

# NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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## HOME AFFAIRS

### **Health insurance institutions: a surplus of 240 million euro in 2011**

The health insurance institutions are steadily moving towards consolidation. In 2011 all Austrian health insurance institutions were back in the black or reported an at least neutral result. The total surplus of all health insurance institutions amounted to 240 million euro. The Federation of Austrian Social Insurance Institutions presented the preliminary result for the year 2011 on 15 February 2012. In early 2011 the insurance institutions had still expected a deficit of 32 million euro. For the current year a surplus of 66 million euro was forecast.

The surplus would continue to be used to reduce existing debts, explained Hans Jörg Schelling, Chairman of the Federation of Austrian Social Insurance Institutions. "At the beginning of 2012, the debts amounted to about 300 million euro. It is our aim to become debt free by 2013", said Schelling. Upon starting the consolidation of the health insurance institutions in 2010, the debts still exceeded 1 billion euro. Austerity measures had to be continued after 2013.

The surplus of 240 million euro in 2011 included 40 million euro made available by the federal government from the Structural Fund for Health Insurance Institutions. Moreover, the effects of the financial targets agreed on with the Federation were taken into account.

According to Schelling, the positive result was due to the favourable economic trend increasing the revenue from social insurance contributions. In addition, the social insurance institutions had managed to consolidate finances without cutting the benefits of the insured or the fees paid to the contractual partners.

### **More rights for mobile phone users**

The new Telecommunications Act, which has entered into force on 21 February 2012, leads to significant improvements for phone and Internet users. New contracts are limited to a maximum of 24 months (but the two-year limit does not apply to customers changing existing mobile phone contracts). As from 1 May 2012, the costs of data services may not exceed 60 euro. If this cost cap is surpassed, the provider has to discontinue or slow down the service free of charge. If customers require a higher data volume, the limit may be raised. However, the 60-euro cap applies only to consumption-based fees, lump-sum fees for data communication (base charges) as well as the use of foreign networks are not included.

Furthermore, the amendment of the Telecommunications Act 2003 provides for a new uniform deadline for disputing bills of three months, which is also applicable to existing contracts. Customers will also be entitled to free paper bills. As from 21 May 2012, mobile phone users may have data services deactivated if they are charged based on usage.

### **Austria calls for granting candidate status to Serbia**

Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger underlined that one of Austria's major concerns was to ensure that the regional conflicts in the Balkans were developing "in the right direction". The aim was therefore to provide incentives and a European perspective to Serbia. This would help to ensure a peaceful solution to the situation in Kosovo, explained Spindelegger in an interview with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) shortly before the EU Council of Foreign Ministers in Brussels on 27 February 2012.

Austria had supported the EU-mediated agreement between Serbia and the previous south-Serbian province of Kosovo on 24 February 2012. It stipulated inter alia that Kosovo would drop the official term "Republic" (unilateral declaration of independence four years ago). In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244, Belgrade is guaranteed territorial integrity in a footnote.

In a letter to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton, Spindelegger and his counterparts from France and Italy had called for granting candidate status to Serbia in the near future. The next EU summit of heads of state and government in March had been proposed as a possible date. As Serbia had taken the necessary reform steps and met international requirements, it was justified to grant it candidate status.

### **Network of cities against nuclear power**

Vienna's Executive City Councillor for the Environment Ulrike Sima launched a Europe-wide network of cities against nuclear power. "With the support of many partner cities, we plan to combat the nuclear lobby and promote alternatives to the nuclear industry at EU level", stated Sima after the 2<sup>nd</sup> anti-nuclear summit at Vienna's city hall on 20 February 2012. Concrete support was offered to this initiative by cities such as Antwerp, Bergen, Frankfurt, Cologne, Manchester, Munich and Nicosia. Genoa, Zurich and Nantes signalled their interest in joining the network.

**EUROPE INTERNATIONAL****Federal Chancellor Faymann: EU fiscal pact is a prerequisite for stability**

On 21 February 2012 the Council of Ministers authorised the government to sign the EU fiscal pact at the European Council (of heads of state and government) on 2 March 2012. “The pact is a prerequisite for more stability in the common economic area. The example of Greece shows that there are no fast solutions. Therefore we all have to respect our common rules consistently and on a long-term basis“, stressed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the press conference after the session of the Council of Ministers.

However, a European economic and social policy could not focus only on the interest expense on government bonds. Growth and competition also had to be strengthened, said Faymann.

