



Austrian
Centre for Peace
SCHLAINING · VIENNA

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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IMPRINT

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AC4P WEBSITE



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CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

245 participants

IPT: 78

EU training courses: 131

Summer Academy on OSCE: 20

Security policy workshops: 33

MEDIA REVIEW

136 Mentions

PUBLICATIONS

7 Self-published works

PEACE EDUCATION

Peace weeks: 2.356 pupils

Holocaust History Project: 862 pupils

"7 Days for Peace": approx. 400 participants

Master's degree 2025-27: 25 students

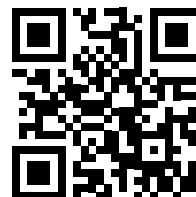


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PEACE REQUIRES NEW ANSWERS

Norbert Darabos



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As we look back on 2025, we see a world marked by uncertainty, crises, and profound transformation. Armed conflicts, geopolitical tensions, the climate crisis, and rapid technological change are challenging long-held assumptions and forcing us to rethink how peace can be built and sustained. In times such as these, the importance of institutions that foster dialogue, build bridges, and provide orientation becomes particularly evident.

For more than four decades, the Austrian Centre for Peace has been committed to this mission. By combining research, peacebuilding, education, and international cooperation, it creates spaces where people with different perspectives can engage in meaningful dialogue. Throughout 2025, we once again fulfilled this role at the regional, national, and international levels. The Austrian Forum for Peace brought together representatives from politics, academia, diplomacy, and civil society to discuss the challenges of a rapidly changing world. At the same time, we continued to strengthen and expand concrete initiatives in conflict trans-

formation, peace education, and international cooperation.

It is particularly encouraging that the ACP not only responds to emerging developments but also helps shape them. Our focus areas of Environmental Peacebuilding and PeaceTech demonstrate that contemporary peace work requires both new perspectives and new tools. Peace is not created solely at negotiating tables. It is also built where environmental challenges, social cohesion, and technological innovation are brought together in a responsible and constructive manner.

My sincere thanks go to all our staff members, partner organisations, funding bodies, and supporters whose dedication makes this work possible. Their commitment demonstrates that peace is not an abstract ideal but a shared responsibility.

This annual report documents what we achieved in 2025. More importantly, it shows that peacebuilding can make a tangible difference even under difficult circumstances when people are willing to take responsibility and work together in pursuit of solutions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Norbert Darabos". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping underline.

Norbert Darabos, ACP-President

TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Tobias Lang



© Andi Bruckner

constructively and contribute actively to building peace.

I am particularly proud of the breadth and diversity of our activities. Through our capacity development programmes, we once again trained professionals from around the world for work in crisis and conflict-affected environments. Peacebuilding practitioners, diplomats, police officers, military personnel, and representatives of civil society participated in training courses in Stadtschlaining and through international partnerships, preparing them for increasingly complex challenges. At the same time, our peace education initiatives reached thousands of children, young people, and educators, helping to develop the skills and competencies necessary for peaceful coexistence.

A defining feature of our work is the close connection between innovation and practice. During the past year, we

For the Austrian Centre for Peace, 2025 was a year of progress, innovation, and practical implementation. At a time of growing global challenges, we remained firmly committed to strengthening the capacities of individuals and institutions to address conflict

further strengthened the links between climate, environment, peace, and security. Environmental Peacebuilding has become a key pillar of our activities, while PeaceTech continues to open new opportunities for making peacebuilding more effective, accessible, and practice-oriented through the responsible use of digital technologies. These developments demonstrate that peacebuilding can only remain relevant and effective if it is willing to explore new approaches and learn continuously from experience.

Equally important is our work in conflict transformation. Whether through international dialogue initiatives focusing on Sudan and the South Caucasus, support for civil society actors, or community mediation projects in Austria, we witness every day that sustainable solutions emerge where people are willing to listen to one another and take different interests and perspectives seriously.

I would like to thank our dedicated team, our partners and donors, and everyone who places their trust in our work. The achievements presented in this annual report make one thing clear: peacebuilding is a long-term endeavour. It is often demanding and rarely spectacular, yet it remains indispensable. Together, we are committed to turning ideas into impact and contributing to a more peaceful, secure, and resilient future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Lang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tobias Lang, ACP-Director

ABOUT US

The Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP)

The Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP) has been supporting ways to peace for over 40 years. It offers a neutral platform for dialogue and mediation, whether at the Peace Castle in Stadtschlaining, in Vienna or globally. ACP's research accompanying its peacebuilding efforts forms the basis for new projects and supports the continuous improvement of its capacity development programmes – through targeted training, experts are prepared for conflict-sensitive work in crisis regions. With peace education programmes, the ACP also trains students and educators in violence prevention, peace and conflict skills. In recognition of its work, the ACP has received several international accolades, including the "Peace Messenger" title from the UN and the "Peace Education Prize" from UNESCO.

The path to security, stability and ultimately to peace is long, extensive and complex. The ACP is seeking to achieve it through various partnerships in the political and security policy context as well as with civil society in Austria and worldwide.

Capacity Development

The ACP's capacity development focuses on the training of peacebuilding experts deployed in crisis regions. As part of the various training programmes, such as IPT (International Civilian Peacebuilding Training) or together with the European Security Defence College, hundreds of civilian, military and police specialists are trained every year. In this work, the ACP collaborates with international partners such as the EU, the UN and the OSCE.

The impacts of environmental degradation and the climate crisis are an integral part of many training modules. Likewise, the use of new technologies to support peace efforts – under the umbrella term "PeaceTech" – is playing an increasingly important role. A particular focus of ACP's training efforts lies in West Africa, with an emphasis on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

ACP also develops customised training courses for its partners on request.

Peace Education

For actively preventing violence and deal constructively with conflicts, knowledge, skills, and a peace-promoting attitude are required. All of this is taught and trained in the various peace education programmes of the ACP: annually, over 3 000 students and educators work on age-appropriate conflict and peace competencies, non-violent communication, bullying and violence prevention as well as team building. In addition to the "small peace" in our educational institutions and in our society, it also involves engaging with the "big peace" and all its global connections.

