

## **Citizen's Forum, Austrian Trade in Turkey and Turkish in Austrian Schools**



### **The Austrian debate on Turkey First Quarter 2011**

Austrians and Turks - Highlights of the debate

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## January

### 4 January 2011 – Turkey’s attempts to improve relations with Christian minorities

The Austrian Press Agency APA covers Turkey’s relations with its Christian minority after vice premier Bulent Arinc visits the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I at his residence by the Golden Horn. The article cites the European Commission’s repeated appeals to Turkey to improve the situation of its non-Muslim citizens and their right of religious freedom.

### 17 – 19 January 2011 – Much ado about “Citizen’s Forum”

ORF, Austria’s public broadcasting company, covers the issue of Turkish immigration during “Citizen’s forum” (Burgerforum), a TV programme. Five politicians from Austria’s five key political parties discuss the issue and respond to questions from a live audience. The extent to which the debate on immigration is intertwined with the debate on Turkey’s accession becomes clear when right wing politicians Peter Westenthaler (BZO) and Karl-Heinz Strache (FPÖ) criticise Turkey’s human rights record and describe the Muslim headscarf as a “symbol of female suppression”. Josef Cap, speaker of the Social Democrats in the Austrian parliament and a member of his party’s anti-Turkey wing, states: “One can be against Turkey’s EU accession and still be friends with the Turks in Austria.”<sup>1</sup> Maria Fekter (ÖVP), the minister of interior, criticises the Turkish government’s funding of Austrian mosques.<sup>2</sup> Alev Korun of the Green Party, Austria’s only parliamentarian of Turkish origin, is also the only guest to advance a positive view of Turkish immigration. “In the debate, we should not rely on clichés but on facts,” she says.

On 18 January *Das Biber*, a migrant magazine published every other month, describes the TV programme as “a nice attempt to start a debate, but a failed attempt.”

“I do not think that the educational mandate (of the ORF) is fulfilled when it hosts people with narrow views and politicians who use the show as a platform for their populism,” writes Olja Alvir for *Das Biber*.<sup>3</sup>

On 19 January the conservative daily *Die Presse*, referring to statements made by Josef Cap during the ORF programme, writes of a significant shift inside the Social Democrat party:

“Cap supports a new and stricter integration policy in his party. He warns against parallel-societies and Islamism – he says the Turkish ambassador, Kadri Evced Tezcan, is not an ambassador but a nationalist.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statement Josef Cap: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5oJv8if7O4&feature=related>

<sup>2</sup> Statement Maria Fekter: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVOu3LCmtbA&feature=related>

<sup>3</sup> *Das Biber*, “Die Türken haben uns belogen - ORF BÜRGERFORUM”, 18 January 2011  
<http://www.dasbiber.at/content/die-t%C3%BCrken-haben-uns-belogen-orf-b%C3%BCrgerforum>

<sup>4</sup> *Die Presse*, “Bürgerforum: Die Türken machen die Nacht zum Tag”, 19 January 2011  
[http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/626392/Buergerforum\\_Die-Tuerken-machen-die-Nacht-zum-Tag](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/626392/Buergerforum_Die-Tuerken-machen-die-Nacht-zum-Tag)

The shift that *Die Presse* describes becomes obvious by comparing Cap's comments in the TV-debate to the party's programme of the SPO which is published on the party's website .

“We support minorities and their right of full integration into society while allowing them to keep their cultural identity. We understand that everyone has the right to have his own homeland, his nationality and his culture.”<sup>5</sup>

The popular weekly magazine *News* comments on the ORF-Bürgerforum on its website. “Conclusion: Pure pessimism”, reads the article's headline. “In the Bürgerforum the machinery of negative clichés about Turkish immigrants ran at full speed,” writes staff reporter Jorg Tschurtz. Tschurtz finds Josef Cap's statements “interesting”. “Obviously there are more similarities between the SPO and the FPÖ (the right wing, anti-immigration party) than one would presume,” he concludes.<sup>6</sup>

### **18 January 2011 – Orban on the pace of Turkey's accession**

The local daily *Tiroler Tageszeitung* quotes Viktor Orban as telling the German tabloid *Bild*: “In my opinion a strategic partnership with Russia will happen faster than an agreement on the relationship between Turkey and the EU.”<sup>7</sup>

### **25 January 2011 – “Valley of the Wolves”: An anti-Semitic action movie?**

The action movie “Valley of the Wolves: Palestine” gains a lot of attention in Austrian media. Jewish organisations criticise the film's anti-Semitic content and draw attention to its release date, 27 January, which coincides with International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The criticism is echoed by a number of key opinion makers, including the protestant bishop Michael Bunker, members of the Austrian parliament Karl Ollinger (Greens), Petra Bayr (Social Democrats) and Silvia Fuhrmann (ÖVP), and the Turkish Cultural Community in Austria. The discussion is featured widely in Austrian news outlets (such as *Die Presse*, *Der Standard*, *Salzburger Nachrichten*) and does not subside until the end of the January. Unlike Germany, where protests led to the film's ban, “Valley of the Wolves” is eventually screened in Austria.

#### **Links:**

- Die Presse, ["Tal der Wölfe"-Debatte: Muzicant vs. Schakfeh](#), 3 February 2011
- Der Standard, [Türkischer James Bond will Rache für Gaza](#), 26 January 2011
- Salzburger Nachrichten, [Muzicant will islamische Kritik an „Tal der Wölfe“](#), 3 February 2011

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<sup>5</sup> Party Programme of the Austrian Social Democrats, p.7,  
[http://spoe.at/bilder/d251/spoe\\_partei\\_programm.pdf](http://spoe.at/bilder/d251/spoe_partei_programm.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *News*, “Es geht hier nicht ums Kopftuch, bitte! ORF-Bürgerforum in der Nachbetrachtung”, 19 January 2011, <http://www.news.at/articles/1103/8/286712/es-kopftuch-orf-buergerforum-nachbetrachtung>

<sup>7</sup> *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, “Orban: Schnellere EU-Einigung mit Russland als mit der Türkei”, 18 January 2011 <http://www.tt.com/csp/cms/sites/tt/%C3%9Cberblick/Politik/PolitikContainer/2057240-8/orban-schnellere-eu-einigung-mit-russland-als-mit-der-t%C3%BCrkei.csp>

## 25 - 27 January 2011 – European Court for Human Rights publishes annual report

Turkey hits headlines again when the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg publishes its annual report, which points out that “in 2010 the highest number of judgments concerned Turkey (278), followed by Russia (217), Romania (143) and Ukraine (109). These four States accounted for almost half (49.8%) of all judgments.”<sup>8</sup> In his report the Court points out that

“At the end of 2010, nearly 140.000 allocated applications were pending before the Court. As in previous years, four States account for over half (55,9%) of its docket: 28,9% of these cases are directed against Russia, 10,9% concern Turkey, 8,6% Romania and 7,5% Ukraine.”<sup>9</sup>

Several media report on Abdullah Gul’s visit to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. According to the conservative daily *Die Presse*, Gul criticises the discrimination of Christians by Turkish authorities Gul refers to a decision of a Turkish court that rejected the job-application of a Turkish citizen due to his Armenian heritage, calling it a “shame”, *Die Presse* writes.<sup>10</sup>

“For a long time, Non-Muslims in Turkey complain that they do not have access to jobs as civil servants,” *Die Presse* points out, “Christian churches in Turkey criticise the lack of a clear legal status. The EU-commission has urged Turkey to take measures to improve the situation of Non-Muslims.”<sup>11</sup>

Various media, such as *Der Standard* and *ORF*, pick up a *Spiegel Online*-report on a Turkish teacher who had received a warning for teaching Darwin’s theory of evolution to high school students.

