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HOME AFFAIRS**Wifo and IHS issue upward revision of growth forecast for 2010/2011**

The Austrian economy is obviously recovering faster from the economic crisis than predicted still in summer. The Economic Research Institute (Wirtschaftsforschungsinstitut/Wifo) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (Institut für Höhere Studien/IHS) expect the upward economic trend of the first six months to continue also in the second half of 2010. Both institutes made a significant upward revision of their forecasts on 24 September 2010. According to them, the gross domestic product (GDP) will increase by 2.0% (Wifo) or 1.8% (IHS) in 2010. In July the economic analysts assumed a real growth of merely 1.2% and 1.5%, respectively. The experts are more optimistic also for 2011, predicting a GDP plus of 1.9 and 2.0% (previous estimates: 1.6 and 1.9%).

The revised autumn forecasts of Wifo and IHS are in line with the Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank/OeNB), which adjusted its estimate for 2010 to a value between 1.8 and 2.0% in September 2010. The labour market situation and public budgets are also expected to improve in the wake of the economic revival.

After the Council of Ministers' session on 24 September 2010, Chancellor Werner Faymann expressed his satisfaction about these favourable effects on the economy and labour market. Austria had coped with the crisis better than other European countries. He was particularly pleased about the forecasts assuming a decline in unemployment and emphasised that the federal government's economic stimulus and labour market packages had made an important contribution to this development.

Nevertheless, the Chancellor and various economic researchers reiterate the need for consistent and sustainable budget planning. The causes of the speculation-driven crisis had to be eliminated and the existing debt consolidation gap had to be covered by those responsible for the crisis: banks, speculators and financial markets. Calling once more for stricter regulation of financial markets, Faymann stressed that all measures had to be meaningful, balanced and socially fair. Economic analysts also warn against euphoria, highlighting the continuing high cyclical risks (economic slowdown in the USA and in China, appreciating euro, high government debt, instable financial sector, low investment levels). Despite the improved budget development based on higher tax receipts (see Economy), this should not be

ignored. Budget consolidation and additional reforms were a top priority even if the budget deficit could decrease from 4.7 to 4.1% in 2010 and drop to 3.2% in 2011. This year's growth is driven mainly by strong export demand. Exports are likely to grow by 11% or 12%, while the institutes had previously assumed a plus between 5.8% and 7.3%. Growth is, however, expected to slow down in 2011.

Strong decline in unemployment – lowest unemployment rate in the EU

The domestic labour market continued to relax also in September. Head of the Public Employment Service Johannes Kopf referred to the strongest decline in unemployment since the crisis. The number of jobseekers went down by 8.7% or 20,338 persons year-on-year to 214,167. The number of unemployed persons (including the participants in public training programmes) decreased by 6.4% or 19,305 persons to 283,650, informed the Ministry of Social Affairs on 1 October 2010.

In parallel, employment grew by about 47,000 persons to 3,332,000. A significant increase in vacancies of 20.3% (to 35,064 job openings) was registered. The unemployment rate (based on the national calculation method) declined by 0.5 percentage points to 5.9%. As a result, public expenditure on labour market policy would drop by 350 million euro below the planned level, informed the Ministry.

Austria has achieved the EU's lowest unemployment rate for the fourth time. According to data of August, the rate was 4.3% (based on Eurostat). For the first time, Austria boasts Europe's lowest youth unemployment (8.5%).

Regional elections in Styria: SPÖ remains number one

At the elections to the regional Parliament (Landtag) of Styria on 26 September 2010, the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) – with leading candidate Governor Franz Voves – remained number one despite suffering losses. Voter support for the second-ranked People's Party (ÖVP) had also dwindled. The Freedom Party (FPÖ) managed to enter Styria's regional government.

