

## NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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## HOME AFFAIRS

**Government meeting behind closed doors: 7 work packages, 90 measures**

The federal government held a meeting behind closed doors in Semmering (Lower Austria) from 30 to 31 May 2011. In line with the meeting's motto "Providing stimulus to Austria", the coalition partners – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and People's Party (ÖVP) – presented the tasks as well as a roadmap for the remaining legislative term. Seven work packages containing more than 90 measures were drawn up. At the Council of Ministers' session following the government meeting (31 May 2011), concrete steps were adopted to implement these packages focusing on education, infrastructure, the reduction of red tape, increases in efficiency, economic stimulus measures, the long-term care system, the environment as well as alternative energies. The government expected "highly sustainable and strong stimuli for Austria", Chancellor Werner Faymann told reporters. These clearly defined work packages and individual measures guaranteed an adequate framework for modernisation and growth as well as improvements for workers. He also underlined the importance of slimming down the administration of the care system – a joint project of the federal government and the Länder. The financing system would be replaced by a **Fund for Long-Term Care**, to which a budget of 685 million euro is allocated until 2014. Eight instead of previously 303 institutions would be responsible for making benefit payments, informed Faymann. The SPÖ and ÖVP also agreed on various tax relief measures, e.g.: **tax allowances for mechanical fitters posted abroad**, benefiting about 15,000 persons (30 million euro p.a. were earmarked in the budget); **preferential treatment of young entrepreneurs** – exemption from the employer's contribution to wage tax may be claimed for 12 months within three years (instead of one year) (as from 2012); **tax deductibility of charitable donations** to environmental organisations, animal homes and fire brigades (previously only to humanitarian organisations) (as from 2012); the deductible amount for church tax increases from 200 to 400 euro (as from 2012). The Chancellor stressed that the aim of this reform was to further reduce unemployment, to strengthen Austria's economic performance as well as to increase wages and purchasing power. Minister of Finance Maria Fekter was put in charge of developing a tax reform leading to significant simplifications by 2013.

The seven work packages cover priority areas such as expanding the countrywide supply of **new comprehensive schools** as well as increasing the number of **all-day care** places for children from now 105,000 to 210,000 (including after-school care centres) by 2015. As in the case of the Long-Term Care Fund, an agreement between the Federal Republic and the Länder (pursuant to §15a of the Federal Constitution Act on the Organisation and Financing of the Health Sector) is the basis for all measures. The federal government contributes 80 million euro annually, while the Länder are responsible for co-financing. The government also agreed on expanding **childcare facilities** for infants up to the age of three years (to 56,000 places) by 2013. It will make available 10 million euro in 2011 and 15 million euro annually in the period 2012 to 2014 for this purpose. The Länder are expected to double this amount. **Energy** is another issue high on the agenda. Austria will ban the use of nuclear electricity by 2015. Until 2050 the country is to achieve energy autonomy and produce sufficient power from renewable energies.

[www.austria.gv.at/site/6606/default.aspx](http://www.austria.gv.at/site/6606/default.aspx)

**Federal Chancellor Faymann: "Euro has served Austria well in the past"**

Unanimity was shown at the government meeting also with regard to the euro. A withdrawal from the single currency was not an option. According to Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann Austria had definitely profited from the euro. However, one could not hide the fact that long-term problems had arisen due to disparities and blatant mistakes of individual countries. Nevertheless, summary criticism had to be rejected vehemently, said Faymann.

Austria was a "stable factor" in the euro-zone and one of the few countries with a triple-A rating, emphasised the Chancellor. The tasks in the euro-zone had to be tackled regardless "of how difficult they will get", demanded Faymann with regard to Greece. He also stated that the reintroduction of the Schilling would be a "grossly negligent measure" having only adverse effects on Austria. Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger was also against the "dangerous Schilling nostalgia". If help to Greece was refused, the remaining euro-countries would face serious problems.

