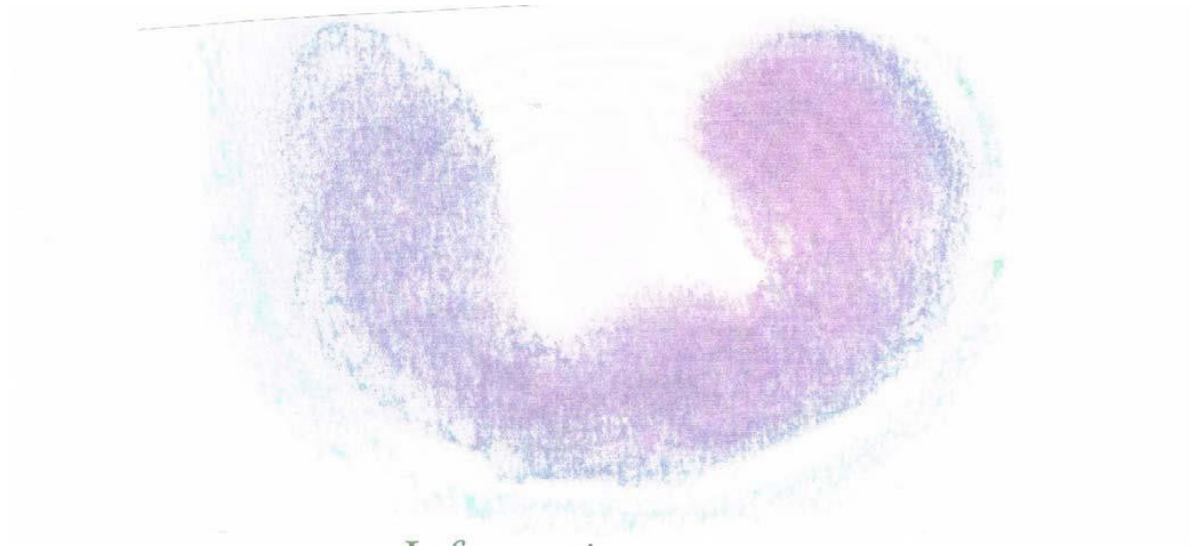




Verein Regenbogen – helping each other after pregnancy and infant loss



*Information Package*  
*for parents*  
*who have lost their baby through*  
*Curettage*  
*Miscarriage*  
*Abortion*  
*Stillbirth or*  
*Early Infant Death*

**THIS FOLDER IS A MASTER COPY,  
PLEASE DO NOT TAKE IT HOME!**



**I will live as long as your heart is beating.**

**I will live as long as I will have a place in your heart.**

**I will live as long as you follow your path.**

**I will live as long as there will be a smile in your life.**

**If you are looking for me, search for me in your heart.**

**If you find me there, then I will continue living within you.**



**Dear parents,**

who have lost their baby during pregnancy, birth or shortly afterwards!

We are so sorry for your loss. We, which means other affected parents from the Verein Regenbogen Vienna, have experienced a similar situation. We compiled some suggestions for you, how to welcome your baby in this world and how to make the limited time with it on earth as beautiful as possible.

**We can only say goodbye after saying welcome first.**

**Take your time!**

Things have turned out completely different then expected. You are in shock and very sad. It will take time to realize the new reality and you will need good company. Take all the time you need, don't let yourself be pressured. You will feel ready to say goodbye to your baby at your own pace. Maybe you want to see it (again) on the next day or on the day afterwards. Have to courage to do it!

**Take a close look at your baby!**

Every child is unique and beautiful in its own way. Each one has its own distinctive features, even if it is very small or in case of a malformation. Take the chance to look at your baby, you will see its beauty.

**Name your baby!**

Maybe you already thought about names for your child but maybe you haven't. In Austria, a baby of any gestation week can be named (information on that can be found under "The right for a name"). Irrespective of your choice of officially naming the child, give your child a name and use it, whenever you want to talk about it! A first name makes a person unique and unmistakable.

**Take your baby into your arms or your hand!**

Physical contact is important and helps to bond. Also the smallest babies can be held in one's hand to notice their body and weight. Have the courage to touch, to hold and to caress your baby. You will remember this moment forever!