With regard to the EU aid package for Greece recently adopted in Brussels, the Federal Chancellor stated: “We cannot achieve stability by excluding a country but only through solidarity between the partners of the economic community.“ The solution was based on Greece meeting the requirements. “The financial resources granted to Greece at a more favourable interest rate are loans but not a gift“, stated Faymann emphatically. Thus an important partial step had been taken.

For Austria “no additional expenditure” would arise from the second rescue package for Greece, emphasised Minister of Finance Maria Fekter after the decisive meeting of EU ministers of finance in Brussels.

Due to lower interest rates applied to bilateral loans under the first aid package, interest payments from Athens to Vienna would in fact decrease but the ECB had agreed to distribute its profits from restructuring Greek bonds to the central banks. For Austria this meant “a huge volume of several hundreds of million euro”, said Fekter.

**Vienna at the centre of diplomacy to end crisis in Syria**

On the sidelines of an international ministerial conference led by the UN to tackle Afghanistan’s drug trafficking problem on 16 February 2012, Vienna became the hub of diplomacy to end the crisis in Syria. The foreign ministers of France and Russia, Alain Juppé and Sergey Lavrov took advantage of this opportunity to hold consultations. In the UN Security Council the two countries have different positions regarding the resolution on Syria. Juppé criti-

cised Russia’s no to a UN resolution and spoke of “tyranny” in Damascus and a “serious human tragedy“. According to Juppé, Moscow’s argument that it wanted to avoid a full-blown civil war like in Libya was merely a “bad pretext“ since the envisaged resolution excluded a “military option“. The only objective of the resolution was to end violence and to provide humanitarian aid to the Syrian population, stressed Juppé.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon held talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos. Ban had highlighted the fact that all parties were interested in preventing “a political and military escalation” of the situation in Syria, informed Fischer. Ban also accused the Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad of “crimes against humanity”. Russia’s decision to veto the resolution on Syria was noted with regret by Ban.

**UN conference against drug trafficking from Afghanistan held in Vienna**

The third Paris Pact Ministerial Meeting on Drugs from Afghanistan chaired by the UN took place at Vienna’s Hofburg on 16 February 2012. As the host of the conference, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger, highlighted the common responsibility regarding the combat against drugs from Afghanistan to which the conference participants had committed themselves. The Minister called on the attendees to implement the objectives agreed on.

Spindelegger announced that a conference focusing on the control of the Afghan borders after the withdrawal of ISAF would be held in Vienna in April.

To ensure a lasting peace and reconciliation process, measures to establish the rule of law and security in the region were a top priority. “In this context the efforts of the international community of nations to combat drug trafficking, terrorism and organised crime play a crucial role”, said Spindelegger.

The objectives set forth in the final declaration were as follows: to strengthen the capacity of Afghan authorities to combat drug trafficking, to support the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) headquartered in Vienna as well as to facilitate transnational cooperation between judicial and police authorities of the production country, the transit states and consumer countries.

**ECONOMY****Eco-Label provides valuable ecological guidance**

On 22 February 2012 Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich awarded the Austrian/European Eco-Label to 24 highly eco-efficient enterprises. Only the products or services which have been proved to meet specific environmental criteria are entitled to carry the Eco-Label. "By adjusting their consumer behaviour, more and more people make a personal contribution to environmental protection. The Austrian Eco-Label has provided valuable and objective guidance to consumers for more than 20 years", stressed the Minister at the award ceremony in Vienna.

The Eco-Label has been granted since 1990. To date 1,993 products carry the Austrian Eco-Label designed by Friedensreich Hundertwasser. All products and services awarded the Eco-Label are listed on the website <http://www.umweltzeichen.at>.

**Mitterlehner: "Successful interim result of winter season in Austrian tourism"**

"The winter is not yet over but the interim result justifies optimism for the second part of the season", stated Minister for Economy and Tourism Reinhold Mitterlehner at the presentation of the data for the first three months of the winter tourist season. The Minister informed that the number of hotel nights and guest arrivals had increased. He was particularly pleased about the fact that the number of hotel nights of domestic guests had reached an all-time high, climbing by 3 per cent to 6.8 million.

The internationalisation campaign conducted by the Austrian tourist sector over many years was having favourable effects. Mitterlehner explained: "The decline in the number of guests from Germany and the Netherlands was compensated for by strong increases in tourists from Central and Eastern European countries." The number of nights spent in hotels by guests from Russia had for example surged by 16.1 per cent between November 2011 and January 2012. There was a particularly strong demand for 5-star to 4-star accommodation.

