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Social Minister Hundstorfer: jobs for more than 115,000 young people

The average youth unemployment rate was significantly lower than the rate for adults, underlined Minister for Social Affairs and Labour Rudolf Hundstorfer in a press release of 8 November 2009. Young persons aged between 15 and 19 years could expect to get a job or training place within 55 days thanks to public placement services. The “Future Youth Campaign” guaranteed that 20- to 24-year-olds found a job or training opportunity within six months, said Hundstorfer. This October this target had been met within 67 days on average, while the total group of jobless persons found a job only after about 99 days. The government’s training guarantee was also showing results. According to the Minister for Social Affairs, apprenticeship seekers found a training place within a period of 35 days. 115,668 young people had benefited from placement by the Public Employment Service in 2009. 60,834 young persons had taken advantage of course offers and completed training programmes, which were partly of a very high quality. “We have responded very fast to the critical development of this year and managed to mitigate the adverse trend in the youth labour market by launching initiatives”, emphasised Hundstorfer. ■

Federal government upholds plans for Postal Market Act

The governing parties – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and People’s Party (ÖVP) – uphold their plans for a new Postal Market Act. On 10 November 2009, a majority of the Transport Committee of the National Council voted in favour of the respective bill submitted by Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures to pave the way for the further liberalisation of the postal market. It is also the first piece of legislation guaranteeing the countrywide supply of the population with mail services. The law preparing the postal market for final liberalisation in 2011 will enter into force on 1 January 2010. The partly government-owned stock-listed Post AG will then lose its monopoly on delivering letters weighing less than 50 grams. Private providers will become entitled to deliver letters (in addition to parcels).

The new Postal Market Act provides for a minimum of 1,650 post offices or other postal outlets (postal partners) as well as mail delivery in

remote regions. In addition, letters will have to be transported within one to two working days. If the post office company wants to shut down a post office, it has to notify the authority in advance and find a substitute service provider. Universal services not covering the costs will be subsidised from an equalisation fund. Furthermore, the law stipulates that the staff of competing enterprises has to be recruited on the basis of a collective agreement so as to prevent wage dumping. ■

Children’s rights in the Constitution

The Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the People’s Party (ÖVP) agreed on enshrining children’s rights in the Constitution. Thus children will have a legal right that their interests and opinions regarding child welfare matters have to be given due consideration. ■

First Austria-wide education plan for nurseries

The first Austria-wide education plan for nurseries has been completed and will be sent to all nurseries. According to Minister of Education, Claudia Schmied, this plan will provide nursery pedagogues with a “manual for the practice” to support children aged up to 6 years optimally. It was developed in cooperation with the “Charlotte Bühler Institute for Practice-Oriented Research on Infants“. Schmied described the education plan as another important measure in the field of pre-school education. After the introduction of a mandatory nursery year for all children, a “new milestone” had been reached. ■

“Licht ins Dunkel“

The charity campaign “Licht ins Dunkel” (“Light into Darkness”) initiated for people with disabilities and in need by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) has been launched for the 37th time on 4 November 2009. To mark the occasion, President Heinz Fischer hosted a reception at the Presidential Office at Vienna’s Hofburg. It was important to support the objectives of this campaign, especially in difficult economic times, stressed Fischer, under whose aegis this project is realised. The campaign motto is “Every euro counts“. To support the initiative, call the donation hotline on 0800 24 12 09 or go to the website: <http://lichtinsdunkel.orf.at>. ■

Federal Chancellor Faymann pays official visit to Moscow

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann paid his first official visit to Russia from 10 to 11 November 2009. He was accompanied by Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer and other officials. Items on the agenda were talks with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Special emphasis was placed on issues regarding the security of energy supplies against the background of the conflict between Moscow and Kiev over gas transit through Ukraine. Other subjects for discussion were Austria's chair of the UN Security Council and the Western Balkans.

Faymann tried to dispel Russia's concerns regarding the Nabucco pipeline planned under the lead of the Austrian petrol company OMV. Nabucco is to supply Europe with natural gas from the Caspian Region by bypassing Russia. Moscow was afraid that it would compete with its own pipeline projects Northstream (via the Baltic Sea to Germany) and Southstream, but this was denied by Faymann. However, he underlined the importance of Russian gas supplies for Europe and Austria, which should not be interrupted in the event of conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, as this had been the case in early 2009. Europe receives a major part of the Russian gas through Ukraine. Putin threatened once more with a stop of gas supplies if Ukraine failed to pay its outstanding bills to Russia.