Distribution of votes based on the preliminary result: SPÖ: 38.3 % (-3.3), ÖVP: 37.2% (-1.5), FPÖ: 10.7% (+6.1), Greens: 5.5% (+0.7), Communist Party (KPÖ): 4.4 % (-2), Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ): 3% (-1.3). Seats in Styrian Parliament: SPÖ: 23 (-2), ÖVP: 22 (-2), FPÖ: 6 (+6), Greens: 3 (+/-0), KPÖ: 2 (-2). Seats in Styrian government: SPÖ: 4, ÖVP: 4, FPÖ: 1.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Austria opposes re-licensing of German nuclear power plants**

In the Council of Ministers' session on 28 September 2010, the Austrian federal government vigorously opposed the re-licensing of German nuclear power plants (NPPs) and also made concrete demands. It did not only request comprehensive information but also technical measures to improve the safety of German nuclear reactors. According to the respective submission to the Council of Ministers, the German NPPs – in concrete terms the Isar-1 Nuclear Power Plant near the Austrian border – had to be shut down if safety deficits could not be redressed. Consultations with Germany will probably begin on 19 October 2010.

The German federal government adopted a new energy concept also on 28 September 2010. It provides for a far-reaching changeover of energy supply to green electricity by 2050. However, the paper also envisages the controversial re-licensing of German nuclear power plants until 2036. Consequently, the German nuclear reactors will remain connected to the grid for about 12 years longer than originally planned.

After the government's meeting, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann responded to the argument of lobbyists that nuclear power was CO₂-neutral: "The only thing that is really sustainable about nuclear energy is the sustainable risk." It was "not okay" to reach CO₂ targets with resources other than renewable energy, stressed Faymann. Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich also expressed his disappointment about Germany's nuclear policy, which he described as a "set-back". His aim was to ensure "maximum security for Austria", said the Minister.

Faymann at ASEM summit in Brussels

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann represents Austria at the ASEM summit in Brussels on 4/5 October 2010. The heads of state and government of the EU and Asia deliberate on climate protection and the financial crisis.

Alternative Nobel Prize awarded to Bishop Erwin Kräutler

Bishop Erwin Kräutler (71), who was born in Austria and has been working in Brazil for many decades, became one of the four laureates of the 2010 Alternative Nobel Prize. As the "Right Livelihood Award Foundation" announced on 30 September 2010, the Bishop of the Brazilian diocese Xingu received this

honour for a lifetime work for the rights of indigenous people and for his untiring efforts "to save the Amazon forest from destruction".

Austria's state and government leaders were unanimously pleased. In a press release Federal President Heinz Fischer expressed his hope that the Alternative Nobel Prize would be "an encouragement to Kräutler to continue his work for human rights and environmental protection consistently". Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann also praised the Bishop: "Thanks to his persistent endeavours, he lent a voice to people who very often are not heard by society". The work of the man born in Vorarlberg in Xingu demonstrated "how important the commitment of an individual could be in the struggle for improving human rights and environmental protection".

Kräutler shares the Alternative Nobel Prize 2010 (200,000 euro) with three other laureates. The award ceremony takes place in the Swedish Parliament on 6 December 2010. Before Kräutler, two other Austrians received this prize, i.e. economist Leopold Kohr in 1983 and futurologist Robert Jungk in 1986.

Bishop Kräutler – who has been decisively influenced by liberation theology – was granted the award especially for his commitment to the indigenous people massively discriminated against as well as to peasants and farm labourers in Brazil. Since 1981 he has been bishop of the Prelacy of Xingu, Brazil's largest diocese with an area of 350,000 square kilometres and 400,000 inhabitants. In 1987 Bishop Kräutler narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. He is among the fiercest opponents of the Belo Monte dam project.

President Fischer and Minister Spindelegger at UN in New York

At the recent UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (combat against poverty, famine, disease and violence) and the UN General Assembly in New York, Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger took a stand on issues like strengthening the role of women in developing countries and enhancing their involvement in conflict settlement.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger also participated in a service held on the occasion of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles at the Park East Synagogue in Manhattan on 25 September 2010, where he was allowed to present a statement – an exceptional gesture of Rabbi Arthur Schneier, who had been born in Vienna.

