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HOME AFFAIRS**2010 regional elections in Vienna: SPÖ remains number 1, no absolute majority**

The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) took once more the lead in Vienna's municipal elections on 10 October 2010, winning by far the greatest number of votes. But losing its absolute majority, it will now have to look for a coalition partner. The Social Democrats with Vienna's Mayor (and Governor) Michael Häupl at the helm received 44.55% of the votes; this corresponds to a minus of 4.54 percentage points. The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – with top candidate Christine Marek – suffered dramatic losses, dropping by 4.93% to an all-time low of 13.84%. With its party chief Heinz-Christian Strache, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) became the actual winner of the elections. Garnering 26.18% of the votes (+11.35%), it succeeded in almost doubling the result of the regional elections in 2005.

The Greens earned about 12.19% of the votes, this is a minor decline by 2.44%. Calling only 1.33% (+0.18%) of the votes their own, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) will not be represented in the Municipal Council (Regional Government).

The seats are distributed in the regional government ("Landtag") as follows: SPÖ 49 (-6), FPÖ 27 (+14), ÖVP 13 (-5), Greens 11 (-3). This is only a preliminary result, including a first count of about 160,000 postal votes (status: 12 October 2010). The official final result including all postal ballots will become available on 19 October 2010. At the municipal elections about 1.2 million people were eligible to vote, voter turnout was about 64%. (For the results of the district representation elections see: www.wien.gv.at)

Both the SPÖ and the ÖVP faced their most significant losses in their former strongholds. Mayor Häupl ruled out entering into a coalition with the FPÖ still in the evening of election day. Face-to-face talks with the leaders of the ÖVP and the Greens on the conditions of the forthcoming coalition negotiations have already been started. Possibilities of cooperating with Strache's FPÖ at a purely technical level will be explored.

A general reform of the postal voting system is planned to prevent abuse.

Carinthia: 90 years of referendum

The highlight of the numerous festivities marking the 90th anniversary of the referendum held in Carinthia in 1920 was the big festival parade

in Klagenfurt on 10 October 2010. About 16,000 people from all parts of Carinthia and many neighbouring regions participated. Among the guests of honour were Federal President Heinz Fischer and Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. Together with Carinthia's Governor Gerhard Dörfler, they reiterated their intention to prepare a solution of the conflict over bilingual signposts in Carinthia by 2012.

"The time has come – Cas je zrei", emphasised Fischer in the two official languages of Carinthia, appealing to all stakeholders to take responsible action "so as to pass this maturity test of history". Fischer called for "courage to face the future".

But also Federal Chancellor Faymann expressed his "legitimate hope" that the conflict over bilingual signposts would be solved by 2012. He reminded of the fact that in 1920 about 60% of those eligible to vote in Carinthia had voted in favour of remaining with Austria, among them many Slovenes. Persuasive power and reason had prevailed in the end.

Recent talks gave hope "to achieve a result in the almost never-ending story" of the bilingual signposts by 2012, "fulfilling an obligation arising from the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 on the basis of a broad consensus", stated Faymann.

Minister of the Interior Fekter: a future strategy for more security

Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter presented a new future strategy for more security in Austria to 1,700 leading police officials at a congress held at the Linz Design Center on 13 October 2010. "Integration" is one of the top priorities of the 100-page strategy paper "Innen.Sicher" ("Interior.Safe"). In this context, Fekter also announced drastic measures to enforce immigration law, a catalogue of key integration data as well as institutionalised migration research. The Minister stated that the new strategy pursued three goals: strengthening social peace, more competence and motivation of the staff and a performance-enhancing organisation. Its basis were 57 concrete projects for targeted and performance-oriented action. In addition to combating asylum abuse and trafficking in human beings ("more efficient entry checks", "more consistent expulsion", improved training of police officers in immigration law), measures promoting integration (e.g. German language skills) should be stepped up. Other key elements: an administration closer to the citizen as well as crime and violence prevention.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL

Special meeting on re-licensing of German NPPs

Representatives of Austria and Germany will meet for talks about extending the lives of German nuclear power plants (NPPs) in Bonn on 19 October 2010. The expert meeting will take place in the framework of the bilateral "Nuclear Information Agreement". Austrian Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich had urged to hold this special meeting, informed the Ministry of the Environment. Berlakovich had expressed his disappointment about Germany's nuclear policy at the session of the Council of Ministers on 28 September 2010, describing it as a "setback". According to the policy paper submitted to the Council of Ministers, Germany would "have to explain" the effects of re-licensing NPPs on Austria at the meeting on 19 October 2010.

