



NEWS BULLETIN

FROM THE SERVAS INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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---- EDITORIAL ----

A FLEXIBLE AND CLIMATE-SMART PEACE EXPERIENCE

by Jonny Sägänger, SI President

Let's face it – both the effects of the horrendous new coronavirus Sars-CoV-2 and the need for us – the world's population – to do whatever we can to decrease the effects of climate change is challenging Servas to its fundment.

The covid-19 pandemic is putting heavy restrictions on movement and our growing awareness of the negative ecological impact of travels are both factors that make the core business of Servas – the overnight homestays – less attractive.

However, both historic and recent developments shows that there are good reasons to believe that our organisation will prevail, in one or another shape: Besides the practical arrangement of homestays, which is fantastic source of unique and rewarding

interpersonal experiences, we're also aligned with each other in a networking arrangement based on strong bonds of shared values and a wish to contribute to a more peaceful coexistence between people.

The shared values are expressed in the vision and a mission which is stated in Servas International's statutes. Click [HERE](#) to download.

The aim of networking is to create conditions for exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge that promote tolerance and understanding between the peoples of the world. The overarching and long-term vision of Servas International is a more peaceful world and the mission is to contribute to the progress towards this goal.

As a member, you are part of a person-to-person network in over 100 countries, promoting peace one conversation at a time. Servas USA illustrated the message with this short story:

The Bulgarian Servas host looked down at her cup of tea and the pistachio-bedecked pastry at its side. Then she looked up at her guests, Servas travelers from the USA, as she made her confession.

"I grew up hating Turks. My parents, my teachers, my friends— everyone told me to hate them. After all, they had oppressed our country for years." She paused to take a sip of the sweet tea and her lips puckered at the bitterness of the memory. "But I had never actually met a Turk until I joined Servas. And then I discovered something:

Turks are people, just like you and me. Servas brought us together."

In this issue of SI News Bulletin you can read about virtual travels and some of the other novel activities that are going on among Servas members to make it possible to connect and learn from each other in times of physical distancing and needs to decrease traditional travelling.

SERVAS — A CLIMATE SMART ALTERNATIVE

A report produced by academic researchers at the Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden reports that overnight stays in private people's homes generally put much less of a burden on the environment than staying at a hotel or other comparable alternatives.

The researchers list accommodation at "relatives and friends" in a category labelled "carbon neutral". Accommodation in motorhomes and caravans, tents, night trains or ferry cabins also in this category. The "carbon neutral" label means emissions from these kinds of accommodation are negligible and assigned as 0 kilos per guest, per night.

Accommodation in hotels labelled "average climate impact" and "lower climate impact", produce between 45 kilos and 1.7 kilos of CO2 per guest night.

You can download the report [HERE](#). (Information about homestays is on pages 17–19.)

The Servas International Ethical Travel (SIETT) report can be dowloaded [HERE](#).

SERVAS ADAPTS TO THE TIMES *by Carla Kristensen, SI Vice President & Jonny Sågänger, SI President*

The Servas core activity – hospitality with homestay – will most probably dramatically shrink during 2020, as travel almost comes to a stop because of Covid-19 restrictions, and people using common sense. Other traditional Servas activities have also been postponed.

Since many Servas members live by mottos like "Nothing stops Servas", "Servas doesn't cancel – we adapt to the times" the organisation's communication and collaboration on web-based platforms are mushrooming.

Here are some ideas people have come up with:

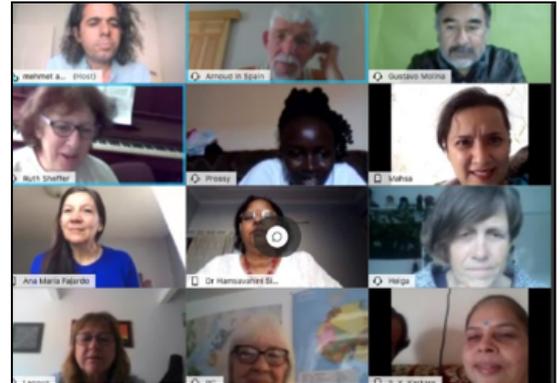
SoliChat – Solidarity Chat



Servas SoliChat (Solidarity Chat) was organised by Mehmet Ates, Servas Turkey Peace Secretary, to talk about the Covid-19 experience in each country.

In Mehmet's own words: *"these SoliChats help us feel that we are not alone, and solidarity now is more important than ever; to see the situation in different countries at the first hand; exchange good practice and new experiences during lockdown; see again the gap between poor and rich people and how they suffer differently; realise that we need to reconsider travelling through Servas, focussing on more humanity and helping 'others'; understand that we all need more meetings like this ..."*

SoliChat is done on a Facebook private group Servas International.



