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Editor: Dr. Franz Putz, tel. ++43/1/53115-2579, fax ++43/1/53115-4274, e-mail: franz.putz@bka.gv.at.  
Dispatch: Division VII/2, Ms. Irene Bucher, tel. ++43/1/53115-2958, fax ++43/1/53115-2880, e-mail: irene.bucher@bka.gv.at.  
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## Asylum: Faymann prefers case-by-case decisions to general rule

Chancellor Werner Faymann clearly rejected the proposal of imposing an “obligation on asylum seekers to be present” in the reception centres. Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter had presented a new (modified) bill on the general mandatory detention of asylum seekers during the admission procedure to the Council of Ministers on 9 February 2010. The latest proposal provided for a maximum of seven days of internment in the first reception centre for asylum seekers, while previous plans had envisaged four weeks. Nevertheless, Faymann considers a general obligation of presence in reception centres during the admission procedure an unduly drastic measure. He expressed major constitutional concerns immediately after the Council of Ministers’ session. But it should be possible to examine individual cases to prevent asylum abuse and to combat crime in Austria effectively, stressed Faymann.

One day later, the Constitutional Service also raised objections. The legal experts issued a first short opinion stating that the second phase of a conditional residence requirement of up to six months could be lawful but not the first five to seven days during which the Ministry of the Interior wanted to impose a strict curfew. “A general legal provision depriving all asylum seekers without exception of their liberty is unconstitutional”, was the key message of the expert opinion. According to the legal experts, asylum abuse or illegal immigration did not occur exclusively in the first days after arrival but, as experience had shown, especially when a negative asylum decision became likely during the asylum procedure (six to eight weeks on average). “I am in favour of a case-by-case approach in asylum policy but against generalisation“, the Chancellor reiterated his position in a press release of 10 February 2010. “If there is an indication of an abuse of the right of asylum in an individual case, I am of course in favour of taking all the necessary measures to prevent this“, said Faymann. The present asylum law allowed detention in individual cases; this provision was enforced by the competent authorities if persons tried to escape the asylum procedure. If necessary, the existing rules could be modified. But by no means should “people coming to our country and seeking help in an emergency situation be locked away in a camp” – not even under the label “residence requirement“.

The coalition parties agreed that the burden on the two reception centres for asylum seekers in Traiskirchen (Lower Austria) and Thalham (Upper Austria) had to be reduced. According to Faymann, a working group in the Ministry of the Interior was developing solutions. If its members came to the clear conclusion that one or several additional reception centres for asylum seekers were required, one would start looking for alternative locations together with the competent Minister of the Interior.

Due to the strong decline in the number of asylum seekers, the problem could automatically become less severe. Based on recent data published by the Ministry of the Interior, 807 asylum applications were filed this January, compared to 1,214 applications one year ago. ■

## Heinisch-Hosek calls for stricter punishment of domestic violence

Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek wants to make general domestic violence against “weaker persons” an aggravating circumstance in criminal law. On 4 February 2010, Heinisch-Hosek expressed this demand in response to Minister of Justice Claudia Bandion-Ortner’s call for stiffer penalties for religiously motivated offences. She considered this inadequate as attention had to be focused on domestic violence, 90% of which affected women and children. It was in general necessary to “examine” whether punishment was not too mild in these cases. Religion and criminal law should remain separate. Offences like genital mutilation or honour killings had more to do with tradition and power structures than with religion, explained Heinisch-Hosek. ■

## Commemorating the victims of the attack in Oberwart

On 4 February 2010, Chancellor Werner Faymann commemorated the four young men belonging to the ethnic group of the Roma, who had been killed in a racially motivated explosive attack in Oberwart (Burgenland) on 4 February 1995. Faymann reminded of the responsibility of the leaders of the Republic to take firm action against incitement and extremist ideas. Among the participants in a commemoration in Oberwart were Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos and representatives of the Roma. ■

## Federal Chancellor Faymann at informal EU summit in Brussels

The EU heads of state and government gathered for a special informal summit in Brussels on 11 February 2010. Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. Their deliberations focused on possible aid for highly indebted Greece as well as on strategies to stabilise the euro.

