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HOME AFFAIRS**Energy summit at the Federal Chancellery**

On 1 July 2011, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann hosted an energy summit, in which ministers, environmental organisations and representatives of the energy sector participated. The attendees agreed that imports of “grey electricity” to Austria had to be prevented.

A political consensus was reached that “we want clarity – and compelling evidence – about the origin of our electricity“, explained Faymann after the meeting. At national level, this could be ensured by adopting ordinances and laws. But since this was a European issue, uniform certification was required also outside Austria, said the Chancellor. The Austrian federal government would therefore continue campaigning for electricity labelling at European level. Questions of legal transposition were being examined, stated Faymann. The electricity labelling draft ordinance was being reviewed.

Everybody agreed that Austria should become free from nuclear electricity. Joint efforts were therefore required to determine “how nuclear energy imports could be prevented in the medium term”, explained the Federal Chancellor. The necessary measures – at national and European level – would be discussed at the next energy summit in autumn.

Representatives of the energy sector and NGOs should also be involved intensively in implementing the Austrian energy strategy. The aim was to increase energy efficiency on the one hand and to expand renewable energies on the other hand, stated Faymann. The combat for a nuclear-free future required concerted action at national as well as European and international level, reiterated the Chancellor. The anti-nuclear summit was described as a huge success also by the environmentalists participating in this event.

Transparency and anti-corruption package

The federal government announced a transparency and anti-corruption package in the session of the Council of Ministers on 21 June 2011. Based on the plans of Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, it was to be adopted by the National Council in autumn. Faymann mentioned the following legislative projects: media transparency law, law on lobbyists and interest groups, transparency on donations to parties and on members of parliament, disclosure of

income and reform of MP immunity. “We are against all types of corruption and “grey areas” of lobbying, against all incidents that surfaced in the past”, underlined Faymann.

As a first step, the Media Transparency Act was adopted to ensure transparency in placing government advertisements. The federal ministries, provincial governments, municipalities, public enterprises as well as chambers – in total about 4,600 legal entities – will be required to report their total expenditure on ads, advertising contracts and the like to the Austrian media authority Komm-Austria semi-annually. Fines of up to 60,000 euro could be charged for repeated infringements of the reporting duty.

A political agreement regarding legislation on lobbyists and interest groups had been reached, submission of the bill for review was being prepared, stated the Chancellor. Based on the new law, it would become possible to examine – and disclose – who was active for whom, said Faymann. The centrepiece of the law on lobbyists was a register of interest representations. The aim was not to put obstacles in the way of people but to create conditions under which they did not have to “hide”. After all, the new law also protected innocent people, said Faymann. Under the new law submission of bills or motions to Parliament in exchange for money would also become punishable. Possible sanctions could include the loss of seats in Parliament.

Faymann: tax reform by 2013

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann affirmed his commitment to adopting a tax reform by 2013 in the TV programme of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) “Presses-tunde“ on 26 June 2011. The tax burden on employees had to be reduced, while taxes on assets should be considered. In the near future the federal government would, however, focus on promoting economic growth and reforming the educational system, said the Chancellor.

Childcare for the first time provided to more than 90% of the 3- to 5-year-olds

According to the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria), the percentage of children aged between 3 and 5 years attending childcare facilities in Austria exceeds for the first time 90%. In the age group 0 to 2 years, 17.1% of the kids benefit from childcare services.

Vienna is leading with 28.1%, but also misses the EU” “Barcelona target” of 33%. Hence, the federal government will step up funds for expanding childcare facilities.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal Chancellor Faymann attends EU summit**

In the preliminaries of the summit of heads of state and government in Brussels on 23/24 June 2011, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann assured the National Council that financial aid to Greece would be paid out only if the government in Athens met the EU requirements. After the EU summit, Faymann welcomed the announcement of EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso to give Greece faster access to regional funds amounting to 1 billion euro with a view to stimulating growth in Greece. Moreover, Faymann described Croatia's EU accession as an "important signal to the Western Balkans".

The adoption of the austerity package presented by Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou by the Greek Parliament on 29 June 2011 was praised by the Chancellor as a "crucial decision to promote financial consolidation".

Federal President Fischer: aid to Greece is important for Europe

In the TV programme "ORF-Pressestunde" on 3 July 2011, Federal President Heinz Fischer stated that financial aid to Greece was "important and right". A collapse of Greece would have consequences for Europe as a whole – and even for Austria and its banking sector, said Fischer. The Austrian head of state welcomed financial aid by the banks as "just and useful" and pled for a Europe-wide financial transactions tax.

