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HOME AFFAIRS

Debate on compulsory military service: voluntary social service year

At a meeting of the executive committee of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) on 12 January 2011, Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer presented proposals for possible alternatives to the present civilian service. New concepts have become necessary due to the current debate about compulsory military service and alternatives to the present defence system (Federal Army). By abolishing compulsory military service, the civilian service for conscientious objectors would also come to an end.

Under an alternative model, the voluntary social service year could be upgraded. The proposal provides for a minimum wage based on the collective agreement of 1,300 euro paid 14 times a year. The volunteers would also benefit from full social insurance coverage. In contrast to the civilian service, the tasks to be performed during the voluntary social service year should be limited to the core area “social and health services”. While currently about 8,500 persons doing civilian service are active in this sector, only 6,400 women and men participating in the voluntary social service year will work in this area to avoid higher expenditure. Hundstorfer assumes annual costs of about 140 million euro for the two models (civilian service, voluntary social service year), which have to be financed by the Federal Republic and the responsible organisations. Alternatives to compulsory military service, e.g. a volunteer army or future changes of the Federal Army (force level, pay, tasks) are presented by Defence Minister Norbert Darabos on 17 January 2011. Talks at political level and with the competent organisations are underway.

Integration: Expert Advisory Panel

On 12 January 2011, Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter presented the (independent) Expert Advisory Panel, which will support the Ministry in implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) for Integration by issuing recommendations. The federal government adopted the NAP in early 2010. The panel is composed of experts in the fields of urban and regional research, migration research, sociology or linguistics. Fekter described the panel members working on a voluntary basis as the “crème de la crème” of integration experts. The body was not subject to political pressure and could publicise its proposals also if she did not approve them, stressed Fekter. Their work would be

guided exclusively by the NAP, which provided a strategic basis for a new, coherent and well-aimed integration policy in Austria. It also required migrants to have German language skills before moving to Austria. This requirement was “taken note of” in the 30-page working programme of the Expert Advisory Panel. No additional language-related initiatives were planned for newcomers, previous measures should be evaluated. A special German language campaign will target migrants living for longer periods in Austria.

Other areas of action of the Expert Advisory Panel are the labour market and occupations, education and skills, the rule of law and values, health and social affairs, intercultural dialogue, sports and leisure activities as well as housing. The tasks, need for action, priorities and initial measures have been defined. Implementation will be ensured across different sectors. The Ministry of the Interior assumed a coordinating role in drawing up and implementing the NAP, stated Fekter.

Major rail expansion on track

In the framework of the stimulus plan for upgrading the Austrian railway system, about 200 million euro had been spent on modernising infrastructure countrywide (this is more than double the expenditure of the previous year of 93 million euro), Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures recently summarised the positive interim results. The four-year modernisation programme was progressing according to plan, 80 individual projects were being realised in all Länder. The stimulus package for the Austrian railways comprised both large-scale projects (e.g. modernising the railway stations of Graz or Leibnitz) and many small, but important improvements for rail passengers, including route modernisation, security measures, track upgrading or guidance systems for the blind, explained Bures.

To cushion the crisis-induced economic slump and safeguard jobs, an extra amount of 700 million euro has been made available for rail projects in the period 2009 to 2012.

The stimulus package for rail projects complemented the infrastructure programme. From 2011 to 2016, 11.5 billion euro would be invested in rail infrastructure, a new “record level”, stated Bures. The railways were the most environment-friendly and safest means of transport. An efficient transport infrastructure was indispensable for Austria as a business location. The current record investment in the rail and trunk road networks would safeguard more than 50,000 jobs, emphasised Bures.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal Chancellor Faymann pays official visit to Portugal**

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann met with Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates in Lisbon on 14 January 2011. The top item on the meeting agenda was Portugal's current financial crisis. In a joint press conference Faymann explained that he had "full confidence" in Sócrates' determined efforts to put in order Portugal's economy and public finances. The Portuguese Prime Minister had shown that "he honours his promises", said Faymann.

