

# NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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**HOME AFFAIRS****Austria loses triple-A rating**

The rating agency Standard & Poor's (S&P) downgraded the creditworthiness of Austria and eight other euro-zone countries on 13 January 2012. Austria and France lost the top rating "AAA", dropping by one notch to AA+.

In a joint reaction, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger stated that it was not understandable that one of three US rating agencies decided independently to downgrade the credit rating of euro-zone countries and to give them a negative outlook.

The government leaders reiterated that the in-depth talks about additional budget consolidation measures for the period 2012 to 2016 were likely to be completed by the end of February. The envisaged austerity and consolidation measures would not jeopardise overall demand, economic development, growth and the labour market. Furthermore, the government had adopted deficit rules (i.e. the so-called "debt brake") already before the turn of the year. According to the joint statement, the coalition was holding talks with the opposition about enshrining the debt brake in the Constitution.

**Federal Chancellor Faymann: pulling Austria out of deficit**

This year's first meeting of the Council of Ministers (10 January 2012) focused on the austerity package as well as the ongoing negotiations between the coalition partners, i.e. the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and People's Party (ÖVP). At the subsequent press conference Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann underlined "the ambitious goal of pulling Austria out of the deficit and reducing the debt by two billion euro annually by 2016". The respective talks with all members of the federal government were held in a "constructive and good climate". A basic agreement is expected to be submitted before the end of February, stated the Federal Chancellor.

In addition to adopting a national consolidation package, Austria also had to participate in securing the euro at EU level. All the euro-zone countries, and in particular Austria, had benefited from the single currency, stated Faymann with reference to a recent international study. "An important step in this direction is the introduction of the financial transaction tax Austria had always been advocating", stressed the Federal Chancellor.

**Austerity package / debt brake: talks with the opposition**

It was clear "that we cannot consolidate the budget just by cutting expenses but that we must also consider new sources of revenue", Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann reiterated also at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 10 January 2012 – especially in view of the ongoing talks with the opposition parties about incorporating the debt brake in the Constitution.

Despite the new draft of the EU fiscal pact, which does no longer require the Member States to enshrine the debt brake in their Constitutions, Austria's federal government sticks to its plan of a constitutional arrangement – for which it requires, however, the approval of an opposition party. Possible measures to increase the revenue envisaged by Faymann are taxes on assets and real estate (e.g. gains from the sale of land).

**Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek: more transparency in the context of income gaps**

"The recent wage tax statistics show us that the income gap is slowly closing", Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek commented the data for 2012 presented by the Austrian Statistical Office on 11 January 2012. This was a welcomed fact but also indicated that "we still have a long way to go", said Heinisch-Hosek.

Transparency was the most efficient tool against wage differences. Heinisch-Hosek described income reports and binding wage information in vacancy announcements as well as the online wage calculator as key measures to combat the gender-related income gap.

**Secretary of State Ostermayer: consensus on new Ethnic Groups Act**

Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer expressed his satisfaction about the compromise reached on the new Ethnic Groups Act after a meeting with the leaders of the six advisory boards of Austria's officially recognised ethnic groups in the Federal Chancellery on 11 January 2012. Ostermayer was "more than confident" that the amendment of the Ethnic Groups Act would be submitted for review in the very near future.

Based on the amendment, a proposal of the Federal Chancellery providing inter alia a rule for distributing the total funding among the ethnic groups should be presented to the Forum of the Advisory Boards of the Ethnic Groups. This Forum is entitled to amend the proposal. If no changes are made the proposal of the Federal Chancellery will take effect.

**EUROPE INTERNATIONAL****Czech President Klaus in Vienna**

Czech President Vaclav Klaus met with Federal President Heinz Fischer for a working meeting in Vienna on 14 January 2012. The topics discussed included the recent downgrade of credit ratings.

President Klaus also participated in the conference “Economies in transition – 20 years after“ hosted by the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA) in Laxenburg. IIASA was founded on the initiative of the USA and the USSR in 1972 to build bridges between the East and West based on scientific cooperation. Today the interdisciplinary research activities in Laxenburg focus on global themes such as environment, energy or population issues.

**Federal President Fischer hosts New Year’s Reception of Diplomatic Corps**

At the New Year’s Reception of the Diplomatic Corps on 13 January 2012, Federal President Heinz Fischer addressed international concerns about the recent developments in Hungary. “If – in unison with European institutions and other European countries – I do not remain silent about concerns and the need for a discussion regarding specific developments in our neighbouring country Hungary, my attitude is not unfriendly but, on the contrary, I speak from the perspective of a country that feels connected to Hungary closely and by ties of friendship”, said Fischer in his address. Hungary needed Europe and Europe needed Hungary. This is a certainty that should “not be called into doubt”, said Fischer.