### **Do something good for your baby!**

There are so many pictures and ideas associated with a birth: bathing the baby, wrapping it into a blanket, putting clothes on. This is also possible for your baby. Ask the midwife for folding blanket (available for 10cm upwards), which have been donated by us for the delivery ward. Wash your baby and dress it, this will comfort you and will be good for you.

### **Take pictures of you and your baby!**

Pictures are a valuable memory of the birth. The midwife might have taken pictures of your baby and will give them to you. Take pictures yourself, take a lot of them, also of the hands and feet of your child, together with you, with siblings and other relatives. Also after years this will be the hugest treasure you will have of your deceased baby.

In this context we can recommend you a group of volunteering photographers who work for the community „Dein Sternenkind“. On their website [www.dein-sternenkind.eu](http://www.dein-sternenkind.eu) a photographer can be requested via an online form and s/he will come to the hospital or into your home as soon as possible or as requested. Their offer is to make beautiful, professional pictures of you and your baby and will follow your wishes regarding the pictures. The service is guaranteed for free, for the photographers it is heart work they do for the parents and the babies.

### **Collect memory items!**

Each item, which is associated with the life and the birth of your baby, is of high value. It is often possible to make foot and hand prints of the baby with the help of a midwife. The hospitals often have ink and beautiful paper available. You might also ask a person you are close with to get these things from a store. If possible, you can also cut a lock of hair from your baby. It is also possible, if you want, to take the placenta and the umbilical cord with you (the placenta can be buried, the umbilical cord can be dried). Also the identity bracelet and the name tag are possible memory items.

Listen to yourself to know what feels right for you and your family!



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### **Do you wish to give your child a blessing?**

When a baby dies, it can be comforting to give him or her blessing on its way, irrespective whether we lead a religious or spiritual life. It is a beautiful and touching ritual. In every hospital you will find pastors, who can bless your baby. All babies born alive can even be baptized. You can also give your baby the blessing or the baptism yourself, also the midwife or another person close to your heart can do this.

### **Our offer for you**

We kindly invite you to get in touch with us or with our self help group:

Self help group Verein Regenbogen Wien

Phone: 0676/642 86 92 – you will reach one of our volunteers through this number.

Please contact us in case of any questions or if you just need someone to talk to in this difficult situation. We are happy to be there for you.

Website: [www.shg-regenbogen.at](http://www.shg-regenbogen.at)

E-mail: [info@shg-regenbogen.at](mailto:info@shg-regenbogen.at)

We are hosting an open group meeting once a month, either on the first or second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm at Nanaya, Zollergasse 37, 1070 Wien. It is announced on our website and on our Facebook page. You are invited to join without prior notice. Just come by! The meeting will be held in English, if non-German speakers are present.



**Verein Regenbogen – helping each other after pregnancy and infant loss**

## **Definition of the basic terms**

### **Maternity rights**

### **The right for a name**

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## **What might help you in this situation?**

### **Burial rights & options**

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### **Arranging the funeral**



## **Definition of various terms**

Your child is a full-fledged human being with its own personality, and you may have already chosen a name for it. The staff at the hospital will however refer to your baby with the corresponding medical term, but this does not in any way imply that they are degrading your child.

These medical terms might be one of the following:

### **Miscarriage:**

This refers to an early termination of pregnancy before 24 weeks of gestation, when the fetus weighs less than 500 grams. The embryo/fetus has or has not yet departed from the uterus.

### **Abortion:**

This term describes the removal of, or causing the departure of the embryo or fetus from the uterus. It serves to terminate either an unwanted pregnancy or a pregnancy that endangers the mother's life.

### **Curettage:**

This word stands for an operative removal of the amniotic sac, the embryo and the uterine lining. This surgery might be needed in case the embryo or other tissue from the pregnancy does not depart from the uterus by itself.

### **Live birth and early infant death:**

We speak of a live birth if (no matter which gestation week of pregnancy ) the child has entirely exited the mother's body and either initiates breathing or displays other signs of life such as heartbeat, an obvious movement of muscles or pulsation of the umbilical cord. Whether the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta has been expelled is irrelevant.

