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BRIEF 6

NEUNERHAUS PEER CAMPUS
neunerhaus

Vienna, Austria

WILLKOMMEN
am PEER

CAMPUS

ID CARD



Vienna, Austria

POLICY TITLE.

neunerhaus Peer Campus

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

To train people with experience of homelessness to become peer workers in interdisciplinary teams in homelessness services, and to support the further professional development of peer work in Vienna.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People with lived experience of homelessness, organisations employing peer workers, and professionals in the homelessness sector.

IN NUMBERS.

118

individuals have graduated from the peer certification course since 2019.

75

peer workers employed in homelessness services in Vienna.

€500k

Approx. annual budget funded by the Vienna Social Fund (FSW).

SUMMARY.

The neunerhaus Peer Campus provides free, certified training for people with experience of homelessness to become peer workers. It supports their integration as employees in interdisciplinary teams in homelessness services, offers professional development through networking and further training opportunities, and supports organisations employing peer workers. By organising workshops, networking events, and strategic collaborations, the Peer Campus enhances the impact of peer work in homelessness services, both in Vienna and beyond.

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Project description

Developing Peer Work as a Profession

Since 2017, neunerhaus has worked to embed peer work within Vienna's homelessness sector. In collaboration with the Vienna Social Fund (FSW) from the City of Vienna and other social organisations, it developed a 7-month peer certification course. The programme includes seven modules, an internship, and a final project. In addition to the modules, further settings and formats help participants deepen their skills and prepare for both peer work and entry into the primary labour market. Course participants reflect on their lived experience and transform this into professional expertise. The course is free for participants. Graduates are then employed in interdisciplinary teams, adding unique value alongside social work and other expertise.

Supporting Peer Workers and Organisations

The Peer Campus supports the ongoing professional development of peer workers, through specialised training, networking sessions, and advisory services for peer workers and employers. Workshops help organisations integrate peer workers into their teams and services effectively. Regular forums and the biennial "exPEERience" conference facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices. Annually, the Peer Campus has around 400 interactions with peer workers and other professionals, demonstrating the growing impact of peer work in homelessness services.

Stable Funding and Strategic Partnerships

The initiative is primarily funded by the FSW. This stability enables the Peer Campus to expand its activities, including research collaborations and knowledge sharing. A key milestone was the 2023 publication of "PEER we are!", a German-language resource on peer work in homelessness services. Ongoing evaluations and feedback from graduates and employers guide programme development, ensuring lasting impact. The strong cooperation with funders and stakeholders provides a solid foundation for growth and sustainability.

TIMELINE

2017-2019

Initial development of peer work with the FSW and partner organisations.

2019

Pilot of the first peer certification course.

2019

Peer work integrated into the FSW's homelessness sector strategy.

2020

First "exPEERience" conference on peer work in Vienna.

2023

Publication of "PEER we are!", a guide to peer work in the sector.

2025

Upcoming EPOCH Practice training in collaboration with the FSW in Vienna.

Inspiration note

Peer Work as a Transformative Force

By supporting the integration of peer workers into interdisciplinary teams, the Peer Campus contributes to a transformation in the culture of homelessness services. Peer workers apply their lived expertise to break barriers between service users and providers, foster trust, and improve service delivery through their unique perspectives and relationship-building. Their presence challenges traditional hierarchies in social services, fostering a more inclusive and human-centred approach to support. This shift ensures that the perspectives of those with lived experience remain at the core of service design and delivery.

A Systemic Approach to Peer Work

Unlike one-off training schemes, the Peer Campus ensures long-term success by providing continuous professional development, networking opportunities, and organisational support. Peer workers receive structured training and post-certification mentoring, while organisations benefit from expert guidance and support on employing peer workers. This dual approach strengthens the entire homelessness support ecosystem, leading to improved collaboration, enhanced services, and better outcomes for both professionals and service users.

Institutional Recognition and Sustainable Growth

The Peer Campus has successfully positioned peer work as a recognised and funded career path within Vienna's homelessness sector. With strategic partnerships, ongoing research, and policy integration, it serves as a model for cities looking to embed peer work into their homelessness response strategies. The initiative demonstrates that meaningful participation of people with lived experience in service provision not only benefits individuals but also leads to systemic improvements. By fostering a structured and sustainable approach, the Peer Campus paves the way for peer work to be acknowledged as a core element of effective homelessness interventions.



Martinho Dias
Peer worker at CRESCER, Portugal

The neunerhaus Peer Campus in Vienna is a pioneering initiative that empowers individuals with lived experience of homelessness by training them as Peer Workers. Through a structured seven-month certification programme, participants transform personal challenges into professional expertise, offering invaluable support to those currently facing housing insecurity. This approach not only enriches social services with authentic insights but also fosters employment opportunities.

By integrating Peer Workers into multidisciplinary teams, Neunerhaus promotes a more empathetic and effective response to homelessness, setting a compelling example of participatory practices in social care.