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# neunerhaus Peer Campus

neunerhaus has worked since 2018 together with the Vienna Social Fund (FSW) on a peer project in Vienna's homelessness support services. The neunerhaus Peer Campus has three key components:

- Certificate course and further training: Peer certification course, with seven modules, an internship and final project. Application for the course is open to people who have previously experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness. Graduates of the course have access to further training opportunities.
- On the job support: once Peers have qualified and have paid roles in homelessness services, the Peer Campus offers forums and opportunities for further training. It also supports organisations employing Peers. The Peer Campus is a hub for graduates of the course.
- Think tank: the Peer Campus also offers space to anyone interested in peer work to come to events and forums to learn more and share experiences.



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# What is a Peer?

"People who have been confronted with specific situations in life, who have lived through them, suffered through them and overcome them, offer support to other people in similar situations."

Utschakowski, Jörg (2016): Peer-Support: Gründe, Wirkungen, Herausforderungen. In: Utschakowski, Jörg / Sielaff, Gyöngyvér / Bock, Thomas / Winter, Andréa (Hg.): Experten aus Erfahrung. Peerarbeit in der Psychiatrie. Köln: Psychiatrie Verlag. 15

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# The impact of Peers in homelessness support services

Using their reflected experience and expertise, Peers have an impact on the provision of homelessness support services on three different levels:

- Individuals using homelessness services

Offer low-threshold opportunities for contact and connection, (emotional) support and accompaniment, reflective exchange, support for individuals using homelessness services in (re)establishing networks, mediation and support for participation.

- In the team and wider organisation

Can work cooperatively/in tandem with others in the team, take on a „translator“ function, widen the perspective of the team through their own experience and expertise, quality control

- In their surroundings and with cooperation partners

Support inclusion work, conveying the perspective of people affected by homelessness from their own experience.

# neunerhaus Peer Campus: certification course and further training

neunerhaus first developed a curriculum for a Peer certification course in 2018, following a pilot project focused on questions around meaningful participation and how the expertise of people with experience of homelessness could be incorporated in the system.

The first certification course started in 2019. The fifth course launched in autumn 2022 and the next course is already being planned for 2023. More detail on the content of the course will be given in the following slides.









Since autumn 2021, the Peer Campus has also started offering further training to graduates of the certification course to support the further development of skills in specific areas.

62 Peers have been trained to date, and around two thirds currently have paid roles in homelessness services in Vienna.

# Peer certification course: Application process

- Potential participants fill out an application form and write an accompanying letter of motivation.
- All applicants are invited to an information evening to clarify any open questions and explain the expectations of the course. Here they can register for the two application days that follow.
- On the first application day, there is a group selection process and on the second day, applicants have individual interviews.
- Observations from the two application days, together with the application form and letter of motivation, form the basis of the decision to accept people on the course.
- Applicants are informed by telephone of the decision.

# Peer Certification Course: Structure

Course	7 Modules – each module is 16 teaching units		Study diary	Own thoughts on the modules (16 units)	
Internship	Between module 3 and 7 course participants do an internship in one of Vienna's homelessness services (min. 127 units)		Exchange	Opportunity to reflect with the course leader (2 units)	
Study groups	Independent study and exchange with other participants between module 1 and 7 (54 units)		Internship reflections	At least 2 appointments (3 units) with members of the Peer Campus team	
Final project	A chance for creativity! Text, pictures, video, poster etc. (15 units)		Graduation	1 Day	

There is no fee to take part in the course – places are funded by the Vienna Social Fund (FSW). The course is also recognised by the Austrian Public Employment Service.

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# Peer certification course: Module overview

## Module 1: My route to becoming a Peer

Participants reflect on their own experience in homelessness services – what helped them and what stopped them moving forward? Learning about Peers and their role in homelessness services.

## Module 2: Alone or in a group – how do I communicate and how do others communicate?

Participants learn about the dynamics and frameworks of group and one:one settings. They reflect on their communication style and preferences, how to ask questions and encourage storytelling.

## Module 3: Diversity and society

Learning about diversity within society and within homelessness services, challenging own preconceptions. Introduction to human rights and reflection on themes around participation and empowerment.



# Peer certification course: Module overview

## Module 4: Interpersonal relationships and encounters

Reflecting on the differences between a peer-relationship and friendship and between professional and not professional settings. Discussion of themes around crisis, de-escalation and establishing boundaries.

## Module 5: Mental health and addiction

Participants learn about psychiatric diagnoses, mental health services and the recovery concept. Recognition of addiction as an illness and what complexities can lie behind a person's consumption. Reflection on any personal experience of these themes.

## Module 6: Encounters and communication

Learning about different communication techniques – active listening, body language, motivational interviewing. Reflecting on own professional development in peer role and recognition of own skills.

## Module 7: Becoming a Peer in homelessness services – the next step

Understanding the role of Peers and also what their role is not. Reflection on interdisciplinary working in teams and understanding the structures and terminology of the homelessness support system in Vienna.

# Further education for course graduates

Since autumn 2021, in addition to the certification course qualifying participants as Peers, there is now also a programme of further education opportunities for peers once they have graduated. Recent and planned topics include:

- Motivational Interviewing
- Overcoming digital exclusion for people experiencing homelessness
- The right to housing (in cooperation with Amnesty International)
- New methods of interdisciplinary work

# neunerhaus Peer Campus: Peers in work

The second element of the Peer Campus is support for Peers once they are in work. As a relatively new profession within homelessness services with a very specific set of experience and knowledge, specific support is needed.

The Peer Campus offers monthly meetings for Peers in work, an opportunity to discuss challenges and exchange learnings and ideas, supported by members of the Peer Campus team.

The Peer Campus also offers support to organisations employing Peers, or interested in peer work, so they can provide the most supportive work environment. There are 6 meetings a year for team leaders and HR leads in organisations employing Peers.

For organisations considering introducing Peers to their teams, the Peer Campus Team can visit and deliver free, tailor-made workshops to introduce teams to peer work.

# neunerhaus Peer Campus: Think tank on peer work

The third element is the Peer Campus think tank, encouraging exchange, discussion and networking between all those who are involved or interested in peer work in Vienna's homelessness services.

The think tank has three parts:

- 1) exPEERience, a conference that takes place every two years covering different aspects of peer work from multiple perspectives.
- 2) Peer Work Forum – a forum (currently online) for anyone interested in peer work. Guest speakers are invited to share their experience or expertise around peer work and there is time for discussion and questions among participants.
- 3) Peer Work Working Group – originally founded to develop the curriculum for the certification course, this group now meets to reflect on discuss the future direction and developments around peer work.

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