



# Peace on the Streets

**Tools, best practices, knowledge  
around campaigns and street actions  
for youth workers and peace activists**



This toolkit is the outcome of the training „Peace on the Streets“ organised in Vienna from 1-7 June 2019 by Service Civil International Österreich (<http://www.sci.or.at>).

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# Why this toolkit?

**This is the outcome of a training course in Vienna in 2019.** With the project „Peace on the Streets“, we brought together 28 youth workers and peace activists from 17 European countries to reflect on creating campaigns and street actions around peace, non-violence and antimilitarism. It was funded by the European Commission through its Erasmus+ program and took place in Vienna from 1-7 June 2019. The hosting organisation was the Austrian branch of the international peace organisation Service Civil international (SCI). Apart from SCI, the participating youth workers and activists were connected to networks such as War Resisters International, IFOR, Alliance, ICYE and CCIVS. During the training, the participants got to know best practices of campaigns and street actions, both from within their organisations and networks, from historic figures such as Bertha von Suttner and from more recent developments in areas such as guerilla communication and online campaigning.



**We don't talk enough about peace and non-violence.** It is a common practice to export weapons to countries in war, both directly and indirectly. Several countries uphold the military conscription and force young people into a military training. These things are not big political topics. In European or national election debates, they are rarely talked about. We need activism and education to bring these topics to the forefront of the public discourse again. With this toolkit, we want to create a base for youth workers to come back to for ideas and input.



**Peace activism should be young.** With frames for becoming active in civil society, e.g. through volunteering or street actions, we want to motivate young people to become active citizens around issues of peace, non-violence and antimilitarism. We want to encourage them to make our democracies more alive, both online and through „traditional“ activism on the streets. With this toolkit, we want to give some incentives on how to work with young people around these issues.



**SCI has a lot of experience with peace activism and it's time to collect some of our skills.** Since its beginnings in 1920 with the first volunteering camp depicted above, Service Civil International in its pacifist roots and values strongly opposes any form of militarization. Instead, we promote a culture of peace that brings people from different cultures and backgrounds together to overcome prejudices and hatred. Usually, we organise volunteering projects in order to reach this culture of peace, which might involve other forms of activism such as the ones described here. There is always an international aspect to our projects.

# Starting a peace campaign or action

In this section, we will introduce some reflection and planning tools that help you to define how to begin planning an action. It might be helpful for you to apply several of these tools. They overlap each other, but you might get different results and different information out of them.

**Essential questions.** When planning a campaign or action in order to make an issue related to peace, non-violence and antimilitarism more visible, we need to start from the basics by asking ourselves some questions:

- What do I want to achieve by doing this?
- Why do I want to do this? Why is it important?
- When do I want to start doing this? When do I want to finish?
- Where do I want to do this?
- Who does this? Whom do I want to reach?
- How do I want to do this?

**Problem Analysis.** What is the actual problem you want to tackle? To understand your problem and the need and structures behind it is an important step in the beginning of your planning phase. It might require some additional research, if you don't have the solutions yourself. You could do a survey among people who know about the problem, you could read up on the backgrounds online, you could talk to people who know more about this than you.

One way to start formulating a problem is to follow these three steps:

1. State the issue, e.g. "Weapons exports"
2. Make it specific, e.g. "Weapons exports to Saudi Arabia"
3. Localize it: e.g. "Weapons exports to Saudi Arabia in Austria"

Some more questions to help you reach a deeper understanding of your problem:

- Is the problem relevant? For whom is it relevant?
- Who causes the problem?

- Who identified the problem?
- Is the problem new or does everyone know about it already?
- Can you explain the problem?
- Which images show the problem very well?
- Are there solutions out there for the problem?
- Does the solution cause other problems? For whom?
- Can a campaign or action improve the situation around the problem?
- Are other groups and organisations already better equipped and experienced at dealing with the problem?

**NAOMIE as your start.** A common concept in project planning is NAOMIE. Each letter in the acronym stands for a different part of project planning, which is a great introduction to looking at a project.

