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Owner (publisher) and producer: Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service. A-1014 Vienna, Ballhausplatz 1. Editor: Dr. Franz Putz, tel. ++43/1/53115-2579, fax ++43/1/53115-4274, e-mail: franz.putz@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. Website: <http://www.bundestkanzleramt.at>. Excerpts from this text may be reprinted. Published by the Federal Press Service – Vienna.

HOME AFFAIRS**Government adopted “Aliens Law Package” and data retention rules**

At the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 22 February 2011, the federal government adopted the so-called “Aliens Law Package”, entailing changes in the frameworks for regular and temporary immigration. As from 1 July 2011, immigration from non-EU Member States will be based on a catalogue of criteria replacing the previous quota system.

The Council of Minister also approved the new data retention regulations and passed a law against social and wage dumping. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice Chancellor Josef Pröll expressed their satisfaction about the results, referring to a “good day” and an “important proof“ of the fruitful cooperation concentrating on the matter on hand between the governing parities.

The core of the new legislation relating to aliens is the so-called Red-White-Red Card for highly skilled immigrants or key labour force (academic professions, skilled workers) from non-EU Member States. This Red-White-Red Card will grant the right of residence and labour market access. Applications have to be filed with Austria’s diplomatic representations. Decisions on admission will no longer be based on quotas but on a system of credits (language skills, age, education).

With regard to asylum seekers, the new law enshrines the obligation of having (basic) German language skills before immigration as well as the “duty of cooperation”, i.e. asylum seekers have to be present in the reception centre for seven days. Adequate accommodation has to be provided to families of asylum seekers with children awaiting expulsion. The maximum duration of detention pending expulsion remains ten months; it may, however, be imposed within a period of only 18 months (instead of 24 months).

The coalition parties – Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) – also agreed on the data retention regulations to transpose the respective EU Directive. Chancellor Faymann stressed that a solution had been found that supported the combat against terrorism on the one hand and guaranteed data protection on the other hand. Thus the government had ensured order and security, while preventing abuse. “For me security is synonymous with clear rules, while legal protection is guaranteed to those needing it”, said Faymann. (Mobile) telephone or e-mail data are stored for a period of six months; this

was in line with the minimum requirement of the EU Directive. The prosecuting authorities will be granted access to the data only if the respective offence is punishable by imprisonment of over one year and if a court decision is available. As far as the disclosure of IP addresses is concerned, the penalty is irrelevant; however, an order of the public prosecutor offering substantiated charges is required. This procedure may also be used to prosecute child pornography. Facilitated access to data will be granted to provide first general assistance or to prevent threats, e.g. in the case of missed persons who can be located only through their mobile phones, or to prevent an offence committed intentionally (kidnapping).

Law against wage dumping: Hundstorfer refers to a “milestone“

On 22 February 2011 the Council of Ministers also agreed on a law against wage and social dumping. Its aim is to prevent wages below the minimum levels laid down in collective agreements. The new law has been adopted in view of the opening of the Austrian labour market to citizens of the new EU Member States, which joined the Union in 2004. It will enter into force on 1 May 2011. Administrative fines between 1,000 and 50,000 euro will be imposed on companies not paying the minimum wages fixed in collective wage agreements.

Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer described the new law as a “milestone” in the social legislation of the recent past. “It is not a trifling offence to evade minimum wages and social security obligations, therefore harsh sanctions are required”, said Hundstorfer. With this new piece of legislation, the Minister for Social Affairs plans to avoid “a levelling down of wages”. Good work had to be paid well.

