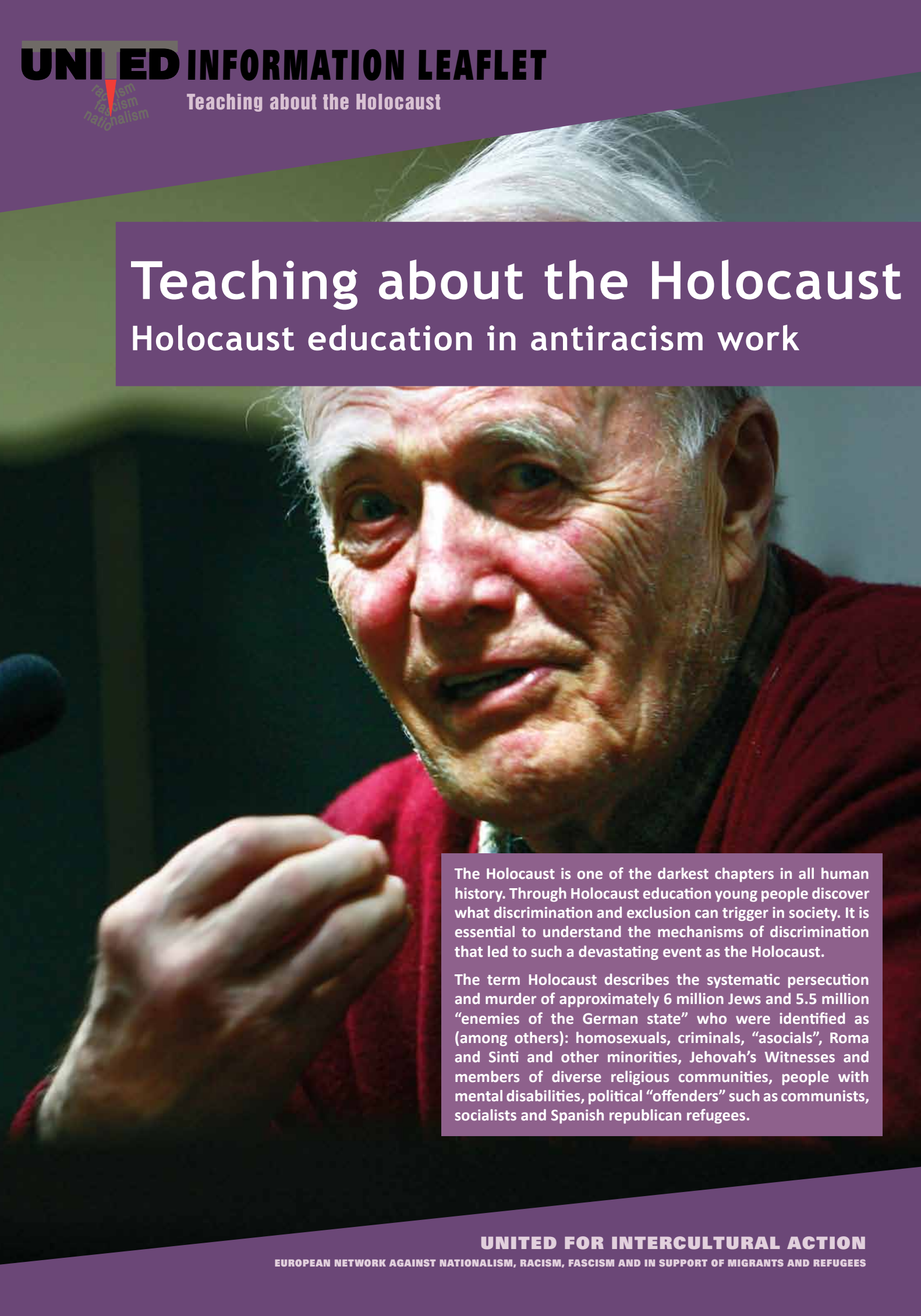


Teaching about the Holocaust

Holocaust education in antiracism work



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 that led to such a devastating event as the Holocaust.

The term Holocaust describes the systematic persecution and murder of approximately 6 million Jews and 5.5 million “enemies of the German state” who were identified as (among others): homosexuals, criminals, “asocials”, Roma and Sinti and other minorities, Jehovah’s Witnesses and members of diverse religious communities, people with mental disabilities, political “offenders” such as communists, socialists and Spanish republican refugees.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION



Depending on which part of the world you are from, the education of the Holocaust can be a selective or a compulsory subject. To include or not to include teaching the Holocaust as a discipline is an even bigger question and the answers vary greatly from country to country. In most European countries the Holocaust is studied in secondary schools and beyond.