Much to the delight of the government, unemployment figures dropped steadily, while tax income grew. Wage and value-added taxes went up by 628 million euro and 453 million euro, respectively.

**EUROPE INTERNATIONAL****Heinz Fischer attends Presidents' meeting in Warsaw**

At a meeting of 20 heads of state from Central and South Eastern Europe in Warsaw on 27 May 2011, Federal President Heinz Fischer stressed the fact that democracy in Austria's eastern and southern neighbouring countries could only be achieved "by peaceful means and by creating societies that were prepared and fit for democracy". To this end, it was necessary to provide an "acceptable material basis" to the population in general and "reasonable prospects" to young people in particular, stated Fischer.

It was not enough "to pay lip service", adequate quality of life and social justice were indispensable, said Fischer. The Federal President described in his speech that religious fundamentalism and "exaggerated nationalism" – which was once more gaining ground in Europe – were threats to democracy.

The European Union was the "driving force behind democracy", Fischer added. Therefore the Community was called upon to avert the threat of a crisis. It was in the interest of all to contribute to the success of European integration and to reduce national selfishness in the Member States, explained Fischer. In this context, the Austrian head of state also explained that the arrest of alleged war criminal Ratko Mladić was a "crucial step for Serbia on its path towards EU membership".

The meeting of the heads of state in Warsaw was devoted to the democracy movements in the countries bordering the EU and particularly in northern Africa. US President Barack Obama participated in the formal dinner.

**50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OECD: Federal Chancellor Faymann in Paris**

Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Secretary of State for Financial Affairs Andreas Schieder at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris on 25 May 2011. Austria is one of the 18 founding members of the organisation established in 1961. Today 34 countries are members of the OECD. Besides OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, EU Council President Herman van Rompuy, German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy attended the festivities.

In Paris Federal Chancellor Faymann once more beat the drum for a global financial

transactions tax. According to Faymann, the introduction of this tax would make a fair and socially just contribution to coping with the crisis that had been caused by the financial markets, said Faymann.

As demonstrated by Austria, it was necessary to invest in education, infrastructure, new technologies and research even in times of crisis so as to prevent "that the gap between the poor and rich continues widening", underlined Faymann in the roundtable discussion "Riding the Storm – Lessons from Leaders". A vital measure to eliminate social imbalances and, in particular, to decrease excessive youth unemployment was to consolidate the budgets. To achieve this goal, new income sources were required. In Europe alone, the financial transactions tax could generate additional income of up to 250 billion euro if a broad tax base and a very low tax rate were applied, stated the Austrian Federal Chancellor.

**Federal President Fischer attends Italy's unification anniversary in Rome**

Federal President Heinz Fischer participated in the official celebrations marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Italy's unification in Rome on 2 June 2011. The ceremony was hosted by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano. Among the invitees were the heads of state of all EU Member States, US Vice President Joe Biden, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Spain's King Juan Carlos, Israel's President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

On the sidelines of the festivities, Fischer also held talks with Abbas. Last but not least, the Federal President visited the Austrian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale on 3 June 2011.

**Faymann: fighting for the nuclear exit**

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann described Germany's plans to phase out nuclear power by 2022 as a "milestone".

In an interview with the daily "Österreich" (5 June 2011), he also drew attention to the fact that Switzerland was gradually decommissioning its nuclear power plants and that the number of anti-nuclear activists in Italy was increasing. Chancellor Faymann was convinced that there was "a clear majority against atomic energy all over Europe".

In consultation with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), an anti-nuclear summit would be held still before the summer break, informed Faymann.