Child and Youth Welfare Act: Länder receive 3.6 million euro from Republic

The Länder of Vienna, Lower Austria, Carinthia, Tyrol and Vorarlberg gave the green light for the planned Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act. To implement this law, the Federal Republic agreed to make available a one-time amount of 3.6 million euro for knock-on financing, informed Secretary of State for Family Affairs Verena Remler on 21 February 2011. If Salzburg, Styria, Upper Austria and Burgenland withdraw their requests for consultation on financing, the new law could enter into force already on 1 July 2011. The Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act enshrines inter alia the four-eye principle to assess the exposure of children to dangers.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Libya: Federal Chancellor Faymann wants to increase pressure on Gaddafi**

In an interview with the daily "Österreich" (27 February 2011), Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann pled to increase pressure on Libya's dictator Muammar Gaddafi – after consultation with the partners in the EU. Violence against the Libyan population was unacceptable. The freezing of Gaddafi's accounts in Austria was being examined, stated Faymann. Other steps such as an entry ban and criminal prosecution should be coordinated at European level. "Charges should be brought before the international courts against all those having violated international law and human rights so severely", said Faymann.

The Federal Chancellor compared the present events in Libya and the region with the fall of the Iron Curtain in Europe in 1989. After that, many new democracies were emerging. "I hope and expect that this will also happen in the countries affected. We will support them in this process", underlined Faymann.

Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter stated in the TV programme "Pressestunde" of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) on 27 February 2011 that Austria would adhere to the UN sanctions against the Gaddafi regime. Gaddafi's family members would not be allowed to enter or stay in Austria. The Austrian National Bank had been conducting investigations regarding Gaddafi's assets in Austria for some time. In the case of a wave of refugees from Libya, Austria could receive 5,000 to 6,000 people without problem, stated Fekter.

Federal President Fischer pays state visit to Singapore

Federal President Heinz Fischer paid a state visit to Singapore from 21 to 22 February 2011. He was accompanied by his wife Margit, several ministers and a high-ranking trade delegation. Key issues for discussion in a meeting with Singapore's head of government Lee Hsien Loong were not only the bilateral relations in politics, economy, research and culture but also the recent events in North Africa and the Middle East. Other topics for debate were the relations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the EU as well as the international dialogue of cultures and religions.

The official programme included a state banquet hosted by Fischer's counterpart S.R. Nathan (Sellapan Rama) as well as the "Economic Forum Austria-Singapore". Last year,

the city-state reported fast growth (14.5% of the GDP), which had positive effects on its economic relations with Austria.

During a visit to the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) – which is the youngest university in a ranking of the world's top 100 universities and has 33,000 students – President Fischer reiterated how crucial the support of science and research was for economic development. In cooperation with the AIT (Austrian Institute of Technology) and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, the NTU launches the binational International Graduate School for Bio-Nanotechnology (IGS BioNano Tech). Up to 30 students are expected to complete their three-year doctoral studies and study for some semesters in the respective partner country in the next nine years.

Pröll and Spindelegger in China

Minister of Finance Josef Pröll and Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger paid an official visit to China from 22 to 24 February 2011. In Beijing the two ministers held talks with high-ranking officials such as Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and Minister of Finance Xie Xuren.

The political talks in the framework of this visit marked the beginning of the "anniversary year" 2011, in which Austria and the People's Republic of China celebrate 40 years of diplomatic relations. Austria expects that the anniversary year comprising an extensive cultural programme will also give impetus to the economic relations, which have developed highly dynamically in the recent past. In the first ten months of 2010, Austrian exports to China skyrocketed by 43% to 2.3 billion euro. By 2014 exports are to be doubled to 4 billion euro.

According to Minister of Finance Pröll, this official visit is another step to realise his foreign policy strategy oriented particularly towards the growth markets of the Austrian economy. One of the goals of this strategy is to create more jobs in Austria. China is interested in investing above all in Austrian environmental and hydroelectric power technology.

In the talks with his counterpart Yang Jiechi, Minister Spindelegger also addressed human rights issues. In Beijing he met with the prominent dissident Ai Weiwei, who thanked Austria for its human rights commitment.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann is expected in Beijing in May.

ECONOMY**Austrian economy continues to grow: exports as the growth engine**

The Austrian economy continues to recover even though GDP growth slowed down towards the end of last year. In the fourth quarter, the GDP (gross domestic product) in real terms exceeded the rate of the previous quarter by 0.6% – after increasing by 0.9% in summer. Year-on-year growth declined slightly to 2.4% (2.5%). These data were issued by the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) on 15 February 2011. According to preliminary figures, the GDP in real terms for 2010 rose by 1.9% compared to the year 2009.

