

danews



The Extracurricular Issue

Studying is one thing our students do quite well.

Now we invite you to find out what else is going on at the Academy



Dear Alumnae,
Dear Alumni,

Only a few days are left before we leave our offices for a while and embrace our families and beloved ones. Christmas Holidays are special for the Western World and this year the Christmas anthem "Silent Night, Holy Night" is being intonated for the 200th time, having made its way from Oberndorf in Salzburg out into the world.

A lovely Christmas concert was enjoyed by DA students and alumni alike during our annual "St Nicholas Party & Meet and Greet".

At the same time, this was the day when traditionally the ClubDA Board decides on four scholarships to be given to four students who have just started the academic year in fall.

This year's ClubDA Scholarship awardees are Mourad Chouaki, Sarah Ducelari, Konstantin Oedl and Lisa Reitbrecht. Portraits will be published in the Spring Edition of ClubDA News.

The year 2018 coming to an end, I want to thank all ClubDA members for their financial contribution to the Club and for the growing active participation in our worldwide chapter activities which happen to be at an all-time high – with 41 events.

Congratulations to our *alma mater* for having mastered a tremendous workload of workshops training Austrian civil servants to meet the manifold requirements of the EU Presidency. A series of trainings being entrusted to the Diplomatic Academy in a firm belief in its administrative competence and know-how. An EU Presidency that has been mastered with excellent diplomatic skills and great Austrian hospitality.

On behalf of the board of the ClubDA and myself, I wish you all a merry, merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Yours,



Oliver Kitz
ClubDA President

Inside this Issue

DA's Student Body 2018-19 <i>Introducing our active students for the current academic year</i>	3	Polemics @ ClubDA News <i>Ruben Hirsch on "Russia's Pension Reform: A Necessary Evil?"</i>	12
Meet our students' committees and societies <i>Find out what DASICON, TheBridge & Co. are planning for the 2018-19 academic year</i>	4	Recent alumni meetings <i>See which events DA, ClubDA and its local chapters organised over the past months</i>	14
Polemics @ ClubDA News <i>Michael Asiedu on "A new EU-Africa Trade Pact: A Partnership of Equals?"</i>	10	Event calendar / Imprint <i>Inviting you to join us at meetings in Vienna, Berlin and the annual Ski and SB Championships on Stuhleck</i>	16

DASICON 2019



Dear alumni,

The DASICON 2019 Team is more than happy to continue the tradition of a fully student-run conference. Coming from different educational backgrounds, cultures and nationalities, we are curious to explore this year's conference theme: GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: HOME WITHOUT BORDERS. We are all aware that the main challenges we are facing today transcend visible as well as invisible borders and are of a global nature: Within the ambit of DASICON 2019 we wish to explore how the idea of global citizenship can help us in finding innovative and global solutions to these global challenges.

This year DASICON is introducing an art fair, input talks and breakout sessions. The program will be focused on the following five areas and their link to the concept of Global Citizenship:

- Participation in Digital Democracies
- Change in Conflict Resolution
- Dynamics in Identities
- Innovation in Urban Life
- Disruption in Business

CALL FOR HELP: Unfortunately, also at DASICON there is no such thing as a 'free lunch'. We would therefore highly appreciate your help in putting us in contact with potential speakers and sponsors.

We are looking forward to welcoming you at DASICON 2019 on March 1st and 2nd.

We are also looking forward to your input, interest and questions:
info@dasicon.org.

Bar Committee

Metternich and Castlereagh would have been regulars in the Tipsy Weasel: As bar committee, we proudly keep the spirit of the Congress of Vienna alive – drinking, dancing, negotiating. We are purveyors of hope during term and regularly organize parties.

Limited Edition Tipsy Weasel Gin, Halloween drinks and Oktoberfest beer are some of the special drinks you'll only find at Favoritenstraße 15a.

In order to keep the Vienna spirit alive, we are in dire need of spirits. If you happen to be a winemaker or related to one, we would be more than grateful for sponsoring and promise advertisement and eternal gratefulness in return.

