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HOME AFFAIRS

Austrian government paves the way for European Citizens' Initiative

On 29 November 2011 the federal government passed a resolution to create a legal basis for the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). This was an important step towards more co-determination of the citizens in Europe, stated Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann after the meeting of the Council of Ministers. The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) agreed on submitting the respective legislative proposal.

Austria would start implementing the ECI in due course (as from April 2012 in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty) as "we are actively promoting citizen participation", stressed the Chancellor. In supporting anti-nuclear initiatives or a financial market regulation "public pressure would be welcome", said Faymann.

The European Citizens' Initiative enables EU citizens to call directly on the Commission to bring forward proposals for legal acts. It must be supported by a minimum of one million signatures from at least one quarter of the EU Member States (currently seven). A minimum number of inhabitants of a Member State has to sign the initiative. In Austria an ECI requires at least 14,250 supporters.

Debt brake: agreement between Federal Republic and Länder

After intensive negotiations on 29 November 2011, the Federal Republic of Austria, the Länder and municipalities agreed to introduce a "debt brake" in 2017.

According to the deal, the budgets of the Länder and municipalities are considered to be "in equilibrium" if the structural deficit amounts to 0.1% of the GDP, while the federal government deficit is limited to 0.35% of the GDP. As these percentages may be exceeded, the deficits will be recognised in "adjustment accounts". The respective limits are 0.35% of the GDP for the Länder and municipalities and 1.25% for the federal government. In the event of higher deficits, counter-measures have to be taken and a debt-reduction plan has to be submitted.

Secretary of State for Financial Affairs Andreas Schieder referred to a "very good concept". The aim of this step was to give a sign of stability and future-oriented financial management to the financial markets. The debt brake initiated a "fiscal trend reversal", stated Schieder.

New Media Transparency Act

The Constitution Committee of the National Council passed the Media Transparency Act with the votes of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), the People's Party (ÖVP), the Greens and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) on 1 December 2011.

The aim of the Media Transparency Act is to increase transparency in political advertisements placed by the government and public bodies, e.g. by publishing contracts awarded on a quarterly basis. The ownership structures of newspapers will also become more transparent. Violations of disclosure rules and misinformation may be punished with administrative fines of between 20,000 euro and 60,000 euro (repeated infringement).

Childcare benefits: changes regarding extra income in 2012

The rules governing childcare benefits will change with effect 1 January 2012. Based on the legislation in force, a "month with extra income" is defined as a month in which childcare benefits are obtained for 16 days or more. This period will be extended to 23 days. If childcare allowance is received during 23 days of a month, the respective month is no longer defined as a "month with extra income" and the earned income is not regarded as "extra income". Thus the recipients of childcare benefits will not have to repay the amount exceeding the extra income threshold. The threshold for extra income earned by recipients of means-tested childcare benefits has been increased from 5,800 to 6,100 euro.

The Board of Ombudspersons will also examine allegations of torture

The Board of Ombudspersons will become the competent body for allegations of torture. On 22 November 2011 its scope of responsibilities was widened based on a decision of the Constitution Committee of the National Council approved by the SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ and partly the Greens. The UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) signed by Austria in 2003 will be transposed through the Act Implementing OPCAT (entering into force on 1 July 2012). The Board of Ombudspersons will receive the necessary powers to act as the National Preventive Mechanism. It will be able to verify the observance of human rights in "places of detention", e.g. reception centres for asylum seekers, military barracks, psychiatric wards, residential homes for the elderly, nursing homes, crisis centres, juvenile facilities and institutions for people with disabilities.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal President Fischer in London**

Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer was received by Queen Elizabeth II. in London on 30 November 2011. He was accompanied by his wife Margit. The meeting was held in the private rooms of the monarch. Fischer described the talks as “very lively and intensive“, the Queen had been “briefed and informed well on Austria“. Fischer invited Queen Elizabeth to Austria. Other subjects discussed were Europe, China and the Middle East.

One day earlier, on 29 November 2011, Fischer gave a speech on the subject “1989 and EU enlargement: Austria's role in European Politics“ following an invitation by the London School of Economics. Moreover, the President met with the former Chairwoman of the House of Commons Betty Boothroyd and the Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow.

