

# NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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**HOME AFFAIRS****Werner Faymann: “Clear rules to reduce debt in Europe“**

The Austrian government decided to enshrine a “debt brake” in the Austrian Constitution, following the German example. This was “a consistent step to implement the decisions of the euro summit, underpinning our intention to decrease budget deficits continuously”, said Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the budget debate in the National Council on 16 November 2011. However, the approval of at least one opposition party is required. The overall objective was to decrease the debt to 60% of the GDP by 2020, while promoting economic growth. The Federal Chancellor was of the opinion that the world of international finance had to participate in solving the European debt crisis, e.g. via a financial transactions tax.

According to Minister of Finance Maria Fekter, Austria did not face any risk of losing its triple-A rating, which it was currently sharing with only 18 countries. But “we are working on an austerity path at full speed”, and the economic data were good, said Fekter.

**Alois Stöger: giant leap towards health and hospital reform**

The recently adopted amendment of the Hospital Act had the aim of gearing “hospitals optimally to the demand of the regions. Sick people are often unable to travel long distances. The Länder are provided with an adequate tool for improving the healthcare of the people in the regions”, stressed Minister of Health Alois Stöger after the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 15 November 2011. Based on the amendment, the range of hospital services will be adjusted to the actual local demand, without jeopardising the supply of fast and competent basic healthcare and primary care. Examples were hospitals in large ski areas, which could shift their focus from surgery to casualty surgery or a general increase in geriatric services in hospitals, stated Stöger.

**Strategy promoting internal security**

Together with Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer, Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner informed of the successful results of the administrative reform in the federal security authorities on 17 November 2011.

In the framework of the Internal Security Strategy (“INNEN.SICHER-Strategie”), more than 60 projects had been launched. The core project of this strategy focuses on the security

directorates, the 14 federal police directorates and the police command centres in each of the nine Länder. These bodies are to be merged into nine so-called “police directorates of the Länder“. Secretary of State Ostermayer explained: “The aim of this measure is for example to avoid duplication and to streamline procedures and structures in a meaningful way.“

The Secretary of State informed that the reform of the administrative court system was the most important measure guaranteeing legal protection since the adoption of the Austrian Federal Constitution. The reformed system would certainly lead to faster procedures and slimmer organisational structures as eleven courts with comprehensive competence would emerge from more than 120 special authorities. The government bill would be presented before the end of this year and the new court system is expected to begin operating in 2014.

**“Intergenerational Scan” – a signal to families, children and young adults**

“More transparency increases consciousness and boosts awareness”, concluded Minister for Families Reinhold Mitterlehner on 15 November 2011. Thanks to the newly introduced “Intergenerational Scan“, “all laws will in the future be examined systematically for compatibility with the needs of children, young people, families and generations“, said the Minister. In accordance with the amendment of the Federal Budget Act, his ministry would develop a guide for lawmakers by year-end, allowing them to examine objectively the effects of envisaged legislation on children, young people and families during the lawmaking process. Furthermore, bills would have to specify the consequences of a legal provision on intergenerational equity.

**Federal hymn: Austria also sings the praises of its daughters**

The coalition parties – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and People’s Party (ÖVP) – and the Greens presented a joint motion, which will be discussed in the Constitutional Committee still in November and is likely to be adopted in a plenary session of the National Council in December. The lyrics of Austria’s national anthem will be changed. Austria is now “home to great daughters and sons“ (previously only sons). In the third stanza of the anthem the “choirs of brothers” are replaced by “joyous choirs“.

The revised lyrics and melody of the national anthem will be laid down in an amendment passed by the National Council.

