

2021/22



HILFE KONKRET





SHARING GOD'S LOVE

Cordial thanks to all of you who have so faithfully and constantly supported our work over the past year. We have also received donations without knowing the addresses of the donors. Hereby we want to thank you for your donations. We will be happy to send you a donation receipt if you contact us or include the address in the bank transfer.

Our gratitude in particular to: AEM Förderstiftung; Altpietistischer Gemeinschaftsverband; ATSV Kleinsteinbach; Bruderhof Deutschland e.V.; Deutsche Evangelische Allianz; Diakonissenmutterhaus Aidlingen/Pfingstjugendtreffen; Ev. Kirchenge-meinde Nierenhof; Ev. Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens; Kommunität Adelshofen; Ojkos-Stiftung; Siegerland Stiftung; Stiftung Friedhelm Loh; RAM-Stiftung Ulm; Staatsministerium Stuttgart; Wertestarterstiftung Haiger/Berlin, Hartmut Hühnerbein, Johannes Nehlsen and Reinhard Quast.

We also thank all the contributors to this newsletter. Moreover, we are thankful for the new design, including a great deal of commitment and voluntary work. Thanks to all our volunteers in administrative work and at missions. Without this great volunteer commitment, this service would not be possible.

Please feel free to request additional copies of this newsletter. We would also be happy to come to your church for a church service or lecture, please contact us.

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*Whoever comes to me, I will
not cast out.*

John 6:37

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

We would like to extend our warmest greetings to you in this newsletter, being more extensive than usual in this busy year. It is an insight into what your efforts have accomplished in terms of support and intercession.

Shortly after our newsletter went to press last winter, the refugee camp of Lipa (Bosnia-Herzegovina) burned down. And still, there are thousands of people on the Balkan route today. Only a few days later, a strong earthquake came to the central region of Croatia, its catastrophic consequences affecting more than 160,000 people. At the same time, construction work continued regarding the new school building in Čakovec, and the ongoing school operation including the dormitory was maintained. All the while, respecting the special conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vacation programs, camps, and many church events took place.

We went immediately after the earthquake for a first mission trip in January 2021. Many other missions to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina followed until this autumn. Often, travel conditions were difficult, and volunteers, as well as local partners, displayed a high level of commitment. In this newsletter, it is also them who will get to speak out and let you take part in their lives.

Next year, *Hilfe konkret* will enter its third decade. This anniversary is accompanied by a greater change: Starting in the fall of 2021, I will commit myself to the ongoing work with *Hilfe konkret* in a full-time and donor-funded position. Working with the younger generation of volunteers reminds us of God's will for us to continue building God's kingdom across the generations. The verse of the year in 2022 is found in the Gospel of John, "Whoever comes to me, I will not cast out." God's invitation remains. In Jesus Christ, God becomes man and reaches out to us. He himself becomes an invitation of the Creator to us. Weary and burdened, driven by themselves, or loaded with need and pressure – all are invited to manger and child.

Our best wishes for a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year 2022,

Johannes Neudeck and the team of *Hilfe konkret*



Katharina and Johannes Neudeck

*A friend loveth at all times, and a
brother is born for adversity.*

Proverbs 17:17

Poštovani prijatelji, dear friends!

An acquaintance might happen at random – but over time it turns into a solid friendship. In times of need, friends became family. And just like this, it happened to be the Balkan war in the early 1990s that turned foreign helpers from Germany into family. We are sharing so many experiences and we arranged so many projects, or – how my brother and friend Johannes Neudeck would claim in his unmistakable North-Croatian Međimurje dialect: “We’ve already learned that together.”, or “It has never been this hard!”

Seeming to have overcome the hardships following the war, after years of laborious reconstruction, new challenges arise. Some of them are global ones – such as the Covid-19 pandemic or global refugee movements and the humanitarian catastrophes they are accompanied by. Others are local ones: the two huge earthquakes in Croatia last winter or the flood in Germany this year. All these catastrophes challenge us being Christians. It is not unusual to ask ourselves: “Why did this happen?” It is a legitimate question we should pose: as the creations of God we are capable of reason. It is important to step back and to reflect, to judge, and to shape our own opinions. In doing this, a new question will arise and put an end to this neverending circle of pondering: “What am I capable of doing?” In this newsletter, there are testimonies of Christian solicitude, altruism, and compassion, as an answer toward the fragile and sorrowful reality of life. Let us read these accounts as an apparent sign of hope and an answer to all the catastrophes we are facing.

Let me thank you in the name of all those who have been changed due to your providing, prayers, and actions concerning their material and spiritual needs and searching. Together we’ve allowed them to feel the warmth of human compassion, motivated to share our and God’s love by the example of Christ. *Hilfe konkret* may be small in comparison to the big players of NGOs, but it works with a wide heart and much experience and has proven itself in emergencies through the years. Because of that, for us in Croatia, Johannes, Katharina and the friends of *Hilfe konkret* are not merely donors, organizers, or anonymous structures, but they are friends in the first place. Friends we have been working with for almost 30 years. They have proven themselves to be “always loving friends” as well as brothers and sisters in varied times of need. We are in particular grateful and happy for Johannes working full-time with us once again. In summer at our pastoral camp, we prayed together for

Katharina and Johannes, their family and service, for God’s blessings for them. We are connected and held together by our common faith in Christ, the saviour of the whole world. May this season of Advent and Christmas remind us of our becoming friends with God and siblings in faith due to Jesus Christ.

Wishing a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year,

Željko Mraz

General Secretary, Baptist Union of Croatia





12th of February 2021: On mission in the camp of Lipa (L-R): Selam Midžić, Leader Red Cross Bihać; Johannes Neudeck, chairman *Hilfe konkret* e.V.; Željko Mraz, general secretary, Baptist Union in Croatia (Zagreb); Marco Dummler, volunteer (Pfinztal)

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: HUMANITARIAN AID FOR REFUGEES

For about six years we have been engaged in aiding refugees in the Balkans, four of these years in the regions of Bihać and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. As part of our project work, we visited the refugee camp of Lipa in Bihać several times in 2021. In this year there have been living about 800 to 1,200 refugees in army tents. After the fire in December, a temporary infrastructure was established step by step. By now there has also been opened a camp for up to 1,500 people consisting of accommodation containers.

Currently, there are about 9,000 refugees stranded in the regions around Sarajevo and Bihać. Many of them dwell in the open woods, ruins, or vacant houses. In the three months from August to October 4,500 refugees arrived in Bosnia by foot. We are providing emergency aid, shoes, food and hygiene packages, all the while supporting the Red Cross in Bihać e. g. in the kitchen. This department of our work continues to need support. Since 1994 we have known Tomislav Dobutović. He is from Croatia and together with his wife Lidiya he has been participating in the activities of the church in Sarajevo since 1997. Since then, we have been working together on several projects. He reports on the current work.



Tomislav and Lidiya Dobutović with their son Natanel, Sarajevo



Conversation between Rafael Moya-Rojas, Sarajevo (on the left) and Niels van Slooten, Bihać (on the right). Rafael and Niels are participating with "Operation Mobilisation" in church and diaconal projects, cooperating with the Evangelical Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Baptist Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina takes care of many needs among the refugees and migrants as well as poor and needy, cooperating closely also with *Hilfe konkret*. Most of the refugees and migrants are in the regions of and around Sarajevo and Bihać. Combining our capabilities with those of other churches and NGOs we coordinate our actions with them in order to provide help to the refugees. Most of them are from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Morocco, Egypt, and many other countries. They live in refugee camps such as Usivak, Blazuj (outskirts of Sarajevo), or Lipa (outside Bihać), or in vacant houses and apartments. Some of them live in the woods, ruins, or below the open sky. In

cooperation with *Hilfe konkret* and our partners – among others the Red Cross and Operation Mobilisation in Bihać, and local partners in Sarajevo – we have been able to provide hundreds of food and hygiene packages, buying shoes, sleeping bags, and backpacks for survival kits and distributing them. However, in the foreseeable future, these people will not have a place of refuge and so we will continue our help.

The economy in Bosnia continues to be weak and there is high unemployment. The socio-economic situation in the country is complex and the pandemic intensifies the problems already existing. Many lost their job due to the complex crises. It is not a



Coordination and preparation for distributing food and hygiene packages. Tomislav Dobutović, Sarajevo (in the center), and personnel from the Red Cross in Bihać



Joy due to the distribution of new shoes by the Red Cross in Bihać.

rare sight to see locals digging in dumpsters for food. We have to respond to the needs of the poor as well. We have been preparing food packages and are going to provide more food and hygiene packages as well as firewood as winter is approaching.

