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HOME AFFAIRS**Federal government passed Budget Framework Act**

The federal government laid down the Federal Republic's financial framework for the period 2011 to 2014 in the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 9 March 2010. It outlines important guiding principles for the budget 2011, which will be presented in more detail in autumn. The financial framework contains explicit instructions how much money the individual ministries may spend next year. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll expect expenditure cuts of 3.2% on average for the budget 2011.

The costs of budget consolidation would be financed on the following basis: 60% by cutting expenditure and 40% by increasing income, explained Faymann. The citizens should not get the impression that the costs of the crises are "simply passed on to the broad mass", stated Faymann. Also the originators of the crisis, especially speculators and financial market players, should be forced to pay. "We have to cut costs in a meaningful way and distribute the tax burden fairly", he stressed.

According to the budget framework, the government projected cost savings of 1.7 billion euro at federal level. On the income side, also 1.7 billion euro (including 500 million euro from a planned bank tax) are to flow into the state coffers. The Länder and municipalities are to cut expenditure by 800 million euro. Thanks to this set of measures, the budget deficit is expected to drop to 4% of the GDP next year. Until 2014 new borrowings are to be reduced to a level of 2.3%, which would comply again with EU requirements. Negotiations on concrete measures how to realise the announced cost cuts and increases in income as well as on the taxes to be raised will have to be conducted with the ministries, the Länder and municipalities. The Minister of Finance does not exclude financial cuts in any sector. Faymann thinks potential savings could be realised by eliminating duplication between the Federal Republic, the Länder and municipalities.

Government adopted guaranteed minimum income

The Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP) agreed on the introduction of a countrywide guaranteed minimum income at their closed-door meeting in Graz (1/2 March 2010). This system will replace the different social assistance schemes of the Länder. The new guaranteed minimum income

amounts to 744 euro and will be granted twelve times a year as from 1 September 2010. This illustrated that even in times of crisis Austria was a country not destroying but expanding social systems. "We strengthen them where necessary and do not cut back on benefits for the socially weakest and the middle class", Chancellor Werner Faymann praised the joint decision. Measures would be taken to ensure that "only those really in need would benefit from this support", stressed Faymann.

To avoid duplication of benefits granted by the Federal Republic, the Länder and municipalities, the governing coalition agreed to set up a working group for developing a "transparency database" providing clear information about all benefits granted by the public sector. But certainly the aim was not to establish a database serving envy and to pit socially weaker groups against one another, stated Faymann. The coalition also adopted a reform of the insolvency law for companies. Its focus is on financial consolidation based on self-management.

Women's Day: Heinisch-Hosek requests equal pay for equal work

Equal opportunities, mandatory women's quotas and wage transparency were demanded once more in all the official statements made on the International Women's Day on 8 March 2010. Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek requested mandatory disclosure of the average wages in enterprises and the introduction of a women's quota of 40% for supervisory boards. She also urged to increase the participation of fathers in parental leave and housework.

Municipal elections 2010 in Lower Austria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg

The results (in %) of the 2010 municipal council elections held on 14 March 2010 are as follows:

Lower Austria: Austrian People's Party (ÖVP): 51.62 (+2.80), Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ): 33.77 (-5.14), Greens: 3.43 (-0.34), Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ): 5.96 (+2.65), others: 5.22 (+0.03).

Vorarlberg: ÖVP: 44.63 (-0.72), SPÖ: 10.75 (-4.86), FPÖ: 11.33 (-0.16), Greens: 7.32 (+0.30), Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ): 0.24 (n.a.), others: 25.72 (+5.20).

The final result for Tyrol has not been available at editorial close. On the whole, the ÖVP recorded gains, while the SPÖ suffered losses. Voter support for the FPÖ increased slightly, that for the Greens stagnated. More than 2 million citizens had been eligible to vote.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**6 million euro earmarked for Auschwitz Foundation**

Austria would contribute 6 million euro to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation to ensure the preservation of the former concentration camp as a memorial. This was the official message conveyed by Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger to his Polish counterpart Radoslaw Sikorski in Warsaw on 3 March 2010. "This is a duty arising from our history", underlined Spindelegger at a joint press conference.

Spindelegger is Austria's first Foreign Minister paying an official visit to Warsaw after Poland's accession to the EU in May 2004. The two ministers had, however, communicated at EU level before their bilateral meeting. Cooperation between the two countries was "very good", stated Spindelegger. The Foreign Minister reaffirmed Austria's ambitions to focus activities in the year 2010 on bringing the Western Balkan states closer to the European Union.

