



# Annual Review 2024



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# A Message from the Chairman



Dear colleagues and friends,

It is a pleasure to introduce our Annual Activity Report for 2024. This report sums up a particular year that saw humanitarian crises all around Europe - the continuation of the war in Ukraine, and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. We hope you will find it interesting and contribute to a better understanding of our networks' activities and the realisation of our shared values through actions and projects.

Thanks to the work of the Clinical Working Group, JOIN published a third story for children between 5 and 7 years introducing further first aid topics. *Robyn's story* provides an awareness of potential risks and situations that may lead to injury or illness, how to avoid them and how to react in critical situations. It is available to all users for free in many different languages and can be downloaded on [www.firstaidjoin.org](http://www.firstaidjoin.org)

While our member organisations share one single aspiration to help people in everyday life as well as in crises, the actual range of services – based on the Christian values of the Orders of St John - is extensive: ambulance services, help to the homeless, retirement homes, hospitals, first aid and first aid training, mental health first aid, youth work, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, home nursing and many other related activities.

Within this comprehensive picture, the mission of JOIN is to help its members, large and small, to cooperate on as many issues as possible and facilitate their access to the relevant institutions of the European Union when necessary. In 2024, the JOIN Office participated with Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe Austria on two European-funded projects: MED1stMR, which ended in April and aimed to better prepare medical first responders for mass-casualty incidents by developing advanced mixed-reality training scenarios; TeamUP, which started in January and will develop innovative technologies for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRN-E) incidents.

The heart of JOIN's activities revolves around its working groups, where representatives of our members exchange best practices and develop JOIN projects. During the year, all meetings were held online, except for our Fundraising and our Clinical Working Groups who met face-to-face in Paris.

To the delight of all delegates, the Annual General Meeting 2024 took place in Budapest, Hungary. The meeting provided an excellent platform to discuss the activities of the JOIN Office and our members.

My very best wishes to you all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Velten-J'.

Christian Velten-Jameson



# News in brief

The following section offers a concise overview of significant events, initiatives, and developments that shaped the activities of our network throughout 2024.

## Cross-border success: Dementia Care Training through Swedish-Hungarian collaboration

March 2024

A unique collaboration between JOIN Swedish and Hungarian members culminated in the certification of Hungarian care personnel in dementia-specialised care. Based on the internationally respected 'Silviahemmet' methodology from Sweden, the training focuses on person- and family-centred care, free of restraints and rooted in each patient's personal history.



Following the initial session in September 2023, the most recent training was held in March for staff at a retirement home run by the Evangelical Charity of Sztéhló Gábor. The certification ceremony also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Hungarian Commandery of the Johanniterorden. With support from the State Secretariat for Welfare Policy, there are plans to expand this training nationwide and potentially establish a dedicated Hungarian training centre.

## Germany: Johanniter International Assistance Strengthens Support in Ukraine

Mykolaiv, Ukraine, April 2024

Two years after the onset of the full-scale war, the humanitarian needs in Ukraine remain immense. To assess the current situation and plan future support, Susanne Wesemann, Director of Johanniter International Assistance, travelled to Ukraine in April, accompanied by Florian Beck, Programme Officer, and Adam McKerrow, Head of Mission Ukraine.

Their journey began in Odessa, where they met with our partner organisation NEW DAWN and visited



communities near Mykolaiv, assessing needs on the ground. The delegation then travelled to Kyiv to meet with another local partner, ELEOS, focusing discussions on psychosocial support for both residents and staff. These visits not only evaluated the progress of ongoing projects but also laid the groundwork for future engagement, particularly in mental health and trauma care – a growing concern across affected regions.

## JOIN advocates for First Aid at EU Road Safety Conference 2024

Dublin, Ireland, April 2024

On 16th April, JOIN Chairman Mark Broughton represented Johanniter International at the EU Road Safety Conference in Dublin. The conference brought together road safety experts to explore how to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on European roads focussing on ideas like mandatory first-aid lessons, driver training and improved post-crash health care.



In his address, Broughton highlighted the life-saving potential of immediate first aid, citing the stark statistic: every minute without resuscitation after a road accident reduces survival chances by 10%. He advocated for mandatory first-aid training as part

of the driver's license application process and on school curricula. The event, covered by EURACTIV, also reaffirmed the EU's goal of halving road deaths by 2030.

### **Germany: Johanniter Respond to Major Floods in Southern States**

May 2024

In late May 2024, heavy flooding struck parts of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. Johanniter quickly deployed around 500 emergency personnel – mostly volunteers – to assist with evacuations, medical care, food provision, and logistical support. An additional 200 team members were on standby.

As the situation stabilised, Johanniter continued offering psychosocial support and began assessing long-term needs. In Saarland, flood-affected residents were supported with the loan of drying equipment.



Drawing on experience from past disasters, Johanniter once again demonstrated their capacity to act swiftly and effectively. The floods also highlighted the growing need for climate-resilient civil protection systems and public preparedness.

### **Johanniter Austria Celebrates 50 Years of Service A Milestone Anniversary**

June 2024

Founded on 21st June 1974 with a single ambulance, a first-aid kit, and a group of determined volunteers, Johanniter Austria has grown into a vital part of the international Johanniter network. In 2024, the organisation marked its 50th anniversary.

The celebrations culminated on 21st June 2024, and included events throughout the year showcasing Johanniter Austria's evolution and impact. Highlights included a grand ceremony at Vienna City Hall, attended by Herrenmeister Oskar Prince of Prussia and representatives from our German, Hungarian, Latvian, and Swiss member organisations.



A special audience with the Federal President of Austria further marked this important milestone. For more about the history and upcoming events,

### **Robyn joins Alex and Sam: Expanding First Aid education for children**

August 2024

JOIN has released the third story in its *European First Aid for 5 to 7-Year-Olds* series. The latest tale follows Robyn, who navigates common emergencies caused by heat and cold, teaching young readers how to stay safe, recognize risks, and call for help.



