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HOME AFFAIRS**100 years of Bruno Kreisky: official ceremony at Hofburg in Vienna**

The highlight of the commemoration of the 100th birthday of Bruno Kreisky (22 January 1911) was a ceremony hosted by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at Redoutensaal (“ballroom”) of the former imperial palace Hofburg in Vienna on 21 January 2011. Some 600 high-ranking guests from Austria and abroad attended the event. Besides President Heinz Fischer and representatives of Austria’s political and economic arena, academia and the arts, the guest list included Czech Foreign Minister Karl Schwarzenberg, former Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen and Felipe González from Spain. In his festive speech Faymann emphasised that Austria had a mandate to preserve Kreisky’s heritage. He reminded of “Bruno Kreisky, the human being, the politician, statesman, cosmopolitan, democrat, the Secretary of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and, of course, of Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky“. Kreisky – an outspoken patriot – had participated in negotiating the Austrian State Treaty and had “lived and suffered for Austria”, said Faymann.

He praised Kreisky’s “great zeal and eagerness for reform“ as he realised comprehensive reforms in the field of family and penal law, equality between women and men, the health system, national defence and democracy.

In his speech Faymann drew attention to Kreisky’s education reforms. Kreisky’s heritage had to be preserved especially in this area. He had made universities accessible to all and reduced social barriers, for example by abolishing university tuition fees and the entry exams at academic secondary schools or by introducing free textbooks and free public transport for pupils. 40 years later, the doors should not be closed again. In keeping with the spirit of the great education reformer, policy-makers should – today, more than ever – seek to offer equal opportunities to all young people so as to prepare them adequately for a globalised world. They should “not be abandoned by society but supported by a strong social network”, appealed Faymann. Kreisky had known better than any other: “Without social balance there was no peace and no freedom, without social balance there was no modern society.“

Faymann also praised Kreisky’s international commitment, especially in the Middle East. It had always been guided by a vision of dialogue and understanding between Israel and the Arab world.

New Year’s reception of the federal government

Following its motto of emphasising that “which unites over that which divides“, the federal government for the first time started the new political year with a joint reception on 19 January 2011. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll welcomed about 1,500 representatives of politics, including President Heinz Fischer and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer, as well as leading personalities of business, culture, academia, the media as well as the religious communities, social partners and interest groups at Hofburg in Vienna.

Austria was among the top in Europe in many sectors, stressed Faymann in his speech. “We belong to the countries with the highest employment and lowest unemployment rates“, said Faymann. It was the task of the government to ensure that this would not change in the next decade – but governed by the precept “fair distribution“. The Chancellor turned the spotlight on education, long-term care and administration. He underlined that the Federal Army needed state-of-the-art structures to tackle vital tasks such as disaster protection or international peace-keeping missions.

In a brief review of the past year, he highlighted the government’s strong commitment to preparing Austria for the upswing in the aftermath of the crisis. According to the Chancellor, the government had succeeded in safeguarding jobs, stimulating the economy and adopting a tax reform.

Equal Treatment Act amended to ensure more income transparency

On 20 January 2011, the National Council adopted an amendment to the Equal Treatment Act requiring enterprises to disclose the wages of female and male employees (based on anonymised data).

Austrians are among the European front-runners in voluntary services

As far as voluntary activities are concerned, Austrians are among the European front-runners. 43.8% of the Austrians older than 15 years do unpaid work, while the European average is only 23%. This means that three million Austrians spend about 14.7 million hours per week performing voluntary activities. They will be in the limelight of the European Year of Volunteering. To guarantee minimum social standards, a new law will be passed still this year.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Government leaders at World Economic Forum in Davos**

At this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos (26 to 30 January 2011), Austria focused on strengthening economic ties with the booming countries in the Black Sea region and in Central Asia. On the second day of the international conference, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger hosted a meeting with high-ranking politicians and business leaders, where Austria was presented as a hub for investments of Western countries in the former Soviet republics.

The Presidents of Ukraine and Azerbaijan, Viktor Janukovych and Ilham Aliyev, respectively, Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Masimov as well as OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría participated in Austria's luncheon devoted to Central Asia. This event was also attended by Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, CEO of the world's largest food group Nestlé, voestalpine boss Wolfgang Eder and Siemens Europe chief Brigitte Ederer.

