

# NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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**HOME AFFAIRS****Positions in the debate on compulsory military service**

Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos would not object to compulsory military service becoming a matter to be decided at top level. This was his response to a question about the respective proposal of Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl in the TV programme "Report" on 8 February 2011. He stressed, however, that as the competent minister he was responsible for the discussion on the substance of military service and that Häupl explicitly supported him. Darabos was "99 per cent sure" that a decision on a common security strategy would be reached with the People's Party (ÖVP) in the near future. Despite the criticism voiced about his way of conducting the army reform, Darabos was not afraid of losing credibility. While the Minister had described compulsory military service as something "engraved in stone" only last summer, he was now advocating a professional army. According to him, the future defence system was a political decision. He expressed his conviction that his concept for a professional army would win in a possible referendum although a majority had favoured compulsory military service in a recent opinion poll by "market". Leading government members reacted cautiously or even reluctantly to Michael Häupl's proposal that the heads of the coalition government should become responsible for matters concerning compulsory military service. Minister Darabos would remain in charge of conducting the debate on this issue and the Chancellor was fully supporting him, explained a spokesman of Chancellor Faymann. He stressed that the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor had agreed that Austria's future security strategy would be finalised by the competent ministers in late February. The government leaders could intervene at the end of the debate – as they had done before.

Häupl reiterated that he was content about the result of the talks between the ÖVP and the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), namely to discuss first the security doctrine and then the reform of compulsory military service. He rejected, however, the ÖVP's proposal to reduce the length of compulsory military service to five months. Häupl upholds his demand to abolish compulsory military service: "What is done all over Europe cannot be considered completely daft in Austria". He had also advocated a referendum on this far-reaching issue.

A spokesperson of Josef Pröll informed that the Vice Chancellor thought that the internal

discussion in the SPÖ revealed a lack of confidence in Minister Darabos. On 7 February 2011 the daily "Österreich" wrote that the ÖVP wanted to submit its own army concept in March. These plans would provide for compulsory military service (10,000 recruits), compulsory civilian service for persons unfit for the army and more professional soldiers (including the militia, 20,000 to 25,000 persons).

**Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer's statement on the social year**

At a press conference Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer defended the figures he had presented on the social year but admitted that there was a certain margin for interpretation concerning organisational costs. It made for example a difference if conscientious objectors performing community service worked on the premises or externally as different food allowance rates would be applied.

The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) as well as the Head of the Civilian Service Agency, Ferdinand Mayer, had recently questioned Hundstorfer's figures, according to which the costs of a voluntary social year (pay based on collective agreements) would exceed the expenditure on civilian service only by 5 million euro.

Hundstorfer informed that he preferred twelve months of service over nine months as fewer training cycles would be required during the year. Even the harshest critics would agree with this. Talks with the competent organisations would be continued. A decisive qualitative concern was the question which benefits people doing volunteer work would reap for their future working lives. Detailed information on these career benefits would become available by the end of March.

**Discussion on "bilingual signposts"**

Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer described the new discussion round on bilingual topographical signposts in Carinthia with Governor Gerhard Dörfler and three representatives of the Slovene organisations Valentin Inzko, Marjan Sturm and Bernard Sadovnik as very constructive. The gathering – held in Klagenfurt on 3 February 2011 following talks with the mayors of the affected municipalities – had improved the understanding for the Slovene minority and built confidence. The proposed census to count the minority population was rejected. Ostermayer underlined that a fair solution would be found before the end of the deadline fixed by Chancellor Faymann, i.e. 2012, to conclude the discussion on bilingual signposts.

**EUROPE INTERNATIONAL****EU summit focusing on energy policy**

Based on the new EU energy pact, all EU Member States are to be connected to a common electricity and gas grid by 2015. Moreover, the European Union plans to continue expanding renewable energies. To realise this goal, investments of several billion euro will be made in the period until 2020.