Conflict Resolution

The ACP supports mediation projects and peacebuilding initiatives, primarily in the Middle East, Africa and the OSCE region. It is involved in both official negotiations and informal dialogue processes. ACP's activities take place at the local, regional and national levels and in a dialogue with formal and informal armed actors, political interest groups and civil society. These activities form the core mission of the ACP.

For mediation to actually contribute to peace, recognised principles such as impartiality, consent of the relevant parties, inclusivity and the principle of doing no harm through one's own actions must be upheld. Peace can only be made with enemies. A peace process must therefore include the parties who exert influence on the conflict.

The ACP believes that international peace work is credible only when it is accompanied by practice within one's own country. Within Austria, the ACP favours an approach that pursues constructive forms of conflict resolution at all levels of society. In this spirit, the ACP conducts local conflict resolution processes – for example, in the housing sector of Burgenland – using methods such as neighborhood mediation. This municipal peace and conflict work is carried out in cooperation with a housing cooperative in Burgenland and the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland.

ABOUT US

The Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP)

Research

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Focus Topics at ACP

The environmental and climate crisis is already threatening millions of people, especially in conflict regions such as the Sahel or the Middle East. Environmental changes exacerbate existing conflicts, while wars further damage the environment. Since 2022, the ACP has focussed on **Environmental Peacebuilding**. Environmental challenges are used as a starting point for dialogue and peacebuilding.

PeaceTech leverages digital tools such as GIS, social media and virtual reality for peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The ACP incorporates these methods into its training programmes, including mixed-reality simulations. The goal is early conflict detection. Cross-sector collaboration enhances sustainable peace efforts and supports local development.

Environmental Peacebuilding and PeaceTech are reflected in all areas of ACP's work.

DIRECTOR

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TEAM

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Ursula Gamauf-Eberhardt (Senior Project Manager)

Tina Gangoly-Madl (PR Manager)

Susanne J. Györög (Senior Project Manager)

Adham Hamed (Head of Research, Mid-January-December on educational leave)

Claudia Hofer (Schlaining Events Coordinator and Project Administrative)

Astrid Holzinger (Senior Project Manager)

Elisabeth Horvath (Finance Manager and Accountant)

Eva Huber (Educational leave)

Alba Losert (Junior Researcher)

Bernhard Müllner (Civil Service Worker, since September 2025)

Yerivan Pruscha (Project Manager)

Monika Psenner (Head of Capacity Development)

Caitline Roche (Intern, April–July 2025)

Sophia Stanger (Senior Project Manager and Focal Point for Environmental Peacebuilding)

Martina Tader (Schlaining Office- and Finance Manager)

Wolfgang Weilharter (Senior Project Manager)

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Ständige Vertretung der Schweiz bei der OSZE
UN Women
Wiener Städtische Versicherung
Wirtschaftsagentur Burgenland

AUSTRIAN FORUM FOR PEACE 2025

Peace in Crisis

Now in its third edition, the Austrian Forum for Peace has established itself as an anchor event in the field of peacebuilding for participants and an interested international audience. The Austrian Forum for Peace 2025 took place from 30 June to 3 July at Peace Castle Schläining. The Forum was supported by the federal state of Burgenland and brought together around 280 participants from 25 countries. Participants represented policy, academia, civil society, media, diplomacy, and peace practice.

With its theme “Peace in Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities for a World in Transition”, the Forum responded to a global context marked by rising levels of violent conflict, geopolitical fragmentation, and declining trust in democratic institutions. It also addressed the growing interlinkages between conflict, climate change, and technological transformation, as well as the impact of information ecosystems on peace and security. Against this backdrop, the Forum created space to critically reflect on how peacebuilding approaches must evolve in an increasingly complex and contested global order.

The program combined high level panels, interactive workshops, workshop formats, and public events. This structure reflects the ACP’s approach of linking research, dialogue, and practice. The opening keynote by Yair Hirschfeld, a key figure in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations (Oslo Accords) illustrated both the fragility and continued relevance of negotiated solutions and set the tone for a conference focused on realistic yet forward looking approaches to peacebuilding.

The first conference day focused on transatlantic relations and their implications for peace and human security. The panel “Transatlantic Drift” brought together perspectives from diplomacy and academia, including Wolfgang Petritsch, Former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and peace researcher Oliver Richmond, and explored the

erosion of established peace architectures and the implications for Europe’s future role in a changing geopolitical landscape. Discussions highlighted the need for new alliances and more inclusive forms of multilateralism. A public panel further examined European strategies towards Russia and emphasized the importance of maintaining diplomatic and civil society channels even in times of confrontation.



Opening, 30 June 2025: N. Darabos, Y. Hirschfeld, Deputy Governor A. Haider-Wallner, T. Lang, D. Pressl and B. Holzer (from left) © Photo: Andi Bruckner

The second day addressed peace in the age of disinformation. The high-level panel on disinformation featured experts from peace operations, diplomacy, and technology, including Annika Hansen (ACP Advisory Board Member, ZIF Berlin) and Lina Rukštelienė (Ambassador of Lithuania to Austria), and analyzed how digital narratives shape conflict dynamics, polarization, and democratic resilience. Discussions focused on the responsibilities of technology actors, the risks of information manipulation, and the need for comprehensive strategies to rebuild trust in fragmented societies.

Workshops formed a central component of the Forum. They enabled in-depth engagement with key thematic areas such as Environmental Peacebuilding, PeaceTech, protection of civilians, and conflict sensitive approaches in local governance and education. For example, discussions on PeaceTech explored the role of digital innovation in supporting peace processes and examined Austria’s potential contribution

AUSTRIAN FORUM FOR PEACE 2025

Peace in Crisis

to global debates. Workshops on cross border cooperation in the Sahel and on protection of civilians connected policy challenges with practical field experience, while sessions on peace education highlighted the importance of skills based and preventive approaches.

