

UPF Upper Austria: Austrians & Germans Join *Pure Water, Pure Air* Forum and Hike

Maria Pammer
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Bavaria, Germany – Peace activists from Germany and Austria met at the Dreisessel mountain inn on September 21, 2025 – the International Day of Peace – for an interfaith breakfast featuring a typical Bavarian dish, weisswurst, or white sausage. This was followed by a forum on the theme “Pure water, pure air, pure thoughts and feelings.”



The event was initiated by **Ms. Maria Pammer** of UPF-Upper Austria and **Mayor Michael Leitner** of

the municipality of Schwarzenberg. This is the fifth year that a Peace Road event has been organized here on the border between Czechia, Germany and Austria. Thirty-five years ago, the Iron Curtain that divided Europe ran through here. In 2024, this 3.2 kilometer hiking trail was officially signposted as the Peace Road.



Ms. Pammer welcomed those present and reminded them that the United Nations was founded 80 years ago and UPF 20 years ago, both initiatives for world peace. However, it seems that we are currently miles away from peace in the world.

Referencing the day’s theme, Ms. Pammer said that everyone longs for clean air and pure water, which were found in this wonderful natural environment. But the will to preserve this for future generations, she said, requires an inner change. Pure thoughts and feelings, including empathy and living for the sake of others, will lead to better treatment of nature.



Mr. Stefan Schmidt then opened the breakfast with a profound prayer, asking for divine presence and guidance.

Mr. Michael Leitner, mayor of the Austrian municipality of Schwarzenberg, which borders Czechia and Germany, emphasized that hiking and thinking go very well together. In the face of overwhelming floods of information, a night hike in this natural setting, where one can still see the Milky Way, affords space to think and listen to one’s inner voice, to filter out what is important and find one’s personal center.

Mr. Peter Haider, president of UPF-Austria, had travelled from Vienna. He reported on an event held two days earlier at the United Nations in Vienna to mark the International Day of Peace. He also recalled that 50 years ago, on August 1, 1975, the Helsinki Accords were signed, which called for the respect of human rights in the former communist countries of Europe.

Mr. Valerio Tammiso, who works with youth groups to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, said that pure water must flow – using this as a metaphor for young people to focus not on themselves, but to connect with others. He mentioned a student group he works with, called C.A.R.P., drawing a comparison with the fish called “carp,” which purifies the water. These young people can contribute to the purification of spiritual pollution with pure thoughts and feelings, he said. Through such activities as international football tournaments, sporting events like the Peace Cup in Prague a few weeks ago, workshops or even hiking trips, these young people can contribute to a better world in spirit, in truth and in action.



Mr. Oivind Haugen, who had just returned from his home country of Norway, pointed out that roads enrich culture, comparing the Peace Road to the ancient Silk Road. He distributed a scroll to all those present containing inspiring thoughts on a universal culture of heart.

Following the discussion, the Peace Road hike to the border triangle of Germany, Austria and Czechia began. The walk was used for good conversation and deep exchanges in beautiful natural surroundings. This hiking trail is popular with many long-distance hikers, but also with many families with children from the three countries.



Arriving at the border triangle, the group sang We Shall Overcome and the Song of Unity. Joined by a family who was inspired by the singing, they sang two more mountaineering songs in German. The conversations in the morning and the hike in the beautiful countryside filled all participants with renewed energy to invest in the pursuit of peace and community.