### Links:

- Der Standard, [Lehrer nach Evolutionstheorie-Stunde verwarnt](#), 26 January 2011
- ORF, [Hinweis auf Darwin: Türkischer Lehrer wird verwarnt](#), 25 January 2011

In a reaction to reports on “the increasing power of Islamists in Turkey”, MEP Andreas Molzer of the right wing, anti-immigration Freedom Party (FPÖ) calls for an immediate suspension of EU accession talks with Ankara. In a press release, he writes:

“A lifestyle that does not match strict Islamic rules is hindered, and a teacher who explains Darwin’s theory of evolution receives a warning. These are behaviours that severely contradict fundamental European ideas.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *European Court of Human Rights*, Annual Report 2010, page 14

<http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Reports+and+Statistics/Reports/Annual+Reports/>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, page 13

<sup>10</sup> *Die Presse*, “Gül kritisiert Diskriminierung von Christen”, 28 January 2011

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas Molzer, “Islamisierung der Türkei muss zu Abbruch der Beitrittsverhandlungen führen”, 27 January 2011, <http://andreasmoelzer.wordpress.com/2011/01/27/islamisierung-der-turkei-mus-zu-abbruch-der-beitrittsverhandlungen-fuehren/>

## **27 January 2011 – readmission agreement between Turkey and the EU**

The end of negotiations on a readmission agreement between Turkey and the European Union gains some news coverage. In an Austrian Press Agency (APA) statement, Susanne Gusten points out the importance of the agreement for Turkey's efforts to loosen visa requirements for Turkish citizens. Strict visa requirements in some European countries have been a source of anger and dissatisfaction among Turks. The freedom to travel to the EU, Gusten underlines, "is more important to Turks than the doubtful and distant prospect of EU accession."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>*Pr-inside.com*, "EU-Minister billigten Türkei-Flüchtlings-Abkommen", 24 February 2011, <http://www.pr-inside.com/de/eu-minister-billigten-tuerkei-fluechtlings-abkomme-r2439298.htm>

## February

### 2 February 2011 – Turkey, a role model for the Middle East?

Shortly after the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the Austrian media begins to discuss Turkey's in the new Middle East, underscoring the importance of a Western oriented Turkey as a role model for the region. The left-liberal daily *Der Standard* publishes an interview with Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the director of the Ankara office of the German Marshall Fund, a think-tank. "It is true that Turkey has been a source of inspiration for the countries of the Middle East," Unluhisarcikli says in response to a question, "perhaps more so than we thought some months ago. We all had our ideas about the Middle East, but the dynamics are so new and stark that we have to rethink them."

Referring to Tunisia's main Islamic party and to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, he says:

"Will they be capable of pursuing political Islam the way that Turkey has? To reconcile democracy and secularism? I think so. Because in Tunisia and in Egypt the people have said: 'Enough!' It was the same situation as in Turkey, where the people protested against the domination of the Kemalists, and a multi-party-system under control of the military was installed."<sup>14</sup>

### 3 February 2011 – Turkey a victim of a "racist mentality"?

Statements by Turkish minister for European affairs Egemen Bagis receive coverage in the conservative daily *Die Presse*.<sup>15</sup> Bagis – speaking at a Holocaust commemoration event in Auschwitz – had said that Turkey had become a victim of a "racist mentality that emulates the fascist methods of the 1930s."<sup>16</sup> According to *Die Presse*, Stefan Fule, EU commissioner for enlargement, "gave Bagis a scolding". Bagis apologised for his statements.

### 4 February 2011 – Turkey's political role in the Middle East

Susanne Gusten, writing for the Austrian Press Agency (APA), analyses the wider implications of Turkey's role in the Middle East.

In a series of long articles starting in early February, Gusten portrays Turkey as a "functioning democracy with a Muslim majority, a religious-conservative government, democratic reforms triggered by the EU process, and economic growth." Compared to the dictatorships in Tunisia, Libya and Yemen, Gusten writes, Turkey has been a "glowing example". "There can be no doubt that Turkey's political model is attractive

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<sup>14</sup> *Der Standard*, "Die Türkei ist eine Quelle der Inspiration", 2 January 2011  
<http://derstandard.at/1295571472133/STANDARD-Interview-Die-Tuerkei-ist-eine-Quelle-der-Inspiration>

<sup>15</sup> *Die Presse*, "Türkischer Minister warf EU Rassismus vor", 3 February 2011  
<http://diepresse.com/home/politik/eu/631062/Tuerkischer-Minister-warf-EU-Rassismus-vor>

<sup>16</sup> *Euractiv*, "In Auschwitz, Turkey minister accuses EU of 'racism'", 3 February 2011,  
<http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/auschwitz-turkey-minister-accuses-eu-racism-news-501851>

for the region.” Gusten quotes Turkish scientist Mehmet Sahin, who stresses that Middle Eastern governments and the US have lost credibility among the people of the region. “Only two states have been able to fill this vacuum, Turkey and Iran,” says Sahin. Despite some Western European states’ scepticism towards Turkey’s accession, the West prefers Turkey to Iran. This, says Sahin, speaks to a logical conclusion: “Who does not want to strengthen Iran must strengthen Turkey.”

Gusten’s stories are picked up by most Austrian newspapers, including *Salzburger Nachrichten*, *Der Standard*, *Wiener Zeitung*, and *Die Presse*, as well as by a number of regional and local newspapers.

Jan Keetman, news correspondent for conservative daily *Die Presse*, underlines that “Erdogan’s party is very often called an example for the conciliation of Islam and of democracy.” The Turkish government won plaudits among Arabs, he qualifies, “not least because of Erdogan’s explicit criticism of Israel.” While the Turkish system is preferable to other systems in the region, mainly Iran’s, it is itself a work in progress, Keetman writes. Turkey finds itself in phase of upheaval. “It is not easy to foresee in what direction Ataturk’s state will develop and whether laicism will continue,” Keetman writes.<sup>17</sup>

Stefan Winkler, journalist with regional daily *Kleine Zeitung*, adopts a more sceptical point of view. In his article he stresses the uncertainties related to the revolutions in the Arab world. While stating that Europe is still the model for democratisation and has shown its efficiency in the Balkans as well as in Turkey, he points out that “radical Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood will do everything to come to power.” It is in Europe’s own interest to assist these states in adopting democracy, he argues. “It is because of Europe that Turkey and the Balkans are more democratic today than ten years ago.”<sup>18</sup>

The *Wiener Zeitung*, one of the oldest continually published newspapers in the world and the publication used by the Austrian government for its official announcements, runs a commentary by Alexander von der Decken, staff-writer for the German *Weser Kurier*. According to the author, Turkey’s membership in the EU would be an advantage for Israel.

“The EU now has to play its trump card. And the trump is Turkish accession. Erdogan’s attempts to combine democracy and Islam rely on the support of democratic Europe. Obstructing Turkey’s full membership will ... damage Turkey’s power as a role model for the Middle East.”<sup>19</sup>

Only the Turkish model, von der Decken concludes, will guarantee security in the region and security for Israel.

An article in the influential local newspaper *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* refers to Turkey as “role model” for the Arab world. “There can be no doubt that Turkey’s political

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<sup>17</sup> *Die Presse*, “Türkei-Modell als Exportschlager im Nahen Osten?”, 2 February 2011

<http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/631427>

<sup>18</sup> *Kleine Zeitung*, “Warum Europa trotzdem Vorbild bleibt”, 3 February 2011

<sup>19</sup> *Wiener Zeitung*, “Die Türkei in der EU hätte Vorteile für Israel”, 4 February 2011,

[http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/29128\\_Die-Tuerkei-in-der-EU-haette-Vorteile-fuer-Israel.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/29128_Die-Tuerkei-in-der-EU-haette-Vorteile-fuer-Israel.html)

system is attractive to the Middle East,” it reads. *Der Standard*<sup>20</sup>, the *Salzburger Nachrichten*<sup>21</sup> and the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* all take a similar line.

## 8 February 2011 – Chamber of Commerce grants passive voting rights for Turks

The Austrian Chamber of Commerce admits Turkish entrepreneurs who work in Austria the right to stand for elections in the Austrian Chamber of Commerce as of 2015. With the signing of a bilateral agreement, Austrian businessmen will have the same right in Turkey.<sup>22</sup> The decision was made after several Turks were denied the chance to run in the 2010 elections because they did not have Austrian citizenship. “This is because we want to allow Turkish companies in Austria to take responsibility,” said Brigitte Jank, President of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce. The decision grabbed headlines in *Die Presse*<sup>23</sup>, *Kurier*<sup>24</sup> and *Der Standard*.

## 25 February 2011 – Sarkozy’s visit to Turkey

French President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Turkey is widely covered in the Austrian media. In an article published shortly before Sarkozy’s arrival, *Der Standard* quotes a Turkish diplomat: “We wished that he would stay longer to improve his understanding of Turkey - because he does not know this country very well.”<sup>25</sup>

“On his first official visit to Turkey, president Sarkozy called for alternatives to Turkey’s full EU-accession,” reports the influential regional newspaper *Kleine Zeitung*. “It is better to point it out clearly now, than to get trapped in a dead end street later,” the paper quotes Sarkozy as saying. It then writes:

“Sarkozy, the first French president to travel to Turkey since 1992, affronted the Turkish government with his remarks. Turkish president Gul asked him not to obstruct the accession negotiations. One day earlier, Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had criticised Sarkozy’s views as wrong. ‘Several times we have warned Sarkozy due to his remarks on Turkey and the EU’, Erdogan said.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Der Standard*, “Ankara glaubt an die große Gestalterrolle”, 8 February 2011

<sup>21</sup> *Salzburger Nachrichten*, “Die Türkei wird Modell für den Umbau der Araberstaaten”, 4 February 2011

<sup>22</sup> *Austrian Press Agency APA*, “Grüne Wirtschaft setzt sich durch: Passives Wahlrecht für türkische UnternehmerInnen bei der Kammerwahl”, 08 February 2011.