Yours,

Jack, Julia, Matthias and Max



Cultural Society

Vienna is known worldwide for its huge and wide-ranging cultural offer. People from all around the world come to the Austrian capital to visit some of the magnificent places like the imposing Opera, the various theatres, world-famous museums, etc.



The Cultural Society aims at combining the international environment of the DA together with the cultural offer of Vienna. We try to promote transcultural exchange and to create a space for dialogue and celebration of diversity.

By organizing joint visits to some of the many cultural offers, providing discounted tickets for some of the greatest balls or by simply giving an overview of events that take place in and nearby Vienna, we aim at bringing the international cultural offers closer to the DA community.



Some of our highlights so far included the Running Dinner, tickets to the Moscow Ball, a trip to Budapest, a movie night sponsored by the US embassy and the organization of the highly-demanded tickets for the IAEA Ball. Many other things are yet to come, like the Running Dinner 2.0, dance classes and an international cooking event.

We are happy to receive new input and/or funding possibilities. Thus, if you are interested in joining us or supporting the Cultural Society's activities, please contact Patricia Schedifka (patricia.schedifka@da-vienna.at). 

TheBridge

As students of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien and as future alumni we all understand that in our future we will have to deal with complex societal issues. The Academy has always been an institution which provides an intersection between different fields, being foremost a link between academics and diplomacy.

What has changed, however, are the issues we are confronted with: whether it is bureaucracy, or the rise of nationalistic politics, global climate change or the effect of social media on people's minds and people's views.

The idea behind *TheBridge* is to unwind the tangled complexity of modern society, and to go first-hand to places affected by political decisions and decision-makers.

In addition to our knowledge of different ideas, approaches and studies underlying political measures, we want to make ourselves aware of working structures and concrete issues which institutions have to deal with: whether it be the Austrian Unemployment Agency, the federal social insurance carrier, or a simple hospital.

Experience has shown, that the problems on the ground often completely differ from one's own perspective.



TheBridge members on a Shades Tour, learning about the phenomenon of homelessness in Vienna. Our tour guide Barbara, who has been homeless for the past years, gave us a new perspective on this difficult topic.

Since our interest intersects with groups in our society which are extremely marginalised, we intend to create a space through *TheBridge*, which allows us to move out of our habitual comfort zone and also challenges us to learn to talk about themes normally conceived as uncomfortable.

Next project on the agenda of *TheBridge*: Visiting a larger AMS office and gaining an insight into how the Austrian Unemployment Agency actually works.

We are always open to new ideas, contacts and participants:

Marlene Gerber (DLG, Head of *TheBridge*)
marlene.gerber@da-vienna.at

Anahita Tabrizi (DLG, Treasurer of *TheBridge*)
anahita.tabrizi@da-vienna.at

Debating Society

Ad aspera per astra! This is the motto we have chosen for the Debating Society this year. And indeed we have had the chance to organize three main events during the first trimester: a public speaking workshop, a bar debate and a debate in cooperation with Le Cercle.

PUBLIC SPEAKING WORKSHOP

This year we are partnering with public speaking coach Marvin Grünthal who is holding a workshop series for our students. The first workshop was held in November and we were happy to welcome over 15 participants. The workshop series will continue in the second and third trimester.



BAR DEBATE

The bar debate is a new format we have introduced this year: it is a debate in a rather informal setting taking place in our beloved bar, the Tippy Weasel. This format is designed to encourage students to practice their public speaking skills without directly having to face a large audience in the formal setting of the Festsaal. We will continue with the Bar Debates in 2019!



COOPERATION WITH LE CERCLE

In cooperation with Le Cercle we hosted the first 'Festsaal Debate' of the academic year. Participants debated in French on the topic of "L'UE – est elle une démocratie?". For the first time we introduced a question from our online audience, watching via live stream.

If you are interested in joining us or supporting our activities, please contact us via:

gloria.bozyigit@da-vienna.at

sebastian.bielowski@da-vienna.at

Society of International Security: Disarmament and Conflict Studies

Within the context of increasing global uncertainty and insecurity, it is ever more important to understand the root causes of conflicts and explore avenues for the peaceful resolutions of conflicts.

