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## Apprentices talk to Saxony's Minister-President about Memorial Site work at Auschwitz, tolerance and respect

- **Transparent Factory: Apprentices from Germany and Poland report on conservation work, encounters and experiences**
- **Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer: "It is so important not to forget – and to stand up for your opinions!"**
- **Managing Director for Human Resources and Organization Dirk Coers: "Volkswagen stands for tolerance, internationality and cosmopolitanism."**
- **IAC Vice-President Christoph Heubner: "Auschwitz survivors follow the commitment of Volkswagen apprentices with great sympathy."**

**Wolfsburg / Dresden – At the Transparent Factory in Dresden today, Volkswagen apprentices from Germany and Poland talked about their conservation work, encounters and experiences at Auschwitz Concentration Camp Memorial Site before an audience of employees and managers from Volkswagen Saxony. The Prime Minister of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer, attended the event as guest of honor and discussed with the apprentices how young Poles and Germans understand history and can shape the future together. Other topics included cooperation between people from different cultures in international companies and the fundamental importance of tolerance and respect at the workplace and in public life.**

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Michael Kretschmer (center), Prime Minister of Saxony, talking to the apprentices



Volkswagen apprentices stack cleaned roofing tiles of a concentration camp inmates' hut in Birkenau



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"At Auschwitz, I understood that indifference can be fatal. During the Nazi dictatorship, indifference made it possible for millions of Jews, members of ethnic minorities and people with other political convictions to be persecuted and murdered," said Tim Clauß, apprentice motor vehicle mechatronics technician at the Transparent Factory. "This is why I will no longer close my ears or look the other way if people are bullied on the streets today. Anyone can ask other people for help or call the police on their mobile phone," said the 20-year-old from Dresden.

Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer said: "The possibility that anti-Semitic ideas could again lead to a breach with civilization cannot be excluded. That is why it is so important not to forget – and to stand up for your opinions. It is important to keep the memory of the inconceivable crimes of the National Socialist era and the Holocaust alive. I am very impressed by the remembrance and memorial work which has been and is being carried out here. This is not abstract but really quite concrete."

The Managing Director for Human Resources and Organization of Volkswagen Saxony, Dirk Coers, emphasized: "I am proud of our apprentices who are committed to the memorial site work of Volkswagen with the International Auschwitz Committee and talk about it to their friends, families and colleagues." Memorial site work at Auschwitz and at the memorial site for victims of forced labor at the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg are a key element in Volkswagen's corporate culture. Coers: "Today, Volkswagen stands for tolerance, internationality and cosmopolitanism – here in Saxony and at more than 120 plants around the world. There is no space for marginalization within our company." Employees from 21 nations work at the plants of Volkswagen Saxony in Chemnitz, Dresden and Zwickau.

Jens Rothe, Chairman of the General Works Council of Volkswagen Saxony, emphasized: "We are pleased that our apprentices are helping to conserve the Auschwitz Memorial Site. The Youth Meeting Center there is also one of the most important examples of how remembrance needs a location and how young people can learn that democracy cannot to be taken for granted and always needs to be defended – this is all the more true at the present day."

Over the past 30 years, the joint project "Auschwitz – Remembrance and Future" of the International Auschwitz Committee (IAC) and the Volkswagen Group has brought more than 3,800 German and Polish apprentices and vocational school students as well as foremen and other management personnel from the Group to the Concentration Camp



Memorial Site at Auschwitz and the International Youth Meeting Center Oświęcim.

IAC Vice-President Heubner said: "The young women and men help conserve the Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp Memorial Sites with their professional skills and personal dedication. They play a key role in preserving these places of remembrance for future generations."

The apprentices and vocational school students clear weeds from pathways, repair barbed wire fences, preserve the shoes of the victims and talk to eyewitnesses who survived Auschwitz concentration camp and Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. The Memorial Site is an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

*The International Auschwitz Committee (IAC) was founded in 1952 by survivors to ensure that Auschwitz would not be forgotten. The committee includes organizations, foundations and Holocaust survivors from 19 countries. Information on the committee is available in English, French, German and Polish at [www.auschwitz.info](http://www.auschwitz.info).*

*About 1.5 million people were murdered by the Nazi regime at Auschwitz concentration camp and the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Red Army liberated the few survivors on January 27, 1945.*

**Note:**

A [report](#) on Memorial Site work with interviews, images and films as well as this text and photos are available at [www.volkswagen-newsroom.com](http://www.volkswagen-newsroom.com).

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**About the Volkswagen brand: "We make the future real"**

The Volkswagen Passenger Cars brand is present in more than 150 markets throughout the world and produces vehicles at over 50 locations in 14 countries. In 2017, Volkswagen delivered 6.23 million vehicles including bestselling models such as the Golf, Tiguan, Jetta or Passat. Currently, 198,000 people work for Volkswagen across the globe. The brand also has over 7,700 dealerships with 74,000 employees. Volkswagen is forging ahead consistently with the further development of automobile production. E-mobility, smart mobility and the digital transformation of the brand are the key strategic topics for the future.

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