

## **Lower Austria as a Space of Forced Migration, Integration, and Inclusion in the Postwar Era 1945 – 1956**

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Austria is a transit and destination country for refugee movements both past and present. In the second half of the twentieth century alone, Austria experienced numerous major refugee movements. With around one million refugees as a result of National Socialist aggression, the occupation period after World War II posed the by far greatest humanitarian and inclusive/integrative challenges to Austrian society in the twentieth century, followed by the refugee movements in the aftermath of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 involving some 170,000 people.

Lower Austria played a significant and also multifarious role in these migration movements. It was a place of origin, transfer, as well as destination for the refugee movements occurring during this period. The spatial impact of the displacement of the German-speaking minority from Czechoslovakia in 1945/46 as well as the presence of thousands of displaced Germans from other regions in Central and Southeast Europe, from forced laborers to prisoners of war from all over Europe, but also the refugees from Czechoslovakia from 1948, made Lower Austria a hotspot of migration, integration, and inclusion.

While scholarship has to date focused generally on postwar migration in Austria and the measures taken by the state, empirical studies on this important migration phase with regard to questions of the concrete situation of refugees in Lower Austria as a space of absorption, of their later fate (repatriation, re-emigration, or integration/inclusion), and of the consequences for the host society are still lacking. This is precisely the point where this sub-project picks up, beginning with the activities of the responsible public authorities on the one hand and the lived realities and opportunities of the refugees who fled to Lower Austria on the other. A special emphasis will be placed on the later fate of the refugees: Did they remain in Austria? Did they return home after the cessation of hostilities or crises in their native countries? Or did they migrate further into other “guest countries”? This research project also examines the motives for migration and the role played by the host society, how it reacted to the arrivals, and how it dealt with the corresponding challenges.