**Intelligent traffic light systems will improve traffic flow**

An Austria-wide pilot project ensuring optimal traffic flow control while reducing emissions will be launched in the centre of the city of Salzburg. Seven traffic light systems will be upgraded with a new software synchronising the traffic of public buses, private vehicles,

cyclists and pedestrians via the city's central traffic computer. All traffic participants will benefit from the new system as unnecessary long waiting times will be avoided. The two-year research project "Share" is to become a model for other cities in Central Europe.

**Thermal rehabilitation benefits economy, environment and employment**

Despite the austerity package, the government continues to fund the thermal rehabilitation programme for buildings with 100 million euro in 2012 (as in the years 2009 and 2011). The programme had beneficial effects on the economy but also on the environment and on employment, stressed President of the Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) Christoph Leitl und Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner at a press conference kicking off the countrywide road show on 16 February 2012. In the framework of the thermal rehabilitation campaign, Austrian enterprises are provided with practical information on funding options and tailored expert advice.

"In times of tight budgets, we need intelligent instruments to boost growth, and the thermal rehabilitation programme for buildings is an excellent example of a meaningful campaign", emphasised also WKÖ President Leitl.

**Austrian manufacturing sector recovered to pre-crisis level of 2011**

The Austrian manufacturing sector grew by 5.6 per cent on average in 2011 (adjusted for the number of working days p.a.) compared to the previous year, informed the Austrian Statistical Office ("Statistik Austria") on 24 February 2012.

**Styrian medical engineering company among Europe's leaders**

Ultrasonography is an integral part of state-of-the-art medicine. But this technology has its price: ultrasound equipment may cost up to 150,000 euro.

The highly sensitive ultrasound transducers (or "probes") are often affected by mechanical or electronic defects, delamination or cable damages. The Styrian medical engineering company Mides takes advantage of this fact to intensify activities in a growing business segment. The Graz-based company does not only sell ultrasound systems but is also the leading provider of specialised repair services in Europe.

The company has reported strong growth in the recent past. Mides offers its services in more than 30 countries around the world.

**CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE****Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) presents its collection**

In the exhibition “The Magic of Diversity“ Museum Director Christoph Thun-Hohenstein turns the spotlight on the core of the museum, namely applied arts in nine key areas of collection. Including the complete collection of sketches of Wiener Werkstätte or Gustav Klimt’s eleven-metre-long sketch of the mosaic frieze for Palais Stoclet in Brussels, the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) is of global importance.

The present show raises the fundamental question: What criteria are to be applied when displaying artefacts? Possible answers were provided by the artists’ duo Krüger & Pardeller, who for example arranged objects in a glass box by size and in the rainbow spectrum order, as well as nine “Vision Wheels“ – movable wheels with selected works and background information on the different areas of activity of MAK.

In a dialogue between contemporary and applied arts, new works of art are juxtaposed with old ones. Artist Renée Green covered for example a wall with a fabric depicting slavery. The motifs are inspired by fabric patterns of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In a series of sculptures Heimo Zobernig recreated a turn-of-the-century wardrobe of Koloman Moser.

On show until 25 March 2012. [www.mak.at](http://www.mak.at)

**News on the Klimt Year 2012**

**Getting closer to Klimt:** In the framework of the exhibition “Gustav Klimt at the Museum of Art History“, visitors may admire the works of the “painters’ company” (formed by the young Gustav Klimt, his brother Ernst and their colleague Franz Matsch) on a twelve-metre high platform in the entrance hall until 6 May 2012. After the death of Franz Makart, who had originally been commissioned to do the artwork, they created the paintings of difficult formats for the museum’s entrance hall to the full satisfaction of the museum. The wall paintings for the former Court Museum helped to enhance the prestige of the young artists.

**Klimt and Hoffmann in Venice:** After closing in Belvedere in Vienna on 4 March 2012, the exhibition “Pioneers of Modernism” featuring Gustav Klimt and Josef Hoffmann will travel to Museo Correr in Venice. The adapted version of the show titled “Klimt under the influence of Hoffmann and the Secession movement“ will be inaugurated on 24 March 2012. The exhibition in Venice will give a

wider public “also outside Austria” the opportunity to learn more about Klimt in the anniversary year.

