

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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HOME AFFAIRS**Verena Remler sworn in as new Secretary of State for Families**

The new Secretary of State for Families Verena Remler, a member of the People's Party (ÖVP), was sworn in by Federal President Heinz Fischer at his residence in Hofburg in Vienna on 26 November 2010. Her tasks fall within the remit of the Ministry of Economy.

Verena Remler (38) from eastern Tyrol succeeds to Christine Marek, who changes to Vienna's new Municipal Council as the chairwoman of the ÖVP's parliamentary group. Remler studied law and became the head of the Health and Social Services of Lienz in eastern Tyrol in 2007. She gained political experience in the Municipal Council of Lienz and as a deputy chairwoman and social expert of the Lienz branch of the ÖVP's employee representation "Österreichischer Arbeiter und Angestellten Bund" (ÖAAB). Remler is married and has a daughter.

First meeting of Vienna's new Municipal Council

Vienna's first "red-green" municipal government was sworn in at the City Hall on 25 November 2010. The 12 members (executive city councillors) of the City Senate were elected in the first meeting of the Municipal Council. Moreover, the 100 members of Vienna's regional government (Landtag) were appointed and the green Vice Mayor Maria Vassilakou formally took office. The chief of Vienna's Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) Michael Häupl was elected mayor already for the fifth time. After that, Häupl was sworn in as Governor of Vienna at Hofburg by Federal President Heinz Fischer. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann attended the ceremony.

The first meeting of Vienna's Landtag – including the appointment of the members of the Federal Assembly as well as of the Landtag presidents – took place on the same day.

Violence against women – Heinisch-Hosek against forced marriages

In her speech delivered on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek focused on forced marriages, posing a severe problem also in Austria. "Forced marriage has no place in our society and is a form of violence that must not be tolerated", said Heinisch-Hosek. In the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence she would give a clear signal against forced

marriage. Also in this country many girls and women were forced into marriages. Experts estimated that there were about 200 victims annually – although forced marriage was illegal and punishable with prison sentences up to five years. Describing forced marriages as a "severe human rights violation", the Minister presented two concrete projects: a programme of self help for and assistance to young women affected as well as a training initiative for professionals active in education, social work, youth welfare and family jurisprudence.

More powers for the Court of Auditors

On 17 November 2010, the National Council unanimously agreed on extending the auditing competences of the Court of Auditors. While before only municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants were subject to audits, the threshold has been lowered to 10,000. Now 71 municipalities can be audited (compared to only 24 municipalities plus Vienna in the past).

This year the health insurance institutions are back in the black

The consolidation package for health insurance institutions is obviously showing effects. According to the latest forecast of the Federation of Social Insurance Institutions, the entire health insurance system will post a plus of 174.9 million euro in 2010.

The nine regional health insurance institutions expect a positive result totalling 93.5 million euro. Only the Social Insurance Institution of Trade and Industry registers a loss of 10.1 million euro. The main reason for the generally favourable trend is the consistent consolidation policy realised particularly by cutting the costs of medication.

Advocating paternity leave for fathers

Together with the social partners, Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek and Minister of Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer presented the "information initiative to promote paternity leave for fathers in business" on 22 November 2010. After Heinisch-Hosek launched a campaign for an unpaid "papa's month" in the federal service only recently, private companies will now be addressed directly.

Hardly 5% of the young fathers took advantage of parental leave, two thirds of them were interested but afraid of income losses and a career slump, said the Minister. This had to change. Information events for personnel managers are to help companies to adjust internal procedures to paternity leave for fathers.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal President Fischer at OSCE summit in Kazakhstan**

Federal President Heinz Fischer will represent Austria at the summit meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the Kazakh capital Astana on 1/2 December 2010. Kazakhstan is currently chairing the OSCE. After the summit, Fischer will pay an official bilateral visit to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

President Fischer hopes that at the summit with prominent attendees – including French President Nicolas Sarkozy, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev – progress will be made on the recognition and enforcement of human rights, democratic principles and peaceful conflict settlement.

The previous meeting of heads of state and government of the OSCE member countries took place in Istanbul in 1999.

Czech President Klaus met with Fischer at the Abbey of Geras

Czech President Vaclav Klaus paid a visit to Austria on 26 November 2010. He held extensive talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll at the Abbey of Geras (Lower Austria). As Klaus informed, he had “pleasant news” for Austria: “We are moving to solar energy“. The Czech Republic would therefore have less demand for “dangerous” energy resources, said the Czech head of state after the meeting, at which the controversial Temelin nuclear power plant had also been discussed.