Federal Chancellor Faymann meets with Angela Merkel in Berlin

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann met with his German counterpart Angela Merkel in Berlin on 2 December 2011. The European debt crisis was high on the meeting agenda. Faymann was open to Treaty changes if this was necessary to improve Europe's legal framework. “We believe that a sound framework is indispensable to ensure credibility“, stated Faymann. He informed Merkel that the Austrian government had decided to introduce a debt brake, which would be enshrined in the Constitution.

Germany and Austria were collaborating closely in the debt crisis, said Merkel. The two countries agreed that the euro had to be defended. It was vital to regain confidence in European bonds and in Europe, stated Merkel. The German Chancellor pled once more for EU Treaty changes, imposing tougher budget discipline.

Mahmoud Abbas in Vienna

President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas paid an official visit to Austria on 28 November 2011. The top item on the agenda was the Middle East peace process.

The programme included talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer. Fischer emphasised Austria's commitment to a two-state solution in the Middle East. The Federal President also indi-

cated that the status of the Palestinian representation in Vienna would be upgraded.

In a meeting with Chancellor Faymann, Abbas praised Austria's role in the EU regarding the peace process with Israel. Abbas “had emphasised his willingness to work constructively with the Middle East Quartet on a solution“, stated Faymann.

Chancellor Faymann received Macedonian Prime Minister Gruevski

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Gruevski discussed the requirements Macedonia had to meet in the EU entry talks as well as the Greek-Macedonian conflict over the state name “Republic of Macedonia“ in a working meeting in Vienna on 21 November 2011.

Together with the President of the Federal Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl, Gruevski opened the “Forum on Macedonia“ of the Foreign Trade Department of the Economic Chamber. He also participated in an event exploring the subject “Investing in Macedonia“ staged by the Federal Economic Chamber on 22 November 2011. In the past, the Austrian economic community had invested predominantly in the energy, construction and banking sectors of Macedonia.

Initiative for stronger financial control

On 22 November 2011 Austria's proposal for a resolution on external public financial control was approved by consensus by the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly. The resolution stresses the important role of independent courts of auditors in developing efficient public administrations. It calls on the Member States to safeguard and strengthen the independence of the courts of auditors on a sustainable basis. Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger described the resolution as a “milestone in enhancing transparency and preventing corruption“.

Violence against women

On the International Day for Eliminating Violence against Women (25 November 2011), Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger emphasised that with a view to implementing Resolution 1325 Austria had been committed to strengthening the protection of women in armed conflicts and women's involvement in peacekeeping. Austria would continue its respective efforts in the UN Human Rights Council, after having been elected as a member in June for a three-year term.

ECONOMY

Hundstorfer: good labour market situation for migrants

On 24 November 2011 Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer presented the results of the OECD country report "Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children": "The report shows very clearly that Austria has been moving in the right direction." Special attention was paid to the labour market integration of young people with a migration background. In early 2012 the Ministry of Social Affairs will launch a new project to raise awareness of simplified procedures for the formal recognition of qualifications earned abroad.

Joining forces against shortage of skilled labour in Salzburg

The Economic Chamber of Salzburg has presented Salzburg's most comprehensive set of measures to promote skilled workers in the last 20 years. The inventors of the previous programme "Careers with Apprenticeship" in the city on the Salzach river propose a mandatory assessment of capabilities for all pupils aged 14 and 15 years, notably those with a migration background. Other measures proposed are to provide systematic counselling to drop-outs as well as to organise workshops for youth workers. Labour market strategists focus particularly on girls and the children of migrants.

Winter tourism: "Ski resorts quite confident"

According to a tourism forecast recently published by the Economic Research Institute (Wifo), the number of hotel nights will remain on a stable level during the current winter season. The turnover in tourism is expected to stagnate or to increase insignificantly. At present, Austria holds a share of more than 57% in the winter travel market of Europe "and we will continue expanding this market share. (...) We are the market leaders, ahead of France, Italy and Switzerland", stressed Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner. The German guests are still the most important group of holidaymakers but in the last five years the share of tourists from Eastern Europe has increased sharply.

New EU rules on food labelling

The new EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers, which sets out new requirements for labelling, will enter into force on 12 December 2011. Uniform and

consumer-friendly information will be provided on all food packaging across the European Union. The Regulation introduces new rules for minimum print size, origin labelling, the declaration of calories and nutritional values, imitation food and allergens. Austria succeeded in pushing through its demand for compulsory origin labelling of meat. The introduction of a minimum print size was also a major concern of Austria.