- **Needs analysis:** What are the needs you are trying to address? Who needs your campaign or action? In what aspect that you are trying to address does the world need to become a better place?
- **Aims:** What is the overall vision you have for how the world and society should change about the issue you are addressing? Where do you want to end up eventually?
- **Objectives:** What concrete goals do you have for your campaign in order to get closer to your aims?
- **Methods:** How will your campaign or action look like? What will you do?
- **Implementation:** How many people do you need? What and how much money, materials, tools or other resources? What is the timescale for our project?
- **Evaluation:** What else do you need to do once the project is finished? What new needs have been created from your project?

**Making your objectives SMART.** While it may be easier for you to find your overall aims, coming up with good objectives for a project is a real skill. A very common tool for finding objectives is to check whether they are SMART! Again an acronym, there are different ways to define the letters:

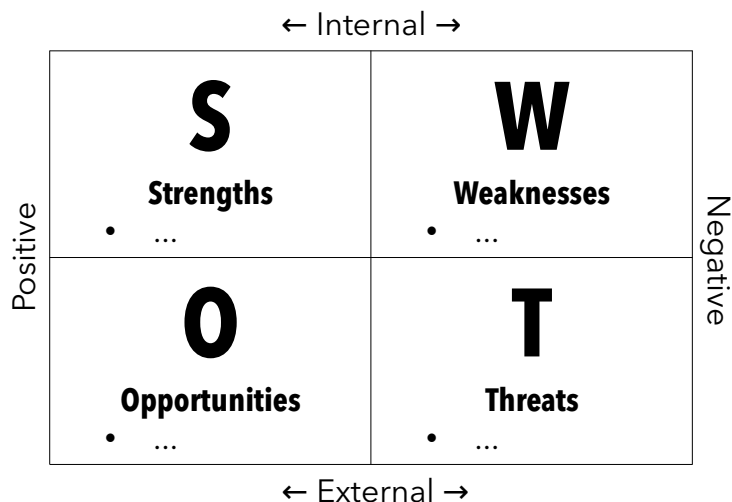
- **Specific:** Come back to the Essential questions above - who, when, here, how, etc.
- **Measurable:** How can you track progress within your project? How do you measure whether you succeeded? Give your objectives something that you can measure, e.g. number of people reached, number of mentions in the press, etc.
- **Attainable:** Is the goal completely out of reach for you? Then tune it down a bit, so you can actually tackle this within your scope. (Alternatives for A are **Achievable** or **Attractive**)

- **Relevant:** Is this objective actually something that you should tackle and not other people? Is the objective necessary for you to reach your aims? Is the goal consistent with other goals you have set? (Alternatives for R are **Reachable** or **Reasonable**)
- **Time-bound:** By what day of what year will you have completed this goal? In order for a project to be successful, it is really helpful to set yourself deadlines and to create a sense of urgency.

**Reflecting on your context by doing a SWOT Analysis.** Another common tool for project planning, a SWOT Analysis helps you to look at possible challenges and possibilities that might await you before, during and after the project. Basically, you list **Strengths** (S), **Weaknesses** (W), **Opportunities** (O) and **Threats** (T) for your project. While strengths and weaknesses are things within yourself or/and your organisation, opportunities and threats are broader things in society and outside that might help or hinder you in achieving your objectives.

Think about your own capacities, the capacities of your organisation or organisations/groups/people around you, but also your opponent's capacities, society as a whole and practical issues.