Fischer emphasised that both Austria and the Czech Republic “adhered to the rules” according to which each country took independent decisions and assumed responsibility regarding its energy policy, while taking into account the concerns and the arguments of the neighbours. Czech President Klaus added: “We believe in global warming.“ Therefore less energy would be required for heating in the future, stated Klaus. Other subjects for debate were cross-border cooperation in transport issues and a early warning systems for floods of the March river.

Estonia’s President Ilves in Vienna

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves arrived in Austria on 23 November 2010 for a two-day official visit. His programme included meetings with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Speaker of the Austrian Parliament Barbara

Prammer and Vienna’s Mayor Michael Häupl. In addition, Ilves participated in a bilateral economic forum of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich/ WKÖ).

Ilve stated that despite the crisis in Ireland Estonia was pleased to introduce the euro with effect 1 January 2011. The introduction of the single currency did make sense to Estonia even in view of the current problems in the euro-zone as Estonia’s own problems during the economic crisis were not due to the fact “that we did not have the euro“, explained Ilves.

The bilateral relations between Austria and Estonia were described as “excellent“ by both sides. The two countries wanted to cooperate in the fields of culture and education as well as with regard to their application for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, said Fischer.

Clinton thanked Austria for its commitment in the Western Balkans

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed her hope that Austria would continue its commitment in the Western Balkans and other trouble spots like Afghanistan. After a meeting with her Austrian counterpart Michael Spindelegger in Washington on 16 November 2010, Clinton thanked him for the very good cooperation in the UN Security Council, of which Austria is a non-permanent member until the end of the year. Austria played an important role, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Kosovo. This was very much appreciated by the USA, stated Clinton.

US Secretary of State praised cooperation with Austria in the UN Security Council in the context of Resolution 1325 on women’s rights and, more recently, on Sudan. Minister Spindelegger’s first bilateral visit to the USA had also helped to intensify the already friendly relations, stressed Clinton. Minister Spindelegger invited US Secretary of State Clinton to Austria.

Slovenian Foreign Minister Zbogar in Vienna

Balkan issues, including the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were high on the agenda of a meeting between Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and his Slovenian counterpart Samuel Zbogar in Vienna on 25 November 2010. On this occasion, the two ministers also discussed the planned “Alpine Region Strategy” and the issue of bilingual topographical signposts in Carinthia.

ECONOMY**Tourism: 2010 the best summer season in 15 years**

In 2010 the Austrian tourist industry saw its best summer season in 15 years. According to data of the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) of 24 November 2010, the number of guests reached an all-time high of 17.9 million. Hotel nights increased by 1.3% to 62.47 million compared to the summer season 2009 – this figure had been exceeded only in 1995 (65.57 million). The best summer result ever was recorded in 1981, with 78.28 million hotel nights. In October no less than 6.26 million (+2.9%) nights were registered, this is the best result ever achieved in the month of October. May (+3.4%), July (+2.9%), August (+0.5% and September (+0.8%) also contributed to the favourable performance in summer.

Minister of Economy Reinhold Mitterlehner hopes that a sound result will be achieved also in winter tourism due to the early snow in many ski resorts, well-aimed marketing measures and massive investments. According to a communication issued by the Ministry, the investment volume financed with the support of the Austrian Hotel and Tourism Bank (Österreichische Hotel- und Tourismusbank/ÖHT) climbed to a record level of about 835 million euro. The cable-car industry invested also approximately 562 million euro this year, including almost 153 million euro spent on snow-making machines.

As far as domestic guest nights are concerned, the 20-million threshold was exceeded in the summer season 2010 for the first time since records began (+1.5% to 20.17 million). Foreign guest nights rose by 1.2% to 42.30 million – despite the decline in tourists from the most important country of origin, i.e. Germany (-1.8% to 23.43 million; Germans have a share of 55.4% in the total of foreign guest nights).

Holiday-makers from the Netherlands (-1.5%), Belgium (-2.0%), Switzerland (+4.7%), Great Britain (+10.3%), France (+2.7%), the USA (+17.3%), the Czech Republic (+3.5%), Sweden (+17.2%), Hungary (+0.1%) and Russia (+35.3%) are also important for Austria's summer tourism.