Developed by the Clinical Working Group, Robyn's story adds new educational content and builds on the success of earlier books featuring siblings Alex and Sam. It is available in English, Arabic, Estonian, French, and Hungarian, along with updated guidance for teachers in English and French. Download the free stories at [www.firstaidjoin.org](http://www.firstaidjoin.org).



# Members in focus

## Our member in Jerusalem: St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) transforms lives by saving sight in one of the world's most complex and historically significant regions. With hospitals in Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, and Gaza, and clinics in Kufor Aqab and Jerusalem's Old City (Muristan), our JOIN member serves a large and diverse population across the region. Decades of conflict have left many people in the Holy Land without access to even the most basic healthcare.



SJEHG is the only charitable provider of expert eye care in the region. For over 140 years, it has treated all patients — regardless of ethnicity, religion, or ability to pay. It was the first hospital in the occupied Palestinian territories to be awarded Joint Commission International accreditation, a globally recognised mark of excellence in patient safety and clinical care. With violence, poverty, and unemployment continuing to rise across the region,



ensuring free and accessible eye care has never been more vital.



In 2024, SJEHG treated over 175,000 patients — a record milestone — and performed more than 4,000 complex surgeries. Approximately one third of the patients were children, and 79% of those treated were women and girls. Our JOIN member also runs two mobile outreach programmes in the West Bank, and its new Child Screening Initiative brought vital care to over 50,000 people in 2024.



In 2025, SJEHG will open a new hospital in Nablus. For the first time, residents of the northern West Bank will no longer need to travel to Jerusalem for surgical treatment.



Since October 2023, and despite its hospital in Gaza being rendered non-functional due to collateral war damage, SJEHG has remained unwavering in its mission to save sight. In April 2024, a three-phase Emergency Response Plan enabled the displaced Gaza team to begin operating ophthalmic stations across the Strip, providing free urgent care under extraordinary conditions. So far, over 40,000 patients have been treated, including hundreds requiring sight-saving injections and laser treatments. Many of these patients suffer from chronic conditions such as glaucoma and depend on ongoing care to prevent blindness.



At the same time, war conditions have led to new types of cases: patients suffering from eye infections caused by environmental factors, injuries from destruction and bombardment, and other sight-threatening conditions requiring immediate intervention. While our JOIN member has done everything possible to treat these patients, some still require further care — including surgeries that can only be performed once services are further expanded.

In the West Bank and Jerusalem, patient access to eye care has also been compromised due to the heightened level of violence. The war has affected the movement of people and goods and has hindered many patients from reaching the main hospital in Jerusalem. In response, SJEHG has taken several steps to improve access to quality eye care. These include expanding services at the Kufir Aqab Clinic, launching a community-based Child Vision Screening initiative, and enhancing outreach to the most isolated communities.

Despite these obstacles, our JOIN member remains committed to restoring full-scale services and ensuring that all Palestinians receive the sight-saving treatment they need. To support this, SJEHG has launched the largest emergency appeal in its 140-year history. Donations from individuals and institutions will be vital to continuing its work.



## Our Latvian Member: Svētā Jāņa Palīdzība

Svētā Jāņa Palīdzība is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in Latvia, offering practical support to people in need alongside a wide range of social and educational services. To fulfil its mission, the organisation actively cooperates with the social services of the capital Riga, with local authorities across the country, and with other NGOs.



Svētā Jāņa Palīdzība was formally founded in March 1993, although it began operating in the spring of 1991, when Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe from Hamburg delivered humanitarian shipments to Latvia following the period of violent conflict in January that year.



The range of social services provided by our Latvian member includes home care, day care centres for people with dementia or mental disabilities, specialised transport, dedicated social workers, and food assistance for the most deprived. In 2024, Svētā Jāņa Palīdzība began offering an individual rehabilitation programme for people with mental disabilities. This service is designed for individuals who are unable to live independently but do not require placement in care facilities.

Every summer, our Latvian member organises camps for children with disabilities, children from disadvantaged families, and children from Ukraine. On that last topic, Svētā Jāņa Palīdzība has also sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine in collaboration with JOIN members - including medicines and medical supplies to the Kharkiv Military Hospital and the Kharkiv Children's Hospital.



# Selected Meetings 2024

## JOIN Annual General Meeting 2024

Budapest, Hungary, 24 - 26 May 2024

The JOIN Annual General Meeting 2024 took place in the Hungarian capital and was hosted by Johannita Segítő Szolgálat. Nineteen delegates from St John enterprises across Europe met to discuss a broad spectrum of topics.

The first day began with our Chairman, Mark Broughton, outlining the activities of the Board and the network over the past twelve months. He highlighted the publication of the Young People First Aid Manual, the record year of the Volunteer Swap programme, and the humanitarian aid for Ukraine provided by all JOIN members. He then presented the outputs of a survey completed by all members which allowed for lively discussion of common interests, issues and future strategies. Mark Broughton also announced that he was stepping down from the Board. Christian Velten-Jameson, Vice-Chairman, will take over as Chairman until the end of the present Board's mandate at the AGM in 2025. The delegates unanimously approved the co-optation of Friederike von Bar to the JOIN Board.

This was followed by presentations from the working groups providing more detailed information about their activities. The Head of the Clinical Working Group (Richard Webber) distributed the newly printed European First Aid for Young People

manual and presented draft materials, including children's stories on temperature-related first aid and a review of the 2019 European First Aid Guidelines. All documents are publicly available at [www.firstaidjoin.org](http://www.firstaidjoin.org). The PR, Marketing & Communication Working Group (chaired by Petra Grell-Kunzinger) set the ground for discussion on its future strategy. Delegates welcomed the high numbers of people taking part in the Volunteer Swap programme organised by the Volunteering & Youth Working Group (chaired by Nancy Kestler). Finally, the Fundraising Working Group (chaired by Frederik Ahlefeldt-Laurvig) presented the new reporting directives for larger organisations and shared updates on a fundraising campaign supporting the Jerusalem member.