Russia hopes to win Austria's support for the pipeline project Southstream, which has been planned jointly with Italy. According to Faymann, the federal government was prepared to start talks. Putin signalled that he preferred direct communication on energy issues between Moscow and Vienna.

The bilateral relations were described by both sides as completely unproblematic. The financial and economic crisis did impact the bilateral economic relations but the dynamics of these relations was "not so bad", stressed Putin. Austria was an important investor in Russia. This argument had also been put forward by Medvedev, who expressed his hope that Austrian companies would participate in the preparations for the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014. The Austrian building group Strabag is already highly active (order volume: 1 billion euro).

Putin also pled for negotiations on the landing rights of the Austrian Airlines (AUA) in Russia as the conditions had changed after Lufthansa

became the new owner. The existing contract would be extended until 1 February 2010, but then a new agreement had to be reached. ■

Success for Austria: UN calls for protection of civilian population

Under the chairmanship of Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger, the World Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution calling for more stringent rules for the protection of civilians in conflict regions on 11 November 2009. Hence, the UN Security Council responded positively to the number one priority of Austria in its capacity as current UN Security Council chair. For the first time, an explicit mandate had been incorporated "that nobody could avoid the responsibility of protecting the civilian population against mass crimes in armed conflicts", said Spindelegger. This was especially true for the protection of women and children. ■

The fall of the Berlin Wall: Faymann at anniversary celebrations in Berlin

At the celebrations of the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann emphasised the importance of this historical event for Europe. "Now what belongs together is growing together", Faymann reminded in a press release of the words of former German Chancellor Willy Brandt. "Not only Germany was united, but Europe as well", said Faymann, highlighting the current successful cooperation to combat the economic crisis. More than 30 incumbent and former heads of state and government from all over the world participated in the celebrations at Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. ■

Austria extends foreign missions of the Federal Army

On 3 November 2009, the Council of Ministers voted in favour of extending several foreign missions of the Federal Army until at least the end of 2010: the UN peace-keeping missions in the Golan Heights, in Cyprus and Nepal as well as the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

The EU Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2,000 soldiers) will be led by Austrian Major-General Bernhard Bair as from 4 December 2009. ■

Economy is growing – Faymann: measures prove effective

In the third quarter of 2009, Austria and the entire euro zone overcame the deep recession and are swinging back onto a growth path. For the first time since spring 2008, Austria's economic performance exceeded the level of the previous quarter. In Austria the GDP (gross domestic product) rose by 0.9% (euro zone: 0.4%, Eurostat). The GDP dropped by 2.4% compared to the same period of the previous year, but in the second quarter of 2009 the minus had been no less than 5.3%. This improvement was by no means a self-sustained upswing, warned the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) at the presentation of its GDP flash estimate on 13 November 2009.

Chancellor Werner Faymann explained in a press release that the economic stimulus and labour market packages of the government had “proven effective”. Under his leadership, the federal government had “reacted cautiously and effectively to the most severe crisis of the last decades”, stated Faymann. Now economic analysts confirmed that the measures taken had been right. Qualifying his statement, Faymann added, “The crisis is over only when the number of unemployed persons decreases significantly.” The increase of unemployment in Austria was very low by European comparison but this did not absolve policymakers from intensifying efforts to strengthen the real economy, said the Chancellor. According to economic analysts, private consumption was definitely a stabilising factor. Therefore, the preservation and strengthening of the purchasing power and wealth of the people had to remain high on the agenda. As the positive effects – confirmed by Wifo – of all economic stimulus programmes on domestic exports showed, coordination at European level was essential. This strategy had safeguarded jobs.

Faymann also expressed his view that a second crisis of this dimension was not affordable. Additional national and European initiatives (e.g. regarding a Europe-wide financial transactions tax) were vital. Moreover, effective rules for financial markets and manager bonus payments were required to prevent speculation and dubious profit-making. At national level, the focus of labour market support measures had to be turned on qualification. Furthermore, it was important to invest in areas crucial for the future such as education, research, environmental protection and infrastructure, demanded Faymann.

