

Shabka

The Strategic
Think & Do Tank

2018

Annual
Report

Introducing Shabka

Shabka is a European strategic Think & Do Tank based in Vienna focusing on foreign, security, development policy and analyses, crisis management as well as civil society engagement. As a next generation Think Tank, Shabka is combining all in one network to facilitate engagement in challenging and complex contexts.

It is a partner in comprehending conflicts and uncertain environments by providing sound analyses and crisis management expertise. Equally important, it is empowering democratic societies by fulfilling a deliberative function towards the public.

Part 1

Our Story So Far

Every idea starts with a problem...

Ours was that we dearly missed social science in explaining what is happening around us. On a quest to change, four ambitious students from Vienna set out to bridge the gap between conventional journalism, academia and political activism.

In fall 2012, we started networking young journalists and academics, creating Shabka (Arabic for “network”), as a critical information platform. As of now the Shabka Journal, which was our initial starting point, is contributing more than 360 articles ranging from sound political analysis to policy papers or commentary pieces from our network of 140+ international contributors.

From project to program

Since the beginning our primary aim has been to raise awareness for global political interrelations. This has remained unchanged until today: Over the last years we have successfully opened spaces for political discussion off the beaten track, led multi-level and impact-seeking projects that bridged academia with politics and gave birth to a young strategic community.

In doing so, we have not only made shaping our own political future a top priority of our work by delivering new impulses and creative ideas. We also navigated the transformation from a journalistic network to a strategic Think & Do Tank based on a unique community of innovative thinkers and doers.

Setting sails for more

As the last years' busy schedule and tremendous workload took its toll, Shabka required adjustments inside and outside: Backed by amazing new team members we re-launched a state-of-the-art website, reshuffled our structures, consolidated our key topics and developed a strategic roadmap for the years ahead.

Indeed, during the last years we have grown. Some of our projects have become programs and the world has changed quite a bit. Solid as rock, our approach has remained the very same: Shabka will continue to be a forum for discussion and a driver that translates qualified knowledge into action.

Thinking and doing

In understanding the enormous challenges that such a changing world brings along, we have decided to focus on the following: comprehensively facilitating engagement in complex contexts! This accounts for government entities, stakeholders in the private sector or civil society, through public dialog and by directly consulting decision makers.



shabka.org/timeline

2018 Flagship Projects

Future Strategists Hub

The Future Strategists Hub (FSH) was one of our most progressive and far-reaching initiatives ever. Organized for the first time in spring 2018, the FSH equipped young talents with know-how to translate research into policy.

In total, over 70 future European decision-makers engaged in creating policy recommendations on topics that are essential to the EU's strategic future. Eight interactive working groups covered topics ranging from digitalization of security to human rights and from climate change to the Belt and Road Initiative. Shabka merged qualified knowledge and transdisciplinary approaches into practical ideas for the future of Europe.

With support of seven distinguished partner organizations we successfully established a creative strategic community of young professionals. They presented their recommendations at the final press conference, discussing the findings at a public panel debate to share qualified policy advice with Austrian and European stakeholders.

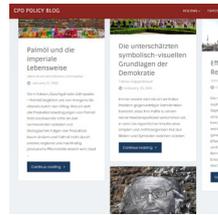


Salon Shabka

Salon Shabka is one of Shabka's programs that exists since 2016. Held on a regular basis, the Salon opens a space for a critical political and societal discussions. It is a space off the beaten track of hectic and hurried public discourses favoring dominant mainstream arguments. It offers critical debate in a relaxed and informal setting for anyone interested in our work and keen to engage outside academic institutions. The Salon is intense - but fun. It is controversial, sophisticated and deliberative.

In the last three years, Shabka held 14 Salons covering a range of topics and contents. Among others, documentaries (e.g. on liberal democracy crisis), fact finding trips (e.g. Mosul), master theses (e.g. fundamentalism and modernity) and book projects (e.g. "Kassandra") have been discussed so far. In 2018 Shabka held Salons in Vienna and Graz as well as Tripoli (Lebanon).

More recently - with Constantin Lager as program manager - the Salon integrates different Shabka initiatives (i.e. Syrian Futures) creating space for a variety of perspectives, skill-sets and innovation.



CPD Policy Blog

The CPD Policy Blog serves as a bridge between peace research and politics. It is set up as a joint project between Shabka, the University of Graz and the Austrian Conflict, Peace and Democracy (CPD) Cluster. In connecting the threads of academia and policy our blog contributes to progressive politics with a constructive future perspective.