**Wien Museum looks for “Worst of Klimt” kitsch:** Before the opening of its Klimt exhibition on 16 May 2012, Wien Museum looks for the most absurd products adorned with Klimt’s work on the Internet. The objects posted on Facebook offer a parade of kitschy products, including a Klimt rubber duck. The aim is to explore the boundary between an uncritical approach to Klimt’s work and the unrestrained transformation of his art into kitsch.

**Garage X presents Jelinek’s “Nora”**

Garage X at Petersplatz in Vienna takes the risk and presents Elfriede Jelinek’s sequel to Ibsen’s play “What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband or The Pillars of Society“ (production: Ali M. Abdullah). In Jelinek’s first text for the theatre, which received its world premiere in 1979, Nora is doomed to failure in a man’s world dictating the terms. This revival of a classic feminist play is given a contemporary setting – a white stage and two actors playing all characters in quick succession – and proves that the social diagnoses of Ibsen’s era are not obsolete. Jelinek’s work succeeded in convincing the audience. (Running until 22 March 2012)

Under the motto “Pimp My Integration“, The programmes of Garage X in the current season focus on artistic positions that examine (post-) migrant experiences or draw attention to the present social reality. Forthcoming premiers are “Annika or We Are Nothing“ by Dietmar Dath on 14 March 2012 as well as a stage version of Gert Jonke’s novel “The Distant Sound“ on 28 March 2012. [www.garage-x.at](http://www.garage-x.at)

**Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art goes to Erni Mangold**

The popular Austrian actress Erni Mangold, aged 85, was awarded the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art on 14 February 2012. “We grant this decoration to Erni Mangold for her artistic vigour, her tireless work as well as her adaptability to different roles“, stated Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied. She also expressed her thanks for the countless memorable and touching moments which the actress had created in her film, TV and stage performances.

Erni Mangold has been held in high esteem as a wonderful stage talent and tireless worker by numerous important artists such as Gustaf Gründgens, Karl Stroux, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Helmut Qualtinger, Erich Neuberger,

Peter Patzak and Werner Schwab. Erni Mangold played roles in more than 80 films shown on TV and at cinemas and excelled in countless classical and comic plays.

### Deaf Theatre Festival 2012

The 13<sup>th</sup> European and International Deaf Theatre Festival takes place at “3raum-Anatomietheater“ in Vienna as well as numerous other venues in Austria from 23 to 30 March 2012. Deaf and hearing artists from nine countries will participate in the productions created for a deaf, hearing-impaired and hearing audience under the motto “Human Duty + Human Dignity = Human Right“ (based on the maxim of lawyer and philosopher Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem, a contemporary of Goethe).

The festival will be opened by the Austrian theatre group ARBOS with its play “Heaven on Earth“ devoted to the taboo topic “sexual abuse of deaf children“. Original documents from three centuries were used as a source. ARBOS approached this sensitive subject through comedy, explained Artistic Manager Herbert Gantschacher. (3raum-Anatomietheater in Vienna on 23/24 March 2012 and Toihaus in Salzburg on 13/14 June 2012).

The following performances/artists form part of the international section of the festival: “The Art of Visual Theatre“ by Ramesh Meyyappan (Singapore/UK), the choreographic theatre play “Puppets“ by Juho Saarinen (Finland), “Room 101“, the dramatisation of Orwell’s novel “1984“ by Ramesh Meyyappan performed by the Theatre of Silence (Hong Kong), “The Greatest Treasure“ by Divadlo NESLISYM from Brno (Czech Republic), “A Journey into the World of the Moving Bodies“ (Theatre of Silence) as well as Gert Jonke’s theatre sonata “Gentle Rage or the Ear Engineer“ about the deaf composer Beethoven.

The so-called “Days of the Deaf Theatre for Children“ – featuring artists from Hong Kong, Germany and Austria (including the National Institute of Deaf Education in Vienna and the New Comprehensive School from Markt Allhau, Burgenland) – take place in the mornings from 26 to 29 March 2012. The mission of this festival is to highlight the richness of expression in sign language and of visual theatre. <http://3raum.or.at/>

### 5<sup>th</sup> Literary Competition of Wartholz

On 19 February 2012 Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied presented the prizes to the winners of the Literary Competition in Reichenau/Rax. The main prize (10,000 euro) of the

competition, which had attracted 749 entries, went to Barbara Zeman for her prose text “Garten. Ansichten mit Frau und zerrissenem Mann vor Paradiesstaude“. The newcomer prize was conferred on Julia Veihelmann for her text “Curriculum vitae“, the prize of the audience was awarded to Kai Weyand for the story “24 Grad und windstill“. Carolina Schutti and Claudia Tondl won writing residencies in Reichenau. The Wartholz Literary Competition was initiated by Michaela und Christian Blazek to continue the literary tradition of the region. Minister Schmied praised it as a successful cultural event.

