

Workcamps are "an important learning field for democracy and International Cooperation".

Photo competition for the 100th anniversary of this peace work - Great Anniversary celebration not possible because of Corona

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For 100 years young people from all over the world have been coming together in workcamps, working together on a project, getting to know each other and doing important peace work. A great anniversary. But the big celebration in Berlin had to fall victim to the Corona pandemic, but the award ceremony of a photo competition for the anniversary took place. Online, but still full of enthusiasm for important civil society work by young people.

"The work camps, with their encounters in international groups, their civil society and charitable commitment, and the way they deal with current developments and problems, are an important contribution to peace, international understanding and solidarity," said Albert Klein-Reinhardt, Head of European and International Youth Policy at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, in recognition of the work of the work camps.

Two years after the end of the terrible murder in World War I, the first work camp would have been in a small village near Verdun. "It was a courageous experiment in reconciliation," said Albert Klein-Reinhardt. From it a large civilian-social movement would have developed, in which young people received important impulses for their further personal work. "Young people formulate their own ideas and interests here, each work camp is a UN in miniature, a learning field for democracy and international cooperation," the representative of the Federal Ministry for Youth made clear.

But peace and friendship would not be inherited, they would have to be worked on again and again, Albert Klein-Reinhardt is convinced. And in the face of new challenges such as racism, nationalism, populism and growing hatred of those who think differently, but also environmental destruction and climate change, the work of the workcamps, international youth encounters and civil society involvement are more important than ever, he emphatically adds.

The Corona pandemic is a great burden for the Workcamps, Albert Klein-Reinhardt also makes clear. "Meetings are cancelled, young people have to return to their home countries or cannot leave the country. For the carriers the Pandemie means also a large financial challenge, so the adviser in the youth ministry. But in view of the current developments, it is important that this international cooperation is maintained.

Albert Klein-Reinhardt was pleased to see how lively, how varied, how colorful the work in the work camps is, however, as the pictures submitted as part of the photo competition for the anniversary show. "They document in an exemplary and impressive way how this international youth work moves the world," he is convinced.

The first prize was awarded to Ulrike Jäger from the Protestant youth region of Bünde-Ost with the photo "Maria Sinkewitsch during construction work in Belarus 2019". For 17 years, young people

have been going to Belarus during the summer vacations, where they renovate dilapidated houses of elderly people in the countryside together with local youth. And in this way, they are doing important work for reconciliation and peace.

Jonas Wölfle took second place with the picture "Feierabend im botswanischen Workcamp-Building Community 2019". Third prize was awarded to Anja Brose with the picture "Teichbau 2016 im Kiez Hölzerner See" in the Dahme-Heideseen Nature Park near Berlin. The photo by Christine Schilling took fourth place "Artistic design of the hobby stall in 2011" in the Hölzerner See district. In fifth place was the painting "Weltkuchen" by Pablo Alejo, which shows a Black Forest cake made by locals in Schenkenzell in the Black Forest was baked for the work camp participants. And finally the picture "Workcamp with deaf children in Nepal - youngest student still without Names" by Markus Zieringer.

"For more than 100 years, workcamps have been an important field of development for young people," says Monika Volte from the Trägerkonferenz der internationalen Jugendgemeinschafts- und Jugendsozialdienste. This is a special format of international youth work. In Germany alone, more than 300,000 hours of charitable work are performed by volunteers from all over the world. "This figure alone shows the dimension of the work camps," said Monika Volte.

The sponsors' conference would like to thank the German Federal Ministry for Youth and the Baden-Württemberg Youth Foundation for their support for this photo competition and also the jury for selecting the winning photos. "These photos show authentically and emotionally what work camps are all about," says Monika Volte.

However, the Corona pandemic posed existential challenges for the work camps, she said. Even if new formats for youth encounters were to be created now through online conferences, this would not replace personal encounters. Therefore, the sponsor conference hopes that the work of the work camps will continue to be supported and promoted, Monika Volte made clear.

"The goal of our work is as relevant as it was 100 years ago. It is about more understanding and peace in world," she stressed.

The photos can also be found on the Workcamps' homepage: www.workcamps.de

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