

The Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria Resolves the Funding of the First Projects

Jewish Cemeteries in Deutschkreutz and Stockerau are to be restored

22 Jun 2011

On 20 June 2011, the first funding for urgently needed restoration work on two run-down Jewish cemeteries was resolved in Parliament by the newly-established "Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria".

As a result, money from Federal funds will be able to be disbursed for measures for the conservation of the Jewish cemeteries in Deutschkreutz and Stockerau before the year is out. The two municipalities were the first municipalities to declare themselves willing to bear the responsibility for the continued maintenance of the Jewish cemeteries in their municipal districts once the restoration has been completed. In doing so, they are rendering an important contribution towards assuming Austria's historical responsibility.

In the "Washington Agreement" of 2001, the Austrian Federal Government and the Government of the United States of America concluded an agreement for the settlement of questions of compensation and restitution for victims of National Socialism, which, in addition to other measures, also stipulated (under item 8 of appendix A of the Agreement) Austria's obligation under constitutional law to restore and maintain Jewish cemeteries, known and unknown, in Austria.

In December 2010 – after the legal situation as regards competencies had been resolved – the enactment of the "Federal Law on the Establishment of a Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria" (Federal Law Gazette I no. 99/2010) marked an important step towards the domestic implementation of this obligation: the Fund, established with the National Council, will be endowed with one million Euros per year for the next 20 years. It is also stipulated that the owners of the Jewish cemeteries contribute funds of the same amount for the restoration.

The administration of the newly-created Fund was transferred to the "National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism", the Board of Trustees of which also functions as the highest body of the "Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria". The recommendations for the decisions of the Board of Trustees are made by an advisory board chaired an expert in the field, the President of the Federal Office for the Protection of Monuments Dr. Barbara Neubauer. The Jewish Community Vienna, the Federation and provinces, cities and municipalities are all represented in this advisory board.

In the coming 20 years, more than 60 Jewish cemeteries throughout Austria – including several of great cultural and historical value, such as the cemetery in Vienna, Währing – are to be safeguarded from ruin with the support of the "Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria", provided that the necessary agreements regarding maintenance and upkeep can be reached with the cities and municipalities concerned.