In an interview on the Portuguese TV before his meeting with Sócrates, the Austrian Chancellor had stressed that the euro rescue umbrella was of crucial importance for the stability of the single currency and expressed his conviction "that Portugal was heading in the right direction". One of the most important tasks in this year was to ensure the stability of the euro, stated Faymann.

Sócrates reiterated that despite the debt crisis Portugal did not intend to make use of the euro rescue umbrella. Portugal was firmly committed to European cooperation. By decreasing the deficit by more than two percentage points since May 2010, his country had also demonstrated the ability to cope with its problems, underlined Sócrates. A joint solution would be found at the next EU summit.

Chancellor Faymann clearly rejected ideas that individual countries could give up the euro or that different speeds could be introduced in the euro-zone: "We are a family in Europe. If there are problems, the family must stand together." In difficult times, a joint solution had to be found. Faymann also explained that the burden of the financial and economic crisis had to be distributed on the basis of solidarity. He was therefore advocating a bank tax and financial transactions tax at European level.

There are early signs that Portugal is successfully coping with the financial crisis on its own. In 2010 Portugal's deficit decreased by 2% and the markets responded to the recently issued government bond quickly and at better terms than expected.

Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremić in Austria

Serbia's Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić held talks with his Austrian counterpart Michael Spindelegger, Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer as well as members of the Foreign Policy Committee of the National Council in Vienna on 14 January 2011. Minister Jeremić

stressed that it was vital for his country to be granted EU candidate status by the end of 2011.

Any delay in this stage of the process of coming closer to the European Union could be risky. Signs that this process was irreversible were therefore urgently needed. Serbia required the political support of the international community on its road to Europe, stated Minister Jeremić.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger reminded of the fact that Serbia still had to prove its "uncompromising willingness to reform". Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague – especially concerning the extradition of the two war crimes fugitives Goran Hadžić and Ratko Mladić – was mentioned as an example by Spindelegger. "We would like to see Serbia taking the side of the EU family more frequently, especially in sensitive international human rights issues", stated Spindelegger.

Nevertheless, Spindelegger and Prammer assured that the integration dialogue with Serbia would be further intensified in 2011. The "Balkans enlargement fatigue" in the EU would in any case be "fought determinedly", said Spindelegger.

Jeremić thanked the Austrian politicians for their support and Austria's economic commitment in Serbia. He described Austria as a bridge builder between the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans. In addition, he highlighted Belgrade's efforts to pave the way for EU accession by realising sweeping reforms of the economy, democracy and judicial system.

Austria among the OECD countries with highest level of social justice

According to a study on social justice of the Bertelsmann Foundation, Austria is among the top third OECD countries. Austria is ranked ninth out of 31 countries listed in the survey – clearly ahead of Germany (15th) and the OECD average.

Austria scored points mainly in the categories "avoidance of poverty" and "labour market inclusion". As far as access to education is concerned, Austria is, however, among the bottom third of countries in this study.

With a total of 8.84 points from 10 in the avoidance of poverty index (compared to an OECD average of 6.66), the Alpine Republic occupies an excellent 4th place – behind Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

ECONOMY**Austria boasts Europe's second lowest unemployment rate for 2010**

In 2010 the labour market in Austria developed better than expected. According to Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer, 250,782 people on annual average were jobless; this corresponds to a minus of 3.7% or 9,527 persons compared to the crisis year 2009. The number of jobseekers in public training programmes increased by 14.2% or 9,127 persons to a total average of 73,190. Hence, 323,972 people on average were without a job in 2010. The economy recovered faster than predicted by the experts, Hundstorfer commented the latest figures on 7 January 2011. The European Commission also confirmed that Austria had coped better with the crisis than most other countries. In the months of November and December new record employment levels were reported, emphasised the Minister for Social Affairs.

