

MAUTHAUSEN COMMITTEE AUSTRIA

The Mauthausen Committee (MKÖ) was founded in 1997 by the Austrian Union Federation and the Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church with the Federation of the Austrian Jewish Communities as partner in the form of an organisation to continue the work of the Austrian Camp Community. In 2000 the MKÖ was officially designated the successor organisation of the Austrian Camp Community. The MKÖ is responsible for the preserving and continuing the legacy of the former concentration prisoners. Upholding the memory of victims of Nazi crimes, particularly those committed in Mauthausen Concentration Camp and its sub-camps, as well as engaging in anti-racism and anti-fascism work, particularly with young people are the main tasks of the MKÖ.

Liberation and Memorial Ceremonies

Each year, the Austrian Mauthausen Committee (MKÖ) organises and coordinates the events surrounding the anniversary of the liberation of Mauthausen Concentration Camp in close cooperation with partners on a national (Austrian Camp Community Mauthausen) and international (Comité International de Mauthausen) level, the largest memorial and liberation commemoration events in Europe, held at the Mauthausen Memorial Site. Thousands, including many survivors of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp as well as important politicians from Austria and abroad, take part in the international liberation ceremony. As over 90% of the victims of Mauthausen Concentration Camp were neither Germans or Austrians, the commemorative events therefore have particular international significance and represent the largest memorial and liberation event of their kind. As well as the main liberation commemorations, many more memorial events take also place at the sites of the sub-camps of Mauthausen and other places of Nazi terror. The majority of these events, attended by many people from the immediate region, but also by visitors from many other European countries, were organised by local organisations and initiatives in close cooperation with the MKÖ. Since 2006, the memorial and liberation commemorations have been framed each year by a special theme, something directly linked to the history of Mauthausen Concentration Camp and Austria's Nazi past. The link to the present is always an important aspect of the chosen theme and should help young people especially draw direct links between their lives and experiences and the ideology of National Socialism. With more than 90 memorial and commemoration events taking place each year at the former sub-camps and other places of Nazi terror, an impressive stand is taken for "never again".

Festival of Joy

Since 2013, the Festival of Joy, organised by the Austrian Mauthausen Committee, has been held on Vienna's Heldenplatz, featuring a free concert by the Wiener Symphoniker in the last years. The Festival of Joy, held each year on May 8th on Vienna's Heldenplatz, celebrates the liberation from the National Socialist regime. On the 8th May 1945 the National Socialist regime was defeated by Allied troops following the unconditional surrender of the German army. Thus ended the criminal occupation and destructive war in Europe.

The Austrian Mauthausen Committee as the organiser had the invaluable support of a number of organisations, including the Verein GEDENKDIENT, the Austrian Jewish Community, the Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance, as well as the support of

the Federal Government and the Viennese City Government. ORF III broadcasts the Festival of Joy live since 2015 and the ÖBB and Rail Tours also cooperates to offer special tickets for people to attend. In the past five years, more than 51,000 visitors have participated in the Festival of Joy, and sent a strong signal, that the 8th May deserves to be marked appropriately as a day of liberation.

Work with young people

The MKÖ has carried out numerous projects over the years, especially with young people, and in cooperation with various partner organisations. Through the programmes for young people, the MKÖ has been able to reach more than 100.000 young people and communicate not only historical knowledge, but also inform them about values such as human rights, free democratic society, anti-racism, anti-fascism and more. Particularly for the groups who are guided through the sites of former concentration camps and sub-camps of Mauthausen we concentrate not only on the darkest and most drastic aspects of this history, but look at the importance of the historical events for today and the lives of the young individuals. This work is more pronounced in the anti-racism workshop “Wir sind alle” and the workshops we hold on civil courage. In autumn 2016 the guided tours as part of the educational programme “denkmalwien” (memorial vienna) started. The tours look at different aspects such as “we are heroes!”, “Republic and Democracy”, “Us and the ‘others’” and “What is Austria?”. The historical focus will be on the history of the Republic as well as the Nazi period with a strong link to contemporary society and events.

Research

As well as projects about the history of Mauthausen Concentration Camp and its sub-camps, the MKÖ hosts regular international symposia aimed at introducing the topics to a non-academic audience.

Publications

The publication series “edition mauthausen” is dedicated in the first instance to investigating historical events and particularly the people at the centre of history of Mauthausen. Also the book “Rechtsextrem”, which gives information about the rightwing scene in Austria, symbols, code, music and fashion was published from the Mauthausen Komitee Austria in 2010.

Cultural Events

We have a range of cultural events that are aimed at making the new perspectives on the history and relevance of Mauthausen Concentration Camp accessible to a wide public.

The aims of the MKÖ

The MKÖ stands for a free, democratic society and the protection of human rights for all, independent from and regardless of citizenship, political views and religion. It is particularly concerned with the protection of ethnic minority groups. The MKÖ stands decidedly against all forms of fascism, racism, right-wing extremism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism.

The MKÖ is concerned with the upkeep and scientific and pedagogical maintenance of the former concentration camp Mauthausen and its satellite camps. The MKÖ is a non-profit organisation, which is engaged in politically unbiased activities.