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HOME AFFAIRS**National Council: law against social and wage dumping**

On 31 March 2011, the National Council adopted the law against wage and social dumping with the votes of the governing parties – Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – as well as of the Greens. It requires companies to pay wages that are customary in Austria and thereby prevents them from recruiting cheaper labour from Eastern neighbouring countries after the opening of the labour market on 1 May 2011.

The law against wage and social dumping had closed a major loophole in control and was a “milestone in the combat against social fraud”, emphasised Minister for Labour and Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer. The new legal framework did not only ensure fair competition – violations were punished by fines of up to 50,000 euro – but also prevented a levelling down of wages, explained Hundstorfer.

The new law would allow the authorities to control wages more comprehensively and to impose administrative fines if the minimum wages laid down in collective agreements were not paid. The Minister also stated that if the difference between the actual and collectively agreed wage was more than insignificant, the employer would not only have to pay the difference as in the past but also faced administrative fines between 1,000 and 50,000 euro, depending on the number of workers affected and any charges previously filed against the company. In the event of repeated violations of the law and/or substantial differences to the minimum wage, foreign employers may be forbidden from providing services in Austria.

Wages are monitored by a unit of the Ministry of Finance responsible for combating the employment of illegal workers (KIAB) in cooperation with the Vienna Social Insurance Institution and the Holiday and Severance Pay Fund for Construction Workers (BUAKA).

Mauthausen memorial is redesigned

The Mauthausen memorial (Upper Austria) will be redesigned. The first phase covering the renovation of the former “Revier” building, a new introductory exhibition and an exhibition on the mass killings in the former concentration camp will be completed by 2013. Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter presented the project on 30 March 2011, emphasising the “great responsibility” of the Republic of Austria.

The total costs of the first project phase are estimated at 1.7 million euro. The contract was

awarded to the designers' group “argeMarie”. Apart from new exhibitions and an architectural redesign, the project also provides for an enhanced educational programme, stated Fekter, who also pointed out that the majority of visitors were pupils. The new plans also included a “hall of names” to commemorate all victims of the Mauthausen concentration camp. Mauthausen was “Austria's most important commemoration and remembrance venue” and was closely linked to the concept of democracy. The memorial was also of international importance as many people from other nations had been imprisoned there, stressed Fekter.

Bilingual signposts in Carinthia: agreement is likely

The federal government and the Land of Carinthia reached an agreement on possible solutions of the conflict over bilingual topographical signposts. Bilingual signposts were to be mounted in villages where the Slovene speakers exceed a share of 17.5% of the total population, informed Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer and Carinthia's Governor Gerhard Dörfler after the talks. The census of 2001 would be used as a basis. Between 160 and 165 new bilingual topographical signposts are under discussion. This option has, however, been rejected by the Council of Carinthian Slovenes. But all parties, including the two other associations of Slovenes, have agreed to continue the talks. The official representatives of the Slovene minority strive for a comprehensive set of measures, including the recognition of Slovene as an official language in South Carinthian communities and subsidies, e.g. for bilingual nurseries. Secretary of State Ostermayer hopes to achieve a solution conforming to the Austrian Constitution before the summer. On 10 April 2011 he stressed that all previous decisions of the Constitutional Court were undisputed. Federal President Heinz Fischer stated that the proposed solution complied with “each individual judgement of the Constitutional Court” and that he would participate to a greater extent in the ongoing negotiations.

Stricter anti-corruption laws

All five parliamentary parties call for the public disclosure of party donations and of secondary activities of MPs. The Ministry of Justice plans to submit a bill on lobbyists, which will create the basis for a register of lobbyists, including also legal interest representations. Stricter anti-corruption rules as well as an employment ban for officials engaged in traditional lobbying activities are also envisaged.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Poland's Prime Minister Tusk meets with Federal Chancellor Faymann**

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk met with Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann in Vienna on 8 April 2011. The talks of the two heads of government focused on EU-related topics, economic policy issues (including the euro rescue package) as well as nuclear power and renewable energies. Poland will take over the EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2011.