Vice Chancellor Josef Pröll was also pleased about the latest economic data and underlined that it had been right to pursue a prudent course during the months of crisis. Now, the key task was to create the appropriate framework for a self-sustained and market-driven growth.

According to Wifo, the main impetus to the substantial GDP growth came from exports and construction investments – in the wake of the international recovery of the economy triggered by comprehensive government packages.

The steady but low growth of private consumption (at a consistent level of +0.1% since the first quarter of 2009) continued, it has been supported by the tax reform and low inflation. ■

Bank aid package: Minister Pröll calls for extension until 2010

Minister of Finance Pröll had called for extending the bank aid package by six months into the year 2010 even before the latest GDP data of Wifo were published. Before the meeting of the euro-zone finance ministers in Brussels on 9 November 2009, Pröll said that he was against discontinuing the aid package “abruptly”. It had to be continued “to ensure stability”. The “flanks” of the economy needed to be protected, especially during the next year. As far as the end of the economic stimulus packages was concerned, the Minister of Finance pled in favour of “setting a signal for 2013”.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann was also favourably disposed towards extending the bank aid package. However, he stressed that “measures against unemployment were at least as important as the protection of the banking sector”. ■

End of Quelle: help for employees affected

The federal government pledged its “full support” to the about 1,100 employees affected by the imminent bankruptcy of the mail order company Quelle. The Public Employment Service and the Chamber of Labour set up counselling centres within the enterprise. About 300 to 500 employees will probably seek assistance from the Insolvency Foundation funded by the Public Employment Service (60%) and the regional government (40%). In addition to unemployment benefit, the workers affected may also claim training grants of up to 200 euro per month. ■

Austrian contemporary art in Beijing and Tokyo

Exhibitions of contemporary Austrian art will be presented at Anniart Gallery in the Dashanzi Art Zone in Beijing (closing on 26 November 2009) as well as at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (as from 22 November 2009). Most of the 15 exhibiting artists were scholarship holders of one of the three Austrian artists-in-residence programmes in Beijing, Nanjing and Chengdu. The show in China was organised by the Austro Sino Arts Program (ASAP) and financed from the federal government budget. The common theme of all the artists participating in the so-far largest show of contemporary Austrian art in China is the in-depth exploration of the host country China. Many of the 97 works are based on every-day experiences. The duo G.R.A.M. (Martin Behr/Günther Holler-Schuster) from Graz presents for example a photo documentation of characters of the Sichuan opera; Nikolaus Gansterer and Matthias Meinharter look into the creative side of copying of Western art, as it is practised in Dafen (Shenzen); Rainer Prochaska travelled with a bicycle rickshaw through Beijing and developed his reactions to the environment into a collage.

The Tokyo show marking the 50th annual exhibition of the Japan Print Society presents an overview of Austrian graphic art, including works by Roland Böck, Wolfgang Buchta, Armin Guerino, Michael Hedwig, Udo Klaf, Andreas Leikauf, Manabe Anton, Sabine Luger, Thomas Nemeč, Michael Schneider, Martin Schnur, Eric Neunteufel, Konrad Planegger, David Smyth and André E. Steinhausen. ■

Long Night of Research

The third “Long Night of Research” on 7 November 2009 ended with a new record, attracting no less than 366,000 visitors. Universities, technical universities, research institutions and enterprises in Dornbirn, Graz, Innsbruck, Krems, Tulln, Linz, Salzburg and Vienna opened their doors to the general public. More than 2,000 researchers allowed the visitors to take a peek behind the scenes of science, research and innovation at about 570 venues.

In Vienna 146,880 visitors were counted at 159 different locations. Thousands of interested persons informed themselves, for example, about the latest trends in domestic research at the

research facilities of the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) at Tech Gate Vienna. Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures underlined that the event was vital to raise awareness and provide information on research and technology. In Graz the 66 research locations covered themes ranging from life in the Middle Ages to the future of the car. A total of 78,840 visitors was registered.

The Innsbruck-based research institutions presented themselves already for the sixth time in a row and for the third time under the umbrella of the “Long Night of Research“. The audience does not yet seem to be tired of research. Facilities offering an X-ray examination of the man from Hauslabjoch, “Ötzi“, a 5300-year-old glacier mummy from late Neolithic age, or simulated Mars expeditions were visited 36,720 times.