The EU Member States agreed on a general political statement of intent, pledging solidarity with Greece. The Hellenes would be supported in an emergency (insolvency) but for the time being no EU funds would flow. A concrete aid package was not excluded: "The euro-area Member States will take determined and coordinated action, if needed, to safeguard financial stability in the euro-area as a whole", stated EU President Herman Van Rompuy, after the meeting. The EU ministers of finance deliberated on details and possible solutions (a common loan of the euro-zone countries as well as an emergency guarantee in case of default) on 15 February 2010. They assured in unison that the euro would be defended vigorously against international speculation.

Federal Chancellor Faymann expects the euro to stabilise. Quick action had helped to avoid the risk of wildfires (Portugal, Spain). With regard to the costs (Greece needs 52 billion dollars), Faymann stressed that neither donations nor subsidies would be granted – but only loans plus interest, which had to be repaid by Greece.

Greece had to commit itself to a strict austerity programme subject to close monitoring by the EU. The euro-countries primarily had to overcome financial crises caused by themselves through their own efforts – this was the motto. ■

## EU "Foreign Minister" Ashton pays short visit to Vienna

EU "Foreign Minister" Catherine Ashton and Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann discussed subjects such as secure energy supplies in the EU, the political situation in the Balkans, accession negotiations with Turkey as well as issues regarding a common EU security policy in Vienna on 12 February 2010. Faymann and Ashton had participated in the EU summit in Brussels one day earlier and attended the Vienna Opera Ball in the evening.

Ashton's political programme included talks with Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger after the meeting with the Federal Chancellor. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy told reporters that the EU military mission in Haiti – which she had announced at the EU summit in Brussels the day before – had a protective function. Besides clearing-up operations, the mission mainly aimed at providing shelter to the quake victims before the rainy season starting in March, said Ashton.

Talks focused also on Ashton's visit to Serbia in the framework of her first trip to the Western Balkans this week. Her trip to this region would send out a signal and strengthen bilateral relations, said the EU's foreign policy chief. She did not mention a concrete date for Serbia's EU accession. Austria had extensive "experience" in the region, underlined Ashton. Spindelegger informed her of his talks in Belgrade on 8 February 2010 and reiterated Austria's support for the EU membership of all Western Balkan states. ■

## Foreign Minister Spindelegger's "dialogue tour" in the Middle East

On 15 February 2010 Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger departed for a six-day Middle East trip, with stops in the Palestinian territories, Israel, the Lebanon, the Golan Heights and Syria. Spindelegger will meet with high-ranking politicians, diplomats and military personnel. The primary objective of this trip to the Middle East was to stress the commitment of Austria and the EU to a diplomatic solution of the conflict in the region and to participate in programmes promoting new perspectives and stability in keeping with the motto "There is no alternative to dialogue". The programme of the Minister's visit was prepared in close cooperation with the UN and the EU. ■

## Chancellor Faymann welcomed appointment of new EU Commission

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann explicitly welcomed the clear approval of the European Parliament of the new EU Commission team. This vote ensured that the EU was fully operational in a difficult phase. The combat against unemployment had to be the number one priority. ■

## Vancouver 2010: "Brand Austria" and exports are profiting

Up to three billion people around the globe will watch the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver on TV. Austria is represented by 81 athletes at this major sports event in Canada.

The Olympic Games are not only an important economic generator for the host country but also the Austrian economic is likely to profit – tourism, electrical retailers and in particular sports trade expect hefty growth. "The hype around top performance sports always gives impetus to mass sports", explained Roman Seeliger of the Trade Department of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) in an interview with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF.at) on 10 February 2010. Major sports events usually had a significant influence on mass sports.

According to Seeliger, the good performance of Austria's Olympic athletes boosted sports sales. The Olympic Games were "obviously contagious", motivating the people to do more sport in general or to become more active in the sports disciplines in which the Austrian athletes excelled. Fritz Aichinger, representative of the WKÖ Department for Sports Trade, confirmed in an interview published on ORF.at that large-scale sports events had a long-term effect on trade. Events such the Olympic Games kept business going. Therefore Vancouver was an "extremely important marketing measure also in Austria", said Aichinger.

As the WKÖ stressed, not only sport retail trade but also electrical retailers would profit from the event. The Olympic Winter Games motivated many consumers to buy new and better TV sets. Tourism would also reap benefits from the Olympic Games. The success of Austrian athletes would also promote the "brand Austria". According to the WKÖ, the country's image would improve. Moreover, a strong athletic performance was reflected in concrete economic effects. Well aware of this fact, Österreich Werbung (Austrian National Tourist Office) broadcast several TV spots in German, English and French language on Eurosport to motivate spectators from almost 60 countries to spend their holidays in Austria.