In 2018 Rebecca Trixa joined our team as the blog's head editor. The CPD Policy Blog allows us to reach out to new stakeholders in the conflict and peace research community. It broadens our network of experts and further integrates the blog contributors into Shabka's work.

Selected Travels

Lebanon

In May 2018 the Syrian war entered its eighth year and with it Lebanon's refugee crisis. On top of hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees per capita on a global scale, in May 2018 the country also held its first parliamentary elections since 2009.

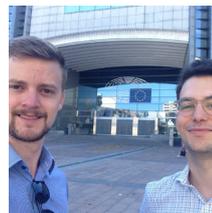
On these margins Shabka visited the country and reported from the elections. Further we discussed the Western role in the Middle East during a Shabka Salon in downtown Tripoli, held background talks with civil society and visited refugee settlements in the northern Akkar province.



Brussels

In July Shabka was invited to discuss the European Commission's Five Scenarios during a critical debate on the future of the EU. Political and economic future prospects of the Union were analyzed vis-à-vis the most pressing European challenges such as Brexit, cyber threats, disinformation campaigns and the rise of anti-democratic tendencies.

This invitation came as a follow-up of the "Talking Europe" conference in Vienna organized by Shabka in June 2018 discussing European and Austrian foreign policy in Eastern Europe and in the Western Balkans.



Iraqi Kurdistan

In the midst of post-conflict reconstruction, trauma relief and reconciliation efforts, parliamentary elections were held in Iraqi Kurdistan in September 2018.

Following the invitation of the Kurdish authorities, Shabka observed the election process from Erbil, reporting on results and their potential political implications on the Kurdish-Iraqi relations.



2018 By The Numbers

1100+ **Event Participants**

Shabka's participants come from diverse backgrounds all over the world. We engage academics, activists as well as interested citizens. Together we can learn from each other and work towards a better future.

14 **Core Members**

Shabka's team grows constantly every year. Our active and highly engaged members represent the core spirit. They are strongly connected in their fields of expertise.

28 **Events**

Restlessly, we organize and join various events in different countries, collaborating with our partners and experts, sparking progressive ideas.

140+ **Experts**

Our network spans across the globe. Connected through Shabka, we work with junior and senior experts in all disciplines.

26 **Partners**

Good work needs good partners. Since the very beginning we are actively joining forces for events, projects and publications.

1900

Total Facebook Page Likes

We proactively engage our Shabka community on- and offline. Our steady growth of Social Media presence indicates that our messages are well received.

86K

Social Media Outreach

Shabka's global approach is reflected in analytical data. We primarily reach out to Europe (Austria, Germany), North Africa and the Middle East.

Events 2018

18 Jan	●	Pre-Future Strategists Hub Policy Workshop
18-19 Jan	●	Annual meeting of the Austrian Peace & Conflict Research Community
01 Feb	●	Panel Discussion - Wie kann Integration im Klassenzimmer gelingen?
22 Feb	●	Panel Discussion - Opening of the Model European Union Vienna 2018
07 Mar	●	Workshop - Future Strategists Hub
16 Mar	●	Salon Shabka - Tarnen und Täuschen
15 Apr	●	Shabka Picknick
17 Apr	●	Panel Discussion - Entwicklungs-Chance Bildung
2-8 May	●	Fact Finding Trip - Lebanon
04 May	●	Salon Shabka - Power vs. Limitations
30 May	●	Workshop - From Vision to Action in Security Policy Making
06 Jun	●	Panel Discussion - Heute im Konflikt und morgen Partner Europas?
18 Jun	●	Round Table - Talking Europe: Austrias Regional Role
18 Jun	●	Panel Discussion - Österreichs regionale Rolle
30 Jun - 02 Jul	●	Brussels Trip and discussion on Juncker's 5 EU Scenarios
20 Aug	●	Cooperation - Annales
26 Sep	●	Salon Shabka - Das US Engagement in Syrien
29 Sep	●	Shabka Hike
29 Sep - 02 Oct	●	Fact Finding Trip - Iraqi Kurdistan
24 Oct	●	Presentation - UN NGO Committee on Peace
30 Oct	●	Salon Shabka - Sanktionen im Informationszeitalter
31 Oct	●	Interactive workshop on security policy making in the Western Balkans
19 Nov	●	Panel Discussion - Neutralität Österreichs und der Schweiz
23 Nov	●	Shabka Jahresabschlussfeier 2018
27 Nov	●	Round Table - Entwicklungen in der Region Kurdistan und Irak
07 Dec	●	Radio Interview on Ö1
14-15 Dec	●	Annual conference of the Austrian Peace & Conflict Research Community
18 Dec	●	Salon Shabka - Krise der Liberalen Demokratie

and counting...



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