

## NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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**HOME AFFAIRS****Chancellor Faymann: Austria's stability package sets an example in Europe**

The federal government adopted the stability package for the period 2012 to 2016 at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 6 March 2012. The National Council deliberated on it in a special session on 8 March 2012. The stability package has a volume of almost 28 billion euro. Budget consolidation is to be achieved through cost-cuts (17.3 billion), new taxes (9.2 billion) as well as measures affecting the social insurance system (1.4 billion). In parallel, investments in future-oriented sectors will be increased significantly. The legislative package comprising 98 amendments will enter into force in two stages: tax increases on 1 April 2012, and the major part of the expenditure cuts on 1 May 2012.

According to the government leaders, the recently adopted stability package is expected to result in a balanced budget (zero deficit) and reduce the debt ratio from currently 72.2% to 70% by 2016.

These measures were "indispensable and reasonable for Austria's development towards more stability", stressed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann after the session of the Council of Ministers. The objectives were clear: "We have to overcome the deficit because we want to become independent of the financial markets and speculations", said Faymann. The European fiscal package offered a good basis for Europe as well as for Austria.

The Chancellor also argued along these lines in his statement to the plenary session of the National Council. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, the entire euro-zone had to ensure stability. And the interest development of Austrian bonds proved that the Austrian government did the right thing to adopt this package. Austria was "among the best of the euro-zone" and enjoyed a high level of confidence at international level, stressed Faymann. And this should not change as it was better "to invest in education than in excessive interest payments".

Therefore the government did not only rely on expenditure cuts and new revenue but also took priority measures. In the period until 2016, more than four billion euro would be invested in universities, schools (countrywide establishment of the new comprehensive school system), youth employment ("training guarantee"), employment programmes for older people as well as long-term care. Together with the Länder, the federal government would also support the further development of

all-day childcare facilities. This in turn would promote the reconciliation of work and family lives, underlined the Federal Chancellor.

Faymann also emphasised that the unemployment rate was rising in other EU Member States, while Austria faced neither an increase in mass taxes nor threats to wealth and social balance. Besides a higher bank tax, the "reasonable mix of measures" included a reform of group taxation, taxes on real estate gains as well as a solidarity tax. The government also envisages the introduction of a financial transaction tax as a new income source, affirmed Faymann.

**Women's Day: part-time work has disastrous effects on pensions**

On 