### **Stillbirth:**

A stillbirth means that the baby has either died in utero or during birth and there are no signs of life after birth. The child's weight at birth is at least 500 grams.



## **Maternity Leave: How long I am allowed to stay at home?**

The process of grieving over a child takes a lot of time and strength. It may be helpful if the father of the child takes nursing leave of absence from work so you can spend time together and help each other to cope with the situation. For that purpose, your family doctor will need to sign a nursing leave of absence for the father. For the mother there are legal regulations which derive from the above mentioned medical terms that are used to describe the child:

### **Miscarriage / spontaneous abortion and curettage:**

In the medical German terminology, a miscarriage will usually be referred to in German as “Abortus”. You are not entitled to maternity leave yet and have to take sick leave instead. Your doctor has to issue a medical certificate immediately. If you have to take a sick leave for a longer period of time, you can also contact a professional, e.g. a psychiatrist or psychotherapist (i.e. psychotherapist Elisabeth Widensky) who can sign a certificate of incapacity to convince the health insurance company of the necessity. **New!** Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 you will have a 4-week protection of dismissal after having experienced a miscarriage. More information will be provided by your local “Arbeiterkammer”.

### **Abortion:**

You are not entitled to maternity leave and have to take a sick leave instead. Your doctor has to issue a medical certificate immediately.

### **Live birth and early infant death:**

A doctor has to confirm a premature birth (weight below 2500 grams) in order for the mother to be entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave. The duration of 12 weeks is not affected by a child's early infant death or the birth of a child that is not viable. In case of a non-premature live birth which results in the infant's death, you are entitled to 8 weeks of maternity leave. After a caesarean section or a multiple birth you are entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave.

### **Stillbirth:**

With a stillbirth notification you are entitled to 8 weeks of maternity leave, no matter how many days of maternity leave you have taken before the birth. After a caesarean section or a multiple birth you are entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave.



## The right of your child to be given a name

This again depends on the gestation week and the way your child was born.

In the case of a **live birth**, your child receives a first name in the birth certificate.

In the case of a **stillbirth**, you can have the public authorities enter your child's first name in the death register. If he or she was buried at the municipality's expenses, this name will be written on the grave's plaque.

Since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, the Austrian legislation makes it possible to register your child's name in the "Personenstandsregister" also in case of **miscarriages**, irrespective of gestation week and whether the sex can be identified or not. This document can be issued on request of the mother or the father (in agreement with the mother), if a medical confirmation of the pregnancy can be presented. The document can also be issued irrespective of how long the loss lies in the past. The only requirement is the medical confirmation.



## **Books that may help you in your situation:**

Books are a great resources to find help and recommendations after loss. There are numerous recommendable books in German we know, but also some in English we have read and can recommend.

**Help Comfort & Hope: After Losing Your Baby in Pregnancy or in the First Year by Hannah Lothrop** is the English original of one of our favourite books which has been published in German under the title **“Gute Hoffnung, jähes Ende”**

A guide for parents who lost their baby and all those who wish to support them. This book sensitively accompanies parents on their way through the mourning process. Through the personal statements of others, affected persons learn that they are not alone in their feelings and reactions, but also that one can survive this pain and inconsolability. Hannah Lothrop deals not only with losses suffered as a result of the death of a baby during pregnancy, birth and early childhood, but she also addresses the particular situation of single mourning mothers or parents who are told that their child will die. She guides affected persons through the mourning process and offers specific assistance in each stage to heal the body, mind and soul (body and breathing exercises, meditation, visualization, guidance on dealing with feelings, creative methods such as painting, writing etc). Furthermore, this unique book shows all those who support the mourning parents (relatives, friends, professionals) how they can deal with their own helplessness and how to support the affected persons.

**Surviving my first year of child loss: Personal stories from grieving parents by Nathalie Himmelrich (editor)**

This book is a community project and contains 26 stories written by bereaved parents on how they dealt with the loss of their child in the first year after the loss. They convey their personal challenges and the way they coped during this time. The book should nurture the soul of bereaved parents, they should feel supported and know that they are not alone. Also, they should rediscover hope and find a way to live with purpose, not just survive. One of our Regenbogen members also published her story in this book.