Federal Chancellor Faymann emphasised how important it was to return to a sustainable growth path after the financial crisis. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to reduce the dependency on raw materials, to invest in education and infrastructure, to modernise industry as well as to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises. A continuous political dialogue and close economic cooperation between the regions could help to reach this goal faster, which was crucial also from a socio-political perspective.

Faymann pointed out that Austrian enterprises could also make available their know-how in Central Asia, e.g. in the sector of road and rail construction, tourism, renewable energies and environmental technologies. In turn, Austria and Europe would benefit from an increase in gas supplies from Central Asia once the planned Nabucco pipeline was built. Enhancing its energy security, the Nabucco project was of strategic importance for Europe, said Faymann. At the World Economic Forum in Davos the Federal Chancellor also emphasised the importance of democracy and reform processes in the region.

To strengthen cooperation with the region, a Davos regional summit is to be held at Hofburg in Vienna in early June 2011. About 500 attendees are expected.

At the meeting in Davos an OECD report was presented, in which major growth opportunities

of Central Asia were highlighted. In the past few years, the region had reported an average economic growth of 8% and foreign investments had increased eightfold.

Faymann also held talks with Swiss Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey in Davos. The subjects discussed also covered the lessons learned from the economic crisis, especially in the context of the regulation of the financial markets. In an interview with "Süddeutsche Zeitung" (28 January 2011), the Austrian Federal Chancellor urged to decide quickly on details of the euro-rescue umbrella and expressed his hope to win Germany's support in the EU for his proposal of introducing a financial transaction tax. However, the austerity programmes of the Member States had to take into account social balance, stated Faymann.

Estonia's Prime Minister Ansip meets with Federal Chancellor Faymann

Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip met with Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann for a working meeting in Vienna on 21 January 2011. The two heads of government discussed Estonia's experience with the introduction of the euro on 1 January 2011 and the effects of this measure on the general economic situation in the euro-zone and the EU. Ansip thanked Faymann for Austria's support during the currency changeover and stressed the excellent bilateral relations.

In the preliminaries of the European Council meeting on 4 February 2011, other items on the agenda of their talks were energy supplies, the financial transactions tax, the euro-rescue umbrella – Estonia has not yet adopted the respective law – as well as the good cooperation between Estonian and Austrian universities and research facilities.

Spindelegger: anniversary gives fresh impetus to Austro-Chinese relations

According to the plans of Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger, this year's anniversary of Austro-Chinese relations will provide fresh impetus to cooperation between Austria and China. This year Austria and China celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations. A major objective was to intensify cooperation in the field of economy, science and culture, stated Minister Spindelegger in a press release on 19 January 2011.

The Austrian Foreign Minister will pay an official visit to China in February of this year.

ECONOMY**Moody's confirm Austria's triple-A credit rating – with a stable outlook**

On 20 January 2011, the rating agency Moody's confirmed the triple-A credit rating for the Republic of Austria. In December the agency Standard & Poor's had testified to Austria's high creditworthiness, describing the country as a "reliable and stable debtor". Based on the assessment of both rating agencies, the future outlook was "stable". Austria was awarded the best rating due to its strong economic performance reflecting a skilled labour force and competitive export sector. These factors had helped Austria to grow more strongly than the European average, explained Moody's analyst Kathrin Muehlbronner.

Although Austria had one of the highest tax ratios in the EU, i.e. 48% of the gross domestic product (GDP), the government succeeded in reversing the negative debt trend. "Very low budget deficits" over longer periods had been achieved earlier, stated Muehlbronner.

The banks had increased their reserves and were adequately capitalised. According to Moody's, the credit institutions were now able to settle their debts on their own. There was no indication that public funds had to be made available.

However, policymakers wanted to make the new stress tests for Europe's banks "more robust and credible", emphasised EU Commissioner for Internal Market and Services Michel Barnier in Brussels on 18 January 2011. This will be the responsibility of the newly established European Banking Authority (EBA). Austrian Minister of Finance Josef Pröll was "one hundred per cent" behind the new bank stress tests, which are to be performed in early summer 2011. The tests will also measure the liquidity levels of the banks.

Wifo: Austria's economy will grow by 2.2% p.a. by 2015

Based on the latest mid-term economic forecast of the Economic Research Institute (Wirtschaftsforschungsinstitut/Wifo) presented on 24 January 2011, Austria's economic performance will improve by 2.2% annually until 2015. The Wifo experts warned, however, that the situation in the labour market would not relax. This was due to the widening labour supply. For the next years, an unemployment rate (based on the Austrian method of calculation) of 6.8% on average was expected.