**EUROPE INTERNATIONAL****Foreign Minister Spindelegger pays visit to the United Kingdom**

Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger held talks with Prime Minister David Cameron, his British counterpart William Hague and Minister for European Issues David Lidington on 10 November 2011. The topics discussed included the stability of the euro-zone as well as the financial transactions tax. While Austria is in favour of introducing a financial transactions tax, the UK rejects this project by highlighting London's role as a global financial centre. Another item high on the agenda was the future of the European Union. "I explained our position that we do not consider an EU Treaty change the right solution to this crisis right now but that in the long run we should reflect on how we may guide Europe as a whole to new structures – also by learning from this crisis", stated Spindelegger. We plan to engage in close cooperation on the EU financial framework for the next years, but hold different views on agricultural policy.

**Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Iraq**

Michael Spindelegger was the first Austrian foreign minister in more than 20 years to travel to Iraq (16 November 2011). During his three-day visit to Bagdad, Spindelegger met with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, head of government Nouri al-Maliki and his counterpart Hoshyar Zebari. Spindelegger was accompanied by an Austrian delegation. Together with the Vice President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Richard Schenz, he opened a business forum, in which members of the Iraqi business community participated. Trade between Austria and Iraq has been booming in the past few months. In view of the partnership and cooperation agreement signed between the EU and the Iraq, a foundation for intensified collaboration had been laid, stated Spindelegger.

Spindelegger held talks on economic policy issues with Regional President Masoud Barzani, Regional Prime Minister Barham Salih and Regional Foreign Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir in the Kurdish Autonomous Region. The Austrian group OMV is active in this region with abundant petrol and gas resources.

**Secretary of State Waldner in Macedonia and Kosovo**

The talks conducted by Secretary of State Wolfgang Waldner with Deputy Prime Ministers Musa Xhaferi and Vladimir Pesovski as

well as Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki in Skopje on 7 November 2011 focused on Macedonia's stagnating efforts to come closer to the EU. The opening of EU accession negotiations with Macedonia has been blocked by Greece due to a conflict about the state name "Republic of Macedonia" lasting for 20 years. Austria supported entry talks provided that the conflict about the state name was solved by the end of the negotiation process.

This position – accession talks subject to the resumption of dialogue with Kosovo – has been adopted also with respect to Serbia. It is backed also by European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle, while Germany and France are sceptical. Austria expected the EU summit on 9 December 2011 to bring progress for the EU integration of the Balkans states, said Waldner.

On 8 November 2011 Waldner met with Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov before travelling on to the capital of Kosovo Pristina, where he held talks with Speaker of Parliament Jakup Krasniqi, Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, Deputy Prime Minister Edita Tahiri, Minister for Foreign Affairs Enver Hoxhaj, leading representatives of the international community and KFOR. Subjects for debate were the Kosovo's prospects of EU integration, the situation in the north of the country as well as dialogue with Serbia.

**Austria against dilution of prohibition of cluster munitions**

The new draft protocol for the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) – presented to the meeting held from 14 to 25 November 2011 – prohibits only cluster munitions produced before 1980. It was strongly supported by countries such as the USA, Russia or China but would lead to a "re-legitimation" of cluster munitions, which had been shunned internationally since the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, criticised the Head of the Arms Control Department of the Foreign Ministry, Alexander Kmentt, and Permanent Representative of Austria to the Specialised UN Agencies in Geneva Christian Strohal. On Austria's initiative, an alternative draft had been prepared with Norway and Mexico.

**Global protection of minorities**

The draft resolution on the global protection of minorities initiated by Austria was submitted by 69 countries and approved by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in New York on 15 November 2011.

## ECONOMY

### **Chancellor Faymann: strengthening the economy in the Danube region**

“In these difficult times, close collaboration in the Danube region is vital – and the Vienna Economic Forum has made a crucial contribution“, stated Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the opening of the 8<sup>th</sup> Vienna Economic Forum in Vienna on 21 November 2011. This year’s meeting focuses on the economy as the driving force behind regional development in the Danube countries.

The common goal was to strengthen the economy in the Danube region as well as to promote growth and stability in the Danube countries. For a strong economy and high competitiveness were the key to the development of each region in Europe, said the Federal Chancellor. “To remain successful in the future, we have to invest in research and development, in educational excellence, green technologies, innovation and efficient mobility“, said Faymann. It was, however, also a must to regulate the financial markets as well as to reduce the government debt.

