

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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HOME AFFAIRS

Austria boasts lowest unemployment rate in the EU

The positive trend in the Austrian labour market continued also in August. The number of registered unemployed persons decreased by 20,405 year-on-year (minus 8.5%) to 218,398. However, the number of persons attending public training programmes rose by 5,171 to 62,865. In total, 281,263 people were jobless. The number of unemployed persons and trainees went down by 15,234 (minus 5.1%). At the presentation of the latest labour market data on 1 September 2010, Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer reacted with cautious optimism: “The situation is developing very well indeed“, Hundstorfer said, while warning that this was not yet an absolute trend reversal. Reporting the EU’s lowest unemployment rate (3.8%), Austria was in any case the “European champion”. Austria came in second in a ranking of EU-wide youth unemployment (9.1%). In August unemployment declined significantly among men (minus 12.5%), long-term jobless persons (minus 10.9%) and young people up to 24 years (minus 8.3%). Among women, unemployment decreased by 3.8% compared to the same period of last year. The number of vacancies is also developing favourably. Across Austria companies registered a total of 34,445 vacancies, this is a plus of 15% compared to August 2009. The average duration of unemployment was 97 days, this is seven days or 6.3% less than in the same period of last year.

Reform of financial criminal law and tighter anti-fraud measures

On 24 August 2010, the federal government adopted numerous decisions at the first session of the Council of Ministers after the summer break. The coalition partners – Social Democrats (SPÖ) and People’s Party (ÖVP) – agreed on tougher measures against tax and financial fraud. The aim was to combat tax evasion and illicit employment as well as to close tax loopholes, informed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll in the subsequent press conference.

The go-ahead was given for the 2010 Anti-Fraud Act and the amendment to the Financial Criminal Act, including a comprehensive set of measures against tax and social fraud. In the framework of amending the financial criminal law, the offence “fiscal fraud” was introduced, which will be subject to mandatory prison sentences (of up to 10 years) in severe cases.

Moreover, fines of a maximum of 2 million euro (or of 10 million euro for corporations) may be imposed.

Anonymous bank transfers of companies (payments to third parties without disclosing the recipient) in the framework of dubious financial transactions are to be discouraged by introducing a 25-percent supertax.

Harsh measures will also be taken against fraud at large building sites. General contractors will be requested to transfer five percent of the invoice amount directly to the tax authority. If this rule is not complied with, the general contractor will be liable for the wage taxes of the subcontractors.

Bank transfers to tax havens exceeding 100,000 euro will be subject to a notification duty. A special financial police will be set up within the tax authorities.

Justice summit: more money for anti-corruption combat

An additional amount of 28 million euro will be allocated to the Ministry of Justice by 2014. This decision was taken at the justice summit at the Federal Chancellery on 26 August 2010. The funds are earmarked for combating corruption and economic crime. According to Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, the aim of this measure was to strengthen “confidence in the judicial system as one of the most important pillars of the Republic“. With this amount, 189 permanent staff positions could be created.

1 September 2010: minimum income, group practices, electronic shackles

The means-tested minimum income is governed by uniform minimum standards across Austria and has first been realised in Vienna, Lower Austria and Salzburg. Single persons are entitled to 744 euro, couples receive 1,116 euro. At least 134 euro are paid for children living in the household. The new group practices do not only offer improved access to the health system and longer opening hours but also reduce the burden on outpatient hospital departments. Electronic shackles may be used for prisoners having to serve a (remaining) prison sentence of a maximum of one year.

Transparency Database under review

The government bill regarding the Transparency Database was submitted for review on 1 September 2010. The aim of the new social transfer account is to ensure that target groups are reached more accurately and to avoid duplication.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**UN chief inaugurates International Anti-Corruption Academy near Vienna**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described the new International Anti-Corruption Academy at the Palace of Kaunitz in Laxenburg (near Vienna) as a milestone in global efforts to combat corruption. At the inaugural conference of the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) held at Vienna's Hofburg on 2 September 2010, Ban stressed that this institution would help to create "a culture of integrity". IACA would complement the activities of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) headquartered at Vienna International Centre.

The aim of the globally first Anti-Corruption Academy in Laxenburg is to engage in training and research on relevant strategies and measures. Target groups of this new centre of excellence are judges, public prosecutors or representatives of the civil society.