Based on preliminary data, active employment rose by 0.9% (or 30,236) to 3,289,546 persons, the number of vacancies registered with the Public Employment Service increased year-on-year by 14.1% (or 3,843) to 31,009 jobs. Based on the EU method of calculation, the preliminary unemployment rate stood at 4.8% (minus 0.1 percentage points). Thus Austria boasted Europe's second-lowest unemployment rate, stressed Hundstorfer.

"During the crisis we deliberately expanded our training programmes to improve the opportunities of jobseekers, especially those lacking qualifications", explained the Social Minister. Thanks to these qualification programmes and other efficient measures (e.g. reform of short-time working), we ensured that the "highly dynamic development of the labour market was continued. For a total of 612,647 persons found a job with the support of the Public Employment Service in 2010", stated Hundstorfer. The labour market recovery had started in March 2010. Unemployment was dropping steadily every month. Although qualification programmes were slightly reduced, this year's budget for active labour market policies was the third-highest ever adopted, informed the Minister for Social Affairs.

Men benefited the most from the decline in unemployment: minus 5.5% to 145,106 jobseekers. The number of unemployed women declined only by 1.0% to 105,676. An analysis by sectors shows that unemployment decreased most significantly in manufacturing, i.e. by 20.6%. Temporary work agencies follow with

a minus of 9.2%. Unemployment declined by 3.3% in trade and by 0.6% in tourism. With a plus of 0.1%, unemployment in the construction sector increased insignificantly.

In 2010 the active labour market policy focused again on youth. The number of unemployed 15- to 24-year-olds dropped by 6.6% to 40,084 persons. 145,173 young people started to work, 80,532 participated in training programmes of the Public Employment Service. In 2010 the average number of apprenticeship seekers stood at 5,752; this was 3.2% below the prior-year level (minus 192 persons). Vacancies for apprentices rose by 4.6% (plus 152) to 3,431. Thus the gap of apprenticeship places (2,321 in total) shrank by 344 compared to the previous year. In the framework of the "training guarantee for young people", 13,782 places were made available for apprentices in public training institutions in the training year 2010/11, i.e. about 1,500 places more than in the previous year.

In the age group 50 plus unemployment grew by 1.4% to 52,446 jobless persons. The unemployment rate of long-term jobless persons decreased by 1.0% to 6,696 persons.

A regional comparison reveals that unemployment in Austria dropped in all Länder, except Vienna, where it went up by 1.5%. The strongest decline was reported in Styria (minus 10.9%), followed by Salzburg (minus 9.8%), Vorarlberg (minus 7.5%), Burgenland (minus 5.9%), Tyrol (minus 5.2%), Upper Austria (minus 4.2%), Carinthia (minus 3.7%) and Lower Austria (minus 1.5%).

AUA 2010: 10% increase in passengers

The Austrian Airlines (AUA) have welcomed more passengers on board. In 2010 the carrier owned by Lufthansa transported 10.9 million passengers, this was an increase by 9.7% or almost one million persons compared to the crisis year 2009. AUA Managing Board Directors Andreas Bierwirth and Peter Malanik informed that these passenger numbers were particularly remarkable as they were achieved despite the reduction in available seat kilometres (ASK) required by the EU and adverse external factors such as the volcano ash and winter chaos. By meeting the passenger target, a good foundation had been laid for achieving the planned operating result for 2011 despite the continuing difficult market environment. Consistent efforts to restructure the enterprise were continuing. The new strategy also provides for competitive prices and larger airplanes.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**School reform: government leaders strive for consensus**

After the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 11 January 2011, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice Chancellor and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll stated that they were ready to work towards reaching an overall agreement in the debate on the school reform. Faymann thanked the coalition partner – the Austrian People’s Party – for accepting the Social Democrats’ proposal of dropping the 10% threshold for the conversion of compulsory secondary schools into “new secondary schools”. Pröll stressed that a move from an ideological debate to a solution for the children had been made. “I am pleased that we travel together in this direction. This is important for education. The more students attend this type of school and receive better education in smaller groups, the better for the future of our country“, said the Federal Chancellor. Many schools in the Länder (mainly lower secondary schools but also some academic secondary schools) were applying for conversion into “new secondary schools”.

