

## **HEIMATSUCHER e.V. Shoah survivors today - Activity report 2018**

The association pursues exclusively and directly charitable purposes within the meaning of the section 'Tax-privileged purposes' of the German Tax Code. The purpose of the association is to promote international sentiment, tolerance in all areas of culture and international understanding. In particular, the association aims to actively prevent anti-Semitism and racism and to sensitise young people in particular to this issue.

The purpose of the Articles of Association is realized in particular by (cf. in detail § 3 of the Articles of Association):

1. the documentation of life stories of contemporary witnesses of the Holocaust
2. the promotion of a lively culture of remembrance of the National Socialist era, for example in the form of exhibitions, didactic concepts and publications.
3. Educational measures, especially in schools, with school classes (from the third grade) and youth groups,
4. the implementation and publication of scientific research projects

**This was implemented as follows in 2018:**

### **1. documentation of the life stories of contemporary witnesses of the Holocaust and their publications**

In 2018, three new interviews were conducted with Holocaust witnesses: with Michaela Vidláková in August 2018, with Dr. Gerhard Baader in September 2018 and with Peter Paul Klinger, also in September 2018. This includes establishing and maintaining contact as well as discussions between the association members and the witnesses. The conversations will be recorded for later transcription and editing.

The work of contemporary witnesses prevents the Holocaust from being forgotten - especially with regard to personal fates. Documenting the life stories of an ageing generation is an essential basis for the sustainable promotion of a living culture of remembrance. The documented interviews are then processed and made available in the form of publications. This directly promotes mutual tolerance and prevents racism and anti-Semitism.

### Maintaining contact with contemporary witnesses:

All 23 living contemporary witnesses have a contact person in the association. In this way, all living eyewitnesses receive regular mail. As far as possible, contact with the contemporary witnesses is also maintained regularly by telephone, email and visits.

As part of the school projects, pupils can also write letters to survivors. These are regularly handed over to the survivors, some of whom live in Israel, or to the descendants of deceased witnesses. In 2018, the association was able to send 1,378 letters from pupils to the survivors. This also helped to promote international understanding and good relations between people.

### Quality assurance:

In order to ensure the scientific standards of our work with the interviews, the existing guidelines for organizing and conducting interviews were further improved in 2018. An improved internal structure was also introduced. The organization of new interviews was managed centrally by one person for the first time, so that more volunteers were able to take part in interviews with improved quality.

### Processing and publishing the interviews with contemporary witnesses:

In 2018, the association continued to work on processing the interviews for publication: eight transcripts were completed; one interview text was edited; 40 short texts were written to supplement the interviews and two interviews were designed and made ready for printing.

The revision of the already published exhibition book with ten life stories was almost completed.

### Support and maintaining contact in the event of death

In 2018, however, four of the contemporary witnesses died (Djorde Alpar, Eberhard Polednik, Micha Schliesser and Bert Max Silbermann), with whom association members had maintained regular contact. In order to protect the contact persons in the association, support for volunteers in such cases was developed in 2018. The stories of the deceased will be passed on by members of the association.

## **2. the promotion of a lively culture of remembrance of the National Socialist era, for example in the form of exhibitions and events**

The documented life stories were made accessible to the public by HEIMATSUCHER e.V. as part of the association's traveling exhibition. In 2018, three exhibitions were successfully realized together with cooperation partners. A total of around 1,844 visitors were reached in this way on 182 exhibition days. Children and young people were specifically sensitized to racism and anti-Semitism in 32 educational workshops. Eleven events made the life stories accessible to the general public in particular.

The exhibition concept was also revised and updated for the first exhibition of the year. Three new portraits of survivors, audio guides and the association's documentary film were integrated into the exhibition in this way.

External people were trained to give guided tours of the exhibition for the first time in 2018. This enabled additional guided tours to be offered and the didactic concept to be passed on.

### Braunschweig: State Museum

16.1.-30.6.2018, 24 weeks exhibition

Accompanying program: 1 press tour; 2 public tours; 29 educational workshops (565 children and young people, 200-300 letters); 1,734 visitors

Note from the museum education department: overall, only positive feedback from visitors, the educational format worked well

### Hildesheim: Cooperation with the University of Hildesheim

23-27.4.2018, 5 days exhibition

Accompanying program: 6 events (poetry slam, lecture evening, fireside chat, 3 public guided tours); 3 didactic workshops; approx. 110 visitors

The exhibition for Hildesheim was planned with students from the University of Hildesheim and realized as planned by them, accompanied by the association.

## Düsseldorf: Parish of St. Antonius and St. Benedictus

10.-18.11.2018, 9 days exhibition

Accompanying program: 3 events: Vernissage, film evening, 3 guided tours with altar servers

The new HEIMATSUCHER letterbox and the magazine "Letters against forgetting" were used for the first time as part of the exhibition.

