

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

Editorial close: 9 May 2011

No. 10/11

HOME AFFAIRS

Agreement on bilingual signposts in Carinthia
Financial framework for 2012 to 2015
8 May 2011: commemorating the victims of National Socialism

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL

Federal Chancellor Faymann in China
Turkish President Gül in Austria
Minister of Defence Darabos visits UN peacekeepers in the Golan Heights
Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Zagreb

ECONOMY

Unemployment decreased in April by 5.4 percent
Current account balance 2010: surplus of 7.8 billion euro
Wind power: more jobs, less CO2

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

Wiener Festwochen 2011
Viennafair 2011
10 Years of Vienna MuseumsQuartier
Theodor Kramer Prize to Ruth Klüger
Parliamentary session: are ethics lessons to become compulsory at school?
Karlheinz Töchterle hosted symposium "Research for Life"
Claudia Schmied: State Prize for Adult Education
World Press Freedom Day
BDA experts enthusiastic about sensational discovery
IT group Oracle opens research lab at the University of Linz
Dialogue on "new comprehensive school"
Construction commences: Bruckner University of Linz

SPORTS POLICY

Federal President Fischer opens Maccabi Games in Vienna in July
Minister Darabos invited sports stars to a physical education lesson
Elisabeth Görgl and Mario Stecher are Styria's Athletes of the Year

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HOME AFFAIRS**Agreement on bilingual signposts in Carinthia**

56 years after the Austrian State Treaty was signed, the issue of bilingual topographical signposts in Carinthia has finally been solved. The Federal Republic of Austria, the Land of Carinthia and Slovene associations reached a compromise regarding the conflict over German-Slovene village and town signposts in Klagenfurt on 26 April 2011. They also agreed on details concerning the use of Slovene as an official language, cooperation with the Slovene minority as well as the promotion of Slovene educational and cultural facilities.

Hence, a conflict “reaching back into the past” had been settled and new vistas for the development of the bilingual region were opening up in a “Dialogue Forum”, stressed Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer acting as the federal government’s negotiator-in-chief one day after reaching the consensus on 27 April 2011 – the 66th anniversary of the reestablishment of the Republic of Austria. The referendum pushed through by the Carinthian Freedom Party (FPK), which will be held by postal vote in the second week of June throughout Carinthia, was described by him as “part of the compromise”.

The memorandum was also signed by Carinthia’s Governor Gerhard Dörfler (FPK) as well as the representatives of the Slovene minority Valentin Intzko, Marjan Sturm and Bernhard Sadovnik. The constitutional act is likely to be adopted by the National Council with the necessary two thirds majority before the summer break. President Heinz Fischer referred to a “good day for Austria”, Chancellor Werner Faymann praised the “historic negotiation result” conforming to the Constitution. In line with Austria’s tradition, “points of agreement and not of disagreement” had been sought, stated Faymann. Foreign Minister Spindelegger was proud of the “respectable result”.

The key elements of the agreement are as follows: In 164 Carinthian villages and towns bilingual signposts will be put up. The agreement does not allow the subsequent addition of provisions to the law (“Öffnungsklausel”). No census to determine the number of minority members will be held. A “Dialogue Forum” will be set up for Carinthia’s multilingual region. Regulations on the funding of the Slovene music education system, bilingual nurseries, sport and the media have been laid down. Regarding the use of Slovene as an official language, special rules (partial application) were adopted for St. Kanzian and Eberndorf, in

14 other municipalities Slovene may be used before the authorities without any restrictions.

Financial framework for 2012 to 2015

The federal government adopted the financial framework for the period 2012 to 2015 in the Council of Ministers’ session on 27 April 2011. The Federal Financial Framework Act is expected to be passed by the National Council in mid-May. The austerity policy will be continued to consolidate the budget. Almost all ministries have to cut expenses, while more resources are made available for nursing care, education, art and culture, families, internal security and infrastructure. The Financial Framework up to 2015 guaranteed stable finances and budget consolidation on the one hand and important investments in promising areas strengthening Austria as a business location on the other hand, stressed Chancellor Faymann at the presentation of the bill in the National Council on 29 April 2011. The budget deficit is to drop below the 3% Maastricht limit by 2013 and to 2% in 2015. Compared to the remaining EU Austria was in a good position, said Faymann.