[http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20110208\\_OTSO172/gruene-wirtschaft-setzt-sich-durch-passives-wahlrecht-fuer-tuerkische-unternehmerinnen-bei-der-kammerwahl](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110208_OTSO172/gruene-wirtschaft-setzt-sich-durch-passives-wahlrecht-fuer-tuerkische-unternehmerinnen-bei-der-kammerwahl)

<sup>23</sup> *Die Presse*, “Wirtschaftskammer-Wahlen: Türken dürfen kandidieren”, 4 February 2011

[http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/632288/WirtschaftskammerWahlen\\_Tuerken-duerfen-kandidieren-](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/632288/WirtschaftskammerWahlen_Tuerken-duerfen-kandidieren-)

<sup>24</sup> *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, “Wirtschaftskammer-Wahlen: Türken dürfen künftig auch kandidieren”, 08 February 2011 <http://www.tt.com/csp/cms/sites/tt/%C3%9Cberblick/2182711-6/wirtschaftskammer-wahlen-t%C3%BCrken-d%C3%BCrfen-k%C3%BCnftig-auch-kandidieren.csp>

<sup>25</sup> *Der Standard*, “Kühler Empfang für Beitrittsgegner Sarkozy in Ankara”, 25 February 2011

<http://derstandard.at/1297819001147/Kuehler-Empfang-fuer-Beitrittsgegner-Sarkozy-in-Ankara>

<sup>26</sup> *Kleine Zeitung*, “Dicke Luft bei Besuch Sarkozys in der Türkei”, 25 February 2011

<http://www.kleinezeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/2682919/dicke-luft-bei-besuch-sarkozys-tuerkei.story>

Jan Keetman, correspondent for the conservative newspaper *Die Presse* reported on a survey by research institute GFK (Society for Consumer Research) for the Associated Press.<sup>27</sup> According to the survey, Turkish society is split on the question of EU accession.

“The Turkish attitude towards Europe is contradictory. While 50 per cent of the Turks still want to become part of the European Union, 42 per cent are opposed to accession. A decade ago, however, two thirds backed accession. With the slow pace of the accession talks and the crisis of the euro ... it was hard to expect that the majority of Turks would still want to be part of the EU.”<sup>28</sup>

## **25 February 2011 – On the prospects of Turkey’s economy**

One of the few Austrian publications openly in favour of Turkey’s accession, the daily financial newspaper *Wirtschaftsblatt* runs an article on Turkey’s economy and opportunities for investors. Under the title “Turkey is trump” *Wirtschaftsblatt*-staff writers Ingrid Krawarik and Alexander Hahn state:

“These days the sun over the Bosphorus shines brighter than ever. After ten years of drastic measures by the IMF and many reforms, Turkey’s economy is booming, while other countries struggle to cope with the impact of the global financial crisis. The ruling AKP has brought the country stability – both in a political and economical sense. Inflation has dropped from 77 per cent in 2001 to 5 per cent in January 2011. At the same time, the economy in the last ten years has been growing at an average rate of up to six per cent. ... Nobody doubts that the AKP will win the parliamentary elections in June.”<sup>29</sup>

## **26- 28 February 2011 – Austrian joint ventures in Turkey**

The Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) publishes an article on its website about a wind power station in the Turkish city of Canakkale, a joint venture involving Sabanci Holding and the Austrian energy company Verbund. The company has been active in Turkey, having investing in a number of power plants.<sup>30</sup>

On 28 February the left liberal daily newspaper *Der Standard* picks up an article by APA about the Canakkale power station. According to the article, more projects like this are in the offing. “Verbund has invested 800 million euro since 2006 in Turkish joint ventures. An additional 400 million euro will be invested between now and 2016.”

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<sup>27</sup> Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung, Österreich [www.gfk.at](http://www.gfk.at)

<sup>28</sup> *Die Presse*, “Stimmung in Türkei: Ausländerfeindlich und sehr religiös”, 25 February 2011, [http://diepresse.com/home/politik/eu/637439/Stimmung-in-Tuerkei\\_Auslaenderfeindlich-und-sehr-religioes?from=suche.intern.portal](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/eu/637439/Stimmung-in-Tuerkei_Auslaenderfeindlich-und-sehr-religioes?from=suche.intern.portal)

<sup>29</sup> *Wirtschaftsblatt*, “Türkei ist Trumpf”, 25 February 2011

<http://www.wirtschaftsblatt.at/home/boerse/investor/tuerkei-ist-trumpf-460921/index.do>

<sup>30</sup> Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Gemeinschaftsunternehmen von Verbund und der Sabanci-Gruppe setzt auf erneuerbare Energie, 28 February 2011,

[http://portal.wko.at/wk/format\\_detail.wk?angid=1&stid=601677&dstid=0&titel=T%C3%BCrkei%3a%2cVerbund%2cJoint%2cVenture%2cEnerjiSA%2cer%3%B6ffnet%2cerstes%2cWindkraftwerk](http://portal.wko.at/wk/format_detail.wk?angid=1&stid=601677&dstid=0&titel=T%C3%BCrkei%3a%2cVerbund%2cJoint%2cVenture%2cEnerjiSA%2cer%3%B6ffnet%2cerstes%2cWindkraftwerk)

## 27-28 February 2011 – Erdogan’s controversial speech in Dusseldorf

*Der Standard* covers Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s speech in Dusseldorf. Erdogan has asked his fellow countrymen who live in Germany to integrate, the newspaper writes:

“I say yes to integration. You have to integrate, but I am against assimilation. The society you live in must be respected. But nobody must take away your religious freedom. Islamophobia is a crime against humanity, just like anti-Semitism ... In the world, Turkey stands for justice.”<sup>31</sup>

On 28 February *Der Standard* covers reactions to Tayyip Erdogan's speech. “With his speech in front of 10.000 German-Turkish citizens the Turkish prime minister again has provoked strong reactions,” it writes. The secretary general of the German CSU, Alexander Dobrindt, demands that the Turkish ambassador be summoned by the German Foreign Office. “It is unprecedented that a foreign head of state instigates citizens who live abroad,” *Der Standard* has him saying. The newspaper quotes a reply by the German minister of foreign affairs, Guido Westerwelle, who argues that “children who grow up in Germany first have to learn German.” *Der Standard* also refers to a situation in 2007 when Erdogan warned a Turkish-German audience in Koln against assimilation. “Nobody can take our culture away,” Erdogan said on that occasion. “Our children must learn German, but first of all they should learn to speak Turkish.”

The Austrian Catholic wire service *Kathpress* covers other reactions to Erdogan’s controversial speech. Johannes Singhammer, the Vice-president of the German CSU, demands a stop to accession negotiations with Turkey. “Before further chapters can be opened, the current state of religious freedom and its progress in Turkey must be thoroughly examined.”

“Singhammer referred to the 2010 progress report on Turkey, which was negative about the state of religious freedom in Turkey. According to the report, Muslim religious education is still mandatory in schools. Furthermore, since 1971 the Orthodox Church in Turkey has not been permitted to educate its priests. A country with a tradition of almost 2000 years of Christianity is about to become a region without Christians, and the Turkish government tolerates this development. This is a development we cannot and will not accept.”

The conservative daily *Die Presse* covers Erdogan's controversial speech in Dusseldorf and includes a comment piece by staff writer Wolfgang Bohm:

“Language is a tool, language is culture. However, first of all language is a means of communication. It is the condition for co-existence in a society. Erdogan's demand that children of Turkish heritage learn Turkish first and German later ignores the situation at many schools in Germany and Austria, where the language barrier stands in the way of equal opportunities for Turkish immigrants. Erdogan acts against cultural assimilation, thereby pleasing many Turkish-German families.