As the Ministry of the Environment informed, Berlakovich was advocating Austria's energy independence and calling for a maximum share of renewable energies in the energy supply. In the policy paper submitted to the Council of Ministers, the federal government rejected the re-licensing of nuclear power plants in Germany and requested inter alia the shut-down of the Isar-1 NPP near the Austrian border "unless all security deficits were remedied".

Foreign Minister Spindelegger pays an official visit to Turkey

Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger paid an official visit to Turkey from 6 to 8 October 2010. One of the key items on his agenda were the economic relations between Austria and Turkey. In Samsun in northern Turkey, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the construction of a 600-million-euro gas power plant by the Austrian mineral oil company OMV (see Economy). An Austrian Honorary Consulate and an Austria Library at university were also inaugurated in this city.

In Istanbul and Ankara Spindelegger held talks with Turkish President Abdullah Gül as well as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. In these meetings Spindelegger supported pragmatic cooperation between Turkey and the European Union, in particular in economic affairs and security policy. The Austrian Foreign Minister stressed his commitment to Ankara's EU accession negotiations. Austria supported the talks, stressed Spindelegger. According to the Minister, the negotiation process with the EU was important because it required Turkey to

meet European standards. However, it was necessary to "overcome" the constant debate on Turkey's full EU membership. Reiterating that the outcome of the entry talks was open, Spindelegger stated that a decision would be taken only at the end of the process, today nobody could predict "what will happen in ten or fifteen years".

In his talks with his Turkish counterpart Davutoglu, Spindelegger also addressed the sensitive issue of the integration of Turks in Vienna. In this context, the Minister invited to an integration conference in Vienna in early 2011, in which also Germany will participate. Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu appealed to the Turks living in Austria to learn German and to observe the applicable law.

Spindelegger visits Zagreb

Croatia's EU accession and economic cooperation between Croatia and Austria were high on the agenda of the talks held between Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and his Croatian counterpart Gordan Jandrokovic in Zagreb on 13 October 2010. Both sides stressed the excellent bonds of friendship between the two countries. Spindelegger was confident that Croatia would close the negotiation chapter justice – in which the combat against corruption was playing a crucial role – "in a timely manner". This was a "decisive phase" in guiding Croatia into the EU.

EU reaches agreement on higher road tolls for lorries

In Europe lorries are to pay extra fees for noise pollution and environmental damages. The EU ministers of transport agreed on allowing Member States to raise motorway toll rates for lorries in Luxembourg on 15 October 2010. The "Eurovignette" Directive (or Infrastructure Charging Directive) contains new rules, according to which lorries weighing 12 tons or more have to pay tolls for noise, pollutants and congestion costs. The Member States may take advantage of this scheme and apply it also to vehicles weighing 3.5 tons or more. The new rules still have to be approved by the European Parliament. The compromise has become possible by exempting very low-polluting lorries (European categories 5 and 6) from extra charges until 2013 and 2017, respectively. Minister for Transport Doris Bures hopes for improvements by the European Parliament. However, this decision meant a step towards reflecting the true costs and towards the "polluter pays" principle, for which Austria had been fighting for many years, stressed Bures.

ECONOMY

New rules for banker bonuses

On 12 October 2010, the Council of Ministers adopted the new bonus model for bank managers in Austria. According to the key provisions of the new system, only 60% of the bonuses may be paid out immediately. The remaining difference will be disbursed only after five years provided that the bank can afford the bonuses and that the bank managers' performance was adequate.

After the session of the Council of Ministers, Minister of Finance Josef Pröll expressed his satisfaction about the implementation of the EU Directive. Full banker bonuses could be paid out only if there was a sustainable economic success, but not when short-term profits – involving significant risks – were made, stressed Minister Pröll.

“Master plan“: creating 100,000 additional “green jobs“ by 2020

185,000 Austrians work in the environment and climate protection sectors. Up to 2020, 100,000 additional “green jobs“ will be created, announced Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich. To realise this goal, the Minister – together with President of the Austrian Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl – presented the “Master Plan for Green Jobs“ on 7 October 2010. This paper aims at paving the way for an alliance between all ministries, the Länder and the respective interest groups. The stakeholders are invited to collaborate actively and consistently for growth in Austria and to realise great domestic potentials.

