

# Charta of the Geography Student Association (STV Geographie)

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## Mission & Vision

The STV Geographie represents and supports all students enrolled in Geography programs (Bachelor, Master, and Lehramt \*teacher education\*) at the University of Vienna. Our mission is to advocate for students' academic and social interests, provide resources and guidance, and foster a vibrant, inclusive community within the department.

We envision a university environment where geography students have equitable access to education, are empowered to engage critically with their studies, and contribute meaningfully to societal and environmental challenges. We strive for a community characterized by respect, diversity, sustainability, and active student participation.

## §1 Who We Are

The STV Geographie is the official student representative body for all students in Geography, consisting of the StV Geographie (Bachelor and Master) and the StV Lehramt Geographie und Wirtschaftliche Bildung (Lehramt Bachelor and Lehramt Master) at the University of Vienna. It is entirely student-run and works to create an inclusive, accessible, and supportive university experience — truly shaped by students, for students.

## §2 Our Core Values

- Accessibility for all – Education must be open to everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability.
- Equality and inclusion – We promote feminist, LGBTQIA+-inclusive, and diversity-conscious thinking and action.
- Zero tolerance for discrimination – No racism, sexism, queerphobia, ableism, or any other form of exclusion has a place in our spaces.
- Environmental awareness – We take ecological responsibility seriously and reflect this in our event planning and daily practices.
- Independent activism – We reserve the right to take part in protests and initiatives aligned with our values, while remaining independent of any political parties or religious institutions.

- Respectful internal culture – We commit to respectful behavior, active listening, and mutual care. Conflicts or issues can be brought to our Awareness Team, which offers a safe and supportive space for resolving concerns.

### **§3 Participation in STV**

Being part of the STV is flexible and open. You can contribute in different ways, including:

- Supporting or organizing events
- Helping with Beratungsstunden (consultation hours)
- Attending and voting in meetings
- Assisting with planning, logistics, or communication
- Sharing ideas or feedback

There is no fixed workload, and you can join or leave at any time. Whether you organize a single event or attend every meeting, each contribution is meaningful and appreciated. We consider everyone who participates — regardless of whether you hold an elected mandate or not — as a full and valued member of the team.

### **§4 Activities and Initiatives**

The STV Geographie engages in a variety of activities and initiatives to support students and build a sense of community. Our major efforts include:

- First-Semester Orientation (Erstsemestrigen-Tutorium) – We organize an orientation tutorial at the beginning of each semester to welcome first-semester students (\*Erstsemestrige\*), introduce them to university life, and help them connect with peers and mentors.
- Mentoring Program – Experienced students offer guidance to newer students through informal mentoring. This helps newcomers navigate their coursework, find resources, and feel more comfortable in the department.
- Social Events and Networking – We host regular social gatherings such as the Geo-Stammtisch (casual meet-ups), seasonal celebrations, and group outings (for example, hikes or field trips). These events strengthen our community and allow students across different semesters and programs to get to know each other.

- Student Consultation and Support – Our team holds weekly consultation hours (\*Beratungsstunden\*) in the STV office (the "Kammer!"), where students can drop in for academic advice, help with administrative questions, or just a friendly chat. We also serve as approachable points of contact via email and social media for any student concerns, making sure everyone knows where to turn for help.

- Academic Advocacy ("Working for Students") – We work behind the scenes to improve the academic experience. This includes collaborating with faculty on curriculum improvements (for example, helping to rework the Master's program), organizing student surveys (\*Umfragen\*) to gather feedback, and advocating for student-friendly solutions to issues in our study programs. In essence, we are continuously working for students to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.

## **§5 Structure and Mandates**

1. The STV Geographie consists of 5 elected mandates (official student representative positions).
2. These mandates represent all students across the Bachelor, Master, and Lehramt geography programs; in practice, we work together as one unified team regardless of study program.
3. From within the active mandates, we internally elect:
  - One President, who also can access the budget and sign official documents.
  - Two Vice-President, who also can sign official documents, but can't access the budget.
4. Elections for these mandates take place every two years, during the official ÖH (Austrian National Students' Union) election period. All geography students are eligible to vote and to run for these positions.

## **§6 Committees (Gremien)**

As part of our role in university governance, the STV Geographie participates in several official committees (Gremien) to ensure student perspectives are included in decision-making:

- Fakultätskonferenz (Faculty Conference) – We delegate 4 student representatives (2 from the Bachelor's program and 2 from the Lehramt program) to the Geography Fachkonferenz. This committee is a forum where faculty and student delegates discuss subject-specific matters, such as course content and curriculum issues for the geography programs.

- Studienkonferenz (Study Conference) – We send 6 student representatives to the Studienkonferenz. This committee addresses broader study-program topics, including curriculum development, degree requirements, and academic regulations affecting geography students.

- Institutsrat (Institute Council) – The STV is invited to participate in the Institute Council of the Department of Geography and Regional Research. Attendance in the Institutsrat is not mandatory for us, but we join its meetings whenever possible to present student viewpoints on department-level affairs and to stay informed about institute-wide decisions.

## **§7 Meetings and Decision-Making**

We hold two open meetings per month, usually on the first and third Tuesday evenings of the month during the semester (with no meetings during university holidays). These meetings are open to all interested students, even those who are not currently active in the STV.

In our meetings, decisions are made collectively. We strive for consensus whenever possible, but when a vote is needed, all participants have an equal vote and the outcomes are recorded for transparency. Meetings are also where we plan upcoming activities and delegate tasks. Responsibilities for events, projects, and issues are distributed among volunteers. When someone volunteers to take on a task, they become the point person for that item, but they are always free to ask for help from the rest of the team. This ensures clear accountability while maintaining a collaborative spirit — no one is left to handle an issue alone.

## **§8 Communication**

The Communications Team is responsible for:

- Announcing events on Instagram and sharing them via WhatsApp
- Posting reminders and updates to keep students informed
- Ensuring a clear, consistent communication style across all channels
- Making information timely and accessible to everyone

Note: WhatsApp is used only as a one-way information channel for announcements; it is not monitored for replies and not used for coordinating STV activities.

## **§9 Language and Accessibility**

STV Geographie currently operates primarily in German, but we incorporate English whenever possible to include as many students as we can. We strive to make all our events, meetings, and materials as accessible and inclusive as possible, being mindful of different language needs and other potential barriers to participation.

## **§10 Finances**

The STV Geographie receives its budget from the ÖH (Österreichische Hochschüler\*innenschaft, the Austrian National Students' Union). The Finance Coordinator manages these funds transparently in consultation with the team. All spending decisions are made collectively, with a focus on maximizing student benefit and using resources sustainably.

## **§11 Updating This Charta**

This charta is a living document, shaped by our shared values and by open discussion. It reflects our current principles and practices, and it can be amended as needed through collective decisions made in our open meetings.