## ECONOMY

### **Austria boasts lowest unemployment rate in the EU**

Unemployment in Austria continued to decline in May. 221,369 persons were registered as jobless with the Public Employment Service (minus 2.5% compared to the same month of last year). The number of participants in public training programmes decreased by 12,398 persons to 65,780. Hence, in May a total of 287,149 people were out of work, i.e. minus 18,118 (-5.9%) from May 2010. Since the labour market opening on 1 May 2011, the number of unemployed persons declined by almost 15,000. This implied that the Austrian labour market had not been flooded by workers from the neighbouring countries, underlined the Ministry of Social Affairs on 1 June 2011. The “sonic barrier” had been broken as – with more than 3.4 million working people in Austria – an all-time high had been achieved in May. In April the unemployment rate was 6.1% (-0.3 percentage points) based on the Austrian method of calculation and 4.2% according to the EU definition. Austria was the EU Member State with the lowest unemployment rate, informed the Ministry in a press release.

Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer stressed the favourable development of youth and long-term unemployment, which had been posing longstanding problems. The “smallest shortage of apprenticeship places in three years” was reported in May. 4,072 apprenticeship seekers were registered, while vacant training positions totalled 3,301. As a result, the apprenticeship gap had shrank to 771 persons, said Hundstorfer. The number of vacancies rose sharply by 9.3% to 36,197, reflecting the steady upward trend of the economy. The number of long-term unemployed persons (out of work for more than one year) also decreased substantially, i.e. by almost one third from 6,865 to 4,841 persons affected.

The economic recovery had beneficial effects, notably on manufacturing (-18.7% jobless persons), the construction sector (-12.6%) and trade (-5.2%). Men’s unemployment dropped more markedly (by 6.1%) than overall unemployment. The unemployment rate for women climbed by 1.8%, which was mainly due to the adverse development in tourism. Including training programme participants, the number of jobless women decreased year-on-year by 3,557.

According to Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner, the latest unemployment data demonstrated that enterprises were

benefiting from the “favourable framework at the business location Austria”.

### **OECD outlook: more growth for Austria**

After the severe crisis, the global economy was recovering, and the recovery was becoming self-sustained and more broad-based, analysed the OECD (Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation) in its latest forecast presented in Paris on 25 May 2011. For Austria a more favourable trend was assumed than only in autumn. The OECD raised its forecast for Austria’s growth by half a percentage point. The GDP is expected to grow by 2.9% in 2011 and by 2.1% in 2012.

The upswing had been mainly driven by the economic stimulus packages of 2008 and 2009, explained Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner and Secretary of State for Financial Affairs Andreas Schieder. According to the OECD, global growth is expected to reach 4.2% this year and 4.6% in 2012. The euro-zone will grow by 2.0% annually. With a GDP growth of 2.6%, the USA will exceed the OECD average slightly by 2.3% in 2011. For Germany a growth rate of 3.4% was predicted.

### **Austrian exports hit a record level**

Austrian exports are reaching new record levels. The Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) expects exports to grow by 14.1% to 125 billion euro. Never before had domestic companies sold so much abroad, stressed WKO President Christoph Leitl at the WKO Export Day on 26 May 2011. And the trend is even likely to improve in 2012. With an additional growth of 9.1%, the export volume will probably surge to 136 billion euro.

In January and February 2011, exports grew by 24.2% to 18.3 billion euro, while imports rose by 25.5% to 19.4 billion euro. During the first six months exports are estimated to have grown by 16.7% to 60.3 billion euro. Austria’s export sector plans to focus on fast growing emerging countries. Currently 18% of Austria’s exports go to overseas markets – this share is to be pushed to 25% by 2015.

### **Amendment to National Bank Act**

On 24 May 2011, the Council of Ministers adopted an Amendment to the National Bank Act. The number of members of the General Council of the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) will gradually be decreased from 14 to ten in 2015. The OeNB’s compensation for bank audits will increase from 4 million euro to 8 million euro. As in the past, 90% of the net profit will be transferred to the national budget.

**CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE****Lyric Poetry Prize 2011**

The 2011 Ernst Jandl Prize for Lyric Poetry goes to Austrian author Peter Waterhouse (who was born in Berlin in 1956). Together with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied will present the Prize to Peter Waterhouse at a ceremony staged at the City Hall on 18 June 2011 in the framework of the Ernst Jandl Poetry Festival.

