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**The editorial team thanks all loyal readers for their interest and support.
The next issue of "News from Austria" will appear in early January.
We wish you a peaceful, happy year 2011!**

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HOME AFFAIRS

Red-white-red card for qualified immigrants

Austria revised its immigration policy by introducing a new admission system for immigrants. After entry into force of the new red-white-red card (RWR card) in July 2011, the inflow of citizens from non-EU Member States (“third countries”) will be subject to specific criteria, while immigration quotas will be abolished. The “rigid quota system“ not taking into account the job qualifications of immigrants will be “replaced by a criteria-driven system“, explained Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter, who presented the planned new rules on 9 December 2010 together with Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner and Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer.

The RWR card is granted on a points-based system. RWR card holders gain the right of abode and labour market access. Criteria that have to be met to achieve a specific number of points are occupational qualifications, education, language skills, age, etc. If these criteria are satisfied, immigrants are allowed to settle down and work in Austria. The previous quota system is no longer applied, and the entire system of residence is restructured in accordance with the new rules. Three groups may apply for RWR cards: highly qualified migrants (e.g. management, medicine, IT), qualified migrants in scarce occupations (nurses, milling cutters, tinsmiths – the respective “scarce occupations” are defined according to demand) as well as other highly qualified personnel that cannot be replaced by domestic jobseekers.

In addition, a “RWR card plus” will be introduced. It will grant unrestricted labour market access and offer prospects for permanent residence. The card will be issued for family members (e.g. of skilled workers), in cases of residence for humanitarian reasons and for people with residence permits. It may also be claimed by persons previously holding RWR cards and “EU Blue Cards“.

Top professionals and specialised workforce immigrating to Austria on the basis of the RWR-card system are not required to have a knowledge of German before their arrival. Different rules will apply to family members of immigrants: dependants of top professionals of the first pillar (highly qualified university graduates) do not have to speak German before coming to Austria. Family members of the second (scarce occupations/top qualifications) and third pillar (other key labour/average

qualification) must have at least basic German language skills. Procedures to extend residence are facilitated for persons learning the language during their stay in Austria.

Budget 2011

At the session of the Council of Ministers on 30 November 2010, the federal government adopted the 2011 Federal Finance Act laying down the budgetary framework. Minister of Finance Josef Pröll delivered his budget speech to the National Council. The National Council will approve the Federal Finance Act on 22 December 2010. (The budget framework for the period up to 2014 had been presented in spring.) The 2011 budget with a projected deficit of 3.2% entails cuts in family allowances and long-term care benefits as well as tax increases and new taxes (bank and airline ticket taxes). Pröll defended these measures in his budget speech, pointing out that debt reduction was not possible without expenditure cuts. “Fewer debts, less interest, more for Austria”, was his credo.

The government plans to reduce spending by 8.1 billion euro by 2014. According to Pröll, this would result in a decrease in interest payments by 4 billion euro. The general government deficit was expected to decline to 2.2% by 2014 thanks to the unexpectedly favourable economic situation. The debt ratio would increase from currently 70.2% of the GDP to 72.5% by 2014. The general government debt was likely to amount to about 209 billion euro. Hence, Austria was doing “clearly better” than other EU countries, emphasised the Minister.

In accordance with the new law, family allowance for young people aged 24 and 25 years will be abolished only with effect 1 July 2011 (while the first draft had envisaged 1 January 2011). Moreover, entitlement to family allowance may be extended by one year in the case of longer studies (e.g. medicine), for young people on parental leave, doing military/civilian service or a voluntary social year. Students entitled to grants will be compensated for the loss of family allowance.

The multiple-child supplement (currently 36.40 euro for the third and each additional child) will be reduced to 20 euro. Pensions up to 1,155 euro will continue to be eligible for a tax deduction for sole earners (without dependants).