Two further presentations were given by Dr Ahmad Ma'ali (St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group), outlining the humanitarian response to the current situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and Thomas Vorwerk (Swiss Johanniter), providing an update on the Alliance Orders Charity Cooperation Group.

On the second day, the delegates gave an overview of the general activities of their respective charities within the past twelve months. The work of the Brussels Office was outlined by Joachim Berney,



► From left to right: First row: Franziska Wolandt (JOIN Office), Dr George Pantelas (Cyprus), Andrew Grech (Malta), Petra Grell-Kunzinger (Austria), Floor van Dedem (Johanniter Orde), Friederike von Bar (Germany), Dr Michael Frendo (Malta), Richard Webber (England), Joachim Berney (JOIN Office), Mark Broughton (England). Second row: Dr Davide Laetzsch (Italy), Dr Ahmad Ma'ali (Jerusalem), Christian Velten-Jameson (France), László Porcsalmy (Hungary), Johannes Bucher (Austria), Thomas Vorwerk (Switzerland), Frederik Ahlefeldt-Laurvig (Denmark). Not on the picture: Melanija Grundšteina (Latvia), Zsófia Porcsalmy (Hungary).



our General Manager, who provided detail of its activities while highlighting the results of the EU-

funded research project called MED1stMR. Franziska Wolandt (JOIN Office) presented the ongoing TeamUP research project.

The meeting concluded with a final tour de table, allowing delegates to provide feedback and suggestions for the coming years. There was broad consensus that the AGM had been highly productive and engaging.

The next JOIN Annual General Meeting will take place in Malta from 23rd to 25th May 2025.

## JOIN Board Meetings – 2024 Overview

Throughout 2024, the JOIN Board convened regularly online to advance coordination across the network and prepare key developments for the AGM.

The year began with a meeting on 19th February, where Board members — Chairman Mark Broughton, Vice-Chairman Christian Velten-Jameson (Association des Œuvres de Saint-Jean), Andrew Grech (St John Malta), and Friederike von Bar (Johanniter Germany) — focused on enriching the upcoming AGM. A key outcome was the decision to launch a survey for member organisations to express their expectations, aiming to guide discussions and consultation phases ahead of the AGM. Planning for the AGM 2024 was also set in motion.

On 4th April, the Board reconvened, this time also joined by Dr Sarah Vecchione (S.O.G.IT Italy). Discussions included a proposal for membership fees and a review of initial responses to the member survey, which began to shape a clearer picture of member priorities. A draft AGM agenda and updates on JOIN Office activities were also shared.

An additional online meeting took place in May, allowing the Board to review final survey responses, confirm AGM logistics, and coordinate final steps with all stakeholders.

The Board then gathered for an in-person meeting in Budapest on the day before the AGM. This session provided an essential opportunity to finalise preparations on site, walk through the agenda, and ensure smooth delivery of the event.

The 10th June meeting, led by newly acting Chairman Christian Velten-Jameson, began with a recap of the AGM 2024 and focused on follow-up actions. With many members expressing interest in deeper collaboration, the Board resolved to identify priority topics, designate contact persons, and initiate ad-hoc working groups by the end of the summer. Network activity updates rounded out the meeting.

A further Board meeting took place in September, continuing the momentum of the year's discussions.

Together, these meetings underscored the Board's commitment to responsive planning, transparent communication, and enhanced cooperation across the JOIN network.



## JOIN Clinical Working Group meets in Paris

Paris, France, 13 - 14 April 2024

The JOIN Clinical Working Group met in Paris to develop new projects following the publication of European First Aid Manual for Young People. Delegates from Austria, Cyprus, Germany and the JOIN Office came together in the French capital.



► From left to right: Dr Andreas Tanos, Mark Broughton (JOIN Chairman), Richard Webber (Chair of the Clinical Working Group), Dr Paul Hunt, Dr Rainer Thell (Austria), Nils Schröder (Germany), Dr Alexandros Vassiliades (Cyprus).

During the two-day meeting, our medical doctors finalised a manuscript including illustrations of a third story teaching basic first aid to children (two stories are already available on [www.firstaidjoin.org](http://www.firstaidjoin.org)). The Clinical Working Group also started to review its European First Aid Guidelines published in 2019 and needing to be updated in light of latest medical protocols.



## JOIN Fundraising Working Group meets in Paris

Paris, France, 12 April

On 12th April, representatives from Austria, Denmark, Malta and the Netherlands were hosted by our French member in its main office in Paris. Johanniter Germany and the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group participated online.

The day began with two presentations on the calls for proposals of the European Social Fund and on the Christmas Trucker organised since 1993 by Johanniter in Bavaria.

This was followed by a discussion on Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) Reporting. An increasing number of companies will have to meet new reporting rules in the coming years and this constitutes an opportunity for JOIN members to raise their profile. Each participant also gave feedback on new fundraising activities taking place at national level.

In the afternoon, a presentation was made by Johanniter International Assistance on the institutional donor funding its programmes. The St John Eye Hospital gave an update on the situation in Gaza and the whole region and presented its

response strategy to the devastating conflict. Participants explored possible ways to support our member from Jerusalem.

Finally, the Fundraising Working Group discussed which activities it should focus on in the future and the JOIN Office gave an update on its latest activities.



► From left to right: Mark Broughton (JOIN Chairman), Petra Grell-Kunzinger (Austria), Floor van Dedem (Johanniter Orde in Nederland), Frederik Ahlefeldt-Laurvig (Denmark), Christopher Borg Cardona (Malta). On the screen: Marina Untersteiner (Austria), Sacha Christianson (Germany), David Dahdal (Jerusalem).