After a telephone conference of all euro-zone finance ministers on 3 July 2011, Minister of Finance Maria Fekter informed that the second rescue package for Greece would amount to about 80 billion euro and had to be "worked out in detail by September". The euro-zone finance ministers had in principle approved the disbursement of 12 billion euro, the fifth tranche of the first bailout package for Greece (totalling 110 billion euro), said Fekter. However, the IMF still had to give the go-ahead. Austria's share amounted to 153 million euro.

Otto Habsburg-Lothringen died

Otto Habsburg-Lothringen, Honorary President of the International Paneuropean Union and former Oldest Member of European Parliament died aged 98 in his house in Pöcking near Lake Starnberg in the early morning hours of 4 July 2011. Otto Habsburg, the oldest son of the last Austrian emperor (dethroned in 1918) and Hungarian King Charles I. (IV.), had been a

member of European Parliament for the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) from 1979 to 1999. He held the German, Austrian and Hungarian citizenships.

In the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament Habsburg supported for example the former Eastern bloc countries and the self-determination of nations. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, he also promoted the EU's Eastern enlargement. Otto Habsburg-Lothringen earned renown as the initiator of the "Pan-European Picnic" on the border of Austria and Hungary, allowing more than 600 GDR citizens to flee to Austria.

Federal President Heinz Fischer expressed his "sincere condolences" to his family, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann was "deeply affected" and paid tribute to Otto Habsburg as a "historic personality whose life was intertwined in many ways with Austria's history".

Israel's Foreign Minister in Vienna

Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman met with Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger in Vienna on 30 June 2011. Items on the meeting agenda included the Middle East peace process, the future of the Palestinian territories as well as bilateral relations. Austria advocated the continuation of direct Middle East peace talks.

Federal President Fischer in Ljubljana

Federal President Heinz Fischer participated in the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Declaration of Independence of Slovenia in Ljubljana on 24 June 2011. The recent compromise on bilingual topographical signposts in Carinthia further "stabilised" the "very good" bilateral relations, said Fischer.

The agreement on German-Slovene signposts in Carinthia reached recently with Slovene representatives was described by Fischer in "ORF-Pressestunde" on 3 July 2011 as a "historic moment". He rejected new negotiations on the Act on Ethnic Minorities.

Libyan rebel leader in Vienna

Mahmoud Jibril, chairman of the executive bureau of the Libyan rebels, demanded access to Libya's frozen international assets in talks in Vienna on 30 June 2011. Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger stated that the unblocking of Libyan funds would be examined. He also informed that 20 tons of relief supplies would be sent to Libya in the near future. Austria recognised the Libyan Interim Transitional National Council as the legitimate representation of the Libyan people.

ECONOMY**Unemployment down by 2.3% in June**

In June Austria's unemployment rate decreased for the 16th month in a row. The number of persons registered as unemployed with the Public Employment Service dropped by 2.3% to 207,944 jobless compared to the same period of 2010. Including participants in public training programmes, 268,866 people were without a job at the end of June (minus 5.5% compared to 2010). The unemployment rate for men, young people and Austrian citizens decreased, while that for women, foreign nationals and older workers went up.

Employment increased significantly. The number of employed persons (plus 63,000 employees) reached a record high in June. Job vacancies registered with the Public Employment Service rose by 7.9% to 36,653.

In June unemployment in manufacturing dropped sharply (by 15.7%) to a level that was nearly as low as during the economic boom in 2007 and 2008. Unemployment decreased markedly also in the construction sector (-8.8%), trade (-4.3%) and tourism (-3.9%).

Short-time working schemes have practically been phased out. While ten thousands of people had been put on short-time working at the peak of the crisis, there were only 227 short-time workers across Austria at the end of June. The number of long-term unemployed persons decreased by 26.8% to 4,804 persons. The average duration of unemployment declined by two days to 93 days.

In June the number of apprenticeship seekers went down by 5.4% to 3,959, while the number of vacancies for apprentices increased by 5.2% to 3,063. Thus the apprenticeship gap shrank to 896. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, this corresponds to the pre-crisis level. 11,693 vacancies for apprentices (+7.2%) were registered with the Public Employment Service for the next training year. The apprenticeship market would continue to relax in the next months, Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer was pleased to inform on 1 July 2011. He stressed that under the government's "training guarantee" training positions would be made available to all those not finding apprenticeship places.