Tusk explained that Poland was "highly sensitised" to the issue of atomic energy after the disaster in Japan but would not give a clear rebuff to plans for Poland's first nuclear power plant. Faymann emphasised that Austria would make its position on atomic energy very clear also at future meetings in a European context and promote exit scenarios.

Federal President Fischer attends Presidents' meeting in Hungary

Federal President Heinz Fischer participated in an informal meeting with his counterparts from Germany, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Finland in Budapest on 8/9 April 2011. All attendees were confident that the "Danube Region Strategy" initiated by Austria and Romania would be adopted already in summer. President Fischer pled for a social Europe.

Swiss Federal President Calmy-Rey in Austria

Swiss Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey paid an official working visit to Vienna on 11 April 2011. The talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann concentrated on bilateral relations as well as the relationship between Switzerland and the EU.

Austria continues anti-nuclear policy

After the Council of Minister's session on 5 April 2011, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann pled once more for a Europe-wide anti-nuclear referendum. To pave the way for it, Faymann plans to organise a "broad alliance" of opponents of nuclear power from different political camps. The main objective are scenarios to exit nuclear technology. Faymann also hoped that the stress tests for European nuclear power plants announced by the EU would be "really strict enough".

An international anti-nuclear conference should take place still in the current year –

probably in Vienna. It should be open to parties of all ideologies but also environmental organisations. Just like the nuclear lobbyists, the opponents of nuclear power had to "demonstrate unity", a spokesperson of the Chancellor told the Austrian Press Agency (APA).

Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich also advocated mandatory NPP stress tests as a first step towards abandoning atomic energy as well as a reorientation of energy policy (towards renewable energies, energy efficiency) during his recent visit to Turkey (5/6 April 2011).

Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Egypt, Gaza and Jordan

Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger travelled to Egypt, the Palestinian Gaza Strip and Jordan from 4 to 8 April 2011.

Spindelegger held talks with Egyptian Prime Minister Essam al-Sharaf and Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi in Cairo. Austria wanted to support Egypt in the ongoing transformation process. The Foreign Minister stated that he had offered experts and soft loans amounting to 70 million euro.

Minister Spindelegger also met with the Grand Sheik of the Al-Azhar University and Mosque, Ahmed al-Tayeb, as well as with Coptic Pope Shenouda III, to whom Spindelegger offered his support in the struggle for the freedom of religion and opinion. Spindelegger called for complete freedom of religion in Egypt and for incorporating this right in Egypt's new Constitution. In addition, he presented the plans for a Centre of Dialogue Among Global Religions and Civilisations in Vienna, for which Austria, Spain and Saudi-Arabia will act as proponents. In Gaza Spindelegger paid a visit to the field office of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and a desalination plant managed by Austrians. The Minister requested to lift Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip as well as to end the rocket attacks on Israel. The aim was a "two-state solution with Israel and Palestine", said the Austrian Foreign Minister.

Spindelegger concluded his visit to the Middle East with a meeting with Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit and Prince Hassan in the Jordanian capital Amman. He was optimistic that the process of transformation in Jordan would also be peaceful and democratic, stated the Foreign Minister. He considered the establishment of the National Dialogue Committee a step in the right direction. Austria would support Jordan in its combat against corruption and in cooperation with the EU.

ECONOMY**Unemployment decreased by 5.2 percent in March**

“Fortunately, the favourable labour market development is continuing. Precisely one year ago, Austria’s unemployment declined for the first time since the beginning of the economic crisis. Now unemployment is decreasing already for the 13th month in a row“, explained Social and Labour Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer after the presentation of the labour market data on 1 April 2011. According to the statistics, in March 252,587 persons were registered as unemployed, i.e. minus 5.2% or 13,733 persons compared to the same month of the previous year. The number of participants in training programmes of the Public Employment Service also dropped considerably: by 17.3% or 14,502 persons to 69,515. In March 322,102 people were jobless (unemployed persons plus training programme participants). In a year-on-year comparison this corresponds to a decline by 8.1%. Austria’s unemployment rate was 6.9% (-0.5 percentage points) according to the national method of calculation or 4.3% based on the EU definition (Eurostat).

