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HOME AFFAIRS**Law on bilingual signposts adopted, Faymann: agreement is an opportunity**

On 6 July 2011, the five parties represented in the National Council adopted the amendment to the Ethnic Groups Act almost unanimously, i.e. with significantly more votes than the required two-thirds majority. It is expected to provide a binding solution to the issue of bilingual topographical signposts in Carinthia. By passing the amendment, the National Council finally ended the row over German-Slovene village and town signs in Carinthia lasting for more than five decades. According to the compromise between the federal government, the Land of Carinthia and representatives of the Slovene minority, 164 bilingual signposts have to be mounted in Carinthia.

This was praised as a “historic moment” by speakers of all parties. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann referred to an “important day” for Carinthia and Austria. Based on the decision taken in the plenary session of the National Council, the agreement on bilingual signposts in Carinthia became constitutional law. Besides 164 bilingual place-name signs, the set of measures includes rules for the use of Slovene as an official language and for funding bilingual private and municipal nurseries, music schools and cultural projects, stressed the Chancellor. The agreement also reflected the “overwhelming desire in the population” to conclude the “never-ending story” of the conflict over bilingual place-name signs. People in Carinthia perceived it as an “opportunity to emphasise that which unites over that which divides”, stated Faymann.

National Council: green light for Eco-Electricity Act and Care Fund

Besides the amendment to the Ethnic Groups Act, the National Council passed other important laws such as the amended Eco-Electricity Act, the Long-Term Care Fund Act and Long-Term Care Allowance Act in its last plenary week (6 to 8 July 2011) before the summer break. The amendment to the Eco-Electricity Act will lead to a significant increase of the funding cap. 50 million euro are made available for electricity production from wind, sun and biomass in 2011 (compared to 21 million euro in the past). The amount agreed on will decrease annually by 1 million euro until the cap declines to 40 million euro in 2021. In parallel, funding continues for approved projects. Hence, the total annual funding for green electricity will rise from 350 million euro in

2011 to 550 million euro in 2015. According to Minister of Economy Reinhold Mitterlehner, the Eco-Electricity Act will make Austria independent from atomic electricity imports by 2015 and even turn it into an electricity exporter. The Act is likely to trigger investments in green technologies of about 12 billion euro and to create “thousands of green jobs” by 2020. The share of renewable energies (including large-scale hydropower plants) in the total electricity consumption is to increase from currently 68% to 85%.

The newly adopted Long-Term Care Fund Act will help financing the increasing expenditure on care services of the Länder. Two thirds of the budget will be financed by the federal government, while the Länder will contribute one third. The Long-Term Care Fund has a budget of 100 million euro in 2011. 685 million euro have been earmarked for the period up to 2014. The Long-Term Care Allowance Reform Act will simplify the administration of care benefits. Only eight instead of about 300 bodies will be responsible for managing and disbursing benefits. The federal government will become responsible for the administration of the care benefits of the Länder.

20 proposals for integration

On 6 July 2011, Secretary of State for Integration Sebastian Kurz presented proposals from the new Integration Report of the Ministry of the Interior, which are expected to facilitate the integration of migrants. In 2010 1.54 million people with a migration background lived in Austria, corresponding to 18.6% of the total population. The newcomers are younger than the average Austrian. They have more children, partly less education and consequentially fewer labour market opportunities.

The recommendations of the experts cover issues such as education, work, healthcare, housing and the media. Mandatory preventive health checkups for all children of compulsory school age are planned. A committee should ensure “a mix” in allocating social housing. A second compulsory nursery year is recommended for children not speaking German.

Gendering the national anthem

The Social Democratic Party, the People’s Party and the Greens agreed to gender the national anthem by adding “daughters” after “home to great sons“. The exact wording has not yet been agreed on. The respective legal provision will be drafted in autumn. The new lyrics of the national anthem could become binding on 1 January 2012.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Poland's President Komorowski pays visit to Austria**

Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski paid an official visit to Austria on 13 and 14 July 2011. Poland is currently holding the EU Council Presidency. The programme included political talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer and a visit of the two heads of state to the former NS concentration camp Mauthausen.

"We are euro optimists", Komorowski stated optimistically about the future of the single currency of the euro-zone. "Difficult reforms of the system" were required but he was confident that the EU would not be affected by a recession, said Komorowski. Poland's accession to the currency union has been scheduled for 1 January 2012.

