

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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HOME AFFAIRS

National Council: victims of judicial system of 1933 to 1938 rehabilitated

On 18 January 2012 the National Council passed a resolution to rehabilitate the victims of the judicial system of the 1930s with the votes of all five parliamentary parties. In accordance with the Revocation and Rehabilitation Act, judgements passed by regular criminal courts, special and drumhead courts martial in the period from 6 March 1933 to 12 March 1938 (the date of Austria's "annexation" to Germany) are revoked. As a result, all persons are rehabilitated who had been sentenced, arrested and/or expatriated for fighting for an independent and democratic Austria. A special provision of the Act describes these judgments as unjust and pays respect to the victims of the judicial system. The scope of the law explicitly covers the expression of political opinion.

By passing this law, Austria demonstrated "that it faces the most difficult chapters of its recent history openly, critically and in a common dialogue. By joining forces, it had become possible to make this historically important step", stressed Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer.

Federal Army: Darabos presented pilot projects

On 23 January 2012 Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos presented his pilot projects for testing a professional army. No conscripts will be used at six different bases of the Austrian Federal Army for a duration of three years. The costs estimated at 8 to 10 million euro are to be covered by reallocating funds from the regular budget. The 300 to 500 conscripts affected will be sent to other Army facilities. Annually about 21,000 persons have to do compulsory military service.

Darabos pointed out that these pilot projects were very meaningful: "The future of the Austrian Federal Army starts in 2012."

Action is taken on three levels. Two militia engineer companies (consisting of 115 soldiers each) are deployed in Salzburg and Lower Austria. The soldiers receive an annual remuneration of 5,000 euro and agree to participate in military exercises for two weeks and/or individual operations if required. Moreover, in several military facilities and the Ministry itself conscripts will no longer be used for providing basic services (e.g. as drivers, cooks, etc.). The Riflemen Battalion 25 in Klagenfurt will be set up as a "model organisation". The Battalion currently consisting of 150 profes-

sional soldiers will be assigned an additional 350 professional and temporary-service soldiers by mid-2014.

According to Darabos, Sweden served inter alia as a model, whose Minister of Defence Sten Tolgfors informed about the progress in changing over to a professional army in Sweden during his visit to Vienna on 20 January 2012.

Council of Ministers agreed on early language support for children

At a meeting of the Council of Ministers on 24 January 2012 the federal government adopted an agreement to support the early language development of children in childcare facilities. The Länder will receive an annual amount of 5 million euro from the federal government from 2012 to and including 2014 – provided that they co-finance measures supporting children aged three to four years with inadequate German language skills. The federal subsidy granted for the first time from 2008 to 2010 was phased out last year but will be continued in 2012.

In this context, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann highlighted that about 23% of the children (including those with German mother tongue) had severe problems with the German language and were therefore also facing difficulties at school. "We have to remedy these shortcomings to ensure that the children affected will enjoy better opportunities in education and at work", emphasised Faymann.

Beatrix Karl: family court assistance "in the interest of the children"

On 23 January 2012 Minister of Justice Beatrix Karl presented the new family court assistance system. Its aim was to ensure "faster and sustainable decisions that are more satisfactory for all those involved" stated Karl.

Pedagogues, social workers and psychologists will be assigned to family law judges to provide professional advice and help them develop solutions that are acceptable for both parties.

In a first phase, the pilot project "family court assistance" has been launched in four jurisdictions: the first district of Vienna, Amstetten, Leoben and Innsbruck. It will be evaluated in two years. The Minister of Justice firmly believes that the outcome will be favourable and that family court assistance professionals will be introduced across Austria.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal Chancellor Faymann at EU summit in Brussels**

In an interview with the German magazine “Spiegel” (issue: 30 January 2012) held in the preliminaries of the EU’s special summit of heads of state and government in Brussels on 30 January 2012, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann pled for increasing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), or commonly referred to as the “euro-rescue umbrella”, from 500 billion euro to 750 billion euro as this would have a deterrent effect on speculators. In addition, Faymann called once for the introduction of a financial transactions tax as well as for enshrining the debt brake in the Constitution.

