



BEWUSSTSEINS  
REGION

Mauthausen - Gusen - St. Georgen



---

# home of human rights

MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG VON BUND, LAND UND EUROPÄISCHER UNION



LE 14-20



Bezugsstelle  
Landesentwicklung und  
Wirtschaftsberatung  
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien  
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien



PERG STRUDENGAU  
We in Oberösterreich die Spitze aufsteigen

FOR A PEACEFUL FUTURE  
CHARACTERISED BY UPHOLDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS.

WE ARE TAKING ON THE  
RESPONSIBILITY OF PROVIDING  
EDUCATION THAT WILL ENABLE US  
TO BUILD A GLOBAL SOCIETY  
WHERE **ALL PEOPLE ARE EQUAL  
AND DIVERSITY IS TOLERATED.**

WE ACT AS A HOME FOR  
DEMOCRACY, ENCOURAGE  
POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT,  
AND SPREAD FREEDOM  
THROUGHOUT THE  
ENTIRE WORLD.

## CHANGING THE WORLD.

Who is genuinely happy with the current state of the world?

Nearly nobody. Especially not those individuals who have helped people rise to power, only to go on to suffer under them the most. Impoverished people, those who are socially disadvantaged, the unemployed and those who have had their human rights infringed upon are easily manipulated. They cling on to promises that all too often are made by people who intend to shamelessly misuse their power.

This situation is all too familiar, in particular here in our region. Having learned from the past, and surrounded by some of the most tragic monuments of our time, the mayors of the towns of Mauthausen, Langenstein and St. Georgen an Gusen have struck up an amazing initiative. That's all of the towns that span over the former Mauthausen concentration camp.

The message for the future that has been acted out here for decades is: "Never again!" The goal that nothing like that ever happens again, is the driving force behind the awareness region.

The awareness region is a place where these ideas can be take the shape of ethics, be cultivated into human rights and sewn in all the world – a home for human rights!





**Thomas Punkenhofer**  
Mayor of Mauthausen



**Christian Aufreiter**  
Mayor of Langenstein



**Erich Wahl**  
Mayor of St. Georgen/Gusen



**Mag.a Andrea Wahl**  
Business Manager

## WHAT SET THE BALL ROLLING?

Following decisions made by the local authorities of the towns of Mauthausen, Langenstein and St. Georgen/Gusen as well as those made by the Upper Austrian State Parliament, on the 18th of January 2016, the collective local organisation: "Awareness region Mauthausen, Gusen, St. Georgen" was founded:

1. "In the knowledge of the historical burden that this region bears due to the death camps that were built and operated in these parts under the Nazi regime.
2. In an effort to alleviate this burden by using our local human and economic resources to raise awareness amongst the community as well as further afield about the events of the past and the horrible atrocities that were committed here.
3. In the hope that this will raise the crucial levels of awareness and accountability in the region and in general and
4. with the goal of contributing to the humanisation of society and preventing missteps like those from happening in the future by providing information about regional events of the past, while also encouraging a sceptical and alert frame of mind."

*(Excerpt from the constitution)*

Human beings crave peace and a life without fear, hatred and racism. They want to be able to share their opinion, and feel accepted in their world, in their country, in their home - where they live. With awareness region Mauthausen – Gusen – St. Georgen we are beginning to take steps to free ourselves from the stigmatisation that we as the people of Mauthausen, have internalised for so long. Drawing on the experiences, events, and story of the holocaust, which we NEVER AGAIN want to experience, we are living in such a way so as to set an example of what a genuine democracy can be. Being actively engaged with both our history and the subject of how we approach human rights issues today, is imperative when it comes to forming a local community characterised by social equity and where people's basic needs are met.

It's not always easy to live in a place with as much history as Gusen. In houses and on plots of land that have been passed down from parents or grandparents from an era defined by destruction, division, and oppression. It's very clear that people who lost their loved ones to the forces of that era will continue to come back to this place. We are facing this delicate issue together with the awareness region Mauthausen – Gusen – St. Georgen, the local community, Austrians, Europeans, and people from all over the world. We hope to process it, discuss it, and ultimately foster trust which will lead us to solve problems. Facing these challenges allows us to lead a life in which human rights are fulfilled.

