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HOME AFFAIRS

Presentation of the budget 2012

On 19 October 2011 the Council of Ministers adopted the budget for 2012. The motto of the federal government was “to cut costs, to make administration more efficient, while making investments for the future“, informed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the press conference following the meeting. Therefore public spending on social protection and education would not decrease. On the contrary, the financial resources for education and research would be raised significantly, said Faymann. This principle established at domestic level also strengthened Austria’s position in the European discussion on the introduction of a financial transactions tax. “In this way we may set an example in Europe“, stressed the Federal Chancellor.

The concrete budget data for 2012 were presented by Minister of Finance Maria Fekter in her first budget speech to the National Council on 19 October 2011. Her statement was under the banner “sound finances for a safer future“. Hence, Fekter emphasised that – despite the budget consolidation path – adequate investments in Austria’s future would be made, notably in education, research and development. Austria had coped fairly well with the financial and debt crisis but had “not yet escaped the crisis“, stated Fekter. With this budget, the federal government had given a clear signal of budgetary predictability and responsibility for the future. Belt-tightening, deficit reduction, reforms and growth were therefore a priority.

The general government deficit was to decrease to 3.2% of the GDP in 2012 (2011: 3.9%). By international comparison (euro-zone: 3.5%, EU-27: 3.8%; Eurostat spring forecast 2011), Austria’s budget was stable and sound. Fekter described these figures as an important message to the financial markets “that Austria can be relied on“.

The overall government debt will increase to 74.6% (2011: 73.6%). Fekter explained that these data had been drawn from the Federal Financial Framework for the period up to 2015, which provides for a decrease of the deficit to below 2% and expects the government debt to start declining for the first time since 2007. Budget consolidation will be based mainly on expenditure cuts. The 2012 budget projects an expenditure of 73.6 billion euro and a revenue of 64.4 billion euro. The expenditure ratio will decrease from 52.2% to 51.2%. The income drops from 48.3% to 48.0%. This will be reflected in the tax ratio, decreasing from

42.4% to 42.1%. Nevertheless, the tax revenue will increase by 3.5 billion euro. This will be due to various factors such as an increase in employment and growing consumption.

(Budget 2012 see: www.bmf.gv.at/budget)

90 years of Chambers of Labour

Austria’s Chambers of Labour celebrated their 90th anniversary on 20 October 2011. Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, Vice Chancellor Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and the President of the Federation of Austrian Trade Unions (ÖGB) Erich Foglar attended the ceremony hosted by Chamber of Labour President Herbert Tumpel. The participants agreed that the chambers and social partners had to play a vital role in the future, especially in times of economic crisis.

Federal Chancellor Faymann formally thanked the staff of the Chamber of Labour. Their firm commitment and active support in concrete cases made it possible to realise political objectives, stressed Faymann.

Successful negotiations at the administrative reform summit

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger held a summit meeting on the administrative reform with the Governors of the nine Länder in Vienna on 21 October 2011 – and the outcome was successful. “We have to cut costs and want to invest, therefore we have to intensify cooperation between the federal government and the Länder“, said the Chancellor. The green light was given for the transparency database. “The aim was to document who receives which subsidy so as to avoid duplication of aid in the future“, said Burgenland’s Governor Niessl.

The representatives of the federal government and the Länder also agreed on setting up regional administrative courts. They are expected to accelerate administrative court proceedings and to reduce the burden on the federal administrative court.

The summit attendees also agreed to establish a Federal Office for Asylum and Migration Affairs. Asylum procedures and decisions on stays for humanitarian reasons would be speeded up. “These measures allow us to streamline administration, to cut costs and to optimise the service for the citizens“, the Chairwoman of the Conference of Governors, Salzburg’s Governor Gabi Burgstaller, was pleased to state.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal Chancellor Faymann attends EU debt summit in Brussels**

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann participated in the EU debt summit in Brussels on 23 October 2011. One of the results of the meeting was the decision to consider “minor Treaty changes”. European Council President Herman Van Rompuy was asked to submit a respective report in December. But this project is already meeting with resistance. Treaty changes require a very lengthy procedure and the approval of the national parliaments – and this process will probably take at least two years. Federal Chancellor Faymann warned: “Changes of the Treaty will not help to solve short-term problems.” But according to him, a debt reduction for Greece was imminent. “I am convinced that the negotiations are likely to lead to an agreement with private lenders who could take on up to 50 per cent of the so-called ‘haircut’ of the Greek debt.” The Federal Chancellor also expressed criticism: We should not only discuss how to save money and how to cut expenses. We also have to discuss how young people in Europe may again find jobs.

