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National Fund publishes visitors' guide to the Jewish cemeteries in Austria

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The National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism has published a "Visitors' guide to the Jewish cemeteries in Austria". The publication, which is available in German and English, was produced jointly with the Jewish religious communities and grassroots initiatives and for the first time includes all known Jewish cemeteries as well as Jewish sections of cemeteries throughout Austria.



Visitor's Guide to the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria. (c) Walter Reichl

President of the National Council Wolfgang Sobotka, Chairman of the National Fund and the Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries (Jewish Cemeteries Fund), emphasises the importance of all contributions towards preserving the cemeteries: "Together, with the help of local municipal authorities and grassroots initiatives that have thankfully already been involved in the care of Jewish cemeteries for years, it will be possible to secure the lasting preservation of these sites of cultural heritage".

Chief Rabbi Jaron Engelmayer of the Jewish Community Vienna underlines the importance of Jewish cemeteries: "In Jewish tradition, a cemetery is often referred to as a 'house of life' or 'house of the living', in allusion to the notion that although earthly life has come to an end, the soul lives on".

The guide is as handy as it is informative: using QR codes, information on over 60 Jewish cemeteries and completed restoration projects out can be accessed via the website of the Jewish Cemeteries Fund. FOGIS, the geo-information portal of the National Fund, also provides a chance to explore the cemeteries on interactive maps using GPS. In addition to the most important historical facts, information on visiting a cemetery, photos and maps, the guide also provides contact details for arranging guided tours.

For Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund and the Cemeteries Fund, the restoration is a pioneering act of remembrance work: "For decades, Jewish cemeteries in Austria have been left to fall into decay and obscurity. By restoring them, we are now managing, step by step, to bring them back into Austria's collective memory." In this sense, the guide will help anchor Austria's Jewish cemeteries in the midst of society once more. In addition to the practical use for visitors, it is also intended to help preserve and raise awareness of regional history. In this way, future generations can experience Jewish history in Austria as part of their own history.

Austria made an undertaking to support the restoration and preservation of Jewish cemeteries in Austria in the Washington Agreement. The Cemeteries Fund was established to serve this purpose; it is endowed with one million euros in federal funds annually until 2030 to support cemetery owners in restoring the cemeteries, who contribute funds in the same amount for the restoration work. The Fund is also open to third-party funding. Once a cemetery has been restored, the local municipality takes on responsibility for its further maintenance and upkeep for 20 years. So far, 15 Jewish cemeteries have had restoration projects supported with funding totalling approx. 8.5 million euros.

The publication can be obtained from the National Fund of the Republic of Austria at office@nationalfonds.org.

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Press Photos

Photos of the Visitors' guide to media use can be found in the "Press photos".