The Summer School on climate, peace, and security in Sub-Saharan Africa provided a structured learning environment for students and early career practitioners. It examined the complex relationship between environmental change and conflict dynamics, linking academic perspectives with policy and practice-oriented discussions. Interactive formats such as “Lively Books” created space for personal narratives and informal exchange, contributing to inclusive dialogue and mutual learning.

The Forum also included publicly accessible formats connecting the conference to a broader audience. A film screening of “How to Build a Truth Engine” followed by a discussion with the director offered an accessible and critical perspective on disinformation and its societal impact. The Burgfest at Peace Castle Schlaining, including a cultural program and live music, created an informal setting for exchange and strengthened the connection between the Forum and the local community.

Each workshop contributed to the development of a dedicated working paper. These papers capture key insights, reflect ongoing debates, and provide a basis for further research and policy engagement. In this way, the Forum links dialogue directly with knowledge production and supports the ACP’s research activities.

Beyond its formal outcomes, the Forum provided space for exchange across sectors and regions. It brought together actors who do not usually meet in such formats and facilitated new connections and perspectives. As one participant noted,

“The Forum creates a rare space where research, policy, and practice genuinely meet. It allows us to rethink our approaches and build partnerships that continue beyond the event.”

Overall, AFP 2025 highlighted the importance of inclusive and interdisciplinary approaches to peacebuilding in a rapidly changing global context. It reinforced the ACP’s role as a platform connecting research, policy, and practice, and as a space for developing responses to emerging challenges in peace and security.



Film screening of “How to Build a Truth Engine”, 2 July 2025: D. Pressl and Director F. Moser (from left)

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

The “HAWA” Program is Entering a New Phase

West Africa faces major challenges: increasing insecurity, violent conflicts, displacement, and the tangible impacts of the climate crisis threaten the daily lives of millions of people. Addressing these interlinked crises requires integrated approaches which go beyond short-term emergency aid and combine humanitarian action with long-term development initiatives and peacebuilding. However, coordination, preparedness, and integrated approaches are often lacking.



Effective action—before crises escalate

This is where the fifth phase of the “Preparedness for Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding in West Africa” (HAWA) program comes in. HAWA V strengthens humanitarian and peacebuilding actors in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Côte d’Ivoire, empowering them to manage crises in a better-prepared, more coordinated, and more effective manner. The program aims to implement emergency and disaster relief in a gender-responsive, conflict-sensitive, and climate-sensitive manner while simultaneously promoting conflict resolution mechanisms.

Combining proven practices and innovation

The program builds on more than a decade of continuous collaboration and learning in West Africa. Now, proven activities—such as the successful HAWA courses at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Ghana—are to be combined with innovative approaches.

New initiatives include i.a. mentoring programs for young participants as well as workshops conducted on-site in border regions to address cross-border disaster preparedness. As part of the program’s development, the partnership between ACP and KAIPTC has evolved into a consortium which now also includes CARE Austria in close collaboration with CARE International Ghana. The program is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Defense (BMLV) as part of International Partnerships Austria.

Launch of a four-year program

In November 2025, we launched the new four-year program phase (November 2025 – October 2029). We aim to reach more than a thousand people directly through training sessions and workshops. Indirectly, over 200,000 people in West Africa are expected to benefit from improved humanitarian structures, strengthened peacebuilding, and more resilient communities.

In this way, HAWA V not only provides short-term support in crisis situations but also creates long-term prospects for peace, security, and a sustainable future.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

Climate, Ecology, and Conflict – Peace Policy Responses to Current Crises

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution are increasingly recognized as key drivers and exacerbators of conflict while armed conflicts and militarization, conversely, cause significant environmental damage and additional emissions. For this reason, the ACP has been focusing on the priority topic of “Environmental Peacebuilding” for several years. In 2025, we continued to address this issue through training activities, events, media contributions, and research initiatives.

The ACP as a leading organization on environmental peacebuilding in Austria

While environmental peacebuilding is already receiving significant attention internationally, the concept remains relatively unknown in Austria. To raise awareness in a national context, we organized a workshop titled “Environmental Peacebuilding from an Austrian Perspective” on 16 October 2025, which was attended by representatives from ministries, academia, civil society, and the business sector. The outcome included a policy brief titled “Klima, Ökologie und Friedenspolitik: Perspektiven österreichischer Stakeholder—Ein aktueller Stand der Debatte”.

ACP activities on Environmental Peacebuilding

In 2025, the focus was also on developing specific projects and offers to harness the potential of environmental peacebuilding. As a result, the ACP now offers climate and environmental mediation as well as participatory processes in Austria (see page 21). Training courses such as the IPT specialization course on environmental peacebuilding (see page 13) are in high demand. Within the framework of the ESDC configuration—which has been dedicated to climate, environment, security, and defense since 2024 and is chaired by Monika Psenner (ACP) (see page 16)—the basic course was increasingly conducted by European training institutes; furthermore, additional relevant curricula and formats were developed. Moreover, we published a paper on “Environmental PeaceTech,” in which we linked our two key focus

areas, and, hosted a workshop in cooperation with the Austrian Institute of Technology.

High Demand for ACP expertise

The ACP’s expertise on climate, ecology, peace, and conflict was repeatedly sought in 2025. As a result, the ACP was represented on panels and at events on the topic organized by civil society, academia, and government institutions. At the development conference held in Innsbruck on 22 November 2025, Sophia Stanger (ACP) and Juliana Krohn (University of Graz) co-led a workshop titled “How to Link Climate Justice and Peace Work?” We were also invited to speak at the Youth Climate Council of the Austrian National Youth Council in parliament and at other events in Salzburg, Upper Austria, Vienna, and Germany.