The lump-sum allowance for commuters will increase by 30 million (instead of 15 million) euro due to the higher mineral oil tax. The standard petrol consumption tax will be raised only with effect 1 March 2011.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Halonen and Napolitano received by Federal President Fischer**

Federal President Heinz Fischer held informal talks with Finnish President Tarja Halonen and his Italian counterpart Giorgio Napolitano at his residence at Vienna's former imperial palace Hofburg on 11 December 2010. Subjects for debate were the EU's euro-rescue umbrella and the climate conference in Cancún.

The official programme included a visit to Leopold Museum and a concert at Musikverein.

Heads of government of Croatia and Hungary meet with Faymann

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann is placing strong emphasis on foreign affairs still before Christmas. On 13 December 2010 he receives Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor for a working lunch, one day later, on 14 December 2010, he will invite Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban for official talks to the Federal Chancellery. Issues like Croatia's EU accession talks, the combat against corruption and other measures to tackle the economic crisis will be discussed.

Heinz Fischer in Kazakhstan: meeting with President Nazarbayev

After the OSCE summit meeting in the Kazakh capital Astana, Federal President Heinz Fischer paid a bilateral working visit to President Nursultan Nazarbayev on 3 December 2010. Both sides highlighted the good bilateral economic relations. Austria was "an important partner in the European area", said Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev. The Kazakh industry's innovation programme "Path to Europe" offered opportunities for Austria. Important passenger flows were routed to Asia via the flight connection of the Austrian Airlines to Astana. Nazarbayev also stressed that Kazakhstan supplied Austria with petrol and that there were 92 joint ventures with Austrian partners.

Fischer referred to a "very important, pleasant and successful visit" – the first of an Austrian head of state to Kazakhstan. This country offered many mineral resources, while Austria could contribute state-of-the-art technology and experience in the hospital and infrastructure sectors. The OMV was the partner in the energy sector on the Austrian side, said President Fischer.

Austria and Germany invited to Balkans conference in Berlin

Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger and his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle had extended a joint invitation to a Western Balkans conference of high-ranking officials in Berlin on 10 and 11 December 2010. Among the conference attendees were the deputy heads of government and foreign ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro. Before the beginning of the conference, Spindelegger had held talks with German President Christian Wulff.

The first conference day took place in the Austrian embassy in Berlin, the second day was devoted to talks in a small circle on the premises of the Aspen Institute, acting as a co-host. The aims of the conference were to intensify dialogue among the countries of this region and to promote the EU integration of the Western Balkans. Spindelegger reiterated his firm commitment to a European perspective for the states of the Western Balkans. "Europe is not complete without these countries. They form part of it", stressed the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Spindelegger informed that an integration conference would take place in Vienna in early 2011, in which Turkey would participate. He announced a new initiative in the framework of the EU's Danube Strategy and informed that the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia spotlighting the Danube area, the Black Sea region and Central Asia as a specific economic area would take place in Vienna on 8 and 9 June 2011. In a press release issued on the Human Rights Day on 10 December 2010, Spindelegger described the freedom of religion as a "fundamental human right" and pledged his commitment to an initiative at European level to protect the freedom of religion as well as religious minorities.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Sudan

In the preliminaries of the referendum on independence for the south of Sudan on 9 January 2011, Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger stated that "great progress" had been made in organising the referendum and registering voters. Therefore the referendum could be held according to plan countrywide, except for the Abyei region, said Spindelegger. On 8 December 2010, the Minister had met with representatives of the two regions of the country as well as with South Africa's former President Thabo Mbeki, who acts as the international community's mediator in this conflict.

ECONOMY**D-A-CH Reform Barometer: Austria makes progress in reforms**

In the three-country comparison of the so-called D-A-CH Reform Barometer (D-A-CH stands for Germany, Austria and Switzerland), Austria has made the greatest leap forward and was ranked second closely behind Switzerland. Germany dropped from the first place in 2009 to the third.