Today, St. Georgen / Gusen is a market town which boasts a high quality of life, great social infrastructure including doctors' offices, sheltered housing, and nursing homes. It also has plenty of amenities for child care including playgroups, pre-school, a secondary school, a sixth-form, and a polytechnic college. The public transport links are perfect for commuting to work in Linz, and make the town an ideal suburb. As mayor, it is particularly important to me that we in the awareness region Mauthausen – Gusen – St. Georgen foster a sensitivity towards the events of the past, in order to cast a critical gaze upon the developments happening today, in order to educate and point individuals in the right direction when it comes to upholding human rights. People should have access to educational, cultural, memorial, and informational offerings that ultimately make this possible. Because of this, we invite all people from every corner of the globe, to foster this sensitivity and take advantage of it as well.

It is a supportive organisation with many members coming from the community, businesses, and politics all making personal and financial contributions to make the group's vision a reality.

The significance of this project even prompted the "Leader Regions" to make a professional start to the first EU-funded projects possible.

I am aware of my responsibilities and duties in the face of the struggle to achieve openness, the desire to live freely without fear, and striving to drive out the uncomfortable and awful recent events and developments surrounding various right-wing populist influences that are gaining traction these days. It's a matter of organising and bringing offerings like conversation cafés, or even the international human rights symposium to the people regardless of their current standpoint. In the awareness region, sometimes we get the feeling that not enough people are getting involved. In other regions they marvel at and praise the ongoing work of the awareness region's projects and task forces. Both of these perspectives are right: we need more people to get involved around the world. Each individual must stand up for and contribute to a peaceful coexistence. Anyone who is interested in this idea, is welcome to get involved in the awareness region.





## THE AWARENESS REGION COMMUNITY

Residents with houses that stand on the grounds of former concentration camps, stigmatisation, sensationalist camp tourism, educational tours, generations that have only ever heard what happened in stories - we find ourselves at a problematic, and contradictory crossroads.

However, the community is behind us. We receive a huge amount of support from young people and you can see that there is a spirit of optimism amongst the majority of the community. Our message is also being heard by educational organisations and schools are getting involved with our projects and events.

Surrounded by many symbols, and even architecture indicative of the dark history of this region, the towns are now being seen in a new light. Many are proud to spread an ideology of peace from this place.



**Christine Mayrhofer**  
Mauthausen

*I am honoured to be able to work with the awareness region Mauthausen – Gusen – St. Georgen in such a lovely causal environment. I enjoy being able to make a difference in our local area alongside a diverse range of people. At every gathering I learn something new and new questions are raised. I would like to be able to strengthen my connections to people from across the region. For me, it is important never to forget and to consider modern day issues as well.*



**Christian Langthaler**  
Langenstein

*The history of this region had always interested me. Our generation, may not be responsible for what happened back then but it is responsible for ensuring that nothing like that ever happens again.*

*It's clear that, especially in today's day and age, xenophobia and discrimination are simmering just below the surface. The work of the awareness region Mauthausen-Gusen-St. Georgen is very important to me because it helps to draw attention to the past and ensure that history doesn't repeat itself. We are responsible for preserving the buildings from the past for future generations.*



**Nicole Döberl**  
St.Georgen / Gusen

*As a resident of St. Georgen/Gusen and a person who has always been interested in history, I find that here I am often confronted with historical buildings and events of a darker nature. The awareness region provides a platform where the history of the region can be discussed. For me that means, learning from the past and focusing on making the future here on earth, a positive one. The awareness region brings together like-minded individuals of all ages from the local area, and from all over the world for discussion.*

# AWARENESS REGION, BUSINESS AND TOURISM

On the one hand, many companies are already on-board with the ideas behind the awareness region and are very supportive.

On the other hand, the awareness region is inspiring local business to get involved.

Tourists and visitors, especially bicyclists, have been known to linger a bit longer and explore these ideas. Countless delegations, and visitors attend our events and international projects. This strengthens and supports our tourism industry with

Investment and the sustainable creation of jobs. More and more creatives are approaching us to dedicate their services or work with us on a project.

We are using projects that promote peace to raise awareness, which benefits communities locally and further afield.



**Gottfried Kraft**

*HISTORY THAT  
LEAVES A LASTING  
IMPRESSION.*

*On the edge of Mauthausen, the biggest tragedy of the modern era took place. The horrors of the Nazi era are presented in the memorials in a way that leaves a timeless, memorable impression.*

*Visitors also have the opportunity to explore the region via the Danube cycle path or the Danube trail. Furthermore, there is the unique prospect of learning about the history of pharmaceuticals by checking out the pharmaceutical museum which is located in the Pragstein Castle.*

*From gourmet restaurants to locally-sourced food, from 4-star hotels straight through to restored hay barns - this is the perfect spot for enjoying delicious meals and cosy accommodation in a unique and pleasant atmosphere.*



## LOCAL REGION AND MEMORIALS

The driving force behind our ideas and goals is this region's history, which laid the foundations for the awareness region. The driving force behind our ideas and goals is this region's history, which laid the foundations for the awareness region.