Based on the national definition, the unemployment rate was 5.7% in June (0.2 percentage points below 2010). In line with the Eurostat method, Austria's unemployment rate was 4.3% in May (latest figure available) and continues to rank second – after the Netherlands (4.2%) – in the EU (9.3%; euro-zone: 9.9%).

Growth forecast for 2011 revised upwards by Wifo and IHS

Thanks to an unexpected strong expansion of foreign trade and investments, Austria's economy is growing faster than predicted in spring. On 1 July 2011, the GDP growth forecasts of the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) were revised upwards from just under 2.5% to 3.0%. However, the two institutes maintain their growth forecasts for 2012, projecting a real growth of only about 2% (Wifo: 1.8%, IHS: 2.1%).

The forecasts for GDP growth in 2011 were again revised due to an unexpectedly strong increase in goods exports and imports as well as heavy investments in equipment by Austrian companies. This trend has been reinforced by the worldwide upturn, which is, however, expected to lose momentum in the current year. According to Wifo and IHS, international economic risks were also increasing, e.g. due to higher raw materials and energy prices, the US debt crisis and turbulences in Greece.

Higher energy prices, notably of oil, push Austria's inflation rate to 3.2% (Wifo) and 3.0% (IHS), respectively, in 2011. The employment expansion triggered by the economic upturn is expected to slow down in the current year. The decline in unemployment will therefore also come to a halt, predicted the economic analysts.

Decrease in agricultural aid

Austrian farmers will face significant cuts to agricultural subsidies as from 2014. "A reduction by 10% is being considered" explained Minister of Agriculture Nikolaus Berlakovich on 29 June 2011. "Extreme cuts" – demanded by EU Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget Janusz Lewandowski – had been prevented, said the Minister. The cuts could total up to 150 million euro per year.

greenEXPO 2011

The ecology fair "greenExp011" was held in Vienna from 24 to 26 June 2011 (free admission). Hybrid and electric vehicles were available for test rides. Minister of Environment Berlakovich praised the "great presentation for life styles respecting the planet".

Bankruptcies decreased

Bankruptcies decreased by 5.4% to 3024 cases in Austria during the first half of 2011. Based on the latest data of the Credit Protection Association, personal bankruptcies rose, however, by 8% (to 4,970 persons affected).

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Tyrolean Festival Erl**

The 14th Tyrolean Festival Erl (Tiroler Festspiele Erl) takes place from 7 to 31 July 2011. It presents a varied programme of operas, symphony and chamber concerts, song recitals and a matinee with Musicbanda Franui (from Eastern Tyrol). Festival founder Gustav Kuhn is not only responsible for the overall management but also acts as a conductor, stage director and light designer. With the new production of “Tannhäuser“ and the revival of “The Mastersingers of Nuremberg“ as well as “Parzival“, the festival’s opera programme brings the “cosmos” of Richard Wagner to life and almost completes its cycle of Wagner works. The festival does not want to indulge in fanciful interpretations confined to a specific period of time but strives to create exemplary performances based on continuous development. Besides regular highlights such as Beethoven’s “Symphony No. 9“ or Verdi’s “Messa da Requiem“, the programme includes world premiers or performances of contemporary works, e.g. Elmar Lampson’s “Passacaglia for Large Orchestra“ (2008) and works by the composers Nebjoša Živković and Zoltán Kodály. The Hungarian conductor György Ráth will give his debut. Besides the “Missa ad venerationem artium et vitae“ (2001/2011) by Paul Engel, the Eastern Tyrolean Musicbanda Franui will add some Tyrolean flair. Its concert “Ständchen der Dinge“, will be devoted to an exploration of German-language songs (“Lieder”) created in the 19th century. (Musicbanda Franui was awarded the Pasticcio Prize for their interpretation of Mahler songs in June by the Austrian radio station Ö1.) The chamber music programme focuses on the Vienna School but also offers numerous world premiers of works by contemporary composers. A highlight is the Minguet Quartett (Echo Prize winner in 2010).