### **Law against wage and social dumping proves effective**

Six months after the adoption of the Act against Wage and Social Dumping, Minister of Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer highlighted the first positive effects. The law ensures equal wage conditions for all persons working in Austria – and thus fair competition between domestic and foreign enterprises. For the first time in the Austrian history, it has become possible to control wages and to allow administrative authorities to sanction enterprises paying inadequate wages. Due to the severe punishment and numerous controls, the first favourable results of the law have been observed after six months.

### **Ministry of Economy supports “Cleantech Initiative“**

In the framework of the new “Cleantech Initiative“, the Ministry of Economy makes available six million euro to Austria Wirtschaftsservice (aws), which will provide venture capital to enterprises active in the energy and environmental technology sector. “These six million euro have to be doubled to twelve million euro by the Venture Capital Fund selected with funds provided by private investors. They will be injected into Austrian start-up companies as well as companies undergoing expansion“, stressed Minister for Economic Affairs Rein-

hold Mitterlehner in a press release on 8 November 2011. “With our campaign we support the growth strategies and innovative power of Austrian companies active in the energy and environmental technology sector. By bringing ecological innovations earlier to the market, we promote structural changes of the economy and provide stimuli to sustainable growth“, stated the Minister confidently.

### **Robust performance of export sector despite economic slowdown**

The export data published on 8 November 2011 demonstrate that Austria’s export sector is performing well in a difficult international environment. “As our export enterprises have so far weathered the crisis successfully, we are approaching a record export volume in the current year. Nevertheless, we should not be blinded by the still favourable data and we must prepare ourselves well in view of the spill-over of the debt crisis to the real economy“, emphasised Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner.

The Ministry of Economy has for example made available 35 million euro to the Foreign Trade Department (AWO) of the Federal Economic Chamber for its campaign “go international“. In this way support is provided to small and medium-sized enterprises planning to open up new markets. Information on this campaign is offered in a road show which has been kicked off successfully countrywide.

### **Presentation of National Action Plan for Intelligent Transport Systems**

“The efficiency of the Austrian transport system is a decisive locational factor and of vital importance for the competitiveness of our economy and the quality of life of our citizens“, said Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures on 21 November 2011. However, today it was increasingly difficult to finance infrastructure expansion projects.

This problem is addressed with the aid of so-called “intelligent transport systems” (ITS), offering new approaches to traffic management and organisation. In the recently presented ITS Action Plan, the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology formulated Austria’s strategy for implementing an intelligent transport system in accordance with the European framework.

**CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE****Nestroy Prize award ceremony 2011**

The coveted Austrian theatre award replaced the Kainz Medal – which has also been granted by the City of Vienna – in 2000. It does not only recognise outstanding achievements in Austrian theatre but is also part of the German-speaking world of theatre. Hence, the Nestroy Prize for the “best performance” is awarded supraregionally. Besides showcasing theatrical accomplishments, the Nestroy Prize aims at inspiring interest in theatre, following the example of the Parisian Molière Prize. This year’s Nestroy Prize award ceremony (statuettes designed by Gabriele Kutschera) took place at Raimund Theater and was broadcast by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation.

The prize winners were elected by the “Academy” (composed of former Nestroy Prize laureates and nominees) from among the candidates nominated by the jury. Following some changes introduced this year, an additional award was granted for the best performances in the Länder and five candidates (instead of three) were nominated in the categories “best actor” and “best supporting role”.