About 35,000 new jobs are to be created through thermal rehabilitation projects. The aim is to increase the rate of thermally improved buildings from currently 1% to 3% by 2020. This would correspond to about 700,000 flats benefiting from thermal rehabilitation. Thanks to this measure, approximately 30,000 full-time jobs could be created or safeguarded in the labour market. About 5,000 jobs to be created through the conversion of heating systems can be added to this figure, explained Berlakovich.

An investment volume of 2 billion euro would be generated if additional funds amounting to 300 million euro – 100 million euro from the Federal Republic, 200 million euro from the Länder – were made available, added WKÖ boss Leitl.

For domestic enterprises competing at international level, “green technology“ was an important issue for the future. The research and de-

velopment (R&D) bonus should therefore be raised from 8 to 12%, demanded Leitl.

According to the master plan, 6,000 additional “green jobs“ are to be created by increasing the export ratio. Growing demand for eco-tourism will result in about 13,500 new jobs, while intensified use of forest biomass is likely to generate another 6,500 jobs. The Minister of the Environment expects that 15,000 jobs will be created by expanding and improving public transport services, while investments in energy systems, e.g. as a basis for e-mobility (electrical cars) could lead to 20,000 new jobs. Finally, increased demand for environmental services could result in roughly 4,000 jobs.

“Green jobs“ include all tasks in the environmental and climate protection sector. The spectrum spans from waste disposal to specialist engineering services.

Passbook savings are the most popular form of investment in Austria

Although the interest on savings are now lower than for a long time – banks pay a maximum of 2.5% on savings tied up for two years, 1.625% on savings due on demand – passbook savings are the undisputed number one investment product in Austria. Thus passbook savings are ranked before building loan contracts, life insurance contracts, securities and funds. According to a poll conducted by Imas Institute on behalf of Erste Bank & Sparkassen, eight out of ten Austrians have a passport savings account into which they pay 165 euro on monthly average. In mid-2010, a total of 157 billion euro was deposited in passport savings accounts. In Austria this year's savings rate amounts to 9.8%, while the EU average is 7.6%.

OMV builds gas-combined cycle power plant in Turkey

The listed petrol and gas group OMV is now also entering the Turkish electricity sector with a major investment. In the presence of the Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger, OMV CEO Wolfgang Ruttenstorfer laid the foundation for a gas power plant with a capacity of 870 MW in Terme near Samsun (northern Turkey) on 8 October 2010. The costs are estimated at 600 million euro.

The power plant projects was “of vital importance“ for OMV for two reasons, said Ruttenstorfer. Turkey was not only an “energy hub between Asia and Europe“, but also “one of the most attractive energy markets in the world“. OMV holds 41.58% of Turkey's leading petrol station chain Petrol Ofisi.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**50 years of Viennale**

Austria's largest film festival was founded already 50 years ago. The 48th edition of Viennale will be kicked off on 21 October 2010. It will be opened with the French feature film "Des hommes et des dieux" ("Of Gods and Men") by Xavier Beauvois, which was awarded the Grand Prize of the Jury in Cannes. The Viennale film festival will close on 3 November 2010 with the film "Alamar" by Mexican director Pedro González-Rubio. Just like in the past years, the festival venues are Gartenbaukino, Metro Kino, Stadtkino, Künstlerhauskino and Urania. And as in 2009, "Badeschiff" – a bar boat anchored in Danube Canal in Vienna – will accommodate the festival headquarters.

This year's programme comprises about 140 feature films and documentaries; among them great works, unknown or rarely shown films, new ones and at least a dozen premiers. A major part of the films was produced in 2010.

As Viennale Director Hans Hurch explained, efforts were made to achieve "equality, equal treatment and equal relevance" of feature films, documentaries and shorts within the festival. Viennale offered the unique opportunity to present these different genres in one programme. The shorts programme comprised almost 40 works, including this year's festival trailer "Empire" by film director Apichatpong Weerasethakul from Thailand. For his film "Lung Boonmee Raluek Chat" ("Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives") he won the Golden Palm in Cannes this year. He will stay in Vienna from 21 to 24 October 2010 to attend the screening of his two films at the festival.

Compared to 2009 – when the festival devoted a special section to Austrian filmmaking – only a very small number of Austrian films is shown at this year's Viennale. Only one feature film and two documentaries are Austrian productions. The programme includes four Austrian co-productions and no less than seven short films by Austrian avant-garde filmmakers. One of these films turns the spotlight once more on Ute Bock and her great commitment to refugees. The cast of "Verrückte Welt der Ute Bock" ("The Crazy World of Ute Bock") by film director Houchang Allahyari includes actors like Josef Hader and Karl Markovics.