**Grieving parents: Surviving loss as a couple by Nathalie Himmelrich**

This book should support grieving parents, not only in their individual grief but also developing understanding for each other's grieving process. It aims to create



awareness, acceptance and understanding for an individual grieving process. The author has lost one of her identical twin daughters 3 days after they were born. She is a psychotherapist, relationship coach and grief recovery expert.

**Here are further recommendations of books published solely in German:**

- “Mein Sternenkind” by Heike Wolter
- "Wenn die Wiege leer bleibt" by Sabine Bode & Frith Roth
- “Warum nur, Gott?- Glaube und Zweifel nach dem Tod eines Kindes” by Verwaiste Eltern Hamburg e.V.
- “Fehlgeburt-und dann...” by Anja Rief
- “Jetzt bist du schon gegangen Kind” by Gerda Palm
- “Du hast kaum gelebt” by Christine Fleck-Bohaumilitzky and Christian Fleck
- “Bin kaum da, muss schon fort” by Sabine Herold
- „Beim Sterben von Kindern: Erfahrungen, Gedanken und Texte zum Rätsel um den frühen Tod“ von Arie Boogert
- „Unendlich ist der Schmerz“ by Julie Fritsch & Sherokee Ilse
- “Nur ein Hauch von Leben” by Gottfried Lutz et al.
- “Trauern hat seine Zeit” by Michaela Nijs

**Books for siblings:**

- “Der geborgte Stern”: children's picture book as a mourning and comfort book for both children and adults (available from Initiative Österreich)
- “Um Kinder trauern: Eltern und Geschwister begegnen dem Tod” by Anja Wiese
- “Himmelskinder“: children's picture book by Julia Ruß
- „Lilly ist ein Sternenkind“ by Heike Wolter (author from „Mein Sternenkind“): children's book for bereaved siblings

**Mourning rituals/mourning services:**

- “Trauerfeiern beim Tod von Kindern” by Klaus Schäfer“
- „Jetzt bist du schon gegangen”: Mourning support and healing rituals with parents of prematurely deceased children (Don Bosco Publications)
- „Flieg, kleiner Schmetterling: Gedanken zur Trauer um ein Kind“ by Petra Hillebrand

**Pregnancy after loss:**

**“Meine Folgeschwangerschaft”** by Heike Wolter

We have described some books in more detail on [www.shg-regenbogen.at](http://www.shg-regenbogen.at)



## Self help groups

It has been helpful for many parents to attend a self help group after losing their child. This is a safe space for exchange with likeminded people, to feel understood and supported in contrast to other situations, where this is not the case.

Many self help groups have been established all over Austria by affected parents. In order to get an up-to-date overview, we recommend to have a look for groups in your area online. Please visit e.g. [www.wig.at](http://www.wig.at), [www.best-help.or.at](http://www.best-help.or.at) or [www.selbsthilfe.at](http://www.selbsthilfe.at).

For some parents it is also helpful to seek help and support in online communities. Please visit [www.shg-regenbogen.at](http://www.shg-regenbogen.at), [www.parents.at/forum](http://www.parents.at/forum), [www.babycenter.de/community](http://www.babycenter.de/community) (Gruppe Trauer und Verlust). There are also closed Facebook groups such as „May We All Heal“, „Still Mothers“, resources such as [www.grievingparents.net](http://www.grievingparents.net) or [www.stillstandingmag.com](http://www.stillstandingmag.com) where you can read and/or share.

Our community is hosting a monthly self help group:

- ✗ place: Zentrum Nanaya, Zollergasse 37, 1070 Vienna
- ✗ time: every first or second Wednesday of the month (in case of public holidays or after Christmas holidays) at 7.30p.m. The dates are published on our website and on our Facebook page
- ✗ what: open group meeting, just come by whenever you find the time and need
- ✗ who: host of the meeting will be either Petra Hainz, Julia Sorko or Claudia Weinert from Verein Regenbogen

In case of questions send us an e-mail [info@shg-regenbogen.at](mailto:info@shg-regenbogen.at) or call our community mobile phone under 0676/642 86 92



## Burial law and burial options

In general, any baby no matter of weight or gestation week can be buried at the parents' own expenses. The decision to bury the child should at best be made within the first 24 hours, but if you can come to an arrangement with the local pathologist, he/she can keep your baby for up to a week, granting you more time to make your decision.