In Linz 94 exhibition venues attracted more than 42,000 visitors. Salzburg offered 48 facilities, which were visited 21,600 times – however, the main universities of the two cities did not participate. The 80 sites in Krems and Tulln registered 34,560 visits, the 12 sites of the University of Applied Sciences in Dornbirn welcomed 4,860 persons.

The “Long Night of Research“ staged by the Ministry of Infrastructure, Economy and Science as well as the Council for Research and Technology Development will take place also in 2010. ■

The Chancellor commemorates the proclamation of the First Republic

“With the foundation of the Republic, the groundwork for our free, Democratic society was laid. The founding fathers of our Republic fought hard for the freedom on which our country is based. It must never be taken for granted”, explained Chancellor Werner Faymann at the wreath-laying ceremony held in commemoration of the proclamation of the First Republic on 12 November 1918 at the Monument for the Republic (Dr. Karl Renner-Ring) on 12 November 2009. The monument consists of two busts on pedestals of the three legendary Social Democratic politicians Jakob Reumann, Viktor Adler and Ferdinand Hanusch. The inauguration took place on 12 November 1928, the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of the First Republic. Due to its clear reference to the Republic and Social Democracy, the monument has been rejected by Conservative and Fascist circles. When democracy was dismantled to establish the

Austro-Fascist regime, the monument was covered with flags with a cross potent and a portrait of Engelbert Dollfuß. It was removed in 1934 and stored in Stadium Hall. On the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic in 1948 it was re-erected. In 1961 the backside of the monument was slightly damaged in an attack with explosives - its background has never been clarified.

Besides Chancellor Faymann, other high-ranking representatives of Social Democracy participated in the wreath-laying ceremony – National Council speaker Barbara Prammer, federal party whips Laura Rudas and Günther Kräuter, Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek, Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer, Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos and Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer. The Vienna branch of the Social Democratic Party was inter alia represented by Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl. President of the Federation of Austrian Trade Unions Erich Foglar and President of the Chamber of Labour Herbert Tumpel also joined in the commemoration of 12 November 1918. ■

Golden Badge of Honour to Pleskow

On 6 November 2009, National Council speaker Barbara Prammer conferred the Grand Badge of Honour for Meritorious Service to the Republic of Austria granted by President Heinz Fischer on Viennale President Eric Pleskow (85). Among the numerous honours bestowed on the Viennese, who had to flee to the US in 1939, is the Honorary Citizenship of the City of Vienna (2007).

In the USA Pleskow came into contact with documentary film. After the end of World War II., he returned to Europe as a US citizen and reorganised the Bavarian post-war film industry in Munich. One of his main achievements was the re-opening of the Bavaria Studios. In 1951 he started to work for the US film company United Artists and later became the second European after Charles Chaplin to head it. Ten "Oscar"-winning films were created under his aegis, e.g. Billy Wilder's "The Apartment" (1960), Milos Forman's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (1975) and Woody Allen's "Annie Hall" (1977).

Together with partners, he founded the company Orion Pictures in 1978. The films produced during his term as a CEO included the "Oscar"-winning feature films "Amadeus" by Milos Forman (1984), "Platoon" by Oliver Stone, "Dances With Wolves" by Kevin Costner (1990)

and "The Silence of the Lambs" by Jonathan Demme (1991).

Today Pleskow lives in the US state Connecticut and in Santa Monica. He has been President of the Viennale film festival since 1998. His life is described in the documentary "I'm About Winning" by Andrea Eckert and the biography "Eric Pleskow – Ein Leben für den Film" ("Eric Pleskow – A Life for Film") by Andrea Ernst. ■

High EU funding for Wittgenstein prize winners

In 1998 Georg Gottlob, computing scientist at Oxford University and at the Vienna University of Technology, and Walter Schachermayer, mathematician at the University of Vienna, had been granted Austria's most important science award, the Wittgenstein Prize. Now the two researchers received the "Advanced Grant" – with funding up to 2.5 million euro – of the European Research Council (ERC). Schachermayer (59) deals with a very application-oriented area of mathematics, i.e. financial mathematics. He is already the third recipient of an ERC Advanced Grant at the University of Vienna. Gottlob (53) plans to use the ERC funds for intensifying cooperation between the Vienna University of Technology and Oxford University. He focuses mainly on database theory, notably query languages, information processing in the web as well as complexity theory. ■

Sensational VIENNA BOOK fair

The VIENNA BOOK fair (BUCH WIEN) took place for the second time at Vienna's trade fair precinct (9 to 15 November 2009). More than 400 publishing houses from 11 countries, offering more than 400,000 book titles, presented themselves on a surface of 7200 square metres in Hall D. Discussions, readings as well as special events for kids and young people were held on numerous stages.

