

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

Editorial close: 23 May 2011

No. 11/11

HOME AFFAIRS

100th Council of Ministers' session: stocktaking and outlook
National Council adopted financial framework 2012 to 2015
Federal Chancellor Faymann: "For a Europe of social balance"

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL

Federal President Fischer in Russia
Minister of Finance Fekter attends meeting on euro in Brussels
Schengen: Austria for "border controls in response to specific situations"

ECONOMY

Austria's economy continues to grow, EU growth outlook revised upwards
Stability Pact formally signed
Mitterlehner: "triple-I strategy" for the Austrian economy

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

Markus Schinwald at the 54th Biennale di Venezia 2011
Show of Austrian contemporary art opened in Moscow
Bawag Contemporary presents Ragnar Kjartansson
WAGNER:WERK Museum Postsparkasse features Hagenauer
Egon Schiele Documentation Centre
Burgenland 2011: Festival Esterházy/ St. Margarethen/Mörbisch Lake Festival
Salzburg Easter Festival 2013 without Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
A new director for the Museum of Applied Arts
Bruno Kreisky Human Rights Award goes to Daniel Barenboim
The work situation of university graduates
Claudia Schmied: 114 additional premises for "new comprehensive schools"
Private schools: no budget cuts and new funding criteria
Doris Bures launches call for proposals on "Intelligent Production"
Heinisch-Hosek: women's concerns are taken seriously by the ORF
International Research Centre for Cultural Studies (IFK)

SPORTS POLICY

Join in the match – the ball season is nearing

IMPRINT

Owner (publisher) and producer: Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service. A-1014 Vienna, Ballhausplatz 1. Editor: Dr. Helmut Wohnout, tel. ++43/1/53115-4154, fax ++43/1/53115-4283, e-mail: helmut.wohnout@bka.gv.at. Dispatch: Division VII/3, 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**100th Council of Ministers' session: stock-taking and outlook**

At the 100th session of the Council of Ministers after the present government took office, the coalition partners – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – took stock of their achievements to date and presented an overview of the challenges ahead. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann told reporters that this session of the Council of Ministers had focused on “further concretising” Austria's security strategy and on defining the standing force of the Federal Army. As in the past, 55,000 persons stood ready for total mobilisation, 12,500 persons were available for disaster relief operations, while 1,100 soldiers could participate in missions abroad, stated Faymann. The respective paper would be adopted by the National Council before the summer break.

The government had piloted the country safely through economically difficult times and created adequate political framework conditions, concluded the Federal Chancellor. The tax reform, labour market packages, the guaranteed minimum income, policies against social dumping, infrastructure investments and the protection of savings deposits had contributed to Austria's stability – and so had entrepreneurs and employees, underlined Faymann.

The Federal Chancellor also highlighted promising developments in health policy. The health insurance institutions had achieved the austerity targets, now work had to be continued in the care sector. Measures to promote employment and education, e.g. expanding child care facilities or the so-called “training guarantee” for young people, were also high on the agenda.

The government's work in figures: since the government took office in December 2008, 216 bills had been adopted or submitted to Parliament in 100 sessions of the Council of Ministers. A total of 647 reports – including 260 EU reports – were presented, 1,730 motions to the Council of Ministers (treaties, agreements, ordinances) were signed and 2,772 items on the agenda were dealt with.

Regarding EU or euro-zone topics, Faymann underlined Austria's position – “yes” to border controls in response to specific situations, but a strict “no” to a general suspension of the Schengen Treaty. Faymann also argued against dismantling the euro-zone and called for more social justice.

National Council adopted financial framework 2012 to 2015

On 18 May 2011, the National Council adopted the Financial Framework Act defining the key budget targets for the period 2012 to 2015 with the votes of the coalition parties, i.e. the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP). The Act provides for expenditure caps for the ministries and lays out a path for bringing the Austrian budget deficit again below the Maastricht limit of 3% of the GDP (gross domestic product) by 2013. For the current year a deficit target of 3.9% has been defined. In the following, the deficit is to decrease steadily, i.e. to 2.9% of the GDP in 2013, to 2.4% in 2014 and 2% in 2015.