Our work also received significant media coverage, including DER STANDARD, Die Furche, Der Tagesspiegel, Ö1, DORFTV, and DATUM Magazine as well as in several specialized podcasts.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

International Civilian Peacebuilding Training Programme (IPT)

The International Civilian Peacebuilding Training Program (IPT), founded in 1993 by the ACP as Europe's first training initiative for civilian peace professionals, has since trained over 2,700 experts from 135 countries in international peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Given the increasing number of armed conflicts and the growing complexity of operational contexts, capacity building for civilian peace professionals is more important today than ever before. In 2025, 78 participants from more than 30 countries and five continents took part in the IPT program in Stadtschlaining

The IPT Core Course for Peacebuilders took place in October 2025 and provided fundamental knowledge and practical skills for working in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In addition, the 2025 IPT programme focused on various specialisation courses. The IPT specialisation course on Intersectional Gender Work and Peacebuilding took place in Stadtschlaining in April 2025 and provided practical, innovative approaches to applying an intersectional gender perspective in peacebuilding work. As part of the IPT specialisation course on Environmental Peacebuilding in November, participants analysed the interrelationships between the environment, climate, peace and security. In addition to examining climate change, environmental degradation and competition for natural resources as drivers of conflict and risk multipliers, they explored how potential for cooperation on environmental and climate issues can be utilised as starting points for peacebuilding work.

Furthermore, 2025 saw the ACP implementing several customized training programs. These included an IPT specialisation course on long-term election observation commissioned by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), which specifically prepared twelve Swiss citizens for assignments in international election observation missions and provided them with the necessary theoretical foundations and practical skills. Moreover, a two-day compact security training course (HEAT Compact) was conducted in



IPT Core Course for Peacebuilders in October 2025 at Schlaining Castle

April 2025 to prepare staff for deployments in challenging and high-risk environments (Global Responsibility). Sixteen staff members from European NGOs participated in the training. In addition to theoretical input, the focus was particularly on practical exercises and a complex outdoor simulation.

With its broad and practice-oriented training offerings, the 2025 IPT program continued to make a significant contribution to strengthening civilian capacities for peacebuilding in an increasingly complex global environment.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

PeaceTech - Virtual and Mixed Reality for Practical Training in Crisis Management

In 2025, the ACP continued its commitment to the priority area of PeaceTech—the use of digital technologies for peacebuilding—and was honored with the 2025 eAward in the category of sustainability for its work as part of the Austrian PeaceTech Alliance.

Together with partners, ACP 2025 worked on two specific PeaceTech innovation projects. The goal of these projects is to further develop technology-based training formats in order to prepare peace professionals even better and more realistically for their missions in complex crisis and conflict contexts. A particular focus was placed on the use of immersive technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Mixed Reality (MR), which enable mission scenarios to be trained in a safe, practical, and repeatable manner. As part of the SkillDrill project funded by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG), which was completed in the fall of 2025, the ACP, together with the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT), Mindconsole GmbH, the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, as well as Johanniter Österreich Ausbildung und Forschung GmbH, developed a modular MR- and VR-supported training system which enables realistic training in patient care, situational awareness, terrain orientation and map reading. The VR and MR training modules developed as part of SkillDrill are also intended to be used within the IPT program and other ACP training formats to further strengthen practice-oriented training in the future.

Building on this experience, the ACP launched another FFG-funded project in 2025 in collaboration with partners: Under the title “EnviPeace,” it combines technological innovation with scientific research in the field of environmental peacebuilding. The project goal is to develop an MR-based training system which prepares professionals for the growing challenges at the intersection of climate, environment, peace, and security.

Moreover, the ACP organized the high-level dialogue “The Blueprint: Austria’s Vision for PeaceTech” as part of the Austrian Forum for Peace in Stadtschlaaining in July 2025. Representatives from research, diplomacy, civil society, peacebuilding, and the technology sector discussed how Austria can develop an independent, values-based PeaceTech agenda which places the needs of peace professionals and communities affected by conflict at the center of the development of new technologies for peacebuilding.

The augMENTOR project (2023–2025), funded by the EU’s Horizon Europe research program, aimed to further develop AI-supported approaches for personalized and collaborative learning and to test their application in various education and training contexts. The focus was particularly on the use of learning analytics, the promotion of digital skills, and the development of innovative formats to strengthen key competencies.

In the final project year of 2025, the Austrian Centre for Peace continued to play an active role as a consortium partner, particularly in organizing training and networking events and in strengthening the project community. In addition, the ACP participated in key dissemination and policy activities with the aim of sustainably embedding the insights gained in the project and contributing them to European discourses on the further development of digital educational approaches. In doing so, the ACP made a significant contribution to the visibility and impact of the project results beyond the term of the project.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

Cooperation with the Ministry of Defense

As part of its long-standing cooperation program with the Federal Ministry of Defense (BMLV), the ACP has served as the implementing partner for a series of jointly developed specialization courses, which, for 15 years now, have been held under the certification of the European Security and Defense College (ESDC). These courses are designed for civilian, military, or police experts who are active in EU, UN, or OSCE peacekeeping missions and who use the ESDC courses at the ACP to delve deeper into selected topics at the civilian-military interface.

In the wake of restructuring within the Federal Ministry of Defense and the creation of a new department, the focus shifted increasingly toward redesigning and updating existing courses in 2025: on the one hand, to adapt course content to the changed conditions of international peacekeeping missions and conflict zones, and on the other hand, to revise teaching methods. Accordingly, instead of the usual ESDC courses on “Comprehensive Protection of Civilians,” the 2025 program featured several workshops on course revision, which toward the end of the year culminated in a completely redesigned course held for the first time in early 2026.

The long-running ESDC core course on security sector reform was also partially revised, with a full redesign planned for 2026.