ECONOMY

Budget: positive trends of tax revenue and deficit

The favourable tax revenue trend observed since the beginning of the year continued in July and August. Based on current figures provided by the Ministry of Finance, public revenue totalled 41.34 billion euro in the first eight months of this year; this corresponds to an increase by 4.7% compared to the same period of the previous year. Minister of Finance Josef Pröll therefore expects a slightly lower budget deficit but rejected any relaxation of austerity measures. Based on the latest estimates, the deficit will probably amount to 3.58% of the GDP, while in April a deficit of 4.1% had been assumed. The situation in the Länder remains problematic.

Consumers continue to make a major contribution to the public budget. In the first eight months, revenue from value-added tax totalled 18.67 billion (plus 5.4%). Income tax (plus 8.7% to 1.3 billion euro) and capital gains tax on dividends (plus 6.3% to 887.8 million euro) also recorded above-average increases. Revenue from corporate tax on company profits was soaring (plus 17.4% to 2.36 billion euro).

As in the past, revenue from wage tax remained below average (plus 0.3%, amounting to about 13 billion euro). Capital gains tax on interest declined drastically (minus 16% to 410 million euro), revenue from tobacco tax amounted to 1 billion euro (plus 2.4%), while mineral oil tax totalled 2.3 billion euro (plus 3%).

The contributions of the Länder and municipalities to the tax revenue of the Federal Republic continue to decline. In the first eight months, their share in the total revenue amounted to 12.6 billion euro (minus 3.9%). The EU contribution also dropped substantially (minus 9.6% to 1.57 billion euro). The share of the Federal Republic in the total tax income rose by 11% to 24.65 billion euro, compared to the same period of 2009.

Ecofin: Austria in favour of tax on financial transactions

At the informal meeting of EU finance ministers (Ecofin) in Brussels on 1 October 2010, Minister of Finance Josef Pröll made another attempt to propagate a tax on financial transactions. After the crisis this tax was a must, explained Minister Pröll. The question whether this tax would have to be paid into the EU budget or into the national budgets had been left open “deliberately“.

In any case, “the net contributors have to be guaranteed that no new financial demands will be imposed on them as long as they are forced to adopt austerity packages at home“, stated the Minister of Finance with a view to the forthcoming delicate negotiations on the EU framework budget for the period 2014 to 2020. Based on Austria’s proposal, a uniform tax rate of 0.01% up to 0.05% should be applied. The new financial transactions tax would be levied on trade in shares, bonds and derivatives. According to projections of the Austrian federal government, the global income from this tax would total no less than 200 to 250 billion euro even if the lowest tax rate was applied. The EU would benefit from an additional income of 100 billion euro. By comparison, the EU’s proposed budget for 2011 amounts to 130.1 billion euro.

Before introducing this (controversial) tax, it must obviously be discussed at technical level and examined for global feasibility.

After the session of the Council of Ministers on 28 September 2010, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann reported that he perceived growing support for a global financial transactions tax in the EU and considered joint action possible. The Council of Ministers had adopted the respective position paper of the federal government, which emphasised that Austria was primarily seeking “a solution regarding the EU-wide introduction of the tax that should be agreed on at EU level“; otherwise Austria hoped that “possible national financial transactions taxes could at least be coordinated EU-wide“.

Slight increase in summer tourism

The latest hotel night statistics proved that “tourism is and will remain a stable factor in Austria’s economy“, commented Chairman of the Department for the Tourist and Leisure Industry of the Austrian Economic Chamber Hans Schenner the favourable balance of summer tourism, which was presented on 24 September 2010.

According to the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria), the number of hotel nights rose by 1.1% to 46.58 million between May and August. At least two thirds of this total were attributable to foreign guests. The number of foreign guests went up by 1.2%, while domestic tourists increased by 0.8%.