8 May 2011: commemorating the victims of National Socialism

Like every year, the highlight of the country-wide commemorations of the anniversary of the surrender of Hitler’s Germany on 8 May 1945 was the International Liberation Ceremony at the memorial of the former concentration camp Mauthausen (Upper Austria). The Austrian Mauthausen Committee had selected “Network of Terror” as this year’s leitmotiv. The International Liberation Ceremony on 8 May 2011 was attended by survivors, their families as well as political representatives, e.g. Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer, Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner. On 5 May 2011, Parliament held a Commemoration Day against Violence and Racism attended by President Heinz Fischer, members of government and Parliament as well as high-ranking representatives of public life. The main speaker was author and literary scholar Ruth Klüger, who had survived three concentration camps as a child. In her speech the 70-year-old woman living in the USA emphasised the incomprehensibility of the mass killings in the Holocaust and the destiny of the children in that era. Barbara Prammer reiterated the importance of never forgetting. Reminding of the horrors of NS terror in a press release, Chancellor Faymann appealed to exercise vigilance and to protect democracy and the rule of law.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal Chancellor Faymann in China**

On 5 and 6 May 2011, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and an official delegation paid a state visit to China. The trip had been organised in the context of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Austria and the People's Republic of China. In Beijing Chancellor Faymann met with China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and President Hun Jintao.

The talks focused on economic affairs but also sensitive human rights issues were addressed by Faymann. In the EU the establishment of good economic relations with China should not be separated from human and civil rights issues, emphasised Faymann. In Beijing the Austrian Federal Chancellor also met with a Chinese dissident whose name was not disclosed for safety reasons.

Concrete cooperation projects, especially in the areas of environmental technology, energy efficiency, renewable energies and public transport, were agreed on by the two countries. Austria considered these industries "highly crucial as we are firmly committed to phasing out energy production from coal and nuclear energy", stressed Faymann. Jointly developed technology parks were to be established both in China and Austria. Austria expected this initiative to boost exports to China and to further improve its foreign trade balance. Chancellor Faymann called for a free and fair access of European companies to the Chinese market.

Turkish President Gül in Austria

Turkish President Abdullah Gül arrived in Austria on 2 May 2011 for a three-day state visit. He was accompanied by his wife Hayrünnisa and a large trade delegation. The political programme included meetings with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer. Economic and energy issues, integration and Turkey's EU accession negotiations were top items on the agenda.

In Vienna Gül campaigned for Turkey's entry into the EU by highlighting the strong economic potential of his country. Particularly Austria – which had intensive economic relations with Turkey – would profit from Turkey's EU membership. Last year, Austria's exports to Turkey had for the first time exceeded the one-billion-euro threshold. Among Austria's top 30 export partners, Turkey was the country to which exports increased most

significantly (plus 40%). A bilateral economic protocol was signed.

With regard to the integration of Turks living in Austria, Gül underlined that they could fulfil a bridging function but were required to speak both German and Turkish.

After his talks with Gül, Federal Chancellor Faymann reaffirmed Austria's position on Turkey's ongoing EU entry negotiations. Austria regarded the accession talks as an "open-ended process" but gave preference to a privileged partnership instead of EU membership. Before Turkey's potential EU accession, a referendum would have to be held, said Faymann. Moreover, the Federal Chancellor stated that he had drawn attention to inalienable fundamental values such as freedom of opinion, human rights, democratic codetermination and press freedom vis-à-vis Gül.

Gül's last stop on his visit to Austria was Salzburg, where Governor Gabi Burgstaller gave him a guided tour through the historic city centre.

Minister of Defence Darabos visits UN peacekeepers in the Golan Heights

During a brief visit to the Austrian UN peacekeepers in the Golan Heights on 3 May 2011, Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos informed himself of the situation in Syria. His visit was also "a signal to the Syrian government that Austria was observing the events in the region very closely", stated Darabos. In various meetings the Minister was informed that despite the internal crisis in Syria there were no "restrictions in fulfilling the mandate" of the mission of UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force). Austria has participated in the mission since 1974. Currently 380 female and male Austrian soldiers are deployed in the region.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Zagreb

During a working visit in Croatia, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and his Slovak counterpart Mikuláš Dzurinda met with Croatian President Ivo Josipović as well as Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor and Foreign Minister Gordan Jandroković in Zagreb on 26 April 2011.