Federal President Heinz Fischer in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan

Federal President Heinz Fischer paid an official visit to the two Caucasian republics of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan from 11 to 13 October 2011. Fischer was accompanied by some ministers and a large trade delegation.

The two countries governed by authoritarian regimes have huge oil and natural gas resources, accounting for more than 90% of the exports. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan play a key role in the EU’s considerations concerning gas supplies for Europe.

In the capital of Azerbaijan Baku the Austrian Federal President held talks with President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Artur Raszade. The top item on the meeting agenda was the gas pipeline project Nabucco, planned under the lead of the Austrian group OMV. For the time being, Azerbaijan did not make any binding commitments regarding gas supplies. OMV plans to invest in the gas production of Azerbaijan. To this end, it signed a memorandum of understanding with the state-owned oil and gas group Socar.

In Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, Fischer met with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, who held out prospects of gas supplies to the West. The negotiations on this

issue will have to continue. Austria and Turkmenistan also signed a memorandum of cooperation in the energy sector.

President Fischer told reporters that he had also discussed human rights issues and the freedom of the press with his meeting partners.

China’s President Hu Jintao pays state visit to Austria

Chinese President Hu Jintao pays a state visit to Austria from 30 October to 2 November 2011. His official programme includes talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer.

Hungarian President Schmitt in Vienna

Hungarian President Pál Schmitt paid a short visit to Vienna on 20 October 2011 to participate in the commemoration of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, which had been bloodily suppressed by the Soviets.

At a meeting with Federal President Heinz Fischer at the presidential residence in Hofburg, Schmitt expressed his thanks for Austria’s solidarity as it had granted asylum to more than 250,000 refugees in 1956.

In the evening Schmitt attended a memorial mass for the victims of the revolt in Hungary at St. Stephen’s Cathedral.

Spindelegger called for investigation into violence against Copts in Cairo

The dimension of violence against Christian Copts at a demonstration in Cairo, where more than 24 people were killed, was “horrifying and deeply worrying“, stated Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger in a press release on 10 October 2011, one day after the bloody confrontation between Christians, Muslims and soldiers in the centre of Cairo. He requested the Egyptian government to fully and completely investigate the circumstances of the escalating violence against the Copts and to punish those responsible, said Spindelegger.

“The legitimate concerns of the population, notably the country’s religious minorities, have to be taken seriously by the Egyptian leadership. To establish a modern democratic state governed by the rule of law and to achieve political consolidation after the first free parliamentary elections to be held in November, this was an absolute must“, stressed the Austrian Foreign Minister.

ECONOMY**Austria boasts third highest labour productivity in the EU**

Austria ranks third in a comparison of labour productivity per person employed in the manufacturing sector of the EU-27. This is one of the findings of the Communication “Industrial Policy: Reinforcing Competitiveness” presented by Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship Antonio Tajani on 14 October 2011. The number one is Ireland, the Netherlands are placed second. Austria is followed by Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden and Germany.

Commissioner Tajani explained that the European industry was in a good shape and ready to compete. The recovery was, however, slowing down. Competitiveness and growth should therefore be put on top of the political agenda. The share of innovative enterprises ranges between 80% in Germany and 25% in Latvia. Austria achieved a good average innovativeness rate of above 50%.

The Commission noted that Austria reported favourable competitiveness and labour productivity data that clearly exceeded the EU average.

Wages of metal workers increase by 4.2 per cent

On 18 October 2011 industry and trade union representatives agreed on an increase in wages and salaries by 4.2%, with lower wages rising more significantly. The wage agreements of the metal workers are considered indicative and set the wage trend for other industries.

The wage increase fixed in the agreement clearly exceeds the inflation rate of the past twelve months of 2.8%, which had been used as a basis for the negotiations.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann described this as a “good result“ which continued the “successful path of the Austrian social partnership“.

The wage agreement affects 165,000 blue-collar and white-collar workers of the metal industry. Their income will rise by 4.2% on average as from 1 November 2011. The lowest pay grades will benefit from an increase of 4.4% and a minimum supplement of 80 euro; the wages of unskilled workers will increase by a total of 5.3%.