The third ESDC course at the ACP, the “Course on Recovery and Stabilization Strategies,” was offered in an updated format incorporating current conflict dynamics in 2025, in continuation of the time-tested collaboration with the National Defense Academy. Apart from two long-term case studies (Rwanda, Bosnia), more recent conflict examples (Colombia, Ukraine) were also included for the first time. Expert panels introduced the respective contexts and highlighted key aspects of conflict management and peacekeeping. In addition, evening programs offered in-depth insights, including



RSS course in September 2025 at Schlaining Castle

a film screening (“Sometimes in April” by Raoul Peck) and a lecture by historian Gerhard Baumgartner on the history of the Jewish population in Southern Burgenland at the Stadtschlaining Synagogue. For the 17 participants from eleven countries, the course at Schlaining Castle provided an intensive and practical learning experience.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

EU-Trainings

EUTI - Annual Report

The European Union Training Initiative (EUTI) is an EU-funded project launched in April 2025 to strengthen the European Union's effectiveness as a global peace and security actor by equipping civilian crisis management personnel with the skills required for complex deployments. Building on its predecessor EUCTI, EUTI is now the single European training initiative integrating civilian, police and gendarmerie dimensions, thereby enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation and coherence. Its overarching goal is to support the implementation of the EU's Civilian CSDP Compact and Training Policy through standardized, high-quality and demand-driven training, complemented by advisory and innovation functions. The initiative focuses on three core objectives: 1) addressing operational training needs, 2) promoting harmonization, standardization and certification, and 3) fostering innovative training approaches. Its primary target audience includes civilian, police and gendarmerie experts preparing for or deployed in missions, as well as EU institutions and Member States involved in training systems.

Delivered by a consortium of 15 European training institutions, EUTI is coordinated by the Centre for European Perspective (CEP) as secretariat and lead. Following the project launch in April 2025, partners convened for a face-to-face kick-off and partner meeting in Brussels in September 2025, marking the operational start of activities. Within the initiative's quality assurance framework, ACP chairs the Working Group on Evaluation, continuing its leadership role from EUCTI. In the second half of 2025, ACP - together with three consortium partners - reviewed and refined the evaluation framework and compiled a set of methodological tools, including pre-course surveys, post-course evaluations, in- and out-testing, and a peer-support "critical friend" mechanism. ACP also provided advisory support to partners, including in relation to the first training on project management delivered under EUTI in December 2025, rein-

forcing evaluation as a central pillar of the initiative's quality assurance system.

ESDC - CCESD Configuration

The Climate Change, Environment, Security and Defence (CCESD) configuration of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) has been chaired by ACP's Head of Training, Monika Psenner, since its inception in February 2024. It serves as the EU's dedicated training platform for integrating climate and environmental considerations into security and defense, with its mandate rooted in key EU policy frameworks such as the 2023 Joint Communication on the Climate-Security Nexus. The configuration provides a structured framework to translate strategic guidance into training, foster cross-sectoral cooperation, and strengthen the EU's preparedness, resilience and operational effectiveness in addressing climate-related security risks.

In 2025, the CCESD configuration consolidated its governance structure, expanded its network of members and observers, and further strengthened its role as a hub for coordination and capacity-building. Key achievements included the operationalization of four thematic task groups (environmental management, environmental crime, climate-energy-defense, and climate-peace-security), enhanced cooperation with EU institutions, Member States and international partners—including NATO and the United Nations—and contributions to EU-level dialogues on climate security. The configuration delivered and further developed a growing portfolio of training activities and curricula, including on energy security, and explored innovative formats such as the Climate Defence Fresco adapted to its specific needs.

Through these efforts, CCESD significantly enhanced the coherence, quality and reach of EU training on the climate-security nexus, while supporting the development of a pool of experts for CSDP missions and operations.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

EU-Trainings



ATEC 2025

At the ATEC Conference in Brussels in November 2025, evaluation featured prominently as a core component of the training cycle, with a dedicated plenary panel exploring how lessons identified through training can be effectively translated into institutional practice and organizational learning. Monika Psenner contributed to this discussion as a panelist, sharing lessons learned and insights on evaluation from both an ACP and EUTI perspective, including ACP's role as Chair of the Working Group on Evaluation.

Following the panel, she also moderated a syndicate workshop session on evaluation, which focused on the application of the Kirkpatrick model to better capture learning outcomes, behavioral change and operational impact. This engagement further highlighted ACP's active role in advancing evaluation practices within the European training community.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE ACP

The 25th Summer Academy on OSCE: Rebuilding Trust in Turbulent Times

In September 2025, the Summer Academy on the OSCE celebrated its 25th anniversary. Founded as a platform to deepen the understanding of the Helsinki Process and the OSCE's contribution to European security, the Academy brought together 20 participants from 12 participating States, including future Swiss Task Force members, diplomats, OSCE field staff, NGO experts, and scholars. Its Silver Jubilee took place at a time when Russia's war against Ukraine has undermined the foundations of the European security order, making cooperative security and dialogue more essential than ever.

Academy Directors Arie Bloed, Walter Kemp, and Ursula Gamauf Eberhardt led many sessions in various formats, providing both historical context and practical insights into diplomacy. They were joined by outstanding experts such as Ambassador Raphael Nägeli, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the OSCE, whose visit and engagement during a scenario based exercise was a highlight. Additional contributions came from high level diplomats and experts, all of whom enriched the discussions with their deep institutional experience.



The program placed strong emphasis on analyzing current security threats, developing negotiation skills, and understanding the OSCE's tools for conflict prevention and crisis management. Pre readings allowed participants to focus on

highly interactive components, including case studies, group work, and a two day study visit to the OSCE in Vienna. The Vienna excursion included expert panels, exposure to a Permanent Council meeting, a visit of the CPC and discussions on media freedom and cooperative security, offering practical insight into the OSCE's political and operational environment. A reception at the Hofburg celebrating 25 years of the Summer Academy on OSCE, offered a special networking opportunity with OSCE officials and diplomats.

A key moment was created through the simulation of a Permanent Council meeting, where participants experienced the complexities of consensus based diplomacy and the challenges of reaching agreement in a polarized geopolitical climate. Group exercises on future scenarios for the OSCE sparked intense debate on the organization's future role.

Evaluations showed strong appreciation for the mix of theoretical input, practical exercises, and informal exchanges, with the Vienna visit and direct access to senior OSCE practitioners frequently mentioned as highlights.

