Vienna, July 22nd, 2019

Dear Madam or Sir,

Since its inception in 1949, the **Council of Europe’s** core mission has been the reconciliation and reestablishment of dialogue among Europeans, as well as the protection of the rule of law, human rights, and democratic values.

The **Comité International de Mauthausen [[1]](#footnote-2)** believes that in this framework, a new cultural route based on one of the most horrible atrocity crimes perpetrated during the Nazi regime, i.e. the negation of human dignity through deportation, forced labour and genocide, will have its legitimate place.

The **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** [[2]](#footnote-3) *are “an invitation to travel and to discover the rich and diverse heritage of Europe by bringing people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage. They put into practice the values of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual exchanges across borders. In 2019, we count 38 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, with very different themes that illustrate European memory, history and heritage and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe.”[[3]](#footnote-4)*

Mauthausen was an international concentration camp (1938 - 1945) where all of Europe – against its will – came together and where it was precisely the diversity of languages and cultures that was valued by the prisoners, who had all, in their own way, fought for a new and peaceful Europe of international solidarity.

The Comité international de Mauthausen has decided to submit a **new cultural route** called ***VIA MEMORIA MAUTHAUSEN* for certification by the Council of Europe.** This new route will, of course, be a transnational route, since people from all over Europe have converged in Mauthausen. Mauthausen will be the centre place: Many of the prisoners had come to Mauthausen from other concentration camps, some from their hometown, from prisons or camps for forced labourers or prisoners of war.

**The first main objective of this new cultural route will be to make these routes readable to a greater public:**

We will be connecting places from all over Europe leading to Mauthausen, from Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Serbia, Poland or Russia. The core and the centre of this European Cultural Route will be situated in Mauthausen, Austria – including the system of about 50 subcamps or other places of historical significance – and all of them related to other places all over Europe.

**The second objective will be to tell the life stories of these prisoners:**

We will be connecting people then and today. We will tell the life stories and individual biographies of the prisoners. Many people have in the last decades been following the traces of these routes, very often without much information about the the sites and the connections between them.

**As a** first step to implement this European Cultural Route, we have identified the following routes leading to or from Mauthausen:

**(1) The Core Route:**

The Core Route is located on Austrian territory and starts/ends in Mauthausen and will include all subcamps of the Mauthausen and the Dachau system on Austrian soil, among them Gusen, Ebensee, Melk, Loibl, Steyr, Schloss Hartheim, etc. The numerous camps for slave labourers, for the Hungarian Jews at the *Süd-Ost-Wall*, and many other places will be included.

**(2) The North-Eastern Route:**

Starting in Moscow, following then to places in Belarus in Ukraine and the Baltic States, this route will cross Poland (including Auschwitz) and the Czech Republic.

**(3) The South Eastern Routes:**

These routes will have their starting point in Belgrade and then split into two routes: One crossing Serbia to the Croatian border, crossing Croatia (including Jasenovac) and then reaching Slovenia. The second route will also start in Belgrade, pass Novi Sad and Subotica, crossing Hungary (including Budapest) and will continue to Vienna and further to Mauthausen.

**(4) The Southern Routes:**

These routes will also consist of two branches, one related to Slovenia and the second one to Italy. The Slovenian branch will start in Ljubljana and will cross the Austrian border at Loiblpass/Ljubelj where the most southern subcamp of Mauthausen was located. The Italian branch starts in Rome, visiting all important cities in Northern Italy, also the former camps in Fossoli, Bolzano Trieste/ Risiera di San Sabba.

**(5) The North-Western Routes:**

The North-Western Routes will have three different branches:

- one starting in Stuttgart, crossing the Southern part of Germany (including the former camps in Dachau and Flossenbürg) and will reach the Austrian border at Passau (also subcamps of Mauthausen).,

- the second route has its starting point in Paris, crossing France in numerous variations and will also include the fate of the Spanish Republican prisoners who were captured in Southern France after they had to flee Spain.