The total number of hotel nights – 95.57 million – in the first eight months of 2010 exceeded the prior-year level by 0.6%. This is the second-best result in the past ten years.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Secretary of State for Media Ostermayer opened Internet Summit Austria**

“The Internet has become part of our everyday lives. The development of a legal framework cannot always keep pace with the emergence of new media, especially in respect of issues such as personal data protection or the right to freedom of expression“, said Secretary of State for Media Josef Ostermayer at the opening of the 2010 Internet Summit Austria on 21 September 2010. The conference organised by the Association of Austrian Internet Services Providers (ISPA) was held at the University of Vienna. It was devoted to the subject “Internet: opportunity and danger for our fundamental rights“. In his statement to the conference Secretary of State Ostermayer, who is also responsible for e-government in Austria, highlighted changes in media use. “The new media have not replaced newspapers, TV and radio but increased the amount of time spent on daily media usage. Daily media consumption rose from 6.5 hours to eight hours per day over the past ten years“. This expansion could be observed also in connection with electronic administration services. “Registering more than 600,000 hits, the information portal HELP.GV.AT achieves monthly records and an increase by more than twenty percent from the prior-year level“, informed the Secretary of State. 100 information desks would have to be open around the clock during two months to cope with the requests that were now made online.

The federal government considered it vital to overcome the “digital gap“. Ostermayer: “A fully functioning Internet access must be available to all people in Austria. The government has therefore made efforts to expand infrastructure throughout Austria“. Frequencies having become available due to the changeover to digital TV could be used for this purpose. “As announced, a call for proposals on using the ‘digital dividend’ for mobile broadband will be launched in early 2012“.

To react better to the fast developments in the sphere of new media, the government had established the centre of excellence “Internetgesellschaft” (“Internet Society”). “This centre of excellence will submit a list of priorities concerning the most important communications and information policy measures to the Council of Ministers every six months“, said the Secretary of State. The first set of measures would be presented in January 2011.

“When it comes to protecting fundamental rights on the Internet or to putting a halt to child pornography, incitement to hatred or circumventing the law against Nazism, we often face inadequacies in our national legislation“, Ostermayer explained the dangers of the relocation of servers to foreign countries. “Hence, we need international responses to these issues“. As global cooperation was still in its infancy, events focusing on these topics were a vital step towards finding feasible solutions. We need a fair balance between regulatory frameworks and the freedom of opinion in a healthy democracy“, concluded Secretary of State Ostermayer.

Press freedom: Faymann, Ostermayer, Bandion-Ortner welcome new idea

On 21 September 2010, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Secretary of State for Media Josef Ostermayer welcomed the idea of discussing press secrecy and media law on a broad basis. “Press freedom and practical work in journalism are being put to the test“, said Faymann in response to a respective proposal of Minister of Justice Claudia Bandion-Ortner after the meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Ostermayer pointed out that he had demanded from the very beginning that all stakeholders should participate in the discussion on press freedom and press secrecy. “I think this proposal is a very good one“. The recent ruling of the Vienna Court of Appeal regarding court access to footage produced by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) for the TV report series “Am Schauplatz“ had shown that in the context of press secrecy it was also necessary to discuss the need for clearer rules. Faymann was also of the opinion that it was “right to ask the question how strong the press secrecy is“. On 28 September 2010, Minister of Justice Claudia Bandion-Ortner supported the call for a wider discussion, e.g. by holding a special parliamentary assembly on press freedom and media law, in which foreign experts would participate.

Michael Ogris appointed chairman of the new independent Media Authority

Former boss of the Austrian Communications Authority “KommAustria” Michael Ogris was appointed chairman of the new independent media authority. Florian Philapitsch, previously holding the position of Vice Chairman of KommAustria, became his deputy. The respective proposal of the federal government was unanimously adopted by the Main Committee of the National Council on 22 September 2010.