Austria develops better than the euro-zone and the EU. However, Germany – Austria's most important trading partner – remained the growth engine (4%).

The favourable economic trend in Austria was supported by the export sector also in the last quarter of 2010. The upswing in the production of physical goods starting in mid-2009 is continuing, the value added increased by 1.5% in the last quarter from the previous quarter. With 1.4%, exports expanded less drastically than in the second and third quarters when rates twice as high were recorded.

According to Wifo, the growth of domestic exports from the previous quarter by 1.4% is mainly due to increased goods exports and the upswing of world trade. Imports increased again in late 2010 – by 0.8% compared to the period July to September.

As in the second quarter, both exports and imports reported double digit increases year-on-year in the last quarter of 2010. Exports climbed by 11.2%, while imports grew by 10.1%. Private consumer demand was stable over the entire year 2010. In the fourth quarter it exceeded the prior-year level by 1%.

Based on data of Wifo, investments developed significantly more dynamically in the fourth quarter. Gross fixed capital formation (construction and equipment investments) increased by 1.4% from the previous quarter, after reporting quarterly increases of 1.2% and 0.3%, respectively.

Retail trade reports real sales plus

The Austrian trade sector looks back on a good year. "In 2010 we recorded the first real sales plus since 2006", concluded Chairman of the Trade Department of the Economic Chamber Austria (WKO) Fritz Aichinger on 15 February 2011. The sales revenue increased by 1.2%, growth in nominal terms was 2.7%. The sector

reported a total net turnover of 50.1 billion euro.

However, almost half of the enterprises did not benefit from the increase in sales. More than one third of the retail stores registered a sharp decline in sales last year; 9% reported a stable level. The profit situation continued to be difficult. "Sales are not equivalent to earnings", underlined Aichinger.

The footwear trade reported the strongest growth. After a weak year 2009, sales went up by about 7% (adjusted for inflation). Electrical shops (+4.5%) and the clothing trade (+3.2%) were also among the winners. The stationery and book trade – which also increased prices most drastically last year – was affected by the sharpest drop in sales (-3.5%).

Generally, it is apparent that the trade sector bases competition mainly on prices. Prices went up by 1.5% on average, remaining under the inflation rate of 1.9%. By European comparison, Austria is among the leaders, as Aichinger informed. Higher increases in sales were achieved only in France and Sweden.

Aichinger expects the increase in raw materials prices to have "long-term repercussions" on trade in the current year; this will result in higher prices for the consumers. Nevertheless, the outlook for the current year of the Chairman of the Trade Department of WKO is very optimistic – provided that "inflation remains low and the labour market stable".

Women's quota in enterprises close to the state

Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek and Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner held first talks about introducing a women's quota in enterprises close to the state. A women's quota for supervisory board members in companies with government ties could be adopted already in March, announced the Ministry of Women's Affairs on 21 February 2011.

Mitterlehner had proposed earlier that by 2013 the women's share in Supervisory Board appointments should be increased to 25% in companies in which the Federal Republic held more than 50%. The quota should be stepped up to 30% by 2018. The Minister for Economic Affairs stated that he had changed his mind as the voluntary approach had not shown any results so far. However, Mitterlehner advocated a self-imposed obligation as a legal duty could meet with resistance. Heinisch-Hosek reiterated her position that sanctions were possible and that a legal quota could be introduced as from 2014.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