### Miscarriage/spontaneous abortion:

By signing the histology form you decide if you wish to have a separate funeral for your child. For a separate funeral you will need a „Leichenbegleitschein“ (German term a corpse movement authorization) issued by the coroner. This form will have to be handed over to *Bestattung Wien*, Vienna's funeral service.

If you decide not to have an individual funeral, your child will join other children who have died in a collective coffin and will be cremated in the crematory in Simmering. The urn will be buried in a collective grave at Wiener Zentralfriedhof on Grabfeld 35 B, a place of commemoration for the relatives. Family and friends can be present at the burial and get involved in the funeral arrangements (see Arranging the Funeral“).

The burial of the urn takes place every first Friday of the months March, June, September and December at 08:30 a.m. (meeting place: Halle 8 at 08:00 a.m.). All expenses are covered by the city of Vienna. To find out on which date the funerals take place, feel free to call Wiener Zentralfriedhof under 760 41/97803. If you want to know if your child is going to be buried in the upcoming collective funeral (the transfer is usually carried out up to two days prior to the funeral), do not hesitate to contact the cemetery's administration or the crematory of the Zentralfriedhof. They have a list of names of the mothers the children belong to (Tel: 760 41/871 or 872).

### Stillbirth:

In the case of a stillbirth you can choose to have an individual funeral for your child with a signature on the autopsy form („Obduktionsschein“). Please expect the average costs for an individual funeral to be around 1.600 Euros.

If you do not wish to have a separate, individual funeral for your child, he or she will be buried at the Wiener Zentralfriedhof on Grabfeld 35B. In case you do not report the child's first name to the civil registry office, the plaque on the grave will be engraved with either „Mädchen“ (girl) or „Knabe“ (boy) and the baby's last name. If



you would like to attend the funeral, please contact Bestattung Wien directly via phone under 501 95-0, they are available 24/7. There you will be informed about the date of the funeral. You may also deposit clothes, toys etc. for your child at the pathology unit so that these personal things can be placed inside the casket as well.

Another possibility is to have your child be cremated and take the urn home with you. This option, however, is only possible with a special authorization from the Magistratsabteilung 40 (information for Vienna).

In the case of a stillbirth, both an autopsy and a subsequent certification and registration of the child at the civil registry office are required. For your child's certification at the registry office you need to bring a photo identification and the child's death notice from the hospital.

### **Early infant death:**

When it comes to early infant death or death shortly after birth, the parents are responsible for the organization of the funeral. Still, the possibility exists that the organization of the burial be handed over to the city of Vienna (e.g. for financial reasons). In that case, the baby is buried in an individual grave at the Zentralfriedhof on burial ground 35B, and the grave will be reserved for this child for a period of 10 years. This is the time span of the so-called "Ruherecht" ("right of rest") that applies to the grave according to law. Up to this point there is no possibility of extending the 10-year-period, but the cemetery's administration is eagerly seeking solutions.

The death certificate („Todesbescheinigung“) from the pathology unit and the live birth notice („Anzeige der Lebendgeburt“) will be sent directly from the hospital to the corresponding civil registry office (to find out which civil registry office is responsible for you, call: 501 95-0; available 24/7)). You can pick up the certificate at the authorities by presenting your personal ID and a payment 10 Euros. The certificate can also contain the name of your child if demanded.

### **Curettage and abortion:**

Babies who have left the womb through a curettage are not buried. They are kept in the respective pathology unit for 30 years. There have been cases, however, in which very empathetic pathologists have agreed to release the child for the collective funeral (in this case see Miscarriage). The same applies for abortions.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time under 0676/64 28 692. We will help you finding out the burial rights and options for your child.



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## **Funeral homes specialized on burials of babies and children**

Every funeral home in Vienna offers the following options for burial:

- x In-ground burial
- x Urn to take home (with official permission in Vienna by MA 40)
- x Forrest cemetery ( ca. 3000 €)
- x Diamond burial (cremation diamonds) (ca. 5.000€)
- x Cremation/Urn burial (ca. 1.000€)
- x Sky burial (ca. 4.000€)

We got in touch with a few funeral homes in Vienna and surrounding and researched their offers, especially their special or individual options which would be suitable especially for a baby's burial.