Besides the two leaders, the three remaining members of the five-person committee were appointed. Susanne Lackner, Martina Hohensinn and Michael Truppe were selected for these positions. Hohensinn and Truppe had been active in the Department “Media Affairs, Coordination of the Information Society, Funding of Political Parties and their Academies” within the Constitutional Service of the Federal Chancellery. Susanne Lackner is media and telecommunications law consultant and gained comprehensive experience in Austrian and European media law.

The new structure of KommAustria took effect on 1 October 2010. Hence, KommAustria became an independent media authority based on European standards. The new legal provisions guarantee that the National Council is involved in the appointment of the members of the media authority. In amending the law, the rules on incompatibility were tightened to ensure the members’ independence. A direct change of staff from the ORF and other media enterprises to the media authority is, for example, forbidden.

Austrian Cultural Forum in New York: exhibition on conflict in the Balkans

How do artists react after 20 years of nationalism, war and racism in the Balkans conflict? Which personal and collective strategies can they recommend? These subjects are addressed in the exhibition “Serbia – Frequently Asked Questions“, which was inaugurated at the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York on 22 September 2010. The show jointly financed with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade comprises works by 18 artists from all territories of the former Yugoslav Republic, among them many Serbs. But also artists from Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and the USA participate in the show – “the super stars of the art scene who felt affected by the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia”, stated Head of the Cultural Forum Andreas Stadler. He curated the exhibition together with art historian Branislav Dimitrijević.

Originally, Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and Serbian President Boris Tadić were to open the exhibition. But owing to constraints of time in connection with the UN summit, the two politicians had to cancel their participation at very short notice. Spindelegger arrived in New York just a few hours before the exhibition opening to attend the UN General Assembly.

The title “Serbia – Frequently Asked Questions“ alludes to the insecurity people feel vis-

à-vis Serbia today. The artists challenge above all national stereotypes. The exhibition presents for example works by the Serbian video artist Katarina Zdjelar, who lives in Rotterdam and investigates cultural stereotypes, interferences and barriers between ethnic nationalism and transcultural globalisation.

In an interview with the Austrian Press Agency (APA), Stadler described this show as the most important exhibition on Serbia and former Yugoslavia, not only of the last ten years but also in the next decades. In parallel to the event at the Austrian Cultural Forum, renowned New-York-based cultural institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, the New York Public Library and Columbia University organise a three-month festival that explores the lessons learnt from the conflict in former Yugoslavia and focuses in particular on the Serbian national myth.

Why is the exhibition staged at the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York? “The conflict in Yugoslavia affected Austria more than any other country, not least because of the numerous refugees. This has created problems in foreign but also in domestic policy”, explained Stadler. Financial support was also granted by the Open Society (Soros) Foundation and a number of European cultural institutions. The exhibition at East 52nd Street 11 in Manhattan is running until 9 January 2011.

www.acfny.org

Palace of Porcia: 90th anniversary of Austria’s Constitution

The exhibition “Having a Good Constitution“ marking the 90th anniversary of the Austrian Constitution was developed by the Federal Chancellery and the Austrian State Archives. It can be visited at the Palace of Porcia (Herrengasse 23, 1010 Vienna) until 12 November 2010 (excluding 1 November).

The exhibition was opened by Secretary of State Ostermayer, who welcomed high-ranking personalities such as Barbara Prammer, Speaker of Parliament.

The Constitution was amended several times in the Austrian history. The founding fathers of republican Austria – then only men – could partly build on the models of the Monarchy but with the new state something qualitatively new was created in 1918/19. On 30 October 1918, the Provisional National Assembly passed a resolution on the main public institutions to pave the way for the Republic, which was proclaimed on 12 November 1918. Different concepts were discussed, models of other countries (Switzerland, USA) were analysed until

the Federal Constitution Act (Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz/B-VG) was adopted on 1 October 1920. It was a compromise of the strongest parties, i.e. the Social Democrats and the Christian Social Party.

