

## Personal statement by Commissioner Fischler on the new government in Austria (4 February 2000)

**Caption:** On 4 February 2000, reacting to the participation of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in the government, Commissioner Franz Fischler condemns the diplomatic measures imposed against his country by its 14 partners and appeals for the new coalition government to be judged by its actions.

**Source:** RAPID. The Press and Communication Service of the European Commission. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: European Commission, [15.12.2009]. IP/00/112. Disponible sur <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/00/112&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>.

**Copyright:** (c) European Union, 1995-2012

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/personal\\_statement\\_by\\_commissioner\\_fischler\\_on\\_the\\_new\\_government\\_in\\_austria\\_4\\_february\\_2000-en-a71a8afa-c3ba-4d09-915f-834f46f4e1a3.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/personal_statement_by_commissioner_fischler_on_the_new_government_in_austria_4_february_2000-en-a71a8afa-c3ba-4d09-915f-834f46f4e1a3.html)

**Publication date:** 06/09/2012

## Personal statement by Commissioner Fischler on the new government in Austria (4 February 2000)

I am well aware of the immense responsibility resting on me, as both a convinced European and an Austrian citizen, as a result of the inclusion of the Austrian Freedom Party in Austria's new national government. I share the concern expressed by the Commission in its statement. The Commission has a duty as guardian of the EU Treaties and is determined to exercise that role to the full, remaining watchful and quick to reprimand the slightest breach of EU law. However, it is not the Commission's place to isolate a member country. On the contrary, our duty is to prevent any country cutting itself adrift from the rest of Europe. This is why the Commission must and will maintain its working relationship with Austria.

One part of my responsibility is and always has been to convey the present international concern to my countrymen and to explain that the European Union is not turning against Austria as a country or a people. The Union has made clear that its basic values - tolerance, solidarity, respect for human rights - have to be automatic for every Member State. No Austrians who are attached their country will want to disagree with me on this.

But another part of my responsibility, as I see it, is to help defend Austria's well-deserved reputation abroad. Austria is not a stronghold of fascism, of intolerance, but a functioning democracy. My fellow-countrymen, as the sovereign people of an independent state, naturally have every right to make up their own democratic mind. That is what has taken place, whether one likes the results or not. What would not be acceptable is any policy running counter to the essential and fundamental values of the European Union.

I personally expressed myself clearly in December towards the head of the Freedom Party when I said that nationalism, anti-foreign feeling and intolerance have no place in our common Europe. I still stand to what I said then and would not take back a single word. My own membership of the Austrian People's Party, whose values are the same as those of all Christian-Democrat parties in Europe, is a reflection of this. It goes without saying that I would be the first to reconsider my membership in the Austrian People's Party, if these principles would not be upheld. I have read the introduction of the programme put out by the new coalition government very thoroughly and have found no passage in it which would clash with these high requirements. It contains a definite 'no' to discrimination, as well as to xenophobia and intolerance. It also contains a clear commitment to eastward enlargement, to European integration in general and to shared responsibility among Austrians for the darkest chapter of our history, the holocaust. This is an important step towards gaining international acceptance which I welcome. I can only hope that this is an unambiguous signal that the Freedom Party has broken with its past. But words alone are not enough. This Austrian Government, as no other, will be judged by its deeds.