Aside from material aid we also offer spiritual and pastoral support. Among the refugees, there are some Christians who were persecuted in their country of origin and made their way towards Europe. We are glad to welcome them into our congregation and to offer them at least a temporary spiritual home.

We are grateful for your previous support. If you are capable and willing to share a part of the financial burden in the future, you may donate to *Hilfe konkret*, thereby supporting us as the local NGOs and churches. We dearly appreciate every prayer spoken by our brothers and sisters in Europe and Germany, as well as of course prayers all around the world!

Tomislav Dobutović, Baptist Church, Sarajevo
Chairman, Baptist Union Bosnia-Herzegovina



Meeting center Sarajevo; on the right: Lidija Dobutović



Camp Lipa: Due to a shortage of bread, Red Cross Bihać asked us for support. In a short-term operation, we added to our ongoing engagement the provision of 12,000 pieces of bread in August and September 2021. The canteen kitchen of the Red Cross prepares 2,000 meals a day.

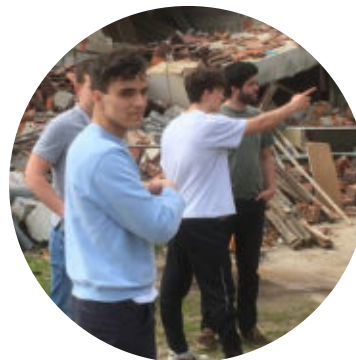
This provision and further help are supported significantly by the State Ministry of Baden-Wurttemberg. Thanks for every aid.

See also the press release from the State Ministry:

<https://bit.ly/3rmpj3C>



Stefan Eißler participated as a volunteer in *Hilfe konkret* from April to September 2021. Several times he accompanied our operations, one of which was in Bihać. In the following, he shortly reflects on his impressions.



The roads are worsening by the moment. Gravel is crunching beneath the tires. We are leaving Bihać further behind as we drive through a forest. Out of nothing we are facing tents on a vast meadow. Young men are cooking over open fire tonnes. It's midday. A security guide registers us and explains to us that there are about 1,500 people currently living in this camp. There are primarily from Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as from African countries. They hope for a new chance in Europe, yet there is a huge barrier: the border between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. There is no going further and no going back, all they can do is wait. Fundamental items are missing. Because of that, we work according to our capabilities and in cooperation with the Red Cross in Bihać and volunteers from a local Evangelical church to help as much as we can. Various teams distribute new shoes and care packages to refugees in and outside the camps in the forests.

In addition to my engagement in Bihać, I got to know the earthquake area and the school project, gained impressions on the work among Roma peop-

le, and visited the House of Hope in Zagreb. The construction of the school became a heartfelt desire to me after the local encounters – especially the ones with the young people there, because for many students the school provides a second home. I am grateful for the hospitality I experienced everywhere. Moreover, I am thankful to God for the successful execution of our operations despite the crises we are working in. I am appreciative to be a part of it. In our prayers, we bear in particular those in mind who are on the flight or casualties of the earthquakes and in existential hardships. Further, I pray for a good beginning of our work in the “House of Hope” in Zagreb and believe deeply in a positive transformation of the community by means of this meeting center. Join me in praying for the work of *Hilfe konkret* and especially the local people.

Stefan Eißler, volunteer, 21



Camp of Lipa after the fire in January 2021





Construction site from outside, summer of 2021

ZAGREB: HOUSE OF HOPE



Jonathan Böke, volunteer; Johannes Neudeck; Žarko Katić, secretary of state, ministry of the interior; Željko Mraz; Benjamin Egger, volunteer

A former building of the secret police turned into a "House of Hope." It had been a long process, but on the 1st of October, the "Kuća Nade" was opened. It is supposed to be a place to come to for people in socio-economic predicaments and for refugees. It shall become a center for the local community, strengthening the community of the district by the possibility of encounters. Our volunteer Jonathan Böke (25) reports:

After a long and intense construction phase including several challenges, the official launch of the House of Hope in Zagreb is the starting signal for a valuable task. When I visited for the first time in 2020, I was barely able to imagine how this building could turn so beautiful. However, as can be seen in the picture not everybody was happy. The graffiti of "No Refugees" states this fact quite clearly. Further, construction difficulties were to be overcome. But now I am present at the opening, and I am seeing a beautiful building. Old timberwork is combined with modern elements. Moreo-

ver, the social tensions from before having been resolved, the majority of the local community supports the engagement of the House of Hope and pastor Mihal Kreko. It is our possibility from now on to begin with our engagement itself: to be salt and light in a district impacted by poverty, social conflicts, and violence. *Hilfe konkret* provides substantial help and supports quickly and uncomplicated wherever there is a need for urgent aid. Furthermore, *Hilfe konkret* supports construction measures and the programs of the project by donations for this specific purpose. Johannes Neudeck is part of



Official launch of the House of Hope on 1st of October 2021

the management team. Such structural support in particular in regard to funding is necessary so that the engagement of the volunteers is financially sustainable.

I am very excited about what my next visit to Zagreb will be like and to see how Christian hope impacts the community.

Jonathan Böke, volunteer

There are some videos featuring the House of Hope on YouTube. We gathered them in a playlist: <https://bit.ly/3oTt260>



Retrospective June 2020: The House of Hope temporarily became the home of an unsheltered pensioner whose house burnt down (in the center); (L-R): Phillip Seeger, Mihal Kreko, the pensioner, Željko Mraz, Marco Dummler



June of 2020: pastor Mihal Kreko (on the left) showing the shell construction to Johannes Neudeck (in the center) and the volunteers Jonathan Böker und Marco Dummler

PETRINJA REGION: EARTHQUAKE AID

Since the devastating earthquake in late 2020, there have been more than 1,000 aftershocks including several stronger ones. We and our local partners provided and arranged 28 accommodation containers. By now there have been replaced more than 140 chimneys, and ten houses have been repaired, another one having been reconstructed from nothing but the foundations spared by the earthquake. Further, a great tent was erected to temporarily replace a destroyed stable. Thank you for all support! More than 130 volunteers from more than 20 congregations engaged themselves in thousands of hours of voluntary work. Hundreds of food and hygiene packages were distributed. Families and adolescents were able to participate in summer camps. Pastor Timothy-Ivan Špičak reports from the earthquake region. Afterward, there is a report from Naphtali Grauer, who participated in an operation in March.

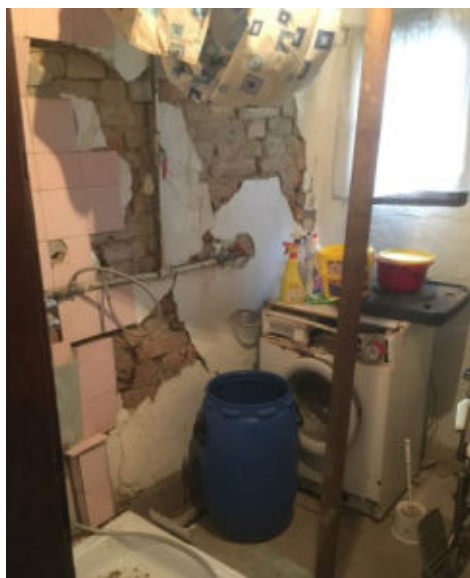


Pastor Timothy-Ivan Špičak reports:

Pastor Timothy lost his wife in 2012 due to influenza. Since she went home, Timothy has been caring for his three children. He summarizes his handling of this grief: "I do not understand God, but I trust in him." This confidence grants him the courage to assist others in their needs.

Following the devastating earthquake in Petrinja and the areas around on 29th of December 2020, Baptist Church Petrinja was supported by many churches and friends in Croatia and abroad, providing material and spiritual help. Not having been harmed, our church building in Petrinja became sort of a center and starting point for many local volunteers as well as those from other churches to help where it is needed. In the beginning, fast and effective operations removed rubble and repaired rooftops. At the same time, it was tried to shelter people in secured rooms and accommodation containers. For more than a month our church building hosted 15 – 30 people and provided them with a place to live and sleep. Until fall we provided 28 accommodation containers including furnishing.