In the First Republic (1918-1938) the Constitution was amended several times. The most important changes were made in the revision of 1929, when the Federal President of Austria was assigned the task of appointing the government, granted the right to dissolve the National Council and to pass emergency ordinances under parliamentary supervision. This amendment to the Federal Constitution Act is in principle still valid after it had been repealed in 1933 by the corporative state ("Ständestaat") and after Austria lost its independence due to its annexation ("Anschluss") to the National Socialist German Reich in 1938.

After re-establishing the (now Second) Republic of Austria on 27 April 1945, the Federal Constitution Act as amended in 1929 – including all modifications until 1933 – was re-enacted. Since then, the Federal Constitution Act has been amended repeatedly as it reflects the dynamic life of the state.

The highly informative show presents the cornerstones in the development of the past 90 years. The achievements of key players (politicians, law experts, etc.) are illustrated with the aid of (original) documents, facsimiles, pictures, busts, etc., providing impressive insights into the historic background of the Constitution.

In cooperation with the Democracy Workshop of the Austrian Parliament, the exhibition also offers workshops to those wishing to gain more in-depth knowledge.

The exhibition has been geared specifically towards pupils and apprentices. It is the aim of the Federal Chancellery and the State Archives to attract as many young people as possible to the exhibition.

Mon. to Fri., 10a.m. to 4 p.m., no advance booking necessary, free admission.

Federal Press Service: "Seitenweise" – the manifold aspects of books

On 30 September 2010, the Federal Chancellery celebrated a new publication of the Federal Press Service: "Seitenweise – Was das Buch ist" ("Page by Page – What Books are"), edited by Thomas Eder, Samo Kobenter and Peter Plener, in cooperation with "edition atelier" (ISBN 978-3-902498-33-5, € 29.90). On 480 pages, 34 authors – all of them bookworms – present their ideas about books, the fascinating history of the book (Plener), stories

and changes, including digitalisation (Manfred Moser, Gerhard Ruiss). They offer touching reminiscences of days long gone, when books helped to escape provincialism and find freedom, when children identified with literary role models and even rebelled with them – e.g. Eva Pfisterer with David Copperfield or Samo Kobenter with Pinocchio.

Quite a few authors describe their obsession with books. David Axmann reminds of the German Protestant theologian Johann Georg Tinius (1764-1846), who was a bibliomaniac, was said to have hoarded ten thousands of books and allegedly even committed murders to indulge in his passion.

Several contributions were authored by high-level experts, e.g. the Director General of the Austrian National Library, Johanna Rachinger, literary scholar Thomas Eder, who has been the publishing officer of the Federal Press Service since 2009. He investigates the phenomenal, i.e. manifest, aspects of reading. Director General of the Austrian State Archives Lorenz Mikoletzky describes general problems in the context of "Archive and Library". He also presents an anecdote which the wife of the long-time Israeli ambassador to Austria told him. After visiting her then fiancé, she told her mother almost in tears that he hoarded countless books at home. The lady answered wisely: "Better books than women!" (but they are not mutually exclusive, Editor's Note).

The book presentation was moderated masterfully by Daniela Strigl, who devoted her contribution to the "Forgotten Books". Poet Bodo Hell presented a funny rap on the countless types of books. Manfred Matzka – Director General of the Federal Chancellery, the driving force behind Austria's citizen-friendly electronic administration and author of the book "Vieler Herren Häuser" about the palaces of the nobility in Vienna as well as of a superb book about Istria – helped to launch the new book that meets the highest typesetting and printing standards. In his excellently worded speech, Manfred Matzka expressed his sympathy for the old-fashioned "haptic experience of the book". "Seitenweise" could hopefully continue a series started two years ago when the creative football book "Seitenwechsel" (ISBN 978-3-901983-82-5) was published on the occasion of the European Football Championship co-hosted by Austria.

It is amazing how creative the Federal Press Service can get once the tight knot is loosened a bit.

