

## NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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**HOME AFFAIRS****Faymann: guaranteed minimum income is a concrete anti-poverty measure**

On 16 March 2010, the governing parties – Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP) – finally gave the green light for the means-tested guaranteed minimum income. The new law is to enter into force in September. But Upper Austria, Salzburg and Carinthia find it difficult to meet this deadline and therefore announced plans to postpone introduction. Rules ensuring adequate transition from the current social assistance system to the guaranteed minimum income will be adopted.

There was no “choice between work and the guaranteed minimum income“, stated Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the press conference after the Council of Ministers. It could never be considered a goal that people live without working. “Work is indispensable for people's self-esteem and human dignity“, said Faymann. The guaranteed minimum income was a concrete measure to combat poverty but also to re-integrate people into the employment process, stressed the Federal Chancellor.

The principle of means-tested guaranteed minimum income is that people in precarious situations are enabled to maintain a defined minimum standard, which is based on the so-called “top-up benefit for pensioners“. After deduction of the health insurance contributions, it currently amounts to 744 euro net per month for singles, 1,116 euro for couples and 134 euro per child. If the personal income – unemployment benefits, unemployment assistance or from economic activities – is below that level, it is topped up to this minimum amount. The guaranteed minimum income consists in a base amount (75 per cent) and a housing subsidy (25 per cent). The latter is not granted to people not paying rents as they live with their parents or own a condominium.

About 270,000 people will profit from the guaranteed minimum income, among them 165,000 social assistance recipients and 90,000 beneficiaries of unemployment assistance. A major advantage of the new system is that persons previously not covered by health insurance will be insured and receive an electronic health insurance card. Willingness to work is a prerequisite for entitlement to a minimum income. Refusal to work will be sanctioned by cutting benefits, in extreme cases by denying entitlement. Abuse is to be prevented by strict means tests and the duty to repay benefits. Before claims can be lodged, applicants must

have exhausted private property (also inherited assets) up to a threshold of 3,720 euro.

**Presidential election 2010: three candidates – electoral campaign started**

Three candidates submitted the required minimum of 6,000 declarations of support for the presidential election on 25 April 2010 to the Federal Electoral Agency in the Ministry of the Interior before the deadline 26 March 2010. Hence, incumbent President Heinz Fischer, Barbara Rosenkranz, the candidate of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), and Rudolf Geiring, Chairman of the “Christian Party of Austria“ (CPÖ) are in the race for president.

**Safer food and consumer credit laws**

To strengthen consumer protection in food law and in consumer credit arrangements, the federal government adopted two amendments in the session of the Council of Ministers on 23 March 2010. This measure has been prompted by a scandal over cheese contaminated with listeria from a Styrian company. The aim was to provide the Ministry of Health and the authorities with a legal basis for earlier intervention as well as to enable them to halt production, to recall products and to close down production facilities temporarily in cases of justified suspicion even without obtaining detailed expert opinions in advance.

Borrowers will also benefit from improvements. In the future they will be entitled to request a repayment plan and have the right to cancel the loan agreement within 14 days. Moreover, banks will have a duty to examine creditworthiness and to warn the consumers.

**Compensation to rail passengers also on short-distance trains**

On 24 March 2010, the National Council gave the go ahead for compensation payments to Austrian Rail passengers also for delays on short-distance trains. The holders of annual tickets receive at least 10% in compensation if less than 90% of the trains run punctually. Furthermore, travellers using long-distance services (even in Austria) will be refunded 25% of the ticket price for delays exceeding 60 minutes, and 50% for trains more than two hours behind the schedule.

**Styria: municipal elections 2010**

The preliminary final result of the municipal elections in Styria on 21 March 2010 is as follows (in %): ÖVP: 46.7 (+3.4), SPÖ: 37.7 (-5.6), FPÖ: 6.5 (+0.7), Greens: 2.1 (-0.2), BZÖ: 0.6 (n.a.), others: 5.3 (+0.9).