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<sup>31</sup> *Der Standard*, “Erdogan ruft Landsleute zur Integration auf”, 27 February 2011  
<http://derstandard.at/1297819085867/Rede-in-Duesseldorf-Erdogan-ruft-Landsleute-zur-Integration-auf>  
<http://derstandard.at/1297819163895/CSU-Erdogan-wiegelt-Tuerken-in-Deutschland-auf>

Without denying the importance of culture, it must be legitimate to ask: How weak is the identity of a nation if it ignores the need for essential communication?<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Die Presse*, “Deutsch zuerst: Westerwelle widerspricht Erdogan”, 28 February 2011, [http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/637973/Deutsch-zuerst\\_Westerwelle-widerspricht-Erdogan](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/637973/Deutsch-zuerst_Westerwelle-widerspricht-Erdogan)

## March

### 4 March 2011 – Austrian investors love Turkey

The Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) reports on the increasing interest of Austrian investors and businessmen in Turkey, quoting the “Foreign direct investment 2010 year-end evaluation report”, a paper published by the International Investors Association of Turkey (YASED). According to the report, Austrian investors spent a total of USD 4.5 billion in Turkey from 2002 to 2010, more than they spent in Germany.

### 11 March 2011 – Turkey, two different realities

“Turkey - two different realities” is the title of an analysis piece by famous political columnist Hans Rauscher in *Der Standard*. “Turkey is not ready for Europe, but it is on its way,” writes Rauscher, referring to a critical report adopted earlier in the week by the European Parliament.

“Turkey does not protect religious minorities sufficiently, women are still discriminated against, and the number of honour killings and forced marriages is on the rise. The government erodes press freedom by prosecuting journalists who investigate human rights abuses. The judicial system is stagnant. Conclusion: Turkey is not a real pluralist democracy.”<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, Rauscher states, “Turkey has moved away from the old, extremely reactionary and authoritarian society.” He quotes the Istanbul-based think tank ESI and Turkish-Kurdish lawyer and activist Orhan Kemal Cengiz, who point out that “serious improvements” have been made in the area of human rights. The progress, Rauscher concludes, may be slow, but it is real. “No longer are people systematically tortured, threats and assaults against human rights activists have decreased.” The main reason for these developments, Rauscher says, “is that Turkey is willing to pursue the track to European Union membership.”

### 15 March 2011 – Interviews with OSCE-candidate Ersin Ercin

The conservative daily *Die Presse* publishes an interview with Ersin Ercin, Turkey's candidate for OSCE secretary general. The elections receive a lot of coverage as the post is also contested by Ursula Plassnik, the former Austrian Minister for international relations (OVP). In the interview Ercin explains that Turkey “is eager to promote a culture of peace and to play a role in the European security structure.”

“I was the first candidate for the OSCE-secretary general – that was nine months ago. Ms Plassnik entered the stage at the very last moment. She is very well known in Turkey as somebody who has blocked Turkey's EU-integration. Now she is trying to block a Turkish candidate in another international organisation. ...

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<sup>33</sup> *Der Standard*, “Türkei: zwei Wahrheiten”, 11 March 2011, <http://derstandard.at/1297820190428/Tuerkei-zwei-Wahrheiten>

At this point there is one Turkish candidate running against three candidates from EU member states. ... After four OSCE leaders from EU states, it seems that there should be another Secretary General from an EU state. Many OSCE members east of Vienna feel alienated. They have the impression that some EU states intend to use the OSCE as a branch of the European Union.”

Referring to Turkey’s EU accession, he points out that “Turkey is frustrated because we have been waiting since 1965.”

The popular daily newspaper *Kurier* runs another interview with Ersin Ercin. Asked about tensions between Vienna and Ankara because of problems with the integration of Turkish immigrants, Ercin says that “Our citizens should be well integrated, but it is not legitimate to ask them to assimilate. And they must not be discriminated.”

Ersin responds to questions restrictions on the freedom of the press in Turkey with the following:

“As far as human rights are concerned, there is no such thing as a flawless state. There are shortcomings in the USA, as well as in Turkey, Austria and France. In general, the West should temper its criticism in matters of human rights towards the East. Indoctrination will lead to alienation.”<sup>34</sup>

### **15 March 2011 – Austrian Turkish players bolster the Austrian soccer team**

Austria's upcoming game against Turkey in the qualification round of the 2012 European Championship receives wide coverage. The website of the Austrian national broadcaster ORF runs a story on Austrian Turkish players:

“Another player [on the Austrian team] currently playing in the German football league is [Umit] Korkmaz. [Coach] Didi Constantini called up Korkmaz and Ekrem Dag [to the national team] not because of their Turkish heritage but because they have lately been in good form. Korkmaz [who plays for Bochum] performed brilliantly against Aachen, scoring one goal and assisting another one. Dag did well for Besiktas Istanbul in his debut after his injury.”

### **15 March 2011 – Start of a debate: Turkish as a school subject**

The Austrian edition of the Turkish daily newspaper *Zaman* publishes a lengthy piece about Turkish language education in Austria, initiating a major debate:

“Language education has been among the most important issues that the Austrian public has dealt with. The fact that students with an immigration background tend to be underrepresented in higher education has been widely criticised in the public debate. In the last two issues of our publication, we ran interviews with Austrian science minister Beatrix Karl and education minister Claudia Schmidt talking about problems and solutions. Both ministers gave the impression of working as a

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<sup>34</sup> *Die Presse*, “Ersin Erçin: Madame Plassnik blockiert die Türkei“, 13 March 2011, [http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/642106/Ersin-Erin\\_Madame-Plassnik-blockiert-die-Tuerkei](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/642106/Ersin-Erin_Madame-Plassnik-blockiert-die-Tuerkei)

team, pursuing similar projects. Karl and Schmidt both criticised that Turkish students in Austria, despite graduating from Austrian universities, have trouble finding jobs in Austria. It seems that the key problem is a lack of political courage since there is a consensus in terms of the analysis of the problem.”<sup>35</sup>

In a survey, the newspaper asked Turkish and Austrian representatives and teachers about the quality of Turkish language education in Austrian schools and attitudes toward Turkish as a living foreign language. One of their most prevalent concerns turns out to be that Turkish cannot be a subject in the final secondary-school examinations (“Matura”).

“It is the wish of the Turkish community that students have the option to select Turkish as a foreign language. If Turkish was accepted as a high school subject (“Maturafach”) it would gain the acceptance it deserves. As is well known, immigrant students at Austrian high schools in general study four languages: German, English, French or Latin. Students whose mother language is Serbian, Polish or Russian can pick one of these languages instead of – for example – French. Up to now, Turkish students have lacked this possibility.”<sup>36</sup>

### **16 March 2011 – “Ankara wants to take revenge”**

EU parliamentarian Andreas Molzer of the right wing, anti-immigration Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) reacts to Ersin Ercin’s candidacy for the position of the OSCE-secretary general with the following.

“Ankara’s ambitions are apparent. First of all, Ankara wants to take revenge because the broad majority of Austrians reject Turkey's EU accession. The Turkish behaviour gives us – once more – a frightening sense of what Europe can expect if Turkey eventually becomes an EU member state.”<sup>37</sup>

Molzer states that Turkey is not in a position to secure peace and to uphold human rights at the OSCE because of its own human rights situation. “Turkey has attacked Kurds in Iraq with airplanes, it discriminates religious and ethnic minorities systematically, it ignores fundamental human rights such as the freedom of expression, and it allows that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century women are treated as 2<sup>nd</sup> class humans without rights,” Molzer says. Electing Ersin Ercin as OSCE secretary general, he concludes, would be a “mockery of European values.” “The OSCE, whose right to exist can be disputed, would lose all its credibility,” Molzer says.

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<sup>35</sup> *Zaman*, “Türkische Community fordert: „Türkisch für Lehramt“, 15 March 2011, <http://www.zamanavusturya.at/details.php?title=Tuerkische+Community+fordert:+-Tuerkisch+fuer+Lehramt%93&haberid=2432>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Austrian Press Agency (APA)*, “Molzer: Türkei will in Rachefeldzug Plassnik als OSZE-Generalsekretärin verhindern”, 16 March 2011 [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20110316\\_OTS0197/moelzer-tuerkei-will-in-rachefeldzug-plassnik-als-osze-generalsekretaerin-verhindern](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110316_OTS0197/moelzer-tuerkei-will-in-rachefeldzug-plassnik-als-osze-generalsekretaerin-verhindern)

## 18 March 2011 – Referendum for Austria’s EU exit

The Austrian blogger Helmut Schramm launched an online petition for a “EU-Austritts-Volksbegehren”, a referendum on leaving the European Union. “Austria must leave the EU as soon as possible,” the site states. “The EU has the power of a federal state but not the democratic legitimation.” In one paragraph the blog refers to Turkey's EU accession:

“The question of EU enlargement - for example of Turkey's membership - will no longer be answered by Austrians. They will not be asked about their opinion as they were when the other Central- and Eastern European States became members. They will not be asked who is allowed to immigrate to their country and who is allowed to live here because in matters of asylum, too, they are deprived of the power to decide.”<sup>38</sup>

## 19 March 2011 – Turkey – Organise the Chaos

Under the title “Working abroad: Turkey - Organise the Chaos” the conservative daily newspaper *Die Presse* publishes an article on working conditions for Austrian expats and companies in Istanbul. The newspaper quotes Cem Yeker, a businessman with SAP Turkey who grew up in Istanbul and studied business in Vienna. “Coming back to Istanbul after three weeks of vacation, everything looks different. The old shop at the corner is gone; instead there is another one. Everything is changing very fast,” Yeker is quoted as saying.