As Vienna's Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny said, the city offered "a climate of openness and curiosity for artists and authors, and we want to provide the necessary cultural infrastructure". At the opening of the book fair, Federal Minister Claudia Schmied also announced this year's State Prize winners, to whose literary work the Republic of Austria pays tribute to in 2009: Margit Schreiner receives the

Prize in Acknowledgement of Literary Achievements, Per Olov Enquist the State Prize for European Literature and Klaus Amann the Austrian State Prize for Literary Criticism.

Austrian writer Eva Menasse – who authored “Lässliche Todsünden“ (“Remissible Cardinal Sins”) and has been living in Berlin for ten years – delivered the opening speech. She described her efforts to cope with the hate-love relationship with her native country – a topos, known from other Austrian authors, e.g. Thomas Bernhard.

As in the past, the City of Vienna tries to encourage people to read books with its campaign “A CITY. A BOOK“ also in 2009. This year 100,000 free copies of the book “Und Nietzsche weinte“ (“When Nietzsche Wept”) by Irvin D. Yalom are distributed across Vienna. This wonderful novel of the psychoanalyst and writer born as the son of Russian immigrants in the USA in 1931 tells the story of a fictitious encounter between the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the co-founder of psychoanalysis Josef Breuer in Vienna in 1882, while the femme fatale Lou Salomé pulls the strings in the background.

Thanks to a special service of “A CITY. A BOOK“ developed in cooperation with the online sign language library “Sign Library”, it will become possible “to read” comprehensive background videos on the novel and key chapters in sign language. www.einestadteinbuch.at;

www.lesefestwoche.at ■

Linz 09: NO MUSIC DAY

22 November 2009 is the St. Cecilia’s Day, and St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music. The existence of music is celebrated in many countries on this day. As a response to this tradition, the NO MUSIC DAY has been observed on 21 November since 2005. Its aim is to remind of the fact that music is a treasure which should be savoured and not be regarded as a product to be consumed mindlessly.

As European Capital of Culture, Linz 09 also explores the growing global trend towards forced exposure to music from a political perspective. On the NO MUSIC DAY, commercial radio stations in Linz will not broadcast any music, even church masses will be celebrated without music. Central Kino will screen films without film music. These activities are supported by renowned personalities, e.g. Alpine climber Reinhold Messner, conductors Franz Welser-Möst and Dennis Russell Davies, researchers Anton Zeilinger and

Elmar Altvater as well as musicians, e.g. cellist Heinrich Schiff. www.linz09.at/hoerstadt;
www.nomusicday.com ■

Kunsthalle Wien: “1989“

Vienna’s Kunsthalle showcases: “1989. End of History or Beginning of the Future?“. The exhibition running until 7 February 2010 is devoted to the momentous events leading to the opening of the Iron curtain and the end of the Cold War. Utopias were buried and new scenarios for the future emerged. The Communist every-day life characterised by suppression and lack was followed by a new age in which old nationalism and fundamentalism re-surfaced and by a financial crisis raising concerns about the viability of a society lacking social responsibility. The exhibition traces the metaphors that are associated with the collapse of the bipolar division of the world into East and West as well as the political upheaval and that are valid up to now. The concept of the show was developed by Oliver Rathkolb, a contemporary historian from Vienna. A comprehensive programme, including discussions and lectures, accompanies the exhibition.

www.kunsthallewien.at ■

10 years of ESSL Museum

Recently Governor Erwin Pröll, representatives of the art and culture scene, diplomatic circles and of the high clergy gathered to celebrate the ESSL Museum in Klosterneuburg (Lower Austria). Today the museum – initiated by Karlheinz and Agnes ESSL ten years ago and designed by Heinz Tesar – looks back on about 90 exhibitions, 4,000 guided visits, 2,500 workshops and 130 concerts. More than one million people have been attracted by it. The ESSL Collection contributed works of art to 20 international exhibitions, 700 objects from the Collection were exhibited around the world in 2008 alone. The ESSL Museum itself accommodates 7,000 works of art. Mrs. and Mr. ESSL stress, “Art makes tolerant and is an indispensable part of the human existence“.

