



Volksoper Wien GmbH

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Child Protection Policy of Volksoper Wien

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Overall responsibility: Management of Volksoper Wien

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Commitment of the Volksoper management


Children and adolescents are very important to us at Volksoper! We are pleased that so many young people visit us at Volksoper, participate in its productions and enrich them in a very special way.

As a cultural institution, Volksoper Wien is committed to the artistic quality of its productions. Nevertheless, the best interests and the welfare of children must always come first. We are parents ourselves and therefore know what the needs of children as well as the concerns of parents are, and thus we do everything in our power to ensure that the young people entrusted to us are able to develop in a protective and safe environment.

We ensure the highest level of safety in performing our duties of oversight, in selecting our staff and in our dealings with children and adolescents. Volksoper Wien has appointed a liaison for child, youth and confidentiality matters who is the point of contact for questions and issues of conduct in respect of child protection and child welfare. The basis for this is the Child Protection Policy set out below, which is brought to the attention of all employees of Volksoper Wien, as well as the Code of Conduct, which all employees of Volksoper Wien undertake to comply with.

We take full responsibility for taking all reasonable steps to protect children and adolescents at Volksoper Wien from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Children and adolescents are in good hands with us!



Lotte de Beer
Artistic Director of Volksoper Wien



Christoph Ladstätter
Commercial Director of Volksoper Wien

Preamble

This Child Protection Policy serves to protect the welfare of children at Volksoper Wien. It contains information on issues relevant to the protection of children and adolescents. All decision-makers and employees of Volksoper Wien GmbH fully support this Child Protection Policy.

1. Code of Conduct for employees

The following Code of Conduct forms the basis for the conduct of staff members in their work with us and in their encounters with children and adolescents at Volksoper, which each member of staff must adhere to and sign. (Annex 1)

These obligations include

- to respect the dignity of children and adolescents, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, social, ethnic and cultural origin, world view, religion, political conviction or economic position, and to counteract discrimination of any kind,
- to treat all children and adolescents with equal **respect and fairness**,
- to create a safe, supportive and encouraging **environment** for children and adolescents,
- to take the **opinions and concerns** of children and adolescents seriously and to respect them as individuals,
- **not to use any physical or psychological violence** towards children and adolescents, especially no sexual violence or sexualised assault in words, gestures, actions or deeds,
- to respect **personal boundaries** and individual feelings about closeness and distance, and especially the boundaries of modesty and privacy, of children and adolescents and thus to behave respectfully towards them,
- **not to make physical contact** with children/adolescents against their will and/or in excess of what is pedagogically or artistically appropriate,
- to detect and adequately address described or suspected **violations of boundaries** by other staff members and/or to report them to the liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices,
- **not to lock oneself** in a room with one or more children or adolescents,
- not to take and/or distribute **photos, videos** or other recordings against the wishes of children/adolescents,
- to communicate only through specified **channels of communication** and not to contact children/adolescents privately,
- to seek fair and humane solutions to **conflicts**,
- to recognise that the interests of children and adolescents, their **health** and **wellbeing** take precedence over the interests of Volksoper Wien,
- to inform superiors when staff members become aware of any **accusations, investigations** or **proceedings** in their professional environment pursuant to §§ 83 or 84 (Assault), 92 (Torturing or neglecting underage, younger or defenceless persons) or 201 to 220b (Sexual offences) of the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB).

All staff members will counteract any developments that endanger the welfare of children and must demand that third parties comply with the rules set out in this Code of Conduct.

2. Mission statement

Volksoper Wien sees itself as an open, family-friendly institution. Children and adolescents are welcome both in regular performances and in the special outreach programmes of *Junge Volksoper!*

In addition, Volksoper Wien welcomes the involvement of children and adolescents in the artistic activities of the institution in connection with the children's choir, the youth choir and the Wiener Staatsballett as well as the pool of extras.

This Child Protection Policy has been developed to ensure that children and adolescents are not harmed when they are involved in activities of Volksoper Wien. Open and transparent communications, and a working atmosphere in which a respectful feedback culture and respectful manners are the norm, are intended to be a preventative means of protecting children and adolescents from any form of violence.

