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HOME AFFAIRS**Government leaders present a 26.5-billion-euro austerity package**

At a special meeting of the Council of Ministers on 10 February 2012, the federal government agreed on the fundamentals of the budget consolidation package for the period 2012 to 2016. After the session, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann (Social Democratic Party) referred to a “socially balanced budget“ not entailing any new “taxes for the general population”. The Chancellor’s party was pleased about asset-based taxes, while Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger (Austrian People’s Party) stressed that about three quarters of the consolidation potential would be realised by cutting expenditure. Minister of Finance Maria Fekter hoped that Austria would soon regain the triple-A rating.

Faymann informed that the austerity package totalled 26.5 billion euro and that the deficit could be cut to zero before 2016. He explained that Austria wanted to be independent of international financial markets, avoid interest expenses and make investments benefiting the country. The socially balanced budget consolidation strategy did not only provide for expenditure cuts but also for a “fair share in incomes”. The range of measures included the introduction of a capital gains tax on real estate and a solidarity charge for top earners, a reform of group taxation and the abolishment of subsidies for agricultural diesel. Faymann also praised the Länder for their contribution to budget consolidation (expenditure cuts of about 5 billion euro). Several proposals of the Court of Auditors had been taken into account. The increase of the actual retirement age by 2016 would be paralleled by numerous support measures. “People have to be treated respectfully“, stressed the Chancellor. In the period up to 2014 the civil service would be downsized by 1,000 employees annually. Due to decreased pension adjustments in the next two years, pensioners also helped to consolidate the budget, said Faymann. No sector would be spared, the National Council, the Federal Council and the federal government would be affected by expenditure cuts of about 10 per cent. On the other hand, major investments would be made in sectors vital for Austria’s future: one additional billion euro was allocated to universities, 1.6 billion euro to education and schools, 700 million euro to the Long-Term Care Fund and 750 million euro to the labour market, stated Faymann.

Federal President Fischer signed Revocation and Rehabilitation Act

On 8 February 2012 Federal President Heinz Fischer signed the Revocation and Rehabilitation Act rehabilitating the political victims of the judicial system of the period 1933 to 1938. In a press release the President highlighted the significance of passing this “law important in coming to terms with modern history“. The Republic of Austria had taken “a clear stance on a difficult chapter of its history”. Fischer pointed out that the law made a “valuable contribution to confronting our past”.

The Revocation and Rehabilitation Act passed with the votes of all five parliamentary parties on 18 January 2012 rehabilitates all persons who were sentenced, arrested and deprived of their citizenship between 6 March 1933 and 12 March 1938. The Act will enter into force on 1 March 2012.

Bures launches administrative reform

Minister of Transport Doris Bures launched an administrative reform in her ministry. “We face the challenge of having to cope with a steadily increasing number of tasks efficiently despite restrictive budgets. Structural reforms are therefore indispensable”, Bures told media representatives on 6 February 2012.

The planned measures (e.g. the distribution of powers between the federal and local governments, concentration on core tasks, modern administration as well as efficient resources management) are guided by the recommendations of the Court of Auditors. The aim is to cut costs by about 1 billion euro annually. The transfer of responsibilities for secondary railways and roads from the Federal Republic of Austria to the Länder is expected to decrease expenditure by several million euro.

Federal Plan for Senior Citizens

Minister of Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer presented the first Federal Plan for Senior Citizens on 31 January 2012 to mark the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012“. The Federal Plan for Senior Citizens focuses on measures in the social, economic, health, housing and cultural spheres which, according to Hundstorfer, were “decisive for Austria’s policy for the elderly”. It was a timely response to the radical social transformation of the ageing society and made it possible to take advantage of opportunities arising, stressed the Minister.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal President Fischer attends meeting of presidents in Helsinki**

Federal President Heinz Fischer participated in an informal presidents' meeting in Helsinki on 10/11 February 2012. The host was outgoing Finnish President Tarja Halonen. Besides Fischer, the heads of state of Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia had been invited to the gathering. Europe's role at international level, tolerance and discrimination as well as the south European neighbours were subjects for debate.

In addition, several bilateral meetings took place. Federal President Fischer held talks with his counterparts from Hungary and Latvia, Pal Schmitt and Andris Berzins, respectively, as well as Italian President Giorgio Napolitano.