## EUROPE INTERNATIONAL

### **Federal Chancellor Faymann at EU spring summit in Brussels**

The heads of state and government of the 27 EU Member States agreed on a rescue plan for the highly indebted Greece at the spring summit in Brussels (25/26 March 2010). As a last resort, a coordinated loan package consisting of bilateral credits of the remaining 15 euro-zone countries (16, including Greece) and a loan of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will be used. However, this model will be applied only as “ultima ratio” and provided that Greece requests support.

After the summit meeting, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann was “not unsatisfied” with the compromise reached but stated that it would remain to be seen whether the safety net knit for Greece was “one hundred per cent working“. Of course, the aim was that it would “not fail”. “But it still needed to be put to the test“, said Faymann. In any case, it had been ensured that most of the aid came from the European side.

### **Swiss Federal President Leuthard in Vienna**

Swiss Federal President Doris Leuthard paid an official visit to Austria on 26 March 2010. She met with Federal President Heinz Fischer at his residence in Vienna’s Hofburg and held talks with Minister of Finance Josef Pröll, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner, Minister of Education Claudia Schmied and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer.

Among the subjects discussed was the conflict between Switzerland and Libya. Leuthard expected a speedy solution as well as the release of a Swiss detained in Libya. Fischer assured that Austria supported the return of the Swiss citizen.

Fischer and Leuthard described the bilateral relations as excellent. There were no unsettled issues and the two countries could concentrate on information exchange as well as cooperation.

### **New IAEA Director-General Amano received by Federal President Fischer**

The new Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Yukiya Amano, from Japan paid his first visit to Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer on 17 March 2010. Amano succeeds to former IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei, who headed the Agency from 1997 to 2009.

According to the press release of the President’s Office, the top item on the agenda of the talks between Amano and Fischer was the situation in Iran, including further sanctions of the international community. President Fischer underlined that it was in Austria’s interest that steps towards nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear arms would be taken. Furthermore, Fischer assured that Austria continued to lend its full support to the activity of the IAEA headquartered in Vienna.

### **Austria supports Croatia’s accession to the EU**

According to Federal President Heinz Fischer, Croatia could become a member of the European Union in 2012. There was a good chance that accession negotiations would be concluded still this year. In this case, membership in 2012 was possible, stated the Federal President after a meeting with incoming Croatian President Ivo Josipović in Vienna on 15 March 2010.

Croatia’s EU membership would benefit Croatia, Austria, the region and Europe, said Fischer at a joint press meeting. Josipović acknowledged that reforms were necessary, especially in the judicial system and in administration. The Croatian government wanted to “offer the citizens everything a state governed by the rule of law and a democratic state can offer“, said Josipović. Croatia was ready for EU accession as soon as the prerequisites were met.

Josipović described Austria as the most important investor in Croatia. The two countries would continue their longstanding good cooperation to overcome the economic crisis, explained the Croatian President.

### **Ceremonious opening of the new OPEC building in Vienna**

In the presence of the energy ministers of all 12 Member States the new seat of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was opened in Vienna’s Willplingerstrasse on 17 March 2010. In his festive speech Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger described OPEC as a “key player in international dialogue“. Ensuring a fair balance between the interests of petrol-producing and petrol-consuming countries, the organisation made a vital contribution to the security of energy supplies for private persons and the economic sector, underlined Foreign Minister Spindelegger.

## ECONOMY

### **Austria is one of the most innovative countries in the EU**

Based on the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) presented by the European Commission on 17 March 2010, Austria has succeeded in consolidating its position among Europe's top innovative countries. "Austria is already one of the EU's most innovative countries but cannot rest on its laurels after having been ranked sixth", stated Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner. To make it "into the group of innovation leaders or even Europe's top three", more enterprises active in research were required. This was the only way to ensure long-term economic upswing and qualified economic growth, stressed the Minister for Economic Affairs.