According to Wifo, the economy was growing faster than in the previous years. Between 2005

and 2010, the gross domestic product (GDP) increased in real terms by 1.5% on average and by 1.6% in the period 2000 to 2005.

The economic researchers were relatively optimistic about the development of the government debt. The level of indebtedness would continue increasing. In 2011 the budget deficit was likely to amount to 3.1% of the GDP; new borrowing would, however, slow down to 1.8% of the GDP until 2015. They informed that fundamental structural reforms in the health sector, in public administration as well as state organisation and public funding were required to achieve this target.

After the severe recession in 2008, the economy had started to recover in mid-2009. According to Wifo, the favourable development of Austrian exports was due to the expansionary monetary and fiscal policies in the large economic areas and the fast economic recovery in the emerging countries.

As Wifo informed, employment was expected to increase by 0.6% annually. But as the supply of domestic and foreign labour was growing at a comparable pace, no further relaxation in the labour market was expected before 2014.

The federal government had "created a basis for several years of economic upswing", Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner expressed his satisfaction about the latest growth forecast. Secretary of State for Financial Affairs Andreas Schieder expected "lasting favourable economic data", the forecast encouraged the government "to continue working towards this goal".

Exports grow by 16 per cent in 2010

In 2010 Austrian companies exported 16% more than one year earlier – this is considerably above the level predicted at the beginning of 2010. According to the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), double-digit growth rates per year were likely to be achieved again only two years after the outbreak of the crisis. The target was to boost domestic exports by 10.5% in 2010 and by 9.1% in 2012.

"Exports developed from a lame pony into a running horse", explained WKO head Christoph Leitl on 25 January 2011. The increase in exports had created more than 100,000 new jobs. Based on preliminary data, Austria's enterprises had reported an export volume totalling 108 billion euro in 2010 (+16% compared to 93.7 billion euro in 2009). This year the all-time high of 2008 (117 billion euro) was expected to be surpassed significantly.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Venice Biennial: Schmied and Schlegel present Markus Schinwald**

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied appointed the renowned artist and curator Eva Schlegel as the commissioner of the Austrian contribution to the 54th Biennale di Venezia in 2011. Schlegel had participated twice as an artist in the Venice Biennial. Schlegel has chaired the University Council of Linz University for Art and Industrial Design since June 2008.

She has selected a young artist to represent Austria at this art event: Markus Schinwald. He was born in Salzburg in 1973. Today he lives and works in Vienna and Los Angeles. "Markus Schinwald has successfully exhibited complex art installations in different museums and art institutions, predominantly abroad, e.g. in Zurich, Frankfurt, Brussels and Budapest. He may look back on a comprehensive oeuvre. In his works of art he combines performance with elements of the visual arts, sculpture, filmmaking and architecture. Markus Schinwald explores systems of control, of disciplining and self-correction. They inscribe themselves in the human body, shape, penetrate it and become again visible and perceptible as psychologically charged inner worlds on the body surface", curator Eva Schlegel explained why she selected Schinwald.

Schinwald's works go beyond visual perception and condense the moment in which rational control over the body ceases. This becomes very evident in the reworked portraits and lithographs of the 19th century, which he partly bought at auctions, in antique shops or at flea markets. The artist adapts his interventions so much to the style of the original that they seem to be part of it.

"I am delighted that Markus Schinwald's selection also means that an outstanding artist of the younger generation was chosen. He is a versatile artist who creates performances, films and sculptures that are equally compelling as his paintings and installations. I am confident that the work of Markus Schinwald for the Austrian Pavilion will truly enhance Austria's reputation in the art world", stated Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied.

Schinwald's contribution to the Biennale di Venezia 2011 will be a reaction to the Austrian Pavilion and its surroundings. The pavilion was created by Josef Hoffmann in 1934 and is one of the Giardini's most distinctive buildings. In the framework of Venice Biennial Director Bice Curiger's overall theme ILLU-

Minations, Schinwald will revolve around the presentation and manipulation of space, time, light and shade. On the one hand, Schinwald changes spatial experience in a moment of disruption between the visible and the hidden. On the other hand, he leaves the architecture and history of the Pavilion unchanged, makes it a subject of discussion – with all its ruptures, fissures and gaps. Schinwald incorporates his own architecture – a second level with a labyrinthine basement and several corridors – into the Josef Hoffmann Pavilion. The aim of this art installation is "to consider and reflect the social climate in Austria".