# JOIN Volunteer Swap

## Looking back on the Volunteer Swap programme 2024

In 2024, the JOIN Volunteer Swap programme once again brought together passionate volunteers from across Europe, offering 21 unique opportunities to connect, collaborate, and contribute abroad. From supporting large-scale public events to participating in youth competitions and cultural celebrations, volunteers immersed themselves in new environments while strengthening the spirit of international solidarity.

Four JOIN member organisations opened their doors to fellow volunteers, offering hands-on involvement in landmark events such as the 50th Berlin Marathon, Austria's National Holiday festivities in Vienna, and the 100-year anniversary of the Johanniterorden. In addition, volunteers also took part in a dynamic regional youth first aid competition sharing skills, enthusiasm, and camaraderie.

The volunteers of our network were welcomed in Austria, England, Germany and Hungary.

Four Swap opportunities were open year-round without fixed dates, giving volunteers greater flexibility and a unique chance to experience the host organisation's work in a more personalised and immersive way.

In total, **81 volunteers** from three countries embraced the opportunity to serve, travel and learn through the Volunteer Swap programme:

- **43** volunteer of Johanniter Austria
- **33** volunteers of Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe Germany
- **5** volunteers from St John Ambulance England and the Isles

### Spotlight on the Youth Exchange

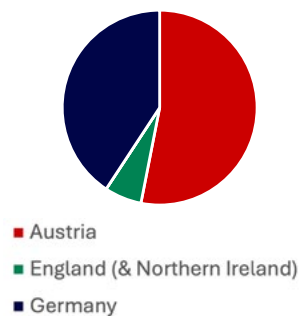
Following the success of the first Volunteer Swap of young people in June 2023, this year, two groups of young people visited their partner organisations and took part in events. Ten young volunteers from Johanniter Germany, accompanied by four supervisors, travelled to London during the Easter holidays to visit St John Ambulance.

In June, a youth group of 17 people from Johanniter Youth Carinthia, accompanied by supervisors and Managing Director Petra Grell-Kunzinger, travelled to Germany and took part a first aid competition.

Volunteers welcomed in



Participating volunteers from

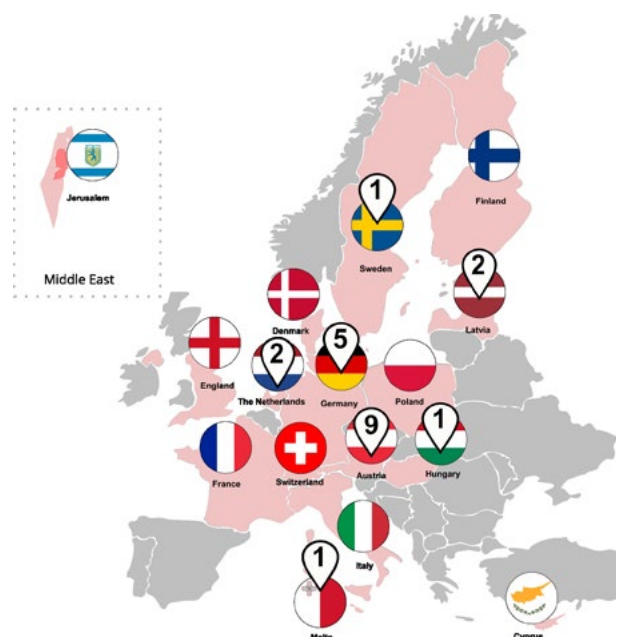


Their visit began in Portsmouth, where they joined local ambulance services at a football match. In London, the extensive programme included a sightseeing tour and a visit to St John Ambulance, where the participants explored the ambulance vehicles. The visitors also accompanied an ambulance service at the Loftus Road Stadium. Furthermore, they visited the Science Museum and were given a guided tour of the Council Chamber of the Museum of the Order of St John, including the St John Gate and the rest of the Order's former headquarters.

### A year of connection and growth

The 2024 edition not only enabled volunteers to expand their skills and knowledge but also deepened cross-border friendships and understanding. It was a year filled with shared commitment, memorable experiences, and a celebration of what unites us as one international community.

### Volunteer Swap opportunities offered





## Volunteer Swap in Hungary: Celebrating 100 Years of the Hungarian Commandery

Budapest, Hungary, 10 – 14 May 2024

From 10th to 14th May, the Hungarian Commandery of the Johanniterorden celebrated its centenary with a conference and a Thanksgiving church service in Budapest. Our Hungarian member was joined by Susann Kraft from Johanniter Germany, who participated through the JOIN Volunteer Swap. Here is what she reports:

### Üdvözljük! (Welcome!)

Four days in Hungary flew by during a truly special weekend. The centenary celebration brought inspiring encounters and unforgettable moments as I joined as an organisational helper.



► Zsófia Porcsalmy (left) with Susann Kraft (right)

I was warmly welcomed at the airport by Zsófia Porcsalmy, youth leader at Johannita Segítő Szolgálat, which supports religious institutions, home care, camps, and humanitarian aid across Hungary. We quickly bonded over shared Johanniter experiences.

On Friday morning, we explored Budapest's historic landmarks. That afternoon, the centenary conference took place at the impressive Károlyi-

Csekonics Residence. Knights, their families, and guests—including Herrenmeister Oskar Prinz von Preußen—gathered for discussions on the Order's present and future, with opportunities for rich conversation and connection throughout the day.



The highlight came Saturday with a moving Thanksgiving service at Deák Square's Lutheran Church. Around 70 knights entered ceremonially with the Order's flag, a moment full of historic weight. Celebrations continued with a courtyard lunch and an elegant gala dinner at the famous Gundel restaurant, where classical music and warm conversations capped off the day.

On Sunday, my host Zsófia guided me through Normafa Park and other sights, including Hero Square and Vajdahunyad Castle. I even got to try Hungary's beloved chimney cake before heading home.

What stood out most? Perhaps the solemnity of the church service, or the warmth and connection across cultures. Either way, I return deeply grateful for this enriching experience—and for being part of the global Johanniter family.