Federal President Fischer praised "Poland's readiness" to help solving the euro crisis. Bilateral relations between Austria and Poland have been characterised by good mutual understanding. Fischer thanked Poland for pledging its support for Austria's candidate for the UNESCO Executive Board.

President Komorowski stressed at the Mauthausen Memorial that reconciliation of the nations was a prerequisite for a united Europe. Fischer affirmed that the two countries had to stand together firmly in the combat for democracy and against racism and anti-Semitism.

Austria calls for an EU Rating Agency

In the context of current discussions on the euro and the financial market reform, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann stressed the need of a calm debate based on facts in an interview with the daily "Österreich" on 10 July 2011. Since the outbreak of the crisis, the EU had coped well with the challenges, but significant differences between the individual euro-zone countries had surfaced. It was an absolute must to reconcile these differences, but it was clear that this could not be achieved overnight, said Chancellor Faymann.

Too little had been done in Europe so far to regulate the financial markets. However, the EU heads of state and government had adopted a number of decisions to stabilise the euro, sending out a message to speculators that they should stand behind the single currency. "The euro is a strong currency", stated Faymann.

One of the most pressing and fundamental problems was that US Rating Agencies decided alone on the fate of European countries.

He had always called for a European alternative to the US Rating Agencies and financial market rules, reminded Chancellor Faymann.

Greek Foreign Minister pays official visit to Vienna

Greek Foreign Minister Stavros Lambrinidis rallied support for his country in Vienna on 7 July 2011. "Not a single euro invested by Austrians in Greece will be lost", assured the Minister after the talks with his Austrian counterpart Michael Spindelegger. This was an "obligation" and a "promise". The second austerity package recently adopted by the Greek Parliament would be implemented "without the slightest delay", said Lambrinidis.

The Austrian Foreign Minister assessed the austerity and privatisation projects of Athens as "very courageous". Spindelegger hoped that this "reform agenda" would help "Greece to change course". The two foreign ministers pledged their support for EU enlargement in the Western Balkans.

President of EU Parliament in Vienna

The President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, held talks on the bailout package for Greece in Vienna on 7 July 2011. The programme of his official visit included meetings with Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger. Following an invitation of Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer, Buzek became the first member of European Parliament to hold a speech to the Austrian National Council.

The former Polish head of government called for solidarity with the highly indebted Greece. "We save the Greek because we want to save you", stated Buzek in a message to the Austrian population. It was not a crisis of the euro but a debt crisis in some countries. The rescue package for Greece was necessary to prevent its debt crisis from spilling over into other economies.

Funeral of Otto Habsburg in Vienna

The funeral ceremony for Otto Habsburg and his wife Regina in Vienna on 16 July 2011 – requiem at St. Stephen's Cathedral, burial in the Imperial Crypt – was attended by Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, the Swedish royal couple Carl Gustaf and Silvia as well as representatives of numerous other ruling royal families.

ECONOMY**Economic Report 2011 – Faymann:
Austria is a model region in Europe**

“Cooperation in Austria is exemplary, other countries envy us. This is clearly reflected in the Economic Report 2011“, stated Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the presentation of the federal government’s Economic Report for Austria 2011 on 8 July 2011. Minister of Finance Maria Fekter, Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures and Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner also attended the event.

Countries such as Austria or Germany had dealt best with the crisis because they had not relied exclusively on strict cost-cutting and austerity measures. “We succeeded in maintaining a balance as we did not only pursue austere expenditure policies but also boosted competitiveness and purchasing power“, said Faymann. Austria’s thriving export business reflected the country’s improved competitiveness.

However, the Federal Chancellor also placed emphasis on the differences in Europe, which could not be eliminated “overnight”. “Common action and a firm hand were indispensable within the European Union“, said Faymann. Now the successful peace project Europe had to be geared towards sustainability, but problems should not be glossed over.

“As a model region in Europe, Austria has many standards that often need to be defended“, underlined Faymann. But at European level, a “common, social and sustainable economic project was required” said the Federal Chancellor. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to press ahead with reforms and to play an active role in devising them. Joint efforts were required above all in research, education, innovation and investments.

“The fact that Austria overcame the crisis quickly came as a surprise even to most economic analysts. According to Minister of Finance Fekter, economic stabilisation had indeed led to an upswing of the real economy but not in the financial sector. In this area stabilisation measures were still underway, new borrowings had to be curbed“, stressed the Minister.

