



Pioneers for a Living Culture of Remembrance

Our International Youth and Educational Activities

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Cover:

 Volksbund



Introduction

Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. (German War Graves Commission) sees war cemeteries as international centres of learning and exchange on the history of war and violence in Europe. Founded after World War One in 1919, the Volksbund is now a humanitarian organisation charged by government of the Federal Republic of Germany with finding and identifying German war casualties from the world wars and looking after 832 war cemeteries in 46 countries together with international partners. It advises relatives and also promotes cross-border exchanges. The Volksbund has been engaged in youth and educational activity for almost 70 years – the first youth exchange at a war cemetery took place as early as 1953 in Lommel (Belgium).

Today, we bring together over 20,000 young people from around Europe and the world every year, sending a message of peace and tolerance. The Volksbund is the only war graves service in the world with four youth exchange and education centres – in the Netherlands, in Belgium, in France and on the island of Usedom at the Polish border. Through these centres, all located near war cemeteries, the Volksbund makes a dedicated and professional contribution to international understanding of the past and how we live together in Europe today. Coexistence and understanding take courage, commitment and creativity.

International dialogue is our priority. We work closely with our European neighbours for our commemorative and educational events. We develop modern didactic resources to help schools and other educational institutions teach history and foster a culture of remembrance. They include educational handouts, exhibitions and youth competitions. As a recognised independent youth welfare and adult political education institution, we offer practical courses for multipliers. Since 1968, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs has recommended that schools work with the Volksbund. In light of the current wars and humanitarian crises, in times of growing antisemitism and other forms of group-focused enmity, it is imperative that we preserve and develop war cemeteries as historical places of remembrance and learning. Their potential in this regard is also of immense importance in the context of growing Euroscepticism. This brochure presents our youth and educational activity work and outlines our wide range of services.



BEISPIELE PRAXIS

ENTSCHEIDUNGS- UND MATERIALIEN

14 / 18 MITTEN IN EUROPA

AMERIKANER MIT FRIEDEN
FRANZÖSISCHER FRIEDEN
LA PAIX
VREDE
ПОКОНЬ С ВОЙНОЙ
ПЕACE

Mit ihm Frieden!

Wiederholungsübungen für Kinder

Peace Education at Schools and Colleges

War Cemeteries as Places of Non-formal Learning

The Volksbund views war cemeteries as transnational centres of remembrance and sites of historical learning, which each generation must actively re-interpret to avoid forgetting the consequences of war and tyranny. Few other spaces can reveal the complexity of European cultures of history and remembrance as tangibly as war graves. They are the ideal places to get a feel for the monumental upheavals in German history and their consequences for the present. Our didactic concepts focus on investigating individual fates and remembering the heterogeneous casualties and the biographies of their killers. These concepts are based on the principles of multi-perspectivity, diversity and democratisation, as well as modern use of media, methods and language. We develop dedicated educational materials for schools and other

educational institutions to teach history and a culture of remembrance, targeting secondary schools (*Sekundarstufe I and II* at German schools).

Our school and educational officers in the state and district associations support schools nationwide with lesson units and project excursions on topics related to peace education. They accompany school projects to war cemeteries in the 16 Federal States of Germany and other countries. This includes both tracing individual fates and creating historical and memorial plaques. Under the supervision of their teachers, the pupils research the history of local war cemeteries, documenting the results on information panels. The panels are then erected with municipal support, making the war cemetery a place where people can learn

Our educational services for schools include

- War cemeteries as interactive centres of learning
- Themed exhibitions with supporting materials
- Didactic hand-outs from the 'Practical Examples' series
- Continuing professional development for teachers
- Youth competitions



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about regional and international history. Digital applications and learning resources provide additional educational approaches to war cemeteries in Germany and abroad.

The educational services include research and production of memorial bricks engraved with names for previous-

ly unnamed prisoners of war and forced labourers at cemeteries in Germany. Other interactive services of the Volksbund's educational activity include provision of, and didactic support for, historical exhibitions at schools and thematic preparation and follow-ups for excursions to our four youth exchange and education centres in Germany and abroad.

International Youth Competitions

Every year, the Volksbund organises competitions for young people between 14 and 20 years old, for example the Franco-German Comic Competition, which is run with the French partner organisation 'National Office for Veterans and Victims of War' (ONACVG). Comics can be used to motivate and illustrate, as well as to enhance aesthetic, linguistic, historical and political competences. Analysing comics and students drawing their own comics have strong didactic potential, and can reach young people from a va-

riety of social backgrounds. Volksbund also cooperates with the British charity 'Never Such Innocence', a creative competition for young people. It motivates young people to search for stories and fates in their personal environment and to present them creatively in words and images.