Middle income brackets will profit from an increase of between 4.0% and 4.3%, the wages of top earners will climb by 3.8%. As from 1 November 2011, a minimum wage of

1,583 euro (previously 1,515 euro) will have to be paid.

The wage agreement costs the industry about 300 million euro. Companies with a weak earnings position will be granted exemptions, which, however, have not yet been fixed in detail.

Improvements to parental leave schemes were adopted as well. While before only 10 months per child were taken into account as eligible service periods for pay increments, 16 months will be recognised as from 1 November 2011.

Inflation rate at 3.6 per cent

With consumer prices rising by 3.6% in September, the highest inflation rate has been achieved in Austria since autumn 2008 (3.8%). In August and July of the current year, prices surged by 3.5%. The main price drivers continue to be mineral oil and petrol products. The inflation rate excluding these items would have stood at only 2.8% in September, as the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) informed on 14 October 2011.

The prices of a typical weekly purchase – referred to as the “mini basket of goods“ including foodstuffs, services and fuels – rose by 7.1% year-on-year in September (6.8% in August).

“Innovation Indicator 2011“: Austria moves up from rank 14 to 8

Based on the Innovation Indicator 2011 published by the German Telekom Foundation and the Federation of German Industry (BDI), Austria improved its position in the innovation index significantly in the past two years, moving up from rank 14 to 8.

“Probably unlike any other country in the EU“, Austria took the so-called “Barcelona objective“ very seriously, increasing its overall expenditure on research and development to three per cent of the GDP.

Thanks to continuous increases in R&D spending supported by proactive innovation policies (including generous tax incentives for R&D investments), the R&D ratio went up from 1.8% in 1998 to 2.8% in 2010. According to the Innovation Indicator, which compares 26 industrialised nations, the Austrian economy also reported a sharp increase in its innovation output. The Innovation Indicator is led by Switzerland, followed by Singapore and Sweden.

Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures and Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner were highly pleased about this favourable result.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Wien Modern 2011**

Wien Modern is one of the most important international festivals for contemporary music. It takes place from 28 October to 25 November 2011 under the artistic management of Matthias Losek. The festival programme features a special section devoted to Friedrich Cerha, one of the most eminent composers of the present. Cerha is still active and celebrates his 85th birthday in the current year. Wien Modern will be opened with his opus magnum “Spiegel I - VII“ on 28 October 2011 (RSO Wien conducted by Cornelius Meister). On 25 November 2011 the festival will come to a spectacular end with the “Concert for Orchestra and Percussion“ of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (conducted by Peter Eötvös). The percussion solo will be given by Martin Grubinger, one of the finest shooting stars of the international scene. In cooperation with Cerha himself, a multifaceted programme was developed, which presents highlights from his comprehensive oeuvre and is rounded off by works by former disciples, e.g. Georg Friedrich Haas. Performances will be given by Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Kontrapunkte and Ensemble die reihe. Wolfgang Mitterer, a pioneer of electroacoustic music representing Austria’s younger generation of composers, will contribute three world premiers, e.g. the comic opera “Baron Münchhausen“ at Rabenhof-Theater.

In its programme section titled “UK Collection“, the festival gives insights into the contemporary music creation of the United Kingdom, featuring composers such as Harrison Birtwistle, Peter Maxwell Davies, James Dillon, Rebecca Saunders but also Emily Howard, who will present the commissioned work “Calculus of the Nervous System“.

Wien Modern deliberately continues to focus on performative, theatrical projects. “Klangspiegel: London / Wien“ is an international platform for intermedia and contemporary sound art by women staged at the multicultural venue Brunnenpassage. Konzerthaus offers “Oskar Serti geht ins Konzert. Warum?“ produced by Markus Kupferblum (a work by Gerald Resch commissioned by Erste Bank). The festival continues its cooperation with long-standing partners such as Dschungel Wien (“Momo“) or Tanzquartier (“Tableaux Vivants“). www.wienmodern.at

Jewish Museum Vienna reopened

After a general overhaul, the Jewish Museum Vienna does not only offer its visitors an opportunity to rediscover its collections but also lures them with the large-scale temporary exhibition “Bigger than Life. 100 Years of Hollywood. A Jewish Experience“.