## Johanniter Youth from Austria in Germany

Filderstadt, Germany, 5 July 2024

On 5th July 2024, the youth group of 17 people from Johanniter Youth Carinthia, accompanied by Managing Director Petra Grell-Kunzinger, traveled to the Johanniter Regional Competition in Baden-Württemberg. Upon arrival in Filderstadt, the host city for the event, the young people entered the *First Aid Olympiad* with high motivation on Saturday. At several practical stations, the young participants had to demonstrate their skills in providing first aid and caring for the injured and ill. Realistic scenarios were created with made-up actors, whose painted and lifelike injuries looked convincingly real.



But it wasn't only about practical skills. At a theory station, the young people had to demonstrate their general knowledge. Answering questions about first aid and the history of the Johanniter organization challenged them to think hard in the summer heat of Baden-Württemberg. The group of young people tackled both the theoretical and practical parts with flying colours.

During breaks between competition stations, the young Carinthian guests had the chance to observe the stations for rescue and emergency paramedics. They gained insight into emergency medical aid and advanced emergency care, which might also become relevant to them in the future.

However, the weekend was not solely about competition and learning. Alongside the events, the *Johanniter Fair* was held. With activities such as bull riding, archery, and various other fair attractions, there was plenty of fun for the participants.



After a challenging yet entertaining weekend, the youth group returned home on Sunday. Strengthened by the experiences and the very positive feedback received during the competition, they started preparing for their next challenge: The regional youth first aid competition of the Red Cross in Feldkirchen, Carinthia on 31st August.





## Three Austrian volunteers at Lake Schiedersee Festival in Germany

Lippe-Höxter, Germany, 18 July 2024

In June, the scenic Lake Schiedersee in Germany hosted its vibrant annual music festival — an event filled with music, soap bubbles, and fireworks that draws hundreds of visitors each year. Johanniter Germany provided first aid support for the event and welcomed three Austrian volunteers through the JOIN Volunteer Swap programme.

Karin Stampfer and Christoph Aufegger from Johanniter Paterngassen (Carinthia), and Josef Huber from Johanniter in Vienna, travelled to Lippe-Höxter to join local teams for their first-ever participation in the cross-border initiative involving two medical services. The Austrian guests actively contributed to the event and gained valuable insights into emergency services in Germany.



Their visit began with a welcome dinner and introduction by Andreas Beckmann (motorbike squadron), Patrik Benzler (regional board), and Franziska Otto (local emergency services lead). After an overnight stay in the Horn-Bad Meinberg youth hostel, the volunteers visited the regional HQ in Blomberg, toured the rescue centre, and explored

the local organisation in Bad Salzuflen, including its emergency vehicles. That evening, they joined their first paramedic service at the lively BubbleBeats Festival.



Saturday included a joint outing to the Hermann monument and Berlebeck eagle observatory, followed by a visit to the iconic Externsteine rock formations. In the afternoon, the teams returned for their second medical service at the *SchiederSee in Flammen* event.

Reflecting on the experience, the volunteers expressed their enthusiasm: “We’ve seen and experienced a lot and would love to come back.”

Patrik Benzler highlighted the value of the exchange: “The programme aims to expand friendship and professional exchange between Johanniter Lippe-Höxter and Johanniter Austria in rescue services. The Volunteer Swap programme supports this by reimbursing travel costs and enabling cross-border learning.”

## A Bavarian volunteer at the Ambulance Service in Vienna

Vienna, Austria, April 2024

Johanniter Austria offers volunteers from all JOIN members the opportunity to participate in the Ambulance Service in Vienna year-round. Johanniter in Vienna provides 24/7 patient transport and emergency medical service across the city. I joined two ambulance shifts there and would like to share my experiences and some notable differences compared to my hometown service.

Gregor, 26, has volunteered with Johanniter in Bavaria for over 10 years and worked full-time in their ambulance service for more than six. Starting at 15 in the school medical service, he earned qualifications as a Medical Assistant B2 and Paramedic, completed a voluntary year as a first aid instructor, and trained for three years as an emergency paramedic. Now a Platoon Leader

in Johanniter's Operational Command Service, he also helps manage major ambulance events around Würzburg. After meeting EMT-I Stefano Mahlberg at this summer's *Rock im Park* festival, he organized a volunteer swap in Vienna to gain insight into Austria's emergency care system.

The medical service in Vienna has 45 trucks each day across the city during peak times. Furthermore, the city of Vienna has approximately more than 26 private and public hospitals,<sup>1</sup> medical helicopter and a range of private ambulance organisations, including Johanniter Austria, who work alongside the Vienna municipal ambulance service 'Berufsrettung' together hand in hand.

"Leaving your comfort zone sharpens focus. Not everything at home is good or bad - in some areas we lead at home and in others the Vienna rescue system is ahead. Ultimately, emergency patients receive proper care everywhere. Guidelines and directives are internationally valid, as are recommendations from organizations like the European Resuscitation Council and the American Heart Association. The differences in non-physician qualifications for rescue and emergency paramedics are noteworthy: the *Rettungssanitäter* qualification in Germany/Bavaria requires 520 hours, while in Austria it's 260 hours. Emergency paramedic training takes 4,600 hours over three years in Germany, compared to 900 hours on top of the 260 in Austria. Austrian emergency paramedics can also acquire advanced skills—pharmacology, venous access/infusion,

and ventilation/intubation—and may work independently with proper qualifications. Beyond clinical training, there are management differences: hospitals in Vienna have clearer responsibilities, use laptops with integrated keyboards for digital documentation (unlike at my hometown service, where we rely on external USB keyboards), and enforce stricter triage procedures. A qualified nursing assessment is required before accessing the emergency room, and patient handovers are digitally confirmed via staff name or ID."



