

About Servas

Servas (an Esperanto word meaning 'We serve') is a world-wide, non-profit, nongovernmental co-operative system of hosts and travellers set up with the purpose of helping to build world peace, goodwill, understanding and mutual tolerance. It seeks to realise these aims by providing opportunities for personal contacts between individuals of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

What does a membership imply?

Servas travellers can visit hosts who accept visitors for two days and nights, or can meet day hosts who cannot offer overnight accommodation, but who are willing to help with information, a guided tour, provide a meal, or just meet visitors for a friendly chat. At the present time the network of 'open doors' includes more than sixteen thousand homes - together with some schools, neighbouring centres, ashrams and other community institutions - in 128 countries on six continents.

Background

In 1949 a movement called "Peacebuilders" was initiated at a folk high school in Denmark by Bob Luitweiler, an American conscientious objector, and his friends. They were deeply concerned about world peace and wanted to prevent a holocaust like World War II from ever happening again. Their intentions were to work actively for peace, have contacts with other peace movements and institute a work – study – travel system that would make it possible for people of various nations to make visits to each other's homes. To accomplish these aims, a network of people who shared those goals and who would offer free hospitality to like-minded people, was established. Within a few years the movement had taken root in a number of countries. Lists of those who were willing to open their doors to people travelling within the system were being circulated and working committees were set up. Leaders of Servas met regularly at international conferences to discuss common problems and guidelines. In 1972 it was decided to establish "Servas International" as an organisation registered in Switzerland. Statutes were drawn up providing for an executive committee of international officers and area co-ordinators to be elected at regular international conferences. The United Nations placed "Servas International" on its roster of nongovernmental organisations in 1973.

After 60 years, the organisation continues to grow. At each international conference new countries are admitted, the most recent being some from Eastern Europe. In the future it is hoped that even more doors will be opened; that more hosts and travellers will be interested in the sharing of ideas and ideals with one another in order to understand better the diversity of humankind, in the ultimate interest of world peace.

SERVAS SWEDEN

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The Role of Servas International

Servas International is the co-ordinating body that links national Servas groups and contacts. Servas cannot be established in any country without the prior approval of Servas International. While some financial assistance is available during the setting up period, countries are encouraged to become financially independent. In order that the organisation functions effectively on an international scale, certain basic rules and procedures are set down by Servas International and individual countries are required to abide by these. Within these guidelines each country may use initiatives appropriate to their particular circumstances. For example, some countries may wish to advertise for hosts while others prefer not to do so. An international conference is held every three years to which delegates from all countries are admitted and procedures are debated and, if necessary, modified. The conference also elects an executive committee, area co-ordinators and an editor for Servas International News.

The International Conference comprises a number of member national groups, each of which has 10 or more hosts, including day hosts. Each has either signed the original Statutes in 1972 as a founding member, or has applied and been accepted for membership at a subsequent International conference. Each member group is entitled to one vote in the proceedings of Servas International. The following 47 member national groups attended the SI General Assembly in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in September 2009:

Argentina	Israel	Ryssland
Australien	Italien	Singapore
Belgien	Japan	Spanien
Bolivia	Kanada	Surinam
Botswana	Kina	Sverige
Brasilien	Malawi	Sydkorea
Colombia	Malaysia	Thailand
Costa Rica	Mexico	Turkiet
Danmark	Nederländerna	Tyskland
England	Norge	Uganda
Finland	Nya Zeeland	Ungern
Frankrike	Pakistan	Uruguay
Guatemala	Paraguay	USA
Honduras	Peru	Venezuela
Indien	Polen	Zambia
Irland	Portugal	

More Information is available on

www.servas.se

www.servas.org

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