



Information on data processing: The Index of the Financial Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland (pursuant to the First Restitution Act)

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Terms of reference

The index of the Financial Directorate for Vienna Lower Austria and Burgenland (FLD-Kartei – “Financial Directorate Index”) at the Austrian State Archives serves as a finding aid for locating the files held there pursuant to the First and in some cases pursuant to the Second Restitution Act. Both file series are predominantly comprised of documents from National Socialist authorities and form key sources of information on individuals who were subjected to Nazi persecution and suffered losses of assets.

The aim of the digitization of the Financial Directorate Index by the staff of the General Settlement Fund was to expedite the research carried out for applications in these historical files. Recording the data electronically for the Fund’s internal database made it easier to order the files of the Financial Directorate, also in the long term. The work was carried out by the Historical Research Department of the General Settlement Fund between 2006 and 2012.

In addition to the index cards on the files pursuant to the First and Second Restitution Acts the Financial Directorate Index also contains entries on the so called FLD-Transportakten (“Financial Directorate transport files”) (aka Deportationsakten, “deportation files”). These provide information of the deportation of Jews from the “Ostmark” up to 1945 and their – on the whole – status as being almost entirely without assets at the time of their deportation. The entries regarding the Financial Directorate transport files were not taken into account during the digitization as they constitute a separate file holdings at the Austrian State Archives. During the course of the digitization, only index cards with a registry number (identical to a file number) were included, which thus refer to a specific Financial Directorate file.

Digitization

The basis for the digitization was a handwritten list of the data in forms, the content of which was subsequently transferred into an electronic table.

Recording natural persons

The surname, forename, if applicable maiden name and if available the date of birth were recorded. Differing spellings for surnames, forenames and differing entries for dates of birth were taken into account.

Residential addresses were not included as, apart from multiple address entries (including property owned), it could not be verified whether the addresses were the residential addresses from 1938 or of “collective apartments” prior to emigration or deportation. Where several persons appear on one index card, a separate record was created for each historical person.

Recording legal entities

Companies, enterprises, institutions (such as associations, funds, religious communities) and bodies under public law were recorded. Addresses of business headquarters and premises were not included.

Inclusion of the registry number (file number)

These were taken from the index cards. In cases where several file numbers were stated, a further entry was created for the respective historical person with the additional file number. The differentiation between the file number and the – from a legal perspective – independent file series pursuant to the First and Second Restitution Act was also taken into account: the registry number pursuant to the First Restitution Act is exclusively numerical; the file number pursuant to the Second Restitution Act is preceded by an “O”.

Summary of the contents of the types of index

The index cards contain brief statements on financial situation. This information is recorded in the remarks field. Categories were chosen for the digitization to which the following circumstances could be ascribed:

- Property: One or more stated properties were subsumed under this category. On the index cards the property is described in the form of register number (“EZ”) and cadastral district (“KG”) and as address (fragments). Due to limited time and capacity, this detailed information on the property could not be included meaning that it is necessary to view the file to obtain this information.
- Capital: This category contains a summary of all movable assets such as bank balances, stocks and bonds etc.
- Insurance: Refers to personal insurance policies.
- Company: companies are recorded in this category. If the type of business was stated, this was also included.
- Estate (probate)
- Art (file): This term refers to a file pursuant to the First or Second Artistic and Cultural Assets Settlement Act

Liabilities (debts) both private and business were not included.

Updating the digitization

In addition to inaccuracies which already existed in the entries in the Financial Directorate Index, the transfer of the original handwritten entries into an electronic database also left margin for error. For this reason the digitized data was reviewed and amended where necessary:

- The electronic entries were checked for errors of form such as spelling mistakes, irregularities and need for clarification.
- The subsequent procedure was carried out according to the existing guidelines, the pre-defined allocation of the data entry fields and the recommendations for user-friendliness and e-accessibility. Common abbreviations were generally written out in full; abbreviations in company names and academic and professional titles were left unchanged and included in the index of abbreviations.
- The internal database and archives of the Fund were referred to for the update, as were the parts of the Vienna address directory "Lehman 1938 (Directory of Buildings and Surnames)" dealing with so called Protokollierten Firmen ("registered companies"). In cases which could not be resolved in this way the Financial Directorate Index or, if ultimately necessary, the files held at the Austrian State Archives was consulted.
- In the "surname" field, natural persons were distinguished from legal entities; the latter were transferred to the field Geschäftsbezeichnung ("name of business"). Maiden names, which were, in part, recorded in the column for forenames were transferred into a separate column. Titles of the nobility were added to the surnames.
- If both a male and a female forename were entered in a single field, an additional record was created if two separate persons were able to be identified after carrying out further research. Yiddish and Jewish forenames which were incorrectly spelled or occasionally written phonetically were corrected or a correct spelling was added in parentheses. Academic and professional titles were added to the forenames.
- Dates of birth which seemed historically improbable and had occurred as a result of typing errors were checked and amended. Where two different dates of birth (alternative date of birth) were entered for one historical person, which were too far apart in date to be plausible if was examined whether one was attributable to another person. If this was the case a separate record was created for this person.
- All legal entities are recorded in the data entry field "Business/Institution/Organization". If an entry was still contained in the field "Forename" despite obviously being the name of a business (company or enterprise), it was examined whether it related to a historical person. If necessary the name of the business and the forename were supplemented with the correct surnames.
- When the Financial Directorate was first recorded in the database electronically it was not expedient to include information of the type of business. It seemed appropriate to undertake a rough categorization, to the extent that the type of business could be gathered from the business name. This was based on the regularity with which a branch, trade or area of business appeared (e.g. "chemist", "community", "military", "groceries" or "weaving mill").
- If it was not possible to ascertain the province in which the business was based from the available information (above all the business name) attempts were made to establish it on the basis of which locality the business was based in. As a result of the Financial Directorate's scope of competence limited the possible provinces to Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland. Despite undertaking research it was not always possible to attribute a business to a province due to identical place names in different provinces.

The first revisions of the electronic database took place in January 2013 with a view to their publication on Findbuch for Victims of National Socialism. By April 2014 the 43,677 entries had been systematically reviewed once more. Need for clarification generally arose regarding the spelling of surnames and Jewish forenames but also a multitude of duplicate entries from the index, in which women had, for example, been recorded in separate index cards under their maiden and the married names. In many cases the relevant files of the Financial Directorate were viewed at the Austrian State Archives. During the course of this undertaking around 700 duplicate entries could be deleted and around 850 entries relating to persons not included in the Financial Directorate Index could be recorded in the database raising the total number of records for this group to 43,826.