Austria's triple-A rating confirmed

In its "Credit Opinion" on Austria, the rating agency Moody's provided a concise summary of the domestic financial situation. The Alpine Republic has been awarded once more the AAA credit rating, i.e. the highest possible level of creditworthiness. The rating agency even upheld its "stable" outlook.

Martha Oberndorfer, Director of the Federal Financing Agency responsible for debt management in Austria, stated: "It is important to send out a strong signal that consolidation is taken seriously also in the medium and long term. Mechanisms such as the debt brake are precisely what we need in this context."

Vienna has the highest quality of living in the world

In the latest Quality of Living Survey of the personnel consulting enterprise Mercer, Vienna has defended successfully its position as the city with the highest quality of living. Zurich (Switzerland) and Auckland (New Zealand) made it to ranks two and three. To compare the quality of living in different cities, various political, social and economic criteria were taken into account.

Austrian shale gas resource represents 30 years of consumption

Shale gas is causing a stir in the energy sector. It may be defined as natural gas not stored in porous rock but in thousands of small gas bubbles between solid rocks buried deep below the surface. The production of shale gas became possible only about ten years ago.

Shale gas deposits are located near Poysdorf, in the north of Lower Austria. "These deposits could be vital for Austria in the future", announced OMV boss Gerhard Roiss. If production became possible, this shale gas resource could "meet Austria's gas consumption (annually about eight billion cubic metres) for 20 to 30 years." But a "new extraction process" had to be developed as production would not be started unless it was "ecologically sound", stated Roiss.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**“Christmas in Vienna“ 2011 at Vienna’s Konzerthaus**

The concert programme comprises festive tunes but also international and popular Christmas themes. With “Psalm 150“ by Anton Bruckner, sequences from Haydn’s “The Creation“ and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s symphony “Hymn of Praise“, momentous compositions will be included in this year’s Christmas concert. A work by Richard Wagner will be performed for the first time at this event: “The Angel“ from the “Wesendonck Songs“. Christmas carols from Austria, Italy, France, Spain, Romania, Great Britain, the USA, Mexico and Japan will be sung by Angela Denoke, Liliana Nikiteanu, Ramón Vargas, Paul Armin Edelmann, Wiener Singakademie and the Boys’ Choir of St. Florian (with soloist Alois Mühlbacher). Sascha Goetzl will conduct the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester. (16 and 17 December 2011)

Otto Mauer Prize to Kamen Stoyanov

The Prize of the Otto Mauer Fund of the Archdiocese of Vienna was set up to honour Monsignore Otto Mauer (1907–1973) and his commitment to young contemporary art. It is awarded for the body of work of an artist under 40 years. This year’s Otto Mauer Prize (with a prize money of 11,000 euro) was conferred on Bulgarian-born artist Kamen Stoyanov on 30 November 2011 by Bishop Egon Kapellari. The artist living in Vienna and Sofia was selected for his wide range of works addressing socio-political and existentialist themes such as migration, globalisation or the commercialisation of art, his use of complex multi-media strategies for realising aesthetical concepts as well as for developing his own distinctive artistic language. The works of the artist are presented in the exhibition “Impossible Stories“ at Jesuiten-Foyer in Vienna until 15 January 2012. www.otto-mauer-fonds.at

Maecenas Art Sponsoring Prize 2011

The Maecenas Art Sponsoring Prize was awarded for the 23rd time at Vienna’s Hotel Imperial on 22 November 2011. The award (without prize money) is granted by the independent committee “Business for Art Initiatives“ (“Initiativen Wirtschaft für Kunst“/IWK) in cooperation with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). In 2011 168 domestic enterprises competed with 185 projects (total budget 9.3 million euro) for the Maecenas. The jury selected Windkraft Simonsfeld