Intense performance of Morton Subotnick's "Jacob's Room" in Vienna

In Vienna's cultural precinct Museumsquartier (MQ) "Jacob's Room" – a chamber opera in one act by US avant-garde composer Morton Subotnick – was recently presented as a guest performance at the festival "2011 OUT OF CONTROL" – unfortunately only on two evenings. The composer born in Los Angeles in 1933 is one of the pioneers in the development of electronic music. In the early 1960s, he taught at the Mills College in Oakland. Together with Pauline Oliveros, Steve Reich, Terry Riley and Ramon Sender he founded the San Francisco Tape Music Center (SFTMC) in 1961. During this period he cooperated with Anna Halprin, a representative of modern dance. As the music director of the San Francisco Actor's Workshop, Subotnick worked with Don Buchla on an early analogous synthesizer in 1963. The instrument – Buchla Series 100 – was completed one year before Robert Moog's revolutionary keyboard synthesizers, was not put to commercial use and is now exhibited at the Smithsonian Museum.

In 1981 Subotnick reached the apex of live electronic processing in his work "Ascent Into Air". Written for the 4C digital sound processor of IRCAM in Paris, the piece presented numerous innovative techniques, experiments with quadraphonic sound and timbres of instruments as well as his "electronic ghost scores". A highly significant aspect was to combine traditional musical instruments with sounds generated on the computer and the use of live performers to control the computer music, who served as living "control voltages". Besides electronic music, Subotnick also composed numerous "classical" works for symphony and chamber orchestras.

An exciting mix of these elements of style can be found in his chamber opera "Jacob's Room" created in 1986, which uses only some passages of the prose text of Virginia Woolf of the same name.

Subotnick's work tells the story of the survivor of a genocide – in concrete terms, the Holocaust – and of his efforts to come to terms with the trauma. Jacob tries to intellectualise his own existence so as to erase his past, but in the end he will confront reality.

Morton Subotnick was present to receive the loud applause of the audience in Vienna. The composer told Laura Berman about the use of musical instruments in his work: "I did not want a string quartet, with which the piece

actually starts, this had too much to do with an orchestra. But the cello played an increasingly important role for me and gradually developed into a symbol of emotions. And this was how the idea was born to multiply the cello in various ways. The cello and the keyboard dominate the language of emotions. Complex ideas and stories are spoken." "Extended vocal techniques, i.e. the vocalises and the grumble, are used to convey feelings involved in remembering and characterise the role of the 'guide'. The vocalises intensively sliding up and down the musical scale have a greater effect than any text could have. They trigger memories – of childhood but also of pain – and remind us of what we have forgotten. The rumble makes us go back to ancient times, beyond humanity. It symbolised our inherent creatureliness, a kind of 'primitive layer'. During the development phases of 'Jacob's Room' it became increasingly clear to me what electronic music was to inspire – and that was awe".

To many in the spellbound audience it remained a mystery how the four singers managed to perform this complicated, austere-beautiful score so accurately. Ruth Rosenfeld (The Guide), Katharina von Bülow (Mother), Florian Just (Jacob) and last but not least Tom Sol (Grandfather) gave brilliant performances. The vocal coach was Joan La Barbara – an important composer herself and the wife of Morton Subotnick. Ari Benjamin Meyers was the conductor. Mirella Weingarten was responsible for the mise-en-scène, stage design and costumes. Animation, media and video artist Lillevan was in charge of the live videos, Torsten Ottersberg of sound engineering. The light design was by Jean-Marie Bessière.

The keyboards were played by the South Korean SooJin Anjou, the unforgettable cellists were Eva Freitag, Marika Gejrot, Augustin Maurs and Andreas Voss.

Morton Subotnick said about the end of his opera: "Even the music of the celli disappears when Jacob starts to grasp reality. It is a strong moment when he moans for the first time". Subotnick concluded: "We must not forgive and forget but we have to remember. (...) by accepting our errors, we can find a way to continue living with them".

www.netzzeit.at, www.mortonsubotnick.com

Auschwitz Women's Orchestra – Lasker-Wallfisch tells her story

In the years 1943/44 the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp had a Women's Orchestra composed of professional and amateur musicians from Germany, France, Poland and other

European countries. The conductor was the then world-famous violinist Alma Rosé, the niece of Gustav Mahler. The orchestra – established on a whim of the commander of the Auschwitz death camp – had to play when the new prisoners arrived in the camp, during selection processes, in the hospital and experimental wards.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, born as one of the three daughters of the Jewish lawyer Alfons Lasker and violist Edith in 1925, is one of the last survivors of the Auschwitz Women's Orchestra. She escaped certain death because she was the only girl in the camp playing the cello. In 1942 her parents were deported and killed, the two youngest daughters were put in an orphanage. After a failed attempt to escape, they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch wrote down her story and published it under the title "Ihr sollt die Wahrheit erben" ("Inherit the Truth").

