

# NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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Owner (publisher) and producer: Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service. A-1014 Vienna, Ballhausplatz 1. Editor: Dr. Helmut Wohnout, tel. ++43/1/53115-4154, fax ++43/1/53115-4283, e-mail: [helmut.wohnout@bka.gv.at](mailto:helmut.wohnout@bka.gv.at). Dispatch: Division VII/2, Ms. Irene Bucher, tel. ++43/1/53115-2958, fax ++43/1/53115-2880, e-mail: [irene.bucher@bka.gv.at](mailto:irene.bucher@bka.gv.at). Website: <http://www.bundestkanzleramt.at>.  
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**HOME AFFAIRS****Government agrees on new security strategy**

The coalition parties – the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – agreed on a new security strategy for Austria at the session of the Council of Ministers on 1 March 2011. "The new security strategy provides a basis for discussing the future development of Austria's security policy, it is important for our country to reach an agreement on it", emphasised Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. The content was clear, but now ways of implementing it had to be found at parliamentary level.

For the time being, the issue of compulsory military service is excluded, on which the parties hold different views. The SPÖ advocates a professional army, the ÖVP is in favour of reforming the Federal Army and upholding compulsory military service.

The key issues of the new security strategy are: Neutrality remains the undisputed fundamental principle of Austria's security policy. National defence and the tasks of the Federal Army will be adapted to new challenges and threat scenarios. According to Federal Chancellor Faymann, the protection of the sovereign state, of the population as well as of resources and infrastructure had to be ensured in crisis situations.

The Federal Army will continue to play the key role in disaster protection – along with important civilian organisations such as fire brigades and rescue services. The third pillar of Austria's defence policy (besides national defence and disaster prevention) are international peace-keeping missions according to defined criteria, for example a UN mandate (as in the past), and involvement in EU security policy.

The NATO membership option was dropped but Austria will continue to participate in NATO programmes (Partnership for Peace).

According to security policy concepts for current threats, conventional attacks against Austria are considered unlikely. Present threats are for example: international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, hacker attacks, organised crime, corruption, migration, but also water shortage, environmental damages or climate change.

The government paper stressed repeatedly that close cooperation at EU and UN level was indispensable for developing and implementing adequate security strategies.

**Heinisch-Hosek: wage transparency, women's quota, violence prevention**

In the framework of the 100<sup>th</sup> International Women's Day on 8 March 2011, Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek looked back on positive developments. According to her, the most important accomplishment was legislation on income transparency to reduce the wage gap between women and men. After its entry into force on 1 March 2011, the Equal Treatment Act finally made it possible to monitor "whether there was equal pay for equal work". This was a "tremendous success, and we should not belittle it", she said. Enterprises exceeding a certain size were now required to disclose the wages paid by them. According to surveys, two thirds of the interviewees – and even a majority of men – considered this a crucial step towards equal pay for equal work and supported this measure, emphasised the Minister. Another key concern of Heinisch-Hosek was the envisaged women's quota for supervisory board members of enterprises close to the state. The Minister is expected to score a success pointing the way ahead also in this area as an agreement with Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner (a member of the coalition partner) is to be reached soon. By 2013 women are to represent 25% of the supervisory board members. As a first step, Heinisch-Hosek plans to propose a "self-imposed obligation" of private enterprises to fix a women's quota for senior management positions. Other projects of the Minister are to introduce the "daddy month" in private companies (which is already available to civil servants) and a minimum wage of 1,300 euro in all sectors. Knock-on financing to expand nursery facilities is to be continued still in the current year.

The prevention of violence against women and children is also a women's policy issue Heinisch-Hosek is firmly committed to. Together with Chancellor Werner Faymann, she visited the counselling centre of Vienna's women shelters. Despite Austria's "well-developed" anti-violence legislation, women and children continued to be maltreated and threatened. Facilities such as women's shelters were a must to guarantee accommodation and support in emergencies, stated Heinisch-Hosek. She also pled to step up funds for preventive measures.

At a ceremony in Parliament on 4 March 2011, Speaker Barbara Prammer stressed that – despite the progress achieved in the past – the genuine realisation of equal rights and opportunities still required concerted action.