To stir up the discussion on the Venice Art Biennial – which has developed into a huge media event – nine interviews with internationally famed artists, museum directors, curators, architects and critics, collectors and gallery owners will be published at two-week intervals as from 26 January 2011 at www.labiennale.at. The title of this video platform initiated by Eva Schlegel is "Approaching Venice".

Secretary of State Ostermayer on the reinstatement of the Press Council

The Austrian Press Council recently staged its opening ceremony at "Börsensäle", the historic event space of Vienna Stock Exchange, which was attended by about 200 guests, predominantly of the Austrian media sector. The festive speeches were held by Irene Neverla, professor of journalism at the University of Hamburg, New York Times reporter David Barstow, who won the Pulitzer prize twice, Baroness Peta Buscombe, Chairwoman of the English Press Complaints Commission and Lutz Tillmann, Managing Director of the German Press Council.

According to Neverla, journalism required professional skills, profound knowledge, responsibility and moral courage. Problematic cases of public news coverage had to be examined soberly with institutional and professional support. This was an important role the Austrian Press Council had to play.

Barstow addressed the WikiLeaks incidents, which had sparked a discussion on the principles of investigative journalism. Both the United States and Europe were considering the introduction of new laws restricting the work of journalists. The debate on press freedom and secrecy had taken on a new dimension.

In their speeches Buscombe and Tillmanns welcomed the fact that the print media in Austria had again a self-regulatory mechanism. They were convinced that press councils had

proven very valuable instruments in democratic societies and were looking forward to cooperating with the re-established Austrian Press Council.

Franz C. Bauer, President of the Austrian Press Council, stated: "A system of self-regulation supported by all those involved is one of the most vital prerequisites for the freedom of press and opinion. The absence of a working system of self-regulation was dangerous as it could pave the way for external control. The warning example of Hungary – currently holding the EU Council Presidency – showed where this could lead us."

At the inauguration ceremony of the Austrian Press Council, Secretary of State for Media Josef Ostermayer expressed his satisfaction about the re-establishment of this institution and congratulated on the fact that the Press Council had been re-instituted "under new circumstances. Democracy requires instruments of this kind. In this context, the Press Council is an important body offering a system of self-regulation for the print media", stated Ostermayer. "I am pleased that I was able to make a contribution to the establishment of the Austrian Press Council."

It was important to recognise that the principle of self-regulation was based on the principle of voluntary action. This was the only way to assure the quality of the editorial work and to guarantee press freedom. Especially against the background of the events in Hungary, self-regulation was of crucial importance.

The topic "press freedom" had already been discussed at an expert meeting – hosted by Secretary of State Ostermayer and Minister of Justice Bandion-Ortner – in November 2010. "This shows how important this subject is to me", stated Ostermayer. The respective legal provisions would be enshrined in the Amendment to the Media Act to be adopted in the current year.

"We live in the communication age. The treatment and dissemination of information and are highly sensitive issues entailing great responsibility for everybody. The Code of Ethics drawn up by the Austrian Press Council reflects this responsibility in a comprehensive manner", concluded Ostermayer.

Spindelegger and Ostermayer: International Holocaust Remembrance Day

On 27 January, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger focused attention on the fact that the mere knowledge about the monstrous historical crimes of the Nazi potentates

was insufficient. "We also must draw the consequences for our action in the present. We must strongly oppose anti-Semitism and racism, wherever they emerge. We cannot condone the discrimination of minorities, e.g. the shameful treatment of Roma and Sinti. If we want to do justice to the memory of the victims of the Nazi era, we must take determined action against today's injustice", stressed Minister Spindelegger. The Holocaust was an unparalleled crime in history and must never be allowed to repeat itself. "The prerequisite is to remember and to be aware of the atrocities and to advocate information and justice – like Simon Wiesenthal used to stress too".

On the 66th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp by the Soviet Army, the Austrian Foreign Minister reminded of the fact that numerous Austrians had been among the people killed under unimaginably cruel circumstances: 11,000 Jews, more than 2,000 Roma and Sinti as well as an unknown number of people persecuted for political, religious and other reasons. "There can be no compensation for the atrocities of the NS regime. We interpret remembrance as the duty to do our utmost to prevent racism, anti-Semitism and violence against minorities in the future".

Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer stated on the Holocaust Remembrance Day: "I would like to take advantage of this occasion to commemorate the victims of the NS regime – all those who were persecuted, tortured, deprived of their rights and killed by this murderous and inhuman regime. Today we must ensure that these crimes and their consequences will always be remembered. We must do everything we can to prevent that these horrendous events will fall into oblivion. We have to place particular emphasis on passing on this knowledge to the younger generations". It was important to point out – especially to young people – that values such as democracy and freedom but also material prosperity had to be achieved and then reconfirmed, and that they could not be taken for granted. In economically difficult times it was crucial to be extremely vigilant so as to reject inflammatory and demagogical promises and slogans.

"Austria had handled the consequences of the economic crisis well and even strengthened social cohesion. Nevertheless, we must not stop raising awareness of the dangers of inhuman ideologies and regimes, and we must have the courage to oppose them with determination", stated Secretary of State Ostermayer by way of conclusion.

New rules governing university access

On 18 January 2011, the Council of Ministers adopted a law tightening the rules of the student induction programmes at universities. In accordance with the new requirements, at least two examinations will have to be held in the induction programme. Students will not be allowed to take these exam more than twice. If they fail the exams, they will be forbidden to enrol in the respective course of studies at this university. The new rules will come into force in the next winter term and will be valid until 30 September 2014. By then, a model for financing university places is expected to be available.

3raum-anatomietheater: Kramar's play "Vienna Blood" only seemingly funny

At the elections to Vienna's regional parliament ("Landtag") in October 2010, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) garnered 25.77% of the votes. Thanks to its top candidate and party leader Heinz-Christian Strache, the FPÖ managed to exceed its result of the municipal elections in 2005.

In its election campaign the FPÖ advertised for example with the following slogan on large-format posters: "More courage for our 'Vienna blood'" and the addition: "Too much of a foreign thing is not good for anybody". Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann had reacted vehemently: "He wants to make us believe this has something to do with the operetta – but in reality this is just another crude attempt of setting up people against one another. His rhetoric has sunk to new depths, deeper is impossible".

This situation has been used by "daskunst" and "Theater SHOWinisten" – Asli Kislal and Hubsli Kramar – as a basis for their production "Vienna Blood" at 3raum-anatomietheater in Vienna. In "three acts and with 21 interruptions", the play explores the abysses of migration and integration issues.

In this play set in 2015 the Freedomite government celebrates its first anniversary. The blond moderator of FOR (Austrian Freedomite Broadcasting Corporation) reports about the increasingly successful homogenisation of the Austrian society. The Austrian identity is the only desirable identity. Austria has finally reintroduced a theatre police that removes all those who are different and have an accent betraying their migration background for the good of the audience from the stage, that sends them to the Public Employment Service or deports them directly. But deport them where? – This is the question arising in the case of

"native foreigners" born in Austria. In any case, the actors of "daskunst" refused to be deported, fled from the Public Employment Service and returned to the stage. They receive an "integration package" consisting of a costume, a libretto and a DVD with the Johann Strauß operetta "Vienna Blood". To integrate themselves on Austrian theatre stages, they have to attend waltz courses and singing lessons and then give a brilliant performance of the Strauß operetta. In fact, they find it quite difficult to come to terms with the libretto by Victor Léon and Leo Stein.

While the rehearsals for the operetta take place in the foreground, the state keeps a watchful eye from a screen fixed on the wall. Over and over, it intervenes boldly. If things get too multi-cultural, a voice immediately shouts: "Aufhean!" ("Stop it!" in Viennese dialect). But when the show gets really schmaltzy, the face of Big Sister seems to melt with joy. A barometer indicates whether the actors dish out a performance conforming to the wishes of the government. Depending on the result, a shaky pointer moves from "subsidies" to "jobless" and even "expulsion". The actors observe the pointer anxiously and immediately try to react "adequately" by adjusting their acting and singing.