After retiring, she has travelled the world to tell her story. "We, the survivors of Auschwitz, will not live much longer, and soon nobody will be here to tell authentic stories about the unspeakable cruelty of that time", she said. "We gave concerts, believe it or not, on Sundays, sometimes outdoors between camp A and B or in the hospital. Moreover, we always had to be ready to perform when SS people came to our block. They usually came to recover from the 'exertion' of having to decide who was going to live and who was going to be killed. On one of these occasions, I performed "Träumerei" ("Dreaming") by Schumann for Dr. Mengele, the notorious camp physician".

The purpose of the music was not only to put the SS henchmen in a good mood but also to tranquilise newcomers and make them believe that life in the camp was not so bad.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch will speak for the first time to a larger audience in Vienna on 10 March 2011, 2 p.m. (Theatersaal Längenfeldgasse 13-15, 1120 Vienna).

Funded by the Federal Chancellery and supported by the District Administration of Meidling (Vienna's 12th district), the event was organised jointly by the adult education centre Volkshochschule Meidling and the association Campus Längenfeld, Collaboration for the Location of Hans-Mandl Vocational School.

Registration: lasker-wallfisch@vhs.at

Women's art: Lieselott Beschorner, Birgit Jürgenssen, Florentina Pakosta

Women's art – "a feminist view in the widest sense" as Barbara Petsch defined it in the daily

"Presse", seems to be en vogue at museums in Vienna. Until 5 March 2011, the Museum on Demand (Museum auf Abruf/MUSA), 1010 Vienna, Felderstraße 6-8, is showcasing the so-called "Puppas" by Lieselott Beschorner (born in Vienna in 1927). These wool dolls are by no means sweet but remind of demonic fetishes, comparable to the masks of indigenous peoples or the dolls of the French artist Louise Bourgeois.

Lieselott Beschorner started to study in Vienna in 1945, e.g. with Robin Christian Andersen and Albert Paris Gütersloh. She was one of the first women to become a member of the Nouveau Art movement "Wiener Secession" (in 1951). The outsider withdrew from the art scene since the 1980s. MUSA showcases about 120 dolls and sculptures by Beschorner.

Bank Austria Kunstforum and Verbund Collection present the first posthumous retrospective (closing on 6 March 2011) of the work of Birgit Jürgenssen, who died in 2003. The artist born in Vienna in 1949 is an outstanding representative of the feminist avant-garde. Based on the emancipating potential of Surrealism, inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis and responding to the socio-critical discourse of her generation, Jürgenssen has developed a complex and stylistically diverse art since the late 1960s. The female body and its metamorphoses were the focus of her subtle work, predominantly comprising drawings, paintings and photos. In 1982 Birgit Jürgenssen started to teach in Arnulf Rainer's class at Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, where she worked enthusiastically until her early death.

Based on about 250 works, including many previously unknown from her estate, the long-awaited retrospective demonstrates for the first time that irony, wordplays and the pleasure in transformation play a major role in her oeuvre unfolding in the great tradition of enlightenment and female emancipation. Peter Weibel: "Birgit Jürgenssen represents a contemporary position building on the oeuvre of Meret Oppenheim and Louise Bourgeois".

Leopold Museum devotes a show (closing on 18 April 2011) to the oeuvre of Florentina Pakosta. It presents about 150 works of the artist born in Vienna in 1933. The exhibition had been initiated by the deceased Rudolf Leopold himself, who appreciated the painter and graphic artist very much. Alongside with Maria Lassnig (born in 1919) and VALIE EXPORT (born in 1940), Florentina Pakosta is considered one of the most important feminist artists in Austria.