With its reform efforts, Austria was “not a shining example“, but this year’s three-country comparison showed that the federal government had done “remarkably well”, concluded Christoph Schneider, head of the Economic Policy Department of the Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich/WKÖ) at the presentation of the latest data in Berlin on 6 December 2010.

“By adopting the Federal Financial Framework Act, the federal government had embarked on a new path in budget policy”, said Schneider. The planned abolishment of the fee on loan agreements was also showing positive effects. The means-tested guaranteed minimum income entailing extra expenditure of more than 200 million euro had, however, had a dampening effect on Austria’s rating.

In the three-country comparison Austria boasted the best performance over the past 12 months. Between October 2009 and September 2010, its score on the Reform Barometer climbed from 107.8 to 113.1 index points (by 5.3 points). Switzerland moved up by 4.2 index points. With a total of 114.4 index points it was ranked first, closely before Austria. Germany lost 2.9 index points, dropping to the bottom with a total of 108.1 index points.

The D-A-CH Reform Barometer has been used to measure momentum for reform in the labour market, social, tax and fiscal policies of Germany, Austria and Switzerland since 2002.

Labour market: fewer jobseekers, more working people in November

The situation in the domestic labour market has improved also in November. The number of unemployed persons dropped by 13,399 (or 5.2%) to 244,346 compared to the previous year. Adding the 73,101 persons participating in public training programmes, 317,447 people were without a job at the end of the month, this means that the number of persons affected declined by 19,080 year-on-year. With 60,000 new jobs (+1.9%), the employment record of 2008 was exceeded by about 7,300 jobs, as the

Ministry of Social Affairs informed on 1 December 2010.

Unemployment was decreasing in all sectors, particularly in industry where the number of jobseekers went down by 27% to 22,555 persons. But an above-average decrease was also recorded in unemployment in the construction sector (minus 6.6%) and in trade (minus 5.9%). The number of jobless men dropped more drastically (minus 8.4%) than that of unemployed women (minus 1.3%). Among young people unemployment decreased by 8.4% (to 38,869 persons). While the number of young people seeking apprenticeship places shrank by 2.1% in November, vacancies for apprentices rose by 2%. A comparison of Länder shows that unemployment decreased in all Länder apart from Vienna.

The unemployment rate based on the national method of calculation stood at 6.7% in November, corresponding to a year-on-year decrease by 0.4 percentage points. The unemployment rate for older workers declined by 0.3 percentage points to 7.2%. With a minus of 24.6%, the number of long-term unemployed persons decreased sharply.

The Federation of Social Insurance Institutions informed on 2 December 2010 that based on final data 3,405,449 persons were employed in November, i.e. 1.62% or 54,443 persons more than in the previous month. The level of employed persons rose in all Länder.

OeNB issues upward revision of forecast: GDP grows by 2.1% in 2011

Adopting a more optimistic stance on Austria’s future economic development than at mid-year, the Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank/OeNB) revised its growth forecast on 3 December 2010. The gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to go up by 1.9% in 2010 (vs. 1.6% predicted in June). For 2011 an economic growth of 2.1% is assumed (vs. 1.8% in June), while a growth rate of 2.3% (vs. 2.1%) is forecast for 2012. The upswing is mainly driven by exports. In late 2011 exports are likely to reach the pre-crisis level. The austerity package would dampen private consumption and temporarily accelerate inflation, stated the OeNB experts. Consequently, GDP growth would go down by half a percentage point. OeNB boss Ewald Nowotny praised the federal government’s budget consolidation efforts but at the same appealed to reduce the mountain of debt. Of course, this was an “ambitious” and “difficult” goal, admitted Nowotny. Employment would continue growing in the next two years.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

Stockholm: “Alternative Nobel Prize” to bishop Erwin Kräutler in Amazonia

Erwin Kräutler from Vorarlberg, bishop of the diocese Xingu in the Brazilian Amazon rain-forest received one of this year’s Right Livelihood Awards – also referred to as “Alternative Nobel Prizes”. In his speech delivered at the award ceremony at the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm, the 71-year-old looked back on his combat against the ecological and social destruction of the Amazon region lasting for no less than 45 years.

