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Opening of the new Austrian national exhibition at Auschwitz

On 4 October 2021, the new Austrian national exhibition “Far Removed. Austria and Auschwitz” was opened in Block 17 of the former main camp of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp, marking the completion of a long-standing project of the National Fund. The curatorial-scientific team led by Hannes Sulzenbacher (overall management) and Albert Lichtblau (scientific management), which also included Siegfried Göllner, Birgit Johler, Christoph Mai, Christiane Rothländer and Barbara Staudinger, was responsible for developing the content. The new exhibition was designed by Martin Kohlbauer.

Memorial service to mark the exhibition opening

The President of the National Council, Wolfgang Sobotka, and the Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Piotr M. A. Cywiński, hosted the memorial service at Auschwitz to mark the exhibition opening.

Dignitaries in attendance included the Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture Prof. Piotr Gliński and Auschwitz survivor Marian Turcki, and, on behalf of Austria, Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen, Second President of the National Council Doris Bures, President of the Federal Council Peter Ragg, Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg, Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution at the Federal Chancellery Karoline Edtstadler, Health Minister Wolfgang Mückstein, State Secretary for the Arts and Culture Andrea Mayer and the President of the Jewish Community Vienna Oskar Deutsch. Secretary General Hannah Lessing moderated the event.

Impressions of the exhibition opening



Video of the memorial service

The ceremony was broadcast live on ORFII as well as on the parliamentary website.

Auschwitz survivors and descendants as guests

The National Fund also enjoyed the great privilege of looking after the invited guests of the Parliament, Auschwitz survivors and close relatives of former Auschwitz inmates. Seventy-six years on from the liberation of the camp, only very few were able to accept the invitation – especially in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the time spent together the guests shared stories of what they had experienced at Auschwitz. The eldest of the group was Erich Finsches, who was born in Vienna in September 1927 and took part in the trip accompanied by his partner and a young documentary filmmaker. Erich Finsches survived Auschwitz and Dachau.



Impressions of the new exhibition



Website for the new exhibition

Alongside the opening of the new exhibition, a new website accompanying the exhibition went online at **www.auschwitz.at**. The National Fund is in charge of its technical maintenance and content, which includes in-depth information on the topics covered by the exhibition, educational materials with modules created by erinnern.at, and biographies and databases on prisoners and perpetrators.

Visitors to Auschwitz have the opportunity to record their impressions and thoughts about the exhibition, the memorial site or the historical camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in the Austrian exhibition's **digital guestbook**. These messages, which fade away from the guestbook screen after a short time, are digitally transmitted to Austria where they are displayed in various public places and on the website www.auschwitz.at.

Links

- Photos from the exhibition opening
- Video: Opening ceremony as video-on-demand
- Parliamentary Correspondence No. 1057/2021
- Video: National Council President Sobotka on the historically revised national exhibition
- Exhibition booklet in German, Polish and English (PDF)
- Speech by the Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen
- Article by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum
- Article by Claire Fritsch in the *Illustrierte Neue Welt* "Auschwitz und zurück" (Auschwitz and back) (PDF)