THE PAST IS  
A WARNING FOR US,  
THE PRESENT IS A DUTY,  
THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT.

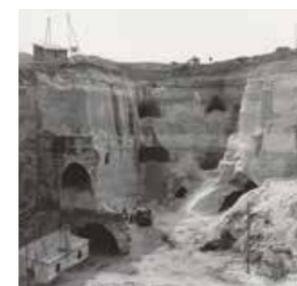
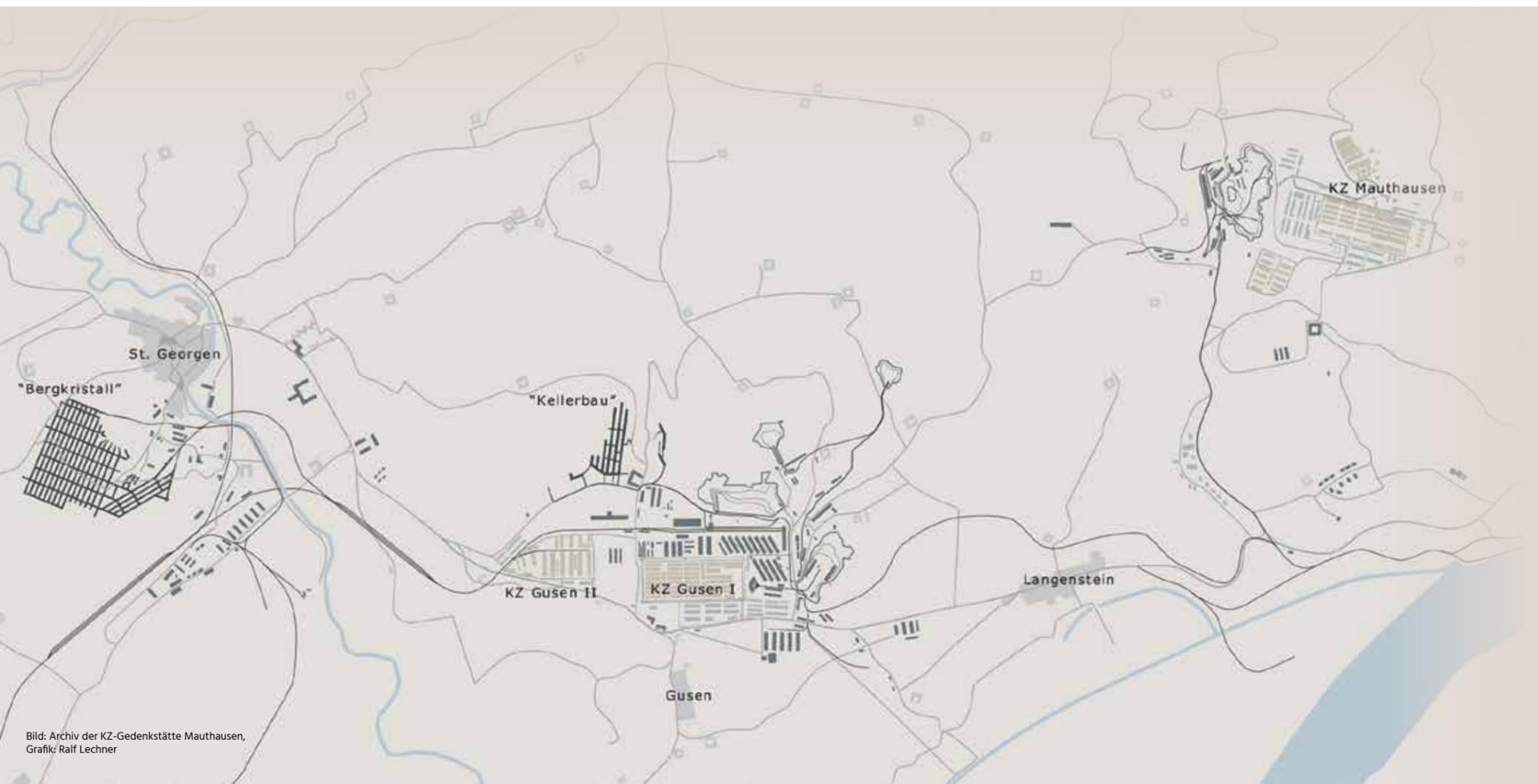
When dealing with topics concerning human dignity, human rights, ethics, morals, solidarity etc. the fact that a visit to our memorials can be educational and act as a warning to others is undisputed.