The government debt will continue climbing and reach 75.5% of the GDP (Maastricht limit: 60%) in 2013. Interest payments will rise from 6.4 billion euro in 2010 to almost 10 billion euro in 2015.

The austerity policy will have less drastic effects on education, families, justice and health. In the wake of adopting the Financial Framework Act, the “Action Programme” period was extended by one year (until 2015). 80 million euro will be made available for expanding after-school care. Special funds amounting to 80 million euro are allocated to universities, 100 million go to research and another 100 million are earmarked for thermal rehabilitation programmes.

It was a “national task” to comply with the Financial Framework Act, emphasised Chancellor Werner Faymann. Thus Austria had become “a pioneer of social action policies” in Europe, stated Faymann. He also called for adequate conditions to ensure social fairness and just policies at European and international level. Minister of Finance Maria Fekter did not rule out the possibility that a zero-deficit could be achieved by 2015.

Federal Chancellor Faymann: “For a Europe of social balance”

In his speech to the Federal Youth Congress of the Austrian Trade Union Youth (ÖGJ) at Austria Centre in Vienna on 14 May 2011, Chancellor Werner Faymann pled once more for a “Europe of social balance”. Europe faced the question whether the common economic area or neoliberal forces would prevail. He appealed to all those who were now requesting social budget and wage cuts after calling for a strong state and more tax money during the crisis. This was a “Europe for speculators”, depriving young people of “their educational opportunities, their future”, said Faymann.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal President Fischer in Russia**

Federal President Heinz Fischer paid an official visit to Russia from 18 to 21 May 2011. He was accompanied by his wife Margit, several ministers and a large delegation of representatives of the economic, academic and cultural arenas.

In Moscow Fischer held talks with President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. In the capital Kazan of the western Russian Republic of Tatarstan – one of the most highly developed regions and the second-largest oil producer of Russia – Fischer met with President Rustam Nurgalievich Minnikhanov. Moreover, bilateral economic forums were opened in the two cities as the focus of the visit was on economic issues. One of the main objectives of the visit was to explore new business opportunities for about 100 Austrian enterprises. Leading companies of the construction and building materials sector, transport engineering, plant engineering and construction, the healthcare and consumer goods sectors as well as banks and energy suppliers were represented in the Austrian delegation.

Austria and Russia signed for example an action plan to modernise the (Russian) economy as well as cooperation agreements regarding competition policy and technology.

Fischer and Medvedev discussed energy issues, the sensitive subject whether Russia was a safe place for investments (keyword: corruption) as well as humanitarian concerns. Investment cooperation with Austria had developed “intensively, actively”, emphasised Medvedev, highlighting investments in the tourist industry, e.g. in the context of the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi (2014) or the Football World Cup 2018. In Sochi alone, Austrian enterprises have been awarded contracts worth about 1 billion euro.

Both sides described bilateral energy cooperation (Russian gas supplies to Austria since 1968) as “very important”. But Russia was also interested in Austrian know-how in the areas of environmental technology, alternative energies and energy efficiency, stated Medvedev. Fischer underlined that Austria was prepared to support Russia’s application for WTO membership in a constructive way.

About 70% of natural gas supplies to Austria came from Russia. According to the Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), about 450 domestic companies are active in Russia. Austrian exports to Russia increased by 22% in 2010.

Minister of Finance Fekter attends meeting on euro in Brussels

Minister of Finance Maria Fekter expects that a decision on extending the maturity of the rescue loans for Greece will be taken at the summit meeting of EU heads of state and government in late June. After the deliberations of the EU ministers of finance in Brussels on 17 May 2011, Fekter pointed out that the heads of government had already agreed in March on extending the repayment and grace periods to help Greece to implement its austerity programme. A decision on finalising the formalities had, however, been postponed by the EU ministers of finance as the respective reports of the EU Commission, the ECB and IMF were not yet available, explained Fekter.

In contrast, the EU ministers of finance had approved the rescue package for Portugal totalling 78 billion euro. Austria’s share will amount to about 1.5 billion euro but Fekter does not expect these guarantees to be used.