Sport continues to be a crucial economic sector in Austria. Every tenth job depends directly or indirectly from sport. The largest turnover with sports products is reported in export trade. In 2009 Germany was the most important foreign

market, followed by France and the USA. Canada, the host of the Olympic Games, was placed seventh in this ranking.

At a press conference on 12 February 2010, WKÖ Director-General Anna Maria Hochhauser emphasised that the Olympic Games would stimulate Austria's sports exports to international markets.

Indeed, foreign trade requires fresh impetus. After climbing to an all-time high of 900 million euro in 2007, Austria's exports to Canada were affected by the global economic crisis, dropping to a level between 650 and 700 million euro in 2009.

Austria aims at boosting its market shares in Canada especially in sectors such as construction and infrastructure, food and beverages as well as renewable energies and environmental technologies. An example of this strategy is the "Austria House", which has been erected as a "passive solar building" by Austria Passivhaus Group in the centre of Whistler, the venue of the Alpine competitions.

According to the WKÖ, much hope was pinned on the current negotiations to strengthen the free trade agreement between Canada and the EU. At present, almost 100 Austrian companies were established in Canada, 20 to 30 of them even operated local production facilities. ■

## Opel Austria: no dismissals in Vienna-Aspern

Opel Austria and its GM engines and gearboxes production plant in Vienna-Aspern will not be hit by the Europe-wide wave of dismissals. A total of 8,300 jobs will be lost in Europe. In Vienna 1,850 persons are active.

On 9 February 2010, GM had announced drastic personnel cuts and requested state aid of more than a billion euro (also in Austria) to consolidate Opel's financial situation. ■

## Eco-electricity: more funding for wind power

Thanks to the new Eco-Electricity Ordinance, which entered into force on 2 February 2010, the operators of wind power plants will receive significantly more money for the electricity produced by them. The feed-in rates for wind power increase by 29% from 7.53 cents per kilowatt hour to 9.7 cents. ■

## Grand Austrian State Prize to composer Olga Neuwirth

Since 1950 the Grand Austrian State Prize has been awarded annually to Austrian artists in the categories literature, music, visual arts and architecture (without rotation). Among previous prize winners are the authors Martina Wied (1952), Imma von Bodmersdorf (1958), Ingeborg Bachmann (1986), Christine Busta (1969), Christine Lavant (1970), Friederike Mayröcker (1982), Ilse Aichinger (1995) as well as the visual artists Maria Lassnig (1988) and Brigitte Kowanz (2009).

This year the most important award of the Republic of Austria will be conferred on composer Olga Neuwirth in Vienna on 8 April 2010. Aged 41, she will become the youngest laureate and the first woman to receive the prize in the category "music".

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied, who will present the prize to her, explained that Neuwirth was "among the leading composers worldwide. She is one of the very few artists transcending the boundaries between disciplines. She has a profound knowledge of visual art, film, neuroscience as well as philosophy. Her music is an expedition to unknown time and spatial zones". This year's selection of the prize winner was also an "important public recognition of women's creative accomplishments".

Olga Neuwirth was surprised and honoured by the high distinction but also stated critically: "If I had depended on Austria, I would not be a composer". There "have always been exceptions, people supporting me when I was still unknown – and I will mention them in my speech", but in general "I have to prove again and again in Austria, probably because I am a woman, that I am able to compose".

Asked for her reaction by the Austrian Press Agency (APA), Nobel Prize winner in literature Elfriede Jelinek stated to be "overjoyed": "I hope that she will be able to forget – at least for a short while – the disregard shown to her by Austria on so many occasions. And the disregard shown to the work of almost all women", said Jelinek. The author and the composer worked together for example on "Sportstück", "Totenauberg" and "Lost Highway" (based on the story of the film of the same name by David Lynch), which received its world premiere at the festival "steirischer herbst" in 2003.