Continuing Professional Development, Seminars and Field Trips for Teachers

We offer continuing professional development for educational staff at schools, universities, adult education centres or other educational institutions, regionally and nationwide, and also at our youth exchange and educational centres. Educational methods for lessons on peace and memorials are presented and trialed using war cemeteries as examples, to explore and harness these sites' educational potential. The continuing professional development services with a focus on the didactics of history consider various non-formal learning sites and offer a forum for practical exchange with the school and educational activity experts. Together we develop teaching and educational methodologies and consult on potential cooperation in implementing the Volksbund's region-specific educational services.

For schools and other educational institutions, the Volksbund develops dedicated didactic resources for history lessons and to promote a culture of remembrance. These educational packages include didactic hand-outs, exhibitions and learning resources on lesson-relevant topics, e.g. World War One, human rights, forced migration, the end of the war in 1945 and European integration. For further information, visit:

[www.volksbund.de/
paedagogische-materialien](http://www.volksbund.de/paedagogische-materialien)

Our educational services are aimed at secondary school children of all ages and all school types, and differ by Federal State. For more detailed information, please contact:

[www.volksbund.de/
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International Youth Exchange and Educational Centres

History at a Historic Site

The Volksbund operates four youth exchange and educational centres (JBS) in Germany and neighbouring countries: Ysselsteyn in the Netherlands, Lommel in Belgium, Niederbronn-les-Bains in France and Kamminke on the island of Usedom. Every JBS is located in the immediate vicinity of a significant war cemetery and close to the German or Polish border. The centres are therefore all characterised by a fascinating local history, surrounded by wonderful landscapes, and focus their didactic services primarily on studying history, remembrance culture and contemporary topics of historical, political and intercultural education.

There are many reasons to visit a JBS: Class trips can combine educational excursions with an attractive leisure programme, youth groups can complete projects on various topics in extra-curricular formats. The venues are also available to multipliers and specialists for conferences, seminars and workshops and offer suitable spaces and technical equipment. Adult education associations and groups are also welcome and can hold their own events, on request with the support of our local educational officers. All JBS have practical and functional furnishings and offer full board with local dishes. Every JBS also allows guests to explore

the surrounding area right outside their front door, for example by visiting other sites of historic interest, e.g. museums and memorials, discovering the sights of nearby major European cities, enjoying leisure and sports facilities or simply savouring the landscape and nature.

Our youth exchange and educational centres aim to empower all visitors, but especially young people, to approach history from an individual perspective, and give them a nuanced view of the experiences of war and violence in the world wars and their historic contexts. Trips into the surrounding area and exchanges with other young people expand their horizons and inspire intercultural discoveries.

Every JBS has its own thematic focus, some of which we want to present here. For more detailed information, please consult the contacts specified for the respective centre. The educational programmes at the JBS abroad are funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

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Ysselsteyn

JBS Ysselsteyn (Netherlands)

The JOC Ysselsteyn Youth Exchange and Educational Centre is located in the delightful natural surroundings of the Limburgse Peel. It is right beside the only German war cemetery in the Netherlands, whose almost 32,000 graves are a powerful call for peace. A new visitor centre presents the local history in a modern exhibition. The youth exchange centre's ambitious educational programme and the wide range of leisure activities in the vicinity make it an ideal destination for school trips, exchange projects, association activities and many other occasions. The youth exchange centre is made up of log cabins laid out in a semi-circle around a central fire pit. They are supplemented by a main building with a dining hall, seminar and leisure rooms, as well as extensive forested grounds.

JOC Ysselsteyn's educational programme focuses on promoting peace through education, using history and politics education methods and offering a wide range of modules on contemporary topics, for example awareness of human rights or campaigns against the use of child soldiers.

The centre's work primarily focuses on studying the war cemetery and the biographies of the war casualties, who give visitors an individual perspective on history as silent witnesses of their time. The centre produces a tailored programme for groups based on their requests and requirements. In addition to the historical topics, photo projects and creative and experiential elements enrich the visitor's educational experience.

