

"Shouting won't help," says new member Helene Jarmer: First speech given by a Deaf person in Parliament

July 10, 2009, 4:58 pm Central European Summer Time (CEST),
News.at

There was silence today in the National Council, not only because the members were waiting in excited anticipation for the speech of the new member. The new member, Helene Jarmer (Green Party), is deaf and gave a speech today delivered in sign language in the National Council, which is a historic first for that legislative body. Jarmer gave a current status report on related disability issues, and also charmed the other members by giving her counterparts a little lesson in sign language.

Jarmer made something clear to her colleagues: she is completely deaf. "Shouting won't help," she explained. In spite of this state of affairs, there are many possible ways to contact her: text messages, e-mail, or also through the telephone with the help of a sign language interpreter.

Teaching the basics of sign language

Jarmer personally delivered a brief "first day of school" orientation lecture to her colleagues. The other members learned that name signs in sign language are always associated with particular concepts. For example, former chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel continues to be identified with the sign for "bow tie," even though he stopped using a bow tie in the year 2000. They also learned something else that is new to most of them, that there are different sign languages in different countries and there are even different dialects of sign languages. [...]

<http://www.news.at/articles/0928/10/246231/schreien-abgeordneter-jarmer-gehoerlose-rede-parlament>