This year's "Viennale Tributes" are devoted to Larry Cohen und William Lubchansky. Cohen will attend Viennale. Tribute is paid to the 69-year-old director who is still considered an

"absolute outsider" of Hollywood. Lubchansky has won renown as one of the greatest cameramen of the past 30 years in Europe. About one dozen of his more than 100 works are shown.

"Viennale Retrospective" – which has already opened its doors at the Austrian Film Museum – features French film director Eric Rohmer.

"Special Evenings" is a new Viennale programme section focusing on a special event, film or person. US musician and artist Lou Reed will for example present his first film "Red Shirley" in Vienna. Other star guests of the festival are acclaimed filmmakers such as Mike Leigh, Raúl Ruiz and Olivier Assayas.

For more detailed information on the programme and venues see: www.viennale.at

China's Minister of Science Wan Gang pays visit to Vienna

Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures praised the "very good relations between Austria and China" in a meeting with Chinese Minister of Science and Technology Wan Gang on 9 October 2010. The talks focused on Austrian high technology, which is currently being showcased at the Expo 2010 in Shanghai with the support of the Chinese government.

During the "Austria Tec Week China 2010", 40 Austrian enterprises and research centres will engage in exchanges with 140 institutions from China. Emphasis is placed on environmental and energy technologies. Minister Bures stressed the enormous opportunities for the Austrian economy.

The official programme of the high-ranking guest from China also included a meeting with Minister of Science Beatrix Karl, who pled for strengthening existing cooperation with China. China's investments in research had quintupled in the past three years. Beijing was very interested to find partners to tackle major challenges in the context of the demographic development and climate change. During the winter term 2009, about 1,260 students from China had been enrolled in Austrian universities, stated Karl.

EXPO Shanghai: BMVIT, AIT und WKO presented Austria Tec Week China

In the framework of the World Fair (EXPO) in Shanghai, the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT), the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) presented "Austria Tec Week China" from 11 to 15 October 2010. In line with the EXPO

motto “Better City, Better Life“, symposia and workshops were held.

The themes selected – mobility for sustainable cities, energy for sustainable cities as well as science-industry relations – are closely interrelated with the overall theme of the World Fair. Besides Austrian and Chinese researchers, representatives of Chinese and Austrian enterprises as well as innovation and technology policymakers from Austria and China participated in the individual events.

The aim of “Austria Tec Week China” was to build mutual understanding for Austrian and Chinese technology and research competences in the aforementioned selected areas, to establish an exchange of experience on developing and realising sustainable cities, to launch technology and innovation policy initiatives as well as to encourage concrete cooperation projects between Austrian and Chinese enterprises, universities and extramural research institutions in these sectors.

As Chinese Deputy Minister for Research Jianlin Cao stated, China was highly interested in research cooperation with Austria. “I would be pleased if more Austrian researchers came to China to cooperate with us“.

Cao described China as a “developing country“ wishing “to learn from Austria to become a country of innovation and to achieve sustainable development“.

Vice Minister for Research Cao highlighted China’s climate protection goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions relative to economic growth by between 40 and 45 per cent in the period 2005 to 2020. Besides CO₂ cuts, other concrete objectives and sectors mentioned by the Vice Minister were a reduction of energy consumption, alternative energies, reforestation as well as transport and construction materials. There was a “long list” of fields in which China hoped to cooperate with Austria; Cao explicitly mentioned motor engineering (which he considered one of the “strengths of Austria“) as well as aviation industry and aircraft construction. China plans above all to promote development in the central and western provinces.

According to Cao, Austrian scientists were welcome in all research fields “due to the sheer size (of the country, editor’s note), we have demand in all areas“ – from basic research (with more than 2,000 universities) and applied science to industrial research. Many researchers were active in China, for example in basic research, “but we are not yet a superpower, only a student“, said Cao with polite understatement.

Ingolf Schädler, the Head of the Innovation Unit in the Ministry of Infrastructure, drew attention to China’s new motto “moving from investment to innovation partnerships“ as China wanted to reduce dependence on foreign investments.

The first concrete cooperation project proposed by China to Austria focuses on Nanchang, the capital of the province Jiangxi. The city with two million inhabitants is to become one of eight low-carbon model cities. Austria was invited to participate in the pilot programme, informed Schädler, underlining Austria’s expertise in the field of “smart buildings“, e.g. low or zero energy buildings, energy efficiency and other areas. The Chinese were very well informed about Austria’s strengths in these fields. In view of the expected demographic development – an additional 350 million Chinese will live in cities by 2050 –, these projects were of vital importance to China.

