

WUK Board Wants to Lock out the Women's Centre?!

We will not accept the WUK and the Vienna City Council threatening the autonomy of the Women's Centre and forbidding us access to our spaces and we will continue fighting for an unlimited right of usage!

The FZ (Women's Centre),

as a communication centre for (migrant) women, lesbians and girls has for 41 years been a space for different feminist activities and groups, a public space for women and part of the autonomous women's movement in Vienna, in Austria and internationally. The FZ was created in 1978 as an outcome of the autonomous women's movement. In 1981 the Association for a Women's Centre "acquired" staircase 6 of the then unused building at Währingerstraße 59 with the intention of establishing a communication centre for women. In all the years since the Women's Centre has been upheld with the means and the unpaid work of (migrant) women and lesbians it has been set up as a feminist structure facilitating the organisation of women, feminist culture, education, handicraft, counselling, resistance and feminist grass roots work. The Women's Centre in Vienna is one of the oldest self-governing women's centres still existing in Europe.

The Women's Centre, WUK and the Vienna City Council

Herstory: In 1981 the unused building of the Industrial Technology Museum (TGM) which was owned by the state and was destined for demolition was "acquired" by both the Association for a Women's Centre and by WUK. It was the women who "got hold of" the key and who were the first to enter the building. Since then, the building complex at Währingerstraße 59 in Vienna has been used by the Women's Centre (staircase 6) and the WUK (staircases 1-5). In all those years there had been between the Women's Centre and the WUK an exchange on the basis of solidarity and agreements on the use of the building. But again and again, controversial opinions and conflicts had a negative impact on the relationship with the board of WUK especially with regard to questions concerning neces-



Banner attached to the scaffold in front of the Women's Centre at the beginning of the restoration works in June 2022

sary renovation works which were unequally assigned and also concerned modes of action vis-à-vis the policies of the Vienna City Council, the owner of the building since 1988.

Current situation: For general refurbishment of the listed building including a required barrier-free access, the Vienna City Council demanded a rental contract be signed, which was negotiated secretly between the WUK board and the Vienna City Council. In 2020 the WUK board, pressurised by the City Council, signed a fixed term rental agreement which did not only cover the spaces used by WUK but, unlawfully, disregarding the will and protests of the Women's Centre, also the spaces of the Women's Centre.

For protests, see: <https://frauenlesbenzentrum-wien.at/fz-b-e-i-b-v/>

In negotiations with the Vienna City Council regarding the renovation works the Women's Centre in 2021 presented a Feminist Concept of Renovation, which is a counter-draft to the patriarchal doctrine of planning and was solely developed by women. It includes feminist and social considerations for all the stages from planning to realisation, contains multi-dimensional approaches to space and preservation order "from below", for which the visibility of women's herstories and women's work are important. This concept demands the renovation of the space of the Women's Centre as a pilot project for the promotion of women in public contracts, for the structural promotion of women in the field of

construction and the financing by the public of a project for craftswomen / female artisans. Although this concept was met with interest, 0.00% of it was eventually realized?!

For the Feminist Concept of Renovation, see: https://frauenlesbenzentrum-wien.at/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Konzept_LF_kl.Datei_.pdf

Now, with the renovation works of staircase 6 coming to an end in April 2023, the WUK board aims at subordinating the Women's Centre to the WUK-structures by means of a "contract of loan" and threatens to lock out the Women's Centre if it refuses to sign this "contract of loan"!

We will not allow either the WUK or the Vienna City Council to deprive the Women's Centres of our autonomy and will keep on fighting for an uninterminated use of the space. A city without women's spaces is like a night without stars and dreams!

*** Join in the manifestations of protest organised by the Women's Centre and 'Asylum in Need'. "Moving in instead of being locked out! Commercialism out from the WUK. Solidarity with 'Asylum in Need' and the Women's Centre!"** on Thursday, April 13th, 2023, 6 p.m. Meeting point: Währingerstraße / corner of Spitalgasse, 1090 Vienna.

