



## Football Club "FK Austria Wien" faces up to its past

07 Jun 2016

Last Monday at Café Landtmann the football club Austria Wien presented a scientific research project subsidized by the National Fund that will investigate the history of the club during the Nazi era in Austria (1938–1945).

---



---

In addition the funding received from the National Fund, the project will be co-funded by the Future Fund and the City of Vienna, whose representatives were also present on the podium. Markus Kraetschmer, Chairman of Austria Wien Football Club Inc., emphasized the importance of coming to terms with history. Efforts had already been made to shed light on certain aspects of the Club during the Nazi era – Austria Wien was the first club in Austria to establish its own Museum, for example. Now, during the course of this project, the club's history will be investigated in detail.

Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund, spoke of her own personal connection to the club. She had been a huge fan from a young age and was a close friend of former club secretary and Auschwitz survivor Norbert Lopper, who had passed away in 2015. Lessing stressed that the National Fund had subsidized around 1,600 projects since its inception. Many of these projects were aimed at dealing with the past in such a way that younger generations could learn from it. In view of the Nationalism prevalent in the football fan clubs, this was a particularly important aspect to address.

The Vienna City Councilor for Sport and the Sciences, Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, pointed out that the project had succeeded in exposing the myth of non-political sport. Football was an integral part of social change and was, as such, also subject to political trends.

The team carrying out the project – expected to span a period of 15 months – comprising historians Rudolf Müllner, Matthias Marschik and Bernhard Hachleitner, led by the sports journalist and author Johann Skocek, will address questions such as: "In what way did the "Anschluss" of Austria to the German Reich in 1938 affect the Club, the functionaries, the players and the fans?" and "What room for manoeuvre was available to individual proponents and what were their areas of responsibility?". The team will not only seek to yield new findings but will also take a closer look at some of the more familiar stories, such as that of the "one-in-a-million Austria player" Matthias Sindelar or the brief period during which the club was renamed "Sportklub Ostmark", in an effort to determine their veracity and identify any causalities.

The research project is also to be understood as an attempt to gain a better understanding of the modern proclivity for racism and offensive language in the fan sector in order to be able to suppress it. The outcome of the research shall then be collated and published in a book.

### Links

- Press release on the project from the Austria Wien Football Club
- Video of the press conference on 6 June 2016
- Life story of Norbert Lopper