

Newsletter April 2023

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

At the end of April, two more interim reports are due, then all servants abroad of the cohort of 2022 will have reached the second half of their service and we do not expect many more changes. Bigger and minor crises and changes of assignments keep us on our toes, but in general, fortunately, the many, many wonderfully positive experiences prevail and we celebrate all our servants abroad's successes with them! Thank you all for your commitment, resilience and for sharing your experiences!

This time we would like to give a small insight into our new Peace Service partner organization in South Africa:



Peace Servant Alexander Spreckelsen at the NIROX Foundation in Krugersdorp, South Africa

The Nirox (Arts) Foundation is an arts venue co-founded by Benjamin Liebmann over 16 years ago. The foundation continuously hosts artists from all over the world and encourages them to create art according to the philosophy of the Nirox Foundation. In their own words, the foundation serves the following purpose: "We are committed to improving social justice and quality of life. We aim to do this through art and nature." The foundation offers space, a residency, concerts, film productions, educational opportunities, sculptures, architectural projects, personal development programs, and a leadership academy. There is an Artist in Residency program in which creative practitioners create art around themes of borders, trauma, xenophobia, humanity, harmony with nature, and colonialism. Furthermore, the Nirox Foundation offers the Nirox Sculpture Park on approx. 30ha, which is also open to the public on weekends. Here, in addition to a restaurant visit, guided tours of the park are offered.

As the first Peace Servant on site, Alexander supports the team of the Nirox Foundation in the implementation of the projects, but at the same time gets the opportunity to develop and implement his own ideas. One of the activities is, for example, to help the curators with the preparation of exhibitions. The core task, however, is the "Act of Apology" project, which deals with the symbolic act of apologising in the reconciliation and peace-building process. The project was developed in cooperation with the Austrian Embassy, the Austrian Service Abroad as well as the Nirox Foundation.

Since the organization is rather small, the activities are very diverse and allow him to be present and help in all areas and all phases.

[NIROX Foundation](#)

In the first months of 2023, some interesting and instructive events could take place again. Thus, the preparation of the next cohort is entering the hot and final phase. In addition to the events lasting several days, all those interested also took part in an excursion to Hartheim Castle (on 19/02) and the Zeitgeschichte Museum voestalpine (08/04).



1st cohort meeting 2023

The first meeting of the cohort of 2023 took place online on Zoom on January 13 & 14, 2023. This has the advantage that the candidates do not have to travel across Austria and, at the same time, speakers and workshop leaders from all over the world can be added without much effort. Like last year, top diplomat Ferdinand von Trauttmansdorf joined us on Friday evening to talk about manners in a diplomatic context as well as Bundeswehr Captain Simon Baaske for the important topic of personal security. We also had the chance to ask actor Cornelius Obonya (pictured) some exciting questions.

Saturday was then divided into two parallel tracks: the Gedenkdienst and Peace Service workshop dealt with the topics of the origin of the Gedenkdienst service, the prehistory of the Holocaust, as well as the history of Brazil and genocides in South-West Africa and Rwanda, while the Social Service workshop was about intercultural communication. At the end there was a chance to talk with four alumni and listen to their experiences.



Understanding Israel-Academy

The Understanding Israel Academy serves as preparation for all candidates going to Israel, doing their service abroad with our partner Project TEN, or simply interested in the topic. This year, in addition to getting to know the other participants, it includes an introduction to Judaism (26/01/23), a talk with Major General Wolfgang Jilke (16/03/23), a talk with the Center for Israel Studies (25/05/23), an Understanding Israel Seminar (04-07/08/23), a reception at the Israeli Embassy, and a meeting with Rabbi Jacob Biderman (08/08/23). This program is offered in addition to the other preparatory programs (Gedenkdienst, Social Service, Peace Service).



Social Service-Seminar

From 02-04/04/23 the prospective Social Servants met in Bad Ischl to prepare intensively for their service, but also to exchange ideas and to get to know each other better. There were exciting presentations by alumni*ae about development cooperation projects in

Costa Rica and Uganda, which were initiated by servants abroad together with their host organizations, but also about their Social Service and their life on site (Israel, India, Guatemala & Senegal). In addition, two representatives of partner organizations from India and Peru came especially to talk about their organizations. However, the candidates mainly worked their own content in seminars and workshops: They had to choose between Stress, Strain and Crises abroad and an Introduction to Childcare + Safety in the Field, as well as between Leadership without easy Answers and Communication & Conflict Management.