Spindelegger and Dzurinda were convinced that Croatia would conclude the EU accession negotiations in June – during the Hungarian Council Presidency. "We will continue supporting Croatia in the very last phase", stated Spindelegger, who also pled for Croatia's participation in the Danube Region Strategy.

ECONOMY**Unemployment decreased in April by 5.4 percent**

In April the Austrian unemployment rate decreased for the 14th time in a row. 236,304 persons were registered as unemployed, i.e. minus 5.4% or 13,375 compared to April 2010. The number of participants in training programmes of the Public Employment Service dropped by 19.3% (15,629 persons) to 65,421 persons. In total, 301,725 people were jobless; this corresponds to a decline by 8.8%.

At the end of April, the unemployment rate stood at 6.6% (minus 0.4 percentage points) based on the national method of calculation or at 4.3% in accordance with the EU definition.

In contrast, 36,025 vacancies were registered; this is a plus by 15.7% compared to the same month of the previous year. Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer hailed the increase in vacant jobs as a “welcomed signal of a positive labour market development”.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann also described the latest labour market data as “very favourable”. With more than 3.3 million working people (employees), the highest employment level since the beginning of the economic crisis had been reached, said Faymann after the session of the Council of Ministers on 3 May 2011. The government had created the necessary framework for the recovery. However, older workers, foreign labour force and women did not benefit to the same extent from the labour market upswing.

While the unemployment rate for men dropped by 8.2% to 126,758 persons from the level of the previous month, the decline in unemployment was less pronounced for other groups: workers aged above 50 years minus 0.3%, foreign nationals minus 0.6% and women minus 1.9%. Men profited above all from the significant reduction in unemployment in manufacturing (-19.9%) and the construction sector (-12.7%). In the women-dominated sectors tourism and trade unemployment went down by 8.4% and 6.4%, respectively.

In April unemployment decreased sharply also among young people, i.e. by 7.9% to 37,217 persons compared to April 2010. The number of persons seeking apprenticeship places rose slightly by 0.4% to 4,416 persons. Throughout Austria the number of vacant positions for apprentices climbed by 17% to 3,434. The number of long-term unemployed persons plummeted by 30.2% to 5,037 persons.

The average duration of unemployment was 100 days.

Current account balance 2010: surplus of 7.8 billion euro

Last year, the Austrian external sector benefited strongly from the global economic recovery and a major upswing in international trade. According to the Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank / OeNB) a current account surplus of 7.8 billion euro was reported for 2010 (after 8.5 billion euro in 2009), corresponding to 2.7% of the GDP (gross domestic product). This result was mainly due to a positive balance of the service sector (+13.3 billion euro), in which tourism but also other sectors like architectural services or IT play a major role.

OeNB Executive Director Ittner informed that increased prices of raw materials were one of the reasons for the trade balance deficit – last year Austria’s import volume exceeded exports by 3.2 billion euro.

International capital flows continue to be under the impact of the economic crisis. Austrian direct investors spent 8.2 billion euro, especially into existing portfolios.

Austria has registered surpluses in the current account balance since 2002, this fact underscored Austria’s competitiveness, stressed Ittner. After dramatic losses during the crisis, foreign trade had recovered quickly in 2010. Trade in services was less volatile and therefore declined less sharply, said Ittner.

Just like the remaining service sector, tourism reported a plus (6.4 billion euro). With 22 million guest arrivals, the record of 2005 was surpassed. But tourists stayed for shorter periods and the number of hotel nights stagnated. Income in tourism rose by 1%.

Freight transport services had registered a minus of 3.2 billion euro in 2010 (-2.3 billion euro in the previous year), leading to a minor reduction of the current account surplus.