45 ministers from 35 signatory nations participated in the inaugural conference at Hofburg. Other countries are expected to join. Austria – the initiator of the project – was represented by Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and other officials. Besides UNODC, the European Anti-Fraud Office (Olaf) also became a partner of IACA.

Spindelegger: more rights for the EU in the United Nations

Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger demanded more rights for the EU in the United Nations. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, Catherine Ashton, should be given the right to address the plenary assembly, to submit proposals or amendments. The EU had been granted a right to speak, but only at the end of the respective debate, explained Spindelegger on 4 September 2010, after attending the UN retreat in Alpbach chaired by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. This would make it easier to negotiate and react in debates.

Hungarian President Schmitt pays first official visit to Austria

Incoming Hungarian President Pal Schmitt paid his first official visit to Austria on 7 September 2010. His official programme includes meetings with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer. Issues like Hungary's EU Presidency in 2011 and bilateral questions will

be discussed. The two countries have joint foreign representations and visa offices.

One day earlier, Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi had met for an exchange of views with Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger in Vienna.

10 years of "Forum Salzburg": intensifying security cooperation

The Security Partnership "Forum Salzburg" plans to strengthen its presence in the European Union, to improve regional cooperation in police matters and to participate actively in the external strategy of the EU, which also encompasses aspects of security policy. These priorities of the future vision of "Forum Salzburg 2020" were mentioned by Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter at a press conference held in Fuschl on 27 August 2010 to mark the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the Security Partnership.

Fekter explained that the aim was to reach agreements on European issues in the preparation process as well as to explore common positions so as to be able to speak with one voice to the EU. This was also a reaction to new rules for majority decisions laid down in the Lisbon Treaty. A common goal was the transnational punishment of road traffic offences.

The Minister of the Interior pointed out that – with currently eight member countries – "Forum Salzburg" represented one fourth of the European Union and 105 million people and therefore had a blocking minority in the EU.

15 ministers of the interior participated in the three-day event. Besides the ministers of the interior of the eight EU Member States (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria), their counterparts from Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Moldova participated. At the beginning of 2011, Austria will take over the six-month chair from Slovenia.

5.6 million euro for Pakistan

The Austrian federal government makes available a total of 5.6 million euro to Pakistan to cope with the flood disaster, informed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann after the session of the Council of Ministers on 24 August 2010. Out of this total amount, 600,000 euro have already been transferred. The government assumed, however, that additional financial aid would be required, stated Faymann. The funds were channelled through the UN, the Red Cross, Caritas and other charities.

ECONOMY**Faymann: government strengthens enterprises close to the state**

On 31 August 2010, the Council of Ministers approved the capital increase for Austria's largest electricity producer Verbund, in which the Federal Republic holds a share of 51%. "We consider it vital to expand hydropower", informed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann in the press conference after the meeting. Therefore the decision had been taken to increase the capital of Verbund by 1 billion euro. As the majority owner, the Republic of Austria would contribute about 500 million euro. This amount would mainly be used to promote sustainable power plant projects and to safeguard Austria's energy independence.

The government was firmly committed to waterpower and the majority owner pursued an active approach to investment management, stressed the Federal Chancellor. By taking this crucial energy policy decision, the government had also set priorities in economic policy.

Some of the money will be used to reduce the debt of the enterprise. Additional funds are to be raised by selling a 30-percent share of the Inn power plant, said Verbund boss Wolfgang Anzengruber. In the next five to seven years, about 2.5 billion euro will be invested into hydroelectric power plants and power lines. However, in connection with the capital increase no power plants would be sold, emphasised Anzengruber.

OeNB: upward adjustment of GDP forecast

The European Central Bank (ECB) issued an upward revision of its economic forecasts for the euro-zone on 2 September 2010. Almost at the same time, the Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank/OeNB) made an upward adjustment of its economic outlook for Austria. Based on this projection, Austria's economic performance could improve by up to 2% after last year's recession. OeNB Governor Ewald Nowotny also stated that there was no risk that Europe would lapse back into recession. The inflation expected for Austria was very low.

Austria's economic growth is likely to be above that of the euro-zone, which, according to ECB estimates, will average 1.6% in 2010 (instead of 1% expected in June). For Austria Nowotny forecast a GDP (gross domestic product) growth of between 1.8 to 2%. Nowotny was confident that Austria's growth in 2010 would be higher than that of the euro-

zone and predicted that Austria would exceed the average growth of the euro-zone also in 2011.