The model can look like this:



# Action forms

There are countless ways how you can gain attention for your issue. Some really common methods are:

- Having a **campaign website**
- **Social media**
- **Campaign videos**
- **Press releases**
- **Petitions**
- **Testimonials by celebrities**
- **Communication behind the scenes** (e.g. with opponents)

There are many different ways of doing **demonstrations and street protests**. The easiest way is to have a few people standing at a symbolic place with a message e.g. on signs or on T-shirts, either silently or shouting slogans. Think about whom you want to reach (journalists? random people on the street?) and how you can reach them. Some things that help your demonstration become more visible and more interesting in a media landscape that is saturated with news and actions:

- A huge number of people - That is the goal of mass protests, to get as many people on the streets as possible, so that media can not *not* report about your action.
- Funny or interesting costumes, e.g. animal costumes, colors, nudity, don't dress like a protester
- Funny or interesting demo signs
- Noise, music or silence
- Unlikely alliances, i.e. getting groups that are not associated with an issue to be in solidarity with your campaign (e.g. „Grandmas against Killer Robots!“)
- Doing it in a prestigious or symbolic location, e.g. at a high-level event of the opponent

**Guerrilla communication** gives an interesting twist to activism. Here you take on the symbols, language and identities of those you want to criticize and you mock and criticize them, basically using their own PR weapons against themselves. This can be for example fake ads (advertising/subvertising) and fake press releases on behalf of the company or institution you want to criticize.



Another interesting and historically pretty successful action form is **civil disobedience**. That's the intentional breaking of a law in order to showcase one's protest against the law's legitimacy. Rosa Parks for example didn't get up from her seat in a bus in the segregated US in the 1950s, even though it was reserved for white people and she was black. Doing civil disobedience - e.g. blocking or occupying something - needs, among other things, a good moral ground why to do it, it needs experience, good planning and a good legal team.

# Strategic Storytelling

In order for a campaign or action to reach its goals, you need to be strategic. Here are some tips for you when planning one.

**Who is your audience?** Whom do you want to reach with your campaign or action? What do typical followers and supporters look like? What media platforms do they use? (Which social media do they use, which newspapers do they read, which shows do they watch?) What kind of language do you need to use to reach them?

**There is a conflict.** Every problem is basically a conflict between different interests. That your goal has not been achieved on its own probably has to do with some people in power not being willing to comply with what you want (e.g. a certain political party or the Ministry of Defense doesn't want to abolish military conscription). Media are much more likely to report about your action, if they can identify this conflict and they see the conflict as a relevant one. Make clear that there are different sides in this and on which side you stand on. Create actions that protest against your opposing side's positioning and put those into media.

**Keep it simple, stupid! (K.I.S.S.)** When people hear about your action or campaign, it should be very easy for them to understand what it is about. They should easily be able to tell other people about it and to repeat your core message. Having witty references to pop culture can be fun, but it might make it inaccessible to a lot of people who don't get them. Of course lots of issues are complex and multifaceted, but one of the difficulties of doing activism is to make complicated matters simple. Even the title of your campaign shouldn't be anything complicated ideally.

**Emotions are key.** While facts and rational arguments are great and can be part of your reasoning, what really reaches most audiences is emotions. Emotional images, emotional language, sad piano music in the background of a campaign video.

**Don't keep doing the same thing!** If you want to make media continuously report about your campaign and your goals - and thus also giving visibility to the problem you want to address - you should not just stage one street protest looking exactly the same

after another. Bring variety into your campaign, use different action forms, have a surprise element.

**Be a superlative.** For media to report about you, it can be interesting for them, if your action is the first, the biggest, the only of its kind.

**Keep a red thread.** If you are doing several actions, make sure that there is a consistency between them in terms of language used, message, images etc. People should recognize that it all comes from the same place and has the same goals. When they hear about your campaign in different points of time, they should be led through your campaign like through a story, with continuous progression.

# Best practices: Cool campaigns and actions

It is always good to look at what other people have done and are doing to see what works, what gets attention and what actually changes things. During our training, we shared a few cool and interesting campaigns and actions (around peace, non-violence and antimilitarism, but also other topics) that could be an inspiration for your own planning. Some examples here:

**Women in Black:** This women's organisation stages vigils in front of places where militaristic decisions are made. Women dress up in black funeral clothing, often with flowers or other symbols associated with grief and funerals, and protest against war. ([More here](#))