EU praises short-time working arrangements in Austria

Besides Germany and Belgium, Austria was one of the EU Member States dealing most effectively with the impact of the crisis on the labour market. Based on the EU report presented on 25 November 2010, these three

countries had responded to the crisis almost exclusively by introducing short-time working. "These countries are in the best starting position for a new upswing", explained EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion László Andor.

Despite general difficulties, Austria, Germany and Belgium had "weathered the storm" and managed to safeguard numerous jobs, also for young people, stated Andor. All three countries had reduced almost exclusively the average number of working hours per worker and productivity per hour. Countries such as the Netherlands and Great Britain had responded to the crisis nearly only by reducing employment and productivity per hour. Spain, Portugal and Ireland had combated the recession exclusively by cutting jobs, said Andor.

According to the November forecast of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), unemployment in Austria is expected to decrease slightly from 4.5% to 4.3% between 2010 and 2012.

In the same period, economic growth is likely to remain at a constant level of 2%. Austria will exceed growth in the euro-zone until 2011; in 2012 a GDP growth rate of 2% is forecast also for the euro-area.

Aid to Ireland: Austria gives guarantee worth 600 to 800 million euro

According to Minister of Finance Josef Pröll, Austria will participate with a share of 600 to 800 million euro in the EU's total guarantee of 85 billion euro to Ireland. In their meeting held in Brussels on 28 November 2010, the EU ministers of finance had agreed on this rescue plan as well as a permanent crisis mechanism in which the private sector (banks, private creditors) participates on a case-by-case basis.

Juicy profits for voestalpine, OMV

Thanks to the economic revival, Austrian lead companies such as voestalpine and OMV have obviously overcome the crisis. According to CEO Wolfgang Eder, the listed steel group voestalpine plans to double its earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) to at least 700 million euro in the financial year 2010/11 (ending on 31 March). Just within the first six months of 2010, the operating profit increased tenfold from 42.7 to 414 million euro compared to the same period of 2009.

The EBIT of the petrol and gas group OMV, which is also listed on the stock exchange, increased by two thirds to 1.75 billion euro in the first nine months of the financial year 2010.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**National Council approved 1m euro p.a. for restoring Jewish cemeteries**

On 17 November 2010, the National Council unanimously voted in favour of restoring Jewish cemeteries with public subsidies. The Federal Republic will make available 1 million euro annually for this purpose.

The subsidies will be managed by the Fund for Restoring Jewish Cemeteries in Austria, administered by the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism. As from 2011, an annual budget of 1 million euro will be allocated to it over a period of at least 20 years. Financial resources were granted to the Fund subject to the condition that the respective community will maintain the cemetery for at least 20 years after completing restoration. Furthermore, the Jewish Religious Community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde/IKG) has to contribute the same annual amount as the Federal Republic.

Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer was pleased that the “negative conflict of responsibilities“ between local authorities over the restoration of Jewish cemeteries has finally come to an end. The Second Speaker of Parliament, Fritz Neugebauer, emphasised that the Jewish cemeteries were “witnesses in stone of an annihilated and sunken culture“. Moreover, they represented an “indispensable source for biographical research“, said Neugebauer.

In the Washington Agreement (Restitution Agreement) of 17 January 2001, the Republic of Austria had agreed to indemnify the victims of NS looting as well as to grant additional funding for restoring Jewish cemeteries. At the same time the decision had been taken to set up the General Settlement Fund (in addition to the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism established in 1995).

Vocational leaving exam will be partly harmonised as from 2014/15

Besides the leaving exam of the academic secondary school (AHS) and the higher vocational secondary schools (BHS), the so-called “vocational leaving exam” (for young people not attending AHS und BHS but undergoing training e.g. as apprentices) will be harmonised partly. The written exams will be held on the same day all over Austria as from 2014/15. In the subjects German and mathematics as well as a modern foreign language standardised tests will be applied countrywide. On 17 November 2010, Minister of Education Claudia Schmied submitted the respective bill.

At academic secondary schools the first partly harmonised leaving exams will be administered already at the regular exam date in 2014, while the A-level exam of higher secondary schools and the vocational leaving exam will follow the new rules one year later. The aim of this measure is to define uniform basic standards for all candidates and to make performance and certificates comparable. The pupils receive the same tests, the teachers are given the same marking guides. The written leaving exam in the candidate’s area of specialisation will not change as no centralised standards are introduced.

The vocational leaving exam was introduced in 1997 to grant persons having completed apprenticeships or vocational schools (intermediate schools of at least three years, healthcare and nursing schools, schools for medical-technical professions) access to universities, academies and colleges. About 2,600 persons take the vocational leaving exam annually.