**EUROPE INTERNATIONAL****Austria demanded “stress tests“ for nuclear power plants in Europe**

In the wake of the earthquake and NPP disaster in Japan, Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich demanded “stress tests“ for nuclear power plants in Europe. He would “urge vehemently” to conduct stress tests on nuclear power stations at the EU Environment Council meeting in Brussels on 14 March 2011, emphasised Berlakovich in the programme “Pressestunde” of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) on 13 March 2011. In the same way as bank stress tests were performed during the financial crisis, these tests should be used to check whether European nuclear power plants were safe and would withstand possible quakes. Berlakovich stated that together with the entire federal government he would continue to advocate the “nuclear-exit policy“ EU-wide. Atomic energy was not a “sustainable way of using energy”, stated the Minister of the Environment. At the Global Climate Conference in Cancún, Austria had achieved that nuclear energy was not supported and funded under climate protection programmes, said Berlakovich.

**Federal Chancellor Faymann at EU summit on Libya and euro stability**

At the EU special summit of the EU’s 27 heads of state and government in Brussels on 11 March 2011, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann rejected calls for EU military action in Libya, as did German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and Czech President Václav Klaus. However, a unanimous decision was taken to appeal to dictator Muammar Gaddafi to surrender power. The EU examines the enforcement of a no-fly-zone over Libyan territory and the tightening of sanctions against the national Libyan petrol company. As a neutral country, Austria supported economic and humanitarian measures, explained Faymann. The heads of state and government of the euro-zone agreed on increasing the existing euro-rescue fund from currently 250 billion euro to a nominal amount of 440 billion euro, which should be the “effective lending capacity” in the future, explained the Federal Chancellor. Austria would raise its legal guarantees from currently 15 billion euro to about 25 billion euro.

**Faymann pays working visit to Berlin**

On 2 March 2011 Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann paid a working visit to Berlin. On

this occasion, issues relating to Europe’s competitiveness were discussed. Both Faymann and German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel supported the introduction of a tax on financial transactions, especially in the euro-zone.

Germany and Austria had agreed “that it was necessary to press ahead with the subject financial transactions tax“, stated the Austrian Federal Chancellor in a joint press conference. The two heads of state were of the opinion that it was necessary to discuss not only Europe’s competitiveness but also the regulation of financial markets and possible additional tax revenue. Faymann considered this “an issue of justice“. During the financial crisis, the taxpayers had ensured with rescue packages that “apocalyptic predictions” did not realise. Now the banks, or rather the entire financial sector had to make their contribution. Individual approaches of Germany and Austria were not useful but a signal should be sent by the entire euro-zone.

The Federal Chancellor reiterated his position that decisions concerning wage negotiations and the retirement age had to be taken at national level. “Wage negotiations have to be conducted in the individual countries, the autonomy of the social partners makes sense”, Faymann reminded Brussels, where discussions are underway on linking wage increases to inflation. Austria had every reason to be proud of its tradition of social partnership. Nevertheless, he pled for more transparency to allow Europe-wide comparisons, said Chancellor Faymann.

**Austrian aid for North Africa, Gaddafi’s accounts blocked**

The Austrian federal government makes available half a million euro for humanitarian aid to refugees from Libya. Equal shares of financial aid go to the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration. In accordance with the EU sanctions list, the Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank) blocked the alleged bank accounts of 27 persons belonging to the Gaddafi regime in Austria.

**Bulgaria’s President Parvanov pays official visit to Austria**

Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov met for official talks with Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann in Vienna on 8 March 2011. Items on the meeting agenda included the Nabucco gas pipeline, which is of vital importance to both countries, and Bulgaria’s upcoming accession to the Schengen area.

## ECONOMY

### **Booming exports, decreasing unemployment**

According to the export statistics for 2010, “Austrian companies deserve excellent marks”, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner was pleased to inform on 11 March 2011. Based on the latest data presented by the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria), the Austrian export sector grew strongly last year, recovering from the economic crisis. Exports surged by 16.5% to 109.2 billion euro. Thus the export target was exceeded by more than 9 billion euro, underlined Mitterlehner. But now economic momentum should translate into more growth and jobs. If this was achieved, Austrian exports could return to the pre-crisis level still this year.

In 2010 imports went up by 16.3% to 113.5 billion euro. The foreign trade deficit increased from 3.8 to 4.3 billion euro.

Christoph Leitl, President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), expects the export-driven upswing of the Austrian economy to continue in 2011. The export record level of 117.5 billion euro of 2008 could probably be exceeded in the current year, Leitl stated optimistically. Based on WKO forecasts, exports will increase by about 10% in 2011 and by 9% in 2012, informed Leitl.

