

Vienna, February 2026

The VieVinum 2026 mentoring programme kicks off

Presenting the promising winemakers and their mentors

*As Austria's wine country gears up for its major wine trade fair, VieVinum (16–18 May 2026), the Gerd A. Hoffmann Academy is already buzzing with activity! For this cross-mentoring programme – a VieVinum highlight - thirteen young winemakers were selected for participation, and on Wednesday, 28 January, all of the mentees and their mentors gathered together for their first major meeting at INTERSPAR Österreich's a la carte restaurant, **das Mezzanin - restaurant & bar**, in the Haus am Schottentor, in the heart of Vienna.*

Through exchanges with their mentors, the 13 mentees seek to gain fresh perspectives, practical insights and advice, inspiration, expand their existing networks, and further their personal development. Topics such as internationalisation, digitalisation, marketing and target groups, and corporate succession, are high on the mentee wish lists. The roster of talented young participants includes Alexander Fritsch, Clemens Krutzler, Stefanie Leitner, Florian Masser, Lena Skringer, and the sibling trio of Sophie, Katharina, and Maximilian Wieninger.

Amongst the mentors are big names such as Peter Aufreiter (Director General of the Vienna Museum of Science & Technology); Hans Bergmann (Wine Department Head at SPAR Austria), Christine Klimaschka (Co-Publisher of myGiulia), Josef Pröll (President of the Austrian Football Association), Waltraud Scharnagl (Wine Category Manager at SPAR Österreich), Gabriela Straka (Corporate Sustainability Manager, MANZ Publishing), and Stefanie Wareka (Marzek Etiketten+Packaging).

A new feature of this year's mentoring programme is the involvement of graduates from previous years serving as "buddies" to advise the mentees. The Gerd A. Hoffmann Academy continues to be under the patronage of Johannes Schmuckenschlager, President of the Austrian Winegrowers' Association.

Goals and procedure

The Gerd A. Hoffmann Academy has been part of the VieVinum wine trade fair since 2022. In this cross-mentoring programme, young winemakers are accompanied on their professional path for several months by mentoring personalities from business and

society. The mentees who applied and were accepted to the programme met the eligibility criteria of being between the ages 18 and 35, are participating in VieVinum, and are taking over or have founded – or are founding – a winery. For these newcomers, opportunities lie in the exchange of experience; for everyone involved, the emphasis is on sharing a passion for wine, learning from each other, and establishing new networks. The key steps of the project are the matching of mentee and mentor and their getting to know each other, an initial review of this dynamic in the coming Spring and, finally, a presentation of the experiences gained as part of the School of Wine at VieVinum 2026.

Alexandra Graski-Hoffmann, organiser of VieVinum, is keen to utilise this programme as a place for interaction and exchange. "I hope this step will strengthen our community, reveal shared visions for all the participants, and enable us to enter the future VieVinum years with renewed energy and confidence," she says.

Adds **Hans G. Bergmann**, Wine Department Head for SPAR Österreichische Warenhandels-AG: "With INTERSPAR Weinwelt and the online shop weinwelt.at, we've been firmly established as a force in the wine industry for more than two decades. INTERSPAR sees itself as an active driver of change and is deeply committed to supporting emerging talents and bringing new names to the forefront. To achieve this, INTERSPAR offers the ideal marketplace - both in our stores and online. It is therefore all the more an honour for me to serve as a mentor at the Gerd A. Hoffmann Academy together with my colleague and wine expert, Waltraud Scharnagl."

All mentees and mentors of the Gerd A. Hoffmann Academy 2026:

Bioweingut Bergkirchner

Martin Bergkirchner & Mag. Peter Aufreiter, Director General of the Vienna Museum of Science and Technology with the Austrian Media Library

Weingut Gerhard Deim

Gerhard Deim & Josef Pröll, CEO of Leipnik-Lundenburger Invest Beteiligungs AG (LLI)

Weingut Eichberger

Marcus Eichberger & Stefanie Wareka, Head of Marketing at Marzek Etiketten + Packaging GmbH

Weinberghof Fritsch

Alexander Fritsch & Stefan Schauer, Managing Director of STAUD'S GmbH

Weingut Katharina Gessl

Katharina Gessl & Christine Klimaschka, Co-Publisher, Communications & Partnerships at myGiulia

Weingut Krutzler

Clemens Krutzler & Hans Bergmann, Wine Department Head at SPAR and INTERSPAR, Wine Expert

Weingut Lex Langmann

Verena Langmann & Waltraud Scharnagl, Wine Category Manager at SPAR and INTERSPAR Wine Expert

Weinhof Leitner

Stefanie Leitner & Prof. Christoph Madl, Tourism Business Specialist and Court-Certified Expert

Weingut Masser

Florian Masser & Wolfgang Reichl, Managing Director of Reichl & Reichl GmbH, Organiser of the Haute Couture Austria Award

Weingut Pröll

Maximilian Pröll & Certified Sommelier Brad Knowles, Vice President of the Burgenland Sommelier Association, Brand Ambassador & Sales Austria, Stölzle Lausitz

Weingut Schmid

Verena Schmid & Dr. Gabriela Maria Straka, Certified Beer Sommelier, Editor-in-Chief at MANZ "NIU Sustainability in Business"; Board Member of RespACT

Weingut Skringer

Lena Skringer & Attila Janos, Founder & Owner of supseven TYPO3 Web Agency

Weingut Wieninger, Hajszan Neumann, Wieninger.next

Sophie, Katharina & Maximilian Wieninger & Sandor Döry, Founder/Chairman, E-Commerce Initiative Austria; CEO, SRG IT & Marketing GmbH