Holocaust education in Europe began carefully in the second half of the 20th century to break the veil of silence on the topic. In West Germany, for example, Holocaust education only started in the 1960s and played a minor role in the curriculum in the following years. In most Central and Eastern European countries it was only in the mid-1990s that the Holocaust became a topic to be addressed.

The first educational approaches that were used at that time were mostly images and movies of concentration camps as a sort of pedagogical shock therapy.

Recently Holocaust education has shifted to a more personal approach in many countries in Europe and especially in Western Europe. This approach attempts to place individuals at the centre of our understanding of history by using personal accounts of the tragic events that took place.

The stories of Jewish families are told in order to gain a broad social perspective from intimate and personal experiences. Family experiences before, during and after the war should provide a clue as to what was happening in the social fabric of the time.

By using personal stories, a more human insight can be achieved, often making young people particularly struck by the fact that so many people allowed this, or can allow any genocide, to occur by failing to either resist or protest. A structured inquiry into this history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behaviour.

Online resources:

- un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/index.shtml

THE "KRISTALLNACHT" POGROM

The "Kristallnacht" pogrom is usually seen as the symbolic beginning of the Holocaust. It reminds us that such terrible things did not start with deportations and concentration camps, but developed step by step.

Looking at tendencies in modern Europe, we must be aware that history can be repeated and the Holocaust happened with the silent acceptance and support of the broad majority. Nowadays, right-wing extremism is a rising force on the entire continent.

Hate crimes and online hate speech are turning into regular realities, extreme right-wing parties are elected into local municipalities and national parliaments and xenophobic propaganda is becoming legitimate in societies.

A society that is fractured, where its people are disconnected from one another, is neither healthy nor will it be effective in resisting 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 neighbourhoods 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 six examples of teaching methods that can be used 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 was 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.

Organisations can use 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 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 a single 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.

Online resources:

- www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/



2 PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

In recent decades, the importance of survivors' testimonies as a central source for understanding the Holocaust has become widely recognised worldwide. In the context of Holocaust education, this personal voice enhances the effectiveness of the learning process.

Many countries still have Holocaust survivors living within their communities. But, with an aging survivor population it may not be possible to have this direct personal contact. However, there are Internet projects with collections of testimonies from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses. Educational tools and supporting resources provide context to deepen the learner's understanding of the Holocaust.

As always in life it is better to stick to the truth than to invent stories. If you need to keep a workshop short it is better to choose a short story rather than shorten a longer one. Lastly, the location for your activity should be a quiet, relaxing and safe environment where everyone feels at ease.

Online resources:

- www.tellingstories.org/holocaust
- ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/phistories/
- adl.org/children_holocaust/children_main.asp

3 STUMBLING 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 plates are fixed to the ground in the middle of pedestrian pathways. Stumbling stones in front of buildings aim to stop passersby and make them reflect on the memory of the people who once lived there.

In addition to many local similar initiatives, there are two well-known projects. "Stolpersteine" (Stumbling Stones) is an initiative by the German artist Gunter Demnig. The Vienna based initiative "Steine der Erinnerung" (Stones of Remembrance) aims to develop projects to remember the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The German word "Stolperstein" means an obstacle; something "getting in the way". Figuratively, pedestrians stumble across the stones and this unexpected interruption develops historical understanding.

Besides participating in one of these initiatives, a local project with young people and local artists 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.

If you like you can ask local artists to work together with you on implementing the production work that is involved (depending on your design you may require certain expertise). The young volunteers can design their own plate or stone that fits their ideas. The participants then feel it is their project and are confronted with history in a vivid way.

Online resources:

- www.stolpersteine.com
- www.steinedererinnerung.net

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. Their stories were often hidden after the war because the shock of what happened was too big to talk about. These buildings were often occupied (taken over) by new residents that followed the former Jewish owners.

An initiative in the Netherlands called "Open Jewish Houses" began in 2012 to open these historical sites to the public to commemorate deported Dutch Jews. Online, people could look up if there were Jews deported in the street or neighbourhood they live in.

Voluntary 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, studying local archives and researching historical content. Not to forget that the current residents should be included from the beginning so they do not feel overlooked during the whole process.

Online resources:

- www.jta.org/tags/open-house-project-in-the-netherlands
- communityjoodsmonument.nl/page/250216 (in Dutch)

5 PROPAGANDA MATERIAL

Propaganda is biased information designed to shape the opinions and behaviour of individuals. Propaganda can occur in many forms such as movies, cartoons, sculptures or photos to name just a few. The nazis used 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 a degree never before seen. Art that was promoted by the regime was forced into central positions in society. In the same turn, modern art was made to look ridiculous, labelled as degenerate and finally banned from public view.

On the homepage of the Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies you can find more structured lesson plans with concrete examples. Teachers and instructors can find background information on the topics being approached in the proposed lesson below.

Online resources:

- www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/

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 complete submission.