Carinthian dramatist Peter Turrini was awarded the Nestroy Prize for his lifetime achievements, while the author’s prize was conferred on Peter Handke for his play “Still Storm“, which had received its world premiere at this year’s Salzburg Festival. The award for the best stage design went to Thomas Schulte-Michels, who had also been responsible for the production of “Mr. Puntilla and his Man Matti“ at Volkstheater. The secret about the other prize winners was revealed at the gala on 14 November 2011. Best actors/actresses became Sarah Viktoria Frick, Max Mayer, Udo Samel (supporting role), Franziska Hackl (newcomer) and Eleonore Bürcher (audience prize). Andrea Breth was selected as the best director. “Ganymed Boarding“ became the best independent theatre production; “Amerika“ at Stadttheater Klagenfurt was selected as the best regional performance, while “The Weavers“ (Deutsches Theater Berlin) won the prize for the best German-language performance. The special prize went to Franz Wittenbrink for the production “Eh Wurscht“.

**Landestheater Linz in 2011/2012**

**Plays:** Edward Albee’s classic marriage drama “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?“ compellingly directed by Peter Wittenberg (with Julia von Sell and Lutz Zeidler) was one of the most acclaimed premieres of this theatre season.

Landestheater Linz also presented a stage adaptation of Daniel Glattauer’s book “Alle sieben Wellen“ (untranslated), a sequel to his successful work “Love Virtually“. The team led by director Harald Brückner was cheered by the audience and critics for its expressive power and overall excellence. Director Gerhard Willert triumphed with his experimental staging of Jean-Luc Lagarce’s “Rules for Good Manners in Modern Society“. The banquet – including a four-course meal created by chef Christian Dattinger – was hosted by actress Katharina Hofmann with a certain amount of irony and a lot of charm. After Elfriede Jelinek’s “The Alps“, Carlo Collodi’s “Pinocchio“ and Roland Schimmelpfennig’s “The Golden Dragon” in autumn 2011, theatre lovers are keenly awaiting Austrian premiers of Jonas Hassen Khemiri’s “We are a Hundred“, Georg Kreisler’s “Du sollst nicht lieben“ and Christoph Nussbaumer’s “Die Kunst des Fallens“ in 2012.

**Auhof - theatre for a young audience** was applauded by young and old theatre-goers for its witty and dynamic production of “An der Arche um acht“ (debut of director John F. Kutil).

**Ballet:** choreographer-in-chief Jochen Ulrich opened the season with the premiere of “Michelangelo“ (music by Arvo Pärt and Benjamin Britten, Bruckner Orchestra conducted by Dennis Russell Davies). The ballet director and his company were celebrated with thunderous ovations for the spectacular ballet performance translating Michelangelo’s art into movement. Besides a revival of “Rumi – In Flammen“ as from 20 December (music by Mohammad Reza Mortazavi, verses by the important Persian poet of the Middle Ages Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi), the programme comprises “The Four Seasons” (with music by Antonio Vivaldi) and Philip Glass’ work inspired in it, “Violin Concerto No. 2, The American Four Seasons“ (ballet by Katrin Hall and Jochen Ulrich, interludes by Fabrice Jucquois, premiere on 3 March 2012). The season will be concluded with “The Ship of Fools“ (music and arrangements by David Wagner). Drawing on the medieval text, American author Katherine Anne Porter (1890–1980) developed the archetypical image of a sea voyage representing a journey through life, which had been turned into a Hollywood film with a star-studded cast (Jochen Ulrich, songs and dance music of the 1920s and 1930s; starting on 20 April 2012).

**Opera:** After the premiere of Puccini’s “La Bohème“ and revivals of Verdi’s “Il Trova-

tore“ and Rossini’s “La Cenerentola“, this season offers premiers of Donizetti’s “Maria Stuarda“ (as from 10 December 2011), Mozart’s “Così fan tutte“, Poulenc’ “Dialogues des Carmélites“ (as from 24 March 2012), the Austrian premiere of Detlev Glanert’s “Nijinskys Tagebuch“ (as from 9 April 2012) and Strauss’ “The Knight of the Rose“ (as from 19 May 2012).