### 9<sup>th</sup> Protest Song Contest

A genuinely exciting neck-and-neck race took place between audience favourites “Wait For The B-Side, It’s Better“ from Melk – who protested against capitalism and speculation in their political song “Wie hat die Börse reagiert?“ (“How did the Stock Exchange React?”) – and “Rotzpipn & Das Simmeringer Faustwatschenorchester“ from Vienna’s eleventh district at the sold-out Rabenhof in Vienna on 12 February 2012. The jury finally selected the latter as the winner. In the wake of the discussion about adding “daughters” to “sons” in the lyrics of Austria’s federal anthem, they protested with their alternative “Hymn 2.0“ (in strong Viennese dialect) against all national anthems. “wos i sig“ were ranked third with their song “Erwin“. But impressive performances were also given by “Gregor Fröhlich und die Krisenstimmung“ with “Rate Me“ (based on a Nirvana song), by the rappers “there is something to be learned“ (“We can do everything, but we do not manage to be happy”) and Johanna Zeul from Germany with “Ich will mehr“ (“I Want More”).

### 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Franz West

Austria’s most sought-after artist in the international art world celebrated his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 16 February 2012. His often large-scale sculptures explore the territories between prosthesis, furniture and artwork. At the Venice Biennale, where he had represented Austria for the first time in 1990 (curator: Hans Hollein), he was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in 2011. The artist born and working in Vienna usually does not join in the debates about his objects but at Vienna’s dance festival “ImPulsTanz“ 2011 he had performer Ivo Dimchev dance with his objects (videos of these performances were also screened at exhibitions to encourage people to interact with West’s artwork).

**“Teach for Austria“: teachers wanted**

The so-called “fellows“ of the initiative “Teach for all“ are already active in more than 20 countries. In September the first 40 participants of this programme are to start working at the secondary and grammar schools in Vienna and Salzburg. University graduates of different study programmes with excellent grades and a strong social commitment are wanted. They will be prepared for their two-year teaching assignment in a training course lasting several months. The aim of the initiative is to support children from low-income and educationally disadvantaged families and to establish equal opportunities in the educational system on a long-term basis.

**Horizon 2020: Austria plans to intensify involvement in EU research programme**

Austria plans to intensify its involvement in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation “Horizon 2020“, informed Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle. With a total budget of 50.5 billion euro, “Horizon 2020“ was the largest transnational research programme in the world. It covered many life spheres to improve the quality of life of the citizens. One of its aims was to tackle energy challenges through the research on and the development of more efficient heating and cooling systems based on renewable energies.

**The success story of the children’s universities**

Numerous universities, universities of applied sciences and other institutions have been firmly in children’s hands during the summer months for many years. The “children’s universities“ offer age-appropriate lectures and workshops for children and young people, which are developed by using modern didactic techniques. They help to kindle the interest of kids and teens in research and development at a very early stage and on a high quality level. Moreover, they motivate them to study at a university, a university of applied sciences or private university later in their lives. It is a major goal of the children’s universities to support children and young people from socially disadvantaged groups.

The idea of the children’s university has already spread to other countries. Austria has been playing a pioneering role in this context. The European Commission for example named the Children’s Office of the University of Vienna coordinator of a European network which became an official institution in 2011.

**Rio+20: researchers and young people are taking stock**

To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pioneering United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Federal Ministry of Research and Science will grant 365 young people the opportunity to gain insight into Austrian sustainability research. The four-week summer internships in Austrian research facilities are organised in the framework of the initiative “Rio+20 – Stocktaking by Researchers and Young People“. Together with scientists from prestigious research facilities, the pupils will learn more about successful and thrilling research results or product developments conforming to the objectives of Agenda 21.

**Graz University of Technology: alternative hydrogen production**

High expectations have been pinned on hydrogen-powered vehicles in the discussion about alternative energy sources. To ensure the general acceptance of fuel cell vehicles (FCVs), it is of course important that hydrogen is produced with a green – CO<sub>2</sub>-free – technology, which is not yet the case. The decentralised generation of hydrogen from renewable sources is investigated at the new Research Studio Austria “Flex-Fuel-Reformer“ at the Graz University of Technology. The project will be carried out during the next three years with the financial support of the Ministry of Economy in the framework of the programme “Research Studios Austria“.