According to a regional analysis, Austria’s exports to third countries increased more strongly (by 18.6% to 32.3 billion euro) than those to the EU-27 (by 15.6% to 76.4 billion euro) in 2010. 70% of Austria’s total export volume goes to EU Member States. Exports to China soared by almost 40% to 2.82 billion euro. According to Mitterlehner, this showed very clearly how effective efforts were to promote exports to emerging markets outside the EU. Austrian exports to Japan, Brazil, Mexico or Turkey had also increased significantly, i.e. by more than 30%.

The Austrian labour market also continues to recover. According to Eurostat, Austria’s unemployment rate stood at 4.3% in February. This corresponds to a minus of 20,648 unemployed persons, while the number of persons attending training programmes of the Public Employment Service dropped by 13,925. Thus Austria reported the strongest total reduction in unemployment in the past three years (minus 34,573 persons). In February, 361,759 people were jobless; unemployment went down by 10.2% among men and slightly increased among women (plus 0.5%). Unemployment among long-term unemployed persons and

jobless young people decreased significantly (by 31.5% and 10.2%, respectively). Vacancies registered with the Public Employment Service increased sharply by 20.7%. The number of vacant apprenticeship places rose by 5.1%.

### **Mitterlehner hosts petrol price summit**

As petrol prices are hitting a new record, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner plans to hold an informal “petrol price summit” shortly. The petrol groups OMV, Shell and BP, the drivers’ associations ÖAMTC and ARBÖ, the Austrian Transport Club (Verkehrsclub Österreich/VCO) as well as the Federal Competition Authority are expected to participate. On 9 March 2011 – when the price of one litre Euro-Super reached the all-time high of 1.374 euro – Minister Mitterlehner stated that he planned “to obtain first-hand information on the situation and to discuss possible measures to improve it” at this meeting. However, he ruled out any government interference in price fixing “in accordance with the law”. The aim of the meeting was to enhance price transparency.

### **147 million euro for climate protection**

In 2011 the Climate Fund of the federal government will make available funding totalling about 147 million euro. This figure as well as various climate protection goals were presented to the press by Minister for Transport Doris Bures and Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich on 7 March 2011. They also stated that – besides climate protection – “energy self-sufficiency” (i.e. Austria’s capacity for energy self-supply) was a paramount concern of the federal government. There was scarcely any another sector with a growth potential comparable to that of climate technology, said Bures and Berlakovich. The funding volume of 147 million was the second highest in the history of the Climate Fund (after 150 million euro in 2010).

In 2011 investments will focus on three areas: models and regions, energy efficiency and awareness-raising activities. The overarching motto is “Zero Emission Austria“. The 66 climate and energy model regions (773 municipalities) play an important role.

### **Eco-Electricity Act: EU forbids electricity cost cap for industry**

Austria has to amend its Eco-Electricity Act. On 8 March 2011 the European Commission rejected the cap on “green electricity” costs that was to be introduced for energy-intensive industrial enterprises in Austria.

**CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE****Vienna Architecture Centre: Flying Classrooms**

The exhibition “Flying Classrooms” delves into the relationship between architectural environment on the one hand and teaching and learning on the other hand. It was conceived by Christian Kühn, Antje Lehn and Renate Stuefer and further developed by the hosts – Architekturzentrum Wien (Vienna Architecture Centre). The show closing on 30 May 2011 allows all those who are directly or indirectly involved in education and affected by the architecture of learning environments to playfully explore space based on 1:1 installations and to develop their own visions of the “school of the future“. For over a hundred years, the classroom with a standard size of 9 by 7 metres has been the customary setting for hourly lessons although teachers and architects agree that modern educational concepts require dynamic classroom designs, which would have a favourable impact on the interaction and classroom routines of pupils and teachers. In the heated debate about the reform of the Austrian school system, school architecture is only a peripheral issue, whereas other countries consider it the “third pillar of instruction”, i.e. a decisive factor in successful education.

The exhibition does not only provide insights into the development of school building and its background, but also allows visitors to experiment with space and to identify needs. Moreover, it showcases original plans, architectural drawings and models of innovative school buildings erected between 1953 and 1979 from the archives of the Architecture Centre. This material supports the historical analysis of the exhibition against the background of a lively debate on school building conducted at the time.