- the third route starting from the Netherlands (Vught/Bois-le-Duc, Westerbork) , crossing Belgium (Fort de Breendonk, Kaserne Dossin, Mechelen) and Luxembourg (Cinqfontaines, Neumünster Abbey), Germany (Hinzert), France (Natzweiler-Struhof), Dachau (D) to Mauthausen (A).

All in all, in the first stage of this new European Cultural Route, we will connect more than 140 places on the routes mentioned above. In further iterations of this project, these routes will be extended.

Dear Madam,

Dear Sir,

We are convinced that by establishing a network of all these different routes in a new cultural route, called *Via Memoria Mauthausen,* according to the rules of the Council of Europe, we are undertaking an important task for democratic education and remembrance. We are convinced that with these routes we offer possibilities of cultural tourism which are hitherto unheard of. We are convinced that with these routes we can connect people, places, countries, and life stories. We are convinced that those who travel on the Via Memoria Mauthausen will be transformed by their experience and will attach even greater value to living in peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, in which the rights and dignity of all are protected.

**We would be honoured if you and your institution accepted to be part of this new European Cultural Route. We heartily invite you to participate from the very beginning in the Via Memoria Mauthausen project.**

As we develop more detailed information and additional material, we will send it to you. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any other questions about the project.

In order to set up the Via Memoria Mauthausen properly as a real route and not just some unconnected places in Europe, your participation is crucial.

If you are interested in participating, please use the attached letter of intent form and return it to us until **22 August 2019**. This letter of intent does not represent any financial or legal commitment or other obligation on your behalf: it simply allows us to build a network of interested parties and supporters who are willing to cooperate on this project.

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| --- | --- |
| s.  Guy DOCKENDORF,  President CIM and Vice-President VMM  guy.dockendorf@culture.lu  cell: +352 621 255 607 | s.  Andreas BAUMGARTNER,  Chairman VMM and Secretary general CIM  baumgartner@cim-info.org  cell: +43 676 701 55 77 |

NB. We would be very grateful if further communication on this project could be – if possible – in English.

**Letter of Intent**

......................................................................., 2019

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **On behalf of** | (Municipality, museum, organization, institute, ...) |
| **I declare that my organization, museum, municipality etc. wants to be part of the new European cultural route to be certified by the Counsel of Europe, called *Via Memoria Mauthausen*.** | |
| **Name of contact person:** |  |
| **Position in organisation:** |  |
| **Address of organisation:** |  |
| **Contact phone** |  |
| **Contact e-mail** |  |
| **Signature:** | .................................................................................. |

**Please send this letter back until August 22, 2019 to us:**

**baumgartner@cim-info.org**

**and**

**guy.dockendorf@culture.lu**



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**The *Comité International de Mauthausen***

The *Comité International de Mauthausen (CIM)* was founded clandestinely during winter of 1944/45 by anti-Nazi fighters who were held prisoners in the Mauthausen concentration camp and some of its satellite camps (Gusen, Melk, Ebensee). Today, 74 years after the liberation of the camp on May 5th, 1945, the CIM is the umbrella organisation of the survivors and their succeeding 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations. The charter founding their action is the *Mauthausen Oath* which was solemnly proclaimed by the liberated prisoners on May 16th, 1945 on the *Appellplatz* in Mauthausen in twelve languages:

*(...) we wish to conserve the international solidarity of the camp in our memories and to derive from it the necessary lessons; follow a common path; the one of freedom - indispensable for every population, of reciprocal respect, of collaboration in the great work of constructing a new world that is free and just for all; (...)*

Between 1938 and 1945, more than 200,000 prisoners from 70 different nations were deported to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. Half of them were murdered there. These prisoners came from all over Europe, some of them even from overseas – just 6% of them were German-speaking. Every single person of these 200,000 has their unique biography and was transported to Mauthausen on various routes. So obviously Mauthausen is related with the whole of Europe and even beyond.

1. http://www.cim-info.org/index\_english.html [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/about](mailto:https%253A//www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/about) and [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/by-theme](mailto:https%253A//www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/by-theme) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)