**Musical:** In “The Black Rider” director Marc Becker combines texts by William S. Burroughs, music by Tom Waits and an old German folk tale (that inspired Carl Maria von Weber to compose “Freischütz”) into partly surrealistic images, whose eccentricity reminds of David Lynch. [www.landestheater-linz.at/](http://www.landestheater-linz.at/)

### “The Kavafis Project“ at Konzerthaus

The world premiere of “The Kavafis Project“ will take place at Vienna’s Konzerthaus on 26 November 2011. Alexandros Karozas set to music twelve poems by Konstantinos Kavafis – who is considered one of the most important Greek poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Byzantine melodic phrases were interwoven into a symphonic fabric (vocals by George Dalaras, poetry recitals by Bruno Ganz).

### Exhibition “BESA: a Code of Honour“

The exhibition at Theater Nestroyhof – Hamakom presents twelve portraits by American photographer Norman Gershman, accompanied by the stories of Albanian Muslims who saved Jews from extermination during the Shoah. It draws attention to a little known chapter in the history of the Holocaust. Before the German troops withdrew from Albania in 1944, almost 2000 Jews found refuge with Muslim families. Albania and its Muslim-majority population succeeded where many other European nations failed – almost all Jews on the Albanian territory were saved, regardless of their origin. Many government agencies provided Jewish families with false documents, enabling them to live normal lives in the community.

Their support was based on “BESA“ – an ethical principle which is still valid today. It means to “keep a promise” and to help people in distress and to protect their lives without being afraid of negative consequences. The help afforded to others is understood as a matter of honour. By January 2010 Yad Vashem recognised 69 Albanians as “Righteous among the Nations”. The touring exhibition was opened at the United Nations headquarters in New York and makes its first stop in Vienna (closing on 17 January 2012).

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

### Austrian filmmakers in the limelight at the 49th Viennale Film Festival

The work of Austrian filmmakers has been represented extensively and regularly at Austria’s largest film festival for some years. Besides Sebastian Meise’s debut feature film “Still Life“ (which received a honourable mention at the festival in San Sebastian), Viennale presented eleven documentaries in which Austrians had participated. Other Austrian highlights at the festival were 15 shorts, a special tribute to documentary filmmaker Sasha Pirker and an event devoted to Ulrich Seidl, who presented his work-in-progress “Paradies“.

Another documentary contribution deserving special attention is Johannes Hammel’s experimental short “Jour Sombre“. Hammel was also behind the camera in Lotte Schreiber’s “Tlatelolco“ and Joerg Burger’s “Way of Passion“ and produced Michael Palm’s “Low Definition Control“. “Tlatelolco“ portrays a neighbourhood in Mexico City which became notorious after a massacre of students; Burger’s “Way of Passion“ describes a Good Friday procession in Sicily; “Low Definition Control“ anticipates the future, based on surveillance and control scenarios which are interwoven associatively and brilliantly.

Political issues are also tackled in “Stoff der Heimat“ (Othmar Schmiderer examines tradition, culture and history based on local folk costumes), “American Passages“ (Ruth Beckermann visits functional places in the present-day USA, inspired by photographer Robert Frank) and in Gerald Igor Hauzenberger’s “Der Prozess“ (about a spectacular trial of animal rights activists in Austria).

Other Austrian contributions to the Viennale festival were classic portrait documentaries, e.g. “Das Weiterleben der Ruth Klüger“ by Renata Schmidtkunz or “The Last Jew from Drohobych“ by Paul Rosdy, a glimpse behind the scenes of the leisure industry in “Ibiza Occident“ by Günter Schwaiger as well as the debut “Boxeo Constitución“ by Jakob Weingartner. The short film section of the Viennale programme listed all the famous names of the Austrian avant-garde – from Siegfried A. Fruhauf and Johann Lurf to Friedl vom Gröller. Martin Arnold – who is regarded as an influential pioneer in international filmmaking – has been featured prominently with his latest four works.