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Lommel

'Huis over Grenzen'
JBS Lommel (Belgium)

'Cross-border house', or 'huis over grenzen' in Dutch – that is the name of the International Youth Exchange and Educational Centre in the Flemish city of Lommel in northern Belgium. The centre is located next to the largest German war cemetery in Western Europe, where over 39,000 casualties of the Second World War are buried on a 16 hectare site. JBS Lommel's educational work is closely linked to the war cemetery as a historic site. It focuses on the life stories of the people buried here, situating them in the broader context of the consequences of war and tyranny. Studying history facilitates a better understanding of present-day conflicts. Commemoration and peace-building methods educate participants on the potential consequences of excessive nationalism. The JBS' location also offers attractive cultural and leisure activities, especially for hikers and cyclists. For interested

day visitors, the JBS offers guided tours of the war cemetery.

The JBS Lommel team provides a comprehensive educational programme for secondary school children. Participants are involved in planning the programme, and structure their week based on their own needs and expectations. The JBS' staff are also happy to help plan sporting activities, cultural programmes or visits to museums, and organise excursions to the surrounding area. Young people and young adults can also take part in the JBS Lommel programmes on a non-formal basis. The annual summer camps with various themes combine international exchanges and communication with fun and creativity.

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Niederbronn-les-Bains

Centre International Albert Schweitzer
JBS Niederbronn-les-Bains (France)

JBS Albert Schweitzer is a youth exchange centre providing education on historical, social and political subjects operated by Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. The JBS was officially opened in 1994 and is located right beside the Niederbronn-les-Bains war cemetery, where almost 16,000 war casualties from the Second World War are buried. Located in the heart of the Northern Vosges nature park, there are a wide range of leisure activities and potential excursions in the vicinity. The seat of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, is just a 45-minute drive away. An extension was completed in 2018, adding seminar and group rooms, and offering perfect conditions for class trips, seminars and group stays of all kind.

The Franco-German team of JBS Albert Schweitzer has over 25 years of experience in teaching history and politics, as well as intercultural mediation. The education-

al programme includes a wide range of modules that can be compiled 'à la carte' for a stay. A guided tour of the war cemetery and through the 'Fortunes of War' exhibition presents World War Two-related topics tangibly and with contemporary relevance based on the fates of individual casualties. Participants study historical sources to learn about them in workshops. Language animation and experiential education activities supplement the programme and are recommended in particular for Franco-German exchanges. On request, the centre is also happy to cater to short stays, day visitors and individual projects.

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Golm

JBS Golm (Germany)

Situated on the sunny island of Usedom, the Golm Youth Exchange and Educational Centre (JBS) run by Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V. is the perfect base for eventful project days. The JBS team organises individual programmes with diverse activities and modern workshops on historical and political education. The Golm war cemetery, the border between Germany and Poland and the Peenemünde Historical Technical Museum bear impressive witness to World War Two. A balanced programme of excursions enables visitors to debate the effects of violence, dictatorship and war, where they actually happened. Coming together and appreciating one another: A stay at JBS Golm gives young people an opportunity to get to know their eastern neighbours better as Europe grows together. JBS Golm is happy to support Polish and German partner schools and associations in planning and conducting international exchanges.

The Polish-German team of JBS Golm specialises in organising and hosting intercultural exchanges in the German-Polish border region. The didactic methods applied are multi-perspective, participative and dialogue-focused. Programmes are designed jointly and tailored for the target group. Thematically, the peace education focuses on the Second World War and the corresponding German and Polish cultures of remembrance. Using the Golm war cemetery as an example, the consequences of marginalisation, hate, dictatorship, war and abuses of human rights are visualised based on biographical references. Playful elements and mini-language courses foster intercultural skills. In a multimedia urban game, guests can explore the past and present of Świnoujście, a city on the Polish border.

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Peace KAROL



International Youth Exchanges

Active for International Understanding

Anyone who studies the past in an international context is actively working towards a peaceful future, for mutual understanding and democracy. The Volksbund pursues this goal in the extra-curricular sector with international youth exchanges. Young people of different ages spend one to two weeks in the summer as an international group near a war cemetery or memorial. They get to know young people from other countries, learn more about the past and contribute to the upkeep of the war cemeteries with routine maintenance work.

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the Volksbund developed the workcamp format with the objective of bringing young people from the former adversaries together and promoting international understanding. What began

in 1953 at the first 'youth camp' with construction work to build the war cemetery in Lommel, Belgium, is now an international exchange programme for young people from all over Europe.

Every year, the International Youth Exchanges Unit organises roughly 40 projects in 15 European countries, with France, Italy, Poland and Russia as the main partners. The projects are aimed at young people aged between 12 and 26. In the projects in other countries, German participants encounter young people from the host country. The youth exchanges and work camps are open to young people from all countries. They often bring together seven or more nationalities. We welcome roughly 1,000 participants every year.