Servas Turkey Peace Secretary Mehmet Ates (upper left corner) organised Servas SoliChat (Solidarity Chat)

Servas Britain Virtual Board Meetings

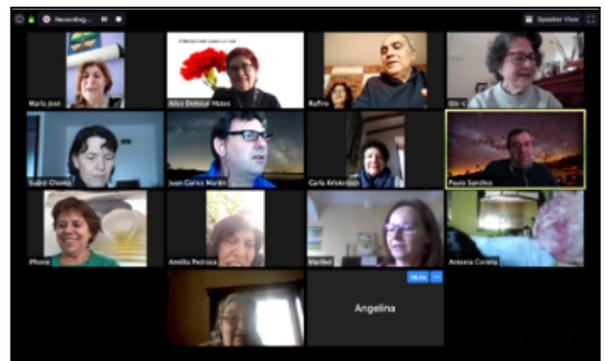
The Servas Britain Management Committee is now holding regular Zoom meetings. The Servas Britain Annual General Meeting (AGM) will also be on Zoom.

Servas Ireland is also hoping to have their AGM on Zoom. Other countries are planning to follow suit.



Portugal-Spain Meeting

On April 25 around 16 members from Portugal and Spain met on Zoom. They talked about the situation during lockdown in both countries and about celebrating freedom. They celebrated freedom by singing two songs. Grândola, Vila Morena is a symbol of the Portuguese revolution on April 25 1974 and opposition to the dictatorship. Resistiré has become a popular anthem in Spain for the struggle against the pandemic. Every evening Spanish people sing it from their homes and balconies.



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Colombian “Letter of Introduction” Radio Programme

Servas Colombia is organizing a radio programme called Carta Viajera (Letter of Introduction, LOI), connecting travels, culture and technology, every 15 days. It is presented in Spanish by three Servas members, on Mondays at 11am (Colombian time). The next date : July 6.

- servas.org/es/news/programa-radial-de-servas-colombia
- encuentroradio.co/

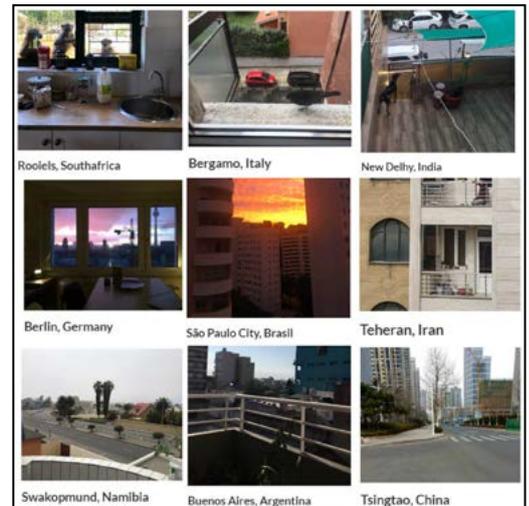
On encuentroradio.co Servas Colombia is organizing a radio programme called Carta Viajera (Letter of Introduction).

”From My Window”



Servas Italy member Ralf Becker has created an off-line album inviting friends to send pictures with the theme '**From My Window**'. “Every day we see the same view from our houses, closed indoors because of the coronavirus. It's a different way of showing Servas hospitality, by letting others see what you see from your windows.”

For the complete collection of photos, visit facebook.com/groups/842552709554598/about/ and their blog frommywindow.blog/



Meditation and Breathing Exercises

Usha Nenwani, the only Servas member in Bahrain, invites Servas members to join her free *vibangam* meditation and breathing exercises sessions on Zoom. So far, she has been joined by members from Taiwan, USA, Turkey, Poland and Spain. Originating in India, *vibangam* is an ancient technique of controlling the mind and moving beyond it. It's known to help increase restful alertness, emotional stability, a calmer mind, lower heart rate and blood pressure, an increase in creative decision power, and elimination of anxiety and depression.

Usha's sessions before the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone indoors.



Korean Food and Culture

On YouTube, Yunja (Julia) Choi, from Servas Korea explains how to cook healthy, delicious Korean dishes and at the same time get an insight into Korean culture. She has had a lot of positive feedback from other countries, from Servas members who make her recipes and take pictures of them.

More on servas.org/en/news/julia-korean-food and youtube.com/watch?v=nqT-HpaRVg



Yunja (Julia) Choi presents fried rice

VIRTUAL TRAVEL INITIATIVE

In today's world, with so many ways to connect with others online, we do not have to get in a train or a plane to meet other Servas members.

Inspired by limits to in-person travel brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, Servas International launched its Virtual Travel Initiative. Members are encouraged to reach out and connect through Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, or any other medium that works for them.

Servas is a community of thousands of friendly, curious and peace-loving members across the globe.

Check out the list of members. Pick a random point on the map. See who is out there. Send an email or a chat message. (You can find the different ways of contacting people on their online profile.) Tell the person a bit about yourself and see if they would be interested to meet online. Explain what prompted you to get in touch with them specifically. A common interest? A friendly smile? You are curious about happenings in their part of the world? Do refer them to your online profile, and if they haven't heard of the Virtual Travel Initiative, refer them to this page!

A few guidelines:

- Please do not send out mass emails. Do as you would if you were travelling in person. Make it personal.
- If you are organizing a group meeting, for privacy reasons, please restrict it to Servas members. When sending out information about the meeting, please enter participants' email addresses in "bcc".