Particularly the substantial investments in research, technology and innovation (RTI) made by small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) proved that Austria was heading in the right direction, stated Mitterlehner. According to the Innovation Scoreboard, Austria exceeded the EU average significantly for the following indicators: R&D expenditure of the private sector (number four in the EU), percentage of innovation-oriented SMEs (number three), SMEs engaged in RTI cooperation (number four) as well as the share of SMEs having introduced a product or process innovation (number two). "On the whole, the R&D expenditure in Austria increased more strongly and steadily than in most other EU Member States", stated Mitterlehner.

Despite tight budgets, the innovation stimulus programmes necessary to achieve top rankings are not cut but stepped up in 2010. Initiatives such as the Innovation Cheque and the cooperation programme for SMEs COIN (Cooperation & Innovation) have been designed to continue increasing the number of enterprises active in research. In parallel, the service sector and creative industry will receive increased support. Companies may claim subsidies of up to 300,000 euro for creative industry projects through the funding system "impulse LEAD" financed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Furthermore, significantly more equity is available for innovative investments this year. By allocating 40 million euro to the SME Fund, the Austrian Economic Service (Austria Wirtschaftsservice/aws) injects equity into growth projects. Among the beneficiaries are also companies of the research sector. Under the new Venture Capital Initiative of aws, 15 million euro are made available to research-

and technology-oriented companies during their foundation or initial phase.

Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures also thinks that Austria's easy sixth-place ranking on the EIS confirms that Austria's research and technology policy approach is right. But she sees it also as a mandate to expand capacities and to optimise the framework. The federal government was pressing ahead with the development of a comprehensive strategy for research, technology and innovation. Bures emphasised that it would continue to be Austria's declared aim to rank among Europe's three most innovative economies. To promote innovation activities of companies and research institutions meant to safeguard sustainable economic growth and future-oriented jobs. The priorities of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology were future- and growth-oriented areas like transport, energy, information and communication technology as well as manufacturing, explained Bures.

### **OeNB: Austria's banks profited strongly from Eastern Europe in 2009**

The credit institutions active in Austria profited strongly from their engagement in Eastern and South Eastern Europe also during the past financial year 2009. Based on the latest estimate of the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) the banks earned a total of 248 million euro, this is significantly less than in 2008 (1.89 billion euro). Including the contribution of the foreign subsidiaries, their income was, however, 1.5 billion euro, corresponding to a plus of 0.9 billion euro. The risk-related costs again had an adverse effect on the result; they increased from the level of 2008 by almost 20% to 8.32 billion euro in 2009. OeNB Executive Board member Andreas Ittner expects risk-related costs to continue climbing in 2010. The peak has not yet been reached, Ittner informed reporters in Vienna on 25 March 2010.

### **FMA: ban on foreign currency credits**

On 22 March 2010, the Financial Market Supervisory Authority (Finanzmarktaufsicht/FMA) imposed a general ban on foreign currency loans due to the high risks involved. Domestic banks are no longer allowed to offer consumers new foreign currency loans, e.g. to finance housing projects. Non-euro credits may be extended only to wealthy private customers with excellent creditworthiness and sufficient income. It is now definitely forbidden to combine these credits with repayment vehicles such as funds or bonds.

**CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE****Oscar reception hosted by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann**

It was “with great pride” that Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann received illustrious Austrian filmmakers in the evening of Monday, 22 March 2010. In the past few years, his guests did not only win international acclaim for their outstanding accomplishments but were also showered with prizes.

The invitation of the Chancellor, Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied and Secretary of State for the Media Josef Ostermayer had been motivated by this year’s Oscar nominations of film director Michael Haneke (“The White Ribbon“) and of his excellent cameraman Christian Berger, with whom Haneke has co-operated over many years, and last, but not least by the Oscar awarded to actor Christoph Waltz (“Inglourious Basterds“).