Just like the EU heads of state and government, Minister for the Economy and Energy Reinhold Mitterlehner declared himself in favour of expanding and modernising the European energy infrastructure. He emphasised: "Thanks to our pumped storage power plants, we may become Europe's 'green battery' as renewable energies like the sun and wind require flexible electricity storage systems." According to the Minister for Economic Affairs, the fast implementation of the internal energy market was a vital prerequisite for additional investments in electricity and gas infrastructure.

The question whether nuclear energy could help reaching the climate goals was highly controversial. According to Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, Austria ensured at the EU summit that "nuclear energy was not sneaked in as a renewable energy in the respective funding programmes". The Federal Chancellor explained: "We decided again nuclear power plants. As Austrians we face a disadvantage because other countries using nuclear energy overtake us in the statistics on CO2 reduction. But there is a difference between atomic energy and sustainable and safe energy resources like hydroelectric power. You cannot sneak in nuclear energy."

Minister of the Environment Niki Berlakovich also argued emphatically: "For Austria a clandestine whitewash of nuclear power is unacceptable. Atomic energy has never been and is not a response to the challenges of climate change."

**Euro-zone summit in March: EU sets the course for economic governance**

A "competitiveness pact" proposed by Germany and France to intensify economic coordination in the euro-zone has by no means met with unqualified approval at the EU summit. The subject will be examined in depth at a special summit of the euro-zone leaders on 11 March 2011. EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy stated that he would consult with the individual euro-zone members about the criteria applied by them to measure competi-

tiveness in the preliminaries of the special summit.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann announced that he would place emphasis on areas such as education, exports, research but also social concerns such as the combat against wage and tax dumping or the proposed financial transactions tax when presenting Austria's position on competitiveness to Van Rompuy. "In my opinion it is wrong to interfere in wage negotiations", commented the Federal Chancellor. He also rejected a common pension policy. "I do not think it is possible for the EU to introduce a common retirement age as there are many differences and different criteria in the individual countries".

**Austria coordinates three priority areas of EU Danube Region Strategy**

At the end of 2010 the European Commission presented the EU's overarching Strategy for the Danube Region. Its aim is to further develop the huge economic potential of the Danube. According to Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn, Austria will be responsible for three out of eleven priority areas, namely "to improve mobility and intermodality in inland waterways", "to invest in people and skills" and "to step up institutional capacity and cooperation". "By assigning responsibility for three priority areas to Austria, tribute has been paid to our previous work, and at the same time this is a mandate to intensify our commitment to the Danube region in the future", Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger welcomed the decision.

Key areas for action are measures to improve the navigability and water quality of the Danube, to strengthen cooperation in security matters as well as to promote tourism.

**German Federal President receives Federal President Heinz Fischer**

German Federal President Christian Wulff hosted a lunch for his Austrian counterpart Heinz Fischer on 7 February 2011. Although this visit was of a both private and official nature, the Austrian President and his wife were greeted by a mounted police escort and representatives of the Guard of Honour before Christian Wulff and his wife Bettina welcomed their guests on the red carpet. One of the topics allegedly discussed during lunch was the current development in Egypt.

**ECONOMY****Austria's crisis management earned praise**

The recent study on the effects of the financial crisis in 37 OECD and Asian countries presented by the Economic Research Institute (Wirtschaftsforschungsinstitut/WIFO) revealed highly positive results for Austria. In an EU comparison, Austria was ranked fourth – almost on a par with the three leaders France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner stated that Austria got “good marks” for its crisis management and economic policy: “Despite Austria's unfavourable starting position with a high export ratio, close ties with Eastern Europe and many suppliers for the crisis-ridden car sector, we coped better with the crisis than numerous other countries.”

Minister of Finance Josef Pröll was also pleased: “Our efforts – from economic stimulus programmes to labour market packages – prove to be effective. In difficult times we deliberately chose to help and not to leave the people out in the cold. This was not only right from a social but also from an economic perspective, as this study demonstrates.”