It was evident that these projects would also lead to a loss of know-how to China, said Schädler. In these cooperation projects it was therefore necessary to ensure “an adequate return“. We must in any case abandon the idea that the West was researching, while China was producing.

AIT Managing Director Wolfgang Knoll warned against being too afraid of China’s “tradition of copying“. “If we are afraid of losing know-how to China, we will be excluded from developments. It seems more appropriate to collaborate and by doing so learn for our own development“.

See also: www.ait.ac.at

Lending a voice to children – exhibition about Janusz Korczak in Vienna

The Teacher Training College (Pädagogische Hochschule) – 1100 Vienna, Grenzackerstraße 18/entrance Ettenreichgasse – presents the touring exhibition (in German/Polish) titled “Janusz Korczak – Lending a Voice to Children“ from 11 to 29 November 2010, Mon. to Fri. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Janusz Korczak was born as Henryk Goldszmit in Warsaw in 1878. Growing up in an assimilated Jewish family, he decided to study medicine. Pursuing literary activities in parallel, he won early renown as a writer in Poland. He felt a growing urge to help the poor in the slums of Warsaw. When he was still a boy, he had left his home secretly to play with the children in the backyards.

When deciding against a middle-class career and in favour of a life with socially disadvantaged children, he also changed his name –

Henryk Goldszmit became Janusz Korczak. He derived his pseudonym from a Polish novel written by J.I. Kraszewski in the 19th century. In 1911 Janusz Korczak started to head the orphanage Dom Sierot, which had been built based on his plans. Reflecting on his practical experience in the orphanage, he developed his ideas about education as an utopia of a peaceful, classless society. As with Marx, Korczak's world was also divided into two classes, i.e. into a class of adults and a class of children. A battle of unequal parties was waging between the two classes – the children were hopelessly inferior to their opponent.

The shared social reality of the small ones is childhood – Korczak's intention was to make both the kids and adults aware of this fact. This is where the most decisive class struggle of humankind starts. Until Korczak's era, children were usually not perceived as independent personalities with vested rights.

While heading the children's home Dom Sierot, where he further developed his ideas about a democratic Children's Republic (Parliament, children's court, children's newspaper and the like), and the second orphanage Nasz Dom, he constantly worked on concretising his concepts and improving the situation of street children. In his two children's books about "King Matt the First" (Polish original: "Krol Macius") he described how children – as experts in children's matters – can organise their world and how adults may support them.

Besides working as an orphanage manager, physician and writer, the tireless Korczak was also working for the Polish radio and as a lecturer at Polish universities. After the outbreak of WWII. in 1939, he put on his Polish officer's uniform, which he had already worn as a military doctor, showing openly his loyalty to the attacked Polish people.

After the erection of the ghetto, the Jewish orphanage was relocated to the ghetto walls. Korczak and his children lived there under unspeakable conditions until the Nazis started the mass killings of the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto by "resettling" them to the Treblinka extermination camp. On 5 August 1942, it was the turn of Korczak's orphanage. About 200 children were collected for deportation by the SS, Korczak did not want to abandon the children and insisted on accompanying them. Composer and pianist Władysław Szpilman, who had witnessed how the children were transported away, recorded in his memories that Korczak had told them that they would go to the countryside and asked them to dress up;

a boy playing the violin had led the group singing happily.

All of them were gassed. Janusz Korczak's diary ended on 5 August 1942.

The important exhibition, which will be presented at the Austrian Culture Forum in Warsaw as from December onwards, targets pupils aged nine years and older and may be incorporated in the syllabus of the subjects German, history, religion and ethics.

The historical photos were made available by the Ghetto Fighter's Museum in Israel. The concept and content of the exhibition were developed in cooperation with the University of Leipzig, the Jagiellonian University Kraków and the Leipzig School Museum – Workshop for School History. Important support to realise the show was provided by the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture, the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism, the Municipal Department for Cultural Affairs (MA 7) and the art insurers Barta & Partner.