Newly elected Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, who will succeed to Halonen on 1 March 2012, introduced himself to his counterparts.

The round of talks on tolerance and the fight against discrimination was chaired by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjörn Jagland from Norway.

Informal multilateral presidents' meetings have been held since 2003. The initiator was then Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio. Helsinki had been the venue of the meeting in 2005, last year Hungary was the host.

Darabos welcomed unchanged troop deployment level in Kosovo

Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos welcomed the decision that the number of KFOR soldiers in Kosovo would remain unchanged. "The current troop deployment level is the minimum needed to fulfil our mandate. As long as there is no freedom of movement at the border crossing points "Gate 1" and "Dog 31", a reduction of KFOR forces is unrealistic", explained Darabos on the sidelines of a meeting of NATO ministers of defence in Brussels on 3 February 2012.

The German-Austrian Operational Reserve Force (ORF battalion) will therefore remain in the KFOR deployment zone and will be replaced only in April for a period of six months. Darabos considers the deployment of another Austrian-German ORF battalion in the Western Balkans possible at a later stage. "Germany is an excellent partner. Cooperation is highly professional and successful", emphasised the Minister of Defence.

He also informed that Austria's participation in the mission in Kosovo had won international

renown. In his statement to the NATO meeting, US Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta had explicitly thanked Austria for its support, said Darabos.

EU-Austria: green light for new Eco-Electricity Act

The European Commission approved Austria's funding programme for energy production from renewable energy sources enshrined in the new Eco-Electricity Act 2012. According to the decision of the European Commission of 8 February 2012, the programme conformed to the EU funding rules as it provided clear incentives to increase the use of renewable energy sources and provided for safeguards to avoid undue distortions of competition. The new financing framework did not contain any exemptions for energy-intensive enterprises.

Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner concluded that there was a sound basis for promoting renewable energies in Austria after Brussels had given the go-ahead for the Eco-Electricity Act 2012. "These are good news for Austria's position as a business location, which has been strengthened considerably by the Eco-Electricity Act", said Mitterlehner on 8 February 2012.

Thus the complete Eco-Electricity Act will enter into force on 1 July 2012. It provides for an increase in the annual funding volume from 21 million to 50 million euro. Last year only a provision reducing the waiting list for wind and photovoltaic projects took effect.

EU innovation report: Austria is praised for research of economic relevance

On 7 February 2012 the European Commission presented its Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS) for 2011. This annually published benchmarking tool compares the innovation performance of the EU Member States. Austria was ranked eighth among the countries with an "above-average performance", behind the innovation leaders (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany).

Bures informed that Austria also did very well in the comparison of indicators capturing business activity, e.g. the R&D expenditure of enterprises, patent, trademark and design applications as well as the share of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

ECONOMY**Employment continues at record level**

“The situation in the Austrian labour market continues to be stable. Thanks to an increase by 55,000 employees, employment is still at a record level and is developing considerably better than forecast”, Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer commented the labour market data for the month of January. Unemployment increased by 2.7 per cent from the previous year, the number of participants in public training programmes decreased by 4.2 per cent. Based on Eurostat, Austria has an unemployment rate of 4.1 per cent – the lowest rate in the whole EU. “We started off into the new year 2012 as the European labour market champion”, said the Minister. He welcomed the sharp increase in the number of employees aged 50 plus in the labour market and stated that older workers accounted for three quarters of the employment growth.

Export sector continues on a successful path

The export figures for the period January to November 2011 prove that Austria’s export volume is approaching a new all-time high. “The successful development shows very clearly that our export enterprises are highly competitive and that the business location Austria offers an excellent framework”, stressed Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner. The “Go International Campaign” supporting the export activities of small and medium-sized companies had also contributed to this success. “By promoting exports to new emerging markets, we balance risks more effectively and take advantage of market opportunities in less indebted and strongly growing countries outside the EU.”

Austria opens Office of Science and Technology in Beijing

The Office of Science and Technology (OST) was recently set up within the Austrian embassy in Beijing to strengthen Austria’s position in China. Following the successful model of the office in Washington, the OST in Beijing will intensify activities to promote Austria as a technology location in China. It will be the main contact responsible for strengthening Austro-Chinese relations in the field of research and technology development.