Wind power: more jobs, less CO2

Electricity production from renewable energies such as wind power does not only cut CO2 emissions but also has favourable effects on the economy. At present, the domestic wind power industry safeguards a total of 3,300 jobs. This number would rise to 7,000 if the National Action Plan for Renewable Energies of the Ministry of Economy was implemented – wind power output of 1,011 megawatt would consequently increase by another 1,570 megawatt in the period up to 2020, as Stefan Moidl, Manager of IG Windkraft (Interest Group Windpower), informed.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Wiener Festwochen 2011**

Under the motto “From the world’s ends about the ends of the world”, Wiener Festwochen (“Vienna Festival”) – headed by Festival Manager Luc Bondy together with Performing Arts Director Stefanie Carp and Music Director Stéphane Lissner – will present a varied programme from 13 May to 19 June 2011. The 41 productions from 23 countries include nine world premieres and two productions by Christoph Marthaler. The director presents Beat Furrer’s new opera “Wüstenbuch” (a co-production with “Theater Basel”), which will also usher in a three-year contemporary music theatre cycle. In the theatre project “±0 A Subarctic Base Camp” – which will receive its world premiere at Wiener Festwochen – Marthaler and his ensemble will explore Greenland and the culture of the Inuit together with artists from Nuuk and Kangerlussuaq. Luc Bondy himself stages two productions: Verdi’s “Rigoletto” with young Israeli conductor Omer Meir Wellber (at Theater an der Wien) and the Parisian production of Ionesco’s “The Chairs”. Director Peter Sellars will be responsible for the world premiere of a text by Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison: “The Desdemona Project”. Robert Lepage presents “The Far Side of the Moon”, while Patrice Chéreau will direct Jon Fosse (“Autumn Dream” and “I Am the Wind”). Other artists represented at the festival are Alvis Hermanis, Ruedi Häusermann, Ivo von Hove, Frank Castorf and Andreas Kriegenburg. The programme is rounded off with productions from Japan, Columbia (on carnival and drugs) and Hungary (“Reality Show“ by Kornel Mundruczo), while the Lebanese Walid Raad will delve into the subject “art and war” at Galerie Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary. Carlus Padrissa (member of La Fura dels Baus) will stage the opera “Oresteia“ by Iannis Xenakis in front of St. Charles’ Church. In a special mini festival at Tanzquartier five projects will be given their world premiere. Wiener Konzerthausgesellschaft and Wiener Festwochen will organise the 35th International Music Festival from 14 May to 21 June 2011. The programme sections “Into the City“ and “forum festwochen“ will be continued. “Into the City“ targets new audiences. Austrian composer Bernhard Gander was commissioned to create a piece which will be performed for the first time by RSO Wien (conductor: Cornelius Meister) at the shopping mall “Donau Zentrum”. “forum festwochen“ investigates sur-

vival strategies by using artistic-discursive and performance formats such as the art installation “Survival Camp” at “project space karlsplatz“. In this project the question will be raised how to survive in view of scarce natural resources, of new struggles over their distribution, the collapse of institutions and climate change. Free artistic practice – not associated with representation – will be in the limelight. As from 2014, Markus Hinterhäuser, who is currently in charge of Salzburger Festspiele, will be at the helm of the festival, Shermin Langhoff (Berlin) will become co-manager.

www.festwochen.at/

Viennafair 2011

Viennafair 2011 will be held at the fair trade centre “Messe Wien” from 12 to 15 May 2011. The art show does not only provide exhibition space to galleries from Austria, Western Europe and the “focus countries” of Eastern and South Eastern Europe but also countries subsumed under the term “emerging markets“ (China and other states of Asia, North Africa and South America), which have been playing an increasingly important role at the art biennials booming around the globe. The concept for the future of Viennafair takes account of this development by launching a “research zone”. It is open to art initiatives and art associations from the emerging markets and to institutions from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), stated the artistic managers Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer. Architect Johannes Porsch created a spatial structure giving galleries and institutions more flexibility to design exhibition stalls tailored to their needs and to explore new types of cooperation.