In conclusion, Gregor said: "Regularly looking left and right, stepping out of your comfort zone, and critically evaluating your surroundings sharpens your awareness of what really matters—patient care. I am looking forward to welcoming Stefano to my station in Würzburg soon. Now I have gained an insight into Vienna and the volunteer swap system is of course based on reciprocity!"

## Thirteen Austrian volunteers at the 50th Berlin Marathon

Berlin, Germany, 29 September 2024



At 42.195 kilometers, with a record-breaking 55,000 runners and thousands of spectators, the 50th BMW BERLIN-MARATHON was an event of superlatives. Over 300 Johanniter volunteers provided medical support, ensuring that all participants and onlookers could rely on immediate assistance if needed.

A fully-equipped medical centre was set up at the start and finish, staffed by 30 mobile medical teams. Along the route, Johanniter set up over 40 fixed and mobile aid stations, with motorcycles and Berlin's cycling response unit navigating the large crowds to provide rapid assistance. Many Johanniter workers were also involved in the event's planning, command, and logistics.





“Although we’ve supported many marathons, we prepare for about ten months for this large-scale operation,” said Jörg Koch, Regional Board

Member of Johanniter Berlin. Johanniter has led the marathon’s medical services since 2008 and had supported it several times before that.

The Johanniter team provided first aid at aid stations and along the route, coordinating hospital transports if necessary. “Our services were required around 900 times, mostly minor injuries and exhaustion, as runners were well-prepared and benefited from ideal weather,” noted onsite Medical Director Dirk Dommisch.

The event brought together Johanniter teams from across Germany and Austria, with support from the German Lifesaving Association (DLRG) and the Malteser aid service. “We are immensely grateful for the dedication of all volunteers who made this event possible,” added Koch.

## Two English volunteers at the National Holiday Celebrations in Austria

Vienna, Austria, 30 October 2024

In the last week of October, Byron and Andrew from St John Ambulance in England took part in a volunteer swap with Johanniter Austria during their National Holiday celebrations in Vienna. The events at Heldenplatz and Rathausplatz in central Vienna featured presentations from the Austrian Army and a wide range of institutions involved in security, disaster prevention, and health services. Around 100,000 visitors regularly attend. Johanniter provided the largest ambulance presence, alongside Malteser, the Red Cross, and the Samaritans.

The English visitors report: On Day 1, we were met by Tom, the volunteer coordinator for Johanniter Austria, who took us to their Vienna base. We were surprised at how big and modern it was, with a basement garage full of ambulances. Our accommodation was a guest room at the base with



an en suite and TV! We ended the day with Wiener Schnitzel in Vienna, then turned in early for the next day.

The first day of the National Feiertag was focused on children, so we had time to explore the site and stalls when not helping our Austrian counterparts set up tents and gazebos.

The second day was much busier. This is when the main parade takes place, and new army recruits swear their oath in front of the President and other dignitaries. Many patients are soldiers who faint from standing in formation. Johanniter treats these soldiers, not the military. Typically, 70+ soldiers are treated.

Interestingly, there’s a locked box at the treatment centre—guarded by military police—for the soldiers’ guns, to prevent them from being left lying around.

The cold, drizzly weather meant fewer patients overall. But those we did treat often involved overcoming language barriers, with the clinical lead doing most of the talking while we assisted with observations—occasionally chiming in with a “Entschuldigung... Blutzucker!”



We worked alongside Johanniter Germany, the Austrian Red Cross, Bundesheer medics, and Malteser from the Sovereign Order of Malta. It was great to talk with everyone and compare working styles. Many young Austrians continue volunteering after completing their mandatory national service, which was inspiring.

Our hosts were welcoming and made sure we understood briefings and were well fed and looked after.

We both wholeheartedly recommend checking the Johanniter International website for upcoming



swap opportunities or 2025 dates. A highlight was meeting Johanniter Austria’s President—formerly Chair of Johanniter International—who was glad to hear we were enjoying the experience.

Looking forward to the next JOIN adventure!



## An Austrian volunteer at St John Ambulance in London

London, England, 21 November 2024

In late November, Lukas, a volunteer from Vienna, Austria, visited his colleagues at St John Ambulance in London.



During his visit, he toured the Museum of the Order of St John, located at St John’s Gate. The museum offers insight into the 900-year history of St John—tracing its origins from a medieval religious military order to the modern, professional organization we know today.

St John in England is also well known for providing medical support at major sporting events, and Lukas had the chance to attend a football match at Emirates Stadium on 21st November 2024. Despite the freezing temperatures, fans were in high spirits for the Arsenal vs. Juventus Women’s match. Lukas shared his impressions:

“All the ‘Johnnys’ warmly welcomed me and were



incredibly kind throughout my stay. Football is very important in England, and it was a great opportunity to experience the match from the medical side and see what goes on behind the scenes. Multiple treatment rooms, equipment, ambulances, and staff—from first aiders to a doctor—were on standby throughout the event.

Fortunately, there were only minor incidents, and fans enjoyed a safe game. I was really impressed by how professional and well-coordinated St John's operations were, especially the communication with the LAS and their own mobile units on-site.



I'd like to thank Mark Broughton, Chris Cassidy, and Tom Leimer for their help with planning the visit—without them, the trip wouldn't have been possible. Special thanks also go to Alex Snow, who led the event on the day and provided detailed insights, and to Matt Jones, who kindly gave me a full tour, including a visit to a regional ambulance base the next day!

While there are some differences in organisation and procedures, we can all learn from one another. What stood out even more was how much we share—the same compassion and commitment to serving the community that I know from home. With all the fascinating insights and the kind people I met, it was truly an experience I'll never forget."

# European-funded projects

## Final Conference Review: MED1stMR wraps up with a dynamic showcase in Ranst

Ranst, Belgium, 17 – 18 April 2024

The final conference of the MED1stMR project took place in Ranst, Belgium, marking the conclusion of three years of intensive research and development under the Horizon 2020 programme.