Olga Neuwirth was born in Graz on 4 August 1968. Aged 7 years, she started taking trumpet lessons. From 1987 to 1993 she studied composition at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts with Erich Urbanner. She also studied at the Conservatory of Music and the Art College (both in San Francisco) as well as in Paris. In 1998 she was featured in two portrait concerts at the Salzburg Festival. Her first full-length music theatre piece "Bählamms Fest" (libretto: Elfriede Jelinek based on Leonora Carrington) was given its world premiere at the Vienna Festival in 1999. Neuwirth participated in documenta12 in Kassel with a sound installation and film. In 2009 "Undine geht" inspired by the story of Ingeborg Bachmann (1961) was premiered in a suburban train of the 1960s.

Before the Grand Austrian State Prize, numerous other awards and distinctions were bestowed on Neuwirth, e.g. the Women Artists' Prize of Heidelberg, her appointment as a member of the Berlin Academy of Arts, the Paul Hindemith Prize and the Louis Spohr Music Prize of the City of Braunschweig. ■

## Wolf Prize to Anton Zeilinger

Austrian physicist Anton Zeilinger received the Wolf Prize in Physics 2010 jointly with Alain Aspect (France) and John Clauser (USA). The work of the three physicists on quantum entanglement laid the groundwork for the currently booming research in the field of quantum information technologies.

The prize founded 32 ago by the inventor and philanthropist Ricardo Wolf (born in Germany) is one of the most important international research awards. The prizes will be presented to the recipients by the Israeli President in the Knesset building in Jerusalem in May. The Wolf Prize is granted annually to excellent researchers and artists for achievements in the interest of humankind and friendly relations among the nations. [www.wolffund.org.il/main.asp](http://www.wolffund.org.il/main.asp) ■

## Three Oscar nominations for Austrian film celebrities

This year's Oscar awards ceremony will be staged in Hollywood on 7 March 2010. No fewer than three Austrian artists hope to win the most prestigious trophy in the world of film.

Film director Michael Haneke was nominated for his film "Das weiße Band" ("The White Ribbon") after having won a Golden Palm in Cannes as well as recently a Golden Globe. The other two nominees are Haneke's brilliant Tyrolian cameraman Christian Berger as well as Christoph Waltz in the category "Best Supporting Actor". In his role of an SS colonel in Quentin Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds" he had already picked up a prize at the Cannes Film Festival and a Golden Globe. Besides, Tarantino's film has been nominated in the top category "Best Picture Award" and for several Oscars.

After Stefan Ruzowitzky ("Die Fälscher"/"The Counterfeiters") and Götz Spielmann ("Revanche"), Michael Haneke is the third Austrian film director in a row nominated for an Academy Award in the category "Best Foreign Language Film". Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied's spontaneous, joyful reaction: "The great success of Austrian filmmakers has been highlighted once more by these nominations and is a globally unique phenomenon". Director of the Austrian Film Institute Roland Teichmann stated: "In an almost unbelievable award winning series, the Austrian film has reaffirmed its great international importance". ■

"Have you seen my Alps?" at the Jewish Museum Vienna

In cooperation with the Jewish Museum Hohenems (Vorarlberg), the Jewish Museum Vienna (JMW) presents the exhibition "Have you seen my Alps? – A Jewish Love Story" (closing on 14 March 2010).

In his book "Dialektik der Alpen. Fortschritt und Hemmnis" ("Dialectic of the Alps. Progress and Obstacles") authored in Haifa in 1940 and published only many years after his death, Arnold Zweig wrote: "The history of the Alps roughly and succinctly reflects the history of Europe, in other words, our civilisation".

The mountains in the middle of the Continent have always been fascinating, challenging and mysterious to the Jews in Europe. Their ruggedness, energy and beauty were supposed to have a meaning that had to be explored. This was the beginning of an eventful relationship, a love story with many deceptions.

The exhibition wants to take the visitor on an expedition through time and space, from Hohenems to Vienna, from there to Switzerland and finally to Merano – on a trip through the

world of Jewish Alpinism and to the era when the mountains were opened up for international tourism, on a journey to intellectual childhoods and adult dreams far away from the cities, through the contradictions of assimilation and migration, persecution and reorientation. The exhibition tells stories about people, places and objects, with surprising references. The history of the Jews in the Alpine region had started with the expansion of the Roman Empire – but the Jewish communities in the Alpine valleys emerged only late in history and remained rare: Hohenems, Innsbruck and Merano, later Lugano and Lucerne or the seasonal Jewish life in the spa resorts of Graubünden and in Wallis. The exhibition, which also invites to a fictitious trip to dream destinations and landscapes of desire, presents largely unknown aspects of the Alpine world. Highly recommended. [www.jmw.at](http://www.jmw.at) ■

State Opera Archives transferred to the Austrian State Archives

On 9 February 2010, Vienna State Opera officially transferred its historical files and documents to the Austrian State Archives. This measure has been taken to ensure that the archive materials from the pre-war, war and post-war periods will be stored adequately and may be used and documented for research purposes.