Austria’s entire gallery scene will be represented at Viennafair, which is expected to give a clear signal that Austria and particularly Vienna are reclaiming their position as international art venues. Moreover, no less than 46 participants from the focus countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe registered for the event. This is not only an all-time high of exhibitors from this region in the history of Viennafair but also one of the reasons why this art fair is so interesting for the audience. For the first time the spotlight is turned on a selected country. The art scene of Istanbul will be the centrepiece of Viennafair 2011: “Diya-log“: Art from Istanbul. The exhibition space designed for this contribution reminds of the courtyard of a historical caravansary. Outsider positions of the art market – both projects and solo presentations of selected works – are accommodated in the “research zone”. The re-

spective works are, however, sold at the stalls of the galleries, which could choose an outsider artist in the preliminaries of the show. This model is expected to pave the way for long-term cooperation between artists and galleries. Viennafair will attract visitors with a wide range of background talks, lectures, art education programmes as well as presentations of art institutions from Austria and abroad. The art show also offers a Performance Night, special programmes for art teachers and collectors, art education as a performative act with Polish artist Pawel Althamer as well as the event “Open forum: EAST by SOUTH WEST“ by departure, the creative agency of the City of Vienna. The Federal Economic Chamber grants Emerging/Established Gallery Prizes (each worth 5,000 euro) for the best gallery stalls.

www.viennafair.at/

10 Years of Vienna MuseumsQuartier

To mark its 10th anniversary, Museumsquartier (MQ) – one of the largest cultural precincts in the world – offers even more cultural events than in the past years. This year’s literary and film festivals focus on Europe. The official birthday of MQ is only on 30 June 2011 but the kick-off events have taken place from 3 to 6 May 2011. Konservatorium Wien Privatuniversität (Conservatoire Vienna – Private University) staged a music programme (“Kons Goes Public“) with the world premiere of Darrel Toulon’s choreography to Markus Stockhausen’s suite “Dancing Light“. A thematic day on 6 May 2011 allowed children and young people to explore issues like integration, climate protection, sustainability, cultural diversity and multilingualism. The exhibition “Playface Intercut“ presented works embodying the interplay between art and media technology, which were created by students of the master programme “Interface Culture“ at the Art University of Linz. In their interactive sound and light installation “soundedge“, Turkish artists Selin Özcelik and Nagehan Kurali transcribed the human voice onto a projection screen. In their work “rambler“ – a sports shoe with an integrated Twitter mechanism –, media artists Tiago Martins and Ricardo O’Nascimento ironised the need of people to express themselves continuously. Curator Edelbert Köb invited 17 renowned Austrian artists (e.g. Erwin Wurm, Peter Sandbichler, Gunter Damisch) to examine the entrepreneurial vision “Shaping the Future with Plastics“. The inflatable sculptures visible from a long distance are to illustrate the flexibility and

versatility of the material. Under the motto “The art of creating innovation“, they will dominate the MQ forecourt at the end of June (28 June to 3 July) and at the end of September (27 September to 2 October). The art project “Fathomizing Memory“ will be showcased up to 22 May 2011. It describes history as a dynamic element which has to be examined constantly. An installation by V. Nino Jaeger links up documents of survivors of the NS regime to the present. From 20 May to 5 September 2011, the fashion exhibition “Get in the Haze“ sheds light on the controversial relationship between fashion and contemporary art. “SOFA unplugged“ is a mobile installation by Josef Trattner. Together with the publishing house Schlebrügge, he invites visitors to an expedition through the city and to joint events, talks and readings (20 May 2011 Radek Knapp; 10 June 2011 Julya Rabinowich; 8 July 2011 Filip Florian). Another highlight is “Hubert Lepka / Lawine Torrèn: Sofamaschine“, a choreography with the MQ courtyard furniture “Enzos“, forklifts and dancers. From 10 June to 1 October 2011 sound objects will be suspended over the MQ main courtyard in the context of Andres Bosshard’s “MQ Sound Heaven“. Besides “Wiener Beschwerdechor“ (18 June), the MQ programme includes a reading with Péter Esterházy (20 June 2011), the “Long Night of European Music“ (21 June 2011) and sand sculpture art from the Netherlands (21 June to 31 July 2011). On 30 June 2011, open-air concerts will be held. Last but not least, the German artists’ group Urbanscreen will project visuals on the facades of Leopold Museum in an audio-visual performance curated by the Vienna sound:frame festival.