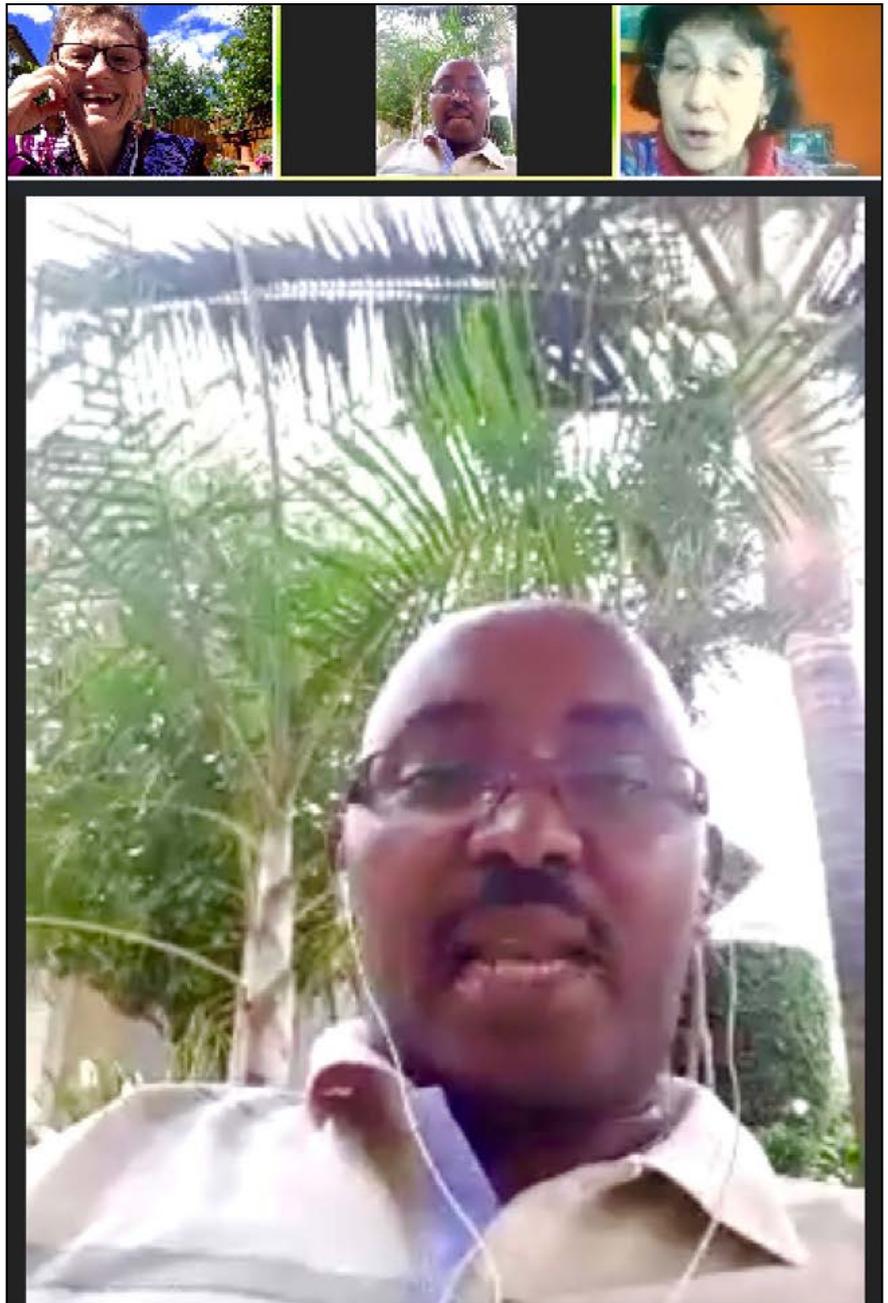
If you would like to post a general invitation to meet up with other members, there is a private Facebook

group that you can join. For more information on how to be admitted to that, please email servas.virtualtravel@gmail.com

Whatever way you choose to travel, Servas welcomes you!

Deborah Parkes, Coordinator Servas International Virtual Travel Initiative

Member of Servas Canada



A Servas member from Canada (far left) introduces a Servas member she stayed with in Portugal (far right) to a Servas member from Rwanda that she recently met virtually.
Large photo: The Servas Rwanda member. Photo: Deborah Parkes

EXPLOSION OF ONLINE SERVAS ACTIVITIES

There's been an explosion of new online activities in the Servas global community during the past couple of months, mainly as a result of the covid-19-pandemic pressure for lockdown and confinement.

Here are some of the most recent examples.

ORIGAMI WORKSHOP

We have started to bring children of world together today. Trial meeting with children from different countries and volunteers was to learn and share. The workshop (Origami) presenter was a Servas Italian child, Valerio.