“A business is founded without papers or contracts. Istanbul is like a small America, very modern, very good infrastructure, a melting pot between the East and the West. You must forget what you knew about ‘Tourist Turkey’.”<sup>39</sup>

## 23 March 2011 – Turkey balancing on a tightrope

Martyna Czarnowska analyses the implications of Turkey's engagement in Libya for the daily *Wiener Zeitung*:

“Once again Turkey is walking a tightrope. On the one hand the only Muslim NATO member cannot easily promote an attack against a Muslim state. On the other hand Turkey does not want to endanger its role of a mediator between East and West. Some Western politicians are already annoyed about Turkey's hesitation, underscoring that Turkey should be closer to its Western allies. After all - they say - Turkey wants to be part of the European Union. ... Especially France and Turkey had an on-going dispute that involved more than just the actions against Libya. Turkish ambitions to join the EU have been met with rejection in Paris, which has led to harsh reactions in Ankara. Most Turks are well aware of France's negative attitude. Erdogan knows that he can score politically in his country by standing up to France - be it in the accession debate or in the discussion

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<sup>38</sup> <http://eu-austritt.blogspot.com/2011/03/osterreich-muss-die-untergehende-eu.html>

<sup>39</sup> *Die Presse*, “Arbeiten im Ausland: Türkei - Chaos mit System”, 19 March 2011, [http://diepresse.com/home/karriere/karrierelounge/expertengespraech/642527/Arbeiten-im-Ausland\\_Tuerkei-Chaos-mit-System](http://diepresse.com/home/karriere/karrierelounge/expertengespraech/642527/Arbeiten-im-Ausland_Tuerkei-Chaos-mit-System)

about actions against Libya. Especially since parliamentary elections will be held in Turkey in June. For Nicolas Sarkozy the situation is quite similar, since he wants to get re-elected in 2012.”<sup>40</sup>

## 24 March 2011 – Travelling Cyprus

Michael Spindelegger (OVP), Austria’s minister for foreign affairs and – after Josef Proll’s resignation in mid April – the country’s new vice-chancellor, visits Cyprus and Kosovo. The conservative daily *Die Presse* writes: “In Cyprus, Spindelegger wants to understand the Cypriots’ attitude towards Turkey’s EU accession.”<sup>41</sup>

## 25 March 2011 – Freedom of Expression or Islamophobia

Columnist Christian Ortner writes a commentary for *Die Presse*, reflecting on freedom of expression and Islamophobia in Europe. Ortner mentions French columnist Eric Zemmour (*Le Figaro*), “who was convicted by a French court for ‘incitement to racism’ after he said in a TV debate that the majority of drug dealers were ‘blacks or Arabs’” and Danish journalist Lars Hedegaard, “who faced charges because he had privately announced that women in Islam had not other value than to be ‘birth machines’.” (Gebarmaschinen). In Austria, Ortner writes, “Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolf was convicted for talking about the sexual habits of Prophet Mohammed.”<sup>42</sup>

“As more and more similar cases become public, more and more people get the impression that freedom of expression in Europe in the 21st century is limited, especially when Islam and Muslim immigration are concerned. On the one hand, European states restrict the freedom of expression with stricter laws, mostly in the context of protecting minorities against discrimination. On the other hand, everyone in public debate who criticises Muslims for disregarding Western values will find himself hit with [accusations] of Islamophobia.”<sup>43</sup>

“It does not serve open discourse if criticism against Islam is dismissed with medical terms (‘phobia’) or sanctioned as a crime,” Ortner concludes. “During Soviet communism, political dissidents were called insane or criminal. The liberal European constitutional state must not use similar methods to prosecute anybody, even if the opinions expressed seem to be absurd.”

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<sup>40</sup>*Wiener Zeitung*, “Nicht nur für die Türkei spielt beim Libyen-Einsatz Innenpolitik eine Rolle”, 22 March 2011, <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/default.aspx?tabID=4152&alias=wzo&cob=551318>

<sup>41</sup>*Die Presse*, Außenminister Spindelegger besucht Kosovo und Zypern, 24. Februar 2011, <http://diepresse.com/home/politik/ausenpolitik/644256/Aussenminister-Spindelegger-besucht-Kosovo-und-Zypern?from=rss>

<sup>42</sup>Christian Ortner, “In Europa herrscht Meinungsfreiheit, so lange die Meinung passt”, 25 March 2011, <http://www.ortneronline.at/?p=7279>

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

### **25 March 2011 – New handbook for Austrian investors in Turkey**

The Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) publishes a new handbook for investors in Austria in Turkish and English. “To succeed with a new business thorough preparation is essential,” Elisabeth Zehetner, the director of the Business Start-Up Service (Grunderservice Österreich) says. “Entrepreneurship must not falter due to language barriers. With the [guide], we want to attract investors in Austria. It is a fact that especially immigrants show entrepreneurial spirit, which has to be supported.”

The “Guide for Business Start-Ups” can be downloaded at <http://www.gruenderservice.at/publikationen>.

### **30 March 2011 – Turkish classes at Austrian employment centres**

The *Wiener Zeitung* publishes a story on language classes for employees of Austrian employment centres (Arbeitsmarktservice AMS). “At this point we provide classes in English, Turkish and sign language,” says Sebastian Paulick, an employee at the AMS Vienna. The newspaper profiles an AMS-employee who studied Turkish to better communicate with clients who don’t speak good German. By studying Turkish, another employee says, “[my] reservations towards Turks have decreased.”<sup>44</sup>

### **31 March 2011 – Albert Rohan on “messed up” relations with Turkey**

The Austrian public broadcasting company ORF runs a radio interview with Albert Rohan, ex-secretary general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Referring to the political uprisings in the Middle East, Rohan criticises the “structural weakness” of the EU and the lack of a *modus operandi* “to guarantee a consistent foreign policy mindset of all the EU members.” “Relations with Turkey, which are becoming more important, have been messed up,” Rohan says. “Despite having adopted a negative attitude towards Turkey’s EU accession, Austria has never blocked negotiations with Ankara like France or Cyprus.”

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<sup>44</sup>*Wiener Zeitung*, “Beim AMS wird Türkisch gelernt”, 30 March 2011, [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen\\_channel/wzintegration/gesellschaft/224452\\_Beim-AMS-wird-Tuerkisch-gelernt.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/wzintegration/gesellschaft/224452_Beim-AMS-wird-Tuerkisch-gelernt.html)

## April

### 1 April 2011 – Economic opportunities in Turkey

While Austrian public opinion is mainly opposed to Turkey's EU accession Austrian economists strongly emphasise the investment opportunities in Turkey for Austrian companies. An article in the *Bauzeitung*, a specialised magazine for the construction industry with a circulation of 10.000, reports on the issue.

“Political issues aside,” the magazine states, “Turkey's economic data as an emerging market is something that the small Austrian market can envy. In 2010 the Turkish market, with its 75 million citizens, delivered economic growth of 8 per cent. This year, experts predict 5 per cent growth and a GDP of 638 billion EUR.”

The magazine quotes Anton Reithner, director of the Ardex Osterreich construction company, who intends to open a factory in Tuzla, close to Istanbul. “Turkey is an interesting market for us. In the last few years, the political situation has become stable”, he says.

“Aside from opportunities to construct new buildings, there is a market for reconstruction (especially in terms of hotels). The existence of high quality raw materials and Turkey's strategic location [are assets]. Furthermore, the country serves as a hub for establishing business relations with the Caucasus, the Caspian Region, the Middle East and Northern Africa.”