About 140 chimneys were replaced and many rooftops were sealed or tiled anew. By our corporate engagement, we reached many schools and public institutions and left ineradicable marks in the lives of many people due to our testimony of voluntary actions. Almost every Saturday until the middle of June, and afterward almost every second Saturday, operations of helping were organized. At the end of these days, we met in the evening in the church building to eat together, enjoy the community, sing and talk, giving personal testimony as well. God's wonderful grace encouraged us to do the almost impossible. The genuine help of many donors enabled us to do more

than we could imagine having done even now. Many food and hygiene packages were distributed, and we were able to share spiritual support and encouragement at many opportunities. As a local church, we attended to people in a container colony, organized regular programs for children, and encouraged adults. We experienced some beautiful moments with many people visiting on religious holidays and at church services. At our campground on the island of Ugljan, children and families were able to participate in holidays as well.

As a church in Petrinja we were able to introduce our work and service to many people. Daily courses for



Grabovac: Great joy due to the container. Baka (grandmother) Nada lost her house as a result of the earthquake. Thanks to the container she is able to stay on her property and with her animals. From the left: Željko Mraz; Baka Nada; Ivica Horvat, chairman of the union of Baptist churches.



Volunteers loading supplies for the earthquake area on a truck at our site in Pušćine near Čakovec. On the right: Alexander Markov, Mačkovec



the local primary school and the music school are continuing now. Because of a collapsed building, 70 young people and a dozen of teachers were forced to move their classes, and by offering our rooms we testify our willingness to serve and to contribute to the welfare of the community. Needless to say that among everything going on we try to reach the people with the Gospel and to strengthen them pastorally and spiritually as they are continually unable to find peace, being confronted with heavy stress, crises, and fear of the ongoing mostly daily earthquakes of moderate intensity. Covid-19 does not improve the situation either, but intensifies stress and psychic strain. In this

place, I want to thank everyone who sacrificed hours of their time to serve with us. Moreover, I thank everyone who supported us with donations so that we could help wherever urgent help and help in general was needed. May the Lord bless every cheerful giver and multiply the joy and blessing of serving others together. We will continue our work courageously for the need is huge!

Sincerely, in the love of Christ,

Timothy-Ivan Špičák, pastor of the Baptist church in Petrinja



The sisterhood of Aidlingen supported the project by means of fundraising in the course of the "Pfingstjugendtreffen 2021 online". Organized by the Diakonissenmutterhaus Aidlingen e. V. (deaconesses in Aidlingen), there has been a festival "Pfingstjugendtreffen" of nowadays several thousand young Christians every Pentecost for more than 70 years. Due to the Covid 19-pandemic, the meeting went online in the last two years.

Haidy Bahgat Kovacevič (in the picture on the top at the left) filmed a video for the report from Johannes Neudeck:
<https://bit.ly/3FCyqRv>



The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony provided great support to the earthquake aid. Press report:
<https://bit.ly/32blxOY>



Great gratitude for a secure place of sleeping in an accommodation container: Jonathan Böke, volunteer, Adelsheim (on the left), Johannes Neudeck, chairman *Hilfe konkret* (on the right)



Volunteer Naphtali Grauer reports on his operation:

My name is Naphtali Grauer. I am 19 years old, and I have been part of *Hilfe konkret* since 2020. Working together with Johannes I quickly got to know the catastrophe in Croatia and its impact. As the media told, there were earthquakes up to an intensity of 6.4 on the Richter scale in the region of Petrinja. On several days, there were up to 20 earthquakes



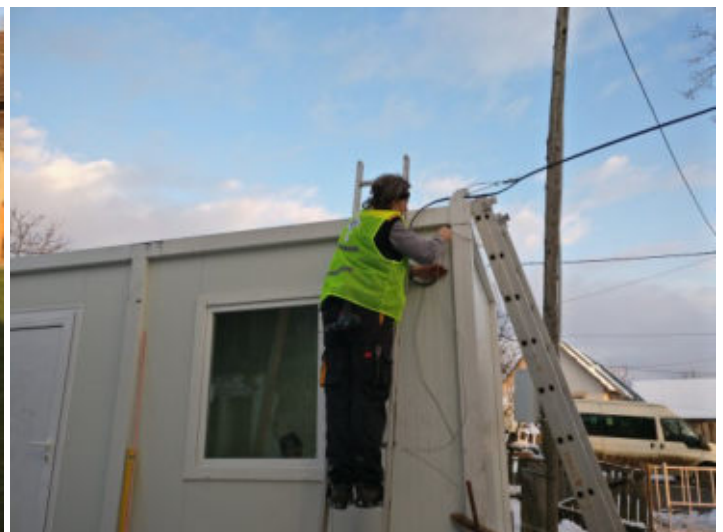
in this town only 50 kilometers from Zagreb. My knowledge of such a catastrophe was limited to what I could see in pictures or read in reports in the media. In March 2021, Johannes took me and other volunteers along to Croatia, so that I could see with my own eyes what inferno is caused by such an earthquake, and how the affected people fare during such times. As it turns out, I rapidly learned how unaware one is of the miseries and hardships such people face. Because of that, I want to report on my experience.

Having driven for about eight hours, we arrived in Croatia and headed toward Petrinja, an average small city. We drove along a road that seemed to us to go on forever until we reached some villages above Petrinja. Željko Mraz guided us through the villages and looking out of the car I saw many houses with deep cracks and missing roofs. In general, I could see that after the earthquake most houses had been mended only crudely. Inhabitants approached us on bicycles, loaded with plastic bags full of essential items to survive. Further, there were even more families walking by, probably on their way to obtain precisely those. Getting out of the car for the first time, I was finally able to actually perceive the extent of destruction the earthquake had caused. In the best cases, the houses had suffered only deep cracks throughout their walls or lost their rooftops. Many other houses, however, had collapsed entirely, and below their ruins, there are buried whole livelihoods and homes.

I was affected profoundly and shocked as Johannes translated to us the stories of some of the inhabitants. Following the earthquake, many young adults had left their parents in a hurry. They had been in fear of further earthquakes and had been hoping to find a better and in particular safer future outside Petrinja. An older woman told us how her ceiling had almost fallen down on her. Later, I saw the crumbled ceiling in her house myself. In her garden, she had built herself a makeshift kitchen and toilet. Another man spoke of the misfortune of his son: As the house had collapsed and tipped over, he had been able to save himself by



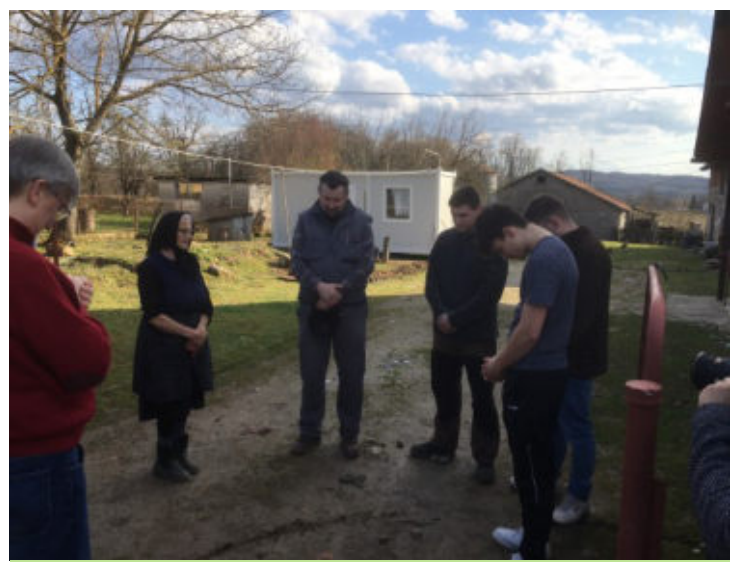
March 2021: Volunteers Micha Ausperger, Bad Wimpfen, Naphtali Grauer, Karlsruhe-Durlach, Felix Neudeck, Babstadt (from the left).



Installation of the power supply for an accommodation container.



The house of "Grandma Nada" had to be demolished due to the heavy destruction.



Praying together: "Grandma Nada" is praying for our group, our families, and us. She is thanking God for the accommodation container and for being alive. She is embarrassing us with her confidence, gratitude, and strong faith.

jumping out of the window, but his son had not shared his luck. We visited another house of a family whose first floor had slid off. Moreover, the feeding barn providing food for more than 100 sheep had been destroyed. After the catastrophe, all these families had slept below the open sky being exposed to the cold for the first nights. All the more, I felt grateful to see new hope arising due to the help provided, among others by *Hilfe konkret*. Living and sleeping with a roof above their heads again due to the accommodation containers provided, the families were able to relax a bit and to look ahead, taking on whatever possibilities and actions they could perform. They repaired such items that were repairable – even though many of those broke again in the ongoing earthquakes – and they worked together and provided help to each other. Local churches sent teams of volunteers, for example, they fixed the roof of a cow stable. In many conversations one caught how especially the psyche of the people is affected because of the ongoing earthquakes, continuing until today. The people tell of living in permanent fear, many sleepless nights, and setbacks due to the earthquakes over and over again.