OECD praise for Austria

Austria had weathered the crisis better than other nations, while maintaining a high degree of social coherence. But to secure its place in the champions league of OECD economies, far-reaching reforms in education, healthcare,

the pension system and the social sector had to be carried out. This conclusion was drawn by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the “Economic Survey of Austria” presented in Vienna on 11 July 2011. The tax burden should be switched away from labour and enterprises towards taxes on property, explained OECD Secretary-General Ángel Gurría.

Austria’s economic position was very sound: unemployment (4.4% in the first quarter of 2011) was considerably below the average of most OECD countries. Youth and long-term unemployment figures were also very low in Austria, Gurría hailed Austria’s good labour market situation. Among the reasons mentioned by him were the extensive social partnership, the highly skilled and motivated labour force, Austria’s export sector and investments for growth.

Austria could, however, lose its position among the strongest OECD countries unless reforms were pushed forward, e.g. raising the retirement age and reducing the tax burden on labour and entrepreneurship, warned the OECD.

The survey also acknowledges the good quality of the healthcare sector as well as the easy and equitable access to healthcare services, while criticising the fragmentation of responsibilities – between the federal government, Länder, social insurance institutions – and the lack of coordination.

Increase in subsidies for Austrian exports to non-European countries

In the next two years, the Ministry of Economy will invest 35 million euro in export promotion programmes to maintain exports at the high level of the previous year. However, Austrian exports should increasingly go to countries outside Europe, announced Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner and Head of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl in Vienna on 4 July 2011. Significantly higher export growth rates could be achieved in non-European countries in the next years.

Based on projections of the European Commission, about 90% of the growth is generated outside the EU. “The Austrian economy is booming and one of the main reasons for that are exports“, explained Minister Mitterlehner. The problem was, however, that 82% of the exports went to Europe. The new “export cheques” had been developed to offer incentives to “newcomers”, especially those exporting to non-European export markets.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Grand Austrian State Prize for Visual Art goes to Heinz Tesar**

Heinz Tesar – born in Innsbruck in 1939 – is not only an architect, but also an artist and writer. After travelling through Italy to explore art, Tesar studied architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna with Roland Rainer. He stayed in different countries before starting to work intensively on his so-called “embryo images” and “homo-types”. In 1973 he opened his own studio in Vienna. He taught at different universities in Europe and the USA and was a guest professor at the Hamburg University of Visual Arts and the Accademia di Architettura Mendrisio (Switzerland). Among his most famous buildings are the Danube City Church, the Museum of the Essl Collection, the Celtic Museum in Hallein as well as the restructured Bode Museum in Berlin. As an architect of religious buildings, he did not only build churches but also a synagogue (Dresden) and an Islamic cultural centre (Vienna). Heinz Tesar also created the social housing pilot project “Biberhaufenweg” (Vienna). By combining private and public open space as well as traditional housing patterns, he wanted to avoid the development of a dormitory suburb. His buildings do not fit common architectural categories. Before executing a building contract, Tesar does research on holistic interrelations and spatial potentials based on ideals of clearance gauges and bodies of sound with the aid of sketches and models. In a next step, he adjusts his concepts to the functions and place of the building (this is impressively illustrated by the exhibition rooms of the Essl Museum, where natural light enters through three-metre high skylights).

Austria’s most important art prize (worth 30,000 euro) will be bestowed on Tesar by Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied in a ceremony held in Salzburg on 27 July 2011. “Of course, the prize to Heinz Tesar is first of all a great personal recognition. But beyond that, it is also acknowledges that architecture has regained importance as an art in Austria”, stated Schmied.

State Prize for European Literature 2011 to Javier Marías

The novelist, essayist and translator Javier Marías (born in Madrid in 1951) will receive the Austrian State Prize for European Literature 2011 (prize money: 25,000 euro) for his complete works. The prize will be conferred on Marías by Minister of Culture Claudia

Schmied in a ceremony at the Stefan Zweig Centre Salzburg on 30 July 2011. The jury explained that tribute was paid to Javier Marías “for his narrative oeuvre of a truly European dimension“, in which his “reflection on the abysmal human nature blends with his contemplations about ethics, history and politics”. Minister Schmied described Marías as an “almost ideal prize winner” since “his work was a continent of its own on the map of European contemporary literature”.