After all, we continue to discover little-known facts that were hardly reported on.

Many memorials have been very well preserved, but others have not had the same amount of care and energy invested in them. In the case of the Audio-walk, a lot of energy has gone into it. The Audio-walk is a creative project that follows the scars of the past, and leads listeners on an emotional journey through the former site of the concentration camp. The most-visited Mauthausen Memorial is actually only a small portion of the larger facility. This facility stretched over Gusen and St. Georgen and includes a very interesting system of mines

and tunnels called "Bergkristall" which are still not fully understood.

This new initiative works to tie together the different memorial sites using hiking trails and bicycle paths. This allows us to raise awareness while also incorporating nature in a unique fashion.



## THE AWARENESS REGION ON THE WORLD STAGE

Even in the early days, the awareness region received an enormous amount of international attention. Victims' organisations, other international memorial sites, human rights activists, and even political figures all reached out to offer their support.

At the inaugural assembly, there were delegations present from Poland, Spain (Catalonia), Germany and Italy. At many of the projects that we have worked on so far, in addition to these nationalities, we also welcomed a wide range of other international guests.

We even collaborated with some of them. Student groups and youth organisations travel to many of the countries and memorials, and discuss topics concerning ethics in workshops while also working with us to uphold human rights. It goes without saying that education is crucial to the work of the awareness region. Only by imparting these values in as many different learning institutions as possible will we be able to put a stop to the burgeoning radical ideologies.

The awareness region is on its way to becoming a global convention centre for all-things ethics and human rights, and a considerable amount of progress has already been made.

## THE AWARENESS REGION'S PROJECTS

One cannot measurably raise levels of awareness, and achieve ambitious goals from the comfort of an office space, and simply sending brochures to every corner of the globe won't help much either.

To raise awareness you need to reach people on a deeper level, and both excite them, and frighten them. Everyone should be able to go out and continue to spread our message. We will only be able to achieve this by planning top-class, international events and projects.



Ralf Punkenhofer

### ANNUAL LIBERATION CELEBRATION

Every year at the beginning of May, the Mauthausen Memorial and the Gusen Memorial celebrate the liberation of the camp. Due to the awareness region's activities, the programme for the event has been expanded upon significantly and the number of visitors in attendance has grown as well.

Our first major success was the high rate of international attention that the Gusen Memorial received, which the Austrian Prime Minister attended for the first time in 2017.

### ERASMUS +, MULTI-NATIONAL WITH EU-FUNDING

We have partnerships with 9 organisations in 3 countries who's work all revolves around raising awareness. We work to uphold human rights and against burgeoning nationalism – all in accordance with European ideas and freedom projects.

We send delegations and youth groups to historical sites and work with them on-site together with the host-organisations.



### HUMAN RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM

In 2017, on the anniversary of "Crystal Night", the first annual International Human Rights Symposium took place. This event took place over the course of four days and featured a top-class programme which was both inspiring and moving.

The opening in the overflowing St. George-ner Church, which featured the play "Der Fall Gruber" was a valuable highlight. Expert presentations and workshops took place in the Danube Hall in Mauthausen as well as

the neighbouring middle school. Engaging cultural offerings, tours of the area, and an emotional poetry slam have now made their mark on the world.

Because the first event was such a huge success, the Human Rights Symposium is now going to be annually reoccurring event which will take place around the anniversary of "Crystal Night" on the 9th of November each year.



## BEWUSSTSEINS REGION

Mauthausen - Gusen - St.Georgen

Bewusstseinsregion  
Mauthausen – Gusen – St.Georgen

A-4310 Mauthausen | Marktplatz 7

Office: A-4222 St. Georgen/Gusen | Gewerbestraße 7

e-mail: sekretariat@bewusstseinsregion.at

Tel: 0043 0699 168 865 13

[www.bewusstseinsregion.at](http://www.bewusstseinsregion.at)



**MACHT DICH**

**STARK!**

[ooe.arbeiterkammer.at](http://ooe.arbeiterkammer.at)



Oberösterreich