

# **Austria builds a bright tomorrow for women's football**

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Big plans are afoot for women's football in Austria – with hopes high that recent success at the highest level will prove a springboard for more progress in the years to come.

Last year, Austria's women's national team reached the semi-finals at UEFA Women's EURO 2017 – a fantastic achievement in the country's first-ever appearance in a major women's national team finals.

The catalyst for last summer's fairytale run in the Netherlands was undoubtedly the tireless work being done at the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) National Centre for Women's Football in St Pölten, opened in 2011 with funding from the ÖFB, the UEFA's HatTrick assistance programme and the UEFA Women's Football Development Programme, together with other national and regional contributors.

No less than nine players nurtured at this boarding school were members of Austria's Women's EURO squad that was just a penalty shootout away from reaching the final. Testament to the quality of the centre's activities, the investments made to establish the centre, and the crucial help coming from UEFA and its HatTrick programme to take women's football development forward across Europe.

The main objective is to foster Austria's talented female players between the ages of 14 and 19 with the future in mind, providing an effective talent pathway and giving strong impetus to the overall development of girls' and women's football throughout the country.

Another prime target is to establish Austria's national women's teams among the European elite at youth and senior levels, and competing regularly in major world and European final tournaments. Life for young footballers at the centre features a strong link between professional football training and school education – with emphasis on attaining excellence in all areas – football, fitness, sports psychology, sports science and individual personal development.

The dual system of school education and performance sports attempts not only to foster players, but also to develop personalities – and strong relationships exist between players, teachers, coaches and parents.

Among the players who have graduated from the centre are two that have been building careers in the German women's Bundesliga – Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuela Zinsberger and Hoffenheim midfielder Jenny Klein.

**We visited the centre and brought Manuela and Jenny together to tell us about the centre and its facilities as Austria strives to build a bright tomorrow for women's football.**