Javier Marías spent his childhood partly in the USA. He studied literature and philosophy at the Complutense University of Madrid and taught at different universities.

Among his most popular novels are: “A Heart So White”, “Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me” and his trilogy “Your Face Tomorrow”.

Ingeborg Bachmann Prize 2011

The “German-Language Literature Festival“ – a reading competition of 14 candidates – was opened by Urs Widmer and broadcast live on the TV station 3sat. The main prize worth 25,000 euro was granted to Maja Haderlap on 10 July 2011. The text of the Carinthian Slovene from her debut novel “Engel des Vergessens” (“Angel of Oblivion”) traces Slovene resistance against the German Wehrmacht. Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied described the novel as a “fine piece of luck for contemporary literature”.

The Kelag Prize went to Steffen Pop, the 3sat Prize to Nina Bußmann, the Ernst Willner Prize to Leif Randt and the Audience Prize to Thomas Klupp.

www.bachmannpreis.eu

40th Carinthian Summer Festival 2011

The festival on the shores of Lake Ossiach in Carinthia was formally opened on 10 July 2011 by Federal President Heinz Fischer (ending on 31 July 2011). The work of composer Darius Milhaud (born in Aix-en-Provence in 1892), who condensed the format of the grand opera to eight minutes, will be featured at the festival under the artistic management of Thomas Daniel Schlee. Besides 14 compositions by Milhaud, the programme includes the cantata “The Return of the Prodigal Son“ (based on a text by André Gide, scenic production: Titus Hollweg, Emanuel Schulz conducts Camerata Schulz). Faced with budget cuts, the Carinthian Summer Festival will offer its last world premiere of a church opera (with which composer Bruno Strobl from Klagenfurt had been commissioned) in 2012.

www.carinthischersommer.at

A special cultural experience at Lake Constance: festival & exhibitions

In 2011 “creation” is the leitmotif of the Bregenz Festival featuring Umberto Giordano’s opera “André Chénier” on the floating stage and Judith Weir’s opera “Miss Fortune” at Festspielhaus. About 100 events will be held as part of the festival running from 20 July to 21 August 2011. “André Chénier” (originally “Andrea Chénier”), the most famous work of Umberto Giordano, received its world premiere in 1896. The drama against the background of the French revolution offers strong characters with exuberant emotions. According to festival manager David Pountney, this work is ideally suited for the Lake Stage (Vienna Symphonic Orchestra conducted by Ulf Schirmer; production: Keith Warner, stage design: David Fielding, costumes: Constance Hoffmann; light design: Davy Cunningham, premiere on 20 July 2011).

The series of operas commissioned specifically for and receiving their first performance at the Bregenz Festival lasts until 2013. It starts with “Miss Fortune” by Scottish artist Judith Weir (musical direction: Paul Daniel; production: Chen Shi-Zheng; stage design: Tom Pye; costumes: Han Feng; light design: Scott Zielinski; premiered on 21 July 2011). This story about fate – based on an old Italian folk tale about an impoverished woman who will regain happiness in the end – had modern day relevance and should help people to change attitudes to every-day problems, stated Pountney. But also the orchestra concerts revolve around the theme “creation” in 2011. The Vienna Symphonic Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of Vorarlberg and the Halle Orchestra conducted by Sir Mark Elder celebrate personalities of outstanding creativity (e.g. Lord Byron, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Goethe).

This year’s edition of the festival will also be debuting new theatre productions. Schauspielhaus Wien will present the Austrian premiere of “Orphans” by Dennis Kelly at Theater am Kornmarkt. Theater Berlin from Germany shows “The Children of the Sun” by Maxim Gorki (as from 12 August 2011) and “Peggy Pickit sieht das Gesicht Gottes” by Roland Schimmelpfennig (production: Martin Kušej, as from 17 August 2011).

The programme section “Art of Our Times” managed by Laura Berman offers highlights such as “Home Work”, an electronic music theatre piece by François Sarhan, as well as the inter-media performance “AS IF Stranger” of the American dancer Richard Siegal.

www.bregenzerfestspiele.com

Kunsthau Bregenz (KUB) presents Ai Weiwei. The renowned Chinese artist addresses not only cultural but also social and political issues. The exhibition is devoted to his collaboration with different architects (e.g. Herzog & de Meuron). It showcases his best-known models, architectural plans and video documentations and also gives insights into his cooperation with lesser known architects.