As the OSCE marks its 50th anniversary amidst major geopolitical tensions, the Summer Academy demonstrated its enduring relevance in an impressive way. It remains a unique space where practitioners, academics, and diplomats can reflect on Europe's security challenges and explore pathways toward restoring dialogue and rebuilding trust.

PEACE EDUCATION AT THE ACP

Master's Program in Peace and Life Skills Education: Education That Drives Change

The cross-border Master's program "Peace and Life Skills Education", implemented as part of the Interreg project "Bounce back" by the University College of Teacher Education Burgenland (PPH Burgenland) in cooperation with the ACP, is a unique study program in Europe which considers education to be a driving force for societal transformation. It is aimed at educators and professionals in the educational and social sectors who aim at empowering people, transforming conflicts, and creating future-oriented learning environments.



Start of the first semester

As a central element of the program, peace education is combined with the WHO Life Skills—competencies that are fundamental for constructive conflict resolution, democratic participation, and social resilience. By combining academic knowledge, practical experience, and personal development, the program consistently focuses on transformational competence—not only knowledge, but the ability to act and a reflective attitude—thus preparing urgently needed multipliers for peace and sustainable development. Today's global polycrisis demands new pedagogical competencies. This Master's program not only responds to this challenge but goes even further: it trains "change agents" who actively shape schools and society.

The internationally renowned ACP contributes expertise from global peace processes, research, peace education,

and international dialogue formats, thereby connecting academic theory with lived practice.

The program is designed for working professionals, consists of seven modules (120 ECTS), and follows a clear learning progression: In the first semester, students learn about the foundations of peace and life skills education, fostering a new pedagogical self-understanding—shifting from mere instruction to guidance and empowerment. The second semester focuses on counseling skills as well as sustainable organizational and school development. The third semester emphasizes global perspectives, sustainable thinking, and global citizenship. The concluding phase brings together positive psychology, personal development, and an individual master's project—thus creating real added value for educational institutions or society.

Graduates are equipped to design peace education programs, foster life skills, advise schools, and integrate global and sustainable perspectives into educational settings. They help cultivate a culture of peace, nonviolence, dialogue, and inclusive community.



Start of the first semester

Thus, this Master's program offers a forward-looking educational pathway which combines professional expertise with social responsibility, creating learning environments which foster orientation, peace, and resilience.

PEACE EDUCATION AT THE ACP

Peace Weeks & 7 Days for Peace

Peace Weeks 2025 – Learning, Shaping and Living Peace

Established as a violence prevention project in 2007, the Peace Weeks provide children and young people with an age appropriate approach to understanding their emotions, boundaries and options for action. Methods of non violent communication, teamwork, and conflict and peace building skills are at the heart of the program.

Under the motto “From Me to You to Us,” the program not only strengthened the self confidence and sense of agency of the roughly 2,400 participants, but also enhanced their willingness to collaborate and support one another.

A particular focus was placed on how young people can take responsibility within their social environment. Peace education guidance enabled deep learning processes — for both students and teachers, who took part in systemic competence training run in parallel.

During the Peace Weeks, the exhibition “Schlaining & Peace” in the castle provided an important learning space. It links historical developments with current global perspectives on peace and democracy. Objects such as the “Non Violence” sculpture — the iconic knotted gun — and the story of Sadako and her paper cranes were particularly impactful, moving the young people emotionally and encouraging conversations about personal responsibility. The oversized “peace staircase” allowed students to experience interactive conflict mediation first hand. Around the giant globe, they explored humanity’s interconnectedness within our shared “homeland Earth” and how peace can be learned, shaped, and lived.

With more than 24,000 participants to date, the Peace Weeks 2025 impressively demonstrated how sustainable peace education is: it creates spaces in which young people experience peace as something that is not an abstract concept, but begins in everyday life — every day, in every encounter.

7 Days for Peace 2025: “Peace Education in Turbulent Times”



Under this theme, the Burgenland Peace Education Symposium focused on societal challenges such as extremism, violence and polarization, and particularly on educational and societal options for action.

At the same time, it invited participants to focus on what strengthens, connects and inspires hope. Educators accompany children and young people on their path toward inner stability, empathy, resilience and a sense of responsibility. Through clear attitudes, personal care, and human centered education, they can encourage and empower young people. The “7 Days for Peace” offered impulses on how this mission can be carried out with confidence and creativity — without losing sight of existing challenges.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT THE ACP

Our Work and Projects in the Field of Dialogue, Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Empowerment of women peacebuilders in the South Caucasus – Phase Two

The South Caucasus region continues to be shaped by unresolved conflicts, with limited opportunities for young women from Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia to meet, exchange, and collaborate. The second phase of the SheLeads project, funded by UN Women Georgia and running since 2024, creates a vital space for such engagement. It brings together a new generation of emerging women leaders from across these communities to strengthen their skills in peacebuilding, civic engagement, and advocacy, while supporting them to take an active role in shaping peace within their own contexts.

Building on an in-person training module held in Cyprus in 2024, the project facilitated the implementation of a second in-person training module for the same group of participants in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025. The women engaged with local peacebuilders and civil society actors, drawing on the country's experience of post-war recovery to deepen their understanding of feminist peacebuilding and reflect on its relevance to their own contexts. The module also provided practical training in communication and advocacy skills. Building on this foundation, participants began developing and implementing small-scale community initiatives, addressing topics such as cross-community dialogue, storytelling, women's rights, and youth leadership.

Following a productive year and a strong partnership with UN Women, the ACP began expanding this cooperation, with the aim of engaging a broader group of young women across the South Caucasus in 2026.

Participation and Mediation in Climate and Environmental Conflicts

As part of its focus on “Environmental Peacebuilding” and

municipal peace and conflict work, the ACP organized a series of events addressing participation and mediation in climate and environmental conflicts in Austria.

Particular attention was paid to issues of **nature restoration and conflicts**. The ACP sees it as its mission to highlight potential conflicts arising from the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, which is set to be enacted in the summer of 2024, and advocates for a constructive approach to addressing them.