“The literary work of Peter Waterhouse is versatile and multi-faceted. He writes poems and stories, and with “Krieg und Welt” (“War and World”) he succeeding in creating a comprehensive and much-noticed prose work. He has authored essays and texts for the stage and is a renowned translator from English and Italian. However, the key features of Peter Waterhouse’s body of work are poetry and his poetic view of the world which he reconstructs in each individual text”, stated Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied. Waterhouse grew up bilingually and studied in Vienna and Los Angeles. He was awarded the Erich Fried Prize (2007) and the Literary Prize of the City of Vienna (2008).

The Ernst Jandl Prize for Lyric Poetry (prize money: 15,000 euro) was founded in commemoration of the author and poet Ernst Jandl, who died on 9 June 2000. Since then the prize has been awarded for outstanding achievements in German-language poetry at two-year intervals. The prize winners are selected by a jury consisting of five members. As Minister Schmied put it, this prize “is all about the relentlessness and obstinacy of texts that are enriching, changing and promoting the project ‘poetry’. These are texts we wish to be published, read and discussed.” The Ernst Jandl Poetry Festival takes place in Neuberg/Mürz from 17 to 19 June 2011.

[www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/15305/jandl\\_programm\\_heft.pdf](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/15305/jandl_programm_heft.pdf)

**Kreisky Book Prize 2010 goes to Charles Taylor**

The Bruno Kreisky Prize for the Political Book 2010 will be presented to Canadian political scientist and philosopher Charles Taylor on 10 June 2011. In his work “A Secular Age” Taylor examines the secularisation of society starting in 1500, when faith was a key component of the social fabric. Taylor presents the hypothesis that religion itself had bred secularity and describes the complex historical development of the secular mentality of the modern human being caught in the no man’s land be-

tween faith and atheism. Charles Taylor, who was born in 1931, is one of the most influential representatives of contemporary political philosophy.

The Recognition Award is presented to Sandra Innerwinkler, who has distinguished herself through “linguistic innovation in political discourse”. The Special Prize for Achievements in Publishing goes to Wieser Verlag.

**Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary takes “The Morning Line” to Vienna**

The Vienna-based foundation for contemporary art presents the sound pavilion “The Morning Line” developed by artist Matthew Ritchie from New York in collaboration with ArandaLasch and Arup AGU. The installation – the so far most ambitious project in public space of the foundation of Francesca Habsburg – is on show at Schwarzenbergplatz in Vienna until 20 November 2011. It is inaugurated with a festival of contemporary composition (8 to 11 June 2011) presenting contributions from 28 sonic artists and musicians, including nine new “venue-specific” compositions.

The main objective of “The Morning Line” is to devise an architectural language where geometry and artistic expression are intrinsically united on an equal footing and translated. The sound pavilion – premiered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Contemporary Art Biennial of Seville in 2009 and displayed in Istanbul in 2010 – has been conceived as an interdisciplinary platform. Ritchie teamed up with architects ArandaLasch, the Music Research Center of York University and Arup AGU to create an innovative, multi-dimensional sonic space. Drawing on contemporary social relational techniques, the pavilion seeks to engage in dialogue with the visitors by responding to their presence. In Vienna the music programme adds a new dimension to the 10m-high and 20m-long structure from black coated aluminium. Its multidimensional sound system (software: Music Research Centre of the University of York) requires a new generation of music and sound compositions. A group of international composers was commissioned to write new works for each venue. World renowned Austrian sonic artist Franz Pomassl was invited as a guest curator to Vienna. New sound creations by Alexej Borisov (Russia), Christian Fennesz (Austria), Tommi Grönlund & Petteri Nisunen (Finland), Carsten Nicolai (Germany), Zsolt Olejnik (Hungary), Finnogi Petursson (Iceland), Terre Thaemlitz (USA), Zavaloka (Ukraine) as well as by Franz Pomassl will receive their world premiere at the festival. The audience may listen to the sound

works stored in a sonic library while the art installation “The Morning Line“ is on show in Vienna.