Opposing the curriculum of the Academy of Fine Arts, “where I was bored” (Pakosta), and the social conventions of female art production, she created authentic sketches conceived as social studies as early as in the 1950s, capturing anonymous characters she encountered in Vienna’s bar scene with pencil, bistre (drawing ink) and sometimes even lipstick. Based on her unrelenting devotion to the genre “self-portrait”, Pakosta produced a series of etchings titled “Paraphrases of Franz Xaver Messerschmidt’s Character Heads“. As she could not afford expensive oil paints, Pakosta focused on drawings and developed the series of “Gesichtsbildungen“ (“Facial Formations”). The large-format, photo-realistic chalk drawings with socio-critical messages were completely new to Austrian art.

The artist explores the apparent disappearance of the individual in mass society, in the flood of pictures of the media and in consumerism as well as the loss of control in every-day life due to mass production based on an entirely unique approach in her series of paintings “Human Crowds” and “Merchandise Landscapes”.

Pakosta reacted to the upheaval of 1989, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Eastern bloc in her most recent series “Trikolore Bilder“ (“Tricolour Paintings”) – abstract variations of bar systems in three colours. She had felt a great void and retreated into “inner emigration”.

Today Florentina Pakosta is represented in all important exhibitions and publications on contemporary art in Austria and in many important public and private collections.

For more information about the women artists: www.leopoldmuseum.org, www.musa.at, www.bankaustria-kunstforum.at

Biologist Kurt Kotrschal is “Scientist of the Year 2010“

The Club of Austrian Education and Economic Journalists (Klub der Bildungs- und Wissenschaftsjournalisten) elected behavioural biologist Kurt Kotrschal (aged 58) “Scientist of the Year 2010“.

During his academic career, Kotrschal established and further developed two research institutions devoted to behavioural biology. After the death of Konrad Lorenz, he became director of the Konrad Lorenz Research Station in Grünau (Upper Austria) and an associate professor at the University of Vienna – a position still held by the researcher.

The “Wolf Science Centre” in Ernstbrunn (Lower Austria) co-founded by him explores

similarities between wolves, dogs and human beings.

Just like his predecessor Konrad Lorenz, Kurt Kotrschal knows how to present his research successfully to a wider audience. Both research institutions attach great importance to communicating their research activities to the general public by offering numerous visitor programmes, guided theme tours, projects for children and the like. The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) presented a three-episode documentary about the “Wolf Science Centre” in its TV programme “Universum”.

The award “Scientist of the Year“ has been granted to personalities such as microbiologist Renée Schroeder (2002), immunologist Josef Penninger (2003), mathematician Rudolf Taschner (2004), climate researcher Helga Kromp-Kolb (2005), philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann (2006), literary scholar Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler (2007), allergy researcher Fatima Ferreira (2008) and the experimental physicist Rudolf Grimm from Innsbruck (2009).

Film festival Crossing Europe 2011 focusing on cities, migration, identity

From 12 to 17 April 2011, the international film festival Crossing Europe will present a selection of about 140 films revolving around the festival theme “City, Migration and Identity”. Crossing Europe will offer for the second time the programme section “Architecture and Film”, which has been developed in cooperation with the Architecture Forum of Upper Austria. The four contributions will explore the coexistence of cultures and religions in urban areas as well as the political framework from different perspectives. Migration will be treated as one of the factors determining reality in modern Europe and as part and parcel of an urban feeling. The documentary “Neukölln Unlimited“ describes for example the struggle of three Lebanese siblings for their right to stay in Germany.

