

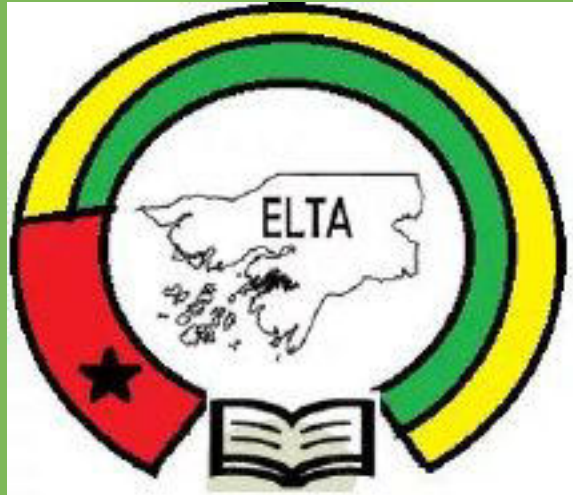


Global Issues SIG

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Joint Newsletter:



IATEFL Global Issues SIG with English Language Teachers' Association – Guinea Bissau (ELTA-GB)

Issue 2 September 2019

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Umi: if a woman is educated, she educates her children and educates a whole generation. Men don't have time because they need to work at two or three jobs here to get enough money to feed the family

Linda: Thank you all so much for talking to me.

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Interview with IATEFL GISIG's Web Coordinator, Laszlo Hajba – about his work at PeaceCamp

Laci - first, could you tell us a bit about yourself and your role in the Global Issues SIG?

I am an English language teacher and educator, based in Budapest, Hungary. I became a GISIG member in 2013 and since then I have been the web-manager and online content manager of the SIG. As a teacher, I am drawn to many different topics and issues: freedom of speech, equality, acceptance, privacy, peace education, inclusivity in state education in my country, just to name a few.



László Hajba, the coordinator of the Hungarian PeaceCamp delegation (2019)

I know you are a volunteer teacher at a PeaceCamp in Austria in your school holidays - what attracted you to work at this camp?

As a matter of fact, I inherited the position from the former coordinator of the project who thought I would be the best person to prepare and mentor the kids from our school, and I think she was right. As an openly gay teacher in a state school in my country, I know how difficult it can be for people to accept minorities and to openly talk about issues of peaceful coexistence. Every year I learn a lot from these brilliant young adults, and the more I understand them, the better I can help them in my capacity as a teacher to open up about global issues in the classroom.

Why do you think there is a need for a camp like this?

Everywhere in the world people of different ethnicities, religions and worldviews are trying to live together, yet in our schools, we teachers rarely talk about how to actually live together peacefully in a world often dominated by propaganda, hate speech and fake news. The camp takes all of these issues and helps kids cope with their emotions, not through traditional education, but through self-reflection, friendship, compassion and critical thinking.

Can you tell us more about the PeaceCamp?



PeaceCamp was created in 2004 by Evelyn Böhmer and it is sponsored by the European Union's Erasmus+ program. It brings together Jewish and Arab pupils from Israel with their peers from Austria and Hungary (8 students per delegation) to spend together ten days in a remote and picturesque village in the Austrian mountains. Each group coached and accompanied by an adult from its own surroundings, will bring to the camp an account of its personal, cultural and religious background and the current social and political issues prevailing in the respective groups and countries.

A team of artists, educators, teachers and a group analyst will elaborate with them on these issues during the workshops, teaching them how to resolve problems in non-violent, creative ways, based on knowledge and mutual understanding.

At the end of the camp, students graduate as Ambassadors of Peace, equipped with the tools to make peace in their own countries; not ten or twenty years from now, but every day as young adults, as global citizens.



Evelyn Böhmer-Laufer, the founder and lead psychologist of PeaceCamp (2019)

Do you have any particular memories of successful activities or breakthroughs at the camp?

I considered my first PeaceCamp, without exaggeration, the best ten days of my life. Even though I consider myself quite open-minded, it altered my perspective in so many ways, it is difficult to describe. It is heartwarming to see these young adults bond and try so hard not to hurt each other's feelings while also trying to make each other understand where they come from and how they live or want to live their lives.

One of the most interesting activities this year was a press conference the delegations organised to answer provocative questions and defend the positions of their group. This required not only a decent level of English vocabulary but also a great deal of understanding of the relevant register they were supposed to use to express their opinions clearly in a non-confrontational style. This is where we, English teachers had to help them a lot as this kind of task is something they rarely encounter during their English studies in school.

What are the objectives of the Peace Camp and what sort of effects does / can it have?

The camp aims to help students process the emotional burden of all the tension that comes from prejudice, discrimination, past and present conflicts, societal expectations, cultural and religious differences. It heavily focuses on how participants **feel** and how they can talk about those feelings with their peers who see things from totally different perspectives. It also gives them tools to think outside the box, reconnect with their bodies and to meet like-minded individuals who are also trying to make the world a more peaceful place.



Students taking part in an art-workshop at PeaceCamp 2019

It sounds so worthwhile and interesting. What are your future plans related to PeaceCamp - or/and anything else connected with GISIG?

I hope I will have the privilege to remain the Hungarian coordinator of the PeaceCamp project for the years to come. I am also hoping to organise something similar in my country since students and parents seem to be interested in such projects, despite the xenophobic attitude of our current government. I am also in contact with the other coordinators in Israel and Austria and we are all eager to keep the project alive as long as we can. Although we all invest a lot of time and energy into it, every year the project, or rather the pupils, prove that we are indeed changing the world, one PeaceCamp at a time.

For more information on the project please visit peacecamp.net

Additional Resources:

- PeaceCamp 2019 - Becoming an Ambassador of Peace
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjK-BM61i5k>
- PeaceCamp 2019 show4peace in Vienna:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lryu3hpSLho>
- Greeting from Alexander Van der Belle, the President of Austria
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMW-6MdKIu4>
- PeaceCamp on social media:
<https://www.facebook.com/verein4peace/>