AG for its project “Rotorenluftmusik“ (“Rotor Air Music“) from 96 entries as the winner in the category “Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises“. The red lights of wind turbines are transformed into huge scores by laser projection. The acoustic backdrop has been composed by Werner Zangerle for nine musicians and seven engines. Bank Austria emerged as the winner of the category “Concept / Large Enterprise“ thanks to its art prize awarded for the first time in 2011, which the jury described as a “strong impetus to the innovative power of Austria’s art and culture scene“. Wiener Städtische Wechselseitige – Vienna Insurance Group received a prize (category “Long-Term Sponsoring Commitment“) for its cooperation with Leopold Museum. The winner of the Audience Prize of the Ö1 Radio Channel (“Ö1-Publikumspreis“) for the best “Long-Term Sponsoring Commitment“ of the last year was selected by online voting. This honour was bestowed on furniture producer Franz Wittmann Möbelwerkstätten GmbH for the project “4-4 Art“ (“4Viertel Kunst“). The following enterprises won prizes for the first time for acting as art and culture producers or organising events: BNP Paribas (“Gerhard Schedl Music Theatre Prize“), Peter Coeln GmbH (WestLicht Photo Gallery), consultant Erich Wolf (sponsoring contemporary art from Styria), Loisium Kellerwelt Betriebs GmbH & Co KG (“Loisiarte“) as well as Franz Wittmann Möbelwerkstätten GmbH.

“Winter Festival“ in Salzburg

Until 6 January 2012 four circus productions and one exhibition will lure the audience to the Winter Festival (“Winterfest“). In two heated circus tents French and Canadian artists, poets and puppet masters will tell their stories for the first time in Austria. The circus festival was opened with the brilliant urban contemporary play “La Vie“ by the Canadian company “The 7 Fingers“ (starting on 24 November). The traditional family circus “Cirque Rasposo“ follows on 25 November with “Le Chant du Dindon“ (“The Song of the Turkey“). The world premiere of “8m3“ by the highly popular circus poets Didier André and Jean-Paul Lefevre will be given on 8 December 2011. The festival comes to an end with the clownish and abysmal-poetic production “Court-Miracles“ of the French company “Le Boustrophédon“(as from 26 December). The play is set in a relief camp during a war. Puppets and people mingle to tell a story, with humour and fantasy, of compassion and inhumanity, heroism and cowardice. www.winterfest.at

Art in Public Space, part 1: Salzburg Foundation

“Art in Public Space” has been conceived as a ten-year project by the Salzburg Foundation. It came to a successful conclusion in October 2011, when a total of 12 works by the Austrian artists Brigitte Kowanz, Manfred Wakolbinger and Erwin Wurm were unveiled in the historic centre of the city of Salzburg. Kowanz created a light installation titled “Beyond Recall“ for Staatsbrücke, the main bridge of Salzburg. Glass cubes reflect writings reminding of the forced labourers who built this bridge under inhumane conditions in the early 1940s. Wakolbinger chose the embankment “Rudolfskai” to establish a link between the river and the city with his eleven-metre-long sculpture from stainless steel “Connection“. Wurm produced five man-sized cucumbers from painted bronze for a park called “Furtwänglerpark”, where Art in Public Space had started with a work by Anselm Kiefer in 2002. The project of the year 2003 was one of Mario Merz’ igloos titled “Ziffern im Wald“ (“Figures in the Wood”) on Mönchsberg. One year later Marina Abramovic followed with “Spirit of Mozart“ on Staatsbrücke. Subsequent artistic interventions were made by Markus Lüpertz, James Turrell, Stephan Balkenhol, Tony Cragg, and Christian Boltanski, who drenched the crypt of the dome in light in 2009. In the more recent past, Jaume Plensa’s larger-than-life marble head was erected in the Dietrichsruh courtyard of the University of Salzburg. Showcasing the twelve works of art, the “Walk of Modern Art” in Salzburg’s historic centre has already become a tourist attraction.

Curator Walter Smerling announced that a comprehensive documentation would be published in January 2012. Moreover, an agreement on the formal transfer and maintenance of the works of art will be concluded with the City of Salzburg. Karl Gollegger, President of Salzburg Foundation, informed that twelve composers had been commissioned to capture the spirit of the individual works of art. The compositions will be performed in the framework of the Salzburg Festival 2013.

Art in Public Space, part 2: a memorial for a former synagogue

The refurbished memorial for a former synagogue called “Turnertempel” reminds of the Jewish past in Vienna’s 15th district. On the site of the synagogue destroyed in the “Night of Broken Glass” in 1938, the roof truss of the building is symbolised by black concrete girders, while mosaics embedded in the floor de-

pic fruit, plants and leaves from the Torah. The redesign was financed by the initiative “Art in Public Space”, the district authority and the EU. The “place of remembrance” was inaugurated with a memorial prayer and a ceremony on 10 November 2011.