*** Support us with letters of protest**

— addresses at the end of the leaflet

*** Sign and spread the petition "FZ-bleibt" (the "Women's Centre Stays") under:**

<https://mein.aufstehn.at/petitions/fz-bleibt?fbclid=IwAR1T8IPn4JJVH91AvpNahhoicbXVQaR60FkICVDNw5Kf44YSXVRfLFM>

The rental contract is unlawful and there is no legal basis for the contract of loan



Transparent am Baugerüst vom FZ zu Beginn der Sanierungsarbeiten Juni 2022

Contrary to the facts, the rental contract between WUK and the Vienna City Council states that WUK in 1981 occupied the entire building and has been using it since then?! This fails to do justice to the facts! The Women's Centre has never been part of WUK and WUK has never held the entire building. Both the Vienna City Council and WUK are familiar with this fact. One "occupant" is not permitted to conclude a rental contract for another autonomous, unaffiliated "occupant". More than that, by means of incorrect information regarding legally relevant points in the rental contract, a third party not directly involved must not be included in the contract. Therefore, the WUK association cannot act as the "lender" of the staircase 6 part of the building to the Women's Centre.

By means of the "contract of loan" which is linked to the rental contract and which was drafted without the Women's Centre being consulted, the WUK board wants to put the Women's Centre under its control. The "contract of loan" is terminated and includes high costs, which the Women's Centre would have to bear and which would endanger the existence of the Women's Centre and the groups it houses.

By its actions the WUK board is trying to make itself a "landlord" and "henchman" of the Vienna City Council and the commercialised, neoliberal policies it follows.

The building only exists because the Women's Centre "appropriated" it in 1981 and because

many grassroots initiatives critical of society were active and kept it in working order. To the Vienna City Council the building has meanwhile become a "profitable property". The WUK board is now adopting the role of "landlord" and "henchman" of the Vienna City Council. WUK is being funded in millions (in 2018 the funding amounted to € 11.5 million, according to the financial report of the City Council) for education, counselling and culture, with more than 150 employees and including the running costs for the entire building of Währingerstraße 59. The commercialisation of WUK has been going on for decades and is reflected in the increasing number of commercial events and horrendous rents which have to be paid for using the WUK event spaces, among others. The commercialisation also becomes obvious in the threats of exclusion against "Asylum in Need" which cannot be subordinated into the commercial WUK structures. The current actions of the WUK board leave ever less space for autonomous grassroots initiatives critical of society. It is high time that this is changing!

As an independent association and occupant, the Women's Centre has not received any funding for years for its activities as an association. It is run on the basis of donations, membership fees and radically feminist grassroots work. Feminist initiatives "from below" can use the spaces of the Women's Centre and use and plan them collectively and democratically for free.

We will not accept patriarchal subordination, not adopt commercialisation and not pay for capitalist logics of exploitation.

For the preservation and resisting presence of autonomous feminist women's spaces governing themselves!

We call the way in which the Vienna City Council and the WUK board act "enforced marriage" and patriarchal destruction of autonomous feminist structures.

The preservation, vibrant presence and development of autonomous feminist women's spaces governing themselves have been important pillars of women's collectivism and self-organising. These spaces

represent important feminist structures for women's liberation and self-defence against sexist and patriarchal relations of violence. The presence and continuity of autonomous feminist women's spaces are of crucial importance for women's political issues also for future generations!

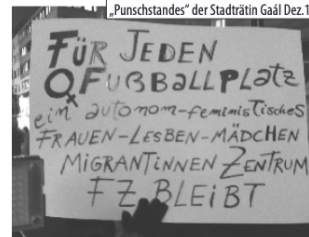
The Women's Centre will remain! Autonomous and feminist! Independent! Resisting!

A women's centre for each football field in Vienna!

We do not need fewer but MORE autonomous women's spaces and feminist structures of resistance.



Protestaktion des FZ bei einem Besuch des „Punschstandes“ der Stadträtin Gaál Dez.19



Your solidarity is important!

Support us by writing notes of protest to the WUK board and the Vienna City Council, namely to:

- + Mayor Michael Ludwig
Michael.Ludwig@wien.gv.at
- + City Councillor for Housing, Housing Construction, Urban Renewal and Women's Issues, Kathrin Gaál
kathrin.gaal@gws.wien.gv.at
- + Municipal Department 57 Women
frauen@ma57.wien.gv.at
- + Municipal Department 34 Building and Facility Management, Ing. Peter Kovacs
peter.kovacs@wien.gv.at
- + Municipal Department 7 City Councillor for Cultural Affairs, Veronica Kaup-Hasler
kaup-hasler@wien.gv.at
- + WUK-board
Vorstand@wuk.at
- + WUK-chairwoman Margit Wolfsberger
Margit.Wolfsberger@wuk.at
- + WUK-managing director Vincent Abbrederis
vincent.abbrederis@wuk.at
- + and send us a copy to

fzbleibt@riseup.net