

## Newsletter January 2023

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

On October 31 2022, our last servant abroad from the cohort of 2021 successfully completed his service. Only one month later (due to an unusually early start) on November 30, the first volunteer of 2022 also finished. Thus, at the moment 17 women and 111 men are serving in 72 locations in 46 countries around the world at our Gedenkdienst, Social and Peace Service partner organizations. An impressive number, of which we are very proud! The first official interim reports have already been sent and in over a hundred personal interviews we were able to assure ourselves of the well-being of our servants abroad. Between January and March there are 16 planned changes of assignment, before three volunteers get to know a third partner organization in May.

The fact that the administration and support of such a huge cohort with three part-time employees is possible at all is thanks to the great cohort management (first and foremost cohort spokesperson Matthias Ogris), but also to our wonderful independent volunteers! Many thanks to all of you!

Even though the addition of new partner organizations has slowed down by now, there are still some new ones among our 143 hosts. We would like to introduce three of them again this time, as well as our servants abroad on site:



### Gedenkdienstler Wolfgang Baumgartner at the Jewish Museum of São Paulo in Brazil

The Jewish Museum of São Paulo (MUJ) was recently inaugurated to cultivate the different expressions, histories, memories, traditions and values of Jewish culture in dialogue with the Brazilian context, the present and the expectations of different audiences.

The MUJ is housed in a building classified as a historical monument, which contains the largest Jewish collection in the country, consisting entirely of donations. The MUJ views memory as a living phenomenon, a source of resistance and survival that is in constant flux.

As a partner organization, the Jewish Museum of São Paulo was a new addition in 2022, after Wolfgang discovered it and sought a partnership together with Daniel Schuster. Born in Brazil himself, but raised in Upper Austria from the age of five, Wolfgang was drawn back to the country of his birth after graduating from high school to finally get to know it properly. At the museum, he has so far mainly assisted with cataloging photos and documents and translating German documents and letters into Portuguese. In between, helping out at events provides a nice change of pace.

To escape the concrete jungle of the city of 12 million people, he often goes hiking in nature on weekends.

Jewish Museum São Paulo



### Social Servant Lorenz Gschöpf at the Africa Amini Alama Support Association in Tanzania

Africa, we believe in you! - Africa Amini Alama is an NGO in Momella, a nice village in Tanzania between Mt. Meru and Mt. Kilimanjaro. The organization was founded in 2007 by a Viennese doctor. At that time it started with the construction of a health station. In the course of time, more and more projects in the fields of medicine, education and social welfare were developed, which now have more than 200 employees. With the help of sponsors, several schools have been built and social projects to strengthen the local population are ongoing. A very special part of Africa Amini Alama is the "Children's Villa", a home that gives children from difficult backgrounds a promising future.

Besides the beautiful landscape and nature and the nice people here, what I also like about my unusual community service is that my activities are very versatile. Tasks range from teaching German, maths and sports at the Africa Amini Secondary School for Sustainable Tourism, to supervision and sports activities in the children's villa, to helping with or taking the initiative for new smaller projects. For example, last month, together

with Fabian, another volunteer, and the apprentices in our workshop, I built a calisthenics sports park for the Secondary School, where the students can have a lot of fun while working out.

The Tanzanian sense of time is completely different; when you arrange a meeting, you can often expect to be an hour late from the start. Despite this relaxed approach to everyday life, things can also get stressful and challenging here, for example during exam time or when projects or tasks need to be finalized. Regular workouts, yoga and breathing exercises, which are often joined by others, are a great way to regain your composure.

Africa Amini Alama Support Association



#### **Peace Servant Sandro D'Assie at the Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture in Tirana, Albania**

The Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture was founded in 2014 by Jonila Godole and since then has pursued the goal of promoting democratic values. The work is based on three main pillars: democracy, media and culture. IDMC's programs aim to make young people understand the Albanian past, and link it to Albania's situation today. In order to reach a wide range of young people, the Institute also organizes creative competitions to encourage students to deal with history, especially in their own environment. Through such competitions, several thousand people have been reached in the past years and this year, too, it represents an important part of the IDMC's work.