### **3. educational measures, especially in schools, with school classes (from the third grade) and youth groups, as well as the development of didactic concepts and materials:**

In 2018, HEIMATSUCHER e.V. carried out numerous projects at schools. In the projects, the personal life stories of contemporary witnesses are presented in their historical context and young people are sensitized to the current issues of racism and anti-Semitism. To this end, the association has developed its own educational concept, in which volunteers are increasingly being trained, including in 2018. Systematic training was developed for this in 2018. As a result, there were six trained multipliers in 2018 who can carry out educational projects for the association and 12 other prospective multipliers in training.

As an association, we continue to be delighted by the sharp rise in popularity in the school landscape and the increasing number of inquiries from educational institutions. With the 2018 educational projects, we were once again able to significantly increase our figures from the previous year. In 2018, we reached 2,433 children and young people, 803 of them in North Rhine-Westphalia. In total, we worked together with 45 different educational institutions in Germany.

The educational projects carried out by the association support teachers in teaching children and young people democratic values. Information about this was provided at three information events for teachers.

The aim of making this offer accessible to teachers outside the school system was pursued further in 2018. The inclusion in the Paritätische Jugendwerk NRW enabled important contacts to be made and five educational projects to be implemented with independent child and youth welfare institutions.

### School cooperations

In order to sustainably promote the association's efforts to promote a lively culture of remembrance in schools, three new collaborations were entered into with schools - so-called second-witness schools - in 2018.

### Didactic concepts and materials

The existing interviews are continuously adapted to suit the age group. They are shortened and arranged chronologically, as the eyewitnesses often switch between narrative threads in the interviews. Illustrations are created for each booklet, and footnotes and explanatory texts are written especially for children and young people. There is also a work section with tasks for the children and young people. They answer in-depth questions about the interview, explain the meanings of quotes and can sometimes write their answers creatively, for example by drawing. The children and young people then take the booklets home with the task of retelling the story. In this way, the idea of international understanding can be passed on beyond the project boundaries.

In 2018, four more survival stories were developed and printed in the form of didactic materials.

## **4. the implementation and publication of scientific research projects**

The association works together with institutions, chairs and scientists from various universities. This includes presenting the association and the didactic methods that have been explicitly introduced into the current academic discourse and discussed there. In addition to joint publication projects, these collaborations provide impetus for new methods or formats that are integrated into the association's work, or the joint organization of project seminars for students. In 2018, cooperation with the following universities was particularly noteworthy

- Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Holocaust Education project group
- Justus Liebig University Giessen, Holocaust Literature Research Center
- Ruhr University Bochum, Chair of History Didactics
- Hildesheim University Foundation, Institute for Educational Science

In addition, a process was developed and implemented to enable the association to conduct historical background research on the interviews conducted.

### **3. other activities**

#### Communication / PR

Throughout the year, the association implemented its statutory purpose via its website, two different newsletters and regular communication via the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. In 2018, the association's website was largely translated into English so that the stories of survival and the association's work can be spread beyond Germany's borders. The newsletter attracted 97 new subscribers. The press area was systematized through the creation of a press review.

#### Club life

175 association members supported the association's work in 2018

#### Other year-round activities

The association was represented at various events throughout the year, in particular commemorative events and networking events in the field of education and remembrance work.

Throughout the year, members gave lectures in a non-academic context on the need for a living culture of remembrance and the promotion of mutual tolerance and international understanding. This also includes lectures on the association's educational concept, which is gaining increasing recognition.

### **5. cooperations**

Important cooperation partners were acquired in 2018 to ensure the most effective and sustainable implementation of the association's purpose. In addition to educational institutions and universities, the Paritätische Jugendwerk is particularly worthy of mention here. Initial contacts were also established with commercial enterprises and public funding bodies.

## **6. prizes and awards**

### Guest at the startsocial award ceremony in the Federal Chancellery

In 2018, the association had the opportunity to present its work at the annual startsocial awards ceremony. The opening speech by the Federal Chancellor, who highlighted the work of HEIMATSUCHER e.V. in detail in her speech, was a special honor.

### St. Sebastianus Shooting Club

The Stephanien Prize of the St. Sebastianus Schützen in Düsseldorf was awarded to the HEIMATSUCHER e.V. association in 2018. In his speech at the award ceremony, Lothar Inden, 1st head of the shooting club, praised the work of HEIMATSUCHER and linked it to the goals of his own club: especially in these times, it is important to practice and support social commitment. The work of HEIMATSUCHER succeeds in helping to shape a society in which racism and xenophobia have no place through the life stories of contemporary witnesses.