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

**Imperial Furniture Collection devotes special exhibition to Marcel Breuer**

Vienna’s Furniture Museum devotes its spring exhibition to the furniture designer and architect from Hungary Marcel Lajos Breuer (1902-1981). The retrospective “Marcel Breuer – Design and Architecture” features one of the most prominent representatives of Bauhaus and is presented on the premises of the Imperial Furniture Collection from 16 March to 3 July 2011. As a designer and architect, Marcel Breuer was one of the most influential and important personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While he is known in Europe mainly as a fur-

niture designer and as the “inventor” of tubular steel furniture, he earned himself a reputation in architecture in the USA, where he had emigrated to in 1937. Breuer became a professor at Harvard University before starting his career as an architect. His buildings influenced by modernism were regarded as exemplary in the 1950s and 1960s.

The exhibition at the Imperial Furniture Collection presents the two facets of the prominent Bauhaus member. Breuer created the “Wassily B3 Chair“ – one of the most important pieces of seating furniture in the history of design – when he was only 23 years old. His tubular steel creations such as the series of “free-swingers” (cantilevered chairs) and furniture from aluminium and wood laminates designed in the 1930s are typical examples of an era in the history of design and inspired future generations of furniture designers and architects.

The retrospective developed by the Vitra Design Museum offers a great opportunity to critically examine or to get to know the oeuvre of Marcel Breuer, whose 30<sup>th</sup> death anniversary is commemorated this year.

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

**Jewish Museum Vienna: Jude sein – Being Jewish**

In the framework of the Vienna Jewish Identity Project, the renowned photographer Peter Rigaud presents the portraits of 42 – famous and less-known – Viennese Jews with highly diverse ideological, religious, social and cultural backgrounds. The series of portraits demonstrates the wide range of approaches to and views of Jewishness (until 19 June 2011 at the Jewish Museum Judenplatz). Entering into a dialogue with his models, Rigaud asked them to choose another person to be portrayed by him and to explain the reasons of their decision. In this way, Rigaud created pairs such as film producer Eric Pleskow and journalist Ari Rath. Describing his portraits as “sessions“, he alludes to the method derived from classical portrait painting. By establishing a verbal and non-verbal dialogue between the artist and the model, the persons portrayed are offered an opportunity for “self-staging“. In this process, the models’ usual environment or a deliberately chosen place also play an important role. Moreover, all models photographed were also asked about their views on Jewish identity. As a result of this procedure it became clear that the questions about (Jewish) identity could not always be answered clearly. It may refer to religion and customs but also childhood memories, lifestyles or value systems. Rigaud,

who was born in Salzburg in 1968 and studied photo design in Berlin, succeeds in presenting manifold approaches to and views of Jewishness.

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

### **150 years of Rudolf Steiner**

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birthday of the important Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was commemorated on 27 February 2011. The founder of Waldorf schools and of the spiritual science “anthroposophy“ and the pioneer of biodynamic agriculture was one of the most influential reformers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His ideas and innovations continue to inspire entrepreneurs, artists and scholars all over the world and have an impact on our cultural and everyday lives in various ways. A matinee under the aegis of Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer was staged at the Austrian National Library on 27 February 2011 to mark the official beginning of the Rudolf Steiner Year. In addition, an international Committee of Honour was set up to oversee the activities of the Rudolf Steiner Year 2011. The anniversary year offers numerous academic, artistic and interdisciplinary events and activities to highlight the present relevance of Steiner’s teachings. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Steiner’s pioneering ideas on ecological responsibility, on the relationship between work and money and the prevention of health and social risks and problems seem to be more topical than ever. The spotlight is turned on Austria and in particular Vienna, where the Technical University, the Belvedere Gallery and the Austrian National Library will host various events. Moreover, the travelling exhibition “Rudolf Steiner – The Alchemy of the Everyday” will be held at the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) from 22 June to 25 September 2011. It is the first comprehensive retrospective of Steiner’s body of work. The holistic understanding of human beings advocated by him still shapes our every-day lives in various way. He did not only inspire many artists, e.g. Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky or Joseph Beuys, but also won renown as the pioneer of “organic architecture“. Last but not least, he also developed a unique stylistic vocabulary in furniture design. The first large-scale retrospective of this universal thinker and artist (developed by Vitra Design Museum) is embedded into new contexts at MAK. With more than 200 exhibits, the show traces Steiner’s multifaceted oeuvre over the entire period of creation. It explores his relationship to Art Nouveau, Cubism and Expressionism

and highlights parallels to other representatives of the Life Reform Movement around 1900. Insights are provided into Steiner’s background from which he distilled his radical and new aesthetical concepts for everyday life. Visitors learn how Steiner translated his reform ideas into concrete changes in everyday life, striving for a connection between art and life – which Joseph Beuys was to describe as a “social sculpture“ – the holistic world view which is currently being revived. The book “Wiener Dialoge: Der österreichische Weg der Waldorfpädagogik” (Böhlau Verlag) with contributions by reputed authors is just one of numerous publications devoted to Rudolf Steiner. Vienna – a place of fundamental importance in cultural history and a platform for East-West relations – plays a vital role in the Steiner anniversary year.