The **workshop “Nature Restoration as a Conflict: Dealing with Local Conflicts Related to Nature Restoration Measures,”** held on 1 and 2 July as part of the Austrian Forum for Peace, served this purpose.

A high-level panel of representatives from politics, administration, civil society (NGOs), and academia addressed the topic and developed a policy brief for decision-makers.

This brief included eight recommendations which strongly emphasized the opportunities offered by strategically planned, well-prepared, and sincere participation and mediation.

This policy brief was presented in Vienna on 13 October 2025, at a public event which was well attended by the media. Representatives from the World Wildlife Fund, the Burgenland Environmental Ombudsman's Office, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLUK), and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences commented on the



CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT THE ACP

Our Work and Projects in the Field of Dialogue, Mediation and Conflict Resolution

proposals, thereby contributing to their enhancement.

Building on 40 years of experience in conflict work, dialogue and participation processes, as well as in municipal peace and conflict work, a participation and mediation program for climate and environmental conflicts was developed in the second half of the year. Among other things, it includes:

- Consulting and designing a **conflict-sensitive participatory process** in collaboration with the client
- **Leading and facilitating** both **public events** and **stakeholder meetings** in manageable groups
- **Mediation** in **simmering or full-blown conflicts**

In particular, the service covers the following areas:

1. **Nature restoration** and conflicts arising in this context
2. **Energy transition**, with a particular focus on conflicts arising from the construction of **wind farms**.
3. **Wolves, beavers, and other wildlife**; human-wildlife conflicts which are highly emotionally charged

Ongoing collaboration took place with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management; the National Park of Lake Neusiedlersee; relevant decision-makers; regional managers of the so-called KEM and KLAR regions; and the Austrian Network for Peace and Conflict Research.

Two-year research project on neighborhood mediation successfully completed

Neighborhood conflicts can be tough, protracted, and a heavy burden for those involved, including property management.

That is why it was an opportunity when the two-year research project “Conflicts in the Residential and Rental Context and Their Resolution with a Focus on Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Burgenland” was launched in 2023—made possible by the Burgenland-EFRE-2021-2027 Additionality Program. Three institutions were involved: ACP, the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (formerly: FH Burgenland), and the Oberwart housing association OSG.

The core of the project involved the OSG referring conflict cases to the ACP, where these conflicts were handled by a team of mediators, with academic support from the university throughout the process.

In 2025, the project was concluded with results including the following:

The service is accepted

Participation in mediation should always be voluntary. At the start of the project, it was unclear whether the mediation offer would be accepted. The finding interesting to mediation researchers was that, out of the 36 cases referred, 25 proceeded to mediation (traditional mediation, shuttle mediation). Four cases were categorized as special cases (e.g., domestic violence), and only in seven cases no mediation process came about due to refusal or the identification of an alternative solution.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT THE ACP

Our Work and Projects in the Field of Dialogue, Mediation and Conflict Resolution



Representatives of the ACP, the OSG, and the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland

Neighborhood mediation is successful

From the perspective of the interview partners most relevant to this—the parties to the conflict and the property management—the concluding statements were exclusively positive.

Of course, there were caveats; for instance, it was frequently highlighted the mediation sessions required a lot of effort but the improvements achieved were consistently confirmed both on a factual and an emotional level.

At a closing event on 26 March 2025, the results were presented to a professional audience consisting of representatives from local government, social work, academia, the judiciary, and the police. The results have been published in an [80-page report](#), a [12-page summary](#) of which is also available.

It is also particularly gratifying that the OSG decided to continue the mediation project from April 2025 using its own funds.

Sudan: Supporting the Transition Process

Since the outbreak of the civil war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, Sudan has been facing “the most devastating humanitarian and displacement crisis in the world”, according to the UN.

The ACP’s involvement in Sudan dates back to over a decade, when the ACP campaigned for an end to the recruitment of child soldiers. Following the fall of the Bashir regime in 2019, the ACP supported the political transition process by working with rebel groups from Darfur. This led to a major rebel group declaring a unilateral ceasefire in 2021. Even after the military coup in October 2021, this engagement continued through the involvement of civilian and political opposition groups, with the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs.

Following the outbreak of the civil war in April 2023, various international mediation initiatives failed. After the UN transitional mission UNITAMS came to an end and the ceasefire talks led by the US and Saudi Arabia were put on hold, while the central negotiating mandate was transferred to the African Union and the regional organisation IGAD. In 2024, the ACP supported a process led by the African Union and IGAD to establish a civilian platform to act as a counterweight to the two warring sides. The ACP’s focus was on creating the conditions necessary for two armed rebel groups from Darfur to join the alliance.

In 2025, the ACP continued its commitment to strengthening civil and democratic forces in Sudan, which, as a third actor alongside the parallel governments led by the SAF and the RSF, are working towards a peaceful end to the conflict. The ACP organised three dialogue meetings, two in cooperation with the Berghof Foundation, with representatives of political parties, movements and civil society.

RESEARCH AT THE ACP

Publications

The ACP stands out thanks to its diverse research profile focusing on peace and conflict dynamics. Its main focal areas are conflict transformation and mediation, as well as Austrian, German, and European foreign policy. Regional priorities include the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and West Africa. ACP projects are supported by accompanying research. Policy recommendations are regularly prepared under the leadership of the research team to support representatives of the federal government. Findings are made available to the public whenever possible.

In 2025, staff members delivered **66 presentations at national and international conferences, in academic programs, and training courses**. Moreover, there were **105 occasions when staff participated in academic events**. Findings and recommendations are published in two different ACP formats: Policy Briefs and Working Papers. Policy Briefs provide recommendations for action on political issues. Working Papers provide in-depth analyses of complex issues. They play a crucial role as a foundation for evidence-based policy advice and conflict resolution. ACP staff and consultants published a total of **13 works**. Of these, the ACP produced **seven as in-house publications and contributed to five external publications**.

Two working papers were published as part of the Austrian Forum for Peace series.