**Ministry for Economic Affairs launches SME campaign**

The aim of the Ministry for Economic Affairs' new campaign for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is to boost competitiveness and innovation. “With our Triple-I Strategy, we plan to further develop the potential for innovation, to promote internationalisation and support investments”, stressed Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner. He explained that the new innovation, technology and creativity vouchers were a well-aimed measure to promote structural changes in the economy. Moreover, the risk capital available to Austrian enterprises for financing new products and services will be doubled. In 2011 the internationalisation campaign will also be realigned so as to facilitate the opening up of high-growth markets outside the European Union.

**Decreasing unemployment in Austria**

“The labour market data are the first valid economic figures of the new year. They show that the Austrian economy got off to a strong start into the new year”, Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer commented on the labour market data for January. The number of jobless persons dropped by 4.3 per cent, while the number of training programme participants went down

by 12.5 per cent. “Minus 5.9 per cent – this is the sharpest decline since the crisis”, the Minister stated with satisfaction.

The rate of long-term unemployed persons decreased by 31.7 per cent. A total of 3.23 million people are working; this corresponds to an increase by 1.9 per cent.

The apprenticeship market also continued to develop favourably. Vacancies for apprentices rose by 6.5 per cent, whereas the number of young people seeking apprenticeship places declined by 4.9 per cent. “Our consistent policy of combating youth unemployment is obviously winning increasing praise, also at international level. Recently US Nobel Prize laureate in economics Josef Stiglitz suggested that Austria's youth labour market policy could serve as a model for the USA”, informed the Minister.

With an unemployment rate of five per cent, Austria ranks third in an EU-27 comparison – behind the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

**Industry is again optimistic: higher prices and profits**

After a brief breather, the Austrian industrial sector started to regain optimism in autumn 2010, expecting a significant recovery of business within six months. Based on the latest Business Barometer of the Federation of Austrian Industrialists (Industriellenvereinigung), the enterprises anticipate increasing sales prices and considerably higher profits.

The prospect of higher profits “will lead to an increase in the propensity to invest of the industrial sector”, predicted Veit Sorger, President of the Federation of Austrian Industrialists. The order intake was also satisfactory.

The Business Barometer provides quarterly data and is based on the feedback of 447 industrial enterprises with 285,000 employees.

**Austrian ski industry is booming again**

The ski industry reports good sales. Austria has become the third-largest sales market.

No wonder all the ski manufacturers were smiling happily at the trade show for the winter sports industry “ispo” in Munich. A positive sell-through trend was observed in almost all markets. Demand was picking up again, especially in the United States – the most important ski market in the world. But also Central Europe, which has been snow-covered since the beginning of the winter season, gave cause for celebration. “As a result, the Alpine ski market improved by ten per cent, selling 3.6 million pairs of ski”, estimated Wolfgang Mayrhofer, CEO of the ski producer Atomic.

**CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE****Austrian Art Prizes 2010**

Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied presented the Austrian Art Prizes for the year 2010 to seven artists. The prizes previously referred to as "Würdigungspreise" in German (prizes recognising the complete works of an artist) were for the first time awarded in a single grand ceremony at Vienna's Hofburg to ensure that the prize laureates and prizes attain maximum publicity and media presence.

"The Austrian Art Prizes express a commitment to contemporary art and show very clearly that both the preservation of our cultural heritage and the promotion of the new are legitimate concerns. Topics such as education and the critical contribution of art to the development of our society are of particular significance in this context", emphasised Federal President Fischer.

"We award the Austrian Art Prizes to persons anticipating the future in their works of art and pioneering their field of activity. Their paintings, objects, art installations, novels, translations, photos and compositions have become part and parcel of the contemporary art scene. Through their work, they set new aesthetical standards, anticipate new trends, explore new areas and interpret the traditional", stated Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied.