The story also refers to changes in society:

“There is a rapid alignment with the West due to preparations for EU accession. The new commercial law has attracted a lot of attention because of its requirements in terms of transparency. In the future, companies will have to publish key data on the web. The essential reason for the changes is the fundamental change of values in Turkish society. The patriarchal agricultural society is transforming into an industrial society with Western standards.”<sup>45</sup>

### 4 April 2011 – Turkish ambassador to be replaced

*Die Presse* reports on rumours that the Turkish ambassador in Vienna, Kadri Ecvet Tezcan, is about to be replaced. In an interview with *Die Presse* in the fall of 2010 Tezcan had criticised Austria's integration policies, provoking furious reactions by Austrian officials. According to a story in the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*, which is quoted in *Die Presse*, Austria has put diplomatic pressure on Turkey to withdraw Tezcan. Austrian President Heinz Fischer had threatened to cancel a visit to Turkey if the ambassador was not recalled. “The president's office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied the report,” *Die Presse* writes. “We never made such a link,” the newspaper quotes unnamed officials. It was pointed out that Fischer had not intended to

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<sup>45</sup> *Die Bauzeitung*, “Turkish for Investors”, 1 April 2011, <http://www.diebauzeitung.at/ireds-111777.html>

visit Turkey in May. However, Turkish president Abdullah Gul is scheduled to visit Austria for a couple of days at the beginning of May.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4 April 2011 – Learning Turkish in school

Reporting on plans by the Austrian government to qualify Turkish as a foreign language in Austrian schools and turning it into a high school subject (alongside English, French, Latin, Serbian, Polish and Russian), *Die Presse* stirs another emotional debate. While most commentators and members of the Green Party support the plan, initiated by Claudia Schmied (SPO), the minister for education, the right wing parties vigorously oppose it. After the OVP rejects Schmied's idea, the SPO officially backs down, again ignoring one of the main concerns of the Turkish community in Austria.

In its article *Die Presse* points out:

“Politically, this is a delicate matter. Despite the fact that the University of Graz is planning to educate high school Turkish teachers (it would be the first Austrian university to do so), none of the coalition parties dared to back it publicly. The new course should be launched by the winter semester 2012/13.”<sup>47</sup>

Theres Hinterleitner, from the University of Graz, says that a written permit has been issued by the Minister for Education. “But we are still waiting for the official green light from Vienna,” Hinterleitner continues.

“Turkish education in high schools should be a tool for integration. Second or third generation immigrants can speak Turkish but they cannot read or write. This lack of knowledge in their mother tongue is one reason why their school dropout rates are higher.”<sup>48</sup>

In addition, *Die Presse* runs a story on a bilingual school in Hamburg where students from the age of six are taught German and English. “The achievements of students in bilingual classes are better than in other classes at the same school,” the newspaper reports. “Reading tests show that [the students] perform significantly better than those in classes with a similar social structure but without bilingual education. However, each year it was difficult to convince German parents that this model made sense,” a teacher tells the paper.<sup>49</sup>

The Austrian public broadcasting company ORF picks up the issue. It quotes Claudia Schmied, the Minister for Education, who states that if her reforms are to be implemented “they have to be harmonised and politically debated with the coalition

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<sup>46</sup>*Die Presse*, “Neue Gerüchte um Abberufung von Botschafter Tezcan”, 4 April 2011  
[http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/647469/Neue-Geruechte-um-Abberufung-von-Botschafter-Tezcan?\\_vl\\_backlink=/home/politik/innenpolitik/index.do](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/647469/Neue-Geruechte-um-Abberufung-von-Botschafter-Tezcan?_vl_backlink=/home/politik/innenpolitik/index.do)

<sup>47</sup>*Die Presse*, “Regierung will Türkisch als Maturafach”, 3 April 2011,  
<http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/hohereschulen/647267/Regierung-will-Tuerkisch-als-Maturafach>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> *Die Presse*, “Man spricht (auch) Türkisch”, 3 April 2011  
<http://lehrer.diepresse.com/home/pflichtschulen/647265/Man-spricht-auch-Tuerkisch>

partner, the OVP.” The reforms, she says, could be in place “maybe in a couple of years.”<sup>50</sup>

Harald Walser, education spokesperson for the Green Party, supports the initial plan. “We must not leave Turkish language education to Islamist fundamentalists or nationalist organisations,” he argues. The right wing anti-immigration party FPO rejects the plans. “To speak about this in the context of integration measures is a mockery,” says Walter Rosenkranz, the FPO’s education spokesperson. “This plan will promote parallel societies (Parallelgesellschaften).”

“Children with an immigration background must first learn the German language before they go to school,” says Ursula Haubner, education spokesperson for the right wing, anti-immigration BZO party (an offspring of the FPO founded by Jorg Haider in 2005).<sup>51</sup>

Under the title “Turkish as a second foreign language”, *Der Standard* picks up the *Die Presse* story.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the newspaper’s website launches a [survey to illustrate the ongoing public debate](#).

In a press release, Ursula Haubner criticises minister Schmied’s plans:

“One year ago Vienna mayor Michael Haupl (SPO) thought about Turkish schools for the city and all parties rejected his efforts. Now the minister of education is trying to implement Turkish as a second foreign language. In their attempts to compete for new voters the Social Democrats will try everything.”<sup>53</sup>

The popular daily tabloid *Osterreich* also covers Schmied’s plans and points out that according to the proposed reforms Turkish would be taught as a second foreign language but would not become a language of instruction. “These plans do not mean that students of Turkish origin would be able to take all the final high school examinations (Matura) in Turkish.”<sup>54</sup>

## 5 April 2011 – The Turkish language debate goes on

Heinz Christian Strache, the leader of the right wing anti-immigration Freedom Party (FPO), criticises Claudia Schmied’s plans in a press release: “This would promote parallel and counter societies“, Strache says, accusing Schmied of being “absurd and out of touch.” He then warns:

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<sup>50</sup> *Österreichischer Rundfunk*, “Presse: Türkisch als Maturafach”, 04 April 2011, <http://oe1.orf.at/artikel/273754>

<sup>51</sup> *Österreichischer Rundfunk*, “Debatte über Türkisch als Maturafach”, 04 April 2011, <http://news.orf.at/stories/2051298/>

<sup>52</sup> *Der Standard*, “Maturafach Türkisch als zweite Fremdsprache”, 04 April 2011 <http://derstandard.at/1301873776306/Maturafach-Tuerkisch-als-zweite-Fremdsprache--->

<sup>53</sup> *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*, Haubner: “Ganz klar gegen Türkisch als 2. lebende Fremdsprache” <http://bzooe.at/node/4597>

<sup>54</sup> *Österreich*, “Kommt Türkisch als Matura-Fach?”, 4 April 2011 <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Kommt-Tuerkisch-als-Matura-Fach/21966509>

“Teaching Turkish as a second foreign language could be the first step to making it a language of instruction. This is in line with the claims of Turkish ambassador Tezcan, who explained in November that he wanted to import Turkish teachers to Austria.”<sup>55</sup>

“As far as the economic dimension is concerned,” Strache says, “other languages are more relevant for Austria. The additional costs of teaching Turkish should not be underestimated since teachers would have to be educated and schoolbooks printed.”

In a press release Efgani Donmez, a Green Party member of the Federal Assembly (Bundesrat), takes the opposite line. “Mastering or not mastering a language has implications for all aspects of life,” he says. According to Donmez, Austria should provide its citizens the opportunity to study Turkish as a foreign language scores that Austria does not have enough properly trained teachers at this point.

“We need qualified teachers and adequate university courses to educate teachers. That way we can ensure that we do not have to ‘import’ Turkish teachers who could damage our attempts at integration. At least if we take the results of Mouhanad Khorchide’s study on Islam<sup>56</sup> seriously.”

“...We must prevent conservatives or fundamentalists from working as pedagogues in Austria. It is not a secret that Austrian politicians, especially the Social Democrats, have promoted conservative Muslim groups. ... [Unless Austrian schools ensure Turkish language education themselves] groups like Milli Gorus, Avrupa Turk-Islam Birliigi or the Gulen movement will establish their ‘education institutes’ and invite their own teachers.”

The *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, the most popular regional newspaper in Austria’s Western state of Vorarlberg covers the Turkish language debate. Siegmund Stemer, an education official (Schullandesrat) with the conservative Peoples Party (OVP) criticises minister Schmied’s plans as “half baked”. “Vorarlberg’s schools prioritise learning German for migrants,” Stemer says.<sup>57</sup> His arguments are also available on video: <http://video.vol.at/aktuell/bregenz-diskussion-um-turkisch-als-zweite-fremdsprache>

The popular daily newspaper *Kurier* also covers the issue. “For Austrian citizens and everyone attending Austrian schools, learning German is the highest priority,” Maria Fekter, Austria’s Minister of Interior (OVP), tells the paper. According to *Kurier*, instead of teaching Turkish in public schools Fekter would rather invest in German language education for children with migration background.