In its previous forecast issued in June, the Austrian National Bank had assumed a GDP growth of 1.6% and of 1.8% for 2010 and 2011, respectively. The OeNB has not yet presented detailed figures for 2011. The ECB now forecasts a GDP growth of 1.4% for 2011, revising its previous estimate of 1.2%. According to the OeNB, the favourable economic trend is driven by consumption.

Informal meeting of German-speaking ministers of finance in Vienna

The ministers of finance of Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg held an informal meeting in Vienna on 26 August 2010. They deliberated on issues such as budget consolidation, bank tax and banking secrecy. Minister of Finance Josef Pröll underlined there was "no pressure from Germany" in the context of banking secrecy. German Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble explained that "common rules taking into account all reasonable interests would be found".

Pröll stated that he wanted to continue fighting for banking secrecy: "Why should there be an automatic exchange of information if it is possible to invest anonymously via financial mechanisms such as British trusts. A level playing field was needed. Austria considered this a subject to be discussed at OECD level. The ministers agreed not to disclose any information about the results of the talks.

Economic Minister Mitterlehner: crisis in tourism has been overcome

Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner presented a "highly positive" mid-term review of summer tourism. "We have overcome the crisis in tourism and are gaining market shares in international competition." With 8.8 million arrivals, more guests than ever before spent their holidays in Austria between May and (including) July; this corresponds to a plus of 5.3% compared to the same period of the previous year. However, hotel nights had grown at a significantly lower rate (1.4%), explained Mitterlehner. In 2010 turnover would therefore stagnate or decline slightly.

Last year, turnover in tourism totalled 10.3 billion euro (summer) and 11.8 billion euro (winter). City tourism has recovered, which is mainly due to the International Aids Conference held in Vienna at the end of July.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Paradox: despite halt, new universities of applied sciences planned**

The Austrian government called a halt to the expansion of places for new students at universities of applied sciences (“Fachhochschulen”), while committing itself to expanding this type of universities. Due to the tight budget, the new Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences for the period 2010/2011 to 2012/13 adopted on 31 August 2010 in the Council of Ministers provides for the “further development and consolidation in qualitative terms” of universities of applied sciences. The number of places for first-year students at these universities has been expanded continuously since their foundation in 1994.

At present, about 36,000 persons attend 315 courses of study at universities of applied sciences, including about 14,300 beginners. The Federal Republic of Austria subsidises almost 32,000 places; this means that these institutions receive 7,940 euro per place in a technical course and 6,510 euro per place in an economic course. Federal funding amounted to 189.4 million euro in 2009 and rose to slightly above 200 million euro in 2010. Of course, study places not financed by the Federal Republic are not affected by the halt. This applies to about 4,000 study places in the health sector, which are funded by the Länder.

Minister of Science Beatrix Karl (People’s Party) explained the Council of Ministers that she found the ban on increasing places at universities of applied sciences lamentable and that new places would be created as soon as possible. “Quantitative further development remains my primary goal. In view of the economic setting and necessary budget consolidation, we will, however, be able to achieve it only if additional funds become available”, said Karl. Minister of Education Claudia Schmied (Social Democratic Party) stated that the Social Democrats gave their consent to the Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences as – “based on the status quo” – more was not feasible.

In Karl’s opinion, new funds were to be raised particularly by greening the tax system: “A joint commitment of the government is needed“. The halt to expansion means in concrete terms that there are no places for new students. Nevertheless, the number of places funded by the Federal Republic increases from currently 31,800 to 33,100 in 2012/13, as the students enrolling now will then move to higher courses.

Another aim of the Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences is to ensure a “focus on existing institutions and locations“ with a view to achieving critical dimensions in infrastructure and personnel as well as building a location-based scientific community. Related disciplines are to be concentrated at specific locations, great importance was to be given to quality criteria in locational decisions and opportunities for cooperation with enterprises should be taken into account.

The Plan for Applied Universities also emphasises the need to support part-time educational programmes for working people and to facilitate transition within the educational system. More students completing secondary education without the A-level exam are to be admitted to this type of universities. Moreover, graduates of the universities of applied sciences should be able to change more easily to regular universities. Other goals are to boost student mobility as well as to increase the share of women and persons with a migration background in the total number of students at universities of applied sciences.