The list of invitees also included film directors Stefan Ruzowitzky, who won an Oscar in 2008 for “The Counterfeiters“, Götz Spielmann, nominated for Oscar in 2009 for “Revanche“ (who was accompanied by his excellent actors Johannes Krisch and Andreas Lust) and Wolfgang Glück (“38 – Auch das war Wien“), Oscar nominee in 1987.

After congratulating Michael Haneke on his 68<sup>th</sup> birthday on 23 March, the Chancellor proceeded to a subject that is probably of vital interest to the filmmakers. Film funding – a “difficult issue“ – had been increased from 18 to 31 million euro annually only recently. This sounded like “a quite small amount” in absolute figures but the government tried to increase funds also in economically difficult times. Faymann then explained the special flair of films made in Austria: “Austrian filmmakers show the shadowy sides of life without embellishment. They help to examine the consequences of the past critically instead of inhibiting them“. Furthermore, the Chancellor thanked the filmmakers for spreading “Austria’s reputation as a nation attaching vital importance to culture in the cinemas of Europe and around the world”.

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied pointed out that Austria could look back on seven Oscar nominations in the past ten years – a series of “unbelievable intensity”. She also assured that “the fight for money for the Austrian film“ would go on. “We are on your side“.

Christoph Waltz was in the limelight of the media, who answered the flurry of questions in a calm and reserved manner, for example

whether the character of SS Colonel Hans Landa in Quentin Tarantino’s film had been “the role of his life“? “I do not hope so, I am only 53. But of course, this could be the case. We have to talk about this in 30 years“. Why the actor living in Berlin and London had left Austria? “This happened a long time ago. As an actor you traditionally become a wandering journeyman. Then you accept the fact that you finally settle down in some other place with a degree of approval“.

He described the invitation to the Federal Chancellery as “actually simply beautiful”. After all, the Minister of Culture was not only competent for the film industry but also interested in films – and the Federal Chancellor as well. “There is nothing to be said against it“.

On 23 March 2010, the successful protagonists of the “Austrian film miracle” followed the invitation of US Ambassador William C. Eacho to his residence in Vienna. In the evening the film celebrities attended the Film Ball at Vienna’s City Hall.

**Minister of Culture Schmied appointed Karola Kraus as new MUMOK Director**

On 22 March 2010, Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied appointed German art historian Karola Kraus as new director of the Museum of Modern Art (MUMOK) in Vienna. Incumbent Director Edelbert Köb will resign on 1 October 2010.

Karola Kraus, who is married to an architect active in Frankfurt, was born as Karola Grässlin in St. Georgen in the Black Forest in 1961. After her studies – including modern German literature and classical archaeology in Stuttgart and Munich, she worked as a project assistant for the large-scale exhibition “Metropolis“ in Berlin. Later she headed Kunstverein Braunschweig and then became director of Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden.

Karola Kraus grew up with art. The Grässlin family are art collectors and runs an influential art space in St. Georgen; deceased painter Martin Kippenberger was considered a close friend of the family. Her sister Bärbel Grässlin manages a gallery in Frankfurt. Among the artists highly appreciated by Karola Kraus are Franz West and Heimo Zobernig. She is very interested in US Minimal Art and concept art.

Together with Minister Schmied, Kraus will present a first programmatic concept for her term of office on 5 May 2010. MUMOK saw her as an “ambassador of international contemporary art and culture in the tradition-steeped atmosphere of a globally renowned city of culture“. Her objective was “to continue

developing this reputation in the future with the support of her progressive team“.

### Series of prizes at Diagonale Graz

At the 2010 Diagonale Film Festival in Graz numerous prizes were awarded. The Grand Diagonale Prize for the Best Feature Film went to Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel for “La Pivellina“. The film presents the story of a woman who searches for her dog in Rome. Instead, she finds a little abandoned girl and takes her home. “The filmmakers observe the improvised way the two start living together with the same tenderness the foundling is taken care of“, stated the Jury.