By far the organization's most important event is 'Memory Days', held annually around February 20. They commemorate the fall of the statue of dictator Enver Hoxha and the accompanying beginning of the end of the dictatorship. The week-long event features a series of informative events such as conferences, discussions, exhibitions and study trips to memorials around the country.

As the first Peace Servant on site, Sandro assists the IDMC team in the implementation of the projects, but at the same time gets the opportunity to develop and implement his own projects. Since the organization is rather small, the activities are very diverse and allow him to be there and help out in all areas and all phases.

Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture

In the summer months of 2022 we were also able to hold some great and successful events, the highlights of which we would like to briefly review here. We are already looking forward to the seminars starting soon with the cohort of 2023!



#### **Westbalkan Study Trip**

From July 13-22, 2022, a group of service abroad candidates, alumni and students of the Institute of Political Science at the University of Vienna traveled to Belgrade (Serbia), Zagreb (Croatia), Sarajevo and Srebrenica (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to intensively study the Yugoslav war and the atrocities of the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, in cooperation with our 7 partner organizations in the region. Organized by our Peace Servant Dennis Miskic with the help of office manager Tobias Kohlberger, the study trip offered many the opportunity to deal with this topic for the first time. Through meetings with representatives of NGOs, universities and embassies, visits to museums and memorials, and city tours from different national perspectives, the participants not only gained an insight into the past, but also a sense of the current conflicts in the region.





### Gedenkdienst Poland Study Trip

Almost simultaneously, from July 16-24 a group of 32, including candidates from our association and students from the University of Cape Town, participated in the Poland Holocaust Study Trip. The educational leaders were Tali Nates, Director of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, and Prof. Adam Mendelsohn, Director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town. In addition, the Vice President of Education of the Holocaust Museum LA (Gedenkdienst partner organization) Jordanna Gessler also participated.

The main stops of the trip were:

- Warsaw: Meeting with Konstanty Gebert at the Austrian Cultural Forum, POLIN Museum (Gedenkdienst partner organization), meeting with survivor Wanda Albinski, walking tour of Warsaw, visiting the Jewish Cemetery, Jewish Historical Institute, Zabinski Villa and Janusz Korczak Memorial.
- Lublin: Tour of Jewish Lublin, visit to the former concentration camp Majdanek.
- Belzec: visit to the former extermination site.
- Krakow: Visit Galicia Jewish Museum (Gedenkdienst partner organization), tour Jewish Krakow, Jewish Community Center and former concentration camp Plaszow.
- Oswiecim: Tour of Auschwitz I & II and visit to Auschwitz Jewish Center (Gedenkdienst partner organization).
- Visit to Nowy Targ.

The week was marked by strong emotions, academic training, a great social experience, personal narratives, deep reflections and intercultural exchange for which we are very grateful.

For our candidates it served as preparation for their service abroad as well as for general education and personal development.



### 30- year-Gedenkdienst-celebration

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Gedenkdienst, Daniel Schuster organized a high-profile conference at the Diplomatic Academy from August 30-31, 2022. Primarily partners of the Gedenkdienst from all over the world were invited, but also political representatives and alumni. In a total of 9 varied panels, the beginnings of the Gedenkdienst, Jewish life worldwide in the past and today, as well as peace work were highlighted. It was a successful exchange that brought about many new personal connections, celebrated the Gedenkdienst as a valuable contribution to Shoah education and, of course, offered those interested a lot of food for thought.

On September 1st, at the invitation of the President of the National Council, Wolfgang Sobotka, a festive reception followed in the Parliament. Foreign Minister Schallenberg, the US Antisemitism Commissioner Deborah Lipstadt (via video message), Rabbi Abraham Cooper from the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Chairman of the Board of Yad Vashem, Dani Dayan,

called in their speeches for the fight against anti-semitism worldwide and thanked all Gedenkdienstler for their commitment. Afterwards, there was a discussion with three of our partners from Poland, South Africa and Australia as well as two of our alumni Jacob Anthony Bauer and Felix Loidl. Many thanks to our alumnus Andreas Stroh for the great photos!