http://www.mqw.at/MQ10/Gesamtprogramm_10_Jahre_MQ.pdf

Theodor Kramer Prize to Ruth Klüger

The 11th Theodor Kramer Prize honouring authors writing in contexts of resistance and exile (prize money: 7,300 euro) will be granted to Ruth Klüger on 20 May 2011. The author born in Vienna in 1931 was deported to different concentration camps, where she started to write poems. After her emigration, she studied and taught at universities in the USA. In 1989 she authored a prize-winning bestseller, i.e. her commemorative volume “Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered“. The jury praised the fact that the author had helped “many people to pull down the wall between them and the so-called past“, and underlined the diversity and literary quality of Klüger’s work.

Parliamentary session: are ethics lessons to become compulsory at school?

Should ethics lessons become a compulsory subject or replace religion lessons? This question was raised in a special session of Parliament on 4 May 2011. Minister of Education Claudia Schmied underlined the importance of conveying values in society. According to her, ethics could replace religious instructions, become a compulsory school subject for all pupils or could even be discussed as a cross-cutting theme in other lessons. Science Minister Karlheinz Töchterle pled for ethics lessons as a “meaningful” supplement to religious education, while philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann called for specially trained teachers.

Karlheinz Töchterle hosted symposium “Research for Life”

“Research for Life” was the motto of a life sciences symposium hosted by Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle at Aula der Wissenschaften on 2 May 2011. “Life sciences are a success story that is exemplary“, the Minister highlighted Austria’s longstanding tradition and numerous excellent scientists in this field in his opening speech.

The Ministry of Science and Research is Austria’s most important funding body for life sciences, e.g. in the framework of the genome research programme GEN-AU.

Claudia Schmied: State Prize for Adult Education

This year tribute will be paid to persons and institutions active in adult education already for the 49th time. Viktor E. Frankl was one of the first to receive the “Förderungspreis für Volksbildung“ (“Prize Promoting People’s Education”). In 2008 the Ministry of Education, Art and Culture launched a “new edition” of the award, which – as the numerous entries and broad participation in the audience voting demonstrate – has been highly successful.

World Press Freedom Day

“Press freedom guarantees democracy and is a basic prerequisite for justice and fairness in our society“, said Secretary of State for Media Josef Ostermayer on the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2011. “In Austria press freedom, which is and should be a counterweight to the power of the state, is strengthened for example by editorial secrecy (“Redaktionsgeheimnis”). Control mechanisms independent from the state guaranteed the quality of Austrian journalism, which was playing a “pio-

neering role” in this respect at international level”, stated Secretary of State Ostermayer.

BDA experts enthusiastic about sensational discovery

One of the most valuable treasure troves discovered on the Austrian territory was presented by the Federal Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments (Bundesdenkmalamt / BDA) in Vienna. According to experts, the “treasure from Wiener Neustadt“, which was found in a private garden, had been created between 1250 and 1350. It has a total weight of 2.3 kilograms and comprises 153 larger objects such as fibulas, finger rings, pottery fragments and belt buckles as well as 75 minuscule fragments. BDA boss Barbara Neubauer stressed that the jewellery collection would be placed under the protection of the BDA still in the current year and could not leave Austria without permit.

IT group Oracle opens research lab at the University of Linz

Johannes Kepler University in Linz succeeded in luring one of the most renowned IT companies to Linz, namely US Java producer Oracle. The Linz-based Institute of System Software (Institut für Systemsoftware) and the IT group have cooperated for 10 years – the about 6 billion computers operating with Java have already been developed by using Austrian know-how.

Dialogue on “new comprehensive school”

The Ministry of Education called into life a special network for parents of pupils attending “new comprehensive schools” to tackle questions arising in the context of this new type of school. “The aim of the platform is to inform, to stimulate and to facilitate exchange and codetermination processes”, explained Minister of Education Claudia Schmied. The results of an Austria-wide poll among parents shows that the “new comprehensive school” is received well by the mothers and fathers: 80 percent awarded the highest marks of the Austrian school system to the new type of school.