SPORTS POLICY**Vienna: hundreds of thousands of people visited the “Day of Sport“**

“Sports heroes” flocked to Heldenplatz (literally translated as “Heroes’ Square”) in Vienna, who in turn were cheered by 400,000 visitors. With ten hours of show and action, the tenth “Day of Sport“ on 25 September 2010 became a celebration of Austrian sport, which could not have been more glamorous.

“The enthusiasm displayed by both athletes and visitors is an impressive proof of the crucial importance attached to sport and physical exercise in our society“, stated Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos. “The diversity of Austrian sport and the range of activities is growing every year, and it is great to witness how this wide spectrum is managed by sports associations, active athletes and various partners and readily received by the public.“

11 Olympic medallists, 24 world champions, as well as 54 European champions and three men’s teams winning European championships (American football, hockey, fistball) were among those 380 athletes who received awards on the stage and were surrounded at the autograph stands by thousands of fans.

“For us the Day of Sport is a welcome event taking place in a unique atmosphere and allowing us to meet our fans“, stressed Olympic medallist in ski jumping Andi Kofler on behalf of the participating sports stars.

One of the numerous highlights of the event was the “Magic Moments Arena”. Pupils competed with world-class athletes on an obstacle course. Moreover, the special stamp issued by the Austrian Mail Service was presented on this occasion. The stamp shows a picture of Andreas and Wolfgang Linger winning twice Olympic gold in the men’s double luge event; this year’s first edition is limited to 160,000 stamps.

Most sports disciplines were presented by active athletes on the awards stage and the two show stages. At this year’s Day of Sport, the spotlight was also turned on volleyball as Austria will host the 2011 European Championship together with the Czech Republic. Other presentations also gave a foretaste of important sports events taking place in Austria within the next twelve months such as the bowling, luge natural track, American football and fistball world championships as well as the Mountain Bike Marathon European Championships.

Entertainer Roberto Blanco and the trio “3 Extreme“ presented music acts. Roberto Blanco – just like Gary Howard of the Flying

Pickets – had already participated in “Una Notte Sportiva“ held (for the seventh time) at Hofburg in Vienna on the eve of the Day of Sport. Numerous awards were presented also at this gala, e.g. to the Linger brothers and “goleador“ Hans Krankl.

European Champs: Austria excels in table tennis and competition climbing

The Austrian athletes’ success in various sports disciplines continued also in September. At the European Competition Climbing Championships held in Tyrol, Austrians won two gold medals, one silver medal and two bronze medals. Austria owes a double victory in lead climbing to Angela Eiter and Johanna Ernst. Jakob Schubert came in third in the men’s competition. Anna Stöhr earned a gold medal at the Bouldering World Cup in the presence of 5000 enthusiastic fans; Kilian Fischhuber won bronze in the men’s event.

Moreover, Austria had a reason to celebrate at the European Table Tennis Championships in Ostrava (former German name: Ostrau) in the Czech Republic. Winning bronze in the men’s singles event, Werner Schlager earned his 17th medal in European championships, Austrian Federal Army athlete Liu Jia even made it to the finals, grabbing a silver medal.

Minister of Sport Darabos: “Every weekend, we have several reasons to celebrate – and we can do so in the most diverse sports disciplines. I congratulate all medallists, who demonstrated once more that the “sports nation” Austria has moved to the international top even in a number of summer disciplines“, said Minister Darabos.

Minister Darabos thanks Mirna Jukic for her achievements and appeal

After winning a total of 22 medals at large-scale events, Mirna Jukic (24) – one of Austria’s most successful athletes – resigned from professional swimming. “Her success was valuable – for her personally and for Austrian sport – and has also been an important driving force behind the swimming boom in Austria. She has been and is a shining example to fledgling athletes“, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos praised the exceptional swimmer born in Croatia. Besides earning numerous medals, Mirna Jukic was awarded the title “Athlete of the Year” three times.

“We will miss Mirna as an athlete. But I hope that she will continue working in a different capacity for Austrian sport in the future. I thank her for her commitment and wish her all the best for her future“, said Minister Darabos.