Concluding our mission, we were invited by one of the teams of local volunteers to join them and the family whose roof they had repaired to eat and sing in their church building. Moved to tears, the family thanked for all the help. Many people I met were immensely grateful for the accommodation containers and not to forget in particular the prayers applying to them.

And so it is also my concluding plea: Let us not stop to keeping the local people and congregations in mind and to pray for them!

Best regards,

Naphtali Grauer (student of business management from Karlsruhe)

AMATEUR SOCCER MEETS EMERGENCY AID

Having been in the earthquake area himself in January 2021, volunteer Lukas Schröder initiated a charity run to support the earthquake aid of *Hilfe konkret*. In the picture, featuring a damaged house in Petrinja, he is standing on the left. Next to him are Marco Dummmler (volunteer) and Johannes Neudeck (on the right). Lasting impressions formed the idea to organize a charity run for the victims of the earthquake. 42 sportsmen and one sportswoman, the gymnastics coach for children, amassed a donation amount of 2,200 €. Lukas Schröder himself accumulated 375 kilometers, the longest distance, followed by the brothers Lukas and Jonathan Elsässer having run 261 and 247 kilometers. Sincere thanks to the team of the ATSV. Lukas Schröder reports:



I was not able to grasp that I could stand on the field again on Sunday, playing football on a trimmed lawn, and without fear of a shaking ground. These thoughts accompanied me as I returned from my operation in January 2021 in Petrinja, having experienced an aftershock myself. Following this impression, I developed a wish to do more to help the victims of the earthquake. Together with my teammate Jonathan Elsässer I initiated a charity run. Knowing that every donation to *Hilfe konkret* is a donation directly to local helpers I knew that Johannes Neudeck would support our

idea. The 42 participating sportsmen of my club ATSV Kleinsteinbach ran a distance of 3991 kilometers.

This matches close to six times the distance from Kleinsteinbach [a community near Karlsruhe in the southwest of Germany; translator's note] to Petrinja, one of the most affected areas in Croatia. Many private donors and some companies took part, and according to a donation rate of .55 € per kilometer we amassed a sum of 2200 € having run 3991 kilometers. At this point I want to thank every donor again, also in the name of *Hilfe konkret*. I know that locally every euro counts. Without the accommodation containers, many people would have to either leave their homes or to survive the winter without a roof above their heads.

With athletic greetings,

Lukas Schröder



Johannes Neudeck with players of the ATSV: In the red jerseys from the left: Lukas Schröder and Jonathan Elsässer; on the right: the second chairwoman of the ATSV Maya Böcherer.

ČAKOVEC: EVANGELICAL SCHOOL AND ITS NEW BUILDING

In 2010, the first evangelical school as an independent, officially recognized institution in Croatia, opened. Today there are 492 students including 52 young people living in the attached dormitory. The adolescents are provided with help regarding their homework, workshops, and life assistance. Aside from the usual high school diploma, there is also the possibility to achieve a degree in the medical sector. In cooperation with the hospital in Čakovec, the students are educated to become nurses, physiotherapists, and nursing assistants. Thanks to a teacher from Germany teaching German in this and other local schools, it is possible to achieve an official language diploma in German. Today there are 28 young Roma in our school and dormitory. Our new school year began 6 December 2021, and due to high demand, we could presently accept only 100 of 400 applications.



The Evangelical School Čakovec experiences a great change. Since the groundbreaking on the 23rd of June in 2020, there is work in progress. On the left, there is the congregation center including the dormitory, where the school is hosted so far. Adding to that, there is the construction area of the extension building in the front on the right, the picture dating to September 2020.



Having improvised a three-layered running of our school due to the question of enough space for ten years, I am glad for the beginning of the construction of a new building. I am sincerely grateful to the benefactor Prof. Dr. Friedhelm Loh and to the “Stiftung Wertestarter” for their generous support and assistance.

At the start of school in the autumn of 2021, I spoke of the Aaronic Blessing in Numbers 6:24-26. God, the creator, is the origin of blessing. This blessing reminds us of how we are carried by the encouragement and guidance it provides also in challenging times like these. With pleasure I quote theologian and writer Friedrich August Köthe: “Building a school for children means building a temple for God.” It is in this sense that we understand our vision and our voluntary engagement.



Bratko Horvat, founder of the school and member of the school management



For many years I have known the initiators of the school project and I dearly appreciate their work, having gotten to know the place myself due to local visits. With conviction and perseverance, they created something very valuable. The school project in Čakovec is an important contribution to necessary efforts in the area of education. Moreover, it testifies impressively to a successful work to open new perspectives to young people and to supply them with useful knowledge and experiences in their life. Furthermore, it became a symbol of the friendship of our countries, Germany and Croatia. I am thankful for that as well.

Michael Brand, member of parliament, chairman of the committee for human rights and humanitarian aid in the parliamentary group of the CDU/CSU



Groundbreaking for the new building of the Evangelical Church in Čakovec on the 23rd of June in 2020. Andrej Plenković, prime minister of Croatia, laid the cornerstone for the new building. He said: “We are aware that our future depends on investments in education and youth.”

From the left: Željko Mraz, general secretary Baptist Union, chairman of the school management; Gordana Ramušćak, school principal; prime minister Andrej Plenković; Bratko Horvat, member of the school management

Opening of the ground level: At present, there is a lack of **about 30,000 €** to complete the ground level. Therefore, we are in need of support. Could you help to provide one of the 300 missing “virtual blocks”, each in a value of 100 €? Please consider donating some “money-blocks” so we can go on building the school with blocks of concrete. We plan on opening the new building as soon as the ground level is completed (about 1,000 square meters), featuring rooms focusing on natural sciences: biology, computer science, mathematics, chemistry, physics, and a multifunctional room providing multimedia and musical possibilities. Equipment is still needed.

The second and third floor will include sixteen additional rooms including a library of 2,000 square meters. For completion of those, we need further financial resources.

Dormitory social fund: The attached dormitory provides a place to live for 52 adolescents. At the moment, 24 of them are Roma and more of them come from socially deprived families. Often, these young people cannot afford their scheduled payment of 90 € per month. Because of that, we founded a social fund. Thank you very much for financial support to this purpose (adding the intended purpose “Schule/ Sozialfond”).



Personal contribution and volunteering: The Croatian friends engaged themselves intensely. During the last months, Croatian teams provided personal contributions to a value of more than 150,000 €. They consist of major areas of the interior construction in different crafts and almost the whole outer area. Bratko Horvat (on the right) has been coordinating the teams of volunteers for months. Benjamin Egger, Karlsruhe (on the left), and Jonathan Böke, Adelsheim (next to him), are helping there themselves in an operation in September/October in 2021.



Čakovec, 6th of September in 2021: A delegation from **Diakonie Karlsruhe** led by pastor **Stoll** visited our activities in Croatia. Aside from strategic discussions they also visited the construction site at the school and the Pastoral Center. For more than three years we have been working together with Diakonie Karlsruhe. Since then, they have provided us with contributions in kind, know-how, and two used vehicles which are in use locally. Petar Horvat (member of the school management) told us about a team of volunteers developing a concept of a "smart school" adapted particularly for this school building. This smart school system supports the use of the building similar to what is known as a smart home. The delegation from Karlsruhe was surprised and impressed by the fact that young adolescents passionately soldered components

so that ventilation, lights, heating system, projectors, etc. could be controlled digitally providing sustainability in the long-term and enabling an innovative school operation.