Austria’s largest-ever landscape installation will be presented until April 2012. The mountains of Vorarlberg provide the setting for “Horizon Field” – a work by British artist Antony Gormley consisting of 100 life-size cast iron figures of the human body (erected 2,039 metres above sea level).

www.kunsthau-bregenz.at

Vienna is dancing again: Impulstanz Festival

The festival taking place in Vienna from 12 July to 14 August 2011 faces once more the challenge to depict interrelations in the contemporary dance scene, while tracing the development of important choreographers. In 2011 the focus is turned on the series of works by Jan Fabre (“Preparatio Mortis” and “Prometheus Landscape II”), Marie Chouinard, Maison Dahl Bonnema (Ricky and Ronny Trilogy), Trajal Harrell (Project “Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church”) and Ivo Dimchev (four performances and the exhibition “Angels” at the Bulgarian Cultural Institute). The Young Choreographers’ Series comprises five projects, e.g. by Nicole Peisl. Other artists participating in the festival are Keith Hennessy from then USA, “LaLaLaHumanSteps / Édouard Lock” from Canada, Boyzie Cekwana from South Africa, Ko Murobushi from Japan, Terence Lewis and his company from India, who were responsible for the festival opening event “Jhoom” at Museumsquartier, Marcela Levi from Brazil as well as Isabelle Schad from Germany, who cooperates with the French artist Laurent Goldring in the project “Unturtled” eliminating the traditional dichotomy between the interior and the exterior. Apart from dance, the festival offers workshops and book presentations (“Big 3 episodes art/discourse” of the Austrian performance collective Superamas, “Jan Fabre: The Years of the Hour Blue” and “Choreographic Collision” by Ismael Ivo). Dance-lovers may relax in the “festival lounge” at Burgtheater Vestibül. Having earned itself an excellent reputation in the past, the Austrian dance scene is heralded as one of Europe’s most important. www.impulstanz.com/

New rules for university tuition fees

The Court of Auditors criticised the rules governing exemptions from university tuition fees adopted in 2008 for being too inaccurate. The wording “Studienabschnitt“ (“study phase”) was no longer applicable in the present Bologna system.

Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to replace the existing “piecemeal” with a new model of socially compatible tuition fees. The Minister therefore also welcomed the recent OECD recommendation to improve the quality of universities with the aid of tuition fees and access rules. Of course, nobody should be prevented from studying at university for financial reasons, stressed Töchterle.

Karlheinz Töchterle: 40 million euro strategic funds for universities

“In autumn strategic funds totalling 40 million euro will be made available to the domestic universities. They will be used for targeted investments to improve teaching. Hence, they will provide an important and quick remedy exactly where the shoe pinches“, said Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle. Another ten million euro per year will be spent on increasing the number of student places at universities of applied sciences. This will also help to reduce the pressure on other universities.

OECD symposium: education policy requires long-term perspectives

“Education policy measures take effect only in the long term” emphasised Minister of Education Claudia Schmied in the framework of the symposium “50 Years of OECD – 50 Years of Austria in the OECD“, jointly hosted by the Federal Chancellery and the Austrian National Bank.

Minister Schmied was grateful that the OECD’s PISA survey underpinned her concerns. She was also pleased to note that “the recommendations of the OECD are almost identical with my education policy agenda“.

New research promotion programme for small and medium-sized companies

The Ministry of Economy launched a new research promotion programme under the motto “research competences for the economy“. Its main aim is to support small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in developing their own research personnel and in improving their skills. Another objective is to

intensify research activities relevant to enterprises at universities (of applied sciences). A total of ten million euro has been earmarked for this project, informed the Ministry of Economy.

Only two weeks ago, the Ministry launched its “Innovation Fitness Package“ for SMEs and company founders to encourage them to become more active in research and development. “The Innovation Cheque Plus amounting to 10,000 euro supports SMEs which plan to engage in research and innovation or to intensify their respective activities“, said Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner.

Vienna pays tribute to Alfred Adler

The urn of Alfred Adler, the founding father of psychosomatic medicine, recently rediscovered in Scotland was buried in Vienna’s Central Cemetery on 12 July 2011. Precisely 100 years ago – after his separation from Sigmund Freud – Alfred Adler founded the Second Vienna School of Psychotherapy, which was renamed “Austrian Association of Individual Psychology” (Österreichischer Verein für Individualpsychologie/ÖVIP) in 1912. This was solemnly recognised by the 25th International Congress of Individual Psychology held under the title “Separation – Trauma – Development“ in Vienna from 14 to 17 July 2011.