SERVAS RWANDA-BRITAIN MEETING

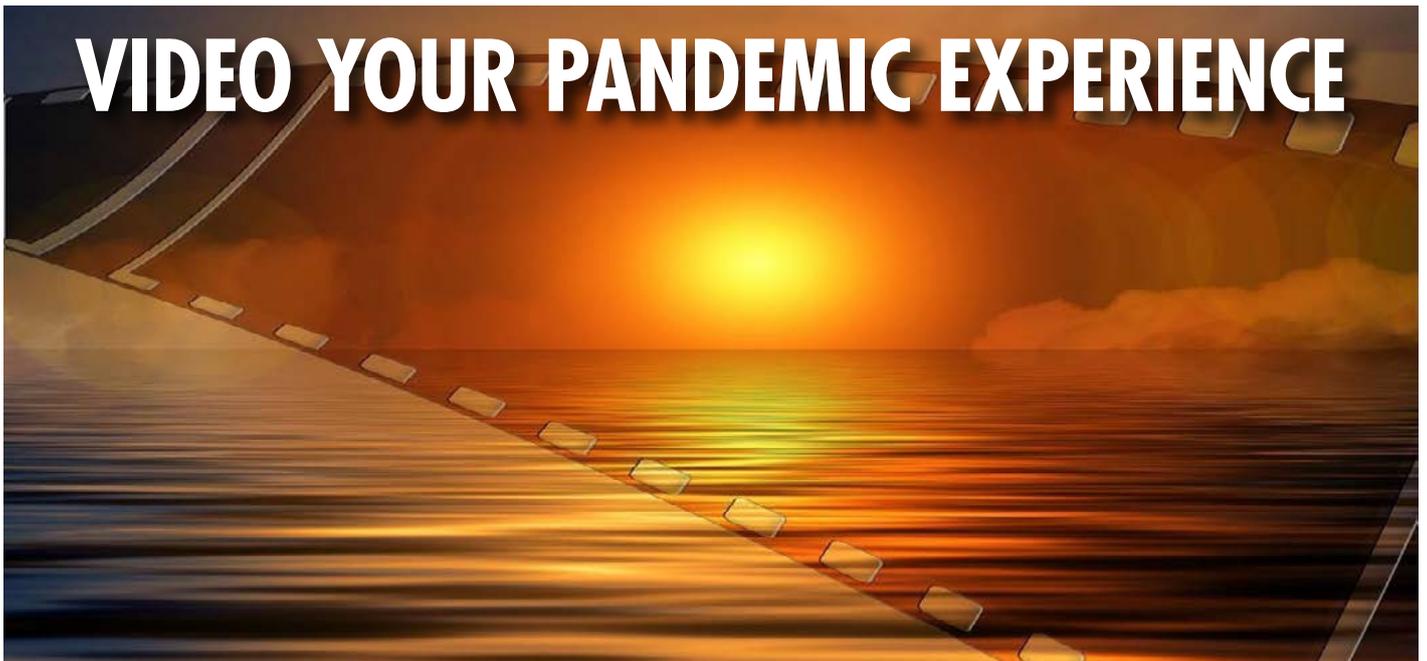
Servas Britain and Servas Rwanda on a Zoom meeting 27th June, 2020.

SERVAS PEACE SCHOOL-ONLINE

Servas Peace School-Online is between 02-20 July 2020.

There will be many local and international volunteers who will hold workshops. Children of Servas people can join the online workshops.





Jean-Luc Turlure, Mehmet Ates, and the Servas Artists team are creating an artwork from your short videos. The idea is to capture the feelings of Servas members around the world during this time of historical pandemic and confinement. Why not join other Servas members across the globe in creating an emotional collection of video art during this extraordinary time?

SERVAS ARTISTS

Project:

To collect short videos about the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on Servas members around the world.

Theme:

Confinement: The Lived Pandemic

We are living through historical moments, full of hope and fear. Share with us an expression of your joys, sorrows and laughter during this extraordinary time.

You should include:

- A short one-minute video (maximum duration 1 minute) •
-a team member will manage the editing.-
- Your name • Your Servas National group • Your email address •

----- **Send videos by:** July 15 2020 -----

By E-mail: Jean-Luc Turlure, Servas France artists@servas.org and turlure@gmail.com

By 'WeTransfer' (it's free): wetransfer.com

----- **SOME TIPS:** -----

- Hold the camera or smartphone horizontally, not vertically • Speak clearly •
- Record the video in good light (preferably daylight) • Include English subtitles if necessary •

Project Coordinators: Mehmet Ates and Jean-Luc Turlure

Feel free to contact us with any questions or comments at artists@servas.org or turlure@gmail.com

SI EXCO MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The minutes from the SI Exco meetings on June 14 and May 24 were published on servas.org the next day, June 15 and May 25. The post was labelled "Instant SI Exco minutes".

This was a new speed record and an important step towards increased transparency in the work of SI Exco.

Some highlights from the two most recent SI Exco meetings:

JUNE 14 SI EXCO MEETING:

- SI Exco will start preparing a motion for the next DV with the aim to
 - a) To postpone SI General Assembly for 1 year to 2022 in view of the current pandemic.
 - b) Request that the current mandate of SI Exco members will be extended to 2022
 - c) If physical travel is still not possible in 2022 due to the coronavirus pandemic, an electronic meeting will be convened.
- SI President Jonny Sågänger, SI Treasurer Radha B. Radhakrishna and SI General Secretary Ki at Y Tan will work on the motion with deadline July 19 2020.
- Kiat Y Tan, Jonny Sågänger, Radha B. Radhakrishna and SI Vice President Carla Kristensen will work on the existing SI General Assembly budget form to be sent to potential hosting countries. Deadline July 5 2020
- For complete minutes of the June 14, please go to https://servas.org/sites/default/files/uploads/minutes/2020/si_minutes_2020-6-14.pdf

MAY 24 SI EXCO MEETING:

- SI Exco is planning to use web-based co-working tools Confluence and JIRA for managing decisions and projects. Confluence is also available for members of committees and teams. Nextcloud software will be used as the primary storage area for SI Exco members documents.
- The text and photo material for the SI Annual Report 2019 is now being collected and will be published during the next couple of months.
- SI Exco created an "associated board member" role for a person who can work as an alternate (substitute or temporary replacement/stand in) to a regular board member. An associate member would not have their own vote, but may vote as a proxy for the regular board member, with the approval of the whole board.
- SI Exco appointed Paul Nielsen (PN) of Servas Australia as an "associated board member" for the role SI Membership and Technology Secretary (SI MTS). PN shares the SI MTS role with Jim Leask of Servas Canada who was appointed SI MTS and SI Exco member by SI Exco earlier this year.
- An upcoming issue of SI News Bulletin during 2020 plans to include an article with a SI Tech Teams presentation.

For complete minutes of the June 14, please go to https://servas.org/sites/default/files/uploads/minutes/2020/si_minutes_2020-6-14.pdf

You can find minutes from all SI Exco meetings since August 23 2012 at the following link: servas.org/en/community/board-and-management/si-exco

Jonny Sågänger, SI President

SI PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL NUMBERS 2019/2020

In my role as Servas International Treasurer I am pleased to present preliminary financial numbers from the most recently completed financial year (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020). Please note that the accounts are still being audited, and the numbers presented here may change as a result of the audit.

This table shows our receipts and payments during the year.

Following are explanations of the amounts reported:

Revenues: This year the amount of fees we received from member groups was 56,415 CHF (Swiss Francs). This was based on the formula proposed by Italy and approved at the last SICOGA. We also received donations of 2,454 CHF from some members for the Africa regional meeting. Total receipts during the year was 58,894 CHF.

| PRELIMINARY FINANCIALS – APRIL 1 2019–MARCH 31 2020 | CHF |
|---|------------------|
| Receipts | |
| Fee Receipts from Member Groups | 56,415.09 |
| Donations | 2,454.39 |
| Interest | 25.00 |
| Total receipts | 58,894.48 |
| Payments | |
| Youth/Regional meetings | 5,473.70 |
| Information Technology expenses | 40,345.33 |
| Other operating expenses | 7,175.49 |
| Development reserve disbursements | 2,954.12 |
| Capital Work in Progress | 1,017.60 |
| FX Loss | 3,637.12 |
| Total payments | 60,603.36 |
| Excess of payments over receipts | (1,708.88) |

Technology Expenses: Our major expense was for information technology, which at 41,363 CHF (40,345 + 1,018) represented slightly more than two-thirds of our total outflows. However, this was much less than the amount budgeted for the year, which was 72,500 CHF. During the current year, based on plans and vendor contracts we expect to spend the full budgeted amount of 72,500 CHF.

Other Operating Expenses: Our operating expenses, which includes, accounting, audit, printing, postage and legal expenses was 7,175 CHF. This was a little higher this year because it included some previous year expenses that were paid this year. Normally, our operating expenses are below 6,000 CHF, and we expect these expenses to go back to normal next year.

Youth/Regional Meetings: The amount spent on youth and regional meetings this year was 8,428 CHF (5,474 + 2,954), which includes disbursements by the SI Development Committee for the meetings. Due to the current COVID situation, we expect that there may be minimal or no expense on meetings this year.

FX Gain (Loss): The FX loss reported in the table is a paper loss (not an actual loss). We maintain bank accounts in 3 currencies (CHF, EUR and USD) since most of our expenses are in USD or EUR. We save on foreign exchange fees by maintaining the accounts in these currencies. We report in CHF because we are based in Switzerland. The FX loss in the table is a hypothetical loss that we would suffer if we converted all our USD and EUR holdings to CHF immediately. Since we have no intention of doing that, it is only a paper loss.

Commentary: Because we were careful with expenses during the year, our cash loss (excess of payments over receipts) was only 1,709 CHF. But, because we had a deficit, we could not set aside any reserves for the next SICOGA. Previously, we would set aside an amount of 25,000 CHF to 30,000 CHF each year, as a reserve for the next SICOGA. We have been unable to do that.

Next year (2020-2021), we estimate a higher projected deficit of 48,000 CHF. This estimate assumes that we will continue to receive member contributions based on the SICOGA 2018 formula and will spend the full budgeted amount for technology and other operations.

Radha Radhakrishna, SI Treasurer

15 879 PROFILES IN SERVASONLINE

On June the 9th 2020, there were 15 879 Membership Profiles in the ServasOnline System, which is now the main global Servas International (SI) membership administration system.

The Great News is that Servas USA and Servas Germany have uploaded their memberships into ServasOnline. The USA has 1 751 Members and Germany has 2 021 Members. This means that almost 100 percent of all individual members of Servas worldwide now have their member data in ServasOnline. There are ongoing activities to integrate the rest of the non-integrated Servas countries as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, this recent survey illustrates a decline in the worldwide Servas membership. We encourage you to spread the word about Servas with your family and friends. Hopefully once the worlds borders open again, we will witness a growth in the membership numbers.