In the Museum’s exhibition space the large collections (collection of the Jewish Religious Community, new acquisitions and the private collections Berger, Schlaff und Stern) are set against their historical background. The museum-goers are introduced to important personalities and invited to a journey through time, providing a glimpse of destroyed Jewish places. At the children’s studio Jewish life may be explored based on objects of everyday use. Presenting a dialogue between two teens, the audioguide is an essential part of this experience. The atrium will serve as a project space until the opening of the new permanent exhibition in autumn 2012.

“Bigger than Life“ portrays the lives of Jewish immigrants to the USA, e.g. Adolph Zukor (Paramount), William Fox, Louis B. Mayer (MGM), Carl Laemmle (Universal) and the Warner Brothers. These personalities created Hollywood with its studios, stars and happy ends, making it one of the most outstanding cultural phenomena of the 20th century. Tracing this global cultural history, milestones in filmmaking are juxtaposed with European-Jewish experiences, encompassing also the (initially only reluctant) anti-Nazi propaganda and attempts to confront the unfathomable Holocaust. Besides essential films, film posters and other memorabilia are presented.

Ruth Klüger receives Danubius Nonfiction Award for her oeuvre

The Danubius Donauland Nonfiction Award will be presented in a ceremony at the Jewish Museum Vienna on 25 October 2011. To pay tribute to Klüger on her 80th birthday on 30 October 2011, the documentary “Das Weiterleben der Ruth Klüger“ by Renata Schmidtkunz is premiered in the framework of the Viennale Film Festival at Gartenbaukino.

Austrian Film Museum

At the beginning of the new cinema season, the Director of the Austrian Film Museum, Alexander Horwath, as well as Deputy Director Andrea Glawogger were reappointed for another five-year term (ending in 2016). The team which has been at the helm of the museum since 2002 may look back on a highly successful development. Cinema attendance

rose to about 55,000 persons per season. According to a press release, the average number of tickets sold is almost 50 per cent higher than that of all other cinema operators in Austria. The 50th anniversary in 2014 will be celebrated with momentous activities. Horwath pointed out that the film museum, rather than the cinemas, offered an increasingly important venue for filmmaking. The Film Museum was drawing special attention to the position of Viennese filmmakers, comprising awareness of material and political views. The Film Museum perceived the auditorium as a social space, where a discursive attitude prevailed and a critical approach to the medium film was facilitated. Not only cinephiles but also the art scene was aware of this fact. The spectrum of the medium film should continue to encompass “attractive blockbusters and avant-garde filmmaking as well as spectacle and work on modernity“, stated Horwath.

Fashion photography at Vienna's Kunsthalle

In the framework of its autumn programme delving into photography and fashion, Kunsthalle presents “Vanity Fair“. The exhibition curated by Synne Genzner (closing on 12 February 2012) showcases works by legendary fashion photographer F. C. Grundlach, who worked for fashion magazines such as Brigitte and has also been active as a gallery owner, collector and curator. Grundlach (born in 1926) uses fashion photography as a tool to analyse social conditions. He interprets as well as stages this social context to mirror or anticipate the spirit of the time. In 2003 he became a founding director of the House of Photography at Deichtorhallen in Hamburg, which had been co-initiated by him. Besides selected works of the Grundlach/Hamburg Collection, photos by Richard Avedon, Sibylle Bergemann and David LaChapelle are displayed at Kunsthalle. www.kunsthallewien.at/

“Cultural Transfair“: continuing an initiative for people in need

The social initiative “Hungry for Art and Culture“ called into life by Schauspielhaus Wien and the Poverty Conference in 2003 provides socially disadvantaged people with a “culture card“ giving them free access to 450 cultural facilities participating across Austria. Projects promoting direct cultural exchanges were tentatively launched in 2009. Thanks to their success, they will be continued also in 2012. In 2010 50,800 tickets were issued to 22,000 Viennese culture card holders. Measures such

as accompaniment, assistance and participation were also necessary, stated Martin Schenk of the Poverty Conference. In 2011 social and cultural facilities successfully developed joint programmes under the title “Culture Transfair“ that were tailored to the needs of the target group and funded by a sponsor.