[www.mak.at](http://www.mak.at); [www.rudolf-steiner-2011.com](http://www.rudolf-steiner-2011.com)

### **Austria’s most beautiful books**

The winners of the award “Austria’s most beautiful books 2010” were presented at Vienna’s RadioKulturhaus on 9 March 2011. In the framework of this competition, which is organised annually by the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture in cooperation with the Federation of Austrian Booksellers, certificates of honour were granted for 15 books. The three State Prizes (each amounting to 3,000 euro) were awarded by Federal Minister Claudia Schmied for “Thomas Bernhard. Autobiographische Schriften“ (Residenz Verlag), “Franz Graf. Schwarz heute jetzt habe dass schon fast vergessen“ (Verlag: Kunsthalle Krems / Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg) and “Amour fou“ (daedalus Verlag). In the contest “The most beautiful books in the world“ of the German “Stiftung Buchkunst” (Book Art Foundation) “Fassaden aus Holz“ (proHolz Austria) won a bronze medal, which will be formally handed over at the Leipzig Book Fair (17 to 20 March 2011) on 18 March 2011. At the opening ceremony on 16 March 2011, tribute will be paid to the Austrian journalist, writer and translator Martin Pollack. He will be awarded the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding. The Federation of Austrian Booksellers will present new books from Austria and promote the reception of Austrian literature beyond national borders in a total of 30 events.

[www.schoenstebuecher.at](http://www.schoenstebuecher.at);

Live radio:

[www.literadio.org](http://www.literadio.org); [www.leipzig-liest.de](http://www.leipzig-liest.de)

### **Federal Chancellor Faymann: more transparency in PR work**

“We have agreed on the compulsory disclosure of payments for advertisements to media enterprises”, informed Chancellor Werner Faymann after the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 8 March 2011. The new rules affected all institutions audited by the Court of Auditors, e.g. all ministries, the Länder, larger municipalities, institutions with compulsory membership (Chambers of Labour, Economy or Agriculture) as well as enterprises with state ties. Public subsidies granted to media enterprises will also have to be disclosed. “We champion transparency, this law will show the population that everything is done properly”, said Faymann.

### **New research strategy for the period up to 2020**

To ensure that Austria will soon be ranked among Europe’s most innovative countries, the Austrian federal government adopted a joint strategy for research, technology and innovation (FTI) titled “The Road to Innovation Leadership”. “One target is to increase government spending on R&D as a percentage of the GDP. To this end, numerous individual measures have been planned, e.g. to improve permeability in education or to increase the research bonus”, stated Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. Minister of Finance Josef Pröll added that small and medium-sized enterprises should be granted facilitated access to venture capital or innovation subsidies. In this context, the financial framework for universities is to be improved as well, e.g. by introducing a new system of financing university places.

The strategy paper defining the fundamentals of Austria’s research policy for the period up to 2020 is a comprehensive catalogue of visions and principles, which is also welcome by institutions such as the Austrian Academy of Sciences or the Austrian Science Council.

### **Austrian Statistical Office: “Education in Figures”**

On 8 March 2011 the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) presented the publication “Bildung in Zahlen” (“Education in Figures”). The data offer information on different educational areas such as school and university systems, adult education, government spending on education, educational levels and educational pathways.

According to these data, the educational level of the Austrian population is increasing steadily.

The study “Education in Figures” of Statistik Austria also shows that the educational pathways and educational attainments of the Austrian population depend strongly on the social background, regional origin as well as gender.

### **New university induction programme**

The plenary session of the National Council adopted an amendment to the University Act to tighten the university induction programme. The maximum duration will be limited to one semester. Besides restricting repeat exams, the new provisions also provide for student registration before formal enrolment to allow universities to assess the number of new students. Heinz Engl, the new rector of the University of Vienna, welcomed the fact that planning will be facilitated.

### **Top ranks for Vienna University of Economics and University of Vienna**

According to a study of the French university MINES ParisTech, in which the educational pathways of the CEOs of the world’s 500 largest enterprises were examined, Vienna is keeping up with international competition when it comes to position itself as a city of universities.