In autumn 2008 the pilot project “apprenticeship and A-level exam“ was launched. It allows young people to sit for the modular A-level exam without having to pay any fees. The new model is applied also to this group. Transitions and interlocking elements of the vocational leaving exam are to be improved. Modules of “exams granting access to university studies” related to the specialisation can be credited towards the general A-level exam.

Important EU grants awarded to Austrian researchers

Two financially highly attractive research grants of the European Research Council (ERC) went to researchers of the Institute of Science and Technology (IST) Austria in Maria Gugging (Lower Austria). IST President Thomas Henzinger and neuroscientist Peter Jonas were awarded ERC Advanced Grants for their excellent research work. The grants totalling 5 million euro are made available for a five-year period. In his ERC project Jonas plans to investigate the “GABAergic interneurons” – nerve cells in the human brain (hippocampus) that are crucial in controlling the activity in nervous systems. These (basket) cells also play an important role in brain diseases, e.g. schizophrenia, depression, epilepsy and neurodegenerative diseases. The function of these cells is to be described comprehensively through spatial resolution in nanometres and microsecond temporal resolution.

The project of IST boss Henzinger focuses on developing software test routines for the early detection of system errors.

40 years of Ministry of Science

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Ministry of Science, Minister of Science and Research Beatrix Karl invited to a ceremony at “Aula der Wissenschaften” in Wollzeile in Vienna on 22 November 2010. Besides representatives of science, research and education, numerous important personalities from politics, business, culture and the media were among the about 400 guests.

The Minister underlined the special role of her ministry in her speech: “Science is more than just a policy area. Science and education are values of our society”. Therefore it was the task of all to communicate the importance of science and research as well as to build awareness.

Policymakers could create the necessary framework, but success was owed first and foremost to the scholars and researchers as well as great institutions such as the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Science Fund (FWF), the Ludwig Boltzmann Society or IST Austria (Institute of Science and Technology), stated Karl in recognition of their merits. Especially universities and tertiary institutions of applied sciences had made a vital contribution to Austria’s position as a highly developed country. Now it was crucial to promote cooperation of universities and facilities with one another as well as with the economic sector and consequently to boost efficiency, said Karl.

The first Austrian minister of science was Hertha Firnberg (SPÖ), entering office at Starhemberg Palace at Minoritenplatz in Vienna on 26 July 1970. Some months before, then Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky had announced the establishment of the new Ministry of Science after winning the election (on 1 March). Previously, the Ministry of Education had been competent for university affairs. The responsibilities of the nine ministers having held this office since then have not only comprised science but also education, culture and, for a short period, even transport, as documented in a film screened at the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Ministry of Science.

Paul Nizon received Austrian State Prize for European Literature

The Swiss writer Paul Nizon (80) living in Paris received the Austrian State Prize for European Literature in Vienna on 15 November 2010. The prize was awarded at a ceremony at the Palace of Daun-Kinsky. The presentation speech was given by Austrian writer Klaus Hoffer. This event also marked the

opening of the reading festival of “Book Vienna 10” (see below).

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied stressed that Nizon’s work addressed the “great themes of modernity: loneliness, forlornness and disorientation. In a precise, tight language which is nevertheless light as a feather, he pictures a subjective escape from a world perceived as restricting and life-threatening”, stated Minister Schmied.

Hoffer paid homage to the prize laureate stating that Nizon was a “citoyen, European, citizen of the world“, the award seemed almost tailored to him. “With his books, Nizon besieges life, searches for life, digs himself into it and invents it by writing. (...) Life and writing are one and the same thing for this ‘writer of the first rank’, as *Le Monde* once called him“, Hoffer stated emphatically.

Nizon himself described the State Prize as “a highlight in his life as a writer“, not least because it was both a European and an Austrian award. Austrian literature had played a major role in his development, he was or had been friends with Ingeborg Bachmann, Elias Canetti, Thomas Bernhard or Peter Handke, said Nizon.

Paul Nizon was born in Bern on 19 December 1929. He studied art history, classical archaeology and German language and literature at the Universities of Bern and Munich. He started to work as an independent author in 1962 and has been living in Paris since 1977. Among his most important works are “Canto“ (1963), “Stolz“ (1975), “Das Jahr der Liebe“ (1981), “Im Bauch des Wals“ (1989) and “Das Fell der Forelle“ (2005). He received various awards, e.g. the C.F. Meyer Prize, the Erich Fried Prize, the Literature Prizes of Bern and Zurich as well as the Literature Prize of Kranichstein (2007).