Learning from the Past for the Future

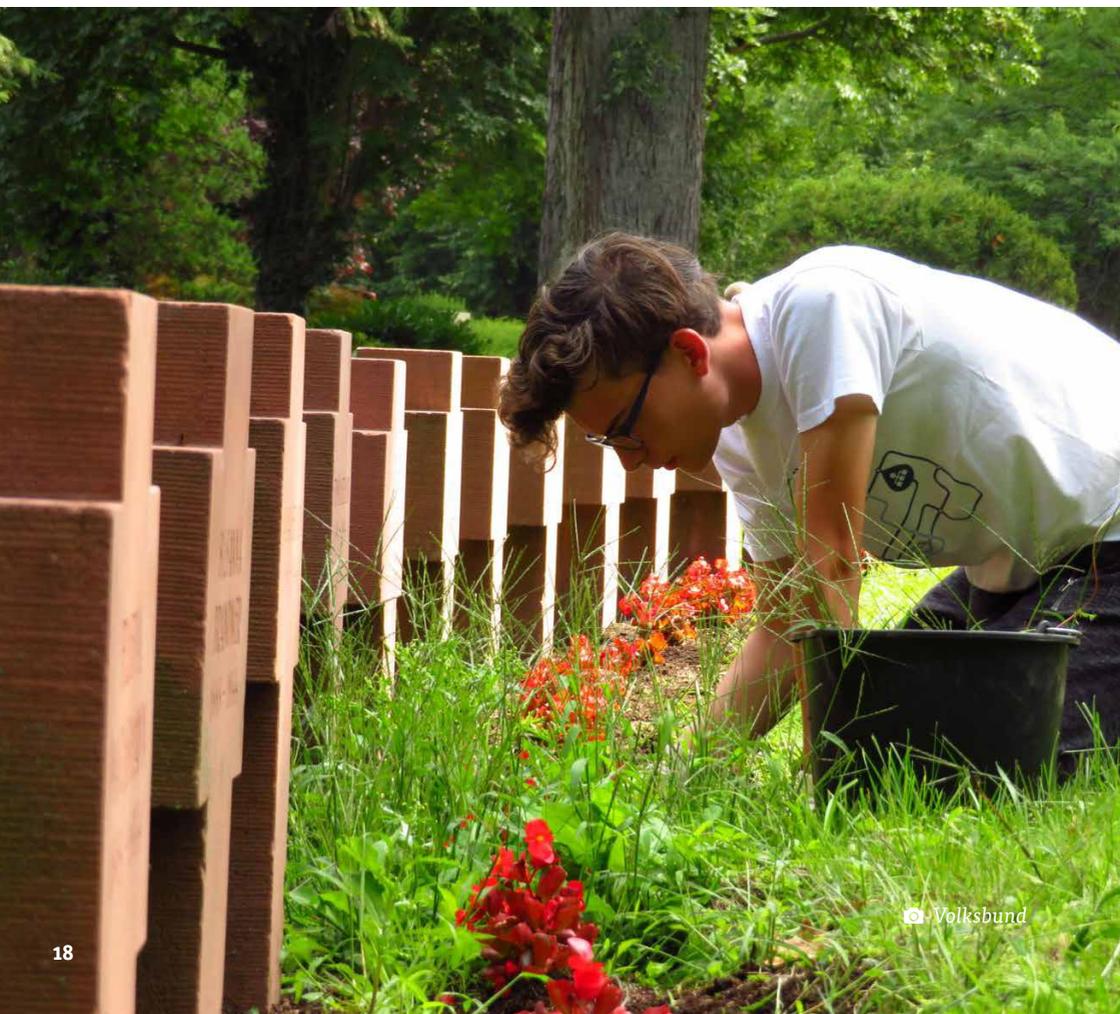
Our international youth exchanges focus on the thematic analysis of the war and violence experiences of the 20th century. War, violence and death are no simple topics, yet we are confronted with them daily.

At war cemeteries and places of remembrance, the participants learn more about the history of conflict in Europe, reconcil-

iation and uniting the continent – often considered self-evident today. Biographies of war casualties illustrate the fate of people in war, visualise their deprivations, restrictions, persecution as well as entanglement and guilt. Studying the past in terms of human rights and democracy encourages participants to question their accustomed ways of thinking. They develop their own ideas of how they can

contribute to peaceful co-existence, tolerance and equal rights today. The young people get to know different perspectives and reflect on how they approach history and remembrance in their own country. The international exchange promotes mutual formation of a modern, transnational remembrance, seeing past wars and suffering as a call to take responsibility for the present and future.