The OST serves as a strategic interface and information exchange on science, research, universities as well as technology policy be-

tween Austria and the People’s Republic of China.

Nikolaus Berlakovich: adoption of an ecological and social austerity package

Minister of Agriculture and Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich was pleased to state “that we have succeeded in adopting a fair, ecological and social as well as future-oriented austerity package. Cost-savings are achieved in all areas and all activities relevant to climate protection remain in full swing, e.g. thermal rehabilitation, e-mobility, climate and energy model regions or the promotion of renewable energies.” The “sustainable centrepiece of our non-industrial agriculture, i.e. “the Mountain Farming and Agri-Environment Programme” was not affected, stated the Minister.

“Safer Internet Day 2012“

“Internet safety is a major concern to all of us. It is a challenge we all face and cannot escape”, said Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner on 7 February 2012, the “Safer Internet Day“ initiated by the EU Commission. A so-called “Cybercrime Competence Centre (abbreviated to “C4“) is being established to serve as the centralised coordination and registration body responsible for combating Internet crime. State-of-the art training and equipment are as important as close collaboration with business and research.

The new Media Youth Information Centre has been set up in Vienna by the Ministry of Family and Youth to provide information material and free counselling services. “We have launched this information and consulting centre to familiarise young people and their parents with the opportunities and risks of new media“, emphasised Minister Mitterlehner.

<http://www.saferinternet.at>

Energy policy: new Water Management Plan

On 1 February 2012 Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich presented the much-awaited set of criteria for proceeding with the expansion of environment-friendly hydroelectric power generation in Austria. “We need to promote hydroelectric power generation but not at any price“, said the Minister for the Environment. “It is my vision that one day Austria will be energy self-sufficient. Based on scientific studies, this could be achieved by 2050. This goal has been enshrined in the government programme”, stated Berlakovich.

CULTURE ■ MEDIA ■ SCIENCE

Salzburg: research project “Residenz”

For several years, Residenzgalerie in Salzburg carried out a research project devoted to the “Residenz” Palace in Salzburg and the lifestyle habits of the Prince-Archbishops living in this internationally important power centre for many centuries. This aspect of Salzburg’s history has been documented in six illustrated volumes published by historian and manager of Residenzgalerie Roswitha Juffinger. The financial resources were inter alia provided by Salzburg’s regional government and the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The project is rounded off with the small exhibition “Centre of Power”.

The unique collection of the archbishops originally comprising about 1,000 paintings was scattered all over the world after the collapse of the independent ecclesiastical state Salzburg. Some works of art were acquired by Belvedere, the Museum of Art History (Kunsthistorisches Museum) and the Imperial Furniture Collection. The exhibition “Centre of Power” consists of 30, partly large-size paintings that are all on loan from the new owners. It also showcases the construction plans of the “Residenz” palace complex and provides insight into the original uses in different epochs. The research findings about the “Residenz” palace are to be put to practical use in the framework of the envisaged “Salzburg Museum Tour”. The regional government plans to establish a Baroque Museum. The museum-goers will be able walk around Domplatz, continue from Residenzgalerie and through the Dome Arcades to the organ loft of the Dome and the Cabinet of Wonder in the Dome Museum. The Long Corridor of St. Peter’s Monastery will take them to a wing of the university (“Wallstrakt”). Passing the chancel of the Franciscan Church, they will return to their starting point, the “Residenz” palace. The museum project is to be completed and inaugurated in 2013.

“The Sound of Music”

The successful Broadway and Westend musical and the third most important film in history (with more than billion million TV viewers) lures more visitors to the original locations in Salzburg than Mozart. This makes “The Sound of Music” the most successful advertising medium of the City of Salzburg. 40% of the guests polled stated that “The Sound of Music” was the main motivation for their trip to Salz-

burg. At present about 300,000 people visit venues related to the Von Trapp family and the locations of the film starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer. While American guests dominated in the past, today most visitors come from Asia, where the film is shown on TV and proves to have mass appeal. But the story has attracted great interest also in Eastern Europe and Britain, where the BBC produced a one-hour TV documentary titled “Climbed Every Mountain”.