Some divergence obviously remains between the views of the Social Democratic Party and the People’s Party. Faymann continued to describe the comprehensive school as a long-term goal of the Social Democrats, while Pröll pointed out that the People’s Party had given the go ahead for expanding the new secondary school system only because he had been guaranteed the continued existence of the academic secondary school.

Regarding recent cuts of the budget earmarked for measures to improve the German language skills of pre-school children propagated by the ÖVP, Pröll stated that the necessary funds would be invested. As the economy was growing faster than predicted, more financial resources would become available.

Faymann also addressed other education policy projects such as a common teacher training system, a new employment law for teachers as well as plans to strengthen pre-school education in the last year of nursery school. In 2010 the federal government had invested additional funds from the budget for special projects to increase the number of places in all-day schools. Better qualified children would boost Austria’s attractiveness as a knowledge base.

Pröll expressed reservations regarding the petition for referendum proposed by former Vice Chancellor and Minister of Finance, the industrialist Hannes Androsch. The government was

paid for developing adequate concepts and taking decisions. In an interview with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) Faymann backed the initiative of Androsch, it meant “tailwind for our demands“.

100 years of Bruno Kreisky: Austria celebrates its great reform politician

Austria’s economic and cultural upswing has been inseparably linked with the intellectual Bruno Kreisky (1911-1990), who came from a Jewish upper middle-class background. He helped Austria to gain an international reputation. Kreisky won four elections – including three with an absolute majority of votes. Even when he was “defeated” in 1983, he still earned almost 48 per cent of the votes for the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) – a result today’s politicians can only dream of.

As the chancellor with the longest tenure (1970-1983) in the history of the Second Republic, Kreisky realised fundamental reforms and overdue modernisation programmes. Sweden – which had granted asylum to Kreisky persecuted by the Austro-Fascists and Nazis – was a model for his reform policy. Sweden was also the country, where his lifelong friendship with Willi Brandt started, where he met his beloved wife Vera Fürth and where his children Peter and Suzanne were born in 1944 and 1948, respectively.

The SPÖ owed it to Kreisky’s charisma that it became Western Europe’s most successful Social Democratic Party. Together with Brandt and Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme (who was also a friend), Kreisky launched important peace initiatives between the East and the West. An anthology of the trio’s correspondence and conversations titled “Briefe und Gespräche“ was published in 1975 and translated into several languages. It received considerable media attention in Austria, Germany and Sweden.

Kreisky’s far-sighted analyses of the Middle East policy are basically still valid, as former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recently stated.

Wolfgang Petritsch, who was Kreisky’s secretary from 1977 to 1983 and is Austria’s present OECD representative in Paris, wrote a gripping but also humorous new biography about the “old man”. He describes that Kreisky had “the common touch” and was therefore loved by the people. Kreisky’s credo was to talk in a way that was understood by an “ordinary factory worker” and a director-general. As a chancellor he never carried favour with “ordinary” people, who always felt that he responded to

their concerns and took up their cause. His private phone number was listed in Vienna's telephone directory.

Johannes Kunz – who was Kreisky's press officer from 1973 to 1980 and later became the news director of the ORF – recently told the Vienna-based daily "Kurier" that he went to a bourgeois Viennese restaurant (in Sieveringer Straße in the 19th district) with his former boss in the late 1980s. When the former Chancellor, who was already feeble and frail, leaning on his walking stick for support, entered the restaurant, there was a moment of respectful silence and then Kreisky was warmly applauded by the guests – who were not really his clientele of voters.

Bruno Kreisky died aged 79 years in Vienna on 29 July 1990. Numerous international politicians such as Willi Brandt, Ingvar Carlsson, Roland Dumas and Yasser Arafat attended the state funeral.

