



The Austrian Forum for Peace Hosts National Dialogue on PeaceTech

From the Peace Castle to the world: Austria begins shaping a grounded, inclusive vision for ethical PeaceTech

Austria's long-standing tradition of peacebuilding took a decisive step into the digital age last week as the **Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP)** convened a landmark, cross-sector dialogue on the future of PeaceTech. The event, hosted at the **Austrian Forum for Peace** in Stadtschlaining, brought together experts from peace practice, research, public service, creative industries, and the tech sector to explore how digital technologies can serve peace — and how Austria can shape this field in its own way.

ACP-Senior Project Manager Astrid **Holzinger**: *"Modern technologies have a huge potential to support peacebuilding efforts worldwide – especially in conflict prevention, early warning, and early action. However, more needs to be done to support the use of technology for peace and provide peacebuilders and communities in conflict and post-conflict settings with the tools and skills they need. This is why events like this are so important. It's the first time we had such a broad and inclusive dialogue in Austria on the topic of PeaceTech, bringing together representatives from ministries, the regional government of Burgenland, universities, peacebuilders, and NGOs. If we want to build a meaningful PeaceTech agenda in Austria, it should be from the ground up, involving peacebuilders and civil society in the conversation from the very start."*

Titled **"The Blueprint: Austria's Vision for PeaceTech,"** the event was held in collaboration with the **PeaceTech Alliance**, a national platform coordinated by the **AIT - Austrian Institute of Technology** and supported by the **ACP**, and brought together a wide range of Austrian stakeholders. The goal: to open an honest conversation about what PeaceTech should mean in practice — not as a buzzword, but as a human-centred field rooted in ethical responsibility, lived experience, and trust.

Reclaiming Technology for Peace

Hosted within the historic Peace Castle, the dialogue captured something uniquely Austrian: a commitment to neutrality and multilateralism, combined with a refusal to import ready-made solutions. Participants instead called for a bottom-up, practice-driven approach to PeaceTech — one that starts from the needs of those working in peacebuilding, humanitarian response, conflict prevention, and diplomacy, and invites critical, creative thinking from across sectors.

"If PeaceTech is not accessible to those who need it, it is pointless, simple as that. I have championed building tech around lived experience for years, and within PeaceTech, it is far more important, peacebuilders are not tech experts, nor should they be, their expertise is in building peace and community development. What really excites me about working



here in Austria is that now I know people share that vision from all corners of this country and I feel Austria is the perfect nation to lead on this within the European Union, and I am so proud to just play a little part of it”, explains Nathan **Coyle**, Founder of the **PeaceTech Alliance** at the **AIT - Austrian Institute of Technology**, and ACP-PeaceTech Lead.

The dialogue also served as a counterpoint to dominant PeaceTech narratives shaped by market forces or security logics. Instead, ACP’s approach starts with peace practitioners — those who work directly with communities — and asks what digital technologies might look like if designed in partnership with them. Notably, creative voices were also at the table, recognising that peace technologies must be not only functional but also understandable, contextual, and culturally relevant.

Where to Go From Here?

The summit surfaced a clear call for action: Austria should build its own PeaceTech agenda — grounded in its diplomatic tradition, informed by real-world needs, and driven by collaboration across disciplines. Participants identified several immediate priorities:

- Supporting applied research and digital tool development to assist mediation, peace missions, and crisis response;
- Advancing ethical data governance and data sovereignty to ensure trust and local ownership;
- Creating safe spaces for co-design between peacebuilders, technologists, and artists;
- Investing in skills development to equip peace actors — especially in non-technical roles — with the understanding needed to shape and use emerging technologies.

The ACP, together with the **PeaceTech Alliance**, will continue this work through follow-up consultations, pilot initiatives, and policy dialogues. A public summary of insights from “**The Blueprint**” will be released shortly to inform ongoing efforts — in Austria and internationally.

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<https://www.peaceforum.at/#gallery>

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