The Diplomatic Academy brings together engaged students, academics and practitioners with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

We at the Society of International Security (SIS)

wish to capitalize on this diversity in order to discuss topics related to current international security issues. We are eager to provide the framework for vivid dialogue through the organization of events, discussions, debates and simulations.

SIS has two thematic focuses: one is on conventional security and conflict study. This includes themes such as the protection of international minorities, R2P, refugees and IDPs, as well as geopolitical affairs. The second thematic focus is on nuclear security and non-proliferation. In particular, this branch of the society aims to build a stronger connection to the UN entities located in Vienna (e.g. IAEA, CTBTO).

Upcoming events are a visit to the OSCE Headquarters and a briefing at the Argentine Embassy on the non-proliferation architecture. Further ideas are simulations, round tables, panels, open discussions and lectures. We are eager to involve everybody who takes an interest in international security-related topics and would be especially happy about engagement of our alumni community. Please reach out to us if you have your own ideas or would like to become active in our society! 



Sports Committee

The Sports Committee, as the name implies, is responsible for all extra-curricular sporting activities in and around the DA. Rooted in the fact that team-building is a practical endeavour, our philosophy is that an active student body requires active students' bodies. We firmly believe that an active lifestyle not only promotes mental health and discipline, but also provides the best opportunity for students to relax and unwind, with the possible exception of a night in the Tippy Weasel.

Given the students' broad personal backgrounds, we have aspired to offer as many sports as possible. From basketball to volleyball, all the way to jogging groups, there's bound to be something for everyone within our committee. Seasonal events are also on offer! Each winter the Sports Committee organises an annual ski trip, and this year's team is additionally planning a summer hiking trip.

In addition, tournaments are regularly hosted for the competitive ones among the student body, while the more solitary athletes will find great pleasure in the regular swimming sessions or the gym available to DA students.

All levels of athletes are welcome within our teams, as are alumni. The only requirement is enthusiasm.



Sustainability Committee

"Think global, act local!"

The DA Sustainability Committee wants to raise awareness and further mainstream sustainability in creative, enjoyable and innovative ways.

This group serves the exchange of ideas and promotion of events and projects regarding the broad topic of sustainability. ☺

POLEMICS

Our first issue of POLEMICS for this academic year was released a few days ago—just in time for the upcoming holiday season. We are excited and proud of the hard work that has gone into this issue, which features 16 articles written by the students of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien. This year's editorial team is comprised of nearly 30 hardworking students who invest time and energy into writing, editing and designing three high-quality issues each year.



POLEMICS is a platform for journalism. Beyond that, it provides an indispensable learning opportunity for students who have the opportunity to acquire the skills needed for fact-based, innovative and creative coverage of stories happening around the globe.

As the magazine is funded entirely by voluntary contributions and advertisements, we look to the alumni community for much-needed support. If you are interested in having a print copy of the magazine delivered to your place of business,

please don't hesitate to contact us. You can also read and share our online articles, available at www.polemics-magazine.com. Secondly, you can support us financially and help us cover the printing costs by making a donation, sponsoring an issue or placing an ad in the magazine. Finally, we are always open to suggestions concerning new story angles or interesting interview partners.

Contact us at: polemics@da-vienna.at

Thank you for your support!

Wishing you an enjoyable read and a relaxing holiday season.

Paula Jahn, Editor-in-Chief

Jamie Bergin, Managing Editor

Jessica Yellow Hair, Creative Director 

A new EU-Africa Trade Pact: A Partnership of Equals?

By Michael Asiedu

In his most recent State of the Union speech, European Commission (EC) President Jean-Claude Juncker outlined the details of a new EU-Africa trade pact that would form part of a "partnership of equals." Describing Africa as Europe's twin continent, he added that the EU must view its relationship with Africa beyond the single prism of development aid, surprising Eurocrats who did not expect the Juncker Commission's interest in the continent to extend beyond migration.