The Rodgers & Hammerstein musical has finally made it to Landestheater in the city which is inseparably linked with the history of the Von Trapp family. The international cast of the musical (running until 8 June 2012) includes Wietske van Tongeren as Maria and Uwe Kröger as Baron von Trapp (production: Andreas Gergen, Christian Struppeck; stage design: Court Watson; choreography: Kim Duddy; musical direction: Peter Ewaldt, Stefan Müller). In the past the heartbreaking story had been ignored by Austrian artists and theatre-makers. While the citizens of Salzburg hardly know the film and musical, the “Sound of Music” is a must-see home video in Japan, Korea, India, China, Australia and even South Africa – the greater the distance from Salzburg, the greater the popularity of this truly Salzburgish story.

Local politicians suggested to set up a “Sound of Music” Museum on the premises of the Baroque Museum and to move the latter to Salzburg’s new museum precinct (“Museumsquartier”). The Salzburg Museum organisation is currently devoting a special exhibition to “The Sound of Music” at Panorama Museum (Residenzplatz 9). The show closing on 3 November 2012 juxtaposes the real life story of the Von Trapp family with the myth created by the musical and film. www.salzburgmuseum.at

Vorarlberg: Hittisau Women’s Museum

The forthcoming Women’s Day on 8 March is the ideal occasion to draw attention the Hittisau Women’s Museum, which is not only Austria’s first and only women’s museum but also the world’s only women’s museum in the rural area. It was founded in Bregenzerwald in 2000 on the initiative of Elisabeth Stöckler to highlight women’s contributions to culture and to document women’s history and women’s life stories. Another aim was to raise awareness of historical and social factors shaping gender roles. The Museum is accommodated in a sophisticated building (by “cukrowicz.nachbaur

architekten”). Alongside with Museum Manager Stefania Pitscheider Soraperra, local cultural educators working in a voluntary capacity engage in authentic communication with the visitors. In 2010 the museum was awarded the “Bank Austria Art Prize“ for the best regional culture initiative.

So far more than 30 exhibitions have been staged. The current show “Celebrations. Combats. 100 Years of Women’s Day“ (organised in cooperation with the Kreisky Archive, the Johanna Dohnal Archive as well as the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art) can be visited until 11 March 2012. It documents the eventful history of Women’s Day in Austria, demonstrations for women’s suffrage, pacifist concerns as well as discussions about abortion and anti-violence measures.

In addition, the exhibition explores women’s life in Vorarlberg which has been characterised by traditional gender roles for a very long time. Neither the Socialist nor the middle-class women’s movement had a major impact on Vorarlberg’s society before the 1980s.

www.frauenmuseum.at

Yvonne Rainer retrospective at Kunsthaus Bregenz (KUB)

The exhibition “Yvonne Rainer. Space, Body, Language“ – curated by Rudolf Sagmeister in cooperation with Rainer – is devoted to the body of work of the artist, activist, filmmaker and choreographer born in San Francisco in 1934. In the 1960s Rainer became a key figure in postmodern dance. Her work on feminism and racism had a decisive impact on later generations of artists. The exhibition presents Rainer’s 6 films and works for the stage in Bregenz before travelling to the Ludwig Museum in Cologne.

In parallel, KUB explores the viability of art journalism in an exhibition titled “Enduring Value? Durability and Expiry Date of Critical Art Journalism“ staged in cooperation with the Vienna-based magazine “springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst“ (curator: Barbara Engelbach) at KUB Arena. Yvonne Rainer and KUB selected documentary photos of her most prestigious dance performances for the six giant billboards on the ground floor.

www.kunsthau-bregenz.at/

“Claes Oldenburg: The Sixties“ at the Museum of Modern Art (mumok)

The spectacular exhibition running at mumok in Vienna until 28 May 2012 (curated by Achim Hochdörfer) presents the early work of

pop artist Claes Oldenburg with an unprecedented wealth of examples. The fragile installations from cardboard and garbage – “The Street“ and “The Store“ – are accommodated on the ground floor. The first floor is dominated by large-size sculptures representing typical American household effects of the 1960s – later Oldenburg’s monumental everyday objects were to redefine art in public space. The exhibition “The Sixties“ ends with the walk-in “Mouse Museum”: Oldenburg’s carefully arranged objects highlight the diversity as well as the abysses of the capitalist society.