Art in Public Space, part 3: “Unknown knights” conquer Graz

Three rather war-weary knights have dominated the cityscape of Graz since September. The sculptures will be displayed for two years in the public space to encourage reflection. Following an invitation by the Institute of Art in Public Space of Universalmuseum Joanneum (UMJ), German-Turkish artist Nasan Tur explored the mechanisms of creating myths and constructing stereotyped enemy figures, such as those derived from the Turkish Wars.

The myth of Styria and Graz as a bulwark against invasions from the South East, especially the Ottoman Empire, has been revived and handed down – and it was still reproduced in primary school textbooks in the 1970s. Together with kids aged six to eight years from Graz, Nasan Tur demonstrates that differentiated views are possible. The primary school pupils and the artist invented mutually independent stories of a vulnerable, anti-heroic “unknown knight“. They served as a basis for traditional bronze monuments erected in the city – in Griesgasse, on Schloßberg (“Turks’ Fountain”) and on the roof of Zeughaus, where the knight is dreaming peacefully of the moon.

200th anniversary of Joanneum

Universalmuseum Joanneum in Styria celebrates its 200th birthday on 26 November 2011 with the opening of the revamped museum precinct and three exhibitions. “Neue Galerie” has been transferred to the main building and shows an extensive exhibition on artist and architect Hans Hollein (until 9 April 2012). Another exhibition delves into “Modernism: Suicide of Art“, presenting works from the museum’s own collection (until 2 September 2012). The spotlight is turned on treasures of the collection, e.g. by Egon Schiele, Joseph Beuys or Marcel Duchamp. “Bruseum” showcasing works by Günter Brus has been opened as well (closing on 9 April 2012). Joanneum Director Peter Pakesch referred to a “great moment for Joanneum“. It had been a “major step to move the New Gallery to the main building”. The Ai Weiwei exhibition “Interlacing“ at Kunsthaus Graz has been extended until 5 February 2012.

www.museum-joanneum.at

Karlheinz Töchterle: intensifying cooperation between Austria and Vietnam

On the occasion of the visit of Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan and Minister of Science and Technology Nguyen Quan to Vienna, a Memorandum of Understanding on higher education and research was signed on 1 December 2011: "It will help us to strengthen the historically grown relations that have been fruitful for both sides and to promote them by focussing on new topics", said Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle. Cooperation in academia and research should be intensified, notably in the framework of EU programmes.

Regional government of Salzburg plans to launch nursing school pilot project

The regional government of Salzburg plans to launch a pilot project for a higher secondary school for the nursing and care-giving professions.

At present young people may attend nursing schools only when they reach the age of 17 years. Many interested teens completing compulsory schooling (at the age of 15) consider a "waiting period" of two years excessive. This problem is to be solved by establishing a higher secondary school for the nursing professions. Young people are admitted immediately after finishing compulsory education. Upon completing the new type of school, they will receive an A-level exam certificate.

22 top enterprises strengthen Austria's position as a research location

On the initiative of Innovation Minister Doris Bures, 22 renowned domestic enterprises made a commitment to increase their research expenditure by 20 per cent by 2015. "The alliance between the economic sector and the government brings us much closer to our goal of achieving a pole position in research and development – despite the economically difficult times", the Minister was pleased to inform.

The annual research expenditure of the 22 companies participating in this initiative totals more than one billion euro. Thus these enterprises embody more than one fifth of the total corporate research in Austria and employ 80,000 people countrywide.

"BIOS Science Austria" bundles agricultural research competence

With "BIOS Science Austria", a unique alliance will be set up, covering almost 100 per cent of Austria's agricultural research. In this

important strategic project leading institutions of the domestic life science scene participate, including the Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, the Vienna University of Veterinary Medicine, the Ministry of Agriculture and associated bodies such as the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety and the Federal Environment Agency. "BIOS Science Austria" facilitated cooperation among experts of different disciplines, above all on complex issues such as food safety and quality, emphasised Minister of Agriculture Niki Berlakovich.

Christa Neuper inaugurated as the first female rector of Graz University

After 246 male rectors, Christa Neuper became the first woman to take the helm at the University of Graz at the beginning of the academic year. The inauguration of the prominent brain researcher took place in the great auditorium of the university on 3 December 2011. Christa Neuper is the first female rector in the more than 400-year history of the Graz-based Karl Franzens University and the first woman to head a university in Styria. One of her main goals is to strengthen the position of the University of Graz as a research institution.