With regard to the debt crisis, President Fischer called for “reforms of the economic coordination architecture” to cope with the crisis more quickly and more effectively.

**Austria-Slovakia: joint fight against youth unemployment**

Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer and his Slovak counterpart Jozef Mihal signed a new agreement on bilateral cooperation in the areas of labour and social affairs in Bratislava on 12 January 2012. In 2012 Austria and Slovakia would focus on the combat against youth unemployment, explained Hundstorfer. At present there were more than 5 million young people without a job across the EU.

“Cooperation in the framework of the EU is vital as the initiative against youth unemployment proposed by me requires the wide support of all countries“, emphasised Minister

Hundstorfer. He plans to make available 1 billion euro for combating youth unemployment from existing EU funding. The initiative advocated by Austria provides for a guarantee to put young people (aged 15 to 24 years) in work or training and for establishing the fund “A Future for Young People”. The aim of European youth programmes was to grant fast and unbureaucratic emergency aid, underlined Minister Hundstorfer.

Bilateral cooperation between Austria and Slovakia had a longstanding tradition and had helped to avoid a flooding of the Austrian labour market by Slovak workers (about 4,000) after the labour market opening, said Hundstorfer.

**Euro: Austria was the country benefiting most**

In relation to its economic performance, Austria is the euro-zone country that has benefited most of the euro. Economic effects attributable to the euro increased the Austrian gross domestic product (GDP) by 22 billion euro in 2010 alone. These are the findings of a study by the international consulting firm McKinsey. Based on it, growth has been fuelled by an upswing of trade, lower interest expenses and the elimination of other costs such as those incurred for hedging against currency risks.

According to McKinsey, the single currency increased prosperity of the 17 euro-zone countries by a total of 332 billion euro in 2010. Germany’s share stood at 165 billion euro (6.4% of Germany’s GDP). In relation to their own economic activity, Austria (7.8%) and Finland (6.7%) were benefiting to an even greater extent. The study authors also came to the conclusion that the economic output in crisis countries such as Portugal or Greece would have been lower without the euro in 2010.

**Labour market opening: no mass influx from Eastern Europe**

Since the opening of the labour market in May 2011 21,736 workers from Eastern European countries moved to Austria. Based on the latest data of the Ministry of Social Affairs, most of them came from Hungary (9,906), followed by Slovakia (4,218), Poland (4,030) and Slovenia (1,862). All statistics, forecasts and expert opinions had turned out to be correct, stressed Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer on 11 January 2012.

## ECONOMY

### **Reviewing 2011: decrease in jobless people and record employment**

Despite the economic crisis and labour market opening for workers from the new EU Member States of Central Europe, the Austrian labour market proved to be relatively stable in 2011. The number of jobless persons, including participants in public training programmes, decreased by 4.3 per cent. Austria now boasts Europe's lowest unemployment rate of 4.0 per cent on average. "Moreover, we are starting the new year with a record level of employment. Never has the number of employed persons been higher than today – not even before the crisis", stated Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer. He was highly pleased about the strongest increase in the employment of older workers since the beginning of the data collection period (20 years ago), i.e. by 37,298 persons. "Adequate working conditions for older persons are the order of the day", said Hundstorfer, who also highlighted challenges facing the economy in this context.

### **Austria Wirtschaftsservice increased credit volume for 2012**

The public development bank "Austria Wirtschaftsservice" (aws) increased the volume of investment loans granted at favourable interest rates by 35 million to 560 million euro in 2011. In 2012 funding activities will concentrate on investments to expand research headquarters and to promote electromobility. Managing Director Bernhard Sagmeister is optimistic for 2012 as Austria's enterprises were "in a relatively good position". aws supports particularly Austrian small and mid-sized enterprises by providing corporate financing support at low interest rates, by co-financing project expenses of innovative start-ups and extending guarantees for high risk loans.

### **Increase in share of female supervisory board members in public enterprises**

"21.5 per cent of all supervisory board members and 15 per cent of all managing board members in public-sector enterprises are women. This is a considerable improvement over the last years, when women's shares of 16.1 and 11.6 per cent, respectively, were reported", Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek commented the report of the Court of Auditors on the average salaries paid by federal public-sector enterprises and institutions. This was indeed a favourable trend but there was still a long way to go before

reaching the goal. The federal government made a voluntary commitment to increase the share of women in leadership positions to 35 per cent by 2018.