The Austrian Art Prize is given to established artists for their complete oeuvre. The prize money amounts to 12,000 (15,000 euro in the category "filmmaking"). Prizes for the year 2010 were awarded in seven categories.

The prize winners are Jacqueline Csuss (translation of children's and youth literature), Franz Graf (visual art), Jessica Hausner (film), Paulus Hochgatterer (literature), Richard Kriesche (video and media art), Paul Albert Leitner (artistic photography) and Thomas Daniel Schlee (music).

Barbara Rett served as the host of the awards ceremony. The presentation speech was given by German philosopher Julian Nida-Rümelin. The prize winners were presented in short video portraits created by Niki Griedl. Live music performances were given by Amarcord Wien, METAPHYSIS, mund.ART Quintett Wien and the trio VIENNarte. Markus Hering, a former member of the ensemble of Vienna's Burgtheater, and the pupils Yannicka Thomas and Zackary Mertz read from works by Paulus Hochgatterer and Jacqueline Csuss. Thomas Gratzner was responsible for the overall concept of the ceremony.

About the prize laureates:

Jacqueline Csuss, translator: born in Vienna in 1960; numerous translations of children's and youth literature from English; with her translations she won the Austrian Children's and Youth Book Prize several times.

Franz Graf, visual artist: born in Tulln in 1954; studied with Oswald Oberhuber at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, numerous exhibitions in Austria and abroad; in 2000 he received the visual arts prize of the Land of Lower Austria for his body of work.

Jessica Hausner, filmmaker: born in Vienna in 1972; studied at Vienna Film Academy, founded the film production company coop99 together with Barbara Albert, Antonin Swoboda and Martin Gschlacht in 1999. In 2009 she was invited with her film "Lourdes" to the Venice International Film Festival; she won numerous awards at (inter)national festivals.

Paulus Hochgatterer, author, psychiatrist for children and adolescents: born in Amstetten in 1961; studied medicine and psychology at the University of Vienna; since 2007 head of the Department for Children's and Youth Psychiatry of Landeskrankenhaus Donauregion (Danube Region Hospital) in Tulln; literary activities since 1979; in 2009 he received the European Union Prize for Literature.

Richard Kriesche, artist, art and media theorist: born in Vienna in 1940; studied graphic art and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and art history at the University of Vienna, numerous exhibitions in Austria and abroad, participated several times in the Venice Biennial and in Documenta in Kassel, various awards, e.g. the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art (2007), *menzione d'onore* at the 46<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennial (1995).

Paul Albert Leitner, photographer: born in Jenbach, Tyrol, in 1957; free-lance artist since 1986, numerous exhibitions in Austria and abroad, various awards, e.g. Rupertinum Photo Prize (1995).

Thomas Daniel Schlee, organist, composer and music manager: born in Vienna in 1957; studied organ, composition and musicology in Vienna and Paris (Radulescu, Langlais, Messiaen, Burt), performed as an organist in concerts all over Europe, 1990-1998 musical director of Brucknerhaus Linz and artistic manager of the International Bruckner Festival, 1999-2003 deputy manager of the International Beethoven Festival in Bonn, since 2004 manager of the Carinthian Summer Festival in Austria, numerous awards, e.g. *Officier des Arts et des Lettres* (2005).

For more information on the prize-winning artists and excerpts from the jury statements see:

[www.bmukk.gv.at/kunstpreise10](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/kunstpreise10)