<http://www.edumoodle.at/nmseltern/>

Construction commences: Bruckner University of Linz

A passive solar building (8600 square metres) is built in the middle of a park on Pöstlingberg in Linz. It will accommodate one of the five Austrian universities of music and performing arts.

SPORTS POLICY**Federal President Fischer opens Maccabi Games in Vienna in July**

The Jewish Maccabi Games are one of the largest sports events of the world. In July they will be held for the first time in Vienna – and in the German-speaking area. More than 2,000 participants from about 40 nations – among them 185 Austrians – will compete for medals in 19 disciplines from 5 to 13 July 2011. The event will be formally opened by Federal President Heinz Fischer.

The European Maccabi Games will be held at and in the surroundings of the Hakoah Sports Centre near Prater. The competitions will cover badminton and basketball, fencing, swimming and chess as well as bowling and tennis. About 3,500 visitors are expected.

The Maccabi Games are the largest Jewish sports event – the first Games took place in Tel Aviv in 1932. Like the Olympic Games, the World Maccabi Games are held every four years in Israel and are among the five largest international sports events. The European Maccabi Games also take place at four-year intervals, two years after the World Maccabi Games. Vienna will be the venue of the 13th European Maccabi Games. The Austrian federal capital outshone Stockholm, Madrid and St. Petersburg, which had also applied for hosting the Maccabi Games.

Minister Darabos invited sports stars to a physical education lesson

A physical education lesson with real sports stars – the three gymnasts and Federal Army athletes Marco Mayr, Caroline Weber and Xheni Dyrnishi visited a physical education lesson at the Secondary School for Athletes in Schwechat (Lower Austria) on 4 May 2011 following an invitation by Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos. The sports celebrities joined the pupils of the third and fourth grade in a sports lesson which they will certainly remember for a long time.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos also attended this special occasion: “I initiated this event to give pupils an opportunity to meet athletes in real life they usually know only from TV.”

Austria’s elite athletes are members of the “Red-White-Red Team”. The Ministry of Sport promotes exchanges focusing on high-performance sport through various events and a joint platform on the Internet.

Elisabeth Görgl and Mario Stecher are Styria’s Athletes of the Year

Elisabeth Görgl and Mario Stecher were paid homage to as “Athletes of the Year” at the Styrian gala night of sport. The curling athletes of RSU Leitersdorf in Raabtal became the “Team of the Year”. The title “Coach of the Year” went to Franco Foda and Waltraud Müllner. Cornelia Hütter and Daniel Offenbacher were selected as the “Young Talents of the Year” by the readers of “Kleine Zeitung”. The award was conferred on them by David Coulthard.

Christa Weitzer (curling) and Thomas Frühwirth (wheelchair triathlon and ironman) earned the title “Athletes of the Year with Disabilities”. Red Bull Motorsports boss Helmut Marko was presented the trophy “Styrian Panther” for his lifetime achievements in sports by Styrian Governor Franz Voves.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos – who also acts as the President of the charity organisation “Sporthilfe” – welcomed the guests: “I am very happy to be present at the award ceremony staged for the Styrian Athletes of the Year today. Styria offers quality sports. I kept my fingers crossed for some athletes directly at the competitions, and I was also able to cheer our athletes Elisabeth Görgl and Mario Stecher. Styria delivers an excellent performance also at large-scale sport events. I am pleased that we will be able to support the Alpine Ski World Cup 2013 in Schladming with a budget of about 75 million euro.”

The most sought-after trophy in Styrian sport weighs 18 kg – the bronze Discus Thrower for the Athletes of the Year. It was presented at the Styrian gala night of sport – moderated by the sports presenter of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation Rainer Pariasek – at Helmut List Halle on Thursday evening before an audience of 600 guests.

“We are all proud of the awards conferred on the athletes of the Land of Styria“, as they provide us with an opportunity to review the sports highlights of the past year and to send out a clear signal to the young generation of Styrian athletes,“ said Franz Voves, Governor of Styria.

The grand finale of the gala night was the presentation of a cheque worth 30,000 euro by “Kleine Zeitung“ to Sporthilfe Manager Anton Schutti. “We will use this money to support Austrian athletes preparing for the Olympic Games 2012.”