### **Inflation: sharp decrease in December**

In December the Austrian inflation rate decreased to 3.2 per cent (year-on-year), from 3.6 per cent in November. This has been due to the so-called "base effect" observed with mineral oil products and food. If prices increase for more than 12 months, the effect on the consumer price index is less drastic. In the year 2011 as a whole, the inflation rate was 3.3 per cent on average, informed the Austrian Statistical Office on 16 January 2012.

### **Socio-political study, volume 9: minor part-time employment in Austria**

The Ministry of Social Affairs published a comprehensive analysis of the situation of persons holding minor part-time jobs in volume 9 of the "Series of Socio-Political Studies" published since 2009. It does not only contain detailed surveys on job satisfaction and work pressure but also discusses labour law problems arising in the context of minor employment relationships. All volumes of the series of studies may be obtained free of charge from the Ministry's Brochure Service.

<https://broschuerenservice.bmask.gv.at>

### **Berlakovich opens Vienna Holiday Fair**

Minister of Environment Niki Berlakovich opened the 37<sup>th</sup> Vienna Holiday Fair on 12 January 2012. With an expected total of about 150,000 visitors, it is the leading trade fair for holidays, travel and leisure geared to a general audience. Presenting climate and environment-friendly programmes and initiatives, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment clearly focuses on sustainable travelling and holidaymaking. "By positioning Austria as a climate-friendly ecotourism destination, we also create great opportunities for the tourist industry", stressed the Minister.

### **Ecolabel for tourism: hospitality and recreation with a green seal**

Enterprises that were awarded the Austrian Environment Label combine hospitality and recreation with officially recognised ecological management. About 230 enterprises of the catering and accommodation sector are listed in the new eco-label catalogue published by the Ministry of the Environment "Ausgezeichnet Reisen und Genießen".

<http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen>

## CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

**Klimt Year 2012**

To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of the “princely painter” Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), eight museums in Vienna present ambitious exhibitions showcasing about 800 works of the artist born in Baumgarten near Vienna on 14 July 1862. The region around Lake Attersee participates in the Anniversary Year with a “Klimt Theme Trail” and special hiking tours following in the footsteps of Gustav Klimt.

The first exhibition “**Gustav Klimt / Josef Hoffmann – Pioneers of Modernism**“ at the **Lower Belvedere** can be visited until 4 March 2012. It is devoted to the close cooperation between the two personalities, starting with the foundation of the movement “Vienna Secession” in 1897 and ending with Klimt’s death in 1918. The centrepiece of the show is the work of the two artists for Palais Stoclet in Brussels. This is also the first time that the only “Gesamtkunstwerk” realised by Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshop) is presented comprehensively. But the exhibition also explores their joint activities for the Art Show of 1908, where Klimt’s masterpiece “The Kiss” was presented to the public for the first time. The exhibition “**150 Years of Gustav Klimt**“ at **Upper Belvedere** will be inaugurated on 15 June 2012.

“**Gustav Klimt at the Museum of Art History**“ (running from 14 February to 6 May 2012) delves into Klimt’s intermediate period. Klimt’s 13 paintings and the respective sketches created for the entrance hall of the Museum are the highlights of this show.

Apart from the special exhibition, the Museum of Art History (Kunsthistorisches Museum) offers special guided tours through the foyer, for which the “painters’ company“ (Gustav and Ernst Klimt, Franz Matsch) worked after completing their commissioned paintings for the ceiling of Burgtheater.

Owning one of the main works of the painter, i.e. “Death and Life”, **Leopold Museum** invites to the exhibition “**Gustav Klimt. Up Close and Personal. Images – Letters - Insights**“ (24 February to 27 August 2012). It focuses on the estate of Klimt’s companion Emilie Flöge. The extensive correspondence offers insights into the every-day life and frequent trips of the painter, including his summer sojourns in Salzkammergut, which were reflected in numerous landscape paintings.

In its show “**Gustav Klimt. The Drawings**“ (from 14 March to 10 June 2012), **Albertina** brings together essential works from its Klimt collection consisting of 170 sheets and loan

exhibits from Austrian and international collections.