Viennese Christoph Waltz receives Austrian citizenship

Actor Christoph Waltz, 53, considers himself definitely Austrian and feels irritated at speculations concerning his citizenship. “My citizenship will also be Austrian. This is a banality based on legal principles and on citizenship law”, said Waltz in Munich at the beginning of the shooting of the film “Die drei Musketiere“ (“The Three Musketeers”), in which he plays the role of Cardinal Richelieu. The actor born in Austria also holds the German citizenship as well as the Green Card, which could also give him facilitated access to the US citizenship.

Waltz told reporters: “I am born in Vienna, I grew up in Vienna, I went to school in Vienna, I took my A-level exam in Vienna, studied in Vienna and started my career in Vienna, I gave my first theatre performance in Vienna, and in Vienna I shot my first film. And there are more details about my life in Vienna. How much more Austrian do you want me to be?!“

The application for the Austrian citizenship was approved by the Council of Ministers on 24 August 2010. At the press conference following the meeting, government leaders refused to comment on this.

In 1956, Christoph Waltz was born in Grinzing (in Vienna’s 19th district), where his mother still lives today. He attended the grammar school “Theresianum” in Vienna and the Max Reinhardt Seminar. He has been living for a

long time in Germany, where he appeared in numerous films, as well as in Great Britain.

After earning many international awards, he won the Oscar for "Best Supporting Actor" in Hollywood in March 2010 for his brilliant performance as the charming-diabolic and polyglot SS officer Hans Landa in Quentin Tarantino's film "Inglourious Basterds".

Prague: Vaclav Havel Foundation pays tribute to Konrad Paul Liessmann

Austrian philosopher, essayist and culture journalist Konrad Paul Liessmann, 57, will receive this year's award of the "Vision 97" Foundation of former Czech President Vaclav Havel and his wife Dagmar. The award ceremony is traditionally held in Prague on 5 October, the birthday of Vaclav Havel.

Liessmann is the twelfth prize laureate. Among his predecessors are the Italian scholar and writer Umberto Eco, Polish sociologist Zygmund Bauman and US economist Robert B. Reich. In 2009 the award went to Czech geologist Václav Cílek.

Liessmann, born in Villach in 1953, is professor at the Department for Philosophy of the University of Vienna. Since 1996 he has chaired Philosophicum Lech held annually. The Club of Austrian Education and Science Reporters awarded him the title "Scholar of the Year 2006".

In April he was awarded the "Danubius" Non-Fiction Prize of the bookstore Donauland for his oeuvre.

Apparently, Liessmann is a "think tank" permanently producing new ideas. The numerous works of the brilliant rhetorician – books, articles in journals – dealing with aesthetics, philosophy of art and culture, social and media theory as well as philosophy of the 19th and 20th century caused a sensation. A small selection: "Philosophie der modernen Kunst" (1993), "Der gute Mensch von Österreich. Essays 1980-1995" (1995), "Reiz und Rührung" (2003), "Die Freiheit des Denkens" (2007), "Schönheit" (2009).

Orientalist Hammer-Purgstall in European Capital of Culture Istanbul

An exhibition on the Austrian orientalist, historian and poet Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) will be presented at the Austrian Cultural Forum in Istanbul – currently European Capital of Culture – from 27 September to 30 December 2010.

Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall from Graz was one of the great bridge builders between Orient and Occident in the 18th century. Alongside

with Count Anton von Prokesch-Osten and Alois Musil, he is regarded as one of Austria's most eminent orientalists. Besides the multimedia documentation about the life and work of the author, who wrote for example a ten-volume work about the history of the Ottoman Empire – "Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches" (1827-33) –, the exhibition curated by Gerhard M. Dienes of Universalmuseum Joanneum focuses on the European image of the Orient as well as the Western-Eastern/Eastern-Western dialogue of cultures.

Faymann in favour of special budget for contemporary art

On behalf of the Directors' Conference of the Austrian federal museums, Agnes Husslein-Arco, Peter Noever and Klaus Albrecht Schröder met with Chancellor Werner Faymann at the Federal Chancellery on 30 August 2010. In the presence of Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied, they reiterated their demand for a special budget for contemporary art.