The Austrian State Prize for European Literature worth 25,000 euro has been granted for the literary lifetime achievements of European authors since 1965. Previous prize winners were Claudio Magris (2005), Jorge Semprún (2006), A.L. Kennedy (2007), Agota Kristof (2008) and Per Olov Enquist (2009).

“Book Vienna 10“: new visitor record

Taking place in Hall D of Vienna’s fair trade centre “Messe Wien”, “Book Vienna 10” – the International Book Fair (18 to 21 November 2010) and the Reading Festival (15 to 21 November 2010) – ended with a new visitor record. According to the Federation of Austrian Booksellers, more than 28,000 visitors had been counted at the third edition of the largest

Austrian booksellers' event. More than 300 authors read from their latest works at numerous events staged at "Messe Wien" and different venues across Vienna. 250 exhibitors from twelve nations presented their new publications, informed on the latest themes and trends, organised reading evenings or gatherings for literary exchanges with publishers, booksellers, journalists, authors – among them Donna Leon – and cultural policymakers. Special readings and workshops were held for children and young people. A thematic focus of the book fair was on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The opening speech was held by the Austrian journalist and author Christian Ankowitsch living in Berlin. He hailed the bound book or manuscript for its "independence, its denial of constant change" and "refusal to be linked". "The book remains loyal to itself", explained Ankowitsch.

Besides the Austrian State Prize for European Literature 2010, which was conferred on Paul Nizon at the opening of the Reading Festival (see above), a total of five prizes were handed over in the framework of "Book Vienna 10". One of the highlights was the presentation of the Bank Austria Literaris prize, which was created eight years ago as a joint initiative of Bank Austria, KulturKontakt Austria and Wieser Verlag, a publisher of Eastern and South Eastern European literature. This year's prize laureates are Renata Šerelyte (Lithuania), Boris Chersonskij (Ukraine) and Ákos Fodor (Hungary).

Austrian reporter and author Armin Thurnherr received the Honorary Prize of the Austrian Booksellers for Tolerance in Thought and Action.

Furthermore, OMV and Buchklub presented the PHILIPP reading awards, while the association "exil" handed over the "exil" literary prizes.

This year the successful free book campaign "A City. A Book" was organised by the City of Vienna and the Vienna-based "Echo Medienhaus" already for the ninth time. All Viennese bookshops, libraries and adult education centres distributed 100,000 free copies of the novel "Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress" by Chinese writer Dai Sijie living in Paris. The theme of the book is reading during the politically turbulent times of the Cultural Revolution in China between 1966 and 1976, when all books (except the Mao Bible) were forbidden.

(www.buchwien.at, www.buecher.at)

Festivals in 2011: Bregenz, styriarte

"Creation" is the motto of the 2011 Bregenz Festival (Bregenzer Festspiele), which will present Umberto Giordano's "André Chénier" on the lake stage (premiere: 20 July 2011) and the world premiere of the festival's own production "Miss Fortune" by Judith Weir at Festspielhaus (premiere: 21 July 2011). The chamber opera "Blond Eckbert" at Theater am Kornmarkt (premiere: 6 August 2011) is also a work by the Scottish composer. Vienna's Schauspielhaus will for the first time participate with the Austrian premiere of "Orphans" by Dennis Kelly (premiere: 2 August 2011). About 100 events have been planned for the festival held from 20 July to 21 August 2011. (www.bregenzerfestspiele.com)

"styriarte 2011" (24 June to 26 July 2011) features a version of Bedrich Smetana's opera "The Bartered Bride" that has presumably never been performed before (Helmut List Halle). Composer Nikolaus Harnoncourt chose the first German translation of 1868. Under the motto "the easy is the difficult", the programme of the Styrian festival includes other highlights, e.g. "Carmina Burana", "Death and the Maiden", "Little Night Music" or "Four Seasons". (<http://www.styriarte.com>)

Museum of Art History 2011

The Museum of Art History (KHM) is expected to end the year with a visitor record. Thanks to 32,000 annual tickets sold – "without a decline in the individual tickets sale" – as well as free admission for children and young people, "so far, every month a significant plus compared to the previous year has been achieved", informed the KHM's financial manager Paul Frey at a press conference on 16 November 2010. The final data would be available only after the year-end. An exhibition calendar for 2011 was, however, presented. With Jan Fabre, Russian and Islamic art, the German portrait around 1500 as well as the large autumn show "Winter Fairytale", the KHM hopes to continue attracting large audiences.