Croatia's President Josipovic in Vienna

Croatian President Ivo Josipovic and his wife Tatjana arrived in Vienna on 15 March 2010. The programme of the President's official visit included talks with his Austrian counterpart Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer.

Mongolian PM Sukhbaatar Batbold meets with Chancellor Faymann

On 9 March 2010, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann received Mongolian Prime Minister Sukhbaatar Batbold. Economic subjects and democracy issues were discussed. Before the meeting with Faymann, the Mongolian head of government and his delegation had held talks with representatives of the UN and OSCE.

Chancellor Faymann praised the good relations between Austria and Mongolia. The two countries were linked by good economic cooperation as well as numerous joint projects in research and culture. Moreover, he was very pleased about the fact "that the European Union was increasingly acknowledging Mongolia's strategic significance as an important partner in Central and Eastern Asia", stated Faymann.

The Mongolian head of government had also provided information about the climate change by which his country was "hit particularly hard", said Faymann.

Mongolian Prime Minister Batbold expressed his wish to intensify cooperation with Europe. After the introduction of a multi-party system, Mongolia had adopted an ambitious reform programme with a view to concentrating efforts on strengthening democracy and the civil society as well as on implementing a reform of the tax system. Batbold thanked Austria for the humanitarian emergency aid during the extremely harsh winter.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger at EU meeting in Cordoba

The European Union plans to take action in the Middle East peace process. This was agreed on by the EU foreign ministers at an informal meeting in Cordoba (Spain). One could not "wait forever", stressed Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. He pointed out that the EU had clearly advocated a two-state solution to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians already in December 2008. Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger also requested the EU to become more active in the Middle East conflict so as to initiate direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as possible.

Slovenia's Foreign Minister Zbogar pays official visit to Vienna

Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Zbogar holds official talks with his Austrian counterpart Michael Spindelegger in Vienna on 16 March 2010. The foreign ministers discuss issues affecting the Slovenian minority in Carinthia (particularly bilingual topographical signposts). Another important subject for debate is the EU perspective of the Western Balkans, notably of Croatia. Austria has shown strong commitment to this project.

Heinisch-Hosek attends UN women's meeting in New York

Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek described the annual conference of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York (1 to 3 March 2010) as a "good opportunity to exchange transnational experience in realising equality between men and women". On the sidelines of the meeting, the Austrian Minister met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

The international initiative "Global Network of Women's Shelters" granted an award to Minister Heinisch-Hosek for her commitment to combating violence against women.

ECONOMY**New Energy Strategy for Austria**

Austria has launched a new Energy Strategy to achieve its climate protection goals for 2020. Minister for Foreign Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner and Minister of Environment Niki Berlakovich presented "Austria's Energy Strategy" on 11 March 2010. The cornerstones of this programme comprise an ecological tax reform, the further development of renewable energies, a programme for the thermal rehabilitation of buildings and measures in the transport sector. According to Berlakovich, the greening of the tax system aimed at rewarding environment-friendly behaviour and punishing damaging approaches. Austria should limit its total energy consumption to the average of the period 2005 to 2008 and reduce the use of fossil energy sources. The share of renewable energies should be boosted from 28% to 35%. Details regarding the measures envisaged and financing have not yet been laid down.

Minister of Economy Mitterlehner stressed that the Energy Strategy "did not imply that the mobility of the citizens should be restricted", e.g. of commuters or holidaymakers. And, of course, people should not freeze in their homes. "Citizens must have a free choice of energy", said Mitterlehner. The "big issues" were, however, mobility, buildings and energy-intensive industrial facilities: "These three sectors have to deliver something – either through saving energy or by increasing efficiency", requested Mitterlehner.

To promote renewable energies, the amendment to the Eco-electricity Act will be adopted still before the summer. Funds for photovoltaic technologies will triple. The basis for the "Austrian Energy Strategy" is the federal government's Climate and Energy Fund. Berlakovich and Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures present the funding programme 2010 on 10 March 2010. Priorities of 2010 are energy research, transport and market penetration. The budget of the Climate and Energy Fund is increased to 150 million euro this year. "The funding made available from the Climate and Energy Fund generates a multiple of investment and also creates green jobs", Bures and Berlakovich said unanimously.

