

## Newsletter January 2024

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

Busy, but also fulfilling months lie behind us: Once again, we were able to send a total of 127 volunteers (who form the 2023 cohort) to partner organizations all around the world - the vast majority of whom will reach their halfway point at the end of this month. We have already received 92 interim reports and this month we will already be saying goodbye to our first servant abroad who is becoming a new alumnus.

At the same time, the 2024 cohort is now entering the 'hot phase'; as there are around 160 interested candidates, but only between 120-130 places available, we even had to set up a waiting list this year. We hope that a few "competitions" can be resolved in the coming weeks and that suitable places can still be found for the vast majority of them!

This time we would like to give a small insight into our Gedenkdiener partner in Dallas, USA:



### **Gedenkdiener Matteo Hubalek at the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies in Dallas, USA reports:**

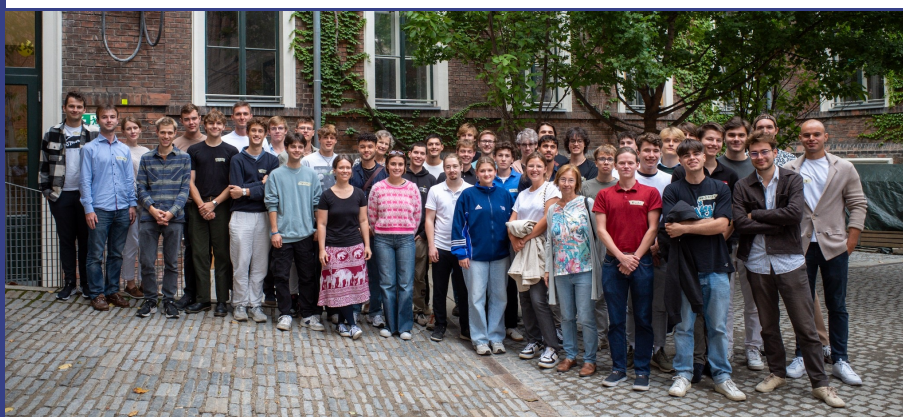
The Ackerman Center was founded in 1986 by Dr. Zsuzsanna Ozsváth. It's part of the University of Texas at Dallas and thus has university funds and private donations at its disposal. University courses in Holocaust Studies are offered and research is conducted in the area of genocide. The faculty consists of a handful of professors in the fields of history, literature and film. The current director of the center, Dr. Nils Roemer, is also the dean of the Bass School of Humanities. The Center also has an extensive library and a large collection of literature on the Holocaust. The Ackerman Center cooperates with many renowned organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee, the USC Shoah Foundation and the United States Air Force Academy.

The work of the on-site Gedenkdiener includes collaborating on faculty projects and the Digital Studies Project. This uses the PowerBI software to graphically and statistically display data on the Holocaust. The memorial servants also have the opportunity to deal with topics individually. They work completely independently and can therefore also engage very closely with the subject matter. There are also several conferences at the university and outside every year. I had the opportunity to take part in a conference at the United States Air Force Academy. I got to know many committed individuals there and also learned more about the US Air Force's military stance on human rights and war.

The Center offers a really exciting atmosphere and is therefore perfect for motivated and independent Gedenkdiener.

Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies

So while the cohort of 2023 is now spread all over the world and diligently provides us with reports and pictures, here in Vienna we have been meeting up with alumni and candidates:



### Returnees meeting 2022

One of the best moments of the year is seeing many of the still quite "fresh" alumni again at the returnees meeting (this time on 23/09/2023 in Vienna) and marveling together at their many different experiences. Three services abroad were presented, highlights and low points of the past months were reflected on, anecdotes were exchanged and feedback for the association was collected before we ended the evening with a dinner together. Although the 2022 cohort once again had to overcome many challenges, some of which were hair-raising, at the end everyone was grateful above all else. Grateful for what they had learned, the many impressions and the new (international) acquaintances. It was wonderful to be able to talk to like-minded people again, reminisce and laugh about crazy experiences. Many thanks again to the entire cohort for your openness and all the best for your future adventures :)