On 22 January 2011, Bruno Kreisky would be 100 years old. This year, his birthday will be commemorated by numerous political and cultural institutions. The Kreisky Year 2011 is ushered in with the premiere of the series of performances under the title "Kreisky, wer sonst?" ("Kreisky, who else?") at Schauspielhaus in Vienna on 31 December 2010. A first highlight of this year is the premiere of the film "Bruno Kreisky. Politik und Leidenschaft" ("Bruno Kreisky. Politics and Passion") by Helene Maimann at Vienna's Gartenbaukino on 18 January 2011, which will also be shown on the ORF's primetime TV on 20 January 2011. A five-part DVD edition on the "Kreisky era" (edited by Peter Huemer and Karin Moser) had already been presented in the presence of President Heinz Fischer at Metro Kino in Vienna on 13 January 2011. This event marked the opening of the retrospective "Kreisky/Kino" ("Kreisky/Cinema"), providing manifold insights into the socio-political sentiment as well as artistic-critical potential of the 1970s and the early 1980s in Austria. Curators Lukas Maurer and Karin Moser selected films illustrating the increasing international opening and growing diversity of Austrian filmmaking during the era of "Sun King" Kreisky: TV scandals such as the grotesque about Austro-Fascism "Staatsoperette" ("State Operetta") by Franz Novotny, reports by and about workers and fringe groups, e.g. the video documentary about the famous sociological study "Morienthal", Ruth Beckermann's "Der Hammer steht auf der Wies'n da draussen" (a documentary about work and strike), the new avant-garde, the beginnings of

independent video productions like "Arena Besetzt" (a documentary about the struggle for the autonomous culture centre Arena). But the programme also includes a filmic biography of Kreisky (as from 7 February 2011).

On 21 January 2011, the official ceremony of the Republic of Austria will be staged at Hofburg. Besides President Heinz Fischer and Chancellor Werner Faymann, an international guest – former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González – will pay tribute to Kreisky for his great achievements.

The federal SPÖ organises a "Kreisky night" in all Länder. These events will focus on education. Kreisky's legacy in education policy is to give fresh impetus to the current debate.

In March the Renner Institute (the political academy of the SPÖ), the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group and the Association of Austrian Pensioners will devote a symposium to the Austro-Keynesian economic and social policy, exploring the question if "the Austrian way" of Kreisky's sole government is still valid in the 21st century.

The International Union of Socialist Youth organises the "IUSY World Festival 2011" in Upper Austria at lake Attersee from 25 to 30 July 2011. About 3,000 young people from all over the world will participate in the event. They will reflect on Kreisky's role in international politics and examine how his political heritage could be further developed for the future. The conference "Bruno Kreisky and the left in Europe" will take place already in March or April. Oskar Lafontaine will be among the attendees. The "Bruno Kreisky Prize" for human rights campaigners will be presented at Musikverein on 20 May 2011.

On 12 January 2011, an exhibition of hardly shown, unpublished photos of Kreisky, including some pictures from the collection of the Federal Press Service, was opened at the Austrian State Archives in Vienna (until 25 March 2011). Exhibition-goers will for example see a photo showing Kreisky's appointment as secretary of state in 1953 and a rare photo taken during the signing ceremony of the Austrian State Treaty in 1955. Kreisky's badge of Foreign Minister of 1959 is also exhibited. An amusing photo shows Kreisky at his desk in his apartment, talking to one of his two dogs.

From 22 January to 29 July 2011, the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) presents an exhibition of black-and-white photos of the politician, which were taken in the 1980s: "Bruno. Bruno Kreisky portrayed by Konrad Rufus Müller". The show "Das Rote Wien" ("The Red Vienna") at "Waschsalon", the partly still used

launderette of the communal housing complex "Karl Marx Hof" in Vienna, will be running until June 2011. Among the exhibits is Kreisky's long lost diary of 1935. In October the series of events will be phased out with the project "Kreisky and his Supporters", in which the "Vienna Film Archive of the Labour Movement" will examine the relationship of the politician with his voters based on archive material.