In the “Discussion Hour on Europe“ of the National Council on 18 May 2011, Fekter defended the EU guarantees for Greece emphatically but also stressed that debt relief was not a solution. Debt rescheduling at the expense of the hard currency countries was “out of the question“, stated Fekter. The Greek had to streamline administration and to introduce an efficient tax system. The Minister of Finance rejected a withdrawal of Austria from the euro-zone. One third of the domestic growth could be attributed to the common currency and the single market. The euro was a success story and significantly more stable than the US dollar, said Fekter.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann also rejected the idea of a euro-zone exit determinedly.

Schengen: Austria for “border controls in response to specific situations“

The Schengen countries plan to improve coordination of re-imposed border controls in case of security threats to several countries. Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner stated after deliberations with her EU counterparts in Brussels on 12 May 2011 that she was in favour of new mechanisms for the coordinated re-introduction of border checks if the security needs of several countries had to be met. “Border controls in response to specific situations“ should, as in the past, be decided at national level, said Mikl-Leitner.

ECONOMY**Austria's economy continues to grow, EU growth outlook revised upwards**

In the first quarter of 2011, economic growth in Austria and many parts of Europe has surpassed all expectations. Domestic economic analysts as well as the EU Commission issued upward revisions of their forecasts. The Austrian economy grew by 1.0% in real terms from the previous quarter and by 4.2% year-on-year, informed the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) on 13 May 2011. Germany – Austria's most important trading partner – returned to a pre-crisis level, reporting growth of 1.5% quarter-on quarter. It achieved an annual growth rate of 5.2% – a figure unparalleled since the country's reunification. Growth rates of 0.8% and 2.5%, respectively, were registered in the euro-zone and the EU as a whole. The crisis-ridden countries of Portugal and Ireland, let alone Greece, had not yet recovered. Spain was reporting weak growth.

According to Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner, Austria's favourable economic data were the result of successful economic measures of the federal government and the attractive conditions offered by the business location Austria. Exports continued to be the strongest growth engine, "we plan to reinforce this trend", said Mitterlehner. The increase in investments in plant and equipment was the "barometer" showing the positive business sentiment.

Based on the projections of Wifo, Austria's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 2.1% in 2010 (previous forecast: 2.0%) following an upward revision of the growth rate for the 4th quarter. After assuming an Austrian GDP growth of 1.7% for 2011 in autumn 2010, the European Commission raised its GDP outlook for Austria substantially, i.e. to 2.4%. In early April, domestic experts of Wifo and IHS (Institute for Advanced Studies) had adjusted their GDP forecasts to 2.5% and 2.3%, respectively. For 2012 Brussels predicts 2.0% (euro-zone: 1.8%, EU: 1.9%).

Austria reported an inflation rate of 3.3% in April. The petrol prices increased by 18% year-on-year, food prices went up by 3.7%.

Stability Pact formally signed

The Stability Pact between the Federal Republic of Austria, the Länder and municipalities agreed on by the Governors two months ago has been formally finalised. Minister of Finance Maria Fekter as well as the representatives of the Länder, cities and municipalities

signed the respective agreement at the Conference of Governors in Bad Hall (Upper Austria) on 19 May 2011. Two days earlier, the Council of Ministers had passed the Stability Pact requiring the Länder to adhere to a strict austerity policy.

The aim of the Stability Pact is to bring the general government deficit below the Maastricht limit of 3% by 2013. The deficit of the Federal Republic is to decrease from 3.1% in 2011 to 1.9% in 2014, while the deficits of the Länder should drop from 0.8% to 0.5%. The municipalities are required to achieve equilibrium in their balance sheets on a continuous basis. To ensure consistent budgetary discipline, the Stability Pact contains a sanction clause providing for penalty payments of up to 15% of the overdraft. Another new rule stipulates that local authorities have to adopt ceilings for guarantees extended.

On the other hand, the Federal Republic will cover the additional expenditure for care services of the Länder and municipalities. A Long-Term Care Fund will be introduced to cover the increase in expenses of the Länder and municipalities until 2014. It has a budget of 685 million euro, two thirds (465 million euro) are contributed by the Federal Republic, while one third is provided by the Länder and municipalities. Final arrangements for the period after 2014 still need to be negotiated.