The number of economically active persons rose by 69,000 in March, in total 3,395,000 people were employed in Austria – this was the best monthly figure since 1945, informed the Ministry of Social Affairs. The number of vacancies went up by 16.4% (+4,602 to 32,685). “The successful labour market and employment development is the best way to consolidate the budget“, stressed Hundstorfer. Based on the status quo, the labour market policy is expected to contribute more than 260 million euro to deficit reduction – in addition to the cost cuts laid down in the budget.

The decrease in youth unemployment has been remarkable, i.e. minus 7.5% (3,116) to 38,377. In March 4,645 young people were searching for apprenticeship places (+2.9%). As the number of vacant apprenticeship places climbed by 10.4% to 3,453, the gap of apprenticeship places continued to shrink. The “Training Guarantee” would of course be upheld, stated Hundstorfer. Last month the sharpest decline in unemployment was reported in manufacturing (-23.8%) and the building sector (-19.6%), benefiting mostly men. In March the unemployment rate for men dropped by 10.1% (-16,475) to 146,275 persons. In contrast, the unemployment rate for women increased slightly by 2.6% (+2,742). This is due to the negative seasonal effect in tourism, where a particularly large number of women is em-

ployed (the peak tourist season starts only with Holy Week in mid-April). Taking into account female trainees (-6,002), women’s unemployment also decreased (by 3,260). The number of long-term jobless (registered as unemployed with the Public Employment Service for more than 12 months) decreased by 32.2% in March.

Wifo/IHS: economy is growing faster

In 2011 Austria’s economy is growing faster than assumed only recently. Therefore the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) issued upward revisions of their growth forecasts for Austria. They now predict a real GDP growth of 2.3% (Wifo) and 2.5% (IHS) for 2011, i.e. about a fourth of a percentage point more than in December, as well as 2.0% and 2.1% for 2012. In 2011 and 2012, Austria’s economic growth will exceed that of the remaining euro-zone for the eighth and ninth successive year. Wifo expects a GDP growth of 1.8% and 1.7% for the euro-zone in 2011 and 2012, while the IHS assumes 1.5% for both years.

The economic upswing continues to be driven by exports, which the economic analysts expect to increase by almost 9% in 2011 and by between 7% and 8% in 2012 due to the favourable global economic development.

OeNB: banks report higher profits

In 2010 the Austrian banks reported significantly higher earnings than in the crisis year 2009. On 29 March 2011, the Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank/OeNB) presented preliminary data, according to which the aggregate annual profit of all banks increased by 3.05 billion to 4.58 billion euro thanks to the faster growing credit demand and decreased credit risk provisions. As the OeNB informed, a major part of the net result for 2010 had been earned abroad, particularly in Eastern Europe. However, the total profit for 2010 was “still considerably” below the peak results for 2006 (7.5 billion euro) and 2007 (6.8 billion euro).

Record budget: voestalpine invests 121 million euro into research

The listed steel group voestalpine increased its research budget for the financial year 2011/12 starting on 1 April 2011 by 10% year-on-year to more than 120 million euro. Thus the research budget has doubled within five years. The group aims at enhancing its position as a global technology leader in the qualitatively most demanding growth segments (e.g. energy and mobility).