A major part of the documents dates back to the period between 1940 and the beginnings of electronic data processing. The diverse inventory also includes older documents, e.g. letters, minutes, contracts and rehearsal plans. Interesting documents are for example the original contract of Concertmaster Arnold Rosé of 1897, the manuscript of the opening speech of Ernst Marboe of 1955 or a note to the file on a performance (not realised) of "The Ring" of Karl Böhm and Wieland Wagner of 1965. The material will make it possible to trace the creative potential of this internationally renowned cultural institution and to provide profound insights into the procedures as well as the creative and logistical processes of Vienna State Opera. Even though a major part of the Vienna State Opera Archives has now been made accessible within the Austrian State Archives, the entire inventory preserved continues to be held by different institutions. These archive materials do not include the documents transferred to the National Library and the Theatre Museum in 1945 after the fire and war damages. Vienna State Opera Director Ioan Holender stated

that many original scores with comments of the musicians had been stolen over the years. Director-General of the State Archives Lorenz Mikoletzky informed that he wanted to make the important documents available not only to researchers but also to the interested public. "Therefore we will first sift through the documents and then classify them to ensure appropriate access. Researchers will be able to download basic information on these documents – as well as on all the other collections of the State Archives – from the Internet. We also try to ensure that documents produced in the future will be transferred automatically to the Austrian State Archives", said Mikoletzky. [www.oesta.gv.at](http://www.oesta.gv.at) ■

### Council of Ministers approved "Competence Centre for Internet Society"

The establishment of a "Competence Centre for the Internet Society" was approved by the Council of Ministers on 9 February 2010. The Competence Centre will be used as a common platform for tasks and measures related to information and communication technologies (ICT). "With more than 14,000 companies and over 100,000 employees, the ICT industry is one of the most important economic sectors in Austria", said Minister of Finance Josef Pröll. One of the objectives of the Competence Centre is to position Austria among the top ICT nations and to increase broadband use. Another goal is to promote a coordinated and research-oriented ICT policy. The Managing Board is composed of representatives of the Federal Chancellery, the Ministries of Finance, Transport and Economy. In addition, a member of the Austrian Telecom Regulatory Agency (Telekom-Regulierungsbehörde) and the Chairman of the Austrian Internet Initiative (Internetoffensive) hold advisory votes. The Competence Centre works on the basis of the findings of the Austrian Internet Initiative. They were enshrined in the Austrian Internet Declaration and handed over to Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice Chancellor and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll by representatives of the Initiative.

The Chamber of Labour requested also on 9 February 2010 to provide or facilitate access to these technologies to all groups of society and to promote broadband technology in rural areas. 58 million euro should be made available for this purpose from the EU economic stimulus package and the national co-financing budget for rural areas in Austria. ■

### ORF Audience Council elected

The elections of the Audience Council – the successor organisation of the Representation of Listeners and Viewers – of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) ended with a surprise. Five out of six seats went to the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), only a specialist for internal medicine Siegfried Meryn, who had been nominated by Kinderfreunde, won a seat in the section "parents and family". The ÖVP was highly successful in the section "senior citizens": 109,364 ORF fee payers voted for Gerhard Tötschinger of Seniorenbund. Kathrin Zettel of Kinderwelt won in the category "youth", the winner in "education" was Eva Scholik of the Federation of Christian Trade Unionists (Vereinigung Christlicher Gewerkschafter). In the section "consumers" Bernadette Tischler (Ökosoziales Forum) earned a majority of votes. Football legend Ivica Vastic – nominated by the ÖVP's Sportunion – received most votes in "sport".