ITB: market growth for Austrian tourism in 2009

Despite the crisis, Austria was among the winners in the international tourist business in 2009. With a share of 6.72% in international tourist expenditure (relating to foreign guests),

the holiday destination in the Alps did not only improve its position compared to the previous year (6.16%) but also achieved the best result (6.6%) since 1997. "We managed to conquer new market shares during the crisis – thanks to these growth rates we are ranked fourth internationally, behind China, Turkey and Australia", emphasised Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner at the ITB tourist fair in Berlin on 10 March 2010. The aim was to continue gaining market shares. Increases in hotel nights and turnover were a totally different subject, especially since in times of crisis holiday makers were very price-conscious and chose close destinations, explained Mitterlehner. The Minister was optimistic for 2010. A minor increase in turnover and hotel nights was expected. If all went well, Austria would at least be among the world average, said Mitterlehner based on international forecasts predicting growth rates between 3 and 4%.

760 million euro are spent on "green jobs" in 2010

About 185,000 people in Austria have a "green job", working in the field of climate and environmental protection. These are the findings of a study of the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) presented by Minister of Environment Niki Berlakovich on 3 March 2010. Based on a master plan, the Minister wants to increase the number of jobs in this sector by 90,000 by 2020. In the current year "green money" totalling about 760 million euro would be made available for well-aimed measures in the environmental sector, stated Berlakovich. In the past few years, the environmental sector recorded a 12% growth in turnover, the respective companies looked for up to ten employees.

New ÖBB boss Christian Kern

On 9 March 2010, the Supervisory Board of the Austrian Railways (ÖBB) appointed Christian Kern (44) CEO of ÖBB-Holding AG. Kern – previously a member of the Managing Board of Verbund AG – will succeed to the incumbent CEO Peter Klugar on 7 June 2010.

Elections of Federal Economic Chamber: Wirtschaftsbund gains votes

The Austrian People's Party's suborganisation for entrepreneurs "Wirtschaftsbund" ("Economic League") won 70.9% (+0.8%) of the valid votes in the elections of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKÖ). The organisations of the Social Democrats and Freedomites suffered losses. The Greens gained votes. Voter turnout dropped from 48% (2005) to 41%.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

Hollywood: Oscar for Christoph Waltz

At the 82nd Academy Awards ceremony held at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood on Sunday 7 March 2010, Christoph Waltz (53) from Vienna picked up the “Best Supporting Actor” Oscar for his role as SS Colonel Hans Landa in Quentin Tarantino’s “Inglourious Basterds”. In the film Waltz gave a brilliant performance as a cold-blooded, sadistic and at the same time refined, charming and eloquent personality.

And this has not been a surprise since Waltz has already won 18 other awards for his role, e.g. the Golden Globe Award, the Screen Actors Guild Award, the British BAFTA Award and last but not least the Award for Best Actor of the Cannes Film Festival in 2009.

Waltz recently nabbed the role of the villain in Francis Lawrence’s circus drama “Water for Elephants”.

Christoph Waltz was born on 4 October 1956. He attended the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna and the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York. Waltz made his stage debut at the Zurich Schauspielhaus with “Amadeus”. Appearing in numerous film and TV roles, he became known to a larger audience. In the film “Leben für Leben” (“Life for Life”) of legendary Polish film director Krzysztof Zanussi about the Franciscan priest Maximilian Kolbe he played a former concentration camp prisoner in 1991. He continued cooperating with this director in “Die Farbe des Lebens” (“Our God’s Brother”) in 1997. In 1993 he played the part of the Anabaptist Jan van Leiden in Tom Toelle’s two-part history series “König der letzten Tage” (“King of the Last Days”). In 1995 he joined the international cast of the TV production “Katharina die Große” (“Catherine the Great”), with Catherine Zeta-Jones in the title role. For his excellent performance in “Du bist nicht allein – Die Roy Black Story” (“You are not alone – The Roy Black story”) Waltz won an award at “Baden-Badener Tage des Fernsehspiels” in 1996 and the Bavarian TV Prize in 1997. Together with film director Peter Kegelevic and the actors Sebastian Koch and Tobias Moretti, he received the Adolf Grimme Prize — for the film adaptation of the kidnapping of the industrialist’s son Richard Oetker “Der Tanz mit dem Teufel” (“Dance with the Devil”). Jointly with actor-colleague Armin Rohde and director Stephan Wagner, this prize was conferred on him again in 2004 for playing the role of a bored sales representative in the black comedy “Dienstreise – Was für eine Nacht” (“Business trip – What a night”). In

2000 he directed the TV film “Wenn man sich traut” (“A Question of Confidence”).