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**OsterKlang Vienna 2011**

From 15 to 25 April 2011, the 15th OsterKlang Festival presents performances spanning the musical spectrum – from Francis Poulenc’s opera “Dialogues des Carmélites”, works by Antonín Dvorák, Josef Suk and Leonard Bernstein to oratorios by Alessandro Scarlatti and Franz Liszt. OsterKlang will be opened on 15 April 2011 by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at Theater an der Wien with Antonín Dvorák’s “Ten Biblical Songs for voice and orchestra” and Josef Suk’s Symphony “Asrael” conducted by Peter Schneider (soloist: Magdalena Kožená). After the overwhelming success of the performances in 2008, Robert Carsen’s clear and powerful production of the opera “Dialogues des Carmélites” – conducted by Bertrand de Billy – is staged again at Theater an der Wien. The exceptional French performer Patricia Petibon may be admired in the role of Blanche. Semper Depot in Vienna will be the venue for the chamber version of Leonard Bernstein’s “Mass“ (conducted by Walter Kobéra) – a coproduction with Neue Oper Wien. The work based on the Latin mass of the Roman Catholic Church is interspersed with jazz, blues and rock elements. The oratory “The legend of Saint Elizabeth“ by Franz Liszt performed by Wiener Akademie and conducted by Martin Haselböck will be presented at Theater an der Wien on 20 April 2011. Vocal soloists are Annette Dasch, Magdalena Anna Hofmann, Daniel Schmutzhard and Andreas Wolf. The festival is concluded with Alessandro Scarlatti’s oratory “La Giuditta“ at Theater an der Wien on Holy Saturday. “Concerto Italiano” will be conducted by Rinaldo Alessandrini. The Vienna Symphonic Orchestra will mark the musical beginning of spring on Easter Sunday with a concert programme under the motto “Vienna Woods”.

Danube Festival 2011

The theme of this year’s Danube Festival is “Nodes, Roots & Shoots“. Under the artistic management of Thomas Zierhofer-Kin, the festival taking place from 28 April to 7 May 2011 turns the spotlight on the structural principles of this event, i.e. by presenting artistic networks but also establishing links among highly diverse artistic media. With 85 productions and 103 performances, the festival programme ranges from visual arts and performance art (e.g. Ole Aselmann and Jonathan Meese), new forms of multi-media theatre (e.g. Giselle Vienne, Monika Gintersdorfer, Knut

Klaßen), music theatre and interactive installations (Dries Verhoeven, Lukas Abela’s “Vinyl Ralley”) to artists acting as the focal points of networks (e.g. the Australian electronics musician Frost, Wildbirds&Peace-drums from Sweden, Icelander Valgeir Sigurdsson with songwriter Puzzle Muteson, US-American musician Carla Buzolich as artist in residence with a commissioned work for Klangraum Krems as well as John Cale and the Femous Orchestra). “The Danube Festival is a stage for new trends, a workshop for creativity and a platform for unusual forms of modern art. Thanks to its critical and innovative potential, it is an ideal instrument to promote cosmopolitan attitudes, tolerance and creativity – and therefore it is of vital importance for our society”, said Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll. In the context of the platform “Lower Austria Contemporary“, the Danube Festival signals that contemporary art may thrive also outside large cities.

(www.donaufestival.at)

Tenth anniversary of Caricature Museum Krems

To mark its tenth anniversary, the Caricature Museum in Krems (Lower Austria) presents the exhibition “Ich traue meinen Augen nicht. Streifzüge durch 400 Jahre Karikatur und Bildsatire“ (“I cannot believe my eyes. Forays into 400 years of caricature and visual satire”) until 18 September 2011. The show curated by Werner Hofmann (an art historian and a founding director of the Museum of the 20th Century in Vienna) differs greatly from other museum programmes. It does not showcase individual works of well-known caricaturists but illustrates how caricature emerged inspired in picture puzzles, in exaggeration and visual delusion. Curious, grotesque and surprising works going beyond caricature in the proper sense are displayed. The focus is turned on a vibrant subculture of so-called fringe artists disregarding all rules. The exhibits dating back to different eras come mainly from the private collection of German experimental filmmaker Werner Nekes.