Although the days were packed with program, there was still energy left in the evening for ice bathing (unfortunately it kept snowing!), hiking, playing table tennis and of course lots of talking. Many thanks again to all for the many great contributions!



Peace Service-Seminar

Immediately afterwards, the next candidates arrived to participate in the Peace Service Seminar from 05-07/04/23. This was led by expert Harald Rettner, who was able to give us not only a comprehensive overview of the theories of peace research, but also many personal insights into his work. Key concepts such as positive peace, local ownership, human rights, gender analysis and self-care were presented and discussed, as well as exercises on mediation and conflict analysis were conducted, as well as research on the actors in peace work.

In the evening there were additional presentations by our Peace Servant Marina Maier and by Serge Stroobants, the director of our partner organization Institute for Economics and Peace from Brussels. Here, too, the time flew by and the missing hours of sleep will have to be made up for afterwards... Thanks to all participants, it was a pleasure to meet you!

Upcoming events:

- **Gedenkdienst-Seminar:** From 12-15/05/2023, a seminar specially organized by Daniel Schuster, Head of the International Office, will take place in Linz for the first time to prepare all Gedenkdienst candidates for their service abroad. If you still want to participate, please register as soon as possible!
- **2nd cohort meeting 2023:** Probably in the first week of July. Planned are one day of workshops with getting to know each other and hopefully again a morning with the Federal President (we are still waiting for the exact date at the moment...).
- **Poland Gedenkdienst study trip:** From 17-23/07/23 for the third time in a row all interested candidates travel to Holocaust memorial sites in four cities in Poland. Together with Tali Nates (director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Education Centre) a top-class program has been put together again.
- **Understanding Israel Seminar:** As in 2020 and 21, there will be 4-day seminar from 04-07/08/23 for all Israel candidates to specifically prepare for their assignment there.

Last but not least, we would like to introduce the team that always has the right figures ready for us for every occasion:

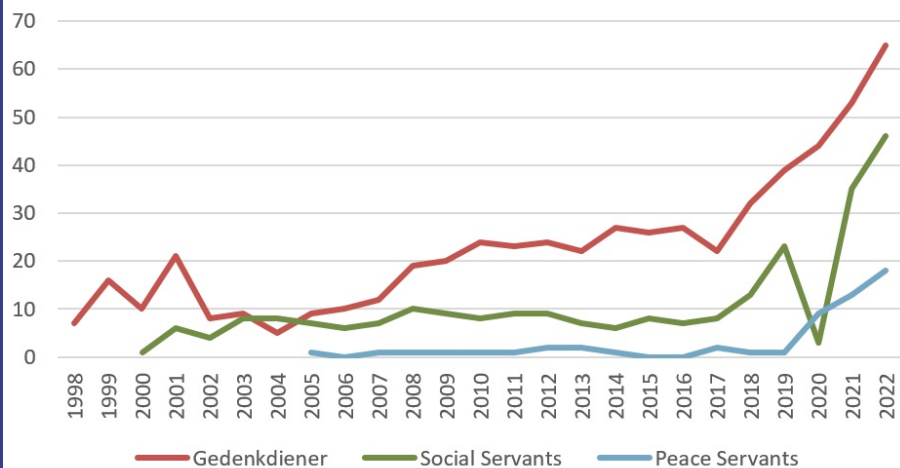
Archive & Statistics-Team

This team is part of the administration department of our organization and has 5 team members and a team leader. Data is collected about each cohort and then summarized and analyzed. Also for each Wednesday Conference, for example, the number of participants is recorded and how many servants abroad and NIs participate. Personal data is also redacted from the final reports before they are posted on Podio so that anyone interested can get a good insight into the work of former servants abroad. You can find them on Podio in the plenum under "Final Reports".

By the way, the best attended Wednesday Conference since the beginning of the recordings was the one with former minister Rudolf Anschöber with 373 participants in total and 300 already at about 20:00.

A successor for the team leadership is currently being sought from candidates/ NIs from the cohort of 2024+ to ensure a smooth continuation. If you are interested, please contact Miriam Vanek.

Types of service between 1998-2022



We hope everyone had a relaxing Easter and (in this hemisphere) a beautiful beginning of spring (hopefully it will be back again soon...).

We keep our fingers crossed for all graduates for the upcoming exams, you can do it!

All the best from the Vienna Office

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