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<sup>55</sup>FPÖ, “Strache: Maturafach Türkisch unterläuft sämtliche Integrationsbemühungen”, 05 April 2011, <http://www.fpoe.at/news/detail/news/strache-maturafach-tuerkisch/?cHash=b0f1d670a736f1608718245697726f31>

<sup>56</sup> In January 2009, the left-liberal Austrian alternative weekly *Falter* reports on Mouhanad Khorchide’s study on Islam teachers in Austria that revealed the most of them had an orthodox or even radical background. *Falter*, “Die Islamlehrer”, 28 January 2009, <http://www.falter.at/web/print/detail.php?id=842>. Link to Mouhanad\_Khorchide’s book: <https://portal.d-nb.de/opac.htm?method=showFullRecord&currentResultId=Woe%253D13702939X%2526any&currentPosition=0>

<sup>57</sup> *Österreichischer Rundfunk*, “Türkisch zur Matura: ÖVP und FPÖ skeptisch“, 05 April 2011, <http://vorarlberg.orf.at/stories/508449/>

The newspaper also quotes Vienna's mayor Michael Haupl (SPO): "I think that as many people as possible should learn as many languages as possible. This will serve the economy, too."<sup>58</sup>

## 6 April 2011 – The Turkish language debate goes on (2)

*Der Standard* runs an interview with Rudolf de Cillia, a linguist, on its webpage. De Cillia explains that teaching another foreign language at school would "not harm anybody."<sup>59</sup>

In the popular weekly *News*, Walter Pohl, a fairly well known columnist, claims that the debate on Turkish as a foreign language is "not relevant at all" as it only helps Minister Schmied's political enemies score points with xenophobic propaganda.

"The Ministry of Education's plans to offer Turkish as a second foreign language have become a boon for patriotic or nationalistic parties like the Peoples Party (OVP), the Freedom Party (FPÖ), or the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ). Looking closer at the matter, it turns out that the debate is [largely irrelevant]. A little more than 20.000 students of Turkish origin participate in higher education (age 14-18). The majority of students of Turkish descent only attend school until the age of 14. This is where the problem lies. The teacher and author Niki Glattauer points out that the majority of Turkish students speak neither good German nor perfect Turkish."<sup>60</sup>

According to Pohl, the true problem lies with improving overall language education, no matter if students speak Turkish, English or Spanish. "It would be fair enough if the students could at least express themselves in a global cultural language (Weltkultursprache), German."

In a press release, Johann Gudenus, spokesperson for the FPÖ in the Austrian parliament, criticises the provision of language courses for employees of the Austrian employment centres (AMS). "The attitude that if the Turks are not willing to learn German we have to learn Turkish is wrong," Gudenus says.

"It is wrong to take away every incentive for Turks to learn the language in the country they live in. This is another way to promote parallel societies. This is why these courses must be cancelled."<sup>61</sup>

The business daily *Wirtschaftsblatt* runs a story on German classes in Turkish schools. "Given the massive public debate on plans to add Turkish as a second foreign language in Austrian high schools, we started to look at German language education in schools in Turkey," the newspaper writes. "The conclusion: language education in [Turkey], with

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<sup>58</sup> *Kurier*, "Fekter: Lieber Geld für Deutschkurse", 05 April 2011  
<http://kurier.at/nachrichten/2087626.php>

<sup>59</sup> *Der Standard*, "Turkish as a school subject will not hurt anybody", 05 April 2011  
<http://derstandard.at/1301873973820/RAU-TV-Tuerkisch-als-Fremdsprache-wuerde-keinem-weh-tun>

<sup>60</sup> *News*, "Was wird an den Schulen besser durch Türkisch-Unterricht? Nichts!", 06 April 2011  
<http://www.news.at/articles/1114/510/293375/was-schulen-tuerkisch-unterricht-nichts>

<sup>61</sup> *Austrian Press Agency (APA)*, FP-Gudenus: Türkisch-Kurse für AMS-Mitarbeiter sofort stoppen, 06 April 2011, [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20110406\\_OTS0166/fp-gudenus-tuerkisch-kurse-fuer-ams-mitarbeiter-sofort-stoppen](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110406_OTS0166/fp-gudenus-tuerkisch-kurse-fuer-ams-mitarbeiter-sofort-stoppen)

its population of 81 million, is better than people in Austria would think ... Turks learn English in their first eight years of school. In higher education, German or French is offered as a second foreign language." According to an expert at the Turkish embassy in Vienna, "German can also be selected as a first foreign language."<sup>62</sup>

### **6 April 2011 – Criticising the lack of press freedom in Turkey**

Referring to statistics published by the OSCE, Evelyn Regner, an Austrian MEP for the Social Democrats (SP) criticises the restrictions on freedom of expression in Turkey in a press release. "Since the AKP came into power the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press have been strongly restricted," Regner writes. "As far as censorship is concerned, Turkey is one of the 50 worst countries." Regner quotes the OSCE report, which found that 57 Turkish journalists are currently in prison and that an estimated 700 to 1,000 trials against journalists are ongoing. MEPs have filed a request with the EU Council and the European Commission in December, asking how the issue of press freedom is being treated within the scope of the accession talks with Turkey. The Council has answered the request a few days ago, reassuring MEPs that the freedom of expression is an important criterion for the outcome of the negotiations. Regner writes:

"In the upcoming months we will carefully observe if the Council stands by its words. We expect a country that intends to become a EU member to respect the values of a constitutional state. Under current conditions, Turkey's EU accession is unthinkable. Turkey needs fundamental reforms and has to embrace human rights to move closer to the European Union."<sup>63</sup>

### **7 -10 April 2011 – The low prestige of a language**

*Die Presse* runs another story about the debate on Turkish language education in Austrian high schools, trying to come up with an explanation for the outcry over Turkish language classes (and the lack thereof when it comes to English, French, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and Polish courses). *Die Presse* quotes linguist Rudolf de Cillia from the university of Vienna, who points out that one reason for the outrage could be the "low prestige of the language."

"From a linguist's perspective point there is not a single rational argument to reject Turkish. There are only few languages spoken by so many people – between 80 and 90 million. Furthermore, learning the language has economic benefits. For those who master Turkish a whole new area of economic opportunities opens up. The outrage over the plans to offer Turkish as a second foreign language ... is a consequence of the low prestige of the language and of people of Turkish decent. Austrians try harder to separate themselves from Turks than from any other

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<sup>62</sup> *Wirtschaftsblatt*, "Deutsch darf in der Türkei erste Fremdsprache sein", 07 April 2011, <http://www.wirtschaftsblatt.at/archiv/466687/index.do>

<sup>63</sup> *Austrian Press Agency (APA)*, Regner zu Medienfreiheit in der Türkei: Dramatische Situation für Journalistinnen und Journalisten, 06 April 2011, [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20110406\\_OTS0056/regner-zu-medienfreiheit-in-der-tuerkei-dramatische-situation-fuer-journalistinnen-und-journalisten](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110406_OTS0056/regner-zu-medienfreiheit-in-der-tuerkei-dramatische-situation-fuer-journalistinnen-und-journalisten)

segment of the population. At the same time Turks are criticised for building ghettos and parallel societies.”<sup>64</sup>

“While Austrians discuss Turkish as a foreign language,” the article concludes, “... in Turkey German can be selected as a first foreign language.”

*Die Presse* also runs a story on the Evening High School at Henriettenplatz (Abendgymnasium Henriettenplatz) in Vienna, where 8 per cent of students have selected Turkish as a second foreign language.<sup>65</sup>

On 10 February *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, Tirol’s most popular regional daily newspaper, features a report on Turkish language education. “The demand for Turkish courses in Tirol is significant. For years, beginner level classes at adult evening programs are highly attended and courses at the language faculty of the University of Innsbruck are always fully booked.”<sup>66</sup>

The *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, Vorarlberg's most read daily newspaper, covers Claudia Schmied's tour across Austria. The minister for education (SPO) faced negative reactions to her plans to include Turkish as a second foreign language, the newspaper writes. “Eventually I understood that this is not about the plan,” Schmied is quoted as saying. “I received numerous mails that were merely xenophobic. We really have to think about this, in a socio-political sense.”<sup>67</sup>

## 11 April 2011 – Alcohol in Turkey

DaStandard blogger Yilmaz Gulum writes a piece on alcohol consumption in Turkey. For some, new laws against alcohol consumption are an indicator of Turkey’s Islamization. When it comes to alcohol, Gulum writes, opinions in Turkey tend to be polarised:

“While some see consumption laws as an important measure to protect the youth, others identify the increasing influence of Islam. One thing can be said for certain: the consumption of alcohol has a different significance than in Austria. The price for beer is one indicator. While a can of beer at a supermarket in Istanbul costs 1.5 euro, the equivalent of 20 Litres of drinking water, in Austria beer is sometimes is cheaper than water. ... In terms of austerity, laws can be compared to those in Sweden or in the US. It is illegal to buy alcohol under the age of 18, and it is illegal for anyone under the age of 24 to purchase it at concerts and public events.