Styrian budget: culture affected by massive cuts

Theater Holding (Schauspielhaus, Graz Opera House, Next Liberty Youth Theatre), Universalmuseum Joanneum (Kunsthau, Stainz, etc.) as well as the large festivals are affected most severely by the austerity package. The future of the “regional” shows replacing the exhibitions at Länder level after 2012 is also uncer-

tain. On 29 March 2011, Joanneum Director Wolfgang Muchitsch and Joanneum Manager Peter Pakesch presented austerity and restructuring plans to cut Styria's budget expenses by 4.3 million euro. The number of administrative departments is reduced from 24 to 13, important venues such as Eggenberg Museum will no longer host special exhibitions and remain closed from December to February, the Museum of Folk Art and Folk Life will be opened only on two days per week, the inauguration of the Museum of Natural History has to be postponed to 2013. The new Joanneum precinct will, however, be opened in autumn 2011 to mark the 200th anniversary of the foundation of Austria's oldest museum. The duration of exhibitions at the Palace of Stainz, the Palace of Trautenfels and Grazer Museum im Palais will be extended to two years. Neue Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst (New Gallery for Contemporary Art), Kunsthaus and Skulpturenpark (Sculpture Park) will be managed by a single department headed by Peter Peer.

Christa Steinle, who was to curate – together with chief curator Peter Weibel – the Hans Hollein solo exhibition scheduled for November, “Bruseum“ (a museum for a collection of works by the Austrian artist Günter Brus) as well as the exhibition “Modernism: suicide of art“, was dismissed as the head of Neue Galerie. The measures led to public disputes. Peter Pakesch described it as a “painful but future-oriented reform“ and then cancelled the contract with Peter Weibel, ending the independence of Neue Galerie.

There had been early signs of a conflict when Kunsthaus was established as it accommodates the same art genre as Neue Galerie, whose internationally renowned activity is curtailed. It is worth mentioning that Neue Galerie went down in art history. Many of the exhibitions curated by Peter Weibel and Christa Steinle have become classics and helped the provincial town Graz to earn an excellent reputation in the international art world – and this is something Kunsthaus has not yet achieved, despite considerably higher expenditure. Renowned artists, museum experts, collectors and gallery owners protested against the dismissals and threatened to reclaim permanent loan exhibits. Many fear that Graz' cultural sector will face provincial mediocrity as cultural policies show a lack of courage. After talks with the parties affected, Styria's Councillor for Culture Buchmann tried to reach a compromise. Christa Steinle will head the newly created executive support team and finally realise the planned

exhibition projects with the support of Peter Weibel.

Intangible cultural heritage in Austria

On 22 March 2011, 15 new entries were added to the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List for Austria, previously comprising 18 cultural practices: Roman – the language of the Roma people living in Burgenland, field names in Vorarlberg, the sword dance of Dürnberg, the Austrian Folk Dance Movement, “Anklöpfeln“ (“Knocking” – singers dressed as shepherds perform in the houses of their neighbourhood on three Thursdays before X-mas) in North Tyrol, the carnival parade “Ebenseer Fetzenzug“, the traditional parade of masks “Gasteiner Perchten“, “Lichtbratlmontag“ (a local holiday on the 1st Monday after St. Michael's Day) in Bad Ischl, the carnival custom “Mullen und Matschgern“ in the MARTHA (Mühlau, Arzl, Rum, Thaur, Absam) villages, the Christmas song “Silent Night“, the St. Nicholas Parade “Windischgarstner Niglumzug“, “Wirlinger Böllerschützen“ (a group firing ceremonial cannons), three-level farming in Bregenzerwald, “Köhlerei und Pecherei“ (traditional techniques to produce charcoal and resin) in Lower Austria.

The language of the Roma from Burgenland was in the limelight of the presentation of these cultural assets. Roman has been passed on from generation to generation. It is very different from other languages of the Roma people but shows many influences from Croatian, German and Hungarian. Burgenland Roma Charly Gärtner-Horvath of the association “Roma Service“ is actively promoting the preservation and teaching of Roman, but also linguist Dieter Halwachs of the University of Graz has made a decisive contribution by developing a writing system for the only Romani variety spoken exclusively in Austria. The President of the Austrian UNESCO Commission, Eva Novotny, stated that the inclusion of Roman in the heritage list could help to draw attention “to this cultural island in our country“. This tribute to a purely Austrian cultural expression may also be understood as a political signal going beyond efforts to strengthen the self-confidence of the Roma people.