A winter festival hall with more than 800 seats and a generous orchestra pit is currently being built in Erl. The opening has been scheduled for December 2012. www.tiroler-festspiele.at

Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival 2011

From 7 to 17 July 2011, this chamber music institution founded in 1981 will celebrate its 30th anniversary in Lockenhaus, a small town in central Burgenland with 1000 inhabitants. The event under the motto “Uncompromisingly young“ is organised by priest Josef Herowitsch, who is supported by numerous

volunteers. At the festival (under the artistic management of Gidon Kremer), artists in varying formations will have an opportunity to experiment with chamber music – which had its heyday in the Viennese classical period and became the preferred genre for the avant-garde endeavours of Romantic composers. Free access is offered to the rehearsals to allow the audience to witness the development of the individual music pieces. The detailed programme – which could be classical music or music of the 20th century – is announced only 48 hours before a concert. The festival has been instrumental in igniting the careers of many soloists and has guaranteed artistic standards of excellence. And yet, it has successfully retained its intimate character. The Lockenhaus Monastery, the parish church and Lockenhaus Castle were converted into attractive performance venues. During the era of the Iron Curtain, Lockenhaus had earned renown for inviting musicians and composers who went unnoticed or were persecuted in their countries of origin. To promote promising talents, the Lockenhaus Academy for Chamber Music was founded. It takes place every second year. www.kammermusikfest.at

21st Vienna Jazz Festival in 2011

The opening concert of Jazz Fest Wien (Vienna Jazz Festival) was a charity event for the UN Women’s Guild starring Marianne Faithfull with her new album and the Canadian Matt Dusk. After shows by Cesária Évora, Al di Meola, Earl Klugh, Bryan Ferry, Madeleine Peyroux and Sérgio Mendes, the festival – managed by Fritz Thom and running until 17 July 2011 – presents numerous other celebrities of different genres: e.g. Afrobeat (Seun Kuti & Egypt 80), Blues (Cyndi Lauper, Dr. John und Trombone Shorty as well as guitarist Walter Trout), soul (Betty LaVette), gospel (the legendary Blind Boys of Alabama) and jazz (Liza Minelli, Thomas Quasthoff). Other big names coming to town are jazz pianist Dwiki Dharmawan with his World Peace Ensemble, singer Youn Sun Nah, guitarist Ulf Wakenius, the Voices of Harlem delving into hip-hop, the Black Country Communion, John Lee Hooker Jr., Terje Rypdal, Magnus Öström, radio string quartet Vienna, Saxofour, Wolfgang Muthspiel and Fritz Pauer. “Summerstage“ will be the venue of concerts of Sabina Hank, Clara Blume and Maria Ivanova. As in the years before, Vienna’s Rathausplatz will host Sunday jazz brunches and screenings of high-calibre jazz films.

www.viennajazz.org/

La Strada - International Festival of Street Art and Puppet Theatre in Graz

The La Strada Festival – founded in 1998 and managed by Werner Schrempf – takes place from 29 July to 6 August 2011. It spreads across the city of Graz – to all streets, squares and courtyards but also stages such as the Opera House and Dom im Berg – and even nearby villages like Stainz and Weiz, where selected productions are shown. In its early days the festival focused on new forms of street theatre. Today it lures crowds also with puppet theatre and cirque nouveau. Nevertheless, the underlying concept has remained unchanged, namely interaction with the urban environment and the people, uncomplicated and barrier-free access to performances, joy of experimentation as well as pleasure in and curiosity about innovative performances of high quality. The festival cooperates with globally reputed artists searching for new forms of expression that go beyond traditional theatre performances. As a partner of the EU-funded network for artistic creation in public space IN SITU, La Strada also acts as an initiator and producer of theatre works presented across Europe. (The European Commission made the 5-year project “META [Manifest of Europe for Transformation through Art] – Urban Metamorphoses” part of its Culture Programme so as to promote “artistic responses to burning issues of urban co-existence“.) Last but not least, the festival presents productions specifically developed for the city of Graz.

www.lastrada.at

2011 Retz Festival “Open Borders”

The idyllic wine village Retz is the setting for the festival “Open Borders” (managed by Alexander Löffler) held for the seventh time. This year’s edition (from 7 to 17 July 2011) is devoted to a composition of modern classical music – Benjamin Britten’s “The Burning Fiery Furnace“. The church opera revolves around topics such as expulsion, integration and cultural identity. These issues are also explored in the literary programme of the festival. (Authors with a migration background will read from their works.) The cross-border partnership with the Znojmo Music Festival is continued also in 2011.