Many member profiles need to be updated and a photo added so please log in to ServasOnline (servas.org), and check that your details are correct.

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| France | 2216 |
| Germany | 2021 |
| United States | 1751 |
| Italy | 1196 |
| Britain - UK | 655 |
| Spain | 667 |
| Australia | 700 |
| Denmark | 447 |
| Belgium | 354 |
| Canada | 422 |
| Sweden | 364 |
| New Zealand | 291 |
| Switzerland | 279 |
| Argentina | 277 |
| Netherlands | 273 |
| Austria | 260 |
| Other (96 countries) | 3705 |
| | 15878 |

Statistics about the origin of Servas members. On June the 8th 2020, there were 15 878 Membership Profiles in the ServasOnline System.

It should be noted the profiles in ServasOnline are in the following categories: Host plus other roles, Traveller plus other roles and Day Host Only plus other roles. Servas France was the first member country that successfully transferred their members' data on July 24, 2016. No Servas country has made a formal refusal to join ServasOnline.

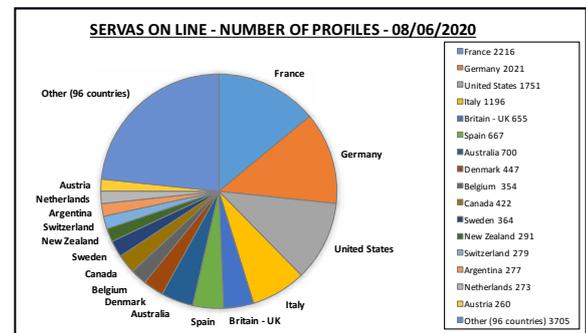
The figures in the box will be updated continuously during the Servas International growth campaign in 2020. There will be a final follow-up and evaluation of figures shown here and the growth campaign during the first quarter of 2021. One of the campaign aims is to double the number of individual members in Servas around the world.

The data and the statistics have been provided by Co – SI Membership & Technology Secretary Paul Nielsen of Servas Australia and the International ICT coordination team and by Joseph Lestang, Servas France and the ServasOnline Team.

Text: Paul Nielsen Co - SI MTS & Servas Australia

ServasOnline Membership Profiles as of 9 June 2020

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total Number of Member Profiles in ServasOnline | 15 879 |
| Hosts & Traveller plus other roles | 6 364 |
| Hosts plus other roles but not Traveller | 6 494 |
| Host Only | 6 375 |
| Day Host Only & Traveller plus other roles | 684 |
| Day Host Only plus other roles but not Traveller | 393 |
| Day Host Only | 385 |
| Traveller Only plus other roles but not Host | 1 766 |
| Traveller Only | 1 757 |
| Supporter plus Other role but not Host or Traveller | 178 |
| Supporter Only | 176 |



Graphic image of the origin of Servas members. On June the 8th 2020, there were 15 878 Membership Profiles in the ServasOnline System.

STAYING IN ISRAEL IN A TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

I visited Israel for the first time seven years ago. I was alone and I knew hardly anyone there. Yael and Chaim from Ramat Gan were my first hosts. When I saw them, I had the feeling I was home. And the next day, when we were hanging out the laundry together, in the warm and gentle light of the November sun (usually the darkest and coolest days in Poland), I again had a strong feeling that there is no better place for me than here and now.

And every other time I've been here, I've always stopped in Ramat Gan and been greeted by my beloved family with a sentence: My home is your home!

Now I'm here on a longer scholarship from the Tel Aviv University. It was supposed to last three months, but in this situation, I'm not sure when I can go back home. In the most stressing time for me, when the lockdown was declared and all my plans are gone, I decided to stay here and wait for better times, working from home. It wouldn't be an easy decision if it weren't for my dear hosts. I'm getting big support from them almost every day: talks, comfort, nice food, even beautiful flowers! We've spent seder and shabbat dinners together. If there is anything I need, they are there for me. I'm not alone, even if I'm so far from my home in Poland, my husband and my three daughters.



Agnieszka from Servas Poland enjoyed her stay with hosts in Israel.

I can see that Israeli society is well prepared for living in difficult conditions. People are organized, you can feel the spirit of solidarity and sheer neighbourly kindness. People care much for each other. I got so much support from other Servas members. My good friends from the previous stays here, Ruth and Yaakov from Mitzpe Ramon, write and call me from time to time, just asking if I'm ok, sending information I need and just being close. Revital from Jerusalem, my dear soul sister, who always helped me with her wise words when I had a hard time in Poland and encourages me now too. There's Meira and Mike, my "adopted family" from Jerusalem (we became lifelong friends since we met for the first time); and Tsvika and Sara from Galilee, thanks to them I've seen so many beauties of the countryside. We even managed even to see an exhibition together before the coronavirus lockdown started.

All of them called or wrote to me many times asking how I am, if I need anything, sending pictures from their gardens, fancy face masks they made for themselves, just to make me feel better. There are no words to express my immense gratitude towards them!

Maybe I lost some research possibilities – the archives are closed, I can't interview Holocaust survivors as I planned – but I gained something more here: a sense of human solidarity, of friendship, of a real care, of love. I couldn't get more than that.

Thank you so much!!!