The system of long-term care benefits will be simplified. The Federal Republic of Austria will be in charge of making benefit payments and reduce the number of decision-making bodies from previously 23 to eight. The Länder and municipalities agree to reimburse expenses amounting to 372 million euro.

Mitterlehner: "triple-I strategy" for the Austrian economy

Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner and Governor of the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) Ewald Nowotny explained concepts for necessary structural changes of the Austrian economy in the aftermath of the crisis at a press conference on 16 May 2011. The "market and product restructuring" should be tackled with a "triple-I" strategy, namely by increasing the innovation potential, supporting investments and promoting internationalisation, stated Mitterlehner. In 2010 subsidies granted by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) had reached an unprecedented level of 411 million euro. The aim was to almost double Austria's export share to growing non-European markets to 30% by 2020.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Markus Schinwald at the 54th Biennale di Venezia 2011**

At the 54th Biennale di Venezia – staged under the motto “ILLUMInations” from 4 June to 27 November 2011 – Austria will be represented with a solo exhibition by Markus Schinwald. On the initiative of curator Eva Schlegel, the Venice Biennale Funding and Research Association was founded to provide academic support in the preparations for the Austrian contributions to the international architecture and art exhibitions of the Biennale di Venezia, to establish digital archives and to organise discussion rounds and symposia. Markus Schinwald was born in Salzburg in 1973, studied at the University of Art and Design Linz and at Humboldt University in Berlin and has already created a substantial body of work. At the Venice show the artist will critically examine the architecture and history of the eye-catching Austrian Pavilion designed by Josef Hoffmann in 1934. By creating a moment of confusion between the visible and the invisible, Schinwald transforms spatial experience, allowing the abysmal to materialise in a socio-political context, while the human body is perceived as manipulable. This concept played a major role in his films (“Children’s Crusade“, “dictio pii“) and caused a stir in the 1990s, when Schinwald deprived clothes of their original function by manipulating them. The Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture supports the development, organisation and realisation of the exhibition.

www.labiennale.at

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary presents performance art by the Austrian artists’ duo Gelatin with Special Guests Japanther: “Gelatin Pavilion – Some Like It Hot” at Arsenale during the Biennale Opening Days from 31 May to 5 June 2011. Cullet will be melted in a traditional glass furnace to create a glass puddle sculpture.

Show of Austrian contemporary art opened in Moscow

During an official visit to the Russian Federation, Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied opened the exhibition “Austria Davaj! Creative Forces of Austria” in Moscow on 20 May 2011. Under this programmatic title, the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts (Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst/MAK) – in cooperation with Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow and the Austrian Cultural Forum

Moscow – presents the first large-scale exhibition of Austrian contemporary art, architecture and design in Russia.

At the exhibition in Moscow 17 Austrian artists are represented, including Johanna Braun, Erwin Wurm, Franz West, Otto Muehl and Stefan Sagmeister. The works of art were developed specifically for this show.

Bawag Contemporary presents Ragnar Kjartansson

The first solo exhibition of Ragnar Kjartansson can be seen (and heard) at Bawag Foundation gallery in Vienna until 26 June 2011. The Icelandic artist born in 1976 was a pop star before earning renown for his video works and live performances (The Opera, 2001, Death and the Children, 2002, The Great Unrest, 2005, Venice Biennale 2009) and becoming a reputed visual artist. In his performance “Take me here by the Dishwasher – Memorial for a Marriage“ created specifically for Vienna, ten troubadours, accompanied by a guitar, sing a line from the film “Morosaga“ (“Murder Story”), during whose shooting Kjartansson was fathered. The performers symbolise youth culture and rebellion on the one hand and represent a gender cliché on the other hand. A “social sculpture” emerges at the end of the performance.

www.bawag-foundation.at/

WAGNER:WERK Museum Postsparkasse features Hagenauer

In line with its programmatic focus on the history of design, WAGNER:WERK Museum Postsparkasse of Bawag PSK mounts the exhibition “HAGENAUER. Vienna Modernism and New Objectivity“ (closing on 30 July 2011). About 200 unique craft and design pieces from several private collections are showcased. 40 years after the first exhibition, this show provides museum-goers with an opportunity to delve into the wide range of objects manufactured by Werkstätten Hagenauer (1898–1987). With the support of the Picture Archives of Edwin Babsek and the owners of the objects, WAGNER:WERK Museum Postsparkasse succeeded in developing a research-based documentation of the history of Werkstätten Hagenauer.