Children and adolescents who are active at Volksoper Wien can contact the **liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices** and the **child welfare team** with any questions and concerns. The most important points of this Child Protection Policy, i.e. in particular the rights of children, adolescents and apprentices, and the identity of the liaisons, are communicated to the children at the beginning of the season or when they join the company or begin rehearsals/projects, by means of a handout that is age-appropriate and formulated in language suitable for children (Annex 2).

3. Definitions and no-goes

According to Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Volksoper Wien defines every person under the age of 18 as a **child** and considers them to be **particularly worthy of protection**.

Physical and sexualised violence, but also neglect and psychological violence as well as forms of violence perpetrated by the media are forms of **risk to the wellbeing of children** and all forms of such violence must be refrained from.

Volksoper therefore does not tolerate the following under any circumstances:

- **Physical violence:** Physical violence includes all conceivable forms of physical abuse.
- **Psychological violence:** Emotional or psychological violence includes devaluation, rejection, ridicule, threats and intimidation, name-calling, non-objective and destructive criticism, degradation, bullying, humiliation, restriction of the child's freedom of movement, discrimination and other forms of hostile treatment. Similarly, when the child is taught that he or she is worthless, unloved or inadequate, or is only there to fulfil the needs of another person. Physical violence is directed against the integrity, dignity or self-worth of another person and is experienced by children even when they are not themselves the immediate target of such violence, but become witnesses to violence against someone important to them.
- **Neglect:** Failure by persons responsible for the child to act in a caring manner that restricts or even harms the child's physical, mental, spiritual and/or social development. This also includes the failure to supervise children adequately and protect them from harm to the extent possible. Such failure may be active, i.e. may be committed knowingly, or passive (due to a lack of insight or knowledge).

- **Sexualised violence:** Sexual abuse, sexual violence or sexualised violence refers to the exploitation of the power imbalance and dependency relationship between an adult or superior young person and a girl or boy to satisfy an individual's own sexual needs. Due to their cognitive and emotional development, children and adolescents are not able to adequately understand, classify and knowingly consent to such acts. Sexualised violence includes, for example, providing children with inappropriate information on sexuality relative to their age, making pornographic photos or films of children, showing sexualised pictures, films or one's own sexual organs (exhibitionism), making children witness adult sexuality, sexualised touching of children, an any sexual practices towards or with children.
- **Forms of media violence:** Digital media must not be used to violate and restrict children's personal rights. Examples include cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying, cyber-grooming and happy-slapping.

4. Legal framework

The following international conventions and national laws provide the **legal framework** for Volksoper Wien's Child Protection Policy:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) of 1989 as well as its optional protocols and other standards relating to the rights of the child
- Austrian General Civil Code (ABGB): § 37, Prohibition on violence as well as § 138, Best interests of the child
- Federal Constitutional Act on the Rights of Children of 20 January 2011: In particular, the right to a childhood free of violence (Art. 5), the right of the child to appropriate participation and consideration of his or her opinion in his or her own affairs and the principle of the priority of the best interests of the child, which applies to the entire legal and social order (Art. 1) are enshrined in Austrian constitutional law
- Austrian Criminal Code (StGB): Chapter 10, Criminal acts, sexual integrity and self-determination – of particular relevance: §§ 206; 207; 207a; 207b; 208; 208a; 212; 214; 215a as well as § 220b, Prohibition on activities
- Austrian Code of Criminal Procedure (StPO): § 66 (2) and Code of Civil Procedure (ZPO) § 73b (1) and (2) on litigation support

5. Preventive measures

The following preventive measures are taken to strengthen the **welfare of children at Volksoper Wien** and prevent threats to their wellbeing:

5.1 Staff members who regularly come into contact with children and adolescents in the course of their work at Volksoper Wien are especially sensitised and trained with regard to child protection principles.

5.2 When selecting staff for positions involving regular and close contact with children and adolescents, applicants are required to show a reflective and respectful attitude towards children and adolescents and, before starting work, to obtain the special "**Criminal Record Certificate – Child and Youth Welfare**" so as to check their record for any abuse of children and adolescents.