During a group workshop participants should examine the cartoon and pay close 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 a caricature? How is it used here and with what effect?*
- *How is the artist 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 nazis used different types of propaganda to convey their message to the people. What are the benefits of such material (like this cartoon, pictures, films, posters) as propaganda? How is material used nowadays as propaganda?*
- *What does this cartoon tell us about the attitude of the nazis concerning the freedom of expression? What does this image suggest about the role of the individual? And about debate and resistance within National Socialism?*

After the participants have answered the questions, the whole group should come together to discuss their outcomes.

The aim of the activity is to understand how people can be influenced by media and artistic tools. It gives an insight into how the nazis abused the power of media and art for their own ends.

Online resources:

- www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/germanys_sculptor.asp



"The Sculptor of Germany"
O. Garvens, Kladderadatsch, 1933, volume 46

6 GRAPHIC NOVEL "MAUS"

"Maus" (the German word for mouse) is a graphic novel completed in 1991 by the American cartoonist Art Spiegelman. It 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 humans as different kinds of animals, with Jews as mice, Germans as cats and non-Jewish Poles as pigs. His choice to use pigs to signify Poles might concern some readers. In many cultures pigs are viewed as disgusting, vulgar and stupid.

Analysing these images with young people, however, may help them gain a broader understanding of the cartoons and Spiegelman's artistic purposes. Though the national comparisons may not always flatter, it may help to refer to well-known fables, 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.

For the workshop you need a few copies of the book, the handout and prepared questions (see first link below).

First step:

Introduce the book to the participants. In small groups read the book for 45 minutes and then summarise peoples' impressions for 15 minutes. Absorb the groups' first impressions about the book but do not discuss the topic yet.

Second step:

Give out 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 you discuss with the participants what they learned during the workshop. Discuss what they can do against discrimination in their daily lives.

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 are these genocides 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? Or a German? Give reasons.*
- *How did people survive in Poland during the Second World War?*
- *How do you think these survivors felt after the war?*

Online resources:

- www.vhec.org/images/pdfs/maus_guide.pdf
- www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/33dTexts/maus/MausResources.htm

AUSTRIAN SERVICE ABROAD ÖSTERREICHISCHER AUSLANDSDIENST

The Austrian Service Abroad (in German "Verein Österreichischer Auslandsdienst") is a non-profit organisation founded in 1998 by Andreas Maislinger and Andreas Hörtnagl. 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 or 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.

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 civilian service, aiming to promote education and raise awareness about the Holocaust. In 1980, the former president Rudolf Kirchschräger 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 Kirchschräger accredited the "positive achievement" of the "accomplished Holocaust memorial service".

Finally, in May 1991 the former Interior Minister Franz Löschnak informed Maislinger that the Austrian Government had approved the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service as an alternative service. Thus, in September 1992 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 Hörtnagl founded the Austrian Service Abroad in 1998, which comprised of not only the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service, but also two new programs: the Austrian Social Service and the Austrian Peace Service.

Fields of Activity of the Volunteers

Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service volunteers work with Holocaust survivors, memorial sites, museums and research facilities such as the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, the Jewish Museum Berlin, the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest or Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

At these institutions AHMS volunteers study and preserve the history of the Holocaust, organise seminars and record testimonies of survivors to ensure that the Holocaust is not forgotten and that future generations can learn from the past and develop greater tolerance. In total, since 1992, about 500 young Austrians have memorialised the history of the Holocaust in 22 countries worldwide and have made an important contribution to Austria's accounting for the past.

Austrian Social Service & Austrian Peace Service

The Austrian Social Service within the Austrian Service Abroad works with development projects around the world, mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It aims to support the social and economic development in the countries of assignment. Due to various circumstances and needs in the different regions, the program includes a wide range of duties such as educational programs, environmental projects and the care of orphans.

The Austrian Peace Service, situated for example in Hiroshima, Japan, and Nanjing, China, is concerned with ensuring safety in conflict areas. By organising workshops with the conflicting partners, giving tours through memorial places and translation work the volunteers support dialog and understanding that helps reduce conflicts.



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UNITED for intercultural action

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST NATIONALISM, RACISM, FASCISM AND IN SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

UNITED for Intercultural Action is the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees. More than 550 organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together in common activities, such as European-wide campaigns. Like-minded organisations have the opportunity to meet each other at conferences and elaborate specific projects. UNITED is and

will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe. Information is received from more than 2700 organisations and mailings go out to about 2300 groups in Europe. Let us know if you want to get involved! And add UNITED to your mailing list!



UNITED IS SUPPORTED BY: more than 550 organisations from 48 European countries, many prominent individuals, private supporters and long-term volunteers from Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service and the EVS, Grundtvig and Leonardo Programmes of the European Union.

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