The artworks created by Werkstätten Hagenauer were not only influenced by Art Nouveau but also reflected the stylistic reorientation towards Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) after WWI, anticipating what came to be known as “Nordic design“.

www.ottowagner.com

Egon Schiele Documentation Centre

A new Egon Schiele Documentation Centre was set up in Leopold Museum at Museum-Quartier in Vienna. It combines documentation, provenance research and library facilities accessible to researchers and students. Art historian Sandra Tretter is responsible for the database of autographs, into which 2,450 data sets from the Leopold Collection, Albertina and other collections have been integrated in the framework of a project supported by the Ministry of Culture. Provenance researcher and co-initiator of the project Robert Holzbauer plans to make available an online inventory of paintings by Schiele and information about the most important collectors. Eminent Schiele expert Jane Kallir, who also curated the show of Schiele portraits in Belvedere, contributed documents to the project. Numerous works by Schiele are privately owned, lost or cannot be assigned clearly. The new database containing Egon Schiele's notes and correspondence could help to investigate the whereabouts of these works. To promote research on Schiele, the Association of Friends of the Leopold Museum called into life "Egon Schiele scholarships". As from autumn 2011, they will be granted to students preparing diploma or doctoral theses selected by a jury.

<http://www.egonschiele.at>

The Schiele Museum in Tulln (www.egonschiele.eu) reopened after renovation with the permanent exhibition "The Making of the Artist". The show conceived by Christian Bauer is devoted to the childhood and youth of the famous Tulln-born artist (closing on 30 October 2011).

The portraits by Schiele displayed at the gallery of Belvedere Palace may be admired until 13 June 2011 (www.belvedere.at).

Burgenland 2011: Festival Esterházy/ St. Margarethen/Mörbisch Lake Festival

In the series of concerts "Esterházy Festival" staged for the first time, world-class artists will perform at Esterházy Palace in Eisenstadt. Among them are the successful violinist Daniel Hope and pianist Sebastian Knauer (27 to 29 May 2011). Their concerts culminate with a special event starring actress Hannelore Elsner. The Esterházy String Quartet Festival is devoted to Joseph Haydn (3 to 5 June 2011). It features five top ensembles, among them the Tokyo String Quartet. On 22 June 2011, an open-air gala with Elīna Garanča, Leah Partridge and Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien (conducted by Karel Mark Chichon) will be held, presenting works by Bellini, Donizetti,

Verdi, Bizet, Delibes, Gounod and Bernstein. On 22 and 23 July 2011, star violinist Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica will perform Chopin – together with pianists Ingolf Wunder and Anastasiya Dranchuk. From 26 to 30 July 2011, Kammeroper München presents a "pasticcio" performance with highlights from eight Haydn operas. On 27 and 28 August 2011, "Orlando Paladino" will be performed by Freiburger Barockorchester (conductor: Haydn specialist René Jacobs). The festival (26 to 28 August 2011) closes with the performance by US pianist Kit Armstrong. On the sidelines of the festival, famed pianist Alfred Brendel discusses Joseph Haydn with René Jacobs. Last but not least, Brendel gives a lecture on Franz Liszt titled "Vom Überschwang zur Askese" ("From Delirium to Asceticism") with live music examples.