### **Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art: “Festivities. Struggles. 100<sup>th</sup> Women’s Day“**

One hundred years after the proclamation of the International Women’s Day, the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art presents the worthwhile results of a comprehensive research project of the Kreisky Archives in the anniversary exhibition “Festivities. Struggles. 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of International Women’s Day“ (from 4 March to 30 June 2011). Besides this historical exhibition, the project “100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of International Women’s Day” comprises a multi-volume publication and artistic interventions in public space. From the first demonstrations for the right of women to vote organised on Ringstraße in Vienna before WWI. to the appropriation and institutionalisation of Women’s Day by ‘autonomous’ women’s groups since the 1970s, the exhibition documents the eventful history of Women’s Day against its socio-political and cultural-historical background based on impressive photographic, sound and film documents. In parallel to the exhibition, the Kreisky Archives developed a concept to realise artistic interventions in the public space of Vienna under the motto “In. Anspruch. Nehmen. 100 Jahre Frauentag“ (“Having a Claim on. 100 years of International Women’s Day). They were developed by the female artists Lisl Ponger, Stefanie Seibold, Magda Tóthová, Sofie Thorsen and their male colleague Wilfried Gerstel for places of historical significance to Women’s Day.

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

### **Austria pays homage to Herwig Zens**

“As a teacher and artist, he has always asked many questions, explored many avenues and created a comprehensive body of work”, Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer paid homage to Herwig Zens on 2 February 2011. The renowned painter and graphic artist, who also taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna for many years, received the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, First Class. The award was presented to him by Secretary of State Ostermayer in a ceremony staged at the Federal Chancellery.

Ostermayer described Herwig Zens as a human being truly deserving this award as he had created a diverse body of work. This was reflected in his numerous art projects, which he

often created together with other artists. The presentation speech was given by Erwin Ortner, artistic manager of the Arnold Schoenberg Choir. Ortner paid tribute to Zens with selected literary quotations, e.g. by Elfriede Jelinek; the Arnold Schoenberg Choir performed works by different composers – from Schubert to Webern. Due to joint artistic projects, there are strong bonds between Herwig Zens, the Schoenberg Choir and its choirmaster. Thanking for the award, the laureate emphasised that his artistic career would not have been possible without the support of his loving wife. He was also grateful to his students. Apart from his artistic activity, he could not think of any other task that was more beautiful than that of a teacher. “There is no other job that is more rewarding”, said Zens.

After starting his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, Herwig Zens (born in Himberg near Vienna in 1943) attended Oskar Kokoschka’s “Schule des Sehens“ (“School of Seeing”) in Salzburg. In 1966 he passed the exam for arts, crafts and history teachers. He earned his diploma as a painter in 1967. Zens worked for twenty years as an arts teacher at different grammar schools in Vienna. In 1975 he started to teach at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, where he became a full professor in 1987. The works of art of Herwig Zens were presented in numerous exhibitions in Europe, the USA, Israel and Japan. His catalogue raisonné comprises more than one thousand prints. Zens’ prints and oil paintings are devoted to themes such as Greek mythology, music and literature as well as to inspiring artists like Goya. In 1990 he created a Dance-of-Death cycle comprising forty paintings for the Basel History Museum. Since 1977 he has worked on “The Etched Diary“ by engraving his every-day notes. The “World’s Longest Etching” consists of more than 500 copper plates. Herwig Zens received many Austrian prizes and awards for his achievements. In 2002 he was awarded the “Orden del Mérito Civil” for outstanding merits by King Juan Carlos I. of Spain.

### **Berlin: Schmied met Minister Neumann and Minister of Education Schavan**

Paying a several-day official visit to Berlin on the occasion of the 61st Berlinale Festival, Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied also met with German Federal Minister of Education Annette Schavan and Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor Bernd Neumann. The talks of the two ministers of education focused on European strategies for lifelong learning as

well as the implementation of the national qualification framework in the two countries. Items on the agenda of the meeting between Minister of State Bernd Neumann and Schmied were common concerns regarding the digitalisation of cinemas and the further development of the digital library "Europeana".

In the past few years, Austrian films impressed with superior quality, winning international renown as the "Austrian film miracle". Films made in Austria proved to be real crowd pullers.