[www.tba21.org/program/current](http://www.tba21.org/program/current)

### **Albertina: Drawings by Max Weiler 1930-2000**

The painting oeuvre of artist Max Weiler (1910-2001) has been covered fairly exhaustively in exhibitions and academic publications in the past twenty years. But it is a little known fact that in an artistic career spanning more than seventy years Max Weiler also created a graphic work – estimated to consist of almost 4,000 pieces of all sizes and techniques – that is completely on a par with his most accomplished paintings. It expresses Weiler’s life theme of examining the connection between nature and spirituality. The drawings do represent a world of their own but also show cross-references to the paintings.

The research project of the Vienna-based museum Albertina, which has been supported by the Jubilee Fund of the Austrian National Bank, will showcase Max Weiler’s graphic oeuvre from 10 June to 16 October 2011. The exhibition includes monumental works of the 1980s, e.g. the 10m-long charcoal work “Naturgebild“ (“Natural Formation”), and examples of his masterful late paintings. Attention is focused on the interplay between paintings and drawings and the role of the “experimental works”.

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

### **Mistelbach Museum Centre: “Hexen.Zauber“ (“Witchcraft”)**

The Mistelbach Museum Centre presents “Hexen.Zauber“ (“Witchcraft”) curated by Hannes Etlzstorfer. The exhibition closing on 30 November 2011 was conceived in cooperation with the Museum of History of Pfalz in Speyer.

It is complemented by the show titled “Drei Farben – Magie.Zauber.Geheimnis“ (“Three Colours – Magic.Spell.Secret”) staged by the Lower Austrian Museum of Prehistory in Asparn/Zaya.

The exhibition in Mistelbach explores the myths and reality of witch-hunting. The phenomenon dating back to a Bull of Pope Innocent VII of 1484 disappeared only in the Age of Enlightenment. Hundreds of exhibits give a fascinating account of this historical process. The show is rounded off by a presentation of contemporary works of art.

[www.hexen-dieausstellung.at](http://www.hexen-dieausstellung.at)

### **Duerckheim Collection at Hermann Nitsch Museum**

The Mistelbach Museum Centre (MZM) accommodates the Hermann Nitsch Museum, where selected works of Nitsch from the Duerckheim Collection are presented until 15 April 2012.

Collector Christian Count Dürckheim has devoted himself to the work of Hermann Nitsch since the 1960s. Continuing the in-depth analysis of the oeuvre of Nitsch, Dürckheim makes the early work created by the Austrian artist between 1957 and 1980 accessible to the public in a retrospective.

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

### **Roland Geyer becomes festival manager of Bregenzer Festspiele**

Roland Geyer will become the new artistic manager of Bregenzer Festspiele (Bregenz Festival) in 2015. Geyer has been manager of Jeunesse Österreich, was responsible for festivals such as “KlangBogen“ and “OsterKlang“ and has been at the helm of Theater an der Wien since 2006. During his term of office, Theater an der Wien has become one of the most interesting venues for Baroque and contemporary music theatre (selling more than 95 percent of the tickets). He will continue to manage the opera house until summer 2016 and has been making the necessary preparatory work. Previous manager of the Bregenz Festival David Pountney will change to the Welsh National Opera in Cardiff in 2013. For 2014 an interim solution has to be found. In 2015 Roland Geyer will fulfil a dual role, acting already as the artistic manager in Bregenz. He will provide advisory services to the festival already in 2012 and become its commercial manager as from 2016. His contract will end in 2021. Günter Rhomberg, who has been the President of the Bregenz Festival since 1981, expects Geyer to provide fresh impetus and start “a third pioneering phase of the festival” (after 1950 and 1980).