The activities of the anniversary year are coordinated by the "Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue". Vienna's Burgtheater will also participate in the programme, where on 16 January 2011 the event "Avantgarde GesmbH. A party for Bruno" was held. Kreisky's 100th birthday offered an opportunity to reflect on the concept "avant-garde". The thematic connection may be explained as follows: In the early 1970s, Kreisky appointed Austrian gallery-owner John Sailer to organise an exhibition of Austrian avant-garde artists, which was to be presented mainly abroad and create a cosmopolitan, critical image of Austria. Among the artists selected were Hans Hollein, Günter Brus, Arnulf Rainer, Walter Pichler and Peter Kubelka. Avantgarde GesmbH ("Avant-garde limited liability company") was founded to prevent government control. Soon after the launch of the project, it drew protests by artists who had not been invited to participate. They succeeded in winning over public opinion and the project was cancelled. This historical anecdote gives rise to questions concerning the present situation in the art scene. Is there still an avant-garde? What can and should be the relationship between art and state? Does it make sense to support subversive art or is this an irresolvable contraction per se? Among the participants in this memorable evening, that met with great public interest, were Marie-Therese Harnoncourt, Matthias Hartmann, Werner Hofmann, Konrad Paul Liessmann, Wolfgang Petritsch, Erwin Piplits, Wolfgang D. Prix, Elsa Prochazka, John Sailer, Eva Schlegel, Rudolf Scholten (incumbent President of the "Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue"), Franz Schuh, Peter Weibel, Emmy Werner, Erwin Wurm. The evening ended with an artists' party and a "1970s disco".

Bruno Kreisky has been on numerous covers of (inter-)national magazines and gazettes – from "Zeit" published in Hamburg to the Vienna-based "profil", "News" and "Falter" presenting the headline "Bruno Kreisky Superstar". In this issue (1-2/11) of "Falter", one of the best experts on Kreisky, historian and jurist

Oliver Rathkolb (who heads the Department of Contemporary History of Vienna University and was prominently involved in editing the three-volume Kreisky memoirs) stated laconically: "Like all great politicians, Kreisky failed to ensure an adequate transfer of power. His era ended in 1983, everything we are now digging out is merely a projection".

www.residenzverlag.at/?search=Kreisky
www.renner-institut.at, www.oesta.gv.at
www.kreisky-forum.org, www.burgtheater.at
www.filmarchiv.at

In memoriam Peter Kreisky: Chancellor shocked about tragic death

Peter Kreisky (born in 1944), the only son of Bruno Kreisky, died during a hiking tour on the island of Mallorca on 27 December 2010. Peter and his wife Eva, professor of political science at the University of Vienna, lived in the house in Mallorca where the former Chancellor suffering from various illnesses sought warmth and spent his holidays.

Peter Kreisky (Ph.D.) was a social scientist and worked in the Department of Economics of the Vienna Chamber of Labour from 1973 to his retirement. He never wanted to become a politician but was a completely political person participating in numerous civil society campaigns. President of the Chamber of Labour Herbert Tumpel said on the death of Peter Kreisky: "With Peter Kreisky's death, we have lost someone always committed to justice and peace".

Chancellor and SPÖ Chairman Werner Faymann has been deeply shocked about the tragic death: "We lost a great and fascinating man, Peter Kreisky, who was highly appreciated and loved by the people around him". Throughout his life, Kreisky had been an advocate of a better and fairer world. As an economic expert he had always fought for social justice, the interests of the people and social coherence. His father's school of thought had taught him to see issues in a wider, international context.

In 1972 Peter Kreisky, then chairman of the Association of Austrian Socialist Students (VSSÖ), participated in a demonstration at Salzburg Airport, where his father was receiving then US President Richard Nixon, who was criticised for his role in the Vietnam War and travelled to the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) I summit in Moscow.