Designed as a platform to present the project's outcomes to the public, the event featured a dynamic programme of presentations and discussions by both consortium members and external experts, all reinforcing the core message of MED1stMR: innovation in training for first responders through mixed reality (MR).



Over 100 participants from 13 European countries attended, representing a broad spectrum of healthcare professionals, emergency responders, and partner organisations.

### Highlights of the Conference

A standout feature of the event was the opportunity to experience the project's results hands-on. Two mixed reality training try-out stations were set up, and nearly all attendees seized the chance to



explore the technology firsthand. Alongside more than a dozen expert talks and presentations, these interactive stations brought MED1stMR's innovations to life.



Beyond showcasing the project's technological achievements, the conference placed strong emphasis on community-building and long-term impact. A series of interactive workshops encouraged participant engagement and facilitated cross-sector exchange. Consortium members were also actively involved in promoting networking and fostering new collaborations.



To further enhance the experience, an *experience fair* was held in the entrance and break areas, where consortium partners hosted information booths to present their organisations, demonstrate project outcomes, and share related initiatives.



## TeamUP Project: Advancing CBRN-E Preparedness across europe

From 24th to 26th January, the TeamUP project consortium launched its activities with an official Kick-off Meeting in Athens, Greece, hosted by the Institute of Communication and Computer Systems (ICCS). The event brought together around 50 experts and stakeholders to lay the groundwork for this ambitious, multidisciplinary initiative, funded by the Horizon Europe programme and running from January 2024 through December 2026.

CBRN-E incidents—Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive—continue to pose serious threats across Europe. In past emergencies, First Responders have had to operate in hazardous environments with limited training or insufficient awareness of long-term health risks. Effective scene management requires a structured response, including:

1. **Detection** and identification of threats
2. **Triage** of casualties
3. **On-site decontamination** before medical treatment



TeamUP aims to address these challenges by developing innovative tools and methods for CBRN-E detection, health status monitoring, triage, and decontamination. The project also promotes public awareness and societal resilience, ensuring communities are better prepared for future emergencies. By integrating expertise from 23 partner organisations, TeamUP will deliver solutions tailored to the needs of end users.

During the Kick-off Meeting, participants discussed the project structure, technical scope, and end-user requirements, along with legal and ethical considerations. The event concluded with a dedicated workshop on preparing for the first joint field exercise in Dortmund.

### CBRN-E Training Exercises in Dortmund

On 15th March, TeamUP participated in two major training events hosted by the Dortmund Fire Department: a Tabletop Exercise (TTX1) and a Small-Scale Exercise (SSX1). These exercises provided critical insights into existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and allowed both expert and non-expert stakeholders to observe field responses and identify gaps in operational readiness.



The SSX1 focused on decontamination procedures for vulnerable populations in a chemical scenario, offering TeamUP partners a deeper understanding of real-world challenges and potential areas for technological innovation.

### Plenary Meeting and Field Exercises in Ranst

From 12th to 13th June, the consortium gathered at Campus VESTA in Ranst, Belgium, for a second Tabletop and Small-Scale Exercise, a Co-Creation Workshop, and the TeamUP Plenary Meeting. The simulated scenario involved a chemical explosion in a collapsed building, testing inter-agency collaboration between fire, medical, police, and civil protection units.





Small-scale simulations followed, covering biological, chemical, and radiological response procedures, including a powder letter scenario, donning and doffing, radiological incident response, and casualty triage. These exercises informed TeamUP's gap analysis and advanced the project's co-creation phase, with consortium members actively exchanging feedback and identifying future priorities.



### Second Plenary Meeting and Workshop in Lyon

From 27th to 29th November, TeamUP held its second plenary meeting and Co-Creation Workshop at the École Nationale Supérieure de la Police (ENSP) in Saint-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or, near Lyon, France. Representatives from all 23 partner organisations attended to review progress and plan the next phases of development.

The workshop, led by Fraunhofer, focused on 21 key technologies grouped under four areas:

1. Detection, Identification, and Monitoring
2. Search and Rescue
3. Triage and Decontamination
4. Collaborative Planning, Response, and Training



Discussions centred around aligning user needs with performance requirements. On the final day, technical leaders presented updates, and parallel sessions ensured coordination between system architects and end-user groups. The event concluded with strong momentum and a shared commitment to deliver impactful outcomes in the months ahead.





# JOIN's Work in 2024

## The JOIN Board

The JOIN Board is made up of representatives from JOIN member organisations who are elected by the Annual General Meeting for a period of two years. Its main tasks include supervising the work of the JOIN Secretariat and the General Manager, dealing with strategic questions and managing JOIN's relations with the Alliance of the Orders of St John.

In 2024, the Board was composed of Chairman Christian Velten-Jameson (Association des Œuvres de Saint-Jean, France), Friederike von Bar (Johanniter

Germany), Andrew Grech (St John Malta) and Dr Sarah Vecchione (S.O.G.IT Italy).

The Board meets regularly at face-to-face and online meetings and holds conference calls. In 2024, the Board held six online or face-to-face meetings (see page 10).

The term of the current Board ends at the Annual General Meeting in May 2025.

## Working Groups in 2024

Given the aim of JOIN to derive benefits for its members from increased exchange and cooperation, the working groups are one of the essential institutions in JOIN. The working groups provide a platform where JOIN members can exchange knowledge and experience on any given issue, and also offer a space where JOIN members can set the thematic foundation for common projects. By combining resources within the network, JOIN can realise projects for which individual members might not possess the capacity.

Moreover, the working groups also guarantee a participatory and transparent structure within JOIN as participation in the working groups is not only open to all members, but also strongly encouraged.

The working groups meet on a regular basis. While a face-to-face meeting allows for a more thorough and personal exchange at least once a year, regular online conferences ensure continuous close collaboration between the working group members.

In 2024, four working groups were operative within JOIN.