The “Birthday Weekend“ on 21/22 November 2009 lures art lovers with free admission, guided visits, workshops and the presentation of a special stamp (motif by Georg Baselitz). On 24 November 2009, a PR campaign is kicked off, offering free admission to the museum up to 2 February 2010 under the motto “Free of charge, but not for nothing“. www.esslmuseum.at ■

Sports funding: Court of Auditors backs Minister of Sport Darabos

In early November, the Court of Auditors published a report on sports funding in the Federal Republic and in the Länder Tyrol and Upper Austria (period under review: 2005 to 2007).

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, who has been in office since February 2009, welcomes the report as it stirs up a discussion on sports funding in Austria. "The report backs my plans of a comprehensive reform of the sports funding system. It seems to me that criticism of the current system is justified. The sports funding model basically dates back to the post-war period and has been in urgent need of reform for quite a while. Therefore, I plan to prepare a new Sports Promotion Act by 2011", said Norbert Darabos, who had set up a reform group before the summer. It has been tasked with developing the fundamentals of the new Federal Sports Promotion Act. Besides the Federal Sports Organisation, the associations responsible for the individual sports disciplines and various umbrella organisations participate in the working group.

"Three aspects are important to me. Funding has to become more targeted, and the indiscriminate distribution of funds has to be stopped. Subsidies have to be granted directly to the athletes, too much money trickles away into administration. And subsidies also have to become more transparent and must be subject to professional controlling", stated the Minister for Sport. In its report the Court of Auditors criticised the lack of transparency in the funding system, lacking coordination among the funding bodies and duplication of the responsibilities of the recipients of subsidies.

First steps towards a state-of-the-art funding management have been taken since spring. The promotion scheme for elite sport was re-launched under the title "RED-WHITE-RED TEAM" ("TEAM-ROT-WEISS-ROT"). The Minister also commissioned a Plan of Facilities for High-Performance Sports to improve long-term coordination regarding the construction of sports centres. Under the newly introduced Section 11a of the Federal Sports Promotion Act, a new funding and accounting management is realised, which includes demand-oriented and measure-specific contract awarding and transparent invoicing with in-situ checks. ■

Hymn of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM

After intensive preparations, the time has come for presenting the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM to the public. 29 of Austria's most prestigious summer and winter athletes, among them Gregor Schlierenzauer, Wolfgang Loitzl, Mirna Jukic, Manfred Pranger, Michael Walchhofer, Jasmin Ouschan and Lizz Görgl, recorded the song "We are winners" for a good cause. Based on the motto "If you want to, you can achieve everything", the new sports hymn is the key communication medium for Austria's high-performance sport. The spots are now screened in Austrian cinemas and on TV. The campaign video has been downloaded 25,000 times in the first two weeks.

"As Minister of Sport it is important to me to turn the spotlight again on our athletes and their great achievements for our country – not just because of the many negative headlines about doping and, more recently, also about the Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC)", said Minister and initiator of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM Norbert Darabos.

The RED-WHITE-RED TEAM stands for a new feeling of togetherness as well as a new solidarity in Austria's high-performance sport. It is also the government's new programme for promoting it. The RED-WHITE-RED TEAM is formed by the best athletes. The athletes of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM receive sports funding totalling about 3.5 million euro per year to prepare optimally for international large-scale events.

The proceeds from the sale of the single "We are winners" are used to support the young generation of Austrian athletes. The music clip of the song can be watched at www.teamrotweissrot.at. ■

High-calibre football seminar with top referee from the USA

Austrians are showing a keen interest in team sports – besides football, handball and ice hockey. Sports officials and other stakeholders are always ready to learn, as an example of American Football demonstrates. A "Referee Clinic" with US referee William LeMonnier takes place at seminar hotel Steinberger on the weekend from 28 to 29 November 2009. Registration is only accepted for the waiting list, as the event has been fully booked within a few days. ■