“Hana, dul, sed...“ – a fascinating film on North Korean women’s football by Brigitte Weich and Karin Macher – was selected “Best Austrian Documentary 2009/2010“.

No surprise at all was the winner of the Diagonale Prize “Best Cinematography” (donated by the Austrian Association of Cinematographers) cameraman Christian Berger. Having gained a global reputation as the “executive organ” of Michael Haneke, Berger was Oscar-nominated for best cinematography in “The White Ribbon” and received an award of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC). Director of “Lourdes“ Jessica Hausner won the “Thomas Pluch Script Prize 2010“ for the best script filmed. The Diagonale Youth Jury’s Prize went to Hüseyin Tabak for “Kick Off“, a film about the “Homeless World Cup“.

Prizes for Innovative Production Services were awarded for “Plastic Planet“ (category: cinema documentary), “The Bone Man“, “Desert Flower“ (category: cinema feature film) and “The White Ribbon“ (category: international feature film).

Numerous other prizes were granted. The Prize of Diocese Graz-Seckau, for example, went to director Juliane Großheim and her documentary “Die Kinder vom Friedrichshof“. “Unobtrusively but still at a high emotional level, she explores the controversial life of Otto Mühl. By presenting his Commune as a metaphor for a closed social system, there is no need for hints of moralism and manipulative comments; critical analysis becomes possible“, the jury explained its decision.

Minister of Science and Research Beatrix Karl congratulated all prize winners. It was particularly gratifying that so many of them were students and graduates of “Vienna Film Academy“. This Institute for Film and TV at Vienna’s University of Music and Performing Arts offered the only filmmaking training at university level in Austria – “and successfully

so, as the new series of awards has demonstrated“, said the Minister.

### Commemorating Raimund Abraham

Architect Raimund Abraham from Austria died in a car crash in Los Angeles already on 3 March 2010. In 2000 Abraham renounced his Austrian nationality, two years later the US authorities approved his application for the US citizenship. His decision to change his passport was due to the participation of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in the then government, which he had criticised vehemently.

Born in Lienz (Eastern Tyrol) in 1933, he graduated from the University of Technology in Graz “with honours“. In the early 1960s, he worked as an architect in Vienna – more theoretically than practically. “As a non-conformist, fundamental critic and defender of architectural form, he advocated tirelessly the collective renewal of architecture“, said Director of the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) Peter Noever. “Imaginary architecture“ and “visionary architecture“ were catchphrases he used to provoke a discussion on the nature of architecture and its relation to the culture of the respective age. In 1964 he published the book “Elementare Architektur“. He was interested in a type of architecture that was free from attributes and external influences, built with the most simple means, organically grown throughout the building process: “Memories and longing: this is architecture. Built and not built“.

As one of the exponents of Vienna’s architectural avant-garde, Abraham was exhibited together with Hans Hollein and Walter Pichler at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1967. This city was to become the centre of his life, he taught and worked there since 1971.

Abraham participated in international projects with spectacular architectural drawings but in “big projects“ the second prize seemed to be his fate. He was narrowly defeated in contests for the Centre Pompidou (1971) as well as for the Opéra de la Bastille (1983). The list of works realised by him is therefore much shorter than that of the buildings whose architects were influenced by him. Among them are housing and business estates in the USA and in Austria (he designed the master plan and sections of the housing development Traviatagasse in Vienna), the Anthology Film Archives in New York and Hypo bank in his native town Lienz. In 1985 he was awarded the “Stone Lion Award“ at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Architecture Biennale in Venice. By realising the new building of the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York based

on his own drawings, Raimund Abraham went down in the history of architecture. The high-rise building with about 20 storeys and a width of only 7.6 metres has a captivating cascading façade of glass and aluminium. During the construction phase from 1992 to 2002, the building aroused many controversies, also due to the high costs. Loudly acclaimed by prestigious architects and architecture critics at the opening, it has become the “flagship of a modern cultural nation“. In the “Wallpaper City Guide“ of the year 2009 the building is described as one of the five most important landmarks of contemporary architecture in New York.