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<sup>64</sup> *Die Presse*, “Übertriebener Wirbel um Türkisch als Maturafach”, 07 April 2011  
[http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/hoehereschulen/648196/Uebertriebener-Wirbel-um-Tuerkisch-als-Maturafach?\\_vl\\_backlink=/home/bildung/index.do](http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/hoehereschulen/648196/Uebertriebener-Wirbel-um-Tuerkisch-als-Maturafach?_vl_backlink=/home/bildung/index.do)

<sup>65</sup> *Die Presse*, “Türkisch-Matura: An Wiener AHS seit Jahren möglich”, 07 April 2011  
[http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/hoehereschulen/648067/TuerkischMatura\\_An-Wiener-AHS-seit-Jahren-moeglich?direct=648196&\\_vl\\_backlink=/home/bildung/schule/hoehereschulen/648196/index.do&selChannel=](http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/hoehereschulen/648067/TuerkischMatura_An-Wiener-AHS-seit-Jahren-moeglich?direct=648196&_vl_backlink=/home/bildung/schule/hoehereschulen/648196/index.do&selChannel=)

<sup>66</sup> *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, “Türkisch in Tirol gefragt, Migranten gesucht”, 10 April  
<http://www.tt.com/csp/cms/sites/tt/Tirol/2542600-2/t%C3%BCrkisch-in-tirol-gefragt-migranten-gesucht.csp>

<sup>67</sup> *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, “Türkisch Matura: "Zum Ausdruck kam Fremdenhass"”, 11 April 2011,  
<http://www.vol.at/tuerkisch-matura-zum-ausdruck-kam-fremdenhass/news-20110411-07171505>

It is illegal to drink alcohol on the street. The debate on Turkey is created only because the Islamic-conservative AKP is the ruling power and because consumption of alcohol is considered a sin in Islam.”<sup>68</sup>

“The Turkish government seems to prevent people from drinking alcohol,” Gulum writes, pointing out that revenues from taxes on alcohol have increased by 1268 per cent in the last ten years. “The AKP and its followers argue that alcohol is unhealthy and that kids should be prevented from drinking - something seen in other democracies, too.” However, critics see this as evidence of the government’s intentions to transform social life according to strict Islamic rules. As Gulum writes:

“The whole debate reminds me of the tobacco debate in Europe. Taxes are constantly raised. The government claims its determination to protect the public. Laws are enacted, fines imposed. There’s only one difference: smoking is not [seen as] a sin.”<sup>69</sup>

### **12 April 2011 – A German-Turkish picture dictionary**

*Der Standard* publishes a review of a German-Turkish pictorial dictionary. The newspaper quotes the book's publisher Birol Kilic, who previously published the monthly Austro-Turkish newspaper *Yeni Vatan Gazetesi*. With this book “Turkish immigrants can improve their German vocabulary,” Kilic says, “and Austrians get a chance to learn basic Turkish words.” According to *Der Standard*, Kilic’s goal is to improve communication between Turks and Austrians. “Kilic experienced in his childhood in Germany how important it was to speak German,” the newspaper writes.<sup>70</sup>

### **12 April 2011 – EU- and Turkey-Bashing by Strache and Molzer**

At a press conference, Heinz Christian Strache, the leader of the FPÖ, criticises “undesirable developments” in the European Union. Strache, speaking alongside FPÖ politician and MEP Andreas Molzer, refers to the EU’s policies on the euro and on refugees from Northern Africa, which “have made it necessary to suspend Schengen.” “These days, EU politics are a disaster,” Strache says. “If this ... continues and if Turkey becomes an EU member one should seriously ask whether it is not better to leave this centralist and citizen-hostile European Union.”

### **12 April 2011 – The hypothetical costs of Turkey’s accession**

*Die Presse* runs a story on the hypothetical costs of Turkey's membership in the European Union. German MEP Markus Pieper, of the Christian Democrats (CDU), asked Gefra, a consultancy in Munster, to provide an answer.

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<sup>68</sup> *Der Standard*, “Türkei und Alkohol”, 11 April 2011, <http://dastandard.at/1301874300423/Servus-vom-Bosporus-Tuerkei-und-Alkohol--eine-Kontroverse>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *Der Standard*, “Deutsch und Türkisch im Doppelpack”, 12 April 2011 <http://dastandard.at/1302515931164/Buchtipp-mit-Gewinnspiel-Deutsch-und-Tuerkisch-im-Doppelpack>

“For the ongoing financial period 2007 to 2013, Turkey would receive funding worth 124.9 billion EUR. Croatia could demand 7.6 billion EUR,” the newspaper writes. “Turkish membership, something that is still written in the stars, would eat up one third of the 346 billion EUR Structural Fund,” *Die Presse* writes. “Looking at these numbers it is obvious that the EU’s budget could not cope with Turkey’s membership,” Pieper says. He points out, however, that the calculations did not factor in the potential contributions by new members.

The European Commission did comment on these calculations. “It is too early to talk about the amount of funding that Turkey would receive. This will be discussed in the final phase of the accession negotiations,” said a spokesperson for Stefan Füle, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement. Data of the European commission shows that Turkey has received 3 billion EUR to worth of pre-accession funds since 2007. This year, the EU has set aside 781.9 million EUR for pre-accession programs in Turkey. 900 million EUR are projected for 2012. According to *Die Presse*:

“The study clearly highlights something that [the Commission] cannot deny: that the system of EU funding for new streets, sewers, employment programmes and other regional infrastructure does not work with a further enlargement of the EU.”<sup>71</sup>

### **19 April 2011 – Turkey not satisfied with negotiations**

The Austrian tabloid *Osterreich* runs a story on the negotiations with Turkey, quoting Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, who complained about the slow pace of the accession talks. “There are no technical problems,” Davutoglu says. “There political problems preventing the opening new chapters.” At the same time, the article goes on to say, Turkey is upset with the EU’s continuing refusal to grant Turkish citizens visa free travel.<sup>72</sup>

### **27 April 2011 – Gul: “Maybe the Turks will say No”**

In an interview with *Der Standard*, Turkish president Abdullah Gul asks Austrian Turks to show loyalty with the Austrian state. The interview comes in the context of Gul’s visit to Austria, the first visit by a Turkish president in 13 years. Gul underscores his intent to intensify economic, political and cultural cooperation between the two countries:

“I would hope that Turks living in Austria integrate into Austrian society. They should contribute their share. They should work as a bridge between [our] two nations.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Die Presse*, “Türkei-Beitritt „sprengt“ EU-Budget”, 12 April, <http://diepresse.com/home/politik/eu/649845/TuerkeiBeitritt-sprengt-EUBudget>

<sup>73</sup> *Der Standard*, Präsident Gül: "Vielleicht sagt das türkische Volk Nein zu EU-Beitritt", 28 April 201, <http://derstandard.at/1303950461160/Praesident-Guel-Vielleicht-sagt-das-tuerkische-Volk-Nein-zu-EU-Beitritt>

<sup>73</sup> *Der Standard*, Präsident Gül: "Vielleicht sagt das türkische Volk Nein zu EU-Beitritt", 28 April 201, <http://derstandard.at/1303950461160/Praesident-Guel-Vielleicht-sagt-das-tuerkische-Volk-Nein-zu-EU-Beitritt>

Asked how to deal with Austrians' sceptical attitude towards Turkey's EU accession, Gul responds:

“Turkey should be better understood in Austria ... We need to tell them that Turkey will not be a burden for Austria. On the contrary: with the accession, the cake will become bigger. Turkey will get its share. But Austria will benefit even more.”

Gul also points out that, down the line, Turkey may become successful and prosperous enough so as to lose interest in EU accession.

“Maybe it will be a highly attractive country. Maybe it will be the case that the Turkish population rejects accession, like the Norwegians.”