

Dear Mag.^a Heinisch-Hosek, Minister for Education and Women!

Honorable Chief Rabbi Eisenberg!

Honorable Director General of the Austrian National Library Dr. Rachinger!

Ladies and gentlemen!

Almost exactly one year ago, on October 23, 2013, *“The Vienna Project”* was opened at the Odeon. In the period of one year, a lot has happened in the field of remembrance in Vienna. With her project, Dr. Karen Frostig has set many wheels in motion.

I am very pleased to be able to extend a very warm welcome to you all at this closing celebration.

I would also like to extend a very special welcome to the survivors in attendance here this evening, as well as their families and descendants of victims of the Nazis.

“We together cannot forget as we remember.”

This was the message of Dr. Karen Frostig’s project. This closing ceremony is also about remembering: **about individuals, about families and history.**

As a part of this celebration some of you will be reading from letters, postcards and written recollections of your relatives. It is very moving that you are willing to share a sensitive part of your family life with us.

It is not easy to face up to these perhaps difficult family memories and open your hearts in front of such a large audience.

I am also speaking from my own personal experience.

I would therefore like to thank you, the children, the grandchildren and the great grandchildren, from the bottom of my heart, for your courage. The stories of your parents, your grandparents, your great-grandparents, your ancestors, are a vital part of Austria’s history. They will not be forgotten.

Now, in this special setting, I would like to remember one person in particular. A person who was highly committed to promoting an active and sensitive approach towards our NS past and the preservation of remembrance:

Mag. Barbara Prammer, President of the National Council and Chairperson of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism - who passed away less than 3 months ago - followed projects of remembrance like this one very closely, with great dedication and encouragement. When it came to the project sponsorship provided by the National Fund it was of profound importance to her **to convey the experiences of the past** – as vividly as possible – **to the coming generations**. It was also of great importance to her that these projects served the needs of ALL victims of the Nazis.

Barbara Prammers dedication will always be remembered.

One of these projects is *“The Vienna Project”* – a multi-faceted project, which is exceptional in a number of ways:

- It has paid tribute to all groups of victims: from Jews, Roma and Sinti to groups such as homosexuals and victims of Nazi euthanasia programs – acknowledging each in a unique way;
- It provided an interdisciplinary tool offering different approaches to history. In doing so, it has found forms of expression which – and I find this particularly important – demand active involvement.

This is especially important for the younger generation, for whom this period increasingly tends to fade into the dark of history – a historical era like any other. For them, it is vital that remembrance of their own history can find new forms of expression. Political sensibility and civil courage cannot be taken for granted today either – these are values which each generation must learn for itself.

I found the following entry on the website of *“The Vienna Project”*:

“The Vienna Project provides every-day Austrian citizens the opportunity to revisit this history and reflect upon issues of accountability, 75 years after the crimes were committed.”

And herein lies the strength of *“The Vienna Project”*: It is so varied and alive that it is able to reach a huge audience: It has also invited so many young people to get involved and has touched their hearts with activities and performances such as the *“Archival letter-reading marathon”* or the *“Memory map”*.

I am glad that “*The Vienna Project*” was received with such enthusiasm and met with such a positive response.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to finish by **thanking Dr. Karen Frostig**: Thank you for creating this remarkable and vivid project for Vienna. With “*The Vienna Project*” you have given a lot to the city where so much was once taken from your family.

Your project will be closing today, but it has left lasting traces in the hearts of the people in Vienna.

Thank you.