshops covered a range of topics from storytelling, leadership, sustainability and crisis and conflict management to racism and antisemitism as well as (social) justice. On the third day, the visit to Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen was certainly the highlight of the program for many. The Federal President addressed all Austrian volunteers, more than half of whom were our nearly 100 prospective servants abroad, with words of thanks and confidence that they will represent Austria in the world in a worthy manner. The last item on the agenda was a visit to the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), a guided tour of the House of the European Union and a tour of Jewish (historic) Vienna, before the candidates dispersed to their provinces to put the finishing touches to their preparations. We wish them all the best for their time abroad!

Further events:

- Gedenkdienst study trip to Poland: As in 2021, an Austrian Service Abroad group together with students from the University of Cape Town went on a Gedenkdienst study trip to Poland from July 16-24. We will be able to report on this very impressive, emotionally demanding, academically and not least socially extremely valuable experience in the next newsletter.
- Western Balkans study trip: From July 13 to July 22, 2022, a group with Austrian Service Abroad participation traveled to places rich in history and symbolism in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia - the main topics were the Yugoslav war and atrocities such as the Srebrenica massacre in 1995. The program was primarily organized and implemented by our Peace Servant Dennis Miskic as well as office manager Tobias Kohlberger. After the completion of the follow-up, there will be more detailed impressions in the next newsletter.
- 30-Year Gedenkdienst Celebration: The establishment of the Austrian Gedenkdienst and its recognition as a substitute for civilian service as well as the deployment of the first Gedenkdienstler will be celebrated in the premises of the Austrian Parliament in the Vienna Hofburg as well as the Diplomatic Academy Vienna from August 30 to September 1, 2022. Speakers will include high-ranking personalities such as Federal Minister Alexander Schallenberg, President of the National Council Wolfgang Sobotka and, among others, Rabbi Abraham Cooper (USA), Tali Nates (South Africa) and Naomi Kramer (Canada), close partners and heads of the Austrian Service Abroad.

Last but not least, this time we would like to introduce a team from the department of consultancy and highlight the work of our film team or more specifically the 7-Minute-Insight-videos which help represent our host organizations and our volunteers work to the public.



7-Minute-Insights

In addition to the "A Year Abroad" videos, the "Austrian Stories Abroad" and interviews with Holocaust survivors, the film team also produces the "7-Minute Insights" for our Youtube channel 'Österreichischer Auslandsdienst', of which three great videos have appeared again since the last newsletter: Markus Wane and Lucas Rollinson present what they got up to on their own at their host organization Enda Graf Sahel in Dakar (Senegal) during the course of their service, and in the latest installment Joshua Haiden and Oskar Leitner present their work in the course of their Gedenkdienst at the prestigious USC Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles (USA).

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

Alumni team

The Alumni team (reachable under the address alumni-team@auslandsdienst.at) has the goal to enlarge and actively maintain the network of former servants abroad - which consists of more than 600 people - and to achieve improvements for the educational offer of the association with the help of its huge potential. The team contacts alumni, informs them about the current status of the association, invites them to events or organizes them together with them. The team also tries to promote networking between future and former servants abroad, which is done by holding preparatory conferences for specific partner organizations. In addition, the alumni team provides opportunities for alumni to exchange ideas and experiences with each other through alumni meetings and conferences.

The alumni team also maintains contact with the Austrian Service Abroad Alumni Community (AAC; <https://www.aa-community.org/>), a separate association that strives to continue the many contacts from the service abroad period. The association was founded in the summer of 2021 and already boasts nearly 100 members from 14 cohorts. Are you an alumnus and interested? Click here to register: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSefB3iX_1nDPH_O_j6K9HjD-ORdv9p7oOdRThUW24grAKKmBA/viewform

From our cool office, we would like to express the hope that all friends of the Austrian Service Abroad can make the most of the summer and the hot days and weeks. We wish all servants abroad all the best for their coming completion and/or start in the field and are incredibly excited for the reports - and photos - of the coming months!

All the best from the Vienna office.

Austrian Service Abroad
Hutterweg 6
6020 Innsbruck
buero@auslandsdienst.at



This E-Mail was sent to {{ contact.EMAIL }}.
You received this E-Mail because you signed up on auslandsdienst.at/news.

[Unsubscribe](#)



© 2022 Austrian Service Abroad