As the first main sponsor of the festival, the Linz-based eye glasses manufacturer Silhouette will grant the New Vision Award.

www.crossingEurope.at

Belvedere: Schiele’s (self-) portraits

Lower Belvedere in Vienna shows a spectacular exhibition (closing on 13 June 2011) comprising about 100 portraits and self-portraits of Egon Schiele (1890-1918). Depictions of people play a decisive role in the oeuvre of Schiele – one third of his oil paintings are portraits.

www.belvedere.at

SPORTS POLICY**ÖSV women achieve best result in the history of Alpine Ski World Cup**

Winning four times gold, once silver, plus another silver medal in the team competition at the 41st Alpine Ski World Cup in Garmisch, Austria's women skiers achieved their best overall result in the history of the Alpine Ski World Cup.

Styrian Elisabeth Görgl stands out even from this truly remarkable group of winners. She was in best shape ever and won both the super-G and downhill events. 22-year-old Anna Fenninger unexpectedly earned the world champion title in the super combined. Showing great courage in the slalom and outshining all her rivals, the Austrian Federal Army athlete deservedly became the number one in the ranking. The slalom event ended with the spectacular double-win of our ski ladies. Marlies Schild, who had been dominating this sport in the recent years, finally succeeded in securing a well-deserved gold medal in the individual competition at a major international event. In view of the tragic injuries Kathrin Zettel suffered in the months before the competition, the importance of her silver medal cannot be overstated. Speaking of unfortunate injuries, they affected in particular the men. After losing Hans Grugger, Mario Scheiber and Marcel Hirscher, the team of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) had to do also without Benjamin Raich and finally also without Hannes Reichelt (silver medallist in the super-G) in the world championships. Given the adverse circumstances, the two medals won (Philipp Schörghofer received bronze in the giant slalom) should be considered a positive result.

Seven medals for Austria at the 10th European Youth Olympic Festival

Once gold, three times silver and three times bronze – this is the medal tally achieved by the Austrian participants at the 10th European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) in Liberec.

Out of a total of 41 young Austrians participating in the competitions, two made it to the top of the winners' podium. 15-year-old Paul Gerstgraser from Salzburg and 17-year-old Philipp Orter from Carinthia took gold in the team sprint of the Nordic combined event.

Silver went to Ulrich Wohlgenannt (ski jumping), Tanja Brugger and Sandro Butollo. A bronze medal was won by Nathalie Schwarz (cross-country skiing), while Sabrina Maier earned two bronze medals (slalom and giant slalom).

The next European Youth Winter Olympic Festival will take place in Romania in 2013. Vorarlberg and Liechtenstein will be the venue of the EYWOF in 2015.

Blood tests at Nordic Ski World Championships: Minister of Sport Darabos welcomed strict FIS procedures

At the beginning of the Nordic Ski World Championships in Oslo, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos welcomed the large-scale blood testing programme: "I think that the strict anti-doping programme announced by FIS is the right approach. In this respect, FIS is one step ahead of WADA. Austria has become a champion in the combat against doping in the past few years. But to be able to win this struggle, we must now stand shoulder to shoulder in Europe", stated Darabos.

Anti-doping policies recently became a subject for debate at European level. In the framework of the informal meeting of EU ministers of sport in Gödöllő (Hungary), Minister Darabos also highlighted the disequilibrium in the anti-doping combat. "I still perceive a major imbalance in the efforts to combat doping effectively at European level. Yesterday NADA Austria banned a cyclist without a positive doping test due to a violation of the anti-doping provisions for a period of four years. However, in Spain stars like Alberto Contador go scot-free despite testing positive several times and clear evidence. This is a severe setback in the anti-doping combat."

Successful interim result for Austria at the Nordic Ski World Championships

These Nordic Ski World Championships will probably become the most successful Nordic event in Austria's history. The Austrian Nordic athletes won no less than three gold medals already after the first weekend of competitions. Particularly, the ski jumpers of the team of the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV) were showered with medals.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos rejoiced with the Austrian eagles in Oslo: "At present, the Austrian ski jumping team is the strongest in the world. The team confirmed impressively on the first weekend of competitions what the successful results in the individual competitions had signalled. I congratulate our eagles on this really awe-inspiring success".