In the night and early morning hours after the Academy Awards ceremony, Waltz was showered with congratulations by politicians. In a statement personally addressing Waltz, Federal President Heinz Fischer expressed his “conviction that this prize will help you in the future to demonstrate your talent as an actor in many acclaimed productions”. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann was pleased about “another truly well-deserved distinction for an exceptional actor from Austria”. Minister of Science and Research Beatrix Karl pointed out that both Christoph Waltz and the two Oscar-nominees Michael Haneke and Christian Berger look back on careers at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts. Currently, both teach at the Vienna Film Academy. “The award and nominations do not only turn the spotlight on the outstanding achievements of the three film celebrities but also the high quality of training and of the teaching staff at the Austrian universities”. Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner congratulated the trio as well. He added that the funding model “Film Location Austria” – a kind of “new creativity premium” – strengthened the competitiveness of domestic film and had in particular been designed “to prevent renowned film creators from leaving Austria for financial reasons”. Secretary of State for the Media Josef Ostermayer considered the accomplishments of Austrian artists as an incentive to further develop the “film location Austria”. To this end, the Act on the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) stipulated a higher share of Austrian films in TV programming as well as a consistent increase in media funding in the next years. “In 2009 we almost doubled the budget of the TV film fund to 13.5 million euro”.

Of course, Waltz was congratulated also by actor-colleagues and film directors such as Stefan Ruzowitzky (“The Counterfeiters”) winning the Oscar for the Best Foreign-Language Film in 2008 or Robert Dornhelm, who had been an Oscar nominee for “Kinder der Theaterstraße” (“The Children of Theatre Street”) in 1978. In his opinion, policy-makers had to take advantage of the upswing in the wake of the Oscar for Christoph Waltz. “In 2009 for the first time one million spectators watched domestic films in Austria. Nevertheless, the film industry gets only a small percentage of the amount that is allocated to “elite culture”. The film sector had “to force” those in charge to increase funding by ten times.

US cinematographers pay tribute to Christian Berger

A special tribute to an Austrian cameraman was paid by the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC). It conferred an award on the Austrian Christian Berger, 65, who was behind the camera in Michael Haneke's Film "Das weiße Band" ("The White Ribbon"), in Los Angeles on 27 February 2010. After having won several international awards, the gloomy social drama unfolding on the eve of WWI. in a northern German village had been nominated for two Oscars – for best non-English language film and for best cinematography. Eventually, these Oscars went to Argentine director Juan José Campanella's "El Secreto de Sus Ojos" ("The Secret in Their Eyes") and Mauro Fiore for his cinematography with newly developed digital 3-D cameras in James Cameron's "Avatar".

Theatre Museum: Mahler and Vienna

The Austrian Theatre Museum presents the exhibition "‘unfortunately I am a dyed-in-the-wool Viennese’ – Gustav Mahler and Vienna" (ending on 3 October 2010). The 150th birthday of the composer will be celebrated on 7 July 2010. The show presents Mahler and his era in ten exhibition rooms and three parts. Born in Kalischt (now Kalište) in Bohemia in 1860, Mahler stayed in Vienna during his studies (part 1) and rose to the position of the energetic director of the Court Opera (today Vienna State Opera) (part 2). After his retirement, he spent the last years of his life as a travelling conductor, with Vienna remaining the anchor of his creative work in Europe (3). The show – curated by Reinhold Kubik and Thomas Trabitsch and designed by Blaich+Delugan – was organised in cooperation with the International Gustav Mahler Society, the Arnold Schönberg Centre, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, the Austrian National Library, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and others. Important loan exhibits come from the Morgan Library & Museum in New York, Magyar Állami Operaház Budapest, the Médiathèque Musicale Mahler in Paris as well as the Richard Wagner Museum in Bayreuth.

The exhibition presents selected autographs, photos, costumes and stage design sketches for the opera under Mahler's revolutionary management and film footage of Vienna around 1900. Another subject explored in the exhibition is the current reception of Mahler.

The exhibition is accompanied by concerts and symposia, but also a composition contest.

www.theatermuseum.at

MdM Mönchsberg: sensational works from Kunstmuseum Winterthur

Up to 30 May 2010, Museum der Moderne (MdM) on Mönchsberg in Salzburg shows 240 paintings, sculptures and drawings by 105 renowned artists from the famous collection of the Swiss Winterthur Art Museum, which was for example the favourite museum of the German Gerhard Richter. Due to renovation, the collection of works spanning one and a half centuries left the Winterthur Art Museum for the first time. After the exquisite touring exhibition was hosted by the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn and the MART Rovereto, it has now stopped in Salzburg.