Salzburg: common training at teacher training colleges and universities

First steps towards a common teacher training system were taken by the University of Salzburg and the Teacher Training College of Salzburg. Planning to centralise teacher training and bundle expertise, the two institutions only wait for the necessary legal amendments which will allow them to implement their co-operation agreement.

University of Economics takes legal action to obtain more funding

The Vienna University of Economics and Business has taken legal action to obtain more funding from the Ministry of Science. The first hurdle has now been overcome. The arbitration committee set up for this purpose (chaired by the President of the Supreme Court Irmgard Griss) confirmed that the funding agreement between the University of Economics and Business and the Ministry of Science had to be revised. This was due to the fact that, contrary to earlier assumptions, the university could not restrict access to its bachelor study programmes.

SPORTS**Austria supports large-scale team sport events with 1.31 million euro**

After the Football EURO 2008 and the European Handball Championships 2010, three large-scale team sports events take place in Austria in 2011: the American Football World Championship, the Fistball World Cup and the European Volleyball Championship.

The federal government supports these three events with a total of 1.31 million euro – an investment that pays off in many ways. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: “The organisation of large-scale sports events has numerous effects on the economy of the host country. These effects (especially growth and employment effects) are triggered primarily by the necessary infrastructure measures, an increase in the demand of domestic and foreign tourists as well as activities in the area of communications, media, advertising and betting.”

Large-scale sports events have, however, also numerous qualitative effects as they enhance the image and awareness of the host region and increase sport participation in the population. Darabos: “Role models are of crucial importance in sport. And if you can see your role models in action and cheer them live, the effect increases. I therefore firmly believe that large-scale sports events in the host country give a powerful incentive to the young generation.”

ÖSV regional conference in Velden focused on elections

On 17 and 18 June 2011, Velden was the venue of the 76th regional conference of the Austrian Ski Federation (Österreichischer Skiverband/ÖSV). To pay homage and bid farewell to meritorious athletes and officials, a ceremony was held at the casino of Velden. The work meeting focused on the election of the president, the managing board and individual departmental representatives. Peter Schröcksnadel was re-elected unanimously as ÖSV President for the next three years, Roswitha Stadlober was voted into the ÖSV presiding committee as ÖSV Vice President. Minister of Sport Darabos took advantage of this opportunity to thank ÖSV officials from all over Austria for their dedicated work.

Ministert Darabos and Werner Schlager visited a physical education lesson

The aim of a campaign called into life at the beginning of this year by Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos is to motivate pupils to par-

ticipate in more sports activities. In this context, athletes of the Red-White-Red Team, which plays an important role in the federal government’s support programme for high-performance sports, pay visits to physical education lesson in schools.

On 27 June 2011, table tennis player Werner Schlager and Minister of Sport Darabos attended a physical education lesson at the secondary school of Neusiedl. The former world champion showed the kids some table tennis tricks. After that, the pupils could watch a table tennis match between Schlager and the Minister of Sport, who also used to play table tennis at a competitive level.

Vorarlberg: virtual trail planning on the Internet

By helping you to decide where a hiking or mountain biking tour should go and to find out how long it takes, where it begins and ends and how to get there, a new virtual map facilitates the planning of outdoor activities. The innovative online map offered by the Vorarlberg Tourist Board is now ready for use. 130 hiking trails, 40 mountain biking trails and countless tourist attractions become available with a mouse click. In addition, the new tool offers information on accommodation, restaurants, culture and leisure. The data can be printed as well as used in GPS systems.

Virtual map: www.alpregio.outdooractive.com

“Paradise of Views“: new theme trail on Schneeberg opened

The new theme trail “Paradise of Views” on Schneeberg in Lower Austria was opened on 9 July 2011. The trail can be reached with the Salamander cog railway from Puchberg and starts at the summit station. Visitors may not only enjoy the unique panorama, but also learn about the construction of the cog railway as well as the importance of Schneeberg as a water reservoir. Since the mid-19th century Schneeberg has been a main supplier of Vienna’s mountain spring water.

The highlight and most distinctive landmark of the trail is “Kaleidoskop” – an exhibition hall of more than 40 metres length that is equipped with multimedia technology. The current exhibition explores the significance of the Schneeberg mountain in the past and present.