Regarding work with refugees, Diakonie Karlsruhe provides great experience due to its own department for migration and integration. In regard to this, we continue our exchange. Furthermore, at our meeting, we addressed the topic of mobile care, which we want to develop via our school and together with several local congregations in the medium-term. Our guests from Karlsruhe have already promised assistance regarding know-how. Moreover, we were introduced to the work of second-hand shops in Karlsruhe. We will continue to consult on possible developments of such activities. We also discussed the topic of earthquake aid. A return visit and ongoing cooperation are intended. In the picture, in the front from the left: Natalia Ansa Held, Patrick Hensel, Wolfgang Stoll, Jelena Kuhar Papesa, all from Diakonie Karlsruhe; Johannes Neudeck, *Hilfe konkret*; Petar Horvat, Puscine; behind them from the left: Željko Mraz, Zagreb; Ivica Horvat, Zagreb; Marc Beck, Diakonie Karlsruhe; Katharina Neudeck, *Hilfe konkret*. Missing in the picture: Evelyn Horvat, Bratko Horvat.



This link leads to the Croatian website of the school. You can watch there some videos and pictures:

www.sscakovec.hr

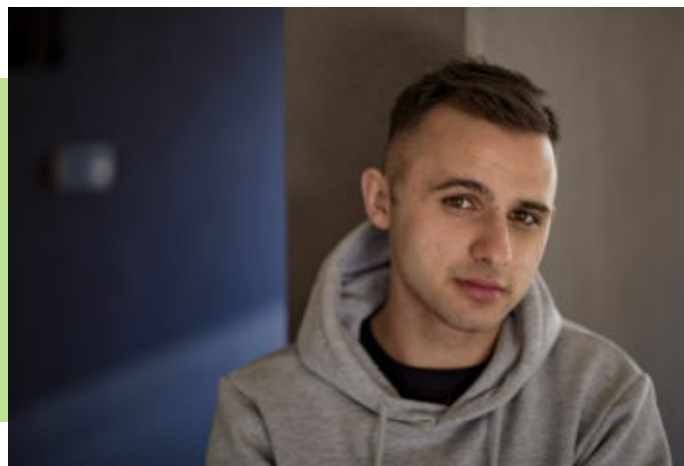


On the left: Handing over the vehicle in Karlsruhe in May 2021: Mrs. Kuhar Papesa, Diakonie Karlsruhe, and Mr. Stoll, director of the diaconal work in Karlsruhe, are preparing the necessary papers. The vehicle is in use in the earthquake area to serve in diaconal projects. On the right: Handing over the van in February 2018. On the left: Marc Beck, Diakonie Karlsruhe. The "yellow van" has been in use for the school in Čakovec since then.

Since the founding of our school young people from Roma villages have been integrated into our everyday school life and dormitory. Čakovec (about 27,000 inhabitants) is the capital of the administrative district of Međimurje (about 113,000 inhabitants). About 30,000 Roma live there, a third of all the Roma in Croatia. One of our former students and inhabitant of our dormitory is David, who comes from a Roma village and is studying in Zagreb now. The Croatian newspaper “telegram” portrayed him in April 2021. We translated the article so that we could share his story.

To understand the system of school in Croatia: After year 8, the students are divided into high school/college and other branches.

Having grown up in a Roma village, David went to school without being able to speak Croatian – today he is in his first year of university.



David Oršuš grew up in the Roma village of Orehovica in Međimurje. He achieved a medical degree at the school in Čakovec and today he is in his first year of studying nursing at the faculty of healthcare in Zagreb. The 20-year-old tells us of his growing up as a Roma and how he was able to bring the opposing sides of society he was living in to harmony:

I lived a typical Roma childhood. I played with other Roma children on the streets, and it was normal to hear disputes out of the houses and loud music all day. There rarely was peace or quietness. However, I was happy, because I never knew anything else but the way of living among the Roma. It became strange to me only as I started to visit the medical high school in Čakovec. During the week, I lived in the dormitory there, meeting non-Roma children. I started to understand what a different world I had been living in. I do claim to have had a happy childhood. The village is neater, there are asphalted streets, and there are soccer courts. But the people continue to live their way of life: They hang around together and thereby they are very attached to each other. They do not separate in their courtyards, but

they meet in the streets in summer and there they spend their days. However, I do believe that Roma villages are a wound to society. The children grow up in total isolation from the non-Roma society. Being separated from society as well as separating themselves from society is impeding my people. In the last years, there have been investments in Roma villages, but the problem does not come to an end because of water and power supply. Far greater a problem are the permanent, loud music, the treatment of the women, rudeness, and in general the lack of ordinary conditions of living of the 21st century.

My family is big: I have two younger sisters and one older one, as well as an older brother. My brother is already working and married, my other siblings are in school or kindergarten. My parents do not work. My mother left school in year 2 and my father left after primary school. I cannot accuse them for dropping school or marrying as minors, because that was customary among our people. Today my relationship with them is friendly for they are still young.

I attended a separate kindergarten and never learned to speak Croatian since Roma people speak Baja, an old form of Romanian. In primary school, a social worker translated everything to us at first. Not having had to follow any rules in the Roma village, we behaved quite wild, and our educator worked hard with us until progress became visible. During my first four years, I went to school among other Roma children from my village and so we did not mix with other children. This changed only in year 5. I always loved school. Even when I was a child, I liked to leave the Roma village to learn new stuff and to see another life.

Learning never proved to be a great difficulty to me. I wanted to work, to be left in peace, and in my case, somehow everything worked out just fine. I was one of the best students and stood out also among the non-Roma kids. In primary school, I volunteered to help other children with difficulties in learning. I was supported by a teacher and educator, accompanying me to interviews as the completion of primary school drew near, in order to find out in which school I fit the best to continue.

I decided to go to the medical high school in Čakovec, because healthcare had always interested me. I remember how we played hospital as children: I was the doctor, and the other kids were my patients. During this time at high school, I was able to do work experience in the regional hospital in Čakovec. My colleagues were impressed to hear that I as a

Roma visited the medical high school. There weren't any other Roma people working there, and they acknowledged, they acknowledged me and appreciated my choice.

For some time, I worked in the section of pediatrics. Some little Roma children were treated there, none of them able to speak Croatian. They wept all day. Understandably, I was not allowed to speak Baja in the hospital in general. However, in a break, I asked the senior nurse whether I could speak to them and other Roma children in Baja if they needed support. She allowed it and so I was able to build a bridge towards the children. I calmed them and spoke to them in Baja. I told them that everything was all right and that their mothers would come and visit them. I was finally able to calm them down entirely. To be in such a situation – not knowing the language of the people treating you and being only among people talking in other languages – would be hard for adults as well, but it was much harder for these children separated from their parents.

Later in my high school time, I did another work experience in Orehovica, at the local healthcare center. It was wonderful to be in contact with Roma of my village. It was a turning point as the Roma began to view me in a new way. I believe they were glad to have one of them there. They were not annoyed with me for continuing my education. I am

I experienced a happy childhood in the Roma village.



happy to be able to come to my village without being condemned by the people. I never had to listen to otherwise common phrases like “Why do you go to university? Why are you showing off so much?” Instead, I get to the village, I can talk to everybody and feel comfortable. Moreover, I cannot claim to have been discriminated against at school. In primary school, there were (too) many other Roma children, and in high school, I might have thought on one occasion, that someone looked at me in an evil way. When Roma enter the non-Roma world, they feel discriminated against quite easily even if discrimination is not the case. For instance, in the beginning, when someone told me that I did something poorly, I thought it was only because I am a Roma. Nowadays, I know that it was well-meant critique and advice. The teachers meant very well to me. My fellow students might have been a little irritated at first, but they accepted me quickly.

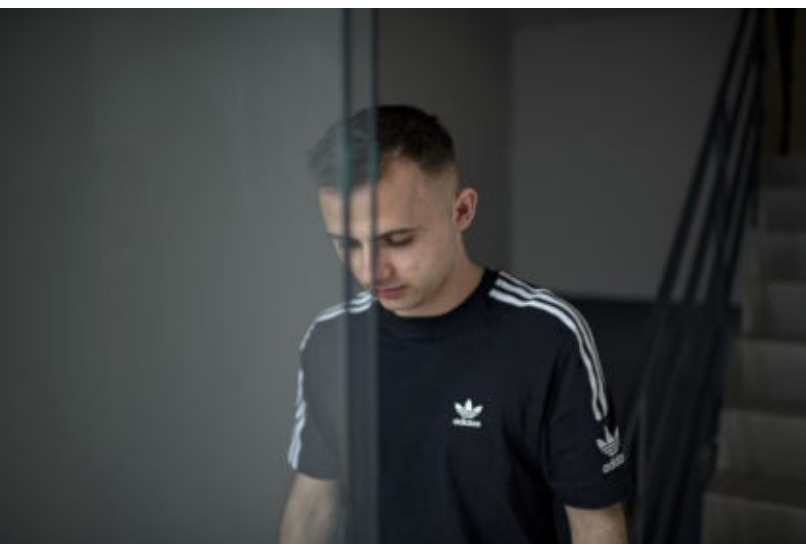
At first, I still felt uncomfortable. I remember how I stepped aside whenever my parents called me so that my classmates would not hear me speaking Baja. I was not ashamed of my language, but I was unsure of how my classmates would react. Today this is no longer a problem and I have become free of this thinking.