Thanks to several measures, the Austrian film industry has been provided with a sound basis for future growth: budget increase of the Austrian Film Institute from 9.6 million to 16.57 million euro between 2006 and 2011; increase in the financial resources granted under the 2011 Film/TV Agreement from 5.9 million to 8 million euro; launch of the Funding Programme "Film Location Austria" (FISA); continuation of the "Innovative Film Promotion Programme" of the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture based on a subsidy of 2 million euro; film subsidies of the Länder. In 2010 the Austrian Film Institute funded 31 films. Another priority were measures to publicise films more effectively. The successful project "Travelling Cinema" – domestic films tour Austria – will be continued in 2011.

"It is not sufficient to create adequate conditions for film productions, we also have to bring these films to the people, into the cinemas and we must ensure that the achievements of the filmmakers are perceived and appreciated", stated Schmied. To continue efforts to increase the share of Austrian and European films in the cinemas, the Ministry of Education, Art and Culture develops a digitalisation strategy for Austrian regional and repertory cinemas, which is expected to produce results still in 2011.

At the 61<sup>st</sup> Berlin International Film Festival ("Berlinale"), Schmied attended the opening as well as the premiere of the film "Folge mir" ("Follow Me") co-financed by the Ministry. With this film presented in the programme section "Forum", Johannes Hammel makes his feature film debut. Hammel is a free-lance filmmaker, cameraman and producer living in Vienna. Austria is represented at the Berlinale with four other films: "Mein bester Feind" ("My Best Enemy") by Wolfgang Murnberger, "Die Vaterlosen" ("The Fatherless") by Marie Kreutzer, "Himmel und Erde" ("Heaven and Earth") by Michael Pilz and "Das Schreiben und das Schweigen" ("Writing and Silence") by Carmen Tartarotti. [www.berlinale.de](http://www.berlinale.de)

### **Austria mourns for Peter Alexander**

On 12 February 2011 Peter Alexander Neumayer (his real name) died aged 84 in Vienna, where he had been born as the son of a bank clerk on 30 June 1926. The difficult pupil was sent by his father to a grammar school in Znojmo (former German name: Znaim) in Moravia, where he passed his school-leaving exam in 1944. He was a "Flakhelfer" (anti-aircraft gun assistant) in the last years of WWII. and later became a prisoner of war of the British Army.

Peter Alexander discovered the magnetic attraction of the theatre already at an early age. But to please his father, he studied medicine and attended the Max Reinhardt Seminar (the Institute for Drama of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna) only after the death of his father.

Peter Alexander had many qualities to become a successful entertainer: Viennese charm, mischievous cheerfulness, great musicality; he was not only a fascinating singer but also a brilliant pianist. His versions of popular songs such as "Die Beine von Dolores", "Der letzte Walzer", "Die kleine Kneipe" were in the charts for decades. He sold more than 50 million recordings, participated in 60 films – in classics such as "Im weißen Rössl" ("The White Horse Inn"), "Charleys Tante" (Charley's Aunt) or "Graf Bobby" ("Count Bobby").

He had his own TV show "Die Peter Alexander Show" from 1963 to 1995, with unparalleled viewing figures. He appeared on TV about 600 times.

Since 1952 he had been married to actress Hilde Haagen, who became his manager. After her death in 2003, he retired from public life. He seemed completely unable to cope with the tragic loss of his daughter Susanne, who was killed in a car accident in 2009.

Countless prizes and honours were bestowed on him, and an important street in Vienna will be named after him. Deeply saddened by the death of the great artist, Federal Chancellor Faymann stated that Peter Alexander had "shaped the face of Austria beyond borders thanks to his talent and versatility". Similar statements were made by Minister of Culture Schmied and Vienna's Mayor Häupl. Secretary of State for the Media Ostermayer said that Alexander had "entertained several generations in a unique manner and across borders". Musical diva Dagmar Koller praised the great modesty of her colleague.

Peter Alexander's body will be laid out at Vienna's Central Cemetery on 19 February 2011.