Kräutler provided a dramatic description of the threats posed by various energy and industrial projects to the Amazon region. With regard to the inhabitants of his diocese, notably the indigenous population, Kräutler said: “These people know very well that they will not survive if Amazonia continues to be disrespected and destroyed. And they know that destruction will have irreversible consequences on the planet Earth. This will be the true apocalypse“. Bishop Kräutler stated that he accepted the Right Livelihood Award on behalf of all his fellow campaigners and the indigenous population of Amazonia. He also reminded of “dozens of people who sacrificed their lives, whose blood was shed and who were assassinated brutally because they had opposed the systematic destruction of Amazonia“.

In his presentation speech, the founder of the Right Livelihood Award Jakob von Uexküll paid tribute to this year’s Right Livelihood Award laureates. Defying powerful interests, Bishop Kräutler fought for granting indigenous groups full constitutional rights, took action against child abuse and mobilised opposition against the Belo Monte dam – often exposing himself to personal danger. “Bishop Erwin Kräutler is a lighthouse – not only in his diocese but also internationally.“

Besides Bishop Kräutler, also Nigerian environmentalist Nnimmo Bassey, the self-help organisation Sappros Nepal and its Chairman Shrikrishna Upadhyay as well as the organisation “Physicians for Human Rights-Israel“ received Right Livelihood Awards. This prize has been granted since 1980. The prize money in 2010 was 200,000 euro.

Alarming results of the PISA study for Austria challenges governing coalition

Compared to PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2006, Austrian students lost 20 points in the proficiency test “reading”, on which this PISA cycle had fo-

cused. Based on this result, Austria had to face a dramatic deterioration in the PISA study 2009 presented on 7 December 2010. The OECD admitted, however, that interpretation of this result was subject to “reservations”. The data complied with the technical standards of the OECD but the possibility could not be ruled out that a call to boycott PISA during the first test week had influenced the students and/or had had a negative impact on the framework conditions.

In the reading tests of previous PISA studies the Austrian students had achieved very similar scores (2000: 492, 2003: 491, 2006: 490). Austria has always been significantly below the OECD average but in 2009 only the OECD countries Turkey, Chile and Mexico are behind Austria. In this context it should, however, be pointed out that the OECD average score in reading dropped from 500 to 493 between 2000 and 2009 due to the inclusion of new countries.

In mathematics the Austrian students seem to have been more motivated – according to the OECD. In this subject the Austrian students achieved a score of 496, this corresponds exactly to the OECD average (rank 18) and to a minus of nine points compared to PISA 2006 (but also in mathematics the OECD average declined by two points between 2006 and 2009). In 2003 Austria had scored 506 points in mathematics, compared to 503 in 2000.

In science the Austrian students achieved a score of 494, this a minus of 17 points compared to 2006. This means that their score deteriorated from a level that was significantly above the OECD average to a level significantly below it (OECD average 2009: 501). Another striking fact is that the science score has always fluctuated. In 2000 the Austrian students achieved 505 points, in 2003 491 points and in 2006 511 points. Therefore, the score of 494 in science is not an all-time low.

The development concerning so-called “at-risk students“ is particularly dramatic. In 2009 28 percent of all students at the end of compulsory school age failed to understand the full meaning of the text in the reading literacy test, whereas this share had stood only at 21.5 percent in 2006. In 2009 15 percent of the students belonged to the risk group in all three test areas, compared to merely ten percent in 2006.

