

***"Thessaloniki 2012 – Towards a Green, Open and Inclusive City"***  
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**Multicultural heritage and politics of inclusion in Vienna**

**Vienna has always been a "melting pot"** during its history. A Byzantine princess, Theodora Komnena, has been the first duchess of Austria from 1156 till 1177. The Habsburg family came from Switzerland. Italians have contributed to the glamour of Baroque Vienna, and Czech workers, cooks and nurses maintained life the 2 million inhabitant capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. "Fin de siècle" culture in Vienna would have been unthinkable without the influence of the nearly 200,000 Jews that lived here and most of whom were exiled or murdered during Nazi dictatorship after 1938.

After World War II, multiculturalism in Vienna stagnated (with the exception of the so-called "Gastarbeiter" migration from Yugoslavia and Turkey and refugees coming from Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Hungary in 1956), but since the fall of the "iron curtain" in 1989, the city readopted its "melting pot" role in the heart of Europe. As a consequence, integration and inclusion have become important tasks of politics.

The Greens of Vienna have played an important role in this process ever since their formation in 1986/87. One of their main endeavours, since the so-called "Waldheim affair" (1986-88), is **coming to terms with the past and the "dark spots" in it**, exposing the involvement of many Austrians as supporters of the annexation of Austria by Hitler Germany in 1938 and their contribution in expropriation and genocide of Jews.

The struggle against right-wing extremist and xenophobic tendencies, particularly inside the "Freedom Party" (FPÖ) previously led by Jörg Haider and now headed by Heinz-Christian Strache, has always been important for Greens, not only during election campaigns. One achievement after nearly two decades of campaigning was the decision to rehabilitate deserters from the German "Wehrmacht" who have been killed or imprisoned by the Nazis. A monument for their commemoration will be raised in Vienna next year.

From the beginning, ethnic **minorities have played a prominent role in the Green party structure**. Slovenes from Carinthia and Croats from Burgenland have become MPs by being elected on the list of the Greens, and in 2008 Alev Korun, previously district and city councillor in Vienna, became the first Austria MP of Turkish origin. The "Green Migrants of Vienna" are a very active party section. When, in November 2010, the first "Red-Green" coalition government in Vienna was formed, Green top-of-the-list candidate Maria Vassilakou, born in Greece, became deputy mayoress and city government member in charge of urban planning, traffic, climate protection, energy planning and public participation.

The **Red-Green Government** strives for a change in the constitution enabling citizens from EU countries living in Vienna not only to vote in elections to the urban district councils, but also to the city parliament (which is a regional parliament at the same time), and equally granting the **right to vote** to people from other countries who live in Vienna for a certain period.

One of the main projects for 2012 is the elaboration of the so-called **"Viennese Charter for living together"** (see [www.charta.wien.gv.at](http://www.charta.wien.gv.at)). All people living in Vienna are invited to contribute with proposals, ideas and (moderated) discussion rounds to issues of living together – young and old, migrants and "indigenous Viennese", men and women, people with and without disabilities, car-drivers and pedestrians, etc. All inputs are being collected and will be used to draft a "Viennese Charter" that shall be signed symbolically by those involved in November 2012. This project is aimed at mobilizing people and offering them dialogue instead of leaving them aside to be manipulated by right-wing populists.