**SPORTS POLICY****Alpine Ski World Championships: sensational performance of Austrian racers**

The team of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) achieved excellent first results at the 41<sup>st</sup> Alpine Ski World Championships in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Germany). The delegation competing under Austria's red-white-red flag earned four (including three gold) medals in only five days. For the ÖSV women's team this is the best start at world championships in more than 60 years.

The performance of Austria's female athletes was outstanding, earning three times gold in the first three events. 29-year-old Elisabeth Görgl from Styria can be regarded as the uncontested star of these world championships. After winning gold in the super-G event, she coped with high audience expectations and triumphed once more. A great surprise was Anna Fenninger (aged 21) from Salzburg. Outshining all favourites in the super-combined race, she won a gold medal. Hannes Reichelt added silver (which he had earned in the men's super-G event) to the Austrian medal tally.

**Olympic champions Andreas and Wolfgang Linger win gold at luge worlds**

The Austrian Linger brothers, who had won the Olympic doubles luge title, were again unbeatable at the Luge World Championships in Cesana (Italy).

Andreas and Wolfgang Linger had two best times and won the gold medal in the men's doubles luge event – for the second time after 2003. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, who had watched the Olympic victories of the Linger brothers live last year in Vancouver, congratulated the two Federal Army athletes: “It is unbelievable how perfectly Andreas and Wolfgang Linger prepare for these large-scale sports events. Winning their second gold medal in world championships, our exemplary duo went again down in the history of sport. It is regrettable that our second duo Peter Penz/Georg Fischler missed the bronze medal so narrowly in the last bend”, said Darabos.

At the domestic World Championships in Umhausen (Tyrol) the natural track luge racers earned gold (Gerald Kammerlander) after coming in second in the team competition and silver (Robert Batkowski).

**41 promising talents start at European Youth Olympic Winter Festival 2011**

17 girls and 24 boys from all over Austria give their Olympic debut at the 10<sup>th</sup> European

Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF), taking place in Liberec (Czech Republic) from 13 to 18 February 2011.

The European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) is the largest multi-sports event in Europe for fledgling athletes aged between 15 and 18 years. EYOF is held every second year both in summer (since 1991) and in winter (since 1993). The aim of the festival is to give up-and-coming athletes an opportunity to compete with their international rivals under Olympic conditions. Another objective of EYOF is to communicate Olympic values such as friendship, respect, fair play, rejection of violence and any form of doping. The idea came from then President of the European Olympic Committee (EOC), Jacques Rogge.

The Team Austria will fight for Olympic medals in the following disciplines: biathlon (8), figure skating (1), Nordic combined (4), Alpine skiing (8), cross-country skiing (8), ski jumping (4) as well as snowboarding (8). Athletes from all over Austria demonstrate that the Austrian winter sports associations offer a wide range of support programmes for young talents: Burgenland (1), Carinthia (10), Lower Austria (2), Upper Austria (3), Salzburg (8), Styria (2), Tyrol (9), Vorarlberg (5) as well as Vienna (1).

“The young and promising talents showed their strong motivation already at our kick-off ceremony in Abtenau and they are looking forward to Europe's largest multi-sports event in Liberec”, said Peter Mennel, Secretary-General of the Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC).

**Austrian indoor hockey team wins World Cup bronze in Poland**

After winning the European champion title last year, the Austrian indoor hockey team scored another huge success. At the Indoor Hockey World Cup in Poland the team led by coach Frank Hänel earned the bronze medal.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos congratulated them on their great success: “Our team won a well-deserved third place after a resounding 5:0 win over Russia at this World Cup tournament. This is the best rank ever achieved by the team of the Austrian Hockey Association (ÖHV) in a World Cup. I congratulate the athletes and their support team, and I am convinced that this great result will help to boost enthusiasm for the hockey sport in Austria”, stated the Minister of Sport.

The Austrian women's team came in seventh in the overall ranking.