www.festivalretz.at

Museum Liaunig

The impressive Museum Liaunig was opened in Neuhaus (Carinthia) in 2008. Industrialist and art collector Herbert W. Liaunig and his family had their dream of creating a unique

space for their contemporary art collections (almost 3,000 works) realised by the architects “querkraft“. The museum accommodates one of the largest collections of Austrian post-war art, which are complemented by outstanding works of foreign painters and sculptors (e.g. Tony Cragg, Robert Motherwell and Georges Mathieu) and, consequently, closes a gap in the museum scene. The so-called “Gold Chamber” – a collection of jewellery and religious objects of African tribes known under the collective name “Akan” – is a fascinating counterpoint. The museum is open to an interested public until 31 October 2011. Guided tours through the new exhibition are available (by appointment). The first part of the exhibition titled “Reality and abstraction I - figurative and expressive concepts from 1980 until today” (curated by Peter Baum, Silvie Aigner and Peter Liaunig) explores expressive and gestural tendencies in painting, sculpture and graphic art. Austrian positions on art are supplemented by exemplary works of international artists. The second part focusing on concrete and reductive positions will follow in 2012.

The 1980s were characterised by a trend to easel painting. With artists of the movement “Neue Wilde“ such as Alfred Klinkan, Siegfried Anzinger, Alois Mosbacher, Hubert Schmalix, Roman Scheidl, Gunter Damisch, Walter Vopava, Herbert Brandl, Erwin Bohatsch or Hubert Scheibl, the exhibition turns the spotlight on internationally famed key representatives of neo-expressive painting in Austria. The show is rounded off with works by young artists influenced by them (e.g. Franco Kappl, Eva Wagner, Petra Sterry, Martin Schnur, Christian Schwarzwald, Bernd Koller). In addition to larger works series of some artists, the exhibition also compiles numerous contemporary sculptures and objects created by different generations of Austrian and international artists.

www.museumliaunig.at

Restitution of Schiele works

In June the Art Restitution Advisory Body recommended the Vienna-based museum Albertina to retribute five drawings by Egon Schiele to the heirs of Karl Mayländer. The Museum of Natural History was advised to return 176 plant drawings to the heirs of Ernst Moriz Kronfeld.

The Michalek Commission proposed restitution of five other Schiele works currently held by Leopold Museum (to the heirs of Mayländer).

The future of the teaching professions

All teaching professionals – from nursery to secondary level II school teachers – will be required to hold a master's degree in the future. This requirement has been enshrined in the "NEW Teacher Training System" presented by Minister of Education Claudia Schmied and Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle. "Only the best should teach in our schools and this is why we also need the best teacher training system", explained Töchterle. In the future all teaching professionals will have to complete a bachelor's degree programme. The induction phase in schools or nurseries may be combined with a master's degree course. No answer has been found to the question which institution should take the lead in teacher training: teacher training colleges or universities. Only one thing is clear: teacher training colleges ("Pädagogische Hochschulen") will be abolished within ten years and replaced by teacher training universities ("Pädagogische Universitäten").

Karlheinz Töchterle invites counterparts to Bregenz

On 25 June 2011, Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle formally opened the fourth meeting of the "Salzburg Group" committed to strengthening cooperation in the field of research infrastructure. In Bregenz the Minister welcomed his counterparts from Central and Eastern Europe as well as from Malta, Cyprus and Switzerland. "Regional commitment to research and innovation has a decisive impact on the competitiveness of the European research area as well as on growth and wealth in Europe", said the Minister. A memorandum of understanding was signed at the end of the meeting. The participants declared their intention to establish a regional research network in the area of materials science.

Study demonstrates Austria's success with renewable energies

According to a recent market study on renewable energies commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, consistent investments into energy research are worthwhile. Austria compares favourably at international level even though 2010 was a difficult year for renewable energies due to the aftermath of the economic crisis. Enterprises in the four sectors biomass, photovoltaics, solar-thermal energy and heat pumps employed 27,617 persons and reported a revenue of 3.6 billion euro in 2010. Energy engineering from Austria also became an ex-

port hit. In 2010 the public sector funded energy research with more than 92 million euro – 63 million euro were made available by the Ministry. "I am pleased that our investments into energy research are worthwhile", said Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures.