However, outside school, there was discrimination in Čakovec. During my time at high school, I lived in a student residence in Čakovec, spending most of my time with other Roma children living there. I remember an afternoon when we went to a local supermarket to

buy some food. Due to our appearance and clothing, we were easily recognized as being Roma. We entered together, but everyone bought their stuff themselves. I was the first one to finish and went to the checkout. There was a long queue and when I finally made it to the cashier, she asked me in front of everybody to turn my pockets inside out and to show everything I had in them. I was shocked. I told her that I had not stolen anything and emptied my pockets. I was appalled at how people would think bad of us because of our appearance and approach as a group. Did she apologize? No. Coldly and sharply she explained that it was a routine measure and she had to check for there were thefts all the time. On a similar occasion in a clothing store in Čakovec, I had to show my purchasing money to a security man.

At some point in everyday life, one forgets, but subconsciously it stays. Even today, as I enter a store, I pay attention to being fast, not to attract suspicion, and not to get in any situation I feel uncomfortable with.

In school, I often collapsed inwardly. In some weeks, I was proud of myself, and in other ones, I asked myself what I am doing there at all. I did not know where I belong. Our advisor in the dormitory, Renate Novački, provided much support. We talked many times and developed an amicable relationship. I asked her why I felt that way, of my ambiguity of belonging in two worlds. She told me not to worry and encouraged me to continue my schooling. Then, she claimed, I would no longer want to live here. At that point of time, this seemed impossible to me. As a Roma, one is encouraged early in life to marry and found a family. I was under pres-



I did not dare to speak Baja in front of my friends.

I belong to two opposing sides of society, but bringing them in harmony I feel great.



sure to marry at 20 as well, but Ms. Novački told me: “No, you will not. One year and you will have achieved a high school degree in the medical area, and you will not be able to comprehend what you have just said. you will see, in Zagreb you will unfold and become a free man.” And so it happened.

More and more, I endeavored to put distance between me and Čakovec. This was possible only by continuing my education. Reaching Zagreb, I felt freedom on the very first day. I looked at the people around me. I listened to stories in tongues I had never heard before. I saw dark-skinned people and Asians. I felt as free as walking with outstretched arms. Something had changed, and I am grateful to my advisor for keeping on trying to convince me of the possibility of success and that Zagreb is the right place to go for me.

Earlier in my life, aged 15 or 16, I did not wholly understand what it means to be Roma in a non-Roma world. I did not know that there are Roma who study at universities and that quite a few of us achieve education. In Čakovec, it seemed I was the only one experiencing such an ambiguity of belonging between these two worlds. But coming to Zagreb, I recognized that there are more of us and that everyone has got his own story to tell. The other Roma children in my school were average students and after three years of college, they went back to the village. I was different and pursued more. Arriving in Zagreb, I looked for community and wanted to meet as many studying Roma as possi-

ble. I joined the Roma youth organization of Croatia, the only active nongovernmental Roma organization in Croatia, bringing together young people. By our work, we try to fight prejudices against Roma in society. We work in nine branches - I’m a member in the area of employment, public relations, and media. We are planning on establishing a branch regarding the topic of healthcare I will lead.

Starting high school, I developed a growing desire to become part of Croatian society, for self-actualization, and to feel like a human being. During the week I was in school in Čakovec, but on the weekends I went back to my village and lived the Roma lifestyle. I was confused and did not know where I belonged and why I would like to come to good relations with the non-Roma society. I wanted to confirm myself and began to engage myself socially.

Therefore, I listed myself to the Red Cross as a volunteer. I won a competition for the intervention team, received training, and started to help the people “out there”. And now I am 20 years old, and I know that I will never let go of my Roma origin and language. Yet I am happy where I am and feel part of Croatian society. Do not misunderstand me, but material prosperity is an important topic in Croatia. Walking the streets or riding on the train, I love to listen to people. Often, they talk about careers or money. But as I come home to my Roma village there is no one talking about such topics. And due to that, I do not want to let go of both

societies. Tired of professionalism, school, and learning, I come home for a few days and experience relaxation and relief. I belong to two opposing sides of society, but bringing them in harmony I feel great.

If I had stayed in my village and not come to the school, I doubt that I would have achieved what I did. The environment and the living conditions there are too big an obstacle. At home, I lacked access to the Internet, printer, and computer. I could not simply borrow a book I needed. To stay there would have been very difficult.

Today I am living in the student residence Cvjetni in Zagreb. When I finish my coursework, I will become a Bachelor of Nursing. I plan on working in the hospital then. To survive financially I am working for the student services. Recently our courses have been online, but soon the live courses will start. I am a little unsure of how my colleagues will accept me. It is no problem for me to withdraw if someone treats me wrong, but I would not like my newly experienced freedom in Zagreb to be threatened. I do not want to be looked upon as a miracle being a successful Roma. This way of thinking should not exist. On the contrary: Everyone can be successful, no matter where he or she comes from. In my neighborhood, there are already two young men studying after finishing college. I want the educational situation of the Roma community to improve. My little siblings do go to high school, yet I do not know whether they will go on. So far, I cannot see in them the desire to achieve more, and I cannot influence that. Still, I am annoyed to see some Roma colleagues, knowing they have never gone out in the evening or experienced social (youth) life outside the village community. For instance, my mother has never drunk a coffee anywhere or gone out. Describing to her the life outside and what I have done, she looks at me in bewilder-

ment and tells me: “Joooj, how much you have experienced already!”.

I know that my mother is proud of me. At first, she could not understand why I would like to study at university. It seemed strange to her to educate myself further instead of starting to work as I had already achieved a degree at school. But I could understand her way of thinking and explained my decisions to her. Many of the people in the Roma village would not understand my decisions as well. Staying there their whole lives they never get to know life outside the village.

Due to that, I try to expand the horizon for my little 4-year-old sister Lana. When I come home we sit on the bed together and I tell her what I have seen in Zagreb or show pictures of the advent to her, describing to her how the people play and dance on the streets. I want to open new perspectives to her as she is still so young. I teach Croatian to her, and she is proud of being able to count to ten. Having successfully done that she applauds herself, and this sight is a great encouragement for me to work with her and to grant her other prospects than I had. I do not want her to feel lost between two worlds as I did.

(Original text: Petra Smoljak; pictures of David: Marko Jurinec)

See here the original publication:

<https://bit.ly/3kJemoB>





At Erasmus-Day this year, students were introduced to possible nursing education and international exchanges in the EU. Every year the school provides Erasmus programs including visits to Germany, Netherlands, Spain, and Slovenia.



ABOUT THE WORK OF THE CHURCH



May 2021: We are visiting a Roma village near Čakovec. A young man (on the left) working on the farm of Bratko Horvat provided us with insights into his home and family. The way of living and the situation there affected our team profoundly. Many people had equipped us with donations in kind and we were able to distribute them locally. In the middle is Johannes Neudeck. Beside him on the right are volunteers Johannes Schlager and Hannes Schmalzhaf. At left are standing Stefan Eißler and Naphtali

Grauer, volunteers as well as Marco Dummler taking the picture.

We are grateful for the fruitful and long-standing cooperation with local evangelical churches, also their diverse church activities and tasks. Statewide, especially in the region around Čakovec, we are in connection with many congregations and work together in activities regarding youth work, also with Roma, summer camps, and evangelization, among others in cooperation with Pro Christ/Hoffnungsfest. Moreover, we work together regarding the distribution of Bibles, working with literature and accompanying and training junior staff members by means of missions, seminaries, and encounters with the youth. One initiator and actor in the local team is Petar Horvat, engaging himself locally and interregionally with his wife Evelyn and three children in church, school, youth work, and musical tasks. We are glad for our friendship and long-term cooperation. At the same time, we are happy for younger people gradually stepping up and taking on responsibility and leadership.