“Intangible cultural heritage“ comprises oral traditions and expressions (at present 213 in more than 80 countries) such as language, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe as well as traditional craftsmanship. These regional practices often handed down orally help communities to

create an identity for themselves and are gaining in importance especially in the age of globalisation. Austria has pledged its commitment to preserving cultural diversity in a UNESCO Convention. (<http://nationalagentur.unesco.at/>)

Media analysis 2010 published

In accordance with its mission of offering advertisers information on media use in Austria, "ARGE Media-Analysen" presented its annual study assessing the reach of print media in Austria. This analysis covers a wide range of media types and reveals early signs of changes affecting the Austrian newspaper market. "Kronen Zeitung" continues to be the Austria-wide market leader. In Vienna this daily has, however, been overtaken by the free daily newspaper "Heute". In the Länder major regional papers have succeeded in limiting the national supremacy of "Krone", in Carinthia, Styria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg they even defeated it. The total reach of the domestic dailies decreased significantly from 75 to 73.7 percent.

www.media-analyse.at

Campaign days 2011: "Political Education"

The European Union declared 2011 the European Year of Volunteering. This year's campaign days "Political Education" focus on "participation and civic courage" to highlight the diverse aspects of volunteering and to discuss strategies promoting civic courage and social inclusion. From 27 April to 15 May 2011 various Austrian educational facilities offer a wide range of activities such as workshops, exhibitions, films, school projects, radio programmes or theatre plays.

www.politik-lernen.at/site/projekte/aktionstage

Austrian Research Promotion Agency reports record year

"Research leads to progress and especially research promotion agencies like FFG provide vital assistance in managing support programmes efficiently and with a view to strengthening Austria's position as a research and business location", stated Minister for Science and Research Beatrix Karl at the press briefing on the annual results of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft/FFG). In 2010 FFG granted unprecedented funding resources of 411 million euro to domestic enterprises and research facilities.

On behalf of the Ministry of Science and Research, the FFG manages European and inter-

national research programmes such as the genome research project "GEN AU". The professional administration by the FFG has made a substantial contribution to the success story of this programme.

Rudolf Hundstorfer requests to make training mandatory for all young people

To improve the opportunities of young people, Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer plans to turn the "Training Guarantee" given by the federal government in 2008 into an "Apprentice Training Obligation" and even considers sanctions. Companies should no longer be allowed to employ untrained young people that easily. If required, entitlement to family allowance could also be withdrawn.

The proposal was welcomed inter alia by Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner, President of the Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl and the Greens.

The electronic health file is gradually becoming a reality

After negotiations of several years, pilot projects will be launched in three Länder in the next few weeks. Patients may agree voluntarily to the electronic registration of medication by doctors and pharmacies as well as to the centralised storage of these data.

According to Minister of Health Alois Stöger, Austria will play a "pioneering role in the EU" in this field.

Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian become A-level exam subject

As from the next academic year 2011/12, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian may be chosen as the second modern language at two academic secondary schools in Vienna. As a result, the pupils will be able to take regular A-level exams in these subjects. If the pilot project is successful, these languages will soon be offered in a larger number of schools.

Karl Blüml, School Inspector for Academic Secondary Schools in Vienna, described this measure as a "contribution to social peace".

Beatrix Karl meets with her Russian counterpart Fursenko

"Russia and Austria will intensify cooperation in the sphere of universities and research", announced Minister for Science and Research Beatrix Karl after her working meeting with Russian Minister for Education and Science Andrei Fursenko on 30 March 2011. The respective agreement is being prepared and will be signed in May.