Agnieszka, Servas Poland

PEDALLING ROUND THE WORLD FOR PEACE

Helga Merkelbach, a member of Servas in Germany, was recently interviewed on the German online platform *Transparenz TV*. In the programme *Peace Issues with Clemens Ronnefeld* she talked about her plans to take part in the *Bike for Peace and New Energies Tour* in 2021.

In the interview, Helga shares her love of cycling, as well as some of her personal inspirations for taking part in this tour. She tells her father's story of seeing France, Austria, the former Czechoslovakia and the former Soviet Union as a soldier and prisoner of war between 1942 and 1947. He

encouraged his daughter to travel in peace, see people around the world as humans and meet them as friends.



It was Helga's interest in international peace and collaboration that motivated her to join Servas. As she shares in her interview with *Transparenz TV*, our organization has been a major source of joy, knowledge and friendship throughout her life. She also goes over some of the history of how Servas International was set up. You can find this around the 4-minute point in her interview.

Much like Servas, *Bike for Peace* is an NGO that works to promote peace and friendly relationships around the world. Bike for Peace focusses on events related to cycling and the use of alternative green energies. Originally programmed for this year, in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, due to Covid-19, the tour has been rescheduled for 2021.

The Bike for Peace route goes through places of historical significance. As Helga tells us in her interview, part of this route, specifically the stretch between Dusseldorf (Germany) and Minsk (Russia) was the one followed by Inge, a young Jewish girl originally from Helga's birthplace. Inge was deported to Maly Trostinez (near Minsk) in 1942 and executed in the only German extermination camp on Soviet ground during World War II. This was where gas was first tested for murdering Jews and others. Bike for Peace promotes overcoming the atrocities of the past by building a sustainable future across borders.

The complete route goes from Paris to Moscow by bike, and then to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by public transport. If you would like to take part in 2021, you can register for the complete tour, part of it or even only a day on the Bike for Peace website: bikeforpeace.net/.

You can find the full interview (in German) in the following link: youtube.com/watch?v=MgBbryItgxc.

Juana Carolina Santos Milachay.



PEOPLE: NEW SERVAS KEY PEOPLE

SERVAS GUATEMALA

Board change in January 2020

- National Secretary: Adela Segura, replacing José Roberto Montes
- National Deputy: José Roberto Montes, replacing Adela Segura (is also Treasurer)
- Peace Secretary: Priscila Rojas, replacing Adela Segura
- Youth and New Members: Mauricio Martinez, replacing Antony Rashon



Adela Segura (NS)

SERVAS PARAGUAY

Board change on May 1, 2020

- National Secretary Edgar Adan Mora Almada resigned as NS. Position is now vacant.

The other board members remain the same:

- Magdalena Barros Ortiz (Nat. Deputy),
- Miriam Amada Mora Almada (HLC)

SERVAS URUGUAY

Since May 2020 Servas Uruguay has a new board.

- National Secretary: Daniela Duarte, replacing Dinorah Sanz
- National Deputy: Helena Winterhalter, replacing Gabriela Etchebehere
- Host List Coordinator: Marisa Contini, replacing Daniela Duarte



Héctor Santana is Coordinator & Interviewer, Graziella Di Lorenzo and Rossana Pessano are Interviewers

Thank you to the board members who have left for the energy and the time you have given Servas.

A warm welcome to the new key people. We hope you'll find your new positions rewarding and enjoyable. Good luck!

Important note: Please inform EXCO (exco@servas.org) and the Dolphin Team (dolphin.team@servas.org) asap about any changes in your board.

*Rita Dessauvage, SI Dolphin Team
Member of Servas Belgium & Luxembourg*

WOLFE AFTER SUBRAMANIAN IN SI IAC

Mr. Rick Wolfe, a US Servas member, has joined the Servas International Internal Audit Committee (SI IAC) from April this year. He joined the team to fill the vacancy resulting from Mr. L.V. Subramanian's resignation in March 2020. He will complete the balance of Mr. L.V. Subramanian's term which expires at the next SI Conference and General Assembly (SICOGA), currently scheduled for 2021.



SI Executive Committee (SI Exco) wishes to place on record its deep appreciation for Mr. LV Subramanian's service in various capacities over the last 20 years to Servas. The board wishes him well in his future endeavors.

Mr. Wolfe, who is based in Southern California has over 30 years of accounting and auditing experience. He is also a long term Servas member, and he and his wife Coleen have hosted travelers and families from all over the world. They have also traveled in many countries and formed lifetime friendships.

SI Exco welcomes Mr. Rick Wolfe to the committee.

Radha B. Radhakrishna, SI Treasurer

CELEBRATION FOR SI DC CONVENOR

On April 25, there was a birthday surprise for Ewa Dzierzawska, convenor of SI Development Committee and member of Servas Poland. Her son Janek Dzierzawska arranged for her a surprise gathering on Zoom with many Servas members taking part.



Screenshot of surprise web-based birthday party for Ewa Dzierzawska, convenor of SI Development Committee and member of Servas Poland.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 – AND BEYOND

On May 12, Servas International representatives at the UN attended the webinar on “The Human Rights of Older Persons in the Age of Covid-19 and Beyond”.

Please read a summary of what they captured during the webinar below or see it on youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9Fw3J81ez0&t=12s>

Questions were submitted in advance, comments and questions were allowed in the chat during the meeting.