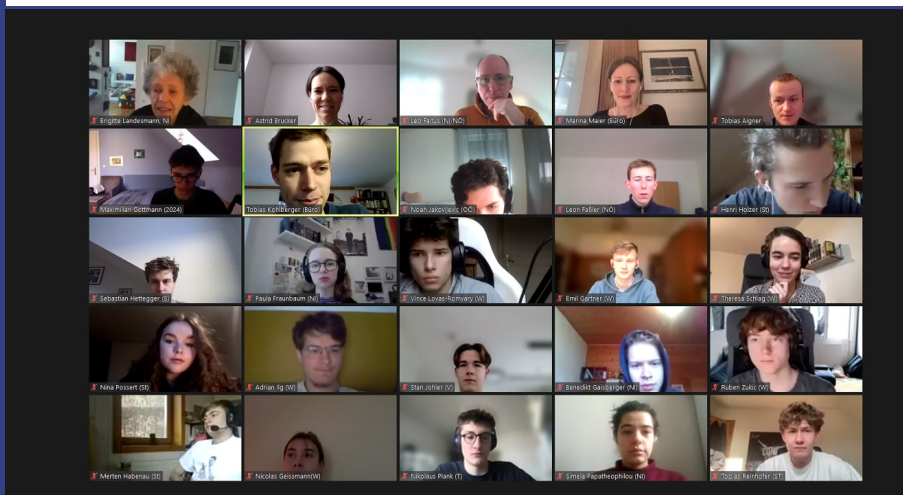


### Award ceremony for the Volunteers of the Year 2022

Another highlight was the award ceremony for the servants abroad from the cohort of 2022. All those interested were invited to Vienna on 22/12/2023 to celebrate the outstanding achievements of Daniel Hackl (Gedenkdiener at the HEGP Foundation, Canada), David Ditzbacher (Gedenkdiener at the Fondation de la mémoire de la déportation, France), Dominik Hohla (Social Servant at AIAT, India), Michaela Franjo (Peace Servant at the Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights Osijek, Croatia) and Noah Plattner (Peace Servant at Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines, Taiwan and Gedenkdiener at CegeSoma, Belgium). Marina Maier and Tobias Aigner hosted the event, cohort spokesperson Matthias Ogris gave the laudatory speeches and the award winners themselves reported on their experiences abroad before receiving their certificates and trophies.

We are delighted that representatives from Parliament, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the event and thank our candidate Adriana Bauer-Klučarić for her wonderful flute performance. Thank you very much!

Of course, after the official part, there was also plenty of time to chat and socialize - a wonderful end to a difficult year.



### First cohort meeting 2024

The first cohort meeting 2024 took place online on January 13. Around 80 candidates and new applicants came together for an intensive day full of workshops, presentations and joint discussions. Between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., Tobias Aigner, Chairman of the Board, gave a joint address before everyone split into smaller groups to delve deeper into the different types of service (Gedenkdiener, Social and Peace Service). Thankfully, we were once again able to call on many of our alumni, as well as a candidate and a partner organization, who shared their valuable experiences with us all. The administrative presentation was also included this time, so that everyone was able to switch off the computer in the evening, a little tired but also satisfied with all the new things they had learned.

### Annual General Meeting 18/12/2023

At the Annual General Meeting in December, which was gratifyingly attended by more than 30 official members for the first time, a groundbreaking new set of bylaws was adopted. This step not only marks a milestone in our association's history, but also fulfills recommendations from the BDO report. These measures enable us to outline the next steps to the Ministry and fulfill the final conditions of the funding agreement. We are on the verge of implementing the last changes we have begun and look forward to a

successful year 2024.

#### Further events:

- During the Easter vacations, Social and Peace Service seminars will take place for the candidates of the 2024 cohort - the dates are March 25-27 for Social Service and March 27-29 for Peace Service - please plan accordingly!
- The Gedenkdienst seminar is planned for mid-May (May 17-21), and will take place this year in cooperation with the Auschwitz Jewish Center (Poland), Bnei Akiva (Germany) and B'nai B'rith (Belgium). We are also working together on further preparatory webinars and excursions and are already looking forward to many exciting lectures and workshops!

Last but not least, we would like to use this newsletter to introduce another one of our hard-working teams:



#### Tutor Department

We tutors have the important task of professionally and carefully supporting new applicants ("NI" is our German abbreviation) of the association and accompanying them through to the admission conference. We can be reached within 24 hours and are very well informed about the association. We provide the new applicants with all the important information on contact details, the admission phase itself and hand out guides to the association.

Every new applicant has the right to be looked after properly and conscientiously by us!

##### **Moritz Gemel, Tutor Coordinator**

As tutor coordinator, I am not only responsible for the smooth supervision of all new applicants and for managing the department, I also lead the so-called admission conferences. Every new applicant has to pass these after a few months in order to be accepted into the association as an official candidate.

##### **Matthias Pany, NI Supervisor**

After someone applies on our website, this person is invited to a "new applicants consultation hour" by and with Marina Maier. Afterwards, anyone who is still interested is assigned a tutor: As NI supervisor, I manage the efficient assignment. This position enables me not only to act as an NI supervisor, but also to actively contribute to the preparation of the new applicants as a tutor.

##### **Daniel Leopoldi, NI Administrator**

As NI administrator, I am responsible for answering all questions that new applicants may have before registering with the Austrian Service Abroad. I also take care of managing the NI email distribution list so that it is always kept up to date and no-one remains in the new applicant phase too long.

We hope you all had a good start to the new year and that 2024 will not only be successful for us as an association, but above all calmer than 2023 ;)

All the best from the Vienna Office

Austrian Service Abroad  
Esterhazygasse 11a/2-3  
1060 Wien  
[bueror@auslandsdienst.at](mailto:bueror@auslandsdienst.at)



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