### **Venice Biennale 2011 – Golden Lions awarded**

In the framework of the opening festivities of the Venice Biennale on 4 June 2011, one of the two Golden Lions for Lifetime Achievement was conferred on Austrian artist Franz West; American Elaine Sturtevant was the second recipient of this award. West’s art installations were recently shown at the Naples-based museum MADRE. His series of sculptures “Ecolaiia“ was presented at the renowned Roman “Gagosian Gallery“ in October 2010.

**Austrian students went to the polls**

Two clear winners emerged from the elections to the Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH): the Socialist Students of Austria (VSSStÖ) and the Young Liberals (JuLis). The election result was, however, less satisfactory for the Green and Alternative Students (GRAS). The conservative Aktionsgemeinschaft (AG) remained the group with the largest number of votes and seats in the Austrian National Union of Students. Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle was pleased about the increased voter turnout and signalled willingness to engage in talks concerning an electoral reform. Chancellor Werner Faymann congratulated the VSSStÖ on the “excellent election result“. Not all members of the federal students’ representation have been named. The seats of the universities of applied sciences and of the teacher training universities will be filled only in June.

**Länder in favour of doubling afternoon care places at school**

Education was the top item on the agenda of the closed-door government meeting in Semmering on 30 May 2011. A welcome agreement on increasing the number of all-day school places was reached with the Länder. The federal government will co-finance personnel costs and infrastructure improvements. The Länder agreed to introduce afternoon care for groups of at least 12 pupils. They also guarantee care services until 4 p.m. and high quality standards. The share of pupils having access to afternoon care increased to 50 percent, informed Minister of Education Claudia Schmied.

**Research and Technology Report presented to the Council of Ministers**

Austria’s dynamic growth of the R&D ratio over the past ten years has been unparalleled in the European Union. According to the Research and Technology Report 2011 presented to the Council of Ministers by Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures, Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle and Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner on 31 May 2011, the 8-billion-threshold has been surpassed for the first time.

Austria has secured itself a stable and excellent position in R&D in the EU, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> in the Innovation Union Scoreboard, narrowly behind the “innovation leaders“. Besides research facilities and political decision-makers, companies have made a major contribution to this success.

**Claudia Schmied presented State Prize for Education Reporting**

Minister of Education Claudia Schmied presented the State Prize for Education Reporting in a ceremony held at the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture on 25 May 2011.

The State Prize for Education Reporting (with a prize money of 5,000 euro) was conferred on Susanne Schnabl, TV editor of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), the Advancement Award for journalists under 35 years (worth 2,500 euro) went to Sonja Hasewend, who covers education subjects in the daily “Kleine Zeitung“.

“By awarding the prizes to these two journalists, we wish to highlight the importance of critical and responsible quality journalism in the field of education“, stated the Minister.

**“IST Austria“ is heading in the right direction**

The Institute of Science and Technology (IST) Austria welcomed the favourable appraisal by international experts. The Evaluation Report 2007 to 2010 drawn up by a committee chaired by David Baltimore of the California Institute of Technology, Nobel Prize laureate in medicine in 1975, recognised the remarkably fast and successful start of IST. The institute founded in 2006 could reach its goal of becoming a leading research facility – but support from the government was a sine qua non. Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle promised financing beyond 2016. Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll, who pledged to provide the necessary infrastructure, emphasised that science and research were prioritised in the budget of Lower Austria.

**Johanna Dohnal Prize granted to young women scientists**

Since 2004 the Johanna Dohnal Prize has been granted to young women scientists conducting research in fields atypical for women or working on feminist subjects. This year the Advancement Awards were bestowed on Christina Keinert, Alexandra Kolodziejczyk, Sushila Mesquita and Veronika Schwediauer. Stefanie Wuschitz received a scholarship of 7,000 euro. Drawing attention to positive changes in academia, Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek stated that four female rectors would head state universities as from October 2011. Since the introduction of a women’s quota of 40 percent for university bodies and committees in 2009, a lot had changed at universities, said the Minister.