Juncker's proposal would tie in with the African Union's "Africa Beyond Aid" agenda. However, considering current Chinese momentum in Africa, the statement of the EC president may be more reactionary in nature, rather than constituting a genuine attempt at a "partnership of equals" trade pact. While China seems to have clear cut goals in Africa, the EU seems to be playing catch up in terms of recent Chinese investments.

China's presence in Africa is expanding just as the EU's economic and political influence seems to be waning. According to the World Bank, China has passed the United States to become Africa's second largest trade partner, accounting for 16 percent of Africa's exports. It is fast on the heels of the EU which still leads with 30 percent of Africa's market share. China is also the source of 21 percent of Africa's imports. Meanwhile, only about 8 percent of the continent's imports in 2016 came from the EU.

According to the Brookings Center, President Xi Jinping has earmarked an additional \$60 billion in investments to Africa in the coming years, a figure independent of an earlier \$60 billion investment package in 2015. According to Debrah Brautigam, director of the China-Africa Research

Initiative at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Chinese banks, contractors and the government loaned more than \$86 billion to Africa between 2009 and 2014. In contrast, the EU Commission's External Investment Plan launched in 2016 only aims to direct around 44 billion Euro in public and private investments.

It is questionable why it took the EU Commission so long to come up with a "new partnership of equals" trade pact. Juncker's trade-pact offer is nothing new. There is a precedent in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) signed in June 2000. The CPA is a comprehensive partnership treaty signed between 15 EU member states and 70 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in Cotonou, Benin. The aim of the agreement was to establish a partnership around the three pillars of development, political and economic cooperation. This agreement has been the framework for EU's relations with ACP countries.

Despite the fundamental principle of the CPA being "equality of partners" in terms of trade with the EU, the agreement has not lived up to its ideals. First, African countries perceived the agreement as exploitative. Second, the agreement was intentionally misleading in terms of deadlines attached to its ratification. Third, African countries could already trade largely duty-free with the EU as "least favored nations" and it was felt by them that the agreement did not benefit them. Finally, only one regional

Photo: © Pixabay, unknown





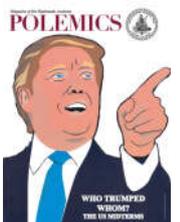
bloc, the six-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) actually ratified the CPA. Carlos Lopes, newly appointed African Union High Representative on post-Cotonou talks, noted that the agreement was badly negotiated and was far from being a “partnership of equals”.

As such, if the EU was serious in striking a new trade pact with African countries that would see the African continent get away from the development aid prism, as indicated by Juncker, it could choose to pursue succession negotiations with respect to the Cotonou agreement. For example, the EU could work out new details that would be favorable to both continents. To do so, time is of the essence as the CPA expires in 2020.

Africa, on the other hand, is pursuing its own landmark African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). It was signed by 49 countries since its launch in March 2018. This agreement could be a basis for a continent-to-continent EU-Africa trade pact should it become operational. In this situation, Africa would have options with competing trade

offers from China, the US, and the UK post-Brexit. In such a scenario, the African countries would not be bound to pursue a trade pact with the EU at all costs, which could prove detrimental to the EU. While a new deal would be in the interest of both parties, the EU cannot afford to take its time as it will only add to the onward erosion of its years of political and economic capital on the African continent - especially with China on the ascent. 

For several years, the DA's students have been successfully publishing “POLEMICS - Magazine of the Diplomatic Academy” which features articles on a broad variety of topics written by the students. Since 2016, we include Polemics articles in Club-DA News on a regular basis. To enjoy the current issue of Polemics in its entirety, please go to www.polemics-magazine.com.



Russia's Pension Reform: A Necessary Evil?

By Ruben Hirsch

On August 29, Vladimir Putin took the rare step of appearing on national television to address the Russian nation. In his speech, the president tried to convince his fellow citizens of the necessity of the government's planned pension reform. It appears unlikely, however, that Putin has managed to sway public opinion on the subject.