**Our Grief is not a Cry for War:** After the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on 11th September 2001, artists staged a performance in different places in the city to announce that they were grieving for the victims of the attacks, but still not asking for the US to use this as a justification for starting a war. The artists wore all black and signs depicting the name of the campaign. ([More here](#))

**End the Cage Age:** It is still legal to keep animals in cages in huge factory farms. This EU-wide petition asked the European Union to ban cages from animal agriculture, e.g. cages for pigs, chickens or other farmed animals. Hundreds of animal rights organisations from around Europe were part of the petition and more than 1.6 million signatures were signed. This helped to make the issue of cage farming much more visible and it reached the goal of forcing a discussion on abolishing it in the European Parliament. ([More here](#))

**eva.stories:** What if a Jewish teenage girl in the Holocaust had Instagram? This art project on Instagram staged for several months Insta stories and posts on an Instagram account in order to gain visibility for the atrocities of the Shoah and to reflect on how this still relates to today's society and media landscape. ([More here](#))

**Stop Killer Robots:** Several countries (e.g. the US, China, Israel, Russia, South Korea and the UK) are developing fully autonomous weapons which by themselves would be able to kill, e.g. during armed conflict but also to suppress protest. The campaign informs about the situation through simple language („killer robots“). ([More here](#))

**Save the Arctic:** Greenpeace wants to prohibit industrial fishing and oil drilling in the Arctic in order to preserve Arctic ecosystems. On their website, they ask people to sign petitions about the issue. In several actions, e.g. through hanging banners on a Gazprom drilling site in Russia or by making a parody website of the Shell company, the campaign gained a lot of attention and became controversial. ([More here](#))

**Clean Clothes Campaign:** A network of NGOs and labour unions want to make the poor living and working conditions of workers in the global garment industry better by raising the issue, pointing out the malpractice of retailers and distributors, educating consumers and supporting workers on site. ([More here](#))



# Money, money, money

How to get money for an action or campaign? There are different ways for you to move forward with this:

**No budget.** Do you need money actually? The easiest way to deal with an action is to see what resources you need and then to try and get around this with as little money as possible (low budget) or no money at all (no budget), as then you save a lot of time and effort on complying to your funder's guidelines and conditions, e.g. on what kind of actions you can or cannot do or on reporting.

**Public money.** This is a really common source for funding:

- city governments,
- embassies,
- federal ministries (e.g. culture or youth),
- regional governments,
- Council of Europe (e.g. the European Youth Foundation)
- European Commission (e.g. Erasmus+ like this toolkit here)

All of these institutions give money to youth and activist projects. Think about whether this could fit your project though - while some public institutions might actually be really supportive of also political actions and campaigns around peace and non-violence, others might see you as detrimental to their own work.

**Foundations.** Both public institutions and wealthy people or families might create funds to support non-profit projects with specific causes. Some foundations might especially focus on the topic that you're trying to address. Foundations are not a big source of project funding in every country, but e.g. in Switzerland, Germany, Norway and the US there are a lot of foundations that also give out money to projects outside of their own national scope.

**Donations, sponsorships, etc.** You might also think about crowdfunding, which is collecting money online by lots of people giving small donations and you offering them something in return (e.g. a product or an experience). You could organise a solidarity party, where people come to dance and the entrance fee goes as a donation to your project. Some companies might also be keen on providing you with materials and capacities for free, if they support the cause of your campaign or action.

# Further reading

[\*\*campaignstrategy.org\*\*](http://campaignstrategy.org). This is a great website by the British Greenpeace campaign strategist Chris Rose, featuring some basic tips for campaigning and lots of interesting further resources.

[\*\*350.org Trainings\*\*](http://350.org). This climate justice organisation gives lots of lessons on how to create grassroots actions and campaigns. They have very hands-on and useful tips on how to communicate with journalists, creating the right video, which images to use, but also on for example reaching decision-makers through people power.

[\*\*Beautiful Rising\*\*](http://BeautifulRising.org). This beautiful activist web platform has lots of interesting tactics and tips when planning a creative action or campaign. It connects it to inspiring best practices and stories from all over the world.