5.3 Before starting work, all new employees receive the **Code of Conduct** and the **Child Protection Policy** and must undertake in writing to comply with the provisions contained therein. Similarly, all employees who are already on the staff of Volksoper will receive the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct to sign.

Violations of the standards of good conduct laid down in the Code of Conduct or violations of the Child Protection Policy will result in consequences ranging from mandatory training in this area to termination of employment.

6. Best interests of the child versus will of the child

The best interests of the child may conflict with the will of the child. Volksoper Wien staff members must act responsibly and, in the event of a discrepancy, **must decide in the best interests of the child**.

Children should be deployed in a way that **respects their resources**: no excessive demands, a balanced number of performances, sufficient breaks between performances, deployment according to individual ability and resilience. All of this should be done with the best interests of the child in mind, which may in certain circumstances contradict the child's will, e.g. after numerous performances, solo roles and excessive rehearsals.

Regardless of their rights, children and adolescents also have **duties**. They, too, do not act in a legal vacuum and are expected to behave fairly and respectfully towards other children and adolescents as well as adults.

7. Child welfare liaisons

Volksoper Wien has appointed a **liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices** as a direct point of contact in connection with all questions relevant to the welfare of children:

Mag. Heidemarie Dude

Contact: heidemarie.dude@volksoper.at; 01/51444 – 3456

The **liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices** is the point of contact for children, adolescents and apprentices with respect to questions and problems of any kind that they cannot or do not wish to discuss with those in charge or superiors. Problems from the child's personal environment may also be brought to the liaison's attention. The liaison provides assistance and support in finding possible solutions. The liaison thus serves as the initial and threshold point of contact for all children, adolescents and staff members who have questions about child welfare and child protection or who need support in implementing child protection. The liaison is responsible for all concerns regarding potential threats to the wellbeing of children, including reports to the competent authorities. In addition, the liaison is in charge of case and complaint management and regularly reviews all child protection complaints and coordinates the handling of allegations against staff members, partner organisations or other children and adolescents who have a relationship with Volksoper Wien.

In addition, a **child welfare team** has been established, which gives special attention to and promotes the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in their respective areas of responsibility. The child welfare team is made up of staff members from the music theatre agency, the children's choir and the youth choir as well as the stage management.

Child welfare team

Mag. Heidemarie Dude (Education department, liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices)

Mag. Nina Moebius (Head of Education department, Equal opportunities officer)

Mag. Brigitte Lehr (

Head of children's chorus, youth chorus, child extras, Deputy extras management)

Elisabeth Kirchner (Children's chorus and youth chorus trainer)

Mag. Susanne Sommer (Assistent Director and Staff Director)

8. Communications standards

8.1 Media reports and photos

In its external communications (media, social networks, etc.), Volksoper Wien takes care to safeguard the **personal rights** of children and adolescents. In that context, care must be taken to ensure that the **dignity of and protection of the identity of children and adolescents** is preserved and safeguarded in the production and dissemination of media content, by ensuring that portrayal, clothing and poses are appropriate and that photos are generally not labelled by name and thus cannot be traced. Photos showing children and adolescents will only be labelled "Children's choir", "Youth choir" or "Child extras".

8.2 Declaration of consent under data protection law

At the commencement of the training (children's choir, youth choir) or the activity (extras pool) at Volksoper Wien, general **consent** for the audio and/or visual recording of rehearsals and performances will also be obtained from the legal guardians of children and adolescents. A corresponding form is available for this purpose (Annex 3).

8.3 Data protection

The protection of the personal data of all employees and guests is an important concern for Volksoper Wien and is set out in the Privacy Policy for Employees of Volksoper Wien. As the data of minors are deemed particularly worthy of protection, employees will be sensitised in this respect.

8.4 Internet, apps & social media

All persons working for Volksoper Wien undertake that they shall only use the internet via all available channels, e.g. PC, laptop, smartphone, etc., in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Any illegal use of the internet by persons working for Volksoper Wien or via an **internet access point of Volksoper Wien**, e.g. downloading or creating inappropriate images of children and adolescents, cyber-bullying, etc., will be investigated and punished.