The Federal Chancellor is also firmly committed to measures promoting growth and employment. Youth unemployment is also high on the agenda of the EU summit in Brussels, in which Faymann will participate as a keynote speaker. He had already proposed to the Main Committee of the National Council on 27 January 2012 that unused financial resources from the European Social Fund (ESF) amounting to 10 billion euro should be earmarked for the struggle against youth unemployment in Europe. More than 5 million young people aged between 15 and 24 years did not find jobs in the EU. The available funds should be used to support programmes promoting youth employment, explained Faymann.

In this segment Austria boasts the lowest unemployment rate of 4.0% (Eurostat) in the EU.

At a meeting of European Social Democrats taking place before the EU summit, Faymann clearly rejected Germany’s proposal of sending a European watchdog to Athens that would have direct control over Greece’s budget.

Austria commemorated the Holocaust

On the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger commemorated the victims of the National Socialist terror regime and warned against the dangers of racist and undemocratic tendencies in times of economic crisis.

Especially during crises there was an acuter risk that resentments against minorities, intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism would flourish, said Faymann: “Therefore we have to oppose the denial and trivialisation of NS atrocities even more fiercely. We do not only owe this to the victims of the Nazi regime. But we

are also responsible for defending human rights and democracy against provocations as well as further developing them with greater vigour”, stressed the Federal Chancellor.

Spindelegger reminded of the fact that “a crisis should never serve as a pretext to lower human rights standards.” Politics and the civil society had to define clear limits. “Democracy and human rights are unique assets we have to defend”, underlined Spindelegger.

Federal President Heinz Fischer and Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer also launched an appeal to keep the memory of the horrors of the Holocaust alive and to share it with the younger generations.

On 27 January 2011 a demonstration was held at Heldenplatz in Vienna to commemorate the victims of the NS regime and to send out a clear message. Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek stressed that a remembrance demonstration at Heldenplatz, where crowds of people had cheered Hitler in 1938, had a highly symbolic meaning.

Federal Chancellor Faymann met with Angela Merkel in Berlin

At a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as the heads of government of Portugal (Pedro Passos Coelho) and Sweden (Fredrik Reinfeldt), Chancellor Werner Faymann emphasised that in view of the debt crisis it was an absolute must to assert the power of politics over the power of the financial markets. Faymann reiterated the need to introduce a financial transactions tax – if necessary only in the euro-zone, as Germany and France had suggested.

Austria welcomes pro-EU result of referendum in Croatia

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann expressed his great pleasure about the fact that the Croatian population had voted in favour of joining the EU on 22 January 2012. Austria had always supported Croatia’s EU accession, said Faymann.

Spindelegger holds talks with Orban in Budapest

After his talks with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Budapest on 20 January 2012, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger highlighted the importance of “a process of objectivising and depoliticising” in the conflict between the EU and Hungary. Moreover, Spindelegger stressed that the EU legislation provided clear guidelines.

ECONOMY

Low interest rates and good economic trend improved 2011 budget balance

In 2011 the general government deficit was smaller than originally assumed. Based on the data presented by the Ministry of Finance on 27 January 2012, the budget deficit amounted to 3.3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011 – instead of 3.9 per cent as budgeted by the government. The level of indebtedness of the Republic of Austria of 72.2 per cent is slightly lower than expected (73.6 per cent). This was due to the fact that the government spent a total of 2.3 billion euro less and earned 910 million euro more than planned. The slightly more favourable development may be attributed to three main factors. First of all, Austria benefited from lower interest rates on loans, reducing the outflow of financial capital by 930 million euro. Secondly, the favourable economic trend of 2011 led to an unexpectedly high tax revenue, which also improved the budget. About half of the tax revenue excess of 878 million euro went to the Länder. Thirdly, the new budget law (including new rules on reserves) required the ministries to pursue a highly prudent expenditure policy already during the last years.

Tourism: new record of arrivals and of hotel nights of domestic guests

Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner did not only come to a positive conclusion about the successful tourism year 2011 but was also optimistic about 2012: “The new guest record and the increase in hotel nights show that the holiday destination Austria is gaining in attractiveness even in economically difficult times. (...) We are very pleased that the number of nights spent by domestic guests in Austrian hotels reached an all-time high. This means that a lot of purchasing power remains in the country”, stressed the Minister. The booming city tourism – reflected in record visitor numbers in Vienna, Salzburg and Linz – has made a decisive contribution to this positive result.