The Strauß operetta – after which this play is named and whose text is made fun of – serves only partly as a vehicle for exploring the different aspects of the integration debate. A highlight of the entertaining two hours is a TV talk show on the subject "blood". Among the guests are a vampire, a geneticist, a hepatitis C virus ("I do not distinguish, I infect everybody!") and a "common Viennese blood corpuscle"; only the man "filling the Muslim quota" is sitting silently on the edge of the sofa. The play contains many allusions, e.g. to Barack Obama ("Yes, we can!") or soul singer Aloe Blacc. A spoken word performance by Blair Darby turns out to be serious business. While he had been dancing the Schuhplattler in a cage with the sign "Völkerschau" (colonial show of 'exotic people') just a moment before, his monologue accompanied by gloomy sounds becomes one of the acclaimed highlights of the play. After the recital, the FOR TV moderator speaks again. Austria's cultural homogenisation has been completed, society has become so frictionless and boring that the minorities, e.g. the Turkish, are again requested to cultivate their innate identity. All 18 actors are impressive, with Lucy McEvil standing out for her sex appeal and singing.

SPORTS POLICY**“Service Centre for Winter Sports Weeks” to stimulate school skiing**

Austria remains the skiing nation number one. We do not have to worry about our top winter athletes but our young generations run the risk of not even learning our national sport as the number of school ski courses offered to pupils is dropping drastically.

Therefore sports representatives, schools and business formulated a common goal, i.e. to make “winter sports weeks” more attractive again – for the pupils, teachers and parents. Now the new “Service Centre for Winter Sports Weeks“ offers information and services regarding winter sports weeks. It is expected to give fresh impetus to school skiing holidays.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, President of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) Peter Schröcksnadel and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber developed a promising model to promote school winter sports weeks (“school skiing courses“). Good teamwork between the sports community, schools and the economic sector has been considered a prerequisite.

Minister of Sport Darabos had hosted a round table discussion on the subject “winter sports weeks” already last year, where recent developments were examined critically. Now the newly created “Service Centre for Winter Sports Weeks” starts its activities and provides support to schools, parents and pupils in all matters concerning the organisation of ski school trips. In the next years, this initiative will also offer incentives to bring more school groups back to the ski slopes. The project is funded by the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of Education, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the association “Interski Austria”, the Austrian Ski Association and “Allianz Zukunft Winter“ (“Alliance for the Future of Winter Sports”).

“Often children gain their first experience with skiing, Austria’s winter sport number one, during winter sports trips. They are also the basis for the success of our athletes,” stated Minister of Sport Darabos. “Winter sports weeks are a unique experience for our pupils, allowing them to explore their personal limits and challenging them physically.“

Minister of Education Claudia Schmied stressed the pedagogical added value of winter sports weeks: “By participating in winter sports weeks young people enhance their sense of self-worth. Joint activities, adventures and

shared experiences strengthen team spirit and classroom community.“

ÖSV President Peter Schröcksnadel argued along the same line: “What we want to achieve is that children participate in winter sports weeks at least once during their schooldays. The importance of winter sports weeks for the Austrian economy and health system cannot be overstated.“

Disabled athlete Claudia Lösch: five medals at World Championships

Two-time Paralympics winner Claudia Lösch won no less than five medals – three silver and two bronze medals – at the Alpine Skiing World Championships in Sestriere. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos congratulated the 22-year-old woman from Lower Austria on her outstanding performance.

Congratulations of Minister of Sport Darabos to double gold medallist Karl

There is no way of stopping Benjamin Karl. At the Snowboard World Championships in La Molina (Spain), the Federal Army athlete from Lower Austria won gold in the men’s snowboard parallel giant slalom and the slalom event. Karl, who had been ranked second in last year’s Olympic Games, scored an impressive victory in the two competitions. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos congratulated the 25-year-old athlete of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) as well as the other medallists (Claudia Riegler and Doris Günther) on their excellent ranks. “The series of victories in snowboarding shows that Austria is positioned excellently in winter sports.“

RWRT triumphs in charity slalom

“We are winners” was the motto of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM (RWRT), the platform of the Ministry of Sport for promoting high-performance sports. And indeed, our athletes delivered on this promise. Winning over a large starter field consisting of 26 teams, the RWRT came in first at the charity slalom event held by the charity organisation “Österreichische Sporthilfe” in the preliminaries of the night race in Schladming.

Sabrina Filzmoser (judo), Elisabeth Pauer (javelin), Christian Schopf (natural track luge) and Martin Weiß (a member of Austria’s national fistball team) had every reason to rejoice.

As in the years before, the proceeds of this charity event will go to a good cause.