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied praised the deceased architect as a “man of clarity“. “This quality did not only characterise his architectural work but also his public activities. Abraham did not compromise as he was adhering unwaveringly to his principles“. Just like Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, Minister Schmied stressed the international significance of the “Austrian Cultural Forum“ in New York. The Chancellor concluded: “Raimund Abraham was a shining example of Austria’s architectural tradition and also a warning voice against political aberrations. I would like to express my sympathy to his family and friends“. About 300 mourners bade farewell at a silent slide show at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) already on 5 March 2010, where the architect had given a lecture, hours before the accident. Friends commemorated this personality “who always remained true to himself and his convictions“ (Peter Noever) at Semperdepot in Vienna on 27 March 2010.

### **Hans Koller Prize: European Jazz Prize to trumpeter Enrico Rava from Trieste**

In the framework of the Hans Koller Prize, the European Jazz Prize 2009 was conferred on the Italian trumpeter-composer Enrico Rava at the jazz club Porgy & Bess in Vienna on 26 March 2010. Born in Trieste in 1943, he began his professional music career at the age of 18 and quickly gained a reputation in New York’s avant-garde of the 1960s. He performed together with Steve Lacy, Bill Dixon, was a member of the group of Roswell Rudd and the Jazz Composer’s Orchestra, from which Carla Bleys and Paul Haines’ “Escalator over the Hill“ emerged. Rava was introduced to this circle by the Argentinean tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri, who was to become famous for the film music of Bernardo Bertolucci’s “Last Tango in Paris“ (1972). Enrico Rava’s trumpet

playing was lyrical and melodic in all free-jazz eruptions from the very beginning. He succeeded in blending various influences – from Italian, North and Latin American music. He considered Italian opera the true popular music of his native country. In projects for records such as “L’Opera Va“ and “Carmen“ he devoted himself to transposing opera arias into jazz.

Among the trumpeters admired by him are Bix Beiderbecke, Miles Davis and Chet Baker. He dedicated records to them, for which he teamed up with other artists, e.g. with his Sardinian trumpeter colleague Paolo Fresu. But his models even include New Orleans musicians such as Nick LaRocca, the leader of the original Dixieland Band, whose parents came from Sicily. He also appreciates Louis Armstrong. Moreover, Rava found a musical kinship with Art Farmer’s lyrical style. He substituted the terminally ill flugelhorn player in the duo project “Duo En Noir“ (1999) initiated by Franz Koglmann and the label “between the lines“, in which also pianist Ran Blake participated.

Enrico Rava has received several awards for his European contribution to contemporary jazz, e.g. the French decoration “Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres“. Nevertheless, he recently stated in an interview of Andreas Felber of the daily “Standard“: “The whole discussion about European and American jazz is not really my thing“.

On 27 March 2010 Enrico Rava gave a wildly cheered concert at Porgy & Bess – together with other Hans Koller Prize winners such as percussionist Wolfgang Reisinger (Musician of the Year), saxophonist Clemens Salesny (Newcomer of the Year) and Max Nagl, whose CD “C.O.D.E.“ – the Music of Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy – won the title “CD of the Year 2009“.

[www.hanskollerpreis.at](http://www.hanskollerpreis.at), [www.porgy.at](http://www.porgy.at)

### **Wien Museum: Madness & Modernity in Vienna around 1900**

The exhibition “Madness & Modernity“ exploring the relationship between art and pathology around 1900 is still running until 2 May 2010 at Wien Museum. The show designed by British art historian Gemma Blackshaw is a downsized version of the exhibition of the London-based Wellcome Collection, a museum devoted to medical history. “Madness & Modernity“ offers visitors a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the works of Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Max Oppenheimer or Egon Schiele.