According to the Directors' Conference, this special budget should be used for extraordinary expenditure of the federal museums (Albertina, Belvedere, MAK, MUMOK) on contemporary art. The funds would be spent exclusively for extraordinary financial needs, e.g. acquisitions (also of estates), unique art projects, which cannot be covered from the existing budget of the federal museums. This special budget should be used particularly for realising unforeseeable, new and unique opportunities that require fast and flexible action.

Chancellor Faymann showed great understanding for the fact that – despite their increased basic funding – the federal museums struggled to meet their most important legal obligation of collecting contemporary art. He considered the initiative of the Directors' Conference important and promised to do his best – in cooperation with private mentors, foundations, large enterprises, etc. – to enable the federal museums to buy contemporary art and to own on behalf of Austria important estates bequeathed to them after the death of the artists or while they were still alive.

Biennale Venice: Fischer and Schmied inaugurated Austrian contribution

Together with the curator of the Austrian contribution Eric Owen Moss, Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied inaugurated the Austrian Pavilion at the 12th Architecture Biennale in Venice on 27 August 2010. Titled "AUSTRIA UNDER CONSTRUCTION", the Austrian contribution

presents works of Austrian architects abroad as well as of foreign architects in Austria. The curator developed a show that reflects the vivacity and openness of Austrian architecture.

In his opening statement, Federal President Heinz Fischer alluded to the Pavilion encased in scaffolding when he stated: “The scaffolding curator Eric Owen Moss erected around and inside the Hoffmann Pavilion reminds of the fact that art – in this case architecture – is continuously further developing and that we also have to continue working on it. Just like the building projects themselves, the general development of cultural policy may not end at positions adopted in the past. Permanent openness to discourse, continuous confrontation and capacity for innovation are necessary to steer processes optimally and to realise them effectively”.

In her speech, Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied praised the work of Eric Owen Moss, who had succeeded in highlighting the diversity of Austrian architecture from the perspective of an international expert. To the Minister it was important that Austria considered itself part of the international architecture scene and remained open towards new trends in architecture. Eric Owen Moss demonstrated this “with numerous excellent examples which are far from covering the country’s entire architectural creation but showed impressively how the diverse architecture of our country attracts worldwide attention and leaves its mark around the globe”. Curator Eric Owen Moss described his show in more detail: “Austria re-imagines the art of building and city making in the world. Foreign architects re-imagine buildings and cities in Austria. Austria exports. Austria imports. New architecture ‘under construction’”.

Leopold Museum at MuseumsQuartier: Masterpieces of the Fondation Beyeler

Leopold Museum at MuseumsQuartier (MQ) presents “Cézanne, Picasso, Giacometti, ... Masterpieces of the Fondation Beyeler“ from 17 September 2010 to 17 January 2011. The representative examples range from Monet, Klee, Léger, Miró to Pollock, Lichtenstein and Warhol. This is the first time since the foundation of Fondation Beyeler opened in 1997 in Basle (the building was designed by Renzo Piano) that so many outstanding works have been lent to another museum.

Ernst Beyeler – born in Basle in 1921 – was a successful art dealer for more than 60 years. In his family, love for modern art could not be taken for granted. His father was a railway

employee, who had to work hard to feed his five children. In 1945 Ernst Beyeler took over the antiquarian bookshop of his deceased employer and mentor Oskar Schloss in the centre of Basle. Besides books, he soon started to sell works of art. Classical modernism became the focus of the gallery, which he presented alongside with non-European art such as pre-Columbian or African art. His carefully designed and opulent catalogues caused a sensation and attracted the attention of artists like Pablo Picasso. Beyeler managed to establish contacts with important collectors, notably from the USA. Among them was the steel industrialist G. David Thompson, who soon became aware of the commercial talent of the Swiss and frequently entrusted him with comprehensive art sales. Beyeler Gallery succeeded in establishing an impressive network of customers all over the world.

Ernst Beyeler found great support in his wife Hildy, who had an unerring ability to recognise quality. The couple considered singularity and timelessness decisive criteria for judging individual works of art. The two collectors were not interested in pleasing art but looked for strong, “difficult“ works commanding attention from every onlooker. They also planned to compile groups of works of some selected artists to allow them to grasp all nuances of an artist’s personality. Fondation Beyeler owns 33 paintings, art prints and sculptures by Picasso alone.