The show has been preceded by a two-year cooperation process between Oldenburg and mumok, which owns important works of the artist. It will travel from Vienna to Cologne, Bilbao, the MoMa in New York and to Minneapolis. www.mumok.at/

BAWAG Contemporary features Heidrun Holzfeind

The videos, slide installations and photos of the Austrian artist Heidrun Holzfeind examine the role of architecture in constructing social space. Her aim is to make visible power relations in urban systems and to question the utopian promises of modernist housing projects. The large solo exhibition (closing on 1 April 2012) presents “CU“ (Ciudad Universitaria, Mexico, 2006), “Mexico 68“ (interviews of former activists of the student movement against the background of the architecture of this important Mexican university, 2007), her video work “Colonnade Park“ (focusing on the modernist buildings of Mies van der Rohe in Newark through interviews with the residents, 2011) and her new series of works on Austrian architect Ernst Schwadron (1896 to 1979), who had to emigrate to New York in 1938.

www.bawag-foundation.at/

Experts advise against reconstructing assembly hall of Austrian Parliament

At a press conference on 8 February 2012, experts of ICOMOS Austria and docomomo_austria (the official consultants of UNESCO for monuments of the modernist movement) advised against the planned renewal of the plenary hall in the Austrian Parliament. The unique historical monument of the 1950s (by architects Fellerer and Wörle) was of great symbolic and architectural importance, representing “pure modernism“ and the “liberation from Nazi aesthetics“. Hence renovation was preferable to reconstruction.

Austerity package does not affect education and research

Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle was highly satisfied about the fact that the recently adopted austerity package would not affect tertiary education and research. Universities will be subject to an unchanged budget policy and benefit from well-aimed investments. Under the “one-billion-euro campaign for universities” announced shortly before Christmas, an additional amount of 990 million euro (including strategic funding for specific purposes) will be made available between 2013 and 2015. Great importance is attached to basic research, which will be funded as in the past.

The austerity package hardly hampers progress on school reform. The Ministry of Education agreed to cut expenditure by 170 million euro by streamlining its own administration. A total of 1.6 billion euro has been earmarked for the education reforms adopted. This budget ensures the availability of adequate funds for additional personnel for the New Comprehensive Schools as well as various other measures, e.g. introducing educational standards, decreasing class sizes or financing the start-up of a modular system for the higher grades of secondary schools.

OECD recommends Austria to go ahead with New Comprehensive School

In its report “Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools” presented on 9 February 2011, the OECD called upon Austria to press ahead with reforms and to offer more support to disadvantaged pupils so as to ensure more social fairness. The concrete recommendations of the study: New Comprehensive Schools for all, no grade repetition, abolishment of free choice of schools by parents as well as improved education and career counselling.

University of Vienna plans to set up new teacher training centre

Rector Heinz Engl had reiterated on various occasions that he planned to make the University of Vienna the “host organisation” of the new teacher training system. By announcing the opening of a special “Teacher Training Centre”, a first concrete step has been made in this direction. The respective development plan had been approved unanimously by the University Council. As political decisions on a common teacher training system “were still pending”, the university wanted “to place em-

phasis” on further developing training and “take independent steps to improve organisation”. With a total of 26 subjects, the University of Vienna offered a wide spectrum of subjects for the teaching profession and was the “largest teacher training institution in Austria”, said the Rector.

The planned Teacher Training Centre is part of the strategy “University of Vienna 2015”, defining the objectives and challenges of the university for the next years.

27th Career and Education Fair

The Career and Education Fair organised by the Ministries of Education and Science as well as the Public Employment Service will be held for the 27th time from 8 to 11 March 2012. This fair attracts an annual audience of about 80,000 interested persons. The about 350 fair exhibitors in Vienna’s Stadthalle include almost all Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities. The Public Employment Service, numerous professional organisations and interest groups will deliberate on opportunities for direct career access at the fair. This is the first time that the programme of one of the three lecture halls will be live-streamed on the Internet and made available for download.

<http://www.bestinfo.at>

EU hails Austria for its dual apprenticeship training system

The Danish EU Council Presidency’s interim report on education also addresses dual vocational training systems. Alongside with Germany and the non-EU member Switzerland, Austria has been praised for its dual apprenticeship training system combining practical vocational training and general education.