Election of the executive board of the Austrian National Union of Students

The Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH) continues to be chaired by a left-wing woman. With 56 out of 83 votes, Janine Wulz, the representative of the Green and Alternative Students (Gras), defeated Bernhard Krall of the conservative Aktionsgemeinschaft (AG). Thus Gras will hold the ÖH chair for another term. But next year, Martin Schott of the Independent Departmental Lists (Unabhängige Fachschaftslisten / FLÖ) will take the helm. Aktionsgemeinschaft (AG) – the group with the largest number of votes – remains excluded from the board due to irreconcilable differences. While Gras supports free university access, AG calls for access regulations.

Minutes of the Council of Ministers of the Figl government published

The 5th volume (out of a total of 12 books) in the series Minutes of the Council of Ministers of the period after 1945 focusing on the Figl I Cabinet will be published soon. The series of publications has been supported by the Federal Chancellery since 1995.

The complete annotated edition of the Minutes of the Council of Ministers of the Figl I Cabinet provides fundamental source material on the first years of the Second Republic. Moreover, it is of great importance for research on the (re)establishment of Austria's governmental and political bodies during the Second Republic. The series is published by the Austrian Society for the Study of Historical Sources (Österreichische Gesellschaft für historische Quellenstudien) in collaboration with the Austrian State Archives (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv).

New super-computers for Vienna's academia

Austria's research community needs super-computers. The Vienna University of Technology, the University of Vienna and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences jointly presented VSC-2 – Austria's fastest mainframe computer. Vienna's new science cluster ranks 56th on the TOP500 list of sites operating the most powerful computer systems of the world.

SPORTS POLICY**Vienna hosts the 13th European Maccabi Games**

From 5 to 13 July 2011 Vienna will be the first venue in the German-speaking area to host the Jewish Maccabi Games. More than 2,000 participants from 40 countries are expected. After Euro 2008, the Austrian capital attracted another international large-scale sporting event. The Maccabi Games are the biggest Jewish sports competition (comparable to the Olympic Games). The name "Maccabi" is derived from the Jewish freedom fighters "Maccabees".

Maccabi Games are held every two years; venues alternate between Israel and a European capital. After Rome in 2007 and Israel in 2009, the Maccabi Games are held in Vienna in 2011, while Israel will host them again in 2013.

Besides Vienna, other cities applying as hosts were Stockholm, Madrid and St. Petersburg. Vienna had been selected due to the favourable location of sports facilities. Short distances between competition venues facilitated the organisation of the Maccabi Games, stated Julius Dem, Secretary-General of the European Maccabi Games.

Athletes participating in the Maccabi Games may win medals in 19 disciplines, including basketball, fencing, chess, field hockey, bowling, football and tennis. The tournaments take place at and near the Hakoah Sports Centre in Prater (2nd district of Vienna), which had been re-opened in its original location in 2008. Other venues include the Ernst Happel Stadium in Vienna and sports facilities in Lower Austria.

The Maccabi World Union – the globally largest Jewish association – is represented in almost all countries in the world and has about 400,000 members. The 13th European Maccabi Games will be opened by Federal President Heinz Fischer in a ceremony at Rathausplatz in Vienna. Numerous artists such as Timna Brauer and Neil Shicoff will perform at this event. Maximilian Schell, the Vienna Boys' Choir and Sarit Hadad, former Israeli Song Contest participant, have also confirmed their attendance.

A special accompanying programme will be offered to those guests of honour of the Maccabi Games who return to Vienna for the first time after they had been displaced by the Nazi regime. An "educational programme" including guided tours to the venues of Jewish life in Vienna will be organised for their descendants.

Special Olympics in Athens: Austria wins 90 medals

Austrian athletes earned a total of 90 medals at the Special Olympics in Athens, which came to a close with a ceremony in the ancient Olympic stadium Panathinaikon on 4 July 2011. Winning 24 gold, 32 silver and 34 bronze medals, the 139 Austrian athletes were highly successful at the 13th Special Olympics World Summer Games for people with intellectual disabilities.

This result is slightly better than the medal tally achieved at the previous Special Olympics held in Shanghai in 2007, when the Austrians returned with 82 medals. The powerlifters (squats, bench press, dead lift) are leading with 17 medals, followed by the tennis players with 14 medals. Austrian athletes won 13 medals in the equestrian event.

The Austrian delegation will be received by Federal President Heinz Fischer on Monday, 11 July 2011.