**Wien Museum** will lure art lovers with Klimt drawings. 400 sheets from the world’s largest collection of Klimt drawings will be showcased in “**Klimt. The Collection of Wien Museum**“ (16 May to 16 September 2012). Other highlights will include paintings such as “Portrait of Emilie Flöge”, Klimt’s work coat, the death mask, portrait photos, sculptures as well as Egon Schiele’s drawings of the dead Gustav Klimt.

The **Austrian Theatre Museum** explores the scandals and controversies around Klimt’s life and work in “**Against Klimt. 'Nuda Veritas' and its Defender Hermann Bahr**“ from 10 May to 29 October 2012.

Under the title “**Objects in Focus: Emilie Flöge’s Collection of Fabric Samples**“ (25 May to 14 October 2012), the **Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art** will exhibit fabric samples from the estate of the fashion designer and Klimt muse Flöge acquired in 1998.

The exhibition “**Gustav Klimt and Künstlerhaus**“ (6 July to 2 September 2012) features documents, letters, photos and other objects from the archives of Künstlerhaus. Gustav Klimt became a member of the Künstlerhaus artists’ association in 1891. He left it together with likeminded colleagues to protest against its rigid academic orientation in 1897 and founded the “Association of Visual Artists – Vienna Secession“.

The exhibition hall “**Secession**“ designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich opened in 1898. It accommodates Klimt’s “**Beethoven Frieze**“ created in 1902 for an exhibition on Beethoven. Special guided tours are offered during the Klimt anniversary year.

The **Museum of Applied Arts (MAK)** displays Klimt’s nine sketches for the mosaic frieze of the dining hall of Josef Hoffmann’s Palais Stoclet in Brussels in the framework of its permanent exhibition.

The “**Klimt Villa**“ in Vienna’s 13<sup>th</sup> district, which was built in 1923 after Klimt’s death on the site of his former studio, is undergoing a complete renovation. The artist’s studio (between 1911 and 1918) will be rebuilt on the ground floor true to the original, based on descriptions and illustrations of contemporaries.

Vienna’s tourist sector has been making intensive preparations for this significant event for a long time and wants to spark the interest of visitors usually not so keen on art in Klimt’s oeuvre, e.g. with a comprehensive brochure and a multilingual website.

[www.klimt2012.info](http://www.klimt2012.info)

### **Restructuring of Vienna's Kunsthalle**

Vienna's Kunsthalle will be radically restructured, informed Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny and the Spokesman of the Greens Klaus Werner-Lobo in December. It will be transformed into a non-profit limited liability company with a supervisory board consisting of eight members (chaired by Sonja Hammerschmid, rector of the University of Veterinary Medicine). Ownership will be transferred to the City of Vienna. Kunsthalle will receive an administrative management, which will be on an equal footing with the artistic management.

### **Reviewing 2011: Wien Museum reports significant increase in visitors**

In 2011 Wien Museum attracted about 125,000 visitors. This means that the exhibition venue located at Karlsplatz reported an increase of 15 per cent from the prior-year level. The special exhibitions proved to be the main crowd pullers. Among the most popular shows of 2011 were "Trude Fleischmann – A Self-Assured Eye", "Building St. Stephen's – The Original Plans from the Middle Ages" as well as "Angelo Soliman – An African in Vienna". The latter show may be visited until 29 January 2012. The exhibition "Makart – An Artist Rules the City" presented by Wien Museum at Künstlerhaus attracted international attention.

### **"Utopia GESAMTKUNSTWERK" at the re-opened 21er Haus**

The exhibition "Utopia GESAMTKUNSTWERK" presents a contemporary perspective of the historical concept of the "Gesamtkunstwerk", i.e. the total work of art, at the recently re-opened 21er Haus from 20 January to 20 May 2012. In the wake of the upheaval initiated by the avant-garde after 1918 and work theories developed by Schwitters, Duchamp or Artaud, integrated and socio-critical approaches started to dominate art. The idea of the "Gesamtkunstwerk", originally a purely aesthetical concept, was redefined. Its aim was to bring about social renewal through an art that was critical of society and institutions. As recent social developments raise again the question which life models are still or again possible, they become increasingly the focus of artistic attention. The exhibition takes account of this challenging trend.

### **Spotlight on Styria: "Regionale12"**

The festival of contemporary art and culture "Regionale12" will take place under the artistic management of Maren Richter from 22 June to

22 July 2012 as the biennial successor event of the official exhibition of the Land of Styria. In 2012 it will be staged in the Murau region under the motto "City.Country.River.". In 25 projects about 200 participants explore the natural resources of the region as a cultural and economic basis, local transformation processes (e.g. the phenomenon of youth exodus) as well as continuity and discontinuity in the history of the region. Under the working title "Remembering", crimes of the National Socialist period are to be documented and publicly debated in the framework of the festival funded under the EU programme "Europe for Citizens".