As far as foreign guests were concerned, the decline in tourists from traditional countries of origin was more than compensated for by the increase in visitors from other countries. “Tourism marketing activities continue to focus on important large markets such as Germany and the Netherlands, but in parallel we plan to take advantage of opportunities in new markets of origin in Eastern Europe, China, India or the Arab region.” The success of this

diversification strategy can be illustrated with an example: The number of nights spent by Russian guests in Austrian hotels rose by 25.6 per cent in 2011.

Financial aid for thermal rehabilitation and elderly-friendly buildings

On 20 January 2012 Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner opened the meeting “Residential Construction in Transition” hosted by the Ministry of Economy. Highlighting new challenges, the Minister informed that according to forecasts the number of households in Austria would increase from 3.6 million to more than four million in 2030. “This development fills the order books of the building companies but also raises questions regarding the affordability and financing of residential construction,” stated the Minister. Adequate solutions were also required to adjust existing apartments to the needs of the elderly as in the period up to 2030 the number of people aged above 80 years would double. In addition, there was a pressing need to decrease energy consumption: “Through the thermal rehabilitation of buildings, which the federal government subsidised with 100 million euro in 2011 alone, we may provide long-term stimuli in this area“, stressed Mitterlehner.

On 27 January 2012 Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Reinhold Mitterlehner and Minister of Environment Niki Berlakovich presented the new thermal rehabilitation programme with a total funding volume of 100 million euro. For private residential buildings 70 million euro will again be made available in 2012, while companies will be able to benefit from subsidies worth 30 million euro.

Economic forecast: minor upturn of Austria's economy

According to the Austrian Economic Research Institute (Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung / Wifo), economic growth will mainly be driven by the dynamic export sector in the next five years. Wifo's mid-term forecast predicts a moderate GDP growth between 2012 and 2016. While private consumption will grow steadily, austerity measures of the public sector will dampen public spending. Growth is expected to start accelerating only in 2014. Exports are likely to expand by 5.5% on average from 2012 to 2016. Imports are expected to grow by 5.1% annually. Despite the only minor economic upturn, employment will grow. The situation in the labour market will remain tense despite the increase in employed persons as labour supply also continues widening.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Austrian Film Awards: “Breathing” by Karl Markovics triumphs**

The Austrian Film Awards were presented at the Rosenhügel film studios in Vienna on 27 January 2012. The big winner was the first-time filmmaker and actor Karl Markovics. His debut as a director with the art house film “Atmen“ (“Breathing”) received awards in six categories (out of a total of 13): best feature film, best director, best script, best actor (Thomas Schubert), best music (Herbert Tucmandl) and best cutter (Alarich Lenz). With two awards, the Austrian Film Academy paid tribute to “Whores’ Glory” by Michael Glawogger – best documentary and best camerawork (Wolfgang Thaler) – as well as to Wolfgang Murnberger’s “Mein bester Feind“ (in the categories best make-up artist and best costume designer).

Markus Schleinzer’s debut film “Michael“ earned an award for the best sound. The trophy for the best leading actress went to Ursula Strauss in Elisabeth Scharang’s film “Vielleicht in einem anderen Leben“. The Austrian Film Awards were granted for the second time, the statuette was designed by Valie Export.

“Breathing” tells the story of the 19-year-old prisoner, who gains courage to face life in a day-release job for an undertaker. International film critics affirmed that Markovics’ debut as a director had been selected with good reason as Austria’s candidate for an Oscar Award.

Austrian Art Prize 2011

On 24 January 2012 Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied conferred the Austrian Art Prizes 2011 on six artists. The prize was a “necessary and many-voiced commitment to contemporary art in its different forms of expression”, stated President Fischer.

All prize winners represented “important and influential positions of Austrian contemporary art” and demonstrated “impressively” how “comprehensive and diverse the oeuvre of Austrian artists” was, emphasised Minister Schmied. It was vital to uphold and further develop the values of culture, especially in times of economic problems. “The artists make an essential contribution that allows us to reflect critically on our own actions and to explore new paths”, said Schmied.

This year’s prize winners in six categories are as follows:

Video and media art: Robert Adrian; music: Gerd Kühr; artistic photography: Michaela Moscouw; film: Barbara Reumüller; literature: Franz Schuh; visual art: Walter Vopava.