In the elections in 2001 and 2005 the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) had won all six seats. The outcome of the latest election is likely to entail changes in the Foundation Council as three of the directly elected audience councillors will become members. The Foundation Council is the ORF's actual centre of power. It also appoints the ORF Director-General. Now at least two of the audience councillors belong to the ÖVP. Thus the SPÖ can no longer attain an absolute majority in the Foundation Council. With about 7%, voter turnout was higher than that of the previous election. <http://publikumsrat.orf.at> ■

### "Prince Eugene" at Lower Belvedere

The Lower Belvedere palace presents an exhibition on its former owner – Austria's most important military commander Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736) – until 6 June 2010. Having moved to the imperial court of Leopold I. in 1683, the Frenchman of Italian descent without means started his brilliant career in the liberation of Vienna from the Turkish siege. He contributed decisively to the political and economic rise of the House of Habsburg. Later he also fought for the Emperors Joseph I. and Charles VI. Finally he also became Vicar General – the representative of the Emperor – of the new Austrian territories in northern and southern Italy. The show also focuses on Prince Eugene's great interest in art and science. [www.belvedere.at](http://www.belvedere.at) ■

Minister Darabos congratulated ski jumper Gregor Schlierenzauer

On 13 February 2010, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos watched the first competition of the 21<sup>st</sup> Olympic Winter Games – the men's normal hill ski jumping event – live in Vancouver and could even congratulate Gregor Schlierenzauer on winning the bronze medal.

“The first medal for Austria in the very first competition – we have no reason to be dissatisfied. The hunt for medals has started, and I am convinced that our other athletes will follow soon.“, said Darabos in a perfectly relaxed way. ■

A winter training base for our elite swimmers in Vienna

Swimmers training in Vienna will have their own intensive preparation centre as from October 2010 onwards. The 50-metre swimming pool at Vienna's Stadionbad will be covered with a roof during the winter months. This has been made possible through the financial support of the City of Vienna and the Ministry of Sport.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: “Competitive swimming has been developing very fast in Austria in the recent years. At the World Swimming Championships in Rome in 2009 18 swimmers competed under the red-white-red Austrian flag. To continue this positive trend successfully, it is necessary to provide adequate infrastructure for competitive swimming in Austria. The roof structure for Stadionbad is a first step to establish professional training conditions.“

President of the Austrian Swimming Association (OSV) Paul Schauer was also enthusiastic about this solution: “Thanks to this future-oriented model realised with the support of the Ministry of Sport and the sports city Vienna, competitive swimmers will have their own winter training base in Vienna. The infrastructure resources will be used effectively and efficiently, while operations as a mass sports facility are continued.“

The gross investments total about 840,000 euro and are shared between the City of Vienna and the Ministry of Sport. Immediately after the end of the outdoor season – this year outdoor swimming pools will close on 12 September – the hall will be erected. The opening has been scheduled for 1 October 2010. The new training centre for competitive swimming at Stadionbad is also an

important element of the 2020 Professional Sports Facilities Plan, which is being developed by the Austrian Institute for the Construction of School and Sports Facilities on behalf of the Ministry of Sport. ■

Darabos pays tribute to Austrian EuroHockey Championships team

On 8 February 2010, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos hosted a reception for the Austrian men's national hockey team – the sensational European Champion of the EuroHockey Indoor Nations Championships in the Netherlands.

Since the end of WWII., no Austrian national hockey team has succeeded in winning a major international title. This makes the achievements of our team led by coach Frank Hänel and manager Doris Bele even more impressive. The Minister invited them to celebrate this triumph at a gala staged at the House of Sport.

“17 January 2010, when the Austrian team won in the finals against Russia, will go down as a historic date in Austrian sport“, stated Darabos in his festive speech. In general, this success was one of Austria's most important achievements in a team sport. Darabos thanked the hockey players for their excellent performance and personal commitment to this sport, which unfortunately had not received adequate media coverage in Austria.

Darabos: “The Federal Republic's sports funding programme, under which funds are no longer spread indiscriminately, has given as much support as possible to the Hockey Association since I have been in office. I consider it also vital to grant additional assistance to very successful sport disciplines.“

Hockey team captain Armin Stremitzer pointed out in his speech that cooperation with the Federal Republic was a prerequisite for future success. Ongoing psychological care was required so as to allow the players to maintain their excellent performance level. The first milestone ahead was the Indoor World Cup in Poland next year, but the ultimate objective was qualification for the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

At the end of the reception, the hockey players and officials received medals of honour and a honorary certificate from the Minister of Sport, who in turn was given a team jersey with the signatures of the title winners. ■