<http://kultur.esterhazy.at/de/node/420>

The **St. Margarethen Opera Festival** (19 July to 28 August 2011) will present Mozart's "Don Giovanni" in the quarry of St. Margarethen (Burgenland). The redesigned "Ruffini stage" (named after a former quarry manager) and its natural backdrop offer a unique setting for the production of opera director Thilo Reinhardt. Artistic manager Joachim Arnold and music director Johannes Wildner created an opulent and electrifying production. Paul Zoller is responsible for the impressive stage design. The cast will include Sebastian Geyer and Anna Virovlanska. To mark the 50th anniversary of the "Passion Plays in the Roman Quarry", a new production of the **St. Margarethen Passion Plays** will be staged. Under the artistic management of Robert Herzl, 450 amateur actors from St. Margarethen will perform from 12 June to 15 August 2011.

The audience of the **Mörbisch Lake Festival** – taking place from 14 July to 18 August 2011 under the artistic management of Harald Serafin – may look forward to "Der Zigeunerbaron" ("The Gypsy Baron") by Johann Strauß. With this operetta the success story of the festival had started in 1957. (Production: Brigitte Fassbaender, music director: Manfred Mayrhofer.)

Outshining 34 competitors, German chamber opera singer Dagmar Schellenberger will succeed Harald Serafin as festival manager in September 2012.

www.seefestspiele-moerbisch.at

Salzburg Easter Festival 2013 without Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra announced that they would abandon the Salzburg Easter

Festival (Salzburger Osterfestspiele) in 2013 and decided to accept an engagement in Baden-Baden – in fact, rumours had been doing the rounds that they wanted to resign since 2009. Governor of Salzburg Gabi Burgstaller plans to set up a working group to develop new prospects for the festival. Festival manager Peter Alward also expressed his hope that a new start would be made in 2013, while the Greens pled for repositioning the festival with a more contemporary vibe.

A new director for the Museum of Applied Arts

On 15 May 2011 Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied presented Christoph Thun-Hohenstein as the new director of the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK). Thun-Hohenstein currently heads the creative agency of the City of Vienna “departure”, is held in high esteem by the art scene and earned a reputation as a gifted networker. Martina Kandeler-Fritsch remains Vice-Director of MAK.

Bruno Kreisky Human Rights Award goes to Daniel Barenboim

Pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim received the Bruno Kreisky Award for Human Rights Achievements for his commitment to promoting reconciliation in the Middle East conflict – jointly with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra founded by him and Palestinian literary scholar Edward Said. It is composed of young Israeli and Palestinian musicians. The award ceremony took place at Musikverein in Vienna on 20 May 2011. Tribute was also paid to the three relief organisations ASPIS, ESRA and HEMAYAT providing support to torture victims and war survivors.

The award worth 700,000 euro was founded in celebration of the 65th birthday of former Austrian Federal Chancellor Kreisky in 1976 and is granted by a foundation at irregular intervals. The laudatory speech in honour of maestro Barenboim was held by Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer, while artist André Heller addressed the relief organisations.

The work situation of university graduates

Minister for Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle presented a recent study on the work situation of graduates of universities (including universities of applied sciences) together with the author of the study Harald Schomburg and Managing Board member of the Public Employment Service (AMS) Johannes Kopf. The core findings: for university graduates job search is comparatively short, the majority of

them get jobs commensurate with their educational level, standard employment dominates, they earn above-average income and state to be highly satisfied with their studies as well as their occupation.

“The work situation of university graduates reflects the good quality of education” noted Minister Töchterle. AMS Managing Board member Kopf emphasised that the notorious “internship generation“ remained a myth.

Claudia Schmied: 114 additional premises for “new comprehensive schools”

114 additional premises for “new comprehensive schools” with 266 classrooms will become available in the next academic year. All lower secondary schools will be converted into new comprehensive schools by 2015.

Based on current legislation, a maximum of ten percent of all compulsory schools may participate in school pilot projects throughout Austria. Recently the government agreed on lifting this threshold. Minister of Education Claudia Schmied informed that conversion of all former lower secondary schools (1st to 4th grade) into new comprehensive schools was to be completed in the academic year 2018/19.

Private schools: no budget cuts and new funding criteria

Minister of Education Claudia Schmied and the representatives of private schools not subsidised by the state agreed on a number of quality assurance measures for private schools in talks described by all participants as “very constructive“. “The future of private schools not subsidised by the state is a matter of concern to me. They promote and provide impetus to the development of the Austrian school system“, stated the Minister of Education.