The Austrian Film Museum organised for example a little guided tour about the medium film for the elderly residents of the Caritas home Jona. Together with the staff of the Secession, apprentices of the organisation “Jugend am Werk“ analysed the ornamental symbols of the façade of this art nouveau building and then realised their own icons and symbols on wooden boards. Tanzquartier invited 28 apprentices to participate actively and learn more about contemporary dance and performance art. The pieces rehearsed were documented by another group of apprentices.

Stadttheater Klagenfurt 2011/12

Theatre manager Josef E. Köpplinger – who will move to Munich – chose a quote of Max Reinhardt as the motto for his last season: “I believe in the immortality of the theatre. The desire to go to the theatre, to make theatre is a fundamental desire of humankind“. He wanted to provide the theatre audience with an experience to take home, said Köpplinger, who can pride himself of an attendance of almost 88% of the seating capacity. The wide spectrum of the programme includes popular standard works (“The Flying Dutchman” based on an interesting concept by Torsten Fischer, “Tosca“, “The Nutcracker“, “My Fair Lady“ and “Westside Story“) as well as some surprises like Julien Green’s “South“ produced by Sibylle Broll-Pape. Green’s play is set in the time of the secession war. His mortal remains were laid to rest in the city parish church of Klagenfurt. The programme features the comedy “39 Steps“ by John Buchan and Alfred Hitchcock premiered in 2005; it will be directed by Werner Sobotka. A new, commissioned version of “Puss in Boots“ will be staged as a play with music. Puccini’s “Tosca“ (conductor: Peter Marschik, production: Stefano Poda) will be performed at the end of the season. Landestheater Klagenfurt will also present Schnitzler’s “The Vast Domain“, “Evangelimann“ and “King Kong“ at Napoleonstadel as well as the highlight “Zala“ by Simone Schönnett and Harald Schwinger in the framework of “Theater Extra“. Despite budget cuts (leading to the abolition of the playwrights’ contest), the artistic quality will be upheld thanks to efficient planning and the use

of synergies (as illustrated by the ballet company consistently developed for a wide range of repertoires). www.stadttheater-klagenfurt.at

Werner Faymann: investment in education strengthens competitiveness

“In most EU Member States the budget item “education“ had to be cut and continues to be cut, while Austria boasts an increase”, praised Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann the new draft budget for 2012. The Federal Chancellor rejected the reproach that the government had taken only inadequate reform measures: “41 government bills dealing with this issue show that education is a key priority of the federal government. Class size reduction, remedial German language lessons in nursery schools, the new A-level exam, the definition of educational standards, the project of combining apprenticeship training with A-level exams as well as the increase in the number of all-day schools and new comprehensive schools can be mentioned as examples”.

Karlheinz Töchterle praised budget for 2012

“The budget for 2012 gives clear priority to science and research“, Minister Karlheinz Töchterle was pleased to inform. The budget “proved the great importance attached to science and research, especially during phases of budget consolidation”, added the Minister of Science.

University of Vienna among the 50 top universities for arts and humanities

According to World University Ranking (for universities of arts and humanities) published by Times Higher Education, the University of Vienna is one of the top 50 arts and humanities universities in the world. It is the only Austrian university on this list and ranks 47th.

“In view of the enormous global competition, this is a very remarkable achievement”, stated the Rector of the University of Vienna Heinz Engl.

Claudia Schmied: free re-entry into educational system as from 2012

People without formal qualifications will be enabled to re-enter the educational system free of charge from 2012 onwards. Minister of Education Claudia Schmied considers this initiative an “important signal of education policy to facilitate the access of educationally disadvantaged persons to lifelong learning“. By granting free re-entry into the educational system, a “major obstacle to formal qualifica-

tions faced by this mostly financially weak group” is eliminated.

Educational leave becomes a permanent right

Educational leave becomes a permanent right. Originally, the current model was to be phased out by the end of 2011 but now the government decided to make the temporary arrangement permanent. The attractiveness of educational leave had been enhanced already in 2009. Labour market experts had hailed the scheme as it helped enterprises to maintain its personnel level in times of economic crisis.

University of Innsbruck plans special faculty for teacher training

The University of Innsbruck plans to establish a new faculty for teacher training – the so-called “School of Education” – in 2012. According to Acting Rector Tilmann Märk, the next step was to merge the Pedagogical University of Tyrol with this university. Based on the concept, the “School of Education” comprises an Institute of Teacher Training and School-Related Research, an Institute of Didactics of Natural Sciences and an Institute of Didactics of Humanities.