Günter Haider, head of the Federal Institute of Educational Research (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung (BIFIE)), presents an example to illustrate to what extent the performance of students deteriorated in the PISA study. If

there are 60 reading questions in total, a minus of about 20 points means that on average only 37 questions – instead of 40 – are answered correctly. It was difficult to assess the deterioration – especially in reading proficiency – differentiated by academic year because at the age when students were tested they hardly acquired new reading skills. The downward trend could be explained only partly by the increasing share of migrants in the total number of students (from eleven to 15 percent between 2000 and 2009), who accounted for “a maximum of three points“, said BIFIE expert Claudia Schreiner.

Participating in the educational study PISA for the first time, Shanghai (People’s Republic of China) became number one in all test areas. This did not come as a surprise to sinologist Barbara Mittler of the University of Heidelberg: “The Chinese school system is geared towards swotting for exams and discipline, this leads to top performance“, she commented drily. In addition, China relied heavily on educating leaders in elite schools – and the best were to be found in the largest cities of the country, e.g. in Beijing or Shanghai. “Like Harvard but at school level“, said Mittler.

In China tough learning started already at nursery school. Elite schools for the “best of the best” existed already at primary school level, described Mittler. There was a sizeable rural-urban divide: “In principle, a child may work its way up from a rural school to a city school through excellent performance – but this happens very rarely“. After primary school lasting six years, students attended middle school, which was divided into two three-year study programmes. Compulsory schooling ended after nine years, those pupils attending school for another three years could complete education with the A-level exam.

This middle school was a comprehensive school in terms of organisation. But due to the division into elite and normal schools, the system seemed more comparable to the Austrian system distinguishing between higher academic and lower secondary schools, stated Mittler. But in general the Chinese school system was more rigorous than for example that of Germany, the standards for tests were also higher. The aim of the Chinese school system was to make students learn information by heart and reproduce it.

Not only Shanghai but also other Asian states like South Korea or Japan achieved excellent results in the different PISA literacy tests. In the reading proficiency test Finnish students

were leading in Europe, while in America the best result was achieved by Canadian students. The alarming PISA results for Austria did not come as a surprise. The governing coalition of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) has been struggling over major improvements in the school system for months. Coalition coordinator Josef Ostermayer (SPÖ) expects the coalition government to agree on an educational reform in 2011, as announced by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. The SPÖ wanted to convince the ÖVP that comprehensive school for all pupils aged between 10 and 14 years was “the right way forward“. However, ÖVP Secretary-General Fritz Kaltenegger is not enthusiastic about this idea. The ÖVP would present its own educational concept no later than in early 2011, focusing predominantly on improvements in primary and nursery schools. Especially because Austria had done so badly in the reading proficiency test, a “language school” offering compulsory remedial German lessons had to be created within primary school.

Minister of Science Beatrix Karl proposes the introduction of compulsory remedial lessons in the afternoon for pupils facing difficulties.

Minister of Education Claudia Schmied (SPÖ) has been advocating the further development of the “New Middle School”, which is considered a “forerunner” of the comprehensive school, for a long time. The Minister has received favourable feedback from the Länder.

After the Council of Ministers on 7 December 2010, Federal Chancellor Faymann stressed that next year in-depth discussions had to be held on issues such as comprehensive school, all-day school, teacher training and a new teacher employment law to foster children’s educational interests in Austria. Plenty of concepts had already been exchanged, in 2011 decisions had to be taken. Regarding the results of the PISA test, the Chancellor said that they demonstrated the need for educational reform. According to him, the introduction of the common school for the age group 10 to 14 years was a top priority. Educational experts recommended this school type, there were only very few countries in Europe that had no comprehensive schools. Promoting equal opportunities, it was one of the most important building blocks of a better educational system. Dividing children into different groups at an early age did not improve the overall performance. The “New Middle School” was an intermediate step. The further development of this type of school was advocated by all stakeholders. Es-

pecially those demanding excellence should be in favour of a comprehensive school system as it laid the foundation for future top performance. The reform had to embrace a wide spectrum, from child care facilities as educational institutions (“pre-school year) to the financing of university places. The Chancellor placed strong emphasis on the further development of all-day schooling; in the budget for priority projects 80 million euro annually had been earmarked for this purpose until 2014. www.bifie.at/PISA