### **Bestattung Himmelblau**

- x Diamond made from the parents' hair and the child's ashes
- x Memorial crystal with the child's ashes
- x Individual painting of the coffin



### **Bestattung Furtner**

- x coffins in shape of drops or feet
- x individual painting of coffins and urns



### **Bestattung Unvergessen**

- x children coffin made from felt
- x individual arrangement of the entire farewell regarding coffin, urn, funeral and memorial service





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## PAX Die Bestattung

- x individual painting of urns and coffins
- x individual arrangement for the funeral are available (e.g. letting doves or balloons fly etc.)



Examples for special shaped coffins we found at different funeral homes:



Lebensspur



Lebensmitte



Lebenstropfen

Examples for special urn designs:





## Song proposals for a funeral service

### Classic music:

- + Pachelbel canon
- + "Comptine d'Un Autre Été (piano piece from the movie „Amélie“)
- + "Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen" (church song)
- + "Der Himmel geht über allen auf" (church song)

### Typical:

- + "Tears in Heaven" by Eric Clapton
- + "Somewhere over the Rainbow" by Judy Garland or by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole

### Popular songs from the last years:

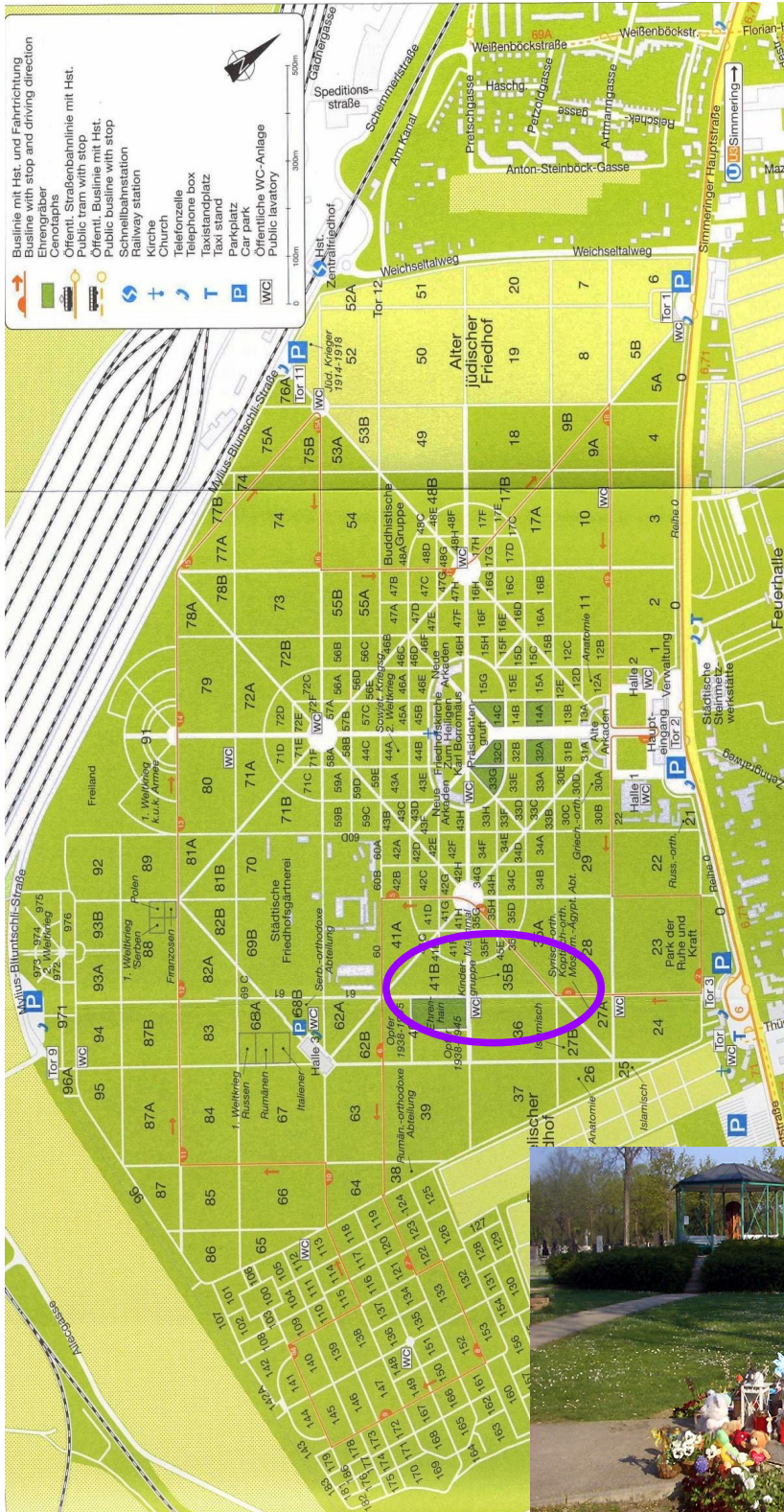
- + "Und wenn ein Lied " by Die Söhne Mannheims
- + „Into the west“ by Annie Lennox
- + "Angel" and „In the arms of an angel“ by Sarah McLaughlin
- + "Amoi segn ma uns wieder" by Andreas Gabalier
- + „Geboren um zu Leben“ by Unheilig
- + Lullabye(Goodnight, My Angel) by Billy Joel
- + Fly by Celine Dion
- + Borrowed Angels by Kristina Cheoweth
- + I will Carry You by Selah