### Homecoming meeting 2021

After a long break due to Corona, a return meeting could finally take place in person again on September 17, 2022. Almost 40 Gedenkdienst, Social and Peace Service alumni from all over the world came together in Vienna to reflect on key moments during their service abroad, to share experiences and to collect feedback. It was a fun, moving, and also impressive afternoon that made everyone realize once again the incredible breadth of doing a service abroad - geographically, content-wise, and emotionally. We were very happy to see so many of you in real life and wish you only the best for your future!

### Further dates:

- **Servants abroad of the year 2021- award ceremony in Vienna:** On Dec. 22, five service abroad alumni Dennis Miskic, Marco Spieler, Markus Wane, Tatjana Lang and Teresa Dujmovits were honored for their outstanding contributions around the world.
- **1st cohort meeting 2023:** From Jan. 13-14, 2023, the first cohort meeting for the cohort of 2023 will take place online. Meeting alumni, Gedenkdienst, Social and Peace Service workshops as well as talks with diplomacy/security and antisemitism experts are on the agenda.
- **Preparatory seminars 2023:** From January 19 the first program points of this year's Understanding Israel Academy will follow. In the Easter vacations the Social Service seminar will take place from April 02-04, directly followed by the Peace Service seminar from April 05-07, and from April 28 - May 1 our first ever Gedenkdienst seminar will be held. In between, additional excursions to Hartheim Castle, the Voestalpine Museum and the Obersalzberg will be offered to all those interested.

Last but not least, we would like to introduce two of our teams again, without whom we would often be lost: the IT team ultimately keeps everything running and the school team ensures that every year new prospective students find their way to us.



### School team

Every association needs committed young people. The school department takes on the important task of making the Austrian Service Abroad known to the country's 350,000 high school students.

To this end, we go to schools, network with student organizations and represent the association at information events for young people. However, our greatest success is our nationwide online presentation. The concept is simple: registration via an online form, a

general overview of the association and three servants abroad who report on their Gedenkdienst, Social and Peace Service. This gives participants a comprehensive impression of what service abroad can offer them. In 2022, over 130 people attended one of three online presentations.

It is especially important to us not to present the Austrian Service Abroad as a male-only group, but to address all genders and also older volunteers, thus making the association more diverse.

If you would like to present the Austrian Service Abroad at your school, please contact the school department at [schule@auslandsdienst.at](mailto:schule@auslandsdienst.at)!

#### IT team

The IT team takes care of solving technical problems and provides or takes care of the digital heart of the association. The work in the team includes the following positions with various activities:

- Website Administrator  
Keeps the website and its plugins up to date. He implements new content or changes so that they can be admired.
- Postmaster  
Creates, deletes and maintains the email accounts of the entire organization.
- Podio Administrator  
Adds new candidates to relevant workspaces, maintains all apps in those workspaces, and implements new screens or changes in Podio.
- Team Leader  
Ensures smooth communication between posts and a good working atmosphere in the IT team. (in short: makes sure nobody cries :-))

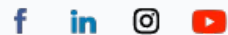
The main point of contact for concerns to the IT team is the ticket system. Questions, problems or suggestions regarding the website, email or Podio can be posted there. The ticket system can be reached at: <https://ticket.auslandsdienst.at/new-ticket>.

We hope you all had a nice, peaceful Christmas at home or at least with (new) friends and can now start 2023 with renewed energy.

We keep our fingers crossed for all servants abroad for the second half of their service and wish you many more valuable experiences, exciting adventures and meaningful activities! We are already looking forward to all your reports and stories :) Take care and see you soon!

All the best from the Vienna office.

Austrian Service Abroad  
Hutterweg 6  
6020 Innsbruck  
[buero@auslandsdienst.at](mailto:buero@auslandsdienst.at)



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