First announced in an understated fashion in the middle of June – coincidentally on the opening day of the FIFA World Cup – Putin's plan to raise the retirement age from 60 to 65 for men and 55 to 60 for women has been met with stiff opposition. Nine out of ten Russians are against the proposal. As a consequence, the president's approval ratings have been in sharp decline, recently hitting their lowest numbers in five years.

Despite widespread disapproval among ordinary Russians, the announced changes continue to be implemented. Why is Vladimir Putin willing to put his popularity on the line for these reforms? The answer is simple: to address the issue of demographic change in the country.

"Russia's population is expected to age significantly over the next few decades," states a report published by the World Bank in 2015.

The UN predicts that by 2050, one in five Russians will be older than 65.

Moreover, the country is on track to lose 11 million of its inhabitants in the next three decades, which could have a devastating impact on the domestic economy and the pension system. In the face of these projections, President Putin seems determined to push through "painful" changes in order to prepare Russia for the future.

Russia has been grappling with its demographic woes for a while, with problems first coming to the fore after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Starting in 1992, population numbers began to fall, with economic and political uncertainty sending the birth rate on a tailspin; in 1999, it reached its lowest level in modern history. Reversing these trends has been on Vladimir Putin's agenda since he came to power in 2000. First, a maternity capital program was introduced in 2007. Under the scheme, mothers are entitled to a lump sum payment for each consecutive child

they have. In addition, alcohol sales and advertising were restricted in a move to tackle the high mortality rate among Russian men. Over time, the adopted policies seemed to bear their fruits: an increase in births and male life expectancy as well as immigration gradually led to a reversal of the demographic downward spiral. In 2013, the birth rate exceeded the death rate for the first time in over 20 years.

This encouraging trend, however, has recently stalled. Last year, Russia's birth rate hit a 10-year low, and the population is shrinking once more. There are signs that worse times are ahead. A growing share of women in their childbearing age are part of the generation born after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The number of children born in the coming decades will therefore be smaller than in the past. Nevertheless, the president and his government are still determined to win the demographic battle Russia is waging. In 2017, the creation of a financial assistance programme targeted at poorer families as well as an extension of the maternity capital program were announced.

In spite of these efforts, the question remains: what the consequences will be if the current attempts to reverse the demographic decline do not succeed. One sector that is already being affected is the economy. With the country's working age population poised to shrink by 14 percent by 2050, businesses are increasingly facing the threat of a skilled labour shortage. Already, there have been reports of companies struggling to hire qualified personnel. Promoting labour immigration, increasing productivity and retraining older workers have been proposed as possible solutions to the problem, but it remains to be seen if these initiatives are enough to remedy the situation. What is more, with less and less people available to consume goods and services, a declining population could deal a heavy



Photo: © V. Martin

blow to Russia's internal market and stifle future GDP growth.

Pensions are another matter of concern. The pension system is under increasing strain as the number of people of working age is falling and a growing number of Russians are reaching retirement age. Every year, a considerable amount of the state budget is spent to make up the difference between individual contributions and pension payments.

Eventually, these involuntary budget allocations, together with increased healthcare spending, could lead to higher deficits and eventually to higher public debt levels. The World Bank warns of a debt-to-GDP ratio of "over 100 percent by 2050."

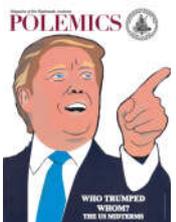
Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that President Putin has qualified the planned pension reform as essential.

"It's core idea and purpose is to ensure sustainability and financial stability of the pension system for the many years to come," Putin said during the televised address in August of this year.

The progressive ageing and decline of its population constitute a challenge for Russia that should not be underestimated. If not handled appropriately, the looming population crisis could have a serious impact on the country for decades to come. The issue of demographic change has become top priority and is being taken very seriously inside the Kremlin.

Russia's current Minister of Economic Development, Maksim Oreshkin, has described the country's demographic situation as "one of the most difficult in the world." 