Cairo Biennale: Ulrike Müller represents Austria

At the 12th International Cairo Biennale from 12 December to 12 February 2010 Austria will be represented with a new series of works by Ulrike Müller. Achim Hochdörfer, the curator of Austria’s contribution to the Cairo Biennale, selected the artist and co-publisher of the feminist art magazine LTTR, who designed 18 enamel paintings and three large-sized rugs for Egypt’s most important art show. Müller (born in Vorarlberg and living in New York) was exploring the “field of tension between inner reality, projection and perception”, said Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied, who expressed her conviction that the “art location Austria was represented optimally by the works of the globally active artist“.

Müller uses Ingeborg Bachmann’s unfinished novel “Der Fall Franza“ (“The Book of Franza”) – partly describing a trip to Egypt in the mid-1960s – as reference point for her associations. In her observations and descriptions Bachmann did not only criticise patriarchal violence but also the relations between the Western and Egyptian culture.

According to Schmied, Müller had translated this criticism into visual patterns, in which she “realised complex affective and violent structures“: “Lines and shapes meet, penetrate, separate, entangle, disentangle and dissolve.“ She explained that Müller, who had described her artistic work “as a continuation and wider interpretation of feminist issues”, had created this series in baked enamel. In general, the artist trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna also used text, audio and video installations. Recently she also created small-sized drawings.

Achim Hochdörfer has been curator at Vienna’s Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation (MUMOK) since 2001. At present, he is preparing an exhibition with Tacita Dean (March 2011) and a Claes Oldenburg retrospective (February 2012) for MUMOK.

Graz: “manuskripte” celebrated anniversary

Literaturhaus in Graz had two reasons to celebrate on 3 December 2010: the opening of the show “Peter Handke and manuskripte“ and the presentation of the “manuskripte“ jubilee edition – a superb two-volume issue – marking the 50th anniversary of the literary magazine. The spotlight was turned on Alfred Kolleritsch, the magazine’s editor since the first issue. In the presence of numerous famous poets, the head of the “House of Literature” Gerhard Melzer praised the “lifetime achievements of Kolleritsch and his affectionate approach to literature“. Curator Klaus Kastberger, who had transferred the exhibition “Peter Handke: Werkschau“ from Vienna to Graz, thanked for staging his exhibition in the “most beautiful setting possible“ in a literary environment as Handke and “manuskripte“ were inseparably linked. According to him, Graz was a “place of transition” for Handke, who also had two long-time friends in Graz, Alfred Kolleritsch and the painter Peter Pongratz. The exhibition section focusing on Handke’s stay in Graz gives insight into the 1960s in the Styrian capital, when a group of Austrian writers emerged in Graz (“Grazer Gruppe“). Handke became friends with Wolfgang Bauer, Gunter Falk as well as Klaus Hoffer and Wilhelm Hengstler, who were among the attendees. Kolleritsch, visibly moved, explained that he owed his “survival” as an editor during 50 years to the authors of “manuskripte“: “This will not change – the anniversary issue demonstrates that the young authors get along very well with the older ones“. Visitors may not only admire this issue of “manuskripte”, but also a section of the show devoted to the magazine, which was curated by German literature expert Kurt Bartsch. It showcases exquisite contributions to the 190 volumes, authored by Elfriede Jelinek, Friedericke Mayröcker, Ernst Jandl and Vaclav Havel.

The Swiss authors Urs Widmer and Jürg Ledracher, Angela Krauss from Germany as well as the Austrians Robert Menasse, Clemens Setz and Günter Eichberger also extended their congratulations. On 4 December 2010 the highlight of the “manuskripte“ jubilee was celebrated. Graz Schauspielhaus invited to “Weiterschreiben. Ein Parcours durch fünf Jahrzehnte manuskripte” (“Writing continued. A tour through five decades of manuskripte”). More than 140 authors and editors came, including Handke himself, Peter Turrini, Suhrkamp boss Ulla Berkewicz and media tsar Hubert Burda. www.literaturhaus-graz.at.