[www.regionale12.at](http://www.regionale12.at)

### **"InterArch Styria" project**

The aim of a research and digitisation programme funded by the EU and managed by the Styrian Universalmuseum Joanneum (UMJ) is to improve the accessibility of archaeological objects and records from the Slovenian region "Lower Styria" (Spodnja Stajerska) stored in Styrian and Austrian archives by 2013. According to project manager Marko Mele, unpublished reports on archaeological finds were very valuable for the research community. A digital archive of the about 5,000 finds from Slovenia is to be established in the archaeological-numismatic collection of the Styrian museum. The archive will be bilingual and accessible free of charge on the Internet.

In the framework of the European Capital of Culture "Maribor 2012", an exhibition titled "Uncovered. Archaeological Heritage of the Stajerska region from Universalmuseum Joanneum" will be staged at the Palace of Betnava already in autumn 2012. A first publication will appear to mark the occasion.

[www.museum-joanneum.at/](http://www.museum-joanneum.at/)

### **Claudia Schmied supports art education at federal schools**

Under the title "school budgets for cultural education", Minister of Education Claudia Schmied makes available direct financial aid totalling up to 500,000 euro per academic year for art education programmes at federal schools. 297 schools from all over Austria have filed applications, 788 projects will be funded. Alongside with "Free Admission up to the Age of 19", "Macht|schule|theater" and other measures, the initiative "school budgets for cultural education" forms part of the comprehensive strategy to promote cultural participation. Its aim is to help children and young people understand contemporary art through active engagement.

### **Petition for a referendum on education: call for a parliamentary committee**

After the Greens and the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), also the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) pled for setting up a special subcommittee in Parliament to deal with the petition for a referendum on education. This popular initiative launched by industrialist Hannes Androsch was signed by 383,820 persons (6.07 per cent of the electorate). The envisaged subcommittee is fully supported by Werner Amon, the ÖVP's Spokesman for Education. As the petition for a referendum on education did not only cover school education but even universities, it made sense to set up a joint committee. In the meantime the Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) also decided to support this proposal.

### **Josef Ostermayer congratulated the ORF on its double anniversary**

At the turn of the year, Secretary of State for Media Josef Ostermayer congratulated the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) on two special anniversaries. "On 1 January 1957 Austria's public broadcasting corporation started transmitting regular TV programmes on six days a week. Precisely ten years later, the new Broadcasting Act entered into force, which provided important stimuli to the further development of our country in terms media policy and democracy", stated the Secretary of State.

Other milestones were an increase in film funding to boost the share of domestic productions in ORF programmes, the introduction of a women's quota, measures to promote barrier-free access, the launch of the channel "ORF III – Culture and Information" as well as the supervision of the ORF by the independent authority "KommAustria".

### **Sabine Ladstätter is "Researcher of the Year 2011"**

The Club of Education and Science Journalists selected archaeologist Sabine Ladstätter as Austrian "Researcher of the Year 2011". The award was conferred on the head of the Austrian Archaeological Institute and the Austrian Excavations in Ephesus (Turkey) in Vienna on 9 January 2012. As two million persons per year visiting the archaeological site of Ephesus demonstrated, the interest in archaeology was great, the laureate was pleased to state.

By awarding this title, the education and science journalists pay tribute to the efforts of researchers to present their work and research discipline in a comprehensible way to the gen-

eral public, enhancing the image of Austrian research.

### **Apprenticeship with A-level exam – a success model**

The project "apprenticeship combined with A-level exam" launched in 2008 with 2,088 participants by the Ministry of Education is increasingly popular. 9,484 project participants (status: late November) are preparing themselves in courses offered throughout Austria for the A-level exam. So far the preparatory courses have been held predominantly during the leisure time of the apprentices and on the basis of agreements with adult education institutions. According to plans of Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, cooperation models with the individual companies training apprentices should also become possible.

### **University of Salzburg celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

On 13 January 2012 the University of Salzburg staged an academic ceremony at the official opening of the Nonntal University Park – an impressive modern building – to mark the beginning of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. The history of the University of Salzburg is, however, considerably longer. Prince-Bishop Paris Lodron founded a university in Salzburg already in 1622. This Benedictine university was closed in 1810, when Salzburg became part of Bavaria in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and was transformed into a Catholic grammar school. The University of Salzburg was re-established only in 1962 by setting up the Catholic-Theological Faculty and the Faculty of Philosophy. It opened with regular study programmes two years later, in April 1964. Various events including lectures by international experts as well as a lecture series on the history of the university have been planned for 2012.