01/2025: Mediating Peace in a Fragmented World Order: The Roles of European Mediators

This report examines the evolving role of four European countries—Finland, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland—as third-party mediators in preventing, managing, or resolving conflicts. It explores their mediation strategies, highlighting both common features and differences, as well as the key strengths and challenges they face, such as the emergence of new conflicts, non-state armed groups, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and evolving international expectations.

Using Sudan and Ukraine as case studies, the report assesses the successes and limitations of European mediation in intra- and inter-state conflicts. Finally, the report offers recommendations for strengthening European mediation efforts, drawing on past and current experiences to address the complexity of modern conflicts and adapt to an increasingly fragmented global order.



02/2025: Environmental PeaceTech: Framing a Space for Cautious Innovation in Climate-Conflict Settings

This paper explores whether Environmental PeaceTech—the intersection of digital technologies and environmental peacebuilding—could serve as a new framework for research and practice. Digital tools are increasingly being

used to address climate-related and conflict-related risks, yet their overlap with environmental peacebuilding has so far been inadequately defined and inconsistently implemented.

Rather than calling for the immediate establishment of a new subfield, the paper draws attention to structural chal-



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lenges such as unequal access to data or a lack of local engagement, and how these could not only be exacerbated but also addressed by bringing together PeaceTech and Environmental Peacebuilding. The analysis suggests that the Environmental PeaceTech concept, if pursued, should evolve from participatory processes which reflect the lived realities of affected communities. The paper is a first step toward conceptually intertwining the aforementioned thematic areas so as to generate new questions and approaches.



Policy Brief 01/25: Konfliktfall Renaturierung?

– Umgang mit kommunalen Konflikten im Zusammenhang mit Renaturierungsmaßnahmen (Nature Restoration as a Source of Conflict? – Addressing Local Conflicts Related to Nature Restoration Measures)

Nature restoration is a key global measure for addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis.

Due to the European Union's Nature Restoration Regulation promulgated in the summer of 2024, a significant increase in nature restoration projects is expected in the coming years, and with it, related conflicts. This paper examines how local and regional conflicts related to nature restoration arise and how they can be addressed constructively. It is based on a workshop held as part of the Austrian Forum for Peace in July 2025, during which experts from politics, administration, academia, and civil society developed recommendations for decision-makers in politics, interest groups, and the business sector.

The paper analyzes key areas of conflict and specific case

studies—such as the development of the national restoration plan, flood protection projects, and the management of beaver populations. The paper advocates for a conflict-sensitive approach to nature restoration which considers participation, transparency, and professionally grounded conflict management as integral components. In this context, conflicts are not merely obstacles but can serve as opportunities for innovation, democracy, and social cohesion. Eight key recommendations for decision-makers are derived from the analyses.



Policy Brief 02/2025: Cross-Border Cooperation in the West African Sahel as a Prerequisite for Sustainable Peace

The West African Sahel region faces a range of challenges, including terrorism, climate and environmental issues, fragmented governance, and socio-economic marginalization.

Armed groups specifically exploit the limited state presence and inadequately secured international borders in remote regions. This contributes significantly to heightened insecurity and instability. Against this backdrop, the Austrian Forum for Peace invited a group of diverse stakeholders to an expert workshop in July 2025.

This policy brief analyzes the key security threats in the region as well as the current state of cross-border security structures. It also draws lessons from other regional cooperation initiatives. The brief concludes that a shift is needed in the future from isolated, individual measures toward

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Publications

integrated, multi-stakeholder-oriented strategies. These should be based on strengthening the resilience of communities and the population's sense of ownership, while simultaneously promoting regional solidarity.



Policy Brief 03/25: Klima, Ökologie und Friedenspolitik: Perspektiven österreichischer Stakeholder (Climate, Ecology, and Peace Policy: Perspectives of Austrian Stakeholders)

The policy brief “Klima, Ökologie und Friedenspolitik: Perspektiven österreichischer Stakeholder” offers an assessment of the current state of the debate on

the interconnections between the planetary crisis, security, and peace from the perspective of Austrian stakeholders. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution are increasingly recognized as key drivers and intensifiers of conflict while conversely, armed conflicts and militarization cause significant ecological damage and additional emissions. Against this backdrop, the paper presents the approach of environmental peacebuilding as a conceptual framework which takes an integrated view of ecological sustainability, peacebuilding, and security. Based on the results of a workshop with representatives from politics, government, academia, business, and civil society,

- the delay in addressing the climate/peace discourse,
- international conflicts with an environmental dimension,
- security threats posed by the consequences of climate change, and
- security risks arising from fossil fuel dependencies

are identified as central challenges. Finally, recommendations are outlined on how Austrian actors can address the climate, environment, and peace nexus more coherently and effectively.

The quality of the ACP's areas of impact is characterized by project research conducted throughout the process.



Research Project “Konflikte im Wohn- und Mietkontext und ihre Bearbeitung mit Schwerpunkt auf Mehrparteienwohnbauten im Burgenland – Ergebnisbericht” (“Conflicts in residential and tenancy contexts and their resolution with a focus on multi-party housing in Burgenland – Results Report”)

Neighborhood conflicts are often intractable,

protracted, and a significant burden for those involved, including the property management responsible for house rules. Recent studies, such as those commissioned by the organization NEUSTART, have even concluded that neighborhood conflicts are more difficult to resolve than workplace conflicts, family conflicts, or conflicts in public spaces.

Therefore, a unique opportunity came up when, in 2023, there was a chance of conducting a two-year scientific study on the potential of mediation in the housing sector in Burgenland. Specifically, this refers to the research project “Conflicts in residential and tenancy contexts and their resolution with a focus on multi-party housing in Burgenland,” made possible by the Burgenland ERDF 2021–2027 Additivity Program. The core of the project involved a housing

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association in Oberwart which referred cases of conflicts to the ACP whose mediators then addressed the conflicts while the process was scientifically monitored by the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland. Now, in 2025, the project has been completed and results have been generated. These were published in an [80-page report](#) highlighting the two most important findings: that mediation in the housing sector has been accepted and is largely viewed as beneficial by those involved.



PEFC

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