Selection of the Science Book of the Year has started

By presenting 21 books, Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle opened a new round of the contest "The Best Science Book of the Year". After an expert jury made the nominations in four categories, the public may now vote for their favourite book in bookshops, libraries, by mail or at www.wissenschaftsbuch.at until 9 January 2012.

"This campaign is unique in the German-speaking area. The fact that an increasing number of readers prefers non-fiction mirrors the enormous interest in scientific topics; this is something we must and wish continue promoting", stated the Minister.

After website re-launch: more information on www.studienwahl.at

On 1 December 2011 the revamped website <http://www.studienwahl.at> of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research went online. It offers information on Austria's entire tertiary education sector, i.e. university studies, programmes of universities of applied sciences as well as studies at pedagogical universities and private universities. Brief descriptions of the different study programmes provide insight into the individual courses offered.

SPORTS**Formal Sports Ministers' Meeting discusses volunteering in Europe**

Under the chair of the Polish EU Council Presidency, the formal Sports Ministers' meeting took place in Brussels on 29 November 2011.

A resolution on the representation of the EU in the Foundation Board of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the coordination of the EU position prior to WADA meetings has been adopted by the Council and the government representatives of the EU Member States in the Council. It provides for a new, strengthened system of representation of the EU in the WADA Foundation Board and also ensures greater continuity.

The Council conclusions on the importance of volunteering in sports to promote active citizenship were also adopted at this meeting.

In the Framework of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, the European Commission aims at developing and testing new and innovative approaches to establishing long-term partnerships among civil society organisations in the area of voluntary services. Another objective is to improve the quality and conditions of volunteering as voluntary activities also play a crucial role in combating social exclusion.

Another item on the agenda of the meeting of sports ministers was the adoption of the Council conclusions on combating match-fixing.

The aims of the policy debate on good governance in sport were to formulate a uniform definition of good governance in sport and to lay down principles of good governance, e.g.:

- autonomy of sport within the framework of law
- clear and regular electoral and appointing procedures
- transparency
- accountability in decision-making
- gender equality

BSO awarded Crystal Trophies to meritorious sports celebrities

Personalities devoting their time, commitment and skills to sports were again in the limelight of the "Crystal Trophy Gala" hosted by the Austrian Federal Sports Organisation (BSO) at Studio 44 of the House of Lotteries on 25 November 2011. The coveted crystal trophies went to Andrea Pöllinger (Sports Association of Disabled Athletes of Burgenland) in the category "top female official", to Martin Scherwitzl (judo) in the category "top male official", to SPORTUNION St. Pölten in the

category "top sports association" and to gold-winning canoeist Helmut Schröter in the category "top coach". The project "Women for the Olympic Games" ("Frauen zu Olympia") of the Sports Association of Schwechat ("SV Schwechat") was awarded the title "top women's power project". The event culminated in the announcement of the winner of the title "top sports ambassador": Roswitha Stadlober, manager of the association "The Career After" ("Karriere Danach" / KADA) and former world-class athlete. The successful ski racer of the 1980s has provided advice and practical assistance to athletes in the difficult transition process to a second career since 2006.

Salzburg Winter Network kicks off campaign for ski newcomers

Those who have not experienced the joy of skiing as a child will hardly opt for holidays in the snow as an adult. This simple conclusion has been the starting point for a campaign developed by the Salzburg Winter Network. With a comprehensive set of measures the Winter Network plans to lure the skiers of tomorrow to Austrian winter sports regions. The Winter Network founded in 2006 attaches vital importance to teachers in reviving the attractiveness of winter sports weeks organised by schools. It offers a joint programme with the ski schools of Salzburg. The beginners are trained by a professional ski instructor, while the sports teachers of the schools will be responsible for the more advanced skiers. Furthermore, kids without ski equipment may benefit from sponsorships organised in the framework of the Winter Network. This sponsorship costs 150 euro and comprises the services of a ski instructor, ski-lift tickets as well as ski equipment. The Winter Network plans to allocate a total budget of 100,000 euro to these sponsorships in the winter season 2012/13. After all, Salzburg is the market leader in winter sports weeks, holding a share of 50 per cent.

"Without a broad basis of skiers, there is no elite", explained the President of Salzburg's Ski Association Bartl Gensbichler. "The most important thing is to bring the joy of skiing to children". Then we did not have to worry about a new generation of Austrian ski stars, said Gensbichler.