Belgian multidisciplinary artist Jan Fabre, who could recently be seen in Vienna predominantly as a performer, was invited to draw inspiration from the old masters. In the show opening on 3 May 2011 he will display the partly large-format ensemble of works "Die Jahre der blauen Stunde" ("The Years of the Blue Hour") created with his typical blue Bic ball pen technique. The great autumn show "Winter Fairytale" opening on 18 October presents approaches to winter in European art "from Bruegel to Beuys". (www.khm.at)

SPORTS POLICY**Swimming: Minister Darabos congratulates Dinko Jukic on gold medal**

Austria did very well at the European Short Course Swimming Championships in Eindhoven (Netherlands) ending on 28 November 2010.

The performance of Dinko Jukic was outstanding. He won the European champion title – the second short course gold medal in his career – in the 200m butterfly event. In addition, the 22-year-old athlete earned bronze in 200m individual medley.

In the 200m breaststroke event Hunor Mate was ranked fifth, missing a medal only narrowly. David Brandl (400m freestyle) and Martin Spitzer (50m butterfly) were also placed fifth.

Minister of Sport Darabos: “I congratulate Dinko Jukic on this great success and I am convinced that this is a great encouragement for the forthcoming short course world championship in Dubai. I am also very pleased that – with a total of eleven participants in the finals and numerous personal bests – the domestic swimmers achieved a very attractive overall result”.

Federal Sports Assembly 2010: Darabos stresses importance of BSO

In his welcome statement at the Federal Sports Assembly taking place on 19 November 2010 at the House of Sport Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos stressed the vital role of the Federal Sports Organisation (BSO) in the Austrian sport.

“It is important that the BSO acts as a strong interest representation and support centre for the sports organisations in Austria”, stated the Minister of Sport. Darabos described fellowship in Austrian sport as unique. There was a lively exchange among the individual associations that was extremely important and valuable for the further development of sport. The Minister extended his special thanks to all officials involved and actively collaborating in the complete reorganisation of the federal sports funding system. “It is a mega-project!”, Darabos pointed out.

Cristall Gala 2010 at Studio 44: voluntary work as a foundation of sport

At the “Sport Cristall Gala” at Studio 44 (headquarters of the Austrian Lotteries) on 19 November 2010, the Austrian Federal Sports Organisation paid tribute to the people devoting their time, commitment and skills to sport.

Federal Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos extended his congratulations to all prize winners. “Voluntary services are the foundation of the Austrian sport. It is great how many people serve the cause in their spare time – as trainers, organisers or as officials of sports associations”, stated the Minister of Sport.

This year, the highly coveted “Cristall” trophies went to Eva Eichmair, chairwoman of Sportunion Döbling, in the category “top female official”; to Konrad Lerch, the all-around meeting director in Götzis, in the category “top male official”; to the basketball club WAT 22 D.C. Timberwolves in the category “top sports association” and to the successful trainer duo of the Austrian competition climbers, Rupert Messner and Reinhold Scherer in the category “top trainer personality”.

The title “Women’s power project of the year” went to MGA Fivers for their project “Women’s power in Austrian handball”.

Austrian winter athletes start the new season with numerous wins

The season’s first real winter sports weekend could not have gone any better for Austria. After a lean period of 20 months, Michael Walchhofer succeeded in winning the downhill run in Lake Louise (Canada) for Austria.

The Austrian ski jumpers emerged as the winners of the season’s first team event at the Ski Jumping World Cup in Kuusamo (Finland). Andreas Kofler won the individual event, ahead of his compatriot Thomas Morgenstern. In Innsbruck/Igls (Tyrol) Olympic doubles champions Andreas and Wolfgang Linger celebrated their Luge World Cup victory. World Cup winner Felix Gottwald triumphed in the Nordic combined event in Finland.

Judo Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi: won by Austrian Sabrina Filzmoser

Sabrina Filzmoser won the Judo Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi by four ippons (instant wins).

On the road to success, the woman from Upper Austria (weight category up to 57 kg) defeated not only the Olympic winner but also the current European champion.

Thus Sabrina Filzmoser may look back on an almost perfect season. In April she got a silver medal at the European Judo Championship in Vienna, while she earned bronze at the World Cup in Tokyo in September. Last but not least, the European champion of 2008 also won this year’s Judo Grand Prix in Moscow.