**SPORTS POLICY****Football: Minister of Sport calls for radical solution after fan violence**

After some fans stormed the pitch at the traditional “Vienna derby”, the football match between the city’s rivals SK Rapid and FK Austria, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos called for tough action against the hooligans. In response to the incident attracting international attention, the Minister stated: “We have to try to come up with a radical general solution”.

Now, policymakers were challenged. “It hurts. As hooliganism is reaching alarming proportions, the political players have to intervene”, stressed Darabos and advocated tough measures. “All-stadium bans throughout Austria must be imposed rigorously”, stated the Minister. “In this case severe punishments will have to be imposed.”

The Minister of Sport also considers action at parliamentary level, namely to make fan violence punishable under criminal law instead of treating it as an administrative offence. “If faced with criminal charges, some hooligans will think twice before storming the pitch”, said Darabos. According to the Minister, Great Britain could serve as a model, not only with regard to prosecution under criminal law: “The English model will be examined”. Darabos also envisages an ID card requirement for season-ticket holders.

As foreign hooligans allegedly participated in the riot on the pitch in Hütteldorf, Darabos is in complete agreement with UEFA President Michel Platini, calling for international cooperation in combating hooliganism. Darabos demanded that this problem “should no longer be ignored” in Austria and that tough policies had to be implemented. “The Rapid fan project had in general been assessed positively but this had been taken advantage of. This is something we cannot simply wink at. Stadium-bans must not be lifted quickly. It is unacceptable that after some weeks the stadium bans are relaxed”, explained the Minister of Sport, who also contacted President of the Austrian Football Federation Leo Windtner. Together they will organise a meeting in which all football clubs will participate.

**Historic step: Sporthilfe supports athletes with disabilities**

The sports charity Österreichische Sporthilfe will grant individual subsidies to athletes with disabilities. This decision was taken at the meeting of the Board of Directors last Monday, which also appointed new members, including

former world-class swimmer Judith Draxler-Hutter as the athletes’ representative.

As proposed by Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, who acts as the President of Sporthilfe, the organisation decided in May to subsidise also athletes with disabilities. Österreichische Sporthilfe takes a historic step by ensuring that funding streams will include athletes with disabilities. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos expressed his satisfaction about the result: “Funding of disability sports is a matter of particular concern to me. Austria may look back on numerous highly successful events in disability sport, boasting a long list of Olympic medallists, world champions and world record holders. My goal is to achieve full equality in sports funding, also in the framework of Österreichische Sporthilfe. At today’s general assembly, I therefore tabled a motion to include athletes with disabilities in the funding schemes of Österreichische Sporthilfe.”

Disability sport has struggled for equality in Austrian support systems for many years. The Minister of Sport and Österreichische Sporthilfe therefore complied with the longstanding request of representatives of disability sport to make disabled athletes eligible for individual funding.

**1,500 participants in Integration Football World Championships**

Football unites nations and promotes integration (initially perhaps unwittingly). Erwin Himmelbauer from Salzburg is the initiator and organiser of the “Integration Football World Championships”, which will take place in four Austrian cities in summer. 1,500 to 1,800 amateur football players belonging to 50 different language groups are expected to participate. The project has been nominated for the Austrian Integration Award.

The interest in the amateur tournament has increased tremendously since its inception in Salzburg in 2006. 120 to 150 teams will meet on the football pitch in Vienna (25 June, UNO City), Salzburg (1 to 3 July 2011, PSV-Platz), Schwaz near Innsbruck (16 July, SC Schwaz) and Linz (the date has not yet been fixed). Admission is free.

Himmelbauer is optimistic that this special world tournament will also be held in other countries in the future. Federal President Heinz Fischer invited Himmelbauer in March to present the project and praised “this wonderful way of practising integration”.