Volksoper Wien is a member of **social networks** such as Facebook. Its appearance on such networks is in line with the Code of Conduct and the contents of the Child Protection Policy. Staff members must deal responsibly with "friendships" on social media networks with children and adolescents and never initiate such "friendships" on their own initiative.

9. Organisation of auditions, rehearsals and fittings

Auditions, rehearsal times and fittings at Volksoper Wien will be adapted, to the extent possible, to the age of the children and adolescents participating at Volksoper Wien and to their school commitments. This

means, inter alia, that attendance or waiting times at rehearsals of children and adolescents must be kept as short as possible, or they must be scheduled at times that accord with the age of the children and adolescents.

To the extent possible, the following aspects must be taken into consideration in connection with auditions, rehearsals and fittings, in the interests of the children's wellbeing:

- Where possible, rehearsals will be adapted to the needs of the children and adolescents, i.e. in rehearsals, scenes involving children and adolescents are to be **placed at the beginning of a rehearsal** to avoid long waiting times, or children and adolescents are called in at a time they are expected to have their turn at the rehearsal.
- If possible, rehearsal times **from 5:00 pm onwards** should be provided for school-age children and adolescents, and at these rehearsals, priority should likewise be given to the scenes with children.
- The **number of rehearsals** should be set in line with the requirements to the extent that the **child is sufficiently rehearsed** and feels confident on stage, but is not called to rehearse **unnecessarily often** so that there is sufficient time for school and other leisure activities.
- For children and adolescents, due to their school commitments, a **maximum of 5 rehearsals can be scheduled in the morning within a single production**.
- Since young children, in particular, are not yet able to attend rehearsals on their own and bringing a child to a rehearsal means organisational efforts for the (usually employed) guardians, and because school needs also have to be taken into account, **rehearsal schedules for children** must be provided in good time, i.e. one week in advance.
- **Volksoper's duty of oversight** for children begins when the responsible Volksoper staff member takes charge of the children and ends at the end of the rehearsal or 15 minutes after the end of the performance. From that point on, parents are obliged to take custody of the children or inform the children in advance that they may go home independently. Parents are obliged to collect their children at the agreed time.
- Due to school commitments, **fittings** for children and adolescents should, if possible, only take place **after 3:00 pm**.
- In order to protect children and adolescents, **no information** should be given about the reason for any **rejection at auditions or castings**. Volksoper Wien requests that parents/guardians respect this, without reservation.

10. Case and complaint management

In the event of complaints, information will be handled with care, and professional help will be sought where necessary. Every complaint and every suspected case of any form of transgressive, abusive, unprofessional, violent, non-transparent, non-lawful behaviour will be investigated.

Every person working for Volksoper Wien is requested to immediately report any child protection incident or suspicion of child welfare endangerment of which they become aware to the liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices. Both the failure to report and the knowingly and intentional making of a false report can lead to serious consequences under employment law.

A report can be made to the email address of the liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices heidemarie.dude@volksoper.at, by telephone 01/51444 – 3456 or in person at the liaison's office (3rd floor). Reports will be treated in strict confidence and in compliance with data protection law. This applies not only to the person reporting the incident, but also to alleged victims, perpetrators and witnesses. This means that information is treated carefully and respectfully and is only passed on to those parties who have a need to know the information in order to be able to act in the best interests of the child. This procedure is

not used to conceal events, but rather to handle personal data with care and respect the necessary privacy. A written record is made of every report for follow-up purposes.

If there is an imminent risk (i.e. if the child or adolescent is in imminent danger) the police and/or rescue services must be notified.