The Vienna Film Prizes 2011 went to Markus Schleinzer for “Michael“ and Gerald Igor Hauzenberger for “Der Prozess“.

### **Chancellor Faymann on the campaign for a referendum on education**

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann considered the result of the petition for a referendum on education initiated by industrialist and former Minister of Finance (Social Democratic Party) Hannes Androsch – 383,820 signatures – a valuable support in continuing the reform of the education system: “As the head of government, I take this result very seriously. I will make a personal commitment to pressing ahead with the reforms of the education system. The quality of education for our children and young people in Austria as well as the further development and modernisation of the education system are decisive for the future of our country.” In this context, the Federal Chancellor welcomed the fact that Parliament had expressed its willingness to address the concerns of the citizens signing the petition as exhaustively as possible in the National Council.

### **Go-ahead for new Styrian University Conference**

The Styrian concept of cooperation among five universities, two universities of applied sciences and two pedagogical universities is exemplary for all of Austria. This unique network of tertiary education institutions will be expanded and strengthened. In the framework of the Styrian University Conference, which has been set up as a permanent institution, the nine universities plan to intensify collaboration. “I am very pleased that by establishing the Styrian University Conference another clear signal of targeted regional cooperation has been given“, Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle stated proudly. Thus Styria has succeeded once more in positioning itself as Austria’s second most important location for universities after Vienna.

### **Platform “Young Science” bridges the gap between education and research**

On 18 November 2011 Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle presented a new centre promoting cooperation between academia and school. Under the motto “forging links through research“, the counselling and service centre “Young Science” bundles information and contacts regarding all programmes of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research promoting young talents at pre-university level. The aim of the initiative is to intensify cooperation between the secondary and tertiary education system significantly and to facilitate direct contacts of pupils with universities, universities of applied sciences and research insti-

tutions. The Minister was convinced that “the desire to learn is stimulated in schools and is a main motivation driving the researchers of tomorrow”.

Recommended link: [www.youngscience.at](http://www.youngscience.at)

### **Austria boasts good position in comparison of university autonomy**

Austria belongs to the “medium high cluster“ in the “University Autonomy Scorecard” recently published by the European University Association (EUA) comparing the level of autonomy of universities in 26 European countries.

In all four categories (organisation, finance, personnel and academic freedom) the Austrian universities are ranked between eighth and thirteenth (the comparison covers 28 university systems and includes three Länder in Germany). According to the study, Austrian universities lack freedom of action only in the context of university tuition fees and university access.

### **Erwin Schrödinger Prize 2011 awarded to biological engineer at TU Graz**

Professor of biomechanics Gerhard A. Holzapfel of the Graz University of Technology (TU) will be awarded the Erwin Schrödinger Prize 2011 of the Austrian Academy of Sciences for his research work. In biomechanics researchers investigate how mechanical forces change biological structures and which harmful effects they may trigger.

Gerhard A. Holzapfel applies the laws of mechanical engineering to gain new insights into the human body and, particularly, the blood vessels. He develops simulation tools for medical experts.

### **Alois Stöger: the right toys are important for child development**

“Play is the most natural way for children to explore their environment. And it is through play that children learn extensively. Therefore playing is more than a leisure activity for children. Playing – with or without toys – is vital to the development of the child“, emphasised Minister of Health Alois Stöger at the presentation of the new manual “Gutes Spielzeug“ (“Good Toys”), which was co-developed by the Ministry of Health to advise consumers in choosing the right toys.

See: [Ratgeber „Gutes Spielzeug“](#)

**SPORTS****Elisabeth Görgl and Thomas Morgenstern are the Athletes of the Year 2011**

Two-time world champion Elisabeth Görgl and high flier Thomas Morgenstern received the much-sought-after trophy of the “Athlete of the Year” at the “Night of Sports”, a gala hosted by the Austrian Lotteries at Austria Trend Hotel Pyramide in Vösendorf. The ski jumping team of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) won the title “Team of the Year”. The trophies for “Athletes of the Year with Disabilities” went to skier Claudia Lösch and triathlete Martin Falch. In the category “Special Olympics” homage was paid to equestrian Isabella Szele. Anna Fenninger, world champion in super-combined, won the title “Newcomer of the Year” awarded by the audience.