....and many more beautiful songs which can be found by using your internet search engine.



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## Map Wiener Zentralfriedhof and location Babygrabfeld 35B



The violet circle indicates the location of area 35B, the so-called Babygrabfeld. On the picture you can see the collective urn grave.





## **Funeral options for bereaved parents with a Muslim background**

Since October 2012, there are two options of burying a child at the Islamic cemetery located at Grossmarktstrasse 2a, 1230 Wien:

### **Collective grave:**

The collective grave is intended for babies with a birth weight of under 500g. Furthermore it is available for Muslim families who find it hard to bear the costs of an individual funeral which are 900 Euros upwards. The financial difficulty of paying for a funeral should be confirmed in written form by a friend or a relative of the bereaved family. In this case, only the costs of 28 Euros per year for the maintenance of the grave will have to be covered while the rest of the funeral is for free. The collective grave is property of the Islamic cemetery and the name of the child is only documented in the cemetery's registry.

### **Individual grave:**

Babies, no matter their birth weight, can also be buried in an individual grave. The child is buried in a coffin of 110cm of length. The contract for the grave can be extended every ten years. The parents have to cover the costs for the funeral (900-1100 Euros) and for the maintenance of the grave (28 Euros per year). The individual grave is property of the Islamic cemetery and the name of the child is engraved on the gravestone.



## Arranging the funeral

If you prepare your baby's funeral yourself or if you have chosen a separate, individual grave for your child, you are free to organize the ceremony according to your liking.

However, if your baby is going to be buried in a collective funeral, it will be rather difficult to make arrangements, especially as you do not know the other deceased children's parents. For reasons of data protection and privacy concerns, the administration of the cemetery is not authorized to offer you any names or other information on the other mothers and fathers.

The date of the burial can be found out by contacting the administration office of Wiener Zentralfriedhof (01/76041-43802, 01/76041-43803). It always takes place on the first Friday of the months March, June, September and December.

### Questions that could be helpful during the funeral arrangements:

Because of the different religious denominations of the concerned parents, it is not allowed to have a religious farewell of any kind. If you like a spiritual guidance during the ceremony, you have to contact a priest or pastor for your own.

During the urn's laying out, mourning music will be played.

You will have the possibility to read a suitable text, poem or letter for your baby.

You can place a burial object inside the grave. You can use any object that is biodegradable, for instance a soft toy, flowers, a letter.

### A closing ritual:

Light a candle for every deceased baby at the grave; blowing soap bubbles (attention: the release of any balloons or similar objects is forbidden in order not to endanger the air traffic around Vienna International airport), cite a farewell poem, etc.

For some time now 1-2 volunteers of our association have been attending the collective funerals. Feel free to approach them if you have planned something or if you have any questions or requests.