For several years, the DA's students have been successfully publishing "POLEMICS - Magazine of the Diplomatic Academy" which features articles on a broad variety of topics written by the students. Since 2016, we include Polemics articles in Club-



DA News on a regular basis. To enjoy the current issue of

Polemics in its entirety, please go to

www.polemics-magazine.com.

Recent alumni meetings

The Diplomatische Akademie Wien and ClubDA would like to thank all chapter presidents, the Diplomatic Academy Students Initiative (DASI) and all other alumni, students and partners who made the events mentioned on this page possible.

In addition, we are proud to announce that a record-setting 41 alumni and student gatherings have been organised by the DA's Development Department and ClubDA in 2018.

"Faszination Japan" @ Bank Austria Kunstforum

20 November 2018

Twenty alumni and students enjoyed a guided tour of the Kunstforum's current exhibition featuring works of art by Monet, Van Gogh and Klimt.



Photos: DA/Andreas Ehrmann

Austrian Alumni Reception in Istanbul

4 December 2018

ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Istanbul invited all alumni and Erasmus students from Austrian universities and Universities of Applied Sciences living in Turkey to this Networking Cocktail with representatives from Austrian subsidiaries in Turkey.



Photo: Romana Königsbrun

7th Alumni-Stammtisch in Brussels

30 November 2018

For the last Brussels Stammtisch in 2018, DA alumni gathered at The Funky Monkey in the heart of the city's European Quarter.



Foto: Alenka Jaschke

Alumni Meeting in London

7 December 2018

Thanks to SPIS alumna Judith Mitterlechner for having revived the Club's London Chapter by organising this meeting at Café Murano.

10th St Nicholas Party & Meet and Greet

7 December 2018

For more information see the article on page 15.

Holiday Meet-Up in Chicago

15 December 2018

St Nicholas Party & Meet and Greet

One of ClubDA's main goals is to maintain a link between the Academy and its graduates. Another is to give support to DA students. For 10 years now, ClubDA has been combining these goals by organising a meeting of ClubDA members and the DA's new students.

With this, we want to encourage DA graduates and students alike to get to know each other, and help to increase the ever-growing worldwide DA network.

Photos: DA/Andreas Ehrmann



We thank the members of our students' Bar Committee for their great support and the DA Choir for kicking off the meeting with some wonderful Christmas melodies!



Please visit <https://club.da-vienna.ac.at> to see additional photos of recent meetings and find out more about upcoming events.

On the calendar ...



- 20 December 2018** **8th Alumni-Stammtisch in Vienna**
Meet us for some punch at the Altwiener Christkindlmarkt
- 9 January 2019** **Alumni Meeting in Berlin**
Join the Berlin Chapter for lunch at the Bundestag
- 27 January 2019** **17th DA Ski and Snowboard Championships**
Compete in the Giant Slalom to become the next Student or Alumni Champion or just enjoy a great day at Stuhleck
- 2 February 2019** **Charity Ball at the Diplomatische Akademie Wien**
- 1-2 Mar 2019** **DASICON 2019**
- 30 May - 1 June 2019** **12th ClubDA Outdoor Weekend**
The venue will be announced early next year
- 28-29 June 2019** **21st International Alumni Meeting**
28 June: ClubDA General Assembly, DA Sommerfest
29 June: Excursion (venue will be announced soon)

For exact dates, more details and information on additional events please check out our online event calendar at <https://club.da-vienna.ac.at/Events> or log in to our networking platform at <http://connect.da-vienna.ac.at>.

Imprint

- Publisher:** Club der Absolventinnen und Absolventen der Diplomatischen Akademie Wien (ClubDA, ZVR: 737329369)
Oliver Kitz, Präsident
Favoritenstraße 15a, 1040 Wien, Österreich
- Editor-in-chief:** Andreas Ehrmann
- Editorial team:** Katharina Dück, Martina Sebastian, Olga Shen
- Design:** Andreas Ehrmann

All pictures and articles are copyrighted to their respective owners and contributed to ClubDA for non-commercial use. Opinions and views voiced herein are not and should not be read as the views of the DA or ClubDA.