Annex 1: Code of Conduct

In connection with my work at Volksoper Wien, I undertake

- to respect the dignity of children and adolescents, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, social, ethnic and cultural origin, world view, religion, political conviction or economic position, and to counteract discrimination of any kind,
- to treat all children and adolescents with equal **respect and fairness**,
- to create a safe, supportive and encouraging **environment** for children and adolescents,
- to take the **opinions and concerns** of children and adolescents seriously and to respect them as individuals,
- **not to use any physical or psychological violence** towards children and adolescents, especially no sexual violence or sexualised assault in words, gestures, actions or deeds,
- to respect **personal boundaries** and individual feelings about closeness and distance, and especially the boundaries of modesty and privacy, of children and adolescents and thus to behave respectfully towards them,
- **not to make physical contact** with children/adolescents against their will and/or in excess of what is pedagogically or artistically appropriate,
- to detect and adequately address described or suspected **violations of boundaries** by other staff members and/or to report them to the liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices,
- **not to lock myself** in a room with one or more children or adolescents,
- not to take and/or distribute **photos, videos** or other recordings against the wishes of children/adolescents,
- to communicate only through specified **channels of communication** and not to contact children/adolescents privately,
- to seek fair and humane solutions to **conflicts**,
- to recognise that the interests of children and adolescents, their **health** and **wellbeing** take precedence over the interests of Volksoper Wien,
- to inform my superiors if I become aware of any **accusations, investigations** or **proceedings** in my professional environment pursuant to §§ 83 or 84 (Assault), 92 (Torturing or neglecting underage, younger or defenceless persons) or 201 to 220b (Sexual offences) of the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB).

I will take action against developments that endanger the welfare of children by means of targeted education and by actions as a role model, and I will demand that third parties comply with the rules set out in this Code of Conduct in their interactions with children and adolescents. In the event of ambiguities or if I am unable to cope with a situation, I will consult with colleagues or seek external professional help and support.

By signing my (employment) contract, I acknowledge the Child Protection Policy and its principles and undertake to comply with them.

Place, date, signature

Annex 2: The Child Protection Policy in child-friendly language

Your rights and duties at Volksooper Wien

Children and adolescents should have a good time at Volksooper Wien, which means that no young person should be treated badly, feel uncomfortable or even get scared!

If you get into a situation at Volksooper that doesn't feel good, if you or other children and adolescents need help, or if you simply want to talk with someone in confidence, you have the option of contacting me, your **liaison for children, adolescents and apprentices**. My name is Heidemarie Dude and you can tell me what you have experienced or observed. I am happy to help you and will look for solutions together with you. You should not have to endure anything that is unpleasant!

If you or other children and adolescents need immediate help, then of course you can turn to anyone and ask them for help and support right away!

You also need to know that you always have the right to say "No!" if something doesn't feel right, because all people have a duty to **treat** you and all other children and adolescents **with dignity and justice!**

- **You are who you are!** Everyone has to respect that and treat you **fairly**.
- It is the responsibility of adults to ensure that you are in a **safe environment**.
- Everyone has an obligation to take your **opinions, concerns and fears** seriously.
- No-one is allowed to **call you names or threaten you with violence, let alone commit violence against you!**
- **Your body belongs to you!** You need not and should not allow any unpleasant and unwanted touching!
- No adult may **lock themselves** alone in a **room** with you.
- No **photos or videos** of you may be taken or distributed against your will.
- You should not communicate privately with staff members of Volksooper, e.g. via social media channels such as Facebook.

Your health and wellbeing always come first!

Those who have rights also have duties! I would also like to remind you of your duties and ask you to treat all other children and adolescents as well as adults with respect! You are also obliged to leave Volksooper at the end of your rehearsal or performance with your parents or with their consent, as no-one can supervise you at Volksooper after the end of rehearsals.

This is how you can reach me, Heidemarie Dude, your liaison:

Either come to the **3rd floor** of Volksooper and drop by my office in person or send me an email at heidemarie.dude@volksoper.at or call me on **01/51444 – 3456**.

Annex 3: Consent form

TBD

Annex 4: External support services and counselling centres

“die möwe” child protection centre in Vienna

The “die möwe” child protection centre in Vienna provides help and counselling in cases of violence against minors or in cases of neglect. “die möwe” answers all questions about violent experiences and other difficult situations by telephone, online and in personal conversations.