"Masterpieces of Modernity" is the name of the show, which could almost serve as an encyclopaedia of modern art. It would be going too far to describe the important movements and counter-movements presented at the MdM in more detail: French Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), Symbolic Naturalism, Geometric Abstraction, Concrete Art, Arte Povera, American Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, including the contemporary positions of Richard Artschwager, Richter and Thomas Schütte – all of them are illustrated by superb masterpieces.

In the lounge area of the exhibition premises visitors will not only find relevant literature but may also watch the film "Von Stiftern und Anstiftern – das Kunstmuseum Winterthur" (script and director: Horst Brandenburg). The German-language exhibition catalogue (320 pages with 248 colour illustration) is on sale in the museum shop for only 29 euro.

www.museumdermoderne.at

Verbund Collection presents exhibition on feminist art in Rome

At the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea in Rome, the Vienna-based Verbund Collection presents the exhibition "DONNA: Avanguardia femminile negli anni '70" (until 16 May 2010) curated by the manager of the Collection Gabriele Schor and by Angelandrea Rorro.

With the 200 works of 17 women artists presented in Rome, "Sammlung Verbund" owns one of the world's largest collections of feminist art of the 1970s.

The "image of the woman" in visual arts has been shaped by male projections and fantasies over the centuries. This representation of women handed down through generations was

deconstructed in the 1970s by the feminist avant-garde.

The female artists examine clichés and stereotypes by focusing on self-dramatisation and role plays. They rebel against dictates of beauty and explore the potential of self-defined female identities. The “image of the woman” is now created by the women themselves.

Besides well-known artistic positions, for example of Valie Export and Cindy Sherman, the exhibition presents many works of artists still to be discovered, e.g. by Renate Bertlmann or Birgit Jürgenssen. Works by this artist are currently presented at Vertikale Galerie of the Verbund headquarters in Vienna.

www.gnam.beniculturali.it

Conference marking the tenth anniversary of the Bologna system

A two-day conference marking the tenth anniversary of the Bologna system of higher education was opened in Budapest on 11 March 2010 by admitting Kazakhstan as the 47th member of the Bologna process. In the afternoon of the same day, the participants travelled to Vienna, where a festive event was staged at Hofburg in the evening and a working meeting of the competent ministers of the Bologna member states was held on 12 March 2010.

A process was initiated in Bologna in 1999 to harmonise the curricula and degrees of universities and other institutions of higher education across Europe based on a three-cycle structure – bachelor, master and PhD. The aim was to allow students to continue their studies seamlessly in another country – the studies would be recognised in all the countries participating in the Bologna process. Based on another objective of the Bologna process, 20 per cent of the students should obtain parts of their university education in a foreign country. All of these measures were expected to improve the quality of education and to increase the share of university graduates. Many observers considered the Bologna process highly important for Austria as the universities and institutions of higher education were still suffering from provincialism in science and research – the impact of annihilation and displacement of Jewish and progressive intellectuals by the Nazis can be felt even today.

According to the critics of the Bologna process, the bachelor studies have led to a strong “schoolification” of curricula. There is no time for studying subjects that will not be tested in exams. The students fail to take advantage of opportunities for studying abroad and the mobility of the teaching staff is rather limited.

Foreign professors come mainly from Germany. And then many B.A. graduates face general problems. Many employers and professional associations do not recognise their degree as qualifying for a profession.

As professor of philosophy Andrée Sursock, who authored the Bologna Anniversary Report of the European University Association, stated in an interview with “Wiener Zeitung“, she hoped that emphasis would shift from technocratic goals to a more humanistic approach to education.

The press conference at the end of the Bologna conference was attended inter alia by EU Commissioner for Education Androulla Vassiliou, Hungarian Minister of Science Istvan Hiller, his Romanian counterpart Petru Funeriu and Spanish Secretary-General in the Ministry of Science Màrius Rubiralta as well as Austrian Minister of Science and Research Beatrix Karl, who told reporters: “We remain committed to the vision of the Bologna process“. So far, Bologna had made an important contribution to strengthening the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). However, implementation at national level remained the “greatest challenge“. Greater mobility and improved comparability of university studies were invaluable. In 1999 30 countries had signed the Bologna Declaration; including Kazakhstan, today there were 47 signatory states.

According to Vassiliou, the EU ministers in charge of higher education should make a pledge to comply with the EU’s goal that by 2020 40 percent of the 30 to 34 year-olds should have completed higher education.

The anniversary celebrations in Vienna provoked criticism: 3,500 to about 12,000 students (according to the police and the organiser “Bologna Burns“, respectively) demonstrated against the developments in educational policy – also university teachers joined the protest.

Leopold Museum: Hidden Treasures of Austrian Watercolour Painting

Leopold Museum at Vienna’s MuseumsQuartier presents “Hidden Treasures of Austrian Watercolour Painting“ from the Biedermeier period to the present. The exhibition (closing on 24 May 2010) showcases masterpieces, e.g. by August von Pettenkofen, Marie Egner, Tina Blau, Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Oskar Laske, Wilhelm Thöny, Josef Dobrowsky, Herbert Boeckl, Max Weiler, Karl Stark, Kurt Absolon, Kurt Moldovan and Heribert Mader.

www.leopoldmuseum.org

SPORTS POLICY**Strong Austrian team at tenth Paralympic Winter Games**

The tenth Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver – ceremoniously opened on 12 March 2010 – are among this year’s major international sports events besides the Football World Cup and the Olympic Games.

19 Austrian athletes as well as the total Austrian team will represent Austria’s red-white-red flag in Canada. 14 male and three female athletes participate in the Alpine events, two athletes compete in the Nordic disciplines. A total of 650 athletes from 46 nations is expected in Vancouver.

At the official farewell ceremony for the Austrian delegation, Federal President Heinz Fischer stressed the outstanding achievements of the athletes: “Regardless how many medals you will win, I am sure you will represent Austria in Vancouver in a most dignified manner“. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos was also highly optimistic on the eve of the Paralympic Games: “We have both top athletes and excellent structures. At the previous Games in Torino, Austria achieved a phenomenal result, earning 14 including three gold – medals. I am confident that we will have many reasons to celebrate this year, too!“, stated Darabos.

Excellent kick-off with two gold medals

Indeed, the X. Paralympic Winter Games started optimally from Austria’s perspective:

There has been cause for celebration already on 14 March 2010. The two gold medals of Claudia Lösch and Sabine Gasteiger as well as the bronze medal of Philipp Bonadimann in the slalom competition marked the sensational beginning of the Alpine events.

Sabine Gasteiger (with guide Stefan Schoner) became the winner of the race of visually impaired women, posting the fastest time in the two runs. In the slalom event for sitting athletes Claudia Lösch (aged 21) was second after the first run; angrily she went into the second run and earned her first gold medal in the Paralympic Games.

Austria’s remarkable medal tally on the first day of the Alpine competitions of the Paralympic Games was increased by Philipp Bonadimann, who clutched a bronze medal in the slalom sitting event. Minister of Sport Darabos: “The fact that the Paralympic Games got off to such a good start will motivate the Austrian athletes enormously in the competitions ahead. I congratulate the medal winners wholeheartedly, and I am pleased that the

sports nation Austria is represented so worthily by this excellent team“.

Republic of Austria supports disabled sports with about one million euro annually

The perfectly working funding system of the Republic of Austria has been a basic prerequisite for the country’s great success at Paralympic Games in the past and in the present.

The indispensable financial basis is for example provided by the Fund Promoting Disabled Sports, which serves exclusively non-commercial purposes. As specific projects of disabled sports – such as schemes promoting young talents or measures ensuring that the participants in competitive sport events for disabled athletes receive adequate ongoing professional support and coaching – are financed on a long-term basis, the quality of sports for the disabled is continuously increasing in Austria. A decisive contribution to the success story of disabled sports in Austria is made by supporting measures raising the Paralympics to the same level as the Olympic Games, funding relevant scientific and research projects as well as by taking action to promote disabled women’s sport.

The legal basis for promoting disabled sports in Austria was created in the framework of amending the Federal Sports Promotion Act in 2003. Under the Federal Sports Promotion Act 2005, a special federal sports promotion scheme was established that ensures financing of disabled sports in Austria on a long-term basis.

In accordance with Section 10(1)(1) of the Federal Sports Promotion Act 2005, the Federal Republic of Austria allocated about 980,000 euro to disabled sports in Austria in 2008.

The latest “branch” of the Fund Promoting Disabled Sports is the RED-WHITE-RED-TEAM (RWRT), which was established in 2007. Thanks to the annual funding made available by the Ministry of Sport, optimal and tailored support can be offered to elite athletes preparing for international top events. The Fund for Disabled Sports receives 150,000 euro annually from RWRT.