Evelyn and Petar Horvat,
Puscine

I grew up as the oldest son in a Christian family. I have four brothers and my parents have already engaged themselves in church work and aid for other people for many years. When the war broke out in 1992, I was nine years old and experienced how we literally hosted thousands of people. My parents' example motivated me. Among many other tasks, my mother has dedicated herself to engagement in Roma villages for almost 30 years. My father engages himself in various projects as well, in particular he cares deeply for the school project and its new building. Today, I am an elder in a small evangelical congregation in Puscine, and I work with the evangelical school in Čakovec, where my wife Evelyn is a teacher. We have three children. I am still musically active, the band Octoberlight toured also through Germany with many concerts. Apart from the school, there are many diverse formats and programs by which we try to reach children and adolescents from every social or ethnic background and to share the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Christian values. I am convinced that these values can provide a solid foundation for a better future, and we are responsible to share them with the new generations so that they are able to find a new way to implement these everlasting truths in practical life, benefitting us all in this faster and faster changing world. To secure a sustainable future for Croatia and Europa the ones shaping the future have to be brought up with the right values.

Petar Horvat, 39, entrepreneur, voluntarily engaged as a church elder, member of the school management in Čakovec, and chairman of the Baptist Union in Croatia

Prof. Dr. Dr. Roland Werner, theologian and chairman of proChrist, has been knowing and visiting the Western Balkans for almost 30 years. For instance, we went on a mission together in Sarajevo after the war. He published books that were translated to Croatian, and in many encounters in many places he campaigned in particular for young people, foremost in regard to the topic “believing in thinking”. In spring 2021, he gave a lecture to our teaching staff in Čakovec about the Christian conception of man. We appreciate further cooperation with him and his team. At the farm festival 2021, a Christian festival for culture and music, Roland and Felix were invited by the Croatian preparation team to participate in the program by giving speeches and sermons.

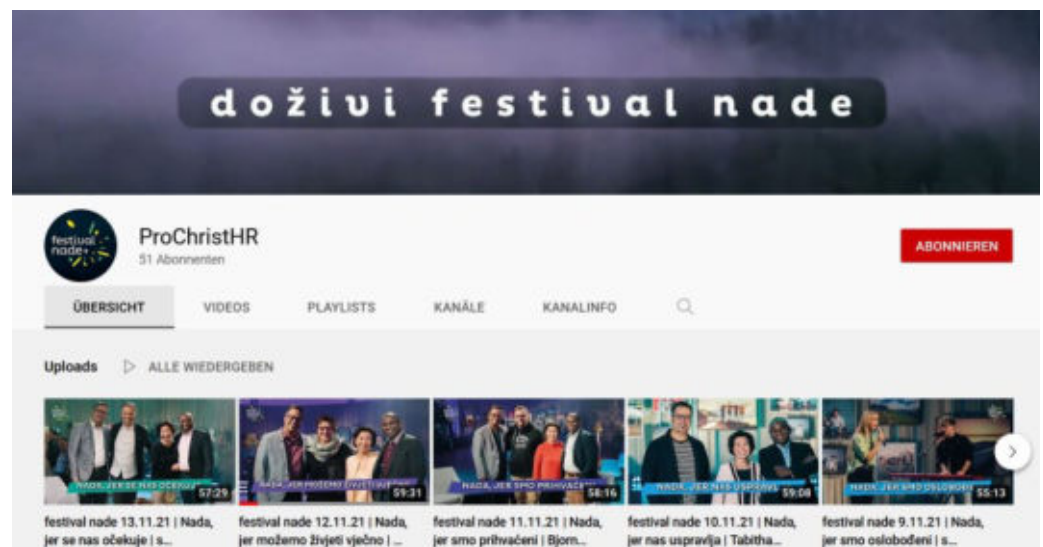


Encounter and exchange during the farming festival in July 2021 in our leisure facility Farm Poleve: Felix Sunderman, staff member from Roland; Roland Werner, Marburg; Lukas Schiling, Hüfenthal, volunteer from *Hilfe konkret*, Johannes Neudeck, Michal Ausperger, Bad Wimpfen, and Stefan Eißler, Ostflidern, both volunteers from *Hilfe konkret*.

PROCHRIST – FESTIVAL OF HOPE

To share and watch the videos of the Festival of Hope in 2021 including Croatian subtitles (the video is in German) follow this link:

<https://bit.ly/3DMRlml>



Hundreds of thousands of watchers and much approval were the results of the evangelical week “hoffnungsfest” [In German the word “hoffnungsfest” is a play on words, meaning “festival of hope” as well as “being confident in hope”; translator’s note]. It was produced by proChrist e.V. and broadcasted from the 7th to the 13th of November on the proChrist YouTube channel and the Christian television channel Bibel TV in Germany. The first chairman of proChrist Roland Werner concludes: “In a new shape and explicitly produced to be broadcast in the TV, we were able to send a strong program with “hoffnungsfest”. Since the 7th of November, we have had made more than 230,000 views. Adding to these the watchers of Bibel TV we were able to reach more than half a million people.” The key topic of the program was “Experiencing God – Encountering Jesus”. Completing the evangelical evenings in a talk format, personal stories of life and faith were contributed. 375 churches and congregations joined the festival at about 150 locations of live broadcasting.

Since 1993, there has been cooperation between proChrist and local congregations in Croatia. The festival of hope – Festival nade in Croatian – involved more than ten translation volunteers so that live broadcast was possible. Seven hours of main program meant over 50,000 words to translate. Aside from live broadcasting in several local churches, interested people were able to watch the evening on YouTube. There were more than 1,000 views for the videos on YouTube. Due to great interest, the recordings remain in use in use for the countrywide church work. There is also work going on on the possibility of broadcasting on the local TV channels.



Leaving their environment of the Roma village behind and being completely free of social constraints to discover another world, the children are especially open to the word of God. In their everyday lives, they usually experience poverty, violence, and abuse of alcohol. And since there are so many children, it is impossible to take time with every child in the ongoing work in the village. However, at the summer camps, there are fewer children meaning there is more time for every individual one. Moreover, for our regular visitors, our camps are an inspiring reward. Organizing the camp, I get to know the parents of the children. Year by year their confidence towards us grows, and they often support us if needed e. g. by driving the children. In cooperation with an evangelical congregation in Čakovec, our three-day-long camp for children took place from the 17th to 19th of September. 20 children aged 8 to 14 joined in.





The subject of the camp was “love” including three variations of love:

Agape, love of God, described in 1.Corinthians 13

Phileo, amicable love, perceivable in the friendship of David and Jonathan

Eros, physical love, portrayed in the example of David and Bathsheba

Adding to the listening of biblical stories there were personal stories of life. We sang together and learned useful things. Of course, there were many games as well, and all the time staff members were ready to conduct personal conversations with individual children. The organization team consisted mainly of volunteers from our community and other congregations in the region (Purine, Držimurec, Varaždin, Koprivnica, Zagreb). In this year, we worked with the biggest team of volunteers yet, increasing the beauty of the communion.

Together as a local team and knowing about the great amount of practical as well as praying support from our friends in Germany, we were able to raise Jesus up among the children and to show them the love of their father and creator. We are thankful to our father for allowing us to sow seed in this way, being confident of its sprouting in its perfect time.

Danica Kosak, a volunteer from the Baptist church in Puscine (at the top on the right in the picture)



AHRWEILER: EMERGENCY AID AFTER FLOOD

Hilfe konkret had already participated in aiding after flood catastrophes in Saxony in 2002 as well as in Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt in 2013. Furthermore, we participated by sending operations to the Balkans after floods in 2012 and 2014 and helping affected people with concrete aid.

Obviously, *Hilfe konkret* participated in aiding after the flood in Rhineland Palatinate this year by sending a team providing local catastrophe aid. The volunteers Micha Ausperger, Bad Wimpfen, and Felix Neudeck, Bad Rappenau, report.





Shockingly the flood catastrophe came upon Germany again in 2021. Many people lost their lives, suffered greatly, and experienced severe losses, moreover causing them expenses of unimaginable amounts. In Ahrweiler, 128 people died and 764 were hurt, while dozens of livelihoods were destroyed and hundreds of buildings were damaged in parts or as a whole (accounts taken from SWR, German radio station). To the extent possible to us, we engaged ourselves with our own vehicles, machines, and tools.