Available: Monday to Thursday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Friday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm (telephone: 01 532 15 15), Börsegasse 9, 1010 Vienna, ksz-wien@die-moewe.at; <https://www.die-moewe.at>

Emergency number for children and adolescents

The emergency number 147 “Rat auf Draht” is an important point of contact for children, adolescents and their caregivers in the event of problems, questions and crisis situations. The number 147 can be dialled without any prefix code from all over Austria, around the clock, free-of-charge and anonymously.

Contact: Telephone number 147; rataufdraht@orf.at; <http://rataufdraht.orf.at>

Eating disorders

Eating disorders hotline: The eating disorders hotline 0800 20 11 20 is a low-threshold, anonymous and free telephone counselling service. It offers professional counselling, information and help to those affected by eating disorders and to relatives of people with such disorders.

Available: Monday to Thursday from 12:00 noon to 5:00 pm (telephone: 0800 20 11 20);

hilfe@essstoerungshotline.at

sowhat: sowhat is both a pioneer and experienced specialist in the outpatient treatment of people with eating disorders. With three locations – Vienna Westbahnhof, St. Pölten and Mödling – sowhat offers a high-frequency therapy programme financed by the Austrian health insurance system and thus enables those affected to receive intensive outpatient treatment for a period of up to three years. Available: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, Wednesday from 8:30 am to 12:00 noon and from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Friday from 8:30 am to 12:00 noon (telephone: +43 1 4065717-0), info@sowhat.at; <http://www.sowhat.at/>

Sexual orientation and identity

Courage*: Counselling centre for same-sex and transgender lifestyles.

Available: Monday to Thursday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (telephone: 01 5856966), <https://www.courage-beratung.at/>

HOSI: HOSI offers support in coming out and in cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation. HOSI is a contact point for information on all aspects on the topic of homosexuality.

Available: Monday, Tuesday, Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Wednesday 9:00 am to 12:00 noon (telephone: 01 216 66 04), <https://www.hosiwien.at/>

Türkis Rosa Lila Villa: The Türkis Rosa Lila Villa is the queer community centre for lesbians, gays, trans*, inter* and non-binary people in Vienna.

For information on getting in touch, see the website at: <https://dievilla.at/kontakt/>

New media (use and abuse)

Saferinternet: Support for children, adolescents, parents and teachers regarding the safe, competent and responsible use of digital media, <https://www.saferinternet.at/>

Internet ombuds office: Free counselling and support for disputes on the internet, also provides answers to legal questions on digital issues, <https://ombudsmann.at>

Child and Youth Welfare Vienna: "Mag Elf" – Office for Youth and Family Affairs

Children have a legal right to protection in cases of neglect, violence and sexual abuse – MAG ELF provides this through various measures.

Contact: 10., Favoritenstraße 211/6. Stock; kanzlei-ra5@ma11.wien.gv.at;

Telephone: 01 4000-10340; www.kinder.wien.at

Vienna Child and Youth Advocacy Office

The Vienna Child and Youth Advocacy Office (KJA) deals with the rights and concerns of children and adolescents. As the ombuds office of the City of Vienna, the KJA represents the interests of those affected as an advocate.

Contact: Telephone: 01 70 77 000; post@jugendanwalt.wien.gv.at

Address: 1090 Vienna, Alserbachstraße 18; opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Further addresses:

- **Independent Child Protection Centre Vienna:** Telephone: 01 526 18 20, office@kinderschutzzentrum.wien
- **Boje Wien:** Telephone: 01 4066602, ambulatorium@die-boje.at
- **Gewaltinfo.at:** This site provides information on domestic violence in the family, in the social environment, against women, older people, against and among adolescents and men.
- **Kinderpsychologen.at:** On these pages you will find the addresses of child psychologists all over Austria who deal with the special needs of special children. **Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy of the Austrian Health Insurance Fund – Wien-Mariahilf Health Centre**
www.gesundheitskasse.at/cdscontent/?contentid=10007.836318t

Telephone numbers:

- Telephone counselling 142
- Social psychiatry 01/313 30
- Women's emergency hotline 01/71719

The Child Protection Policy of Volksoper Wien is based on the policy drawn up by Wiener Staatsoper in consultation with the child protection organisation "die möwe".