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10th Anniversary of the Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria

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Ten years ago, on 14 December 2010, the statutory basis was created for a lasting renovation of the Jewish cemeteries in Austria.

“The Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria” was established at the National Council in December 2010 to prevent the more than 60 Jewish cemeteries throughout Austria from falling to ruin. For 10 years now, the Cemeteries Fund has not only made an important contribution to preserving Jewish cultural heritage for future generations; it also represents a political commitment to the historical role of Jewish culture and the cultivation of Jewish heritage in Austria,” says National Council President Wolfgang Sobotka, in tribute to the manifold significance of the Fund.

For a long time, the Jewish cemeteries in Austria were left to fall to ruin. In 2001, Austria assumed the obligation under international law enshrined in the Washington Agreement to support their renovation and preservation. In 2010, the fund administered by the National Fund was able to begin its work. Since then, the Cemeteries Fund has subsidised around 50 renovation projects in 13 Jewish cemeteries throughout Austria in the amount of approx. 7.3 million euros.

Restoration work is currently underway in Baden, Graz, Hohenems, Mistelbach, Vienna-Währing and at Gates 1 and 4 of the Central Cemetery. At the large Jewish cemetery in Währing, for example, six renovation projects have been carried out in recent years with subsidies from the Fund totalling 1.02 million euros. In cooperation with the owner of the cemetery, the Jewish Community of Vienna, fundamental work was carried out to ensure the continued existence of this historically and culturally significant cemetery. The renovation of the Jewish cemeteries in the Burgenland municipalities of Deutschkreutz, Lackenbach and Kobersdorf as well as those in the Lower Austrian municipalities of Klosterneuburg and Stockerau has already been successfully completed. FOGIS, the geo-information portal of the National Fund displays all of the Jewish cemeteries in Austria on an interactive website.

For Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the Fund, it is important to anchor the Jewish cemeteries in the collective consciousness: “Following the renovation, the local authorities are responsible for their continued upkeep, thereby making a significant contribution to the preservation of the Jewish cemeteries in Austria as part of our shared history.”