Austria documents gender equality: Gender Index 2011

Gender-disaggregated figures, data and facts provide an essential basis for planning and upholding measures and projects to achieve equality between women and men in our society. To promote the gathering and evaluation of gender-specific data on a continuous basis in Austria, the “Gender Index Austria” was presented on 17 October 2011. It provides key information on the situation of women and men in Austria. Every year an updated version will be made available.

[Gender Index 2011 \(PDF\)](#)

Invitation to apply for a “quality seal for first-rate child day care”

All Austrian schools may submit applications for the “quality seal for first-rate child day care” to the Supervisory School Authority by 31 December 2011. The all-day care services provided by the schools will be examined on the basis of strict criteria. In June 2012 the quality seals will be awarded for a two-year period.

“Currently 196 schools hold this quality seal. I hope that the number will increase significantly in the next year“, said Minister of Education Claudia Schmied.

SPORTS**100% Sport: new competence centre for equal opportunities in Austria**

“100% Sport“ is the new competence centre for equal opportunities between women and men in Austrian sport. The association was presented to the public at a joint press conference of Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek and Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos on 18 October 2011. “100% Sport” has been initiated by the Ministry of Sport to ensure that female and male athletes have equal opportunities in Austrian sport.

“In their careers women have to make the same experience over and over again. Men earn more, and even if they deliver an excellent performance, it is still men who wield power. Both women in the economy and women in sport are affected by this discrimination”, said Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: “We examined domestic sport in all its facets and came to the conclusion that many spheres are still dominated by men – despite the fact that it were often Austria’s female athletes making decisive contributions to the medal tally in recent years, e.g. at the Olympic Games in Beijing or the Alpine Ski World Championships in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, where they won all the four gold medals. In my capacity of Minister of Sport, I set myself the goal of taking crucial measures to promote equality of women in sport. The initiative “100% Sport” is one of these measures.“

In 2011 the association WoGoS – Women Go Sport – was renamed “100% Sport“. As emphasis has been placed on equality between women and men in sport, four gender mainstreaming projects are being realised. Funds totalling about 750,000 euro have been made available for this purpose.

Darabos turns sod for “New Danube” water sports centre

A new wild water sports centre in the middle of Vienna will provide the foundation for continuing Austria’s success in canoeing.

A state-of-the-art water sports centre will be built on the site of the present rowing centre near a bridge in Vienna’s 22nd district (Steinspornbrücke) within the next three years. The water sports centre will be available for the disciplines rowing as well as flat water and wild water canoeing. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, kayak world champion Corinna Kuhnle and Walter Aumayr, President of the

Austrian Canoeing Association, turned the first sod on 17 October 2011. The costs of this project totalling 3.9 million euro will be shared by the Ministry of Sport and the City of Vienna.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: “Winning two gold medals in the world championships in 2011, the Canoeing Association is one of Austria’s most successful sports associations. In view of our huge success in this Olympic discipline, we have to create the optimal infrastructure for our athletes. Therefore I am very proud of this unique project.”

Meeting of sports ministers in Cracow: combat against betting fraud

The combat against betting fraud was high on the agenda of the informal meeting of ministers of sport held in Cracow on 13 and 14 October 2011.

Besides doping, the manipulation of games poses a serious threat to the integrity of sport. The EU Council Presidency therefore launched an appeal to treat “sports fraud“ as a criminal offence in the law of the Member States. Moreover, the EU Council Presidency proposed further action to strengthen cooperation among national law enforcement authorities, sports organisations and betting operators as well as to ensure the respect of sport organisers’ rights.

In this context, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos highlighted the need for an initiative – supported by all EU Member States – to speed up procedures to uncover betting manipulations. It was vital to coordinate sports betting monitoring systems more efficiently. Austria also backed the proposal of the European Lotteries to establish an international agency responsible for monitoring sport betting and combating betting manipulations. The EU Council conclusions on combating match fixing are expected to be adopted by the EU ministers of sport at the Council of Sports Ministers in Brussels on 29 November 2011.

The main topic discussed on the second day of the informal meeting was “sport and economy” – an issue highlighted by Austria during its Council Presidency. The incumbent EU Council Presidency stressed the substantial economic contribution sport can make to society as a whole, for example through big sporting events, such as the European Football Championships hosted by Poland in 2012.