The one-hour virtual debate welcomed the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Michelle Bachelet, as well as the new Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Ms Claudia Mahler, and Representatives of Member States in the Groups of Friends of the rights of older persons in New York and Geneva. The event was moderated by Ms Silvia Perel-Levin, Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva, who invited the experts and organized the discussion.

The panelists analyzed the current situation and discussed how to advance the conversation around the rights of older persons during these challenging times, and how we can move from debate to action. Recognizing that older persons are at high risk of severe illness and death following infection from Covid-19, many countries adopted a variety of specific measures. However, even though well-intended and aimed at a greater protection for older persons, those measures may have in many ways negatively impacted their rights and freedoms.

The panellists addressed some important questions: Have some Covid-19 measures impacted older persons to a larger degree than other groups? Did they highlight already existing ageism, negative stereotypes, and age-based discrimination? Also, have the views of older persons been considered?

The panellists admitted that there is not an easy definition of who is an “old person”, yet Michelle Bachelet said: “We must also shift our mindset and challenge the ageist view of older people as frail, dependent and vulnerable. The older population is an incredibly diverse group and they – we, I should say – we have a tremendous potential to contribute to the recovery efforts.”

Though there is no specific Convention to protect the rights of older people (these lie within the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)), it was widely recognized that there is a need to strengthen legal frameworks to promote and protect the human rights and dignity of older persons, including the rights of those living in residential care homes, facing special vulnerability and a broad range of risks. [According to Michelle Bachelet, in Europe, according to the World Health Organization, up to half of total deaths have been among those living in long-term care facilities.]

The challenge therefore remains the establishment of a framework for older people, including the work on a draft resolution by the UN. As the High Commissioner stated, “This crisis has laid bare, and often amplified, many challenges that older people have been facing for years, such as discrimination based on older age, lack of social protection and access to health services, lack of autonomy and participation in decision-making, and risk of violence, neglect and abuse.”

As SERVAS members, we wish to contribute to a better tomorrow. If this crisis has taught us anything, it is that more protection is needed for the most vulnerable of our societies, wherever they may be. All together, be it inside our communities or at a political level, we can work hand in hand together towards these goals as – in line with the words of the High Commissioner – “This crisis has taught us that a society can only be as strong as its weakest member.” Watch the session on YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-Hw2wBeFcXvgZ0hPZr6Xg>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9Fw3J81ez0&t=12s>

Danielle Serres, Chief Administrative Officer/ Servas International UN coordinator

(please find a version of this text on <https://servas.org/en/news/si-un-human-rights-older-persons-age-covid19-and-beyond>)

USA P&J COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PEACE ACTIVITIES

Yosi McIntire, convenor of the US Servas Peace & Justice Committee, is collecting information about areas in which Servas members are engaged.

In a document relating to two major ongoing crises: the coronavirus pandemic and the surfacing of endemic racism, Yosi writes:

The US Servas Peace and Justice Committee exists to be of service to the Servas membership. We are, after all, not simply an organization that facilitates travel: we are a peace-building network. We share relevant information, reflections, and opinions about peace and justice issues and initiatives that will inspire us towards activism to reduce the risks of deteriorating social stability and security.

Please share information about your ongoing peace-building activities with Yosi and the US Servas Peace & Justice Committee. Email: PeaceSecretary@USServas.org

You can request the whole message from US Servas P&J Committee by sending an email to the same address.

Jonny Sågänger, SI President

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL ON THE INTERNET

Servas International website:

servas.org/index.php

Servas on Twitter:

twitter.com/ServasI?lang=en

Servas on Facebook:

Servas Travelling for Peace

www.facebook.com/groups/servas/

This public discussion group is for people who are interested in learning more about Servas International. Membership in a recognized Servas Group is not required. Membership in this Facebook group does not make you a member of Servas.

- Administrators: Jonny Sågänger, Carla Kristensen, Servas International (FB Page)
- Moderators: Jae Kwoang Park

Servas International

www.facebook.com/groups/117649068294944/

This closed discussion group is for people who are members of Servas. Your membership will be verified.

- Administrators: Arnoud Philipppo, Paige LaCombe
- Moderator: Tawny Foskett

SI Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/pg/Servas.International/about/?ref=page_internal

Public profile, open to all.

- Administrators: Jonny Sågänger, Carla Kristensen
- Editor: Uthman Shahid

ABOUT SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN

The Servas International News Bulletin (SI News Bulletin) is a newsletter from Servas International Executive Committee (SI Exco), which is the organization's global board. The SI News Bulletin contains a brief report about current issues and decisions.

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What would you like to read about in the SI News Bulletin? Let us know.

Email: president@servas.org

We encourage Servas key people around the world to forward this bulletin to individual members. Feel free to quote this bulletin but please remember to mention Servas International News Bulletin as the source.

SI EXCO 2018-2021

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ABOUT SERVAS INTERNATIONAL

Servas International is an international, non-profit, non-governmental federation of national Servas groups, supporting an international network of hosts and travellers.

Our network aims to help build world peace, goodwill and understanding by offering opportunities for personal contacts between people of different cultures, backgrounds and nationalities.