The researchers from Graz have the vision that it is possible to generate hydrogen in small units close to the resource and/or the consumer.

**A safe future for the Institute of Science and Technology (IST) Austria**

At a press conference on 22 February 2012 Minister of Finance Maria Fekter, Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle and the Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll announced that they had reached an agreement to continue supporting the Institute of Science and Technology (IST) Austria in Klosterneuburg (Lower Austria). This leading research facility focuses on basic research and on postgraduate training programmes for scientists. “In its first three years, IST Austria has demonstrated very impressively that the trust placed in it has been more than justified“, Minister of Finance Fekter commented the agreement.

**SPORTS****Danish Council Presidency presents its programme “Europe at work”**

“Europe at Work” is the motto of the Danish Council Presidency for the period up to June 2012. Although the Council Presidency has to focus primarily on coping with the financial crisis, four priority areas were defined in sport: a programme to promote sport in Europe, the anti-doping struggle, the fight against match-fixing as well as the promotion of sport for all in Europe.

The objectives of the sport promotion programme are not limited to programmatic issues. Efforts to secure the 238-million-euro budget proposed by the European Commission in the negotiations with the Member States are also high on the agenda.

The anti-doping combat focuses on achieving a uniform EU position on the revision of the WADA Code and ensuring EU coordination before the meetings of the WADA Foundation Board. Moreover, the Presidency plans to adopt conclusions on recreational doping at the Sport Council on 11 May 2012.

The “Sportvision 2012 conference” will take place in Copenhagen on 19/20 March 2012. It will address issues relevant to mass sports such as “volunteering” or “sport and health” and raise awareness of recent challenges facing sport for all, including financing.

**Austria eagerly anticipates the Olympic Gymnastics competition in London**

On 28 July 2012 the go-ahead will be given for the Olympic Gymnastics competitions in London – and Austria has every reason to look forward as three athletes qualified, i.e. Caroline Weber, Florian Leimlehner and Barbara Gasser.

The Olympic Games 2012 will in any case be of historic importance to the Austrian Gymnastics Association (Österreichischer Fachverband für Turnen / ÖFT) as the last Austrian gymnast participating in the Olympic Games was Henriette Parzer in Tokyo in 1964.

**Kickboxing world champion Nicole Trimmel: first boxing match in 2012**

Earning two world champion titles in kickboxing, the autumn season 2011 was highly successful for Nicole Trimmel. Nevertheless, the 29-year-old woman from Oslip (Burgenland) is ready for a new adventure. In 2012 she will participate in her first boxing match. “However, my heart still belongs to kickboxing”, said Nicole Trimmel, who will give her boxing

debut at an international tournament in Hamburg in early March. One week later she will fight in her native Austria – at Vienna Boxcup. Nicole Trimmel might even participate in the World Boxing Championships in China.

**The Linger brothers collect third Luge World Championships title in Altenberg**

For the third time in their career, the double Olympic winners Andreas and Wolfgang Linger collected the Luge World Championships doubles title in Altenberg (Germany).

Federal Minister of Defence and Sport Norbert Darabos congratulated them on this exceptional achievement: “The Federal Army athletes Andreas and Wolfgang Linger remain the measure of all things in the international sport of luge. I am very pleased about the bronze medals of the duo Peter Penz and Georg Fischler, who are also members of the Federal Army.”

**Alois Stöger presented a study on the health of Austrian pupils**

In the framework of a study conducted by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, Austrian pupils were asked about their subjective perception of health, their life satisfaction and risk behaviour.

At the presentation of the findings of the study on 22 February 2012, Minister of Health Alois Stöger stressed that the next step was to translate the results into action: “Preventive measures are very effective, especially with children and young people.” In the framework of the so-called “dialogue on children’s health”, a strategy was developed to improve the health of children and young people. Guidelines for school kitchens had already been drawn up. Another goal was to increase exercise programmes.

As far as physical exercise was concerned, the Minister pled for giving pupils more opportunity for workout. He therefore welcomed the respective initiative of Minister of Education Claudia Schmied to develop school reforms which would enable pupils “to live and not only to learn”.

The survey is conducted in 43 countries among pupils aged 11, 13, 15 and 17 and is the “PISA study for health issues”, so to speak. 250,000 pupils, including 6,500 young people in Austria, are asked questions about their health in questionnaires.