Max Ophüls Prize goes to Markus Schleinzer

This year the Max Ophüls Prize goes to the Austrian film director Markus Schleinzer for his drama “Michael“ revolving around a paedophile, informed the Max Ophüls Prize jury in Saarbrücken on 21 January 2012. The 96-minute film offers a disturbing peek into an unfathomable crime from the perspective of the perpetrator. The jury praised the conceptual courage of the filmmaker. According to its official statement, the film was a “cautious approximation to horrors you will never forget.” The prize money amounts to 18,000 euro. Leading actor Michael Fuith received the prize for the best newcomer. The prize for the best documentary was awarded to Sobo Swobodnik for his black-and-white portrait of Hermes Phettberg in “Der Papst ist kein Jeansboy“. Seven Austrian productions competed for the Max Ophüls Prize in the 33rd edition of the film festival. It is considered one of the most important forums for young filmmakers in the German-language area.

Bregenz Fröhling 2012

The Bregenz Festspielhaus ushers in its spring season (“Bregenz Fröhling“) with Austrian premiers of international dance performances. The festival is kicked off with “Sehnsucht / Schmetterling“, an outstanding dance production of Nederlands Dans Theater 1 on 30 and 31 March 2012 (piano concerts by Beethoven; artistic directorship Jim Vincent; choreography Paul Lightfoot, Sol León).

On 13 April 2012 Spanish flamenco star María Pagés and Moroccan-Belgian dancer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui will collaborate in “Dunas“, bringing together Orient and Occident, contemporary dance and the tradition of flamenco. On 6 May 2012 multi-award winning choreographer and rock star of the ballet scene Wayne McGregor and his company Random Dance explore the mysteries of the body in “FAR“. Inspired in Roy Porter’s book “Flesh in the Age of Reason“, “FAR” raises the question who we are and how we perceive ourselves.

On 11 and 12 May 2012 aktionstheater ensemble directed by Martin Gruber (dramaturgy Martin Ojster) turns the spotlight on “unemployment“.

The festival closes on 25 May 2012 with a performance by Akram Khan Company. In-

spired in universal myths of angels and tales of humankind about the “journey to heaven”, “Vertical Road“ explores the development from the worldly to the spiritual. The work of the London-born choreographer with Bengali roots, Akram Khan, is accompanied by the spherical sounds of Nitin Sawhney’s music. In his choreography he is interweaving the mystic-ascetic culture of Sufism, the classical north Indian dance style Kathak, contemporary aesthetics and, last but not least, Japanese Butoh.

Bregenz Festival: vacant position of manager and programme for 2012

The Bregenz Festival (“Bregenzer Festspiele“) terminated the employment of manager Roland Geyer by mutual consent before it even began. According to a statement of 24 January 2012, this was due to “irreconcilable differences in opinion on the future artistic concept and programme realisation as from 2015“. The vacancy announcement for the festival manager will be republished in February.

This decision does not affect programme planning for the year 2012. This year’s Bregenz festival summer taking place under the motto “Memories of the Future” will present a revival of the revolutionary opera “André Chénier“ by Umberto Giordano on the Lake Stage as well as the science fiction opera “Solaris“ (alluding to the spacecraft of the same name) by German composer Detlev Glanert at Festspielhaus.

Solaris – a composition commissioned specifically for Bregenz and co-produced by Komische Oper Berlin – is based on the science-fiction novel of the Polish author Stanislaw Lem. His work was about the materialisation of memories and dreams and personal approaches to dealing with repressed guilt, explained the composer.

Another work by Glanert – the chamber opera “Nijinsky’s Diary“ – will be performed in cooperation with Landestheater Linz at Theater am Kornmarkt. The Bregenz Festival programme is rounded off with orchestral concerts, cross-culture events and “Art of Our Times” (“Kunst aus der Zeit“). The theatre programme will be announced in spring.

The 67th Bregenz Festival on the shores of Lake Constance opens with the world premiere of “Solaris“ on 18 July 2012.

Kunsthalle Krems: “Time to Act!”

Kunsthalle Krems presents for the first time a thematic selection of works from the collection of the “Migros Museum for Contemporary Art“ in Zurich (Switzerland) in Austria. The

exhibition “Time to Act!” (running until 19 February 2012) gathers works by 43 artists of the late 1960s to the present, including Maurizio Cattelan, Andy Warhol, Gilbert & George, Bruce Nauman, Steve McQueen, Katharina Sieverding and Hanne Darboven. The exhibits reflect different artistic practices from the perspective of political action. Through his political-artistic commitment, the founder of the company “Migros“ Gottlieb Duttweiler wanted to respond to societal as well as social issues.