Led by Matthias Neudeck, Bad Rappenau, we sent a team of volunteers to to the Ahrweiler Altenahr/Altenburg region to help wherever possible. We organized three operations in July/August, September/October, and November, overall helping for twelve days and with eight to twelve people at a time. We worked in contact and cooperation with local congregations being coordinated by local emergency personnel trying to support the affected people in their various tasks. The team removed the core of houses (removal of screed rubble and damaged material), pumped water out of the basement of a gymnasium, removed oil tanks that were welded in basements, removed heating units, and aided in a “helpers’ workshop”. In all of these projects, we are grateful for all of your prayers, donations, and other support. Due to your help, we were able to help in this special emergency.

Thank you very much!





FULL-TIME COMMITMENT OF JOHANNES NEUDECK

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

As the auditor of *Hilfe konkret*, I thank sincerely everyone who supported the mission work and the attached half-time job of Johannes Neudeck in the last five years loyally and on a regular basis.

Dating to the 1st of September in 2021, Johannes Neudeck committed himself again full-time to missionary and diaconal tasks in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He is supported actively by the partnership of his wife Katharina. The diverse work ties to almost 30 years of local cooperation with churches and congregations. The projects accompanied by *Hilfe konkret*, Mannheim, will be supported and continued.

Now, in December 2021, I approach you with a personal appeal. To continue this work there is need of prayer and intercession on the one hand, but on the other hand, there is also need for further, if possible, regular, financial support to provide for the job. The financing is not covered as yet. This missionary commitment is based solely on donations. Formally, Johannes Neudeck is employed by the Vereinigten Deutschen Missionshilfe (VDM) – as was the case in the first phase of his service starting in 1992. The salary and the costs of labor are paid by VDM, but the funds originate from private donors. The money donated for such an employee is collected by VDM and paid as a salary or in response to an expense report. Thank you very much for every contribution!

Klaus Brinkmann, auditor and tax consultant, Radebeul

Possibilities to support the commitment in Croatia:

Recipient: Vereinigte Deutsche Missionshilfe e. V. Bremer Straße 41, D-27211

Bassum

Bank details: Volksbank Syke IBAN: DE33 2916 7624 0012 5776 00

Intended purpose: Neudeck/Kroatien · AC058000

To directly support this project via a donation to *Hilfe konkret* please add “Neudeck/Croatia” as the intended purpose.

Press release from the Evangelical Alliance Germany concerning the new commitment:

<https://bit.ly/3Dhg9YJ>



VOICES COMMENTING ON THE NEW COMMITMENT OF JOHANNES NEUDECK:

Johannes Neudeck is a primary rock in the humanitarian and spiritual aid in the Balkans. It is admirable that he is willing to commit himself full-time to this task again in the future, together with his wife Katharina, with no guarantee of an ensured salary.

Prof Dr. Peter Zimmerling, professor of practical theology at the University of Leipzig



Thinking back to the year of 1993, I remember aid transports and missions in Bosnia and Croatia conducted by *Hilfe konkret*. I have participated in several of them, and I have never forgotten the intensity of the work, the gratitude of the people, and the rugged yet cordial togetherness. The times in the Balkans with *Hilfe konkret* helped form me, leading my way to later working in the sector of humanitarian aid myself. Being asked about my career path, I tell of the unforgettable experiences in Orasje, Pakrac, or Bihać. Today, almost 30 years later, Johannes is still going on with the same amount of courage and at least the same amount of passion, daring to take a step many would not dare to go: He exposes himself to the unpredictability of a job based solely on donations so that he might help even more intensively wherever men or women are in need.

Personally, I want to thank *Hilfe konkret* and everyone engaged, in particular Johannes, for all I have learned through you. I wish to you the endurance and strength to attend to the people in concrete needs, and support and accompany them with your charity and experience of life.

Christoph Waffenschmidt, chairman of World Vision Germany e. V., Berlin





Johannes Neudeck's heart is beating with a great passion for God's mission and the people of the Balkans. I was able to experience that myself on a mission together in July 2018. It was impressive to see how he connects people with each other and lends a hand where help is needed, thereby building the kingdom of God in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina together with others in many ways. I am joyful that he is able to engage himself with *Hilfe konkret* full-time again now, sincerely wishing him, his wife Katharina, and his family God's blessing.

Sister Anne Rentschler, Diakonissenmutterhaus Aidlingen

Since ProChrist in 1993, I have known Johannes Neudeck and his great engagement for Christians and congregations in Croatia, but in particular for people in need and valuable social projects. I am glad that he and his wife Katharina decided to devote his full professional time to the work of *Hilfe konkret* e.V. This decision being a great risk, there is need for companions, friends, and donors. His work is an important signal of hope for evangelical projects and valuable educational work for young people in the north of Croatia, but also for refugees, victims of earthquakes, and Roma. During several visits since 1994, I have been able to convince myself of that again and again. Therefore, I wish continuing courage in faith and God's escorting blessing.

Frieder Trommer, chairman of Deutscher Gemeinschafts-Diakonieverband e.V., Marburg



I have known Johannes Neudeck and his family for many years and have gotten to know him as a highly engaged, utterly proactive human and friend. In different professional stations in mission and development aid in the churches, he achieved great expertise. I can only welcome and thoroughly support his new service on a full-time and donation-based engagement in the Balkans. For this undertaking, I wish to him and his wife Katharina as well as their family every good imaginable and God's bountiful blessing.

Pastor Steffen Kern, Präses of Gnadauer Gemeinschaftsverband, Kassel

HILFE KONKRET AWARDED WITH THE HOFFNUNGSTRÄGERPREIS



Steffen Kern, Katharina and Johannes Neudeck



The symbolical award: A sculpture made of brass by Karl Imfeld



Josip Juratovic, member of parliament, is responsible in the parliamentary party SPD, among other things, for the regions of Southeast Europe, civilian prevention of crisis, human rights, development, humanitarian aid, and migration.

In May 2021 the *Hoffnungsträgerpreis* [“award for people on whom hopes are pinned”; translator’s note] of the evangelical Gemeinschaftsverband of Apis was awarded to *Hilfe konkret* and conferred to Johannes and Katharina Neudeck. Pastor Steffen Kern describes the hope being illustrated by this award: “Hope of heaven is a characteristic of us Christians. But having hope of heaven means being aware of responsibility on earth. And there is much to achieve. One issue [...] is to be found at the borders of Europe: People are in flight, being in great needs and challenges, living in conditions hardly worthy of a human being. And there are some who care for those. There are people engaged in the aid organization *Hilfe konkret*, including Katharina and Johannes Neudeck.”

On the website of Apis there is found the description of a laureate: “The *Hoffnungsträgerpreis* is awarded to people who have engaged themselves socially in a particular manner, in the knowledge of their responsibility to God and human beings. Thereby we are taking up an early pietistic major concern, imprinted by personalities deeply rooted in the Christian faith engaging themselves socially and diaconally. Loving God and the people, having hope of heaven and assuming responsibility for this world: These belong together.”

In his laudatory speech for his “friend Johannes”, Josip Juratovic, member of the German parliament, vouched for this hope in the hearts of the people engaged with *Hilfe konkret*. Some excerpts of his speech: “I know nobody who is engaged with as much lifeblood as Johannes. To me, he is a brother

in spirit, and we are connected via three major points in our lives: Our faith in God, our love for the Western Balkans, and our longing for peace and justice. We are both Christians, and you, Johannes, are a very special Christian. you tackle things, look at the work, and find the necessary solution. your association *Hilfe konkret* is showing impressively how you are living up to the meaning of loving your neighbor. Altruism means to you to assume responsibility and to help people in need – locally, practically, and concretely.”

Hilfe konkret thanks the Apis and everyone engaging themselves with us. “The *Hoffnungsträgerpreis* is an encouragement for every one of us.” (Pastor Steffen Kern)

For the video of the award:

<https://bit.ly/3xh5QSI>





HILFE KONKRET E.V.

CHRISTLICHE HILFE IN DER WELT

your donations and tax receipts

Sincere thanks to everyone generously supporting us in our projects. We are in need of your help in the future as well.

Donation accounts for *Hilfe konkret* in Germany:

Deutsche Bank Frankfurt	IBAN: DE60 5007 0024 0252 7000 00	BIC: DEUTDEDBFRA
Volksbank Rhein-Neckar eG	IBAN: DE68 6709 0000 0011 0461 00	BIC: GENODE61MA2

Further instructions regarding tax receipts:

Usually, the tax receipts are issued and sent retroactively for the last year in the first week of the following year. To receive tax receipts please add your full name and address in the intended purpose on the transfer forms. Please check that your bank is allowed to and is actually passing on your address. Please contact us directly if you are missing a tax receipt for there are many transfers without an address.

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