The Holocaust is one of the darkest chapters in all human history. Through Holocaust education young people discover what discrimination and exclusion can trigger in society. It is essential to understand the mechanisms of discrimination and what discrimination and exclusion can trigger in society. It is important to learn from the past and develop greater tolerance. In Austria, the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service, but also two new programs: the International Holocaust Memorial Day and the European-wide Action Week Against Racism. Furthermore, she or he is responsible for coordinating the two big campaigns “the International Day Against Fascism & Antisemitism” and the “European-wide Action Week Against Racism”. The aim of the Austrian Service Abroad is to establish cross-cultural communication between the Austrian volunteers and the population of their assigned countries focusing on victims of persecution and minority issues. The exchange seeks to further understanding among nations by virtue of commemoration and reconciliation with the tragedies of the 20th century, aid for social and economic development or by easing tensions in conflict areas.

Volunteers at UNITED for Intercultural Action
Volunteers from the Austrian Service Abroad have supported the UNITED office in Amsterdam since 2003. Overall, the Austrian volunteer at UNITED coordinates the two big campaigns “the International Day Against Fascism & Antisemitism” and the “European-wide Action Week Against Racism”. Furthermore, she or he is responsible for organising conferences, administering databases, publishing reports and preparing future projects.

History of the Holocaust Memorial Service
Andreas Maislinger began advocating the Holocaust Memorial Service (Gedenkdienst) at the end of the seventies as an alternative to the mandatory civil service, aiming to promote education and raise awareness about the Holocaust. In 1980, the former president Rudolf Kirchschläger refused his concept as the political stand of the time presented Austria as the first victim of nazi Germany and therefore Austrians did not have to take responsibility by reconciling with the victims of the Holocaust. Later Kirchschläger accredited the “positive achievement” of the “accomplished holocaust memorial service”. Finally, in May 1991 the former Interior Minister Franz Lischka informed Maislinger that the Austrian Government had approved the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service as an alternative service. Thus, in September 1991 the first young Austrian could begin his work at the Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau through the organisation “Verein Gedenkdienst”. Due to conflicting ideas with members of the Verein Gedenkdienst, Andreas Maislinger and Andreas Hörtmig founded the Austrian Service Abroad in 1998, which comprised of not only the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service, but also new programs: the Austrian Social Service and the Austrian Peace Service.

The Austrian Social Service within the Austrian Service Abroad works in the fields of communication between the Austrian volunteers and the population of their assigned countries focusing on victims of persecution and minority issues. The exchange seeks to further understanding among nations by virtue of commemoration and reconciliation with the tragedies of the 20th century, aid for social and economic development or by easing tensions in conflict areas. The Austrian Service Abroad (in German “Verein Österreichischer Auslandsdienst”) is a non-profit organisation founded in 1998 by Andreas Maislinger and Andreas Hörtmig. The organisation sends volunteers (aged 18-28) to around 60 partner institutions in 32 countries all over the world to work in one of three fields: the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service, the Austrian Social Service and the Austrian Peace Service. There, volunteers complete a 12-month internship that counts as an alternative to the Austrian Military Service and the Civilian Service.

The aim of the Austrian Service Abroad is to establish cross-cultural communication between the Austrian volunteers and the population of their assigned countries focusing on victims of persecution and minority issues. The exchange seeks to further understanding among nations by virtue of commemoration and reconciliation with the tragedies of the 20th century, aid for social and economic development or by easing tensions in conflict areas.
Hate crimes and online hate speech are turning into regular realities, extreme right-wing parties are elected in local municipalities and national parliaments and xenophobic propaganda is becoming legitimised in societies. A society that is fractured, where its people are disconnected from one another, is neither healthy nor will it be effective. The hateful movements that can gain ground in uncertain political times. As a civil society we have to respond to these challenges.

We can act and should act against fascism and all forms of hate. This starts at a very local level: our schools and workplaces, our neighbours and streets. Here we have the power to really make a difference and shape society.

Based on the experience of the UNITED network, in its long struggle against hate and injustice, we have developed a short guide that can help you make a real difference. In this leaflet we explain examples of teaching methods that can be useful for group work and group projects.

6 EXAMPLES OF TEACHING METHODS

1 RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

Righteous Among the Nations is an honorary title awarded by Yad Vashem to describe non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis.

The main forms of help given by the Righteous were hiding Jews at home or on their property, providing false papers and false identities, smuggling and assisting Jews to escape and the rescuing of children.

The stories of the Righteous can be used in the stories of the Righteous as an educational approach to teach historical content and religious and moral values, while personalising the events of the Holocaust. The stories of each honoured person represents what prompted and what motivated some individuals (a tiny minority) to risk their lives on behalf of Jewish people during the Holocaust.

One possible activity that can be organised is a story telling day under the title “Whoever saves one life, saves an entire universe.” Volunteers take the role of a story teller and tell the story of one case. Several stories of the Righteous can be found on the homepage of Yad Vashem. This method brings historical content to life and makes it more comprehensible for pupils.

2 STUMBILING STONES

A stumbling stone makes you stop and think. They are memorial plaques placed outside the former homes or workplaces of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. They consist of a brass plate with an inscription of the victim’s name, date of birth, deportation place and date of death. These are fixed to the ground in the middle of pedestrian pathways. Stumbling stones in front of buildings aim to stop people from reflecting on the history of the people who once lived there.