In 1982 the duo decided to transfer their collection of works of art (declared not for sale) to a foundation. In 1989 these masterpieces were presented for the first time to the public – at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. Hildy died in Riehen in 2008, Ernst Beyeler passed away in 2010.

The show at Leopold Museum recreates the distinct image of the Museum Beyeler, which has been shaped by the will and taste of the two collectors like hardly any other. An absolute must-see!

www.leopoldmuseum.org

Linz Sound Cloud has a hit potential

This year’s visualised Cloud of Sound “Baby Jet” – a utopian story about a supersonic train, somewhere between a musical and a thriller – by the artists’ network “lawine torrent” transformed the Danube Park in Linz into the setting for an action spectacle on 4 September 2010. One week later, the Classical Sound Cloud will rise into the sky: Anton Bruckner’s Symphony No.7 in E major.

www.klangwolke.at

SPORTS POLICY**Tenth “Day of Sport“ offers record programme**

Under the motto “Magic Moments“, the “Day of Sport” will be staged for the tenth time at Heldenplatz in Vienna on 25 September 2010. Besides countless Austrian sports superstars, who will receive awards for their outstanding achievements during the past year, the visitors will be offered more attractions than ever before.

On the sports and show stages, numerous amazing sports and exercise prizes may for example be won – just go there and join in the fun. More than 130 sport grounds offering you almost all disciplines form a diverse exercise park without equal.

All visitors of the Day of Sport will have an opportunity to test their personal fitness on different sports grounds and to inform themselves about the exercise and sports programmes of the initiative “Fit for Austria”.

Numerous sports, from air hockey to competitive climbing, wait to be discovered. For more information visit the website of the Day of Sport: www.tagdessports.at.

Austria’s small team causes at sensation at the Youth Olympic Games

Austria’s small team caused a sensation at the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore.

After triathlete Luis Knabl earned a gold medal on the last day of the Games, 16-year-old Lara Vadlau from Carinthia won gold in the sailing competition.

Minister of Sport Darabos: “Lara Vadlau has shown an incredibly steady performance from the first race onwards and kept cool even in the medal race. I congratulate her on this outstanding accomplishment“.

Bronze medals were won by Viktoria Wolffhardt in canoe slalom and by Christine Huck in the mixed team judo competition. Thus, Austria’s small team was awarded no less than six medals at the premiere of the Youth Olympic Games.

Top results of army athletes at World Military Swimming Championships

Our army athletes excelled at the World Military Swimming and Lifesaving Championships in Warendorf, Germany.

Styrian Jördis Steinegger earned gold in the 200m obstacles competition on the last day of the Championships. Winning her fifth medal, Jördis Steinegger set a new world record in military swimming.

Winning three gold, six silver and seven bronze medals, these were the so far most successful World Military Swimming Championships for the Austrian delegation.

Federal Minister of Defence and Sport Norbert Darabos: “I congratulate Jördis Steinegger and the other successful army athletes very warmly on their great accomplishments. The Austrian Federal Army succeeded once more in leaving a lasting impression at a large-scale international sports competition!“

Austria defends title and remains the measure of all things in fistball

Austria remains the measure of all things in international fistball. The reigning world champion succeeded in defending its title also at the European Fistball Championship in Switzerland.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos was highly pleased about this achievement: “The European Champion title (already the fifth since 1984) sends out the absolutely right signal for the Firstball World Championship to be hosted by Austria next year. I extend my sincere congratulations to our men’s national team and coach Winfried Kronsteiner on this outstanding performance, which will heighten the excitement about the large-scale tournament in 2011”.

Minister Darabos congratulates Andrea Mayr on the World Champion title

Austrian marathon record-setter Andrea Mayr won the World Mountain Running Championships in Slovenia last weekend. With this victory, she clinched the World Champion title for the third time. Federal Minister of Defence and Sport Norbert Darabos had two reasons to rejoice as the 30-year-old physician is also active as an army athlete in the Austrian Federal Army.

Federal Minister Norbert Darabos: “It is gratifying to observe how Austrian athletes bring home titles and medals from World and European Championships. I congratulate Andrea Mayr on her great success, which demonstrates once more that high-performance sport and a professional career can in fact be reconciled“.