### Clinical Working Group

The Clinical Working Group has been chaired by Richard Webber (England) since 2022. The group deals with clinical and medical cooperation at both national and international levels. It is made up of chief medical officers from JOIN members.

In 2024, the JOIN Clinical Working Group published a story intended for 5 to 7 years olds, titled *Robyn's Seasons: Hot and Cold*. It is available to all users in many European languages on [www.firstaidjoin.org](http://www.firstaidjoin.org). You can also buy a printed booklet on Amazon. The European-wide First Aid Manual intended for young people (published in December 2023) was also further translated.

The members of the working group met in Paris in the course of the year under review (see page 11).

### PR, Marketing & Communication Working Group

This working group, chaired by Petra Grell-Kunzinger (Austria), deals with all issues concerning JOIN's press work, the website, and publications, as well as corporate identity (CI) and corporate design (CD). The working group has developed the JOIN logo and helped create brochures and information material on JOIN activities. The group's primary purpose lies in sharing experiences, best practices, and know-how on related topics.

In 2024, the PR, Marketing & Communication Working Group held five online meetings.

### Volunteering & Youth Working Group

This working group, chaired by Nancy Kestler (Germany), is responsible for volunteer exchanges between JOIN members and the Volunteer Swap programme (see page 12-19).

These activities enrich the individual volunteering experience, enhance cooperation and understanding between the members, and enable JOIN members to work together efficiently and practically. Moreover, the working group deals with all other issues regarding volunteering, such as legal guidelines and the recruitment of volunteers. It also discusses common interests in JOIN members' youth activities such as summer camps, first aid training, competitions and youth exchanges.

The Volunteering & Youth Working held four online meetings.

### Fundraising Working Group

Motivated by positive cooperation examples in the past, this working group exchanges best practices and know-how in fundraising, grant management and other related topics, with the aim to mobilise financial resources and to strengthen fundraising capacities and cooperation among JOIN members. The working group consists of senior members of the fundraising departments of JOIN members. Since 2023, it is chaired by Frederik Ahlefeldt-Laurvig (Denmark).

The Fundraising Working Group held in 2024 a face-to-face meeting in Paris (see page 11).

## The JOIN Secretariat in 2024

The JOIN Secretariat is located in Brussels, at the heart of decision-making in the European Union. This enables the office to observe relevant European policy developments firsthand and report these back to its members, as well as to advocate the positions and interests of JOIN and its member organisations directly to decision-makers.

The Secretariat also acts as a communication and information centre for JOIN members, e.g. by publishing the monthly newsletter JOINews, running an informative website and social media channels and replying to enquiries on European matters put forward by JOIN members. Furthermore, the JOIN Secretariat identifies relevant EU funding opportunities for its members.

The Secretariat maintains close contact with NGO partners, the Brussels offices of national and regional representations and the members of the Orders of St John who work in the European capital.

A significant influence on the work agenda of the JOIN Secretariat in 2024 was the implementation of the European projects MED1stMR and TeamUP, as highlighted on pages 20-22.

Furthermore, the JOIN Secretariat participated in the drafting of four European project proposals linked to the topics of health and of disaster response. The first proposal, called PROBANT, aims to develop European First Aid material for 8- to 12-year-old. The consortium is composed of JOIN members from Austria, Cyprus, Germany and Italy. The second proposal, called SHIELD

and led by Johanniter Germany, intends to increase the resilience and participation of people with disabilities by actively involving them in emergency response. The third project, called SMART PRIME, is designed to develop a software-hardware framework to assist practitioners and public authorities in the management of terrorist attacks. All project proposals are notably involving Johanniter Austria.

Throughout the year, the JOIN Secretariat maintained its representative character for members in Brussels. Upon request and on behalf of several JOIN members, the JOIN Secretariat took part in various online meetings at European level, for instance, in the areas of humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, civil protection, care, research and innovation.

In 2024, the JOIN Office team consisted of Joachim Berney (General Manager) and Eva Pelgen (EU Officer).





# Perspectives on 2025

In 2025, the JOIN Office aims to remain the motor for cooperation among St John charities in Europe. In this light, the working groups continue to be the main priority for JOIN, and the Brussels office will support them in the best way possible.

One of the main challenges is expected to keep the links among JOIN members as tight as possible. Some JOIN members are currently under financial pressure and have expressed the pressing need to reduce every kind of expenses where possible. The JOIN Office will have to convince the member organisations not to reduce budget for cross-border projects.

Furthermore, promoting EU funding opportunities to our member organisations will stay a priority. The JOIN Office is actively exploring options for preparing European project proposals, especially in the frame of 'Erasmus+', the funding programme to support

education, training and youth, and 'Horizon Europe', the funding programme for research and innovation 2021-2027. JOIN wishes to bring its members closer to innovative, cutting-edge research in relevant service areas regarding research consortia.

The Clinical Working Group is expected to release a second edition of its European First Aid Guidelines, published in 2019. Moreover, it will develop European First Aid teaching material for 8 to 12 years old. The JOIN Office will seek to further encourage translation of already published material and promote its dissemination at a high international level.

Finally, JOIN wishes to further expand its network in 2025 and aims to welcome new member organisations.

The Annual General Meeting in 2025 will take place in Valletta, Malta, from 23rd to 25th May.





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# About JOIN

Johanniter International (JOIN) is the partnership of the four protestant Orders of St John and their national charities. Our member organisations, based in Europe and the Middle East, work in close cooperation and are supported by more than 100,000 volunteers. They serve humanity with medical services and first aid, social care, international aid, disaster relief and youth work. The services of JOIN member organisations are open to everyone. Core to our values is our Christian heritage which underlines our work.

The JOIN central office in Brussels advocates the interest of the St John charities towards European and international bodies and facilitates international projects and working groups.

For further information please contact our Brussels office at [join.office@johanniter.org](mailto:join.office@johanniter.org) or [www.johanniter.org](http://www.johanniter.org).