SPORTS POLICY**Minister of Sport Darabos presented initiative “Sport with Career Prospects“**

In early April, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos presented – together with Roswitha Stadlober, manager of the association “Karriere Danach“ (“The Career After Sports”), the campaign “sport with career prospects“. The aim of the programme is to support former high-performance athletes in transitioning out of competition and carving out a new career for themselves. Darabos stressed how important it was “to create new career prospects for former top athletes“. The Ministry of Sport subsidises this programme with 300,000 euro in 2011.

“We spend this amount to support a crucial initiative for high-performance sport. This is an integral part of our social responsibility vis-à-vis thousands of Austrian elite athletes“, stated Darabos. He especially welcomed the fact that the programme was promoted by personalities who had been active in competitive sports themselves. “We present athletes who successfully managed to build a second career“, said the Minister. Only few people are informed about the lack of social protection for high-performance athletes. Especially athletes competing in less well paid disciplines find it difficult to end their career in elite sport. Their situation is aggravated by the fact that they could not combine their time-consuming training in high-performance sports with education and vocational training.

The campaign “Sport with Career Prospects“ will be managed by the association “The Career After Sports“. The programme offers a wide range of career support services to athletes, e.g. to promote the occupational integration of former elite athletes or to offer career counselling to young active athletes. The association is supported and funded by the Ministry of Sport and the Public Employment Service.

Sport & Business Circle: “Do we have to worry about ski sport?“

Winter tourism is among Austria’s most important economic factors, it creates jobs and makes Austria a leading winter sports destination. But a glance into the future does not only bode well. The effects of climate change, higher risks of sports injuries as well as a shortage of young talents are high on the agenda of meetings such as this year’s first Sport & Business Circle held by Österreichische Sporthilfe in Vienna on 4 April 2011. Samo Kobenter, Head of the Department of Sport of the Federal Ministry of Defence

and Sport, Klaus Leistner, Secretary-General of the Austrian Ski Association (Österreichischer Skiverband), Franz Schenner, Spokesman of the Alliance for the Future of Winter (Allianz Zukunft Winter), Peter Zellmann, Head of the Institute for Leisure and Tourism Research (Institut für Freizeit- und Tourismusforschung) and ex-skier and present hotelier Hans Enn participated in the discussion on the economic aspects of skiing. The event raising the question “Does Austria’s number one sport have to fear the future?“ was moderated by journalist Michael Roscher of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). Since 1995 schools have been entitled to decide independently on organising ski courses. As a result, the number of skiing pupils has dropped by one third in the past few years. To counter this trend, the Ministries of Sport and Education, the Economic Chamber Austria (WKO) and the Austrian Ski Association set up the common platform “Service Centre for Winter Sports Weeks“.

Will this innovative model help to spark the enthusiasm of tomorrow’s potential winter holiday-makers for Austria’s most popular sport and to safeguard skiing as an important economic factor in the future? Isn’t the industry required to react with new offers and price adjustments to these changes?

Samo Kobenter of the Ministry of Sport drew clear conclusions: “It is necessary to raise awareness of this problem. Too little is done to encourage young people to exercise. Structural changes are necessary, notably in schools.“

Klaus Leistner considers ski sport sufficiently attractive for young people: “Thanks to new techniques such as carving, skiing has become more attractive for the younger target group. Our main competitors are all-inclusive resorts, which are preferred by families.

Hans Enn sees a major problem: “People are lazier – not only the pupils but also the teachers. Skiing has to be brought to young people. Ski-lift operators and tourism associations face the challenge of developing attractive offers.“

Secretary-General of Austria’s Olympic Committee (Österreichisches Olympisches Comité/ÖOC) Peter Mennel, ÖOC Marketing Director Florian Gosch, President of the Austrian Volleyball Association (Österreichischer Volleyball Verein/ÖVV) Peter Kleinmann, former speed skater Michael Hadschieff, four-times rowing world champion Christoph Schmölzer as well as minigolf European vice champion Elisabeth Gruber did not let the opportunity slip to participate in this discussion at Austria Trend Hotel Savoyen in Vienna.