Kunsthalle Krems will also be the venue of the solo exhibition “Walter Vopava“, one of the most important representatives of New Abstraction. The show curated by Hans-Peter Wipplinger (closing on 9 April 2012) features a series of paintings created specifically for the central hall of Kunsthalle. They are impressive examples of the artist’s exploration of light, colour, space and atmosphere.

www.kunsthalle.at

Cartoon Museum Krems has a new director

In January Gottfried Gusenbauer succeeded to Jutta Pichler, who had managed the museum successfully since 2006. Gusenbauer plans to position and establish “Karikaturmuseum Krems” (“Cartoon Museum Krems“) – whose first-rate collection has been steadily expanded by the regional government of Lower Austria during more than ten years – as an important competence centre for the art of drawing and graphic literature. The new manager also announced that exchanges and cooperation with international exhibition venues as well as networks with international artists would be strengthened.

Gottfried Gusenbauer was active at Offenes Kulturhaus (media studios), at the University of Art and Design Linz as well as the University of Applied Sciences in St. Pölten. As a comics drawer, he is a member of the Linz-based artists’ association MAERZ.

He founded the Art Association for Comics and Graphic Literature and acted as the editor of the comics magazine “lin-c“. In addition, he has managed the NEXTCOMIC Festival Linz since 2009. The festival conceived by him has earned renown as one of the most important events of the comics scene in Europe. Gusenbauer is also firmly committed to making narrative drawing part of the “established culture” as well as to the recognition of comics as an art.

Claudia Schmied: new individualised and fairer A-level exam

As agreed between Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, teachers, parents as well as students, the draft ordinance setting out the rules for the new A-level exam will be submitted for parliamentary review. The Minister stressed the significance of this ordinance: "The draft submitted for review marks another important stage of the educational reform. By placing emphasis on competence, individualisation and equality of opportunity, the reform of the A-level exam goes hand in hand with other educational reforms such the introduction of the new system for the upper grades of secondary schools ("Oberstufe Neu") and of education standards." Comprising pre-university research projects and diploma theses, the new A-level exam promotes individualised learning and opportunities to develop personal talents.

New Young Science quality seal for successful research partner schools

Young Science is a new platform for collaboration between research and education. Its focus is on intensifying cooperation between institutions of secondary and tertiary education. In 2012 outstanding Austrian research partner schools will for the first time be called before the curtain. Their achievements will be recognised with a quality seal. "Numerous schools have participated very successfully and for a long time in common research projects with academic institutions. In this process, a wide range of model solutions for cooperation at the interface between research and school have been developed. With the Young Science quality seal, we would like to draw attention to the pioneer work of the partner schools and support it as a highly future-oriented approach to promoting young talents at pre-university level", said Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle.

Promoting women: University of Vienna offers three Berta Karlik professorships

The number of female professors at the University of Vienna continues increasing, from below 10% in 2000 to more than 20% today. To reinforce this trend, the University of Vienna announced vacancies for Berta Karlik professorships last year. Physicist Paola Ayala, linguist Brigitta Busch and molecular biologist Verena Jantsch-Plunger will be awarded the Berta Karlik professorships for a three-year term in a ceremony taking place in early March 2012. The programme has been named after Austrian physicist Berta Karlik, the first fe-

male university professor of the University of Vienna, who had been appointed full professor in 1956.

Youth coaching to promote employment opportunities of young people

Youth coaching is a preventive measure which has been designed to give pupils access to a densely-knit network of individual support services and funding programmes. "The aim of the youth coaching project is to reduce the number of school drop-outs and to keep young people in the education and training system as long as possible. Furthermore, we will use this measure to reintegrate early school-leavers", emphasised Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer on 25 January 2012.

In view of the demographic development, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner also considers it "more important than ever to ensure that young people make accurate decisions on future career choices and advanced training". The pilot project "youth coaching" for pupils of the 9th grade is launched in Vienna and Styria in January 2012.