Information, photos and educational material: Agentur Milli Segal, tel. 0043/1/9687266 or e-mail: milli.segal@chello.at, www.millisegal.at

Salam.Orient 2010 – intercultural festival from medieval songs to Future Pop

The festival "Salam.Orient" was founded nine years ago. With its music, dance and poetry programme, it became a huge success. "Salam" means peace and is a greeting used in the Arab world. In 2004 the festival – offering 13 productions this year, including theatre plays, a photo exhibition and a poetry reading – was renamed "Salam.Orient" as many artists from the Orient could not identify with Islam.

This year the festival (closing on 5 November 2010) turns the spotlight on Turkey. Numerous renowned venues in Vienna such as Porgy & Bess, but also the Orpheum in Graz, will offer concerts sweeping away musical boundaries or thriving on fusion – from the USA and India to Senegal, from the minimal music of Terry Riley, who will perform together with tabla virtuoso Talvin Singh, to Future Oriental Pop by DJane Ipek from Berlin.

"There are no boundaries in music", as legendary jazz-saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker said already in the 1940s. This will be demonstrated impressively at the wonderful festival "Salam.Orient 2010" that is of more topical relevance than ever before.

www.salam-orient.at

SPORTS POLICY**Alarming study of IMSB Austria: almost every second child is overweight**

Austria's children are overweight – these are not the latest news but new findings substantiate this fact at regular intervals. Professor Hans Holdhaus has caused a stir with the latest study prepared by the Austrian Institute for Medical and Scientific Sports Counselling (Institut für medizinische und sportwissenschaftliche Beratung / IMSB).

The number of overweight ten- to twelve-year-olds has surged by 20 per cent just within the past four years. Today almost every second child in Austria is overweight. Every fourth kid has a body mass index exceeding 20 per cent.

These negative developments have prompted many an expert to make gloomy forecasts. In the future, many health problems which previously occurred only at the age of around seventy could be diagnosed already in 30-year-old people.

As the aforementioned study also shows, body weight and body mass index have not only increased sharply among children in the past 30 years. In a long-term study conducted over 25 years, the body measurements of about 15,000 persons were taken. Among men an average increase in weight by four kilograms has been recorded (while they were growing in height by an average of two centimetres) since 1980. Women gained five kilograms (growing by six centimetres).

The share of normal-weight persons has decreased from 52 to 34 per cent since 1980, the percentage of overweight persons climbed from 24 to 44 per cent. The share of young men with more than 100 kilograms has almost doubled in the past ten years.

“Don't petrify!": new campaign calls for more movement

Austria is a sports nation, and in a wide range of sports disciplines our athletes are more successful than ever. From competition climbing to wildwater canoeing, from table tennis to mountain biking – our sports celebrities have brought home many titles and medals in various sports during the past few months. Small wonder that the population showed boundless enthusiasm. Nevertheless, not all Austrians are encouraged by these great achievements to get more exercise in their own lives. About one third of the Austrian population never practices sports. And this trend is on the rise, especially among young people.

In view of these dramatic social developments, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos has made it one of his priorities to raise awareness of the acute lack of exercise. This inactive lifestyle frequently gives rise to cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. Too little exercise also increases the risk of metabolic diseases and posture problems. These developments are not only dangerous but also entail high costs for the Republic of Austria. Based on calculations, Austria has to shoulder costs of more than 800 million euro annually that are attributable to the population's lack of exercise.

Therefore, the Ministry of Sport launches a large-scale information campaign calling for more physical activity in October. Under the motto “Do not petrify – move!”, top athletes of the “Team Rot-Weiß-Rot“ (“Red-White-Red Team”) embrace the cause of the campaign. With a lot of humour and without any pedagogical finger-wagging, the initiative draws attention to the consequences of a lack of movement and provides encouragement to practice sports.

Austrian biathlon ace Dominik Landertinger, Snowboard World Cup winner Benjamin Karl, top swimmers Fabienne Nadarajah and Jördis Steinegger, sailor Andreas Geritzer, judoka Ludwig Paischer, Austria's exemplary gymnast Marco Mayr and our number one in rhythmic gymnastics Caroline Weber also had a lot of fun during the production of the TV spots and posters for the campaign. The individual spots will be presented on the TV stations of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF).

In parallel to this campaign, a joint exercise initiative has been organised by the Federal Ministry of Sport and a large Austrian daily. A special gym bag was produced for Austrian pupils containing four pieces of sports equipment (a Frisbee, a skipping rope, an elastic, a hacky sack).

The demand for this gym bag surpassed all expectations, about 40,000 pupils participated in this campaign.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: “I am overwhelmed by the run on the gym bags. By participating in this campaign, our teachers and children fight the current trend of an increasingly overweight youth.“