On 18 January 2011 Peter Kreisky will be laid to rest in his father's memorial tomb at the Central Cemetery of Vienna, where also his mother was buried. President Fischer and Chancellor Faymann will attend the funeral.

SPORTS POLICY**Werner Schlager Academy celebrated opening in Schwechat**

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, Hannes Fazekas, Mayor of the Municipality of Schwechat, Petra Bohuslav, Sports Councillor of the regional government of Lower Austria, as well as table tennis world champion Werner Schlager officially opened the multiverse – the “Hall for All” – in Schwechat with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on 11 January 2011.

40 million euro had been invested in the unique multi-purpose hall, which was erected within a period of two years. The total surface of 27,000 square meters offers the right setting for 50 to 2,400 persons.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos was pleased about the new facility. “Thanks to the wide range of sports offered at the multi-purpose hall, strong impetus is given to mass sports. This is very important to me because the more people become enthusiastic sports fans, the more active and healthy our society will be. Successful top athletes will always be role models encouraging people to become active in sports. Werner Schlager, who passes on his wealth of experience to fledgling talents in his Academy, is an excellent example.”

Bonadimann (Vorarlberg) wins Disabled Alpine Skiing World Cup

Austria scored a great success in sport for the disabled. Leading with a total of 18 World Cup points, Philipp Bonadimann from Dornbirn won this year’s overall World Cup of disabled Alpine skiers. This event had been won no less than nine times in a row by Martin Braxenthaler from Germany. As the usual World Cup “circus” could not be staged in view of the current economic situation, the national association organised four races in the preliminaries of the World Cup, which served as a basis for the ranking.

Bonadimann’s victory gives strong encouragement to the team of the Austrian Skiing Association (ÖSV) at the World Championships in Sestriere, where 130 athletes from 27 countries will be competing.

Minister Norbert Darabos was enthusiastic about magic mountain slalom

On the sidelines of the night slalom race in late December, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos expressed his enthusiasm about this event staged at Semmering, the “magic mountain” of Lower Austria. Darabos: “Night slalom races like the one at Semmering mountain are cer-

tainly among the highlights of skiing in Austria”. After the race, Minister Norbert Darabos personally congratulated the winner, Marlies Schild.

“Austria 2011“: American Football World Champs, the seasonal highlight

The sports world is now gazing spellbound at the NFL (National Football League) playoffs, from which the new NFL champion in American football will emerge as a winner. But in 2011 Austria will also host a major event of this fascinating team sport.

From 8 to 16 June 2011, eight nations will compete for the American football world champion title in eight stadiums in the cities of Graz, Innsbruck and Vienna.

Host country Austria will have to deal with a tough Group B – vice world champion Japan, top favourite Canada as well as France. All games will take place at the UPC Arena in Graz. Austria’s most important game will certainly be the kickoff game in Group B against vice world champion Japan. In the second game the American Football Team Austria will face the favourites from Canada, while the last game of this Group will be a purely European duel with European vice champion France.

In Group A of the American Football World Championship reigning champion USA, European champion Germany as well as Mexico and Australia will compete to advance to the finals. The venue will be the Tivoli Stadium in Innsbruck, one of Austria’s most modern stadiums. Tivoli Stadium has a capacity of 16,000 spectators and is famed for being located in a stunning Alpine scenery.

All final games will take place at Ernst Happel Stadium in Vienna, the only five-star stadium in Austria. All placement games for ranks five through eight will also be held there. The great final game will be kicked off at Ernst Happel Stadium on 16 July 2011.

“Never before has there been a world championship like this. We play in the most modern stadiums, before the biggest fans. It is the first time that really all leading nations in international American Football participate in the World Championship”, stated Michael Eschlböck, President of the Austrian Federation of American Football. “The World Championship will be a historic event in the development of this sport. We are looking forward to welcoming guests from all over the world, who – together with our fans – will make this a truly outstanding event.”