Simplified recognition of qualifications earned abroad

On 24 January 2012 Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer and Secretary of State for Integration Sebastian Kurz stressed that qualifications earned abroad, e.g. by skilled workers or university graduates, could be taken advantage of more effectively and that rules for their formal recognition should be simplified. To this end, an inter-ministerial working group has been set up on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Data protection officers for enterprises with 50 employees or more

Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer plans to strengthen data protection in companies. Enterprises with 50 employees or more should be required to appoint a data protection officer. The background is a planned EU directive providing for a right to delete data. While the draft directive requires only companies with at least 250 employees to appoint data protection officers, Josef Ostermayer plans to introduce this requirement for companies with a minimum of 50 employees. In the framework of the "6th European Data Protection Day", a symposium was held on this issue at the Federal Chancellery, in which also representatives of the European Commission as well as the Data Protection Council and Data Protection Commission expressed their views.

SPORTS**The first Winter Youth Olympic Games were a huge organisational success**

The first Winter Youth Olympic Games, which made Innsbruck a three-time host of Olympic Games, came to a splendid end on 22 January 2012.

On the last day of the Games, Minister of Sport Darabos reviewed the positive result. "With 14 medals, i.e. six gold medals, four silver and four bronze medals, the Austrian team has surpassed all expectations. Many young talents attracted international attention, especially three-time gold medallist Marco Schwarz, winning the Nordic combined event, the Alpine skiing mixed event and the giant slalom event. One thing is certain. We will not have to worry about the success of Austrian athletes in winter sports in the future."

The first Winter Youth Olympic Games were excellent, also from an organisational point of view. "I would like to thank all the staff and the about 1,400 volunteers very warmly. We have proved once more that we are a great organiser of sports events. We have made a lasting impression with these fantastic games", stated Darabos.

Besides, Austria will not have to wait too long for the next large-scale youth sports event. In 2015 the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival will take place in Liechtenstein and Vorarlberg. Obviously, standards are very high after Innsbruck.

Ministry invited to EU conference "Education & Training" to Innsbruck

After setting up six expert working groups of the European Commission, the Ministry of Sport held the first formal EU expert meeting on the subject "Education and Training in Sport" in Seefeld and Innsbruck on 12/13 January 2012.

The first day in Seefeld was devoted to the presentation of best practices. An illustrative overview of junior and elite sports in Austria was presented to the participants, who also discussed various transnational, international and integrative aspects of the topic.

Insights were given into the organisational structures of Austrian high-performance sport. Moreover, the director of the Ski Academy in Stams, Arno Staudacher, presented the model school for fledgling skiers enjoying a global reputation. The educational goals of the school are to guide young people towards outstanding achievements in Alpine skiing, ski jumping, cross-country skiing and Nordic com-

bined/biathlon as well as to allow them to complete education with formal qualifications. Thomas Wörz, Managing Director and Athletic Director of the Salzburg-based "School-Sport Model" gave an impressive overview of his highly successful model of an academy training young talents in high-performance sports.

Another item on the meeting agenda was the presentation of the project "The Career After" offering specific counselling and support services to Austrian elite athletes and professional coaches who wish to build up a second career after withdrawing from sports. In the following, Werner Margreiter of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) provided insight into the organisation, practical realisation as well as individual events of the Winter Youth Olympic Games. The gathering of the first day was concluded by Mirna Jukic (three-time Austrian Athlete of the Year and bronze medal winner at the Olympic Summer Games in Beijing) with a much-noticed keynote speech about her sports career.

On the second day, the meeting – chaired by the European Commission – was continued in Innsbruck.

Seefeld and Innsbruck were deliberately selected as venues for the EU expert meeting as they had hosted Olympic Winter Games already twice, namely in 1964 and 1976. In January 2012 they also acted as the host of the 1st Winter Youth Olympic Games, in which 1,058 athletes aged between 14 and 18 years from more than 70 nations competed for medals in 63 events.

Winning bronze at European Championships, the hockey men face qualification tournament for the Olympics

The Austrian men's hockey team was internationally successful, winning bronze at the European Indoor Field Hockey Championships in Leipzig. In an exciting game, the title holder defeated the Netherlands 5:3. Especially Michi Körper offered a brilliant performance, scoring four goals and preparing another one.

Austria's captain Armin Stremitzer was highly satisfied with the result: "We applied the right tactics to deal with the Netherlands and did considerably better than in the semi-finals." Stremitzer as well as his trainer Frank Hänel are already getting ready for the qualification tournament for the Olympics: "We will play a successful tournament in Japan in April."