SPORTS POLICY**Funding for high-performance sports increases to four million euro in 2011**

The first “RED-WHITE-RED TEAM” campaign day taking place at the House of Sport on 2 December 2010 drew a large crowd. Despite adverse weather conditions, moderator Edi Finger was pleased to welcome about 70 top athletes, including many world and European champions in various sports disciplines in the hall of mirrors.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, acting as the host, underlined the vital role of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM as a platform attracting wide public attention. Minister Darabos: “The RED-WHITE-RED TEAM formed by Austria’s 450 best athletes stands for a new solidarity in the Austrian sport, and it also has the task of communicating this message. All members of the RWR Team are great personalities and consequently role models, especially for young people. In any case, I am proud that besides being great athletes they also render a service to the cause and support us in our commitment to social concerns, e.g. in the present campaign “Don’t petrify – move!”.

The Minister of Sport presented very pleasant news to the audience, as the budget for top-performance sports of the Federal Republic of Austria will increase from 3.5 million to 4 million euro in 2011.

The Advisory Board of the RWR Team chaired by Hans Holdhaus and its activities were also presented on this occasion. The impressive keynote address “How can I cope with ups and downs in my sports career?” by ski jumping legend Hubert Neuper was applauded enthusiastically.

The “RED-WHITE-RED TEAM” campaign day – which will also be staged in the west and south of Austria next year – was rounded off with a media training workshop and the presentation of the latest TV spots.

Looking back at the sports year 2010: triumphs and medals all year round

The year 2010 is drawing to a highly successful close for the Austrian sport.

At the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver, Austrian athletes won 16 medals. In more than half of the sports disciplines in which Austria competed it was placed among the top three nations. In Vancouver some Austrian athletes could even celebrate historic achievements. Andrea Fischbacher had the race of her life in the women’s super-G, leaving all rivals behind.

The brothers Andreas and Wolfgang Linger won gold in the double luge event at the Olympic Games, which is especially noteworthy as there are hardly any repeat Olympic champions in this discipline. The ski jumpers, Nordic combiners but also biathletes demonstrated impressively how much importance Austria attaches to team sports. Triumphant in international arenas, the stars of the young and trendy disciplines ski cross and snowboarding sent out important messages to the youth.

The European Men’s Handball Championships (held in Austria in January) were undoubtedly among the most important sports events of this year. Becoming ninth in the final ranking and defeating handball nations such as Serbia and Russia, the Austrian team “scored a major goal“. The fact that the Austrian indoor hockey team won the European champion title in the Netherlands was at least as sensational.

Other “domestic” events of the year, e.g. the European Judo Championships in April and the European Climbing Championships in September, were also highly successful from the Austrian perspective.

“Athlete of the Year 2010“ Jürgen Melzer celebrated historic triumphs. Melzer did not only manage to make a spectacular entry in the semi-finals in Paris and to defend his title at the tournament at Vienna’s Stadthalle, but also won the Wimbledon men’s doubles together with his German partner Philipp Petzschner.

In addition, Austrian sailors, table tennis aces, mountain bikers, American footballers, canoeists and swimmers were victorious in 2010.

The top achievements of the small team at the first Youth Olympic Games in Singapore and the delegation at the Paralympics also deserve special mention – due to lack of space it is impossible to provide a complete list of all Austrian athletes excelling in 2010!

The successful beginning of the new winter sports season – with victories of the Alpine skiers, ski jumpers, snowboarders, Nordic combiners and with top ranks occupied by the biathletes – makes Austria look forward to the World Cup competitions with eager anticipation.

The European Volleyball Championships, the American Football World Cup and the Fistball World Championships – which will be staged in Austria – will certainly become highlights of the year 2011.