In addition to many local similar initiatives, there are well-known stumbling stone initiatives. “Stolpersteine” (Stumbling Stones) is an initiative by the German artist Gunter Demnig. The Vienna-based artist started calling attention to the history of the Holocaust. The German word “Stolperstein” means an obstacle; something “getting in the way.” Figuratively, a pedestrian stumbles over the stones and this unexpected interruption develops historical understanding.

Besides participating in one of these initiatives, a local project with young people and local adults can also be organised. The first step involves researching the story of a deported person who lived nearby. The participants should be involved in the decision making process so they feel a sense of ownership over the project.

3 PROPAGANDA MATERIAL

Propaganda is biased information designed to shape the beliefs and behaviours of individuals. Propaganda can occur in many forms, such as movies, cartoons, sculptures or photographs. It can serve many purposes, such as political propaganda, to influence the opinions of the audience.

Using cartoons

The cartoon “Germany’s sculptor” (see picture) was published in a satirical, right-wing German newspaper in 1933, the year Adolf Hitler assumed power. By analysing this cartoon, students will explore a primary document (see first link below), which gives some indication as to how certain art was forced from censorship to completion submission.

During a group workshop participants should examine the cartoon and pay attention to the explanation provided by the teacher. Learners should be informed with the historical background of the topic. Then questions should be answered in small groups.

Some examples for questions:

• This cartoon tells a story. What story?
• Hitler is presented as an artist. He is described as “Germany’s sculptor”. What was the role of art in Nazi Germany?
• What is the statement? How is it used here and with what effect?
• How is the aim of the cartoon using anti-semitic stereotypes? Why do you think he uses these stereotypes? Do you think this is effective? Are stereotypes still used today?

The book works with different depictions of animals and can be used to understand how people can be influenced by media and artistic tools. It gives an insight into how the Nazis abused the media and art for their own ends.

Online resources:

• www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/germany_sculptor.asp

4 OPEN DOORS

All across Europe there are several localities like houses, schools or factories that were full with Jewish life before the Second World War. These stories were often forgotten or suppressed because the war was the cause why the problem of mistreatment was even more pronounced. The situation of occupied (taken over) by new residents that followed the former Jewish owners.

An initiative in the Netherlands called “Open Jewish House” and “Open Jewish Sites” project was opened to commemorate deported Dutch Jews. Online, people could look up if there were Jews deported in the street or neighbourhood they live in.

Volunteer speakers present the history of the localities and the people who lived there. The stories are told with the help of photos, movies, diary entries, poems, literature and music. Everybody is welcome to listen, take a look, spend some time and reflect.

This project needs a thorough and lengthy preparation. The examination of the topic includes interviews with possible former residents or local residents who have studied and researching historical content. Not to forget that the current residents of the localities are not yet informed from the beginning so they do not feel overlooked during the whole process.

Online resources:

• www.jsa.org/open-house-project-in-the-holyland.aspx
• communityjoumdenominations/page/250/216 (in Dutch)

5 PROPAGANDA MATERIAL

Propaganda is biased information designed to shape the beliefs and behaviours of individuals. Propaganda can occur in many forms such as movies, cartoons, sculptures or photographs. The name just points to the general notion of propaganda, which is a great number of channels to influence public opinion.

Nazi propaganda stretched through all areas of life, for example, in art. Hitler gave his personal taste in art the force of law to impose his own vision of the Kunstwollen. Inaccording to the historical background of the topic.

• www.stolpersteine.com

One step: Give handouts with a maximum of 30 questions that should be answered in half an hour. After that, the participants should discuss their answers in small groups (max. 4) for another half an hour.

Three steps:

• Hand out the book to the participants. In small groups read the book for 45 minutes and then summarise pupils’ impressions of the book. Ask about their group’s reactions to the impressions about the book but do not ask for their personal opinion yet.

Second step:

• Give handouts with a maximum of 30 questions that should be answered in half an hour. After that, the participants should discuss their answers in small groups (max. 4) for another half an hour.

Third step:

• Finally, the small groups present their answers to the whole group. Afterwards, the participants discuss what they learned during the workshop. Discuss what they can do against discrimination in their everyday life.

Some examples for questions:

• Why did Spiegelman write this book? Why did he call it “Maus”?
• “Maus” portrays the Holocaust or in general a genocide. Do you know of any recent genocides?
• How can you relate this book to the human condition similar to the Holocaust? How are they different?
• What would you have done if you were a Jew living in Poland during the Second World War? What would you have done if you were a Pole?
• How did people survive in Poland during the Second World War?
• How do you think these survivors felt after the war?

Online resources:

• www.xml.org/emp/maus_guides.pdf
• www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/33dTexts/maus/MausResources.htm

6 GRAPHIC NOVEL “MAUS”

“Maus” (the German word for mouse) is a graphic novel completed in 1995 by the American cartoonist Art Spiegelman. The book depicts Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. The book has been translated into 18 languages.

The book works with different depictions of animals. In the United States with Jews as mice, Germans as cats and non-Jewish Poles as pigs. His choice to use pigs to signify Poles is because in Nazi Germany, Jews were considered sub-human. In many cultures pigs are viewed as disgusting, vulgar or even non-human.

Analyzing these images with young people, however, may help them gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, or Spiegelman’s artistic purposes. Though the national comparisons may not always flatten, it can help them to understand how such as Aesop’s, or allegories such as George Orwell’s Animal Farm.

The book can be a helpful tool to teach people about the Holocaust. A workshop can be designed to develop an insight into the conditions under which people lived during the Holocaust as well as how survivors and their families coped afterwards.

Online resources:

• www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/germany_sculptor.asp