Through their practical maintenance work, the participants make a key contribution to the upkeep of war cemeteries and monuments as memorials to peace. They clean grave stones, retrace inscriptions or maintain the green spaces. This practical work is one of the cornerstones of the 'International Youth Exchanges' programme.



Together for Tolerance and Human Rights

Young people reduce prejudices when encountering people their age from other countries. They enhance their sensitivity to other cultures and train their abilities in international understanding – a lasting experience that heightens respect and interest in others as part of everyday life too. A range of methodological approaches, group learning activities, intercultural exchanges and fun leisure activities add variety to all youth exchanges and work camps. The programmes encourage young people to ask questions, to debate and discover how they can play an active role in society.

The youth exchanges depend on the commitment of voluntary youth leaders. They take responsibility for the participants and help design the programmes. A balanced programme of training and continuing professional development with several courses each year ensures that the events are high quality. New youth leaders are always welcome.

The international youth exchanges are announced at www.volksbund.de/workcamps every year in December. The training and continuing professional development courses for youth leaders are also listed there. Registration for all events is done online.



Andrei, 16, Ukraine:

I will remember the first time on the cemetery, the first day of work; because on that day I realized that it does not matter if we are from different countries. We are the same.



Anna, 17, Italy:

I will always remember the camp and every individual participant. I learned something new from everyone and am grateful that I was able to take part in such a wonderful project. The camp made me more receptive to other cultures and I would never have imagined that I could make new friendships here.

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Youth, Specialist and Adult Education

The Youth, Specialist and Adult Education (JFEB) Unit supports the Volksbund's voluntary committees, the Federal Youth Working Group and the Federal Committee for Youth and Educational Activity. The JFEB unit also holds introductory seminars and qualification courses for new volunteer and full-time staff. The services primarily target multipliers in historical and political youth and adult education. The courses teach educational methods and skills for use at war

cemeteries in Germany and other countries.

The unit's responsibilities also include developing and supporting the Volksbund's alumni network and designing political adult education measures. The educational work also uses digital formats to an increasing extent. Supporting and qualifying the voluntary service providers in the Volksbund is another aspect of the unit's responsibilities.

With the unit's services, we want to

- help young people find their place in society and actively contribute to shaping society
- provide information on (peace-related) political matters, structures and contexts
- motivate young people to reflect on their own values and evaluate their political decisions based on values
- motivate participants to take their own stand for democracy, justice, peacefulness and human dignity
- contribute to the democratic justification of preserving war cemeteries and memorials and utilising them with a contemporary focus

The unit's services are characterised by international cooperation and a close working relationship with educational

partners. The qualification courses are generally held in the Volksbund's youth exchange and educational centres.

The unit promotes the necessary thematic opening and expansion of access to historical and political education, to reach and involve both young people and adults with a range of sociocultural backgrounds. Establishing a dialogical perspective with regard to studying National Socialism and the Holocaust is a key step towards an inclusive and multi-perspective culture of remembrance from a European point of view.

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BERNARD SCHEFFER
1911 - 1915
GUNTHER LOREY
1926 - 1915

FRIEDRICH KRUSE
UNBEKANNTER
SOLDAT

Programme Funding Coordination

Funding and Partner Networks in Youth and Educational Activity

The Volksbund works with public and private funding providers. They include federal and state ministries, bilateral youth organisations, many foundations and the European Union. Programme Funding Coordination liaises centrally between the funding providers for international youth activity and the Volksbund's project managers. We advise our colleagues on the programmes and take the lead in the formal funding procedures. We also provide support with applications in all other areas of youth and educational activity with the objective of tapping new funding sources. Besides international workcamps and youth exchanges, we also secure funding for continuing professional development of volunteers, field trips for multipliers and innovative pilot and educational projects of the Volksbund's youth exchange and educational centres.

The unit cooperates with funding providers and central agencies in international, historical and political youth and adult education in Germany and other countries. These multi-body cooperations are reflected practically in the youth

exchanges, school projects, specialist seminars and voluntary work. They inject fresh impetus into the Volksbund's thematic and methodological work and enable it to develop mutual forms of democratic remembrance culture.

There are also links to school and non-formal project formats and cooperation in quality development and quality assurance. In some areas, this has resulted in mature international partner cooperation, e.g. in the Franco-German cooperation with the Fédération nationale des Francas (French Youth Federation).

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