### **Vienna's libraries are increasingly popular**

In 2011 almost ten per cent more readers registered with the "Vienna Libraries" ("Büchereien Wien") than one year earlier. Nearly 14 months after their introduction, about 100,000 e-books, electronic audio books and magazines were taken out on the "virtual library" comprising 8,900 titles. Launched in March 2011, the programme "Kirangolini" for children aged up to three years had to be expanded due to great demand. Attendance of events for adults also increased by 20 per cent.

[www.buechereien.wien.at](http://www.buechereien.wien.at)

**SPORTS****1<sup>st</sup> Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) kicked off in Innsbruck**

The Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) are held for the first time in Innsbruck and Seefeld from 13 to 22 January 2012. Almost 1,100 athletes (aged between 14 and 18 years) from more than 70 nations will compete in 63 sports events. Austria is represented with 81 promising talents.

The Youth Olympic Games feature an extensive cultural and educational programme (e.g. interactive discussions and media workshops on issues such as lifestyle, anti-doping combat, sustainability). This mix of sports and culture has been designed to promote the personal and athletic development of young people and to kindle their enthusiasm for Olympic values.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Winter Youth Olympic Games were opened at Bergisel stadium in the presence of Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos on 13 January 2012. “The event will again beat the drum for Austria as a host of sports events”, underlined Minister Darabos.

In his speech IOC President Jacques Rogge referred to the important symbolic value of starting a new Olympic tradition in Innsbruck. “These Games will enhance a great legacy that includes Innsbruck’s role as a host of the 1964 and 1976 Olympic Winter Games”, stressed Rogge.

**First European meeting: “Involving Young Migrants in Winter Sports”**

The first meeting at European level focusing on the involvement of young migrants in winter sports was held in Innsbruck one day before the opening of the Winter Youth Olympic Games 2012 (YOG).

While the participation of immigrants’ children has become a matter of course in many sports disciplines, there are hardly any migrants in winter sports – neither as active athletes nor as coaches or officials. The European seminar “Involving Young Migrants in Winter Sports” was opened by the Mayor of Innsbruck Christine Oppitz-Plörer and Bart Ooijen of the Sport Unit of the European Commission on 12 January 2012. The Austrian winter sports sector was represented by members of the Luge Association, Erste Bank Ice Hockey League (EBEL) and the Innsbruck Sports Union.

More than 40 representatives of NGOs, sports organisations, associations of different sports disciplines, youth trainers and youth workers, migrant groups and researchers from 14 coun-

tries participated in the seminar held at Haus der Begegnung in Innsbruck. The seminar was the first event in Europe addressing the integration of young migrants in winter sports and problems of under-representation or complete absence of minorities in traditional winter sports in detail.

It was hosted as part of the ongoing EU project “Sport Inclusion Network” (SPIN) by the initiative “FairPlay” of the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). NGOs, football associations, players’ unions as well as sports organisations from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Ireland, Hungary, Finland and Austria participate in the SPIN project.

**A tailored set of measures: the federal government supports the YOG 2012**

The federal government supports the Winter Youth Olympic Games 2012 both financially and through services provided by the Austrian Federal Army. The federal government granted direct financial aid for the YOG totalling about 7 million euro.

In view of the great importance of these Games, the Republic of Austria adopted a very comprehensive financing package for organising the Games. Besides contributing 5 million euro towards the costs of organisation, the Federal Republic also supports the refurbishment of the necessary infrastructure. The renovation of the ski jump hill in Seefeld was funded with about 1.5 million euro.

Moreover, special attention was paid to the adequate preparation of the associations responsible for the different sports disciplines. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: “It was important to me that the Austrian athletes will be able to prepare properly for the Games. Therefore we adopted this special financing package for Austria’s sports associations. To help the Austrian winter sports associations prepare the Games, we made available about 500,000 euro in 2011.” These funds are a sound basis to support Austria’s fledgling athletes in getting ready for the event.

The Austrian Federal Army also makes an important contribution to the YOG 2012 by providing a wide range of services, e.g. organisational management at the Olympic Village, transport services for athletes, equipment and the organisational team, catering services for no less than 1,100 persons as well as the provision of infrastructure.