Thanks to Austrian top managers such as Wolfgang Ruttensdorfer, Andreas Treichl or Hans-Peter Haselsteiner no less than three Vienna-based universities are listed in the International Professional Ranking of Higher Education Institutions. The University of Vienna, Vienna University of Technology and Vienna University of Economics and Business proved to be among the international talent hotbeds; the latter ranking 21<sup>st</sup> – before the elite universities of Cambridge and Yale.

The University of Vienna also made it among the 100 most renowned universities in the World Reputation Rankings 2011 published by Times Higher Education. The survey is based on the responses of more than 13,000 academics from 131 countries who were asked to assess the reputation of universities with regard to their performance in research and teaching.

### **Institute for Neo-Latin Studies**

The Ludwig Boltzmann Society opened an Institute for Neo-Latin Studies at the University of Innsbruck. It is only the second research facility in this discipline in the world.

**SPORTS POLICY****Seven gold medals for Austria at Nordic World Ski Championships in Oslo**

From Austria's perspective, the 48<sup>th</sup> Nordic World Ski Championships in Oslo were highly successful. The remarkable medal tally of seven gold, two silver and one bronze medal will go down in sports history. In the traditional Holmenkollen competitions, the Austrian ski jumpers Thomas Morgenstern, Andreas Schlierenzauer, Andreas Kofler and Martin Koch as well as Daniela Iraschko took the maximum of five gold medals in five events.

The eagles of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) lived up to the expectations of the ski fans as there was absolutely no doubt that they would win the team competitions. With his world champion title, Thomas Morgenstern achieved everything that can be achieved in ski jumping. Winning his first gold medal at World Championships in the men's individual large hill event, Gregor Schlierenzauer can rejoice too. Daniela Iraschko's victory was highly impressive, especially after having suffered an injury recently.

Our Nordic combiners Bernhard Gruber, David Kreiner, Mario Stecher and Felix Gottwald, who triumphed in two breathtaking team events in the final sprint, also scored a great success. Felix Gottwald won his tenth and eleventh world championship medal. Austria's most successful winter athlete has earned a total of 18 medals during his career, which he plans to end now.

Cheering the Austrian athletes personally at some competitions in Oslo, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos stated: "The days of the World Championships in Oslo will remain in our memory. I congratulate the successful Austrian team and the responsible staff of the Austrian Ski Association very cordially."

**Austria played a leading role in development cooperation for years**

In 2010, as in the years before, the Ministry of Sport supported exemplary projects using sports as an instrument of development cooperation.

During the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 proclaimed by the UN, the subject "sport and development policy" had been high on the agenda in our country. Since then, comprehensive political, humanitarian and financial measures have been taken in this area. "Sport and development policy" was also a priority of the Austrian EU Council Presidency in 2006.

Moreover, Austria is a founding member of the international working group "Sport for Development and Peace" under the aegis of the United Nations. On the initiative of Austria, this issue was also included in the White Paper on Sport 2007 of the European Commission.

The White Paper defines the combat against poverty, peace-keeping efforts as well as the protection of national resources as priority areas. It is guided by principles such as involving the partner countries, respecting cultural diversity, ensuring gender equality and taking into account the needs of children and people with disabilities. With a view to ensuring sustainable effects of development cooperation, support is granted to projects to develop and realise methods and measures for conflict prevention, trauma coping as well as peace-keeping in crisis regions. These projects are managed exclusively by experienced international organisations guaranteeing sustainability and continuity also after the end of the programme period.

The respective measures are to benefit countries all over the world. In the past, institutions in Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Palestine, South Africa, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina were among the development cooperation partners of the Ministry of Sport.

The spectrum of concrete projects to be realised with Austria's help covers multifunctional sports fields, sports infrastructure, healthcare, psychological counselling as well as professional support.

In the past, programmes focused on sports such as football, basketball and volleyball. New disciplines like swimming, field hockey, dance and juggling are to be added gradually. Therefore it will be a top priority of the year 2011 to promote "new" sports and to increase the number of female participants.

**Defeating Latvia twice, Austria's handball team is on the road to success**

Austria is making progress towards qualifying for the next European Handball Championship, which will take place in Serbia in 2012. Winning two important qualification games against Latvia in March, Austria is now leading the ranking. As Germany won the home match against rival Iceland, Austria will play against the neighbouring country in the finals in Innsbruck on 8 June 2011.