The new criteria for funding private schools include recognition as an institution having the same rights as a state-run school, a cap on tuition fees per child and year as well as membership in an umbrella organisation. The Minister of Education considered criteria determining the quality of education crucial. Models of alternative pedagogy, quality management tools, financial management subject to controls and quality assurance in the umbrella organisations were mandatory.

Doris Bures launches call for proposals on “Intelligent Production”

The Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) launched the first call for proposals in the framework of the new research, technology and innovation initiative

(RTI Initiative) “Intelligent Production“. With regard to this research priority area, Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures declared: “We wish to keep the production of physical goods in our country“.

The main objective of the new RTI Initiative is to develop productive, resource-efficient and robust emission-free processes and innovative systems in manufacturing. Another call for proposals in 2012 will focus on the second objective: to develop new “intelligent“ materials as well as functional and miniaturised components and materials from renewable, easily available and low-emission resources and to prepare them for market launch.

On the occasion of the first call for proposals of the RTI Initiative “Intelligent Production“, an Orientation Day will take place on 1 June 2011 in which Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures as well as high-ranking representatives of business and industry will participate.

Heinisch-Hosek: women’s concerns are taken seriously by the ORF

Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek expressed her satisfaction about the resolution on promoting gender equality in the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) adopted on 12 May 2011. “The Foundation Council sent a strong signal – in favour of women and, consequentially, quality in the ORF. This resolution sets an example for other media enterprises”, said Heinisch-Hosek.

International Research Centre for Cultural Studies (IFK)

As Minister for Economic Affairs Karlheinz Töchterle announced on 11 May 2011, the International Research Centre for Cultural Studies (Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften/IFK) will be integrated into the University of Art and Design Linz. The institution is renamed “IFK Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften an der Kunstuniversität Linz – IFK International Research Centre for Cultural Studies of the University of Art and Design Linz”. It will remain based in Vienna. www.ifk.ac.at

SPORTS POLICY**Join in the match – the ball season is nearing**

The sports nation Austria is looking forward to a hot summer! Austria's handball teams demonstrated in 2010 that large-scale events staged in Austria can become a huge success. Our American football, fistball and volleyball players may follow their example in the forthcoming mass sports events.

After the successful EURO 2008 and European Handball Championships 2010 held in Austria, three major international team competitions will take place in the near future: the American Football World Championship (8 to 16 July 2011), with tournaments in Vienna, Graz and Innsbruck; the Fistball World Championship (7 to 14 August 2011) staged in Upper Austria, Salzburg and Vienna; the European Volleyball Championship (10 to 18 September 2011) will take place in Innsbruck and Vienna and is co-hosted by the Czech Republic.

These three events do have something in common: some athletes may stand out, but the real stars are the teams. Not only solo athletes such as Lizz Görgl, Benjamin Karl and Sabrina Filzmoser are great role models but our team members also have what it takes to be successful – as the Austrian handball players have demonstrated impressively in the past.

This concept has been upheld by the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM – the platform set up by the Ministry of Sport to raise public awareness. After several successful campaigns, in which solo athletes promoted various important social issues, this year's public relations measures turn the spotlight on domestic team athletes.

“Join in the match” is the key slogan of the new information campaign of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM, which has been coined for the three forthcoming events. This theme has not been chosen at random but conveys several messages.

Large-scale events are a great opportunity to create enthusiasm for sports competitions and exercise as well as to attract spectators and supporters. Ideally, the fans will be encouraged to engage in physical activity themselves. After last year's campaign under the motto “Don't petrify – move!“, the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM continues to carry out its mandate in 2011.

The mission of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM is communicated by its individual members. A large delegation of Austrian elite athletes will for example attend the important qualification match for the European Handball Champion-

ship in Innsbruck on 8 June 2011. One of the declared goals of the RED-WHITE-RED TEAM in this context is to strengthen team spirit.

Hence, this will be a fantastic start into a hot summer for ball games. The fact that the season is opened by our triumphant handball players has an almost symbolic meaning. We hope and believe that Austria – both as a sports nation and host country – and its sports fans will have many reasons to cheer during the next weeks and months.