Viennese researchers determine age of rock layers with aid of astronomy

The past orbit of the earth and the sun reveals a lot about the interior of the earth. With the aid of astronomic cycles, researchers from Vienna succeeded in determining the age of rocks. The sedimentary rock layers in the Vienna Basin examined by Michael Wagneich of the Department of Geodynamics and Sedimentology as well as Johann Hohenegger of the Institute of Palaeontology of the University of Vienna are about 700,000 years younger than previously assumed. This difference of 700,000 years has a major impact, “even on classifying oil deposits”, said Wagneich.

SPORTS POLICY**Ministry of Environment: awards for eco-friendly sports events**

As the five winning projects of the competition “Sportlich zur Nachhaltigkeit” (“In a sporting manner towards sustainability”) demonstrate, it is easy to organise sports events in an environment-friendly and sustainable way. The green awards went to the Salzburg marathon, the ladies’ tennis tournament in Bad Gastein (Salzburg), the marathon of the district of Meidling (Vienna), the fun run in Piber (the Styrian village with the stud farm of the famous Lipizzaner horses) and the Tyrolian women-only fun run in Innsbruck.

“Green events raise awareness of climate protection, energy efficiency, eco-friendly mobility and responsible nutrition. We pay tribute to sports associations and organisations that take concrete measures to promote climate protection and sustainability. By raising awareness of the need to tackle challenges and by demonstrating in practice how events can be improved and contribute to climate protection, they act as important multipliers”, said Minister of the Environment Niki Berlakovich at the award ceremony.

A decisive criterion in selecting the winners was that ecological aspects were taken into account in organising sports events, e.g. waste avoidance and waste separation, regional, seasonal, organic or fair-trade food, eco-friendly transport to/from events, the careful use of energy and water as well as various aspects of social responsibility.

“A Wave Against Violence“

In cooperation with the Austrian Football Association, the Austrian Federal Football League as well as the associations of professional football leagues, the Federal Ministry of the Interior launched the project “A Wave Against Violence” in 2009.

The aim of the initiative is to prevent violence at sports events, to promote respect among fans and fan groups as well as to intensify communication and cooperation among representatives of the federal government, of sports and football organisations, associations and fan groups.

Lectures on the prevention of violence in sport have been given at Austrian schools, youth centres, fan clubs and associations since July 2009. The main target group are teens aged between 13 and 18 years. At these events the pupils and young people are informed and

instructed by anti-violence experts and specialist police officers.

Police campaign against betting fraud

Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner plans to launch a police campaign against betting fraud. The measures will be coordinated by a betting fraud task force. Selected officers of the Unit for Combating Organised Crime of the Federal Criminal Police Office will tackle illegal betting practices.

“Just like doping, betting fraud poses a severe threat to sport. What is at stake is more than a lost match as cheating undermines the confidence of fans and sponsors in the integrity of sport”, stressed Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner.

Cross-country skiing and ski hiking

Both cross-country skiing and ski hiking are highly recommendable from the perspective of sports medicine. As endurance sports, they help to lower the blood pressure, strengthen the cardiovascular system, have a positive effect on blood fats and stabilise the joints by improving muscular balance. The only prerequisite are perfectly groomed trails and an adequate skiing technique. Cross-country skiing is a great way to compensate for lack of exercise in one’s daily life as well as to enjoy nature and beautiful landscapes.

The Hohe Tauern National Park – with Mallnitz situated on the Ankogel mountain range – is one of Austria’s most scenic cross-country skiing regions. Thanks to the excellent condition of the trails, the so-called “climatic health resort” Mallnitz became the first Carinthian resort to be awarded the “Quality Seal for Cross-Country Ski Trails”. Five different cross-country ski trails lead from Mallnitz to the valleys Seebachtal (one of the most picturesque places of the Tauern mountain chain) and Tauerntal and its impressive surroundings. As Seebachtal and Tauerntal have a relatively flat valley bottom, the cross-country ski trails are not difficult and suitable for beginners. Some of them follow ancient paths such as a five-thousand-year-old mule track, which is easily recognisable even today.

Another hot tip for skiers is the Großglockner resort in eastern Tyrol. It offers a wonderful panoramic view of the Großglockner and 60 other mountains with over three thousand metres in height. The first-class ski region also boasts top-groomed cross-country ski trails around Kals (on a level of 1300m snow is guaranteed) as well as in Matrei.