Being a true sportswoman, Elisabeth Görgl gradually improved her position in the competition for the title “Athlete of the Year”. In 2008 the Styrian ranked 12<sup>th</sup>, one year later 11<sup>th</sup>, and last year she moved up to place five. As Görgl won gold medals in the downhill and Super G events in the current year, the Austrian sports reporters voted in favour of the 30-year-old athlete. Görgl garnered the honour the “Female Athlete of the Year” for the first time in her career. The top-ranked athletes were the woman skiers. Görgl outshone her team colleagues Marlies Schild and Anna Fenninger. Canoeist Corinna Kuhnle and star pool player Jasmin Ouschan came in fourth and fifth, respectively.

Thomas Morgenstern looks back on several wins in a row in 2011: the overall World Cup title, the four hills tournament, a silver medal in the large-hill event and, of course, the two World Cup team events. The two-time overall World Cup champion from Carinthia became two-time winner of the title “Athlete of the Year” (conferred on him also in 2008). Morgenstern has now joined the distinguished group of four athletes who succeeded in winning the overall World Cup title, the four-hill tournament as well as individual gold medals at world championships and Olympic Games. Snowboard world champion Benjamin Karl was ranked second after Morgenstern. Ski jumper Gregor Schlierenzauer became third, before tennis ace Jürgen Melzer and ice hockey shooting star Michael Grabner. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> time that a ski jumper has been picked as the “Male Athlete of the Year”.

Congratulating the two winners of the title, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos also expressed his personal satisfaction: “The two

athletes have deserved to win this trophy. Last winter we enthusiastically applauded the achievements of Elisabeth Görgl, notably at the Alpine Ski World Cup. Thomas Morgenstern is not only a natural winner but also a role model for young people.”

**Ministry of Sport supports a children’s book project of Fritz Strobl**

The Ministry of Sport, the Service Centre “Winter Sports Weeks” and the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) support “Fritz Blitz“, a children’s book project of Fritz Strobl and the publishing house G&G Verlag.

Fritz Strobl has guaranteed excitement in Alpine skiing and enjoyed immense popularity for many years. Strobl’s first children’s book (co-authored by Karin Ammerer) “Fritz Blitz – Attacke der Pistenpiraten“ revolves around skiing. Moreover, the book pursues an important goal – to kindle the enthusiasm in children for winter sports.

The book presentation hosted by Fritz Strobl and director of G&G-Verlag Georg Glöckler at the House of Sports was attended by pupils of a Vienna-based cooperative secondary school (Kooperative Mittelschule Wien-Enkplatz) as well as numerous important personalities from sports and business, including Annemarie Moser-Pröll, Franz Klammer, Michael Walchhofer, Stephan Eberharter, Hans Knauß, Toni Polster, Susanne Riess-Passer, Sepp Schellhorn and ÖSV Sports Director Hans Pum.

The book addressing the age group 8 to 12 is used in an Austria-wide school project supported by the Ministry of Sport, the Service Centre “Winter Sports Weeks” and the ÖSV. Fritz Strobl: “My major goal is to get kids and young people all over the world excited about skiing and to encourage an increasing number of children to hit the slopes. It goes without saying that this motivation has to be fit for children – this means it must be cool, witty and thrilling. ‘Fritz Blitz’ (literally, ‘Fritz Quick As a Flash’) is the perfect character.”

**Austria is among the global leaders in the anti-doping combat**

As the Austrian National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) recently confirmed, Austria’s anti-doping provisions fully comply with the regulations of the World Anti-Doping Code. This is the latest important step ensuring that Austria continues to lead the way in the global fight against doping.