[www.wienmuseum.at](http://www.wienmuseum.at)

**SPORTS POLICY****ÖOC secret account: Darabos orders investigation by Ministry**

Auditors confirmed at the latest meeting of the Managing Board of the Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC) in March that a secret bank account with transactions involving very high amounts existed for many years. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: "When I started the ball rolling within the ÖOC upon entering into office as Minister of Sport, I faced major resistance, also from the previous ÖOC leadership. But my suspicion has been confirmed." Unfortunately the dimension of the scandal was not foreseeable, said Darabos. "It is important that all unsettled issues are finally dealt with and then we must turn to the future as soon as possible", said the Minister.

The Minister also announced that a thorough investigation would be launched to find out whether funds of the federal sports promotions scheme are affected directly or indirectly by the movements on the secret account. Major issues at stake are possible double payments for expenses and reversals of bank transfers.

"These incidents confirm that we adopted the right approach to the reform of the funding system. It is a key objective of the reform to ensure more transparency and to introduce a state-of-the-art auditing system, replacing auditors working in an honorary capacity by professional controlling", said Darabos.

**Carinthia's stadium: "Against the destruction of infrastructure!"**

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos is alarmed at the continuing debate about maintaining or reducing the present capacity of the stadium in Klagenfurt, which had been expanded for the European Football Championship 2008. "I am against the destruction of infrastructure and have supported the maximum-capacity option since my entry into office.", said Darabos.

The Minister of Sport had promised to provide the necessary financing to the City of Klagenfurt and the Land of Carinthia already last September. The terms and conditions were also laid down. Taking up a proposal of the Austrian Football Federation (ÖFB), Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos had brought all the parties involved in the Klagenfurt stadium issue to the negotiating table. This "stadium summit" chaired by the Minister of Sport had to be held in view of the diverging positions and conflicting opinions of the City of Klagenfurt and the Land of Carinthia regarding the future capacity of the stadium. To clarify the

issue, the Federal Minister had to act as a mediator and inform himself as comprehensively as possible about the very confusing situation concerning the Klagenfurt stadium.

"It is a fact that the solution has to take account of the requirements of the region, the wishes of the population and the existing infrastructure, and it must be affordable", Darabos commented on the present situation. "It is now the turn of the municipality of Klagenfurt. I uphold my promise, and I am very angry that no concrete project has been presented and that obviously the Land and the City have not reached an agreement. I demand a fast decision based on my commitments for it is unacceptable that one of Austria's most beautiful stadiums is decaying at the expense of the taxpayer."

**Darabos received successful Paralympics team at Vienna Airport**

Austria won eleven medals (3 x gold, 4 x silver, 4 x bronze) at the X. Paralympic Games in Vancouver. Quite an accomplishment in view of the increasingly fierce international competition! Austria is ranked sixth in the medal tally.

In the Alpine skiing competition Claudia Lösch won gold in the women's sitting slalom and super-G races, silver in the Super Combined and bronze in downhill. Sabine Gasteiger and her guide Stefan Schoner earned gold in slalom and won silver in the visually impaired women's giant slalom. Robert Meusburger raced to silver during the men's giant slalom standing event, but missed the winners' podium in slalom and Super Combined only by some hundredths of a second.

A silver medal was awarded also to Jürgen Egle in the Super Combined sitting event. Philipp Bonadimann earned two bronze medals, one in the sitting athletes' slalom and one in the Super Combined event. And Hubert Mandl won a much-longed-for medal, ranking third in the super-G standing event.

On 23 March 2010, Austria's successful team returned home safely. A large welcoming committee received the Paralympic athletes at Vienna-Schwechat Airport.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos praised the excellent result achieved by the Austrian participants: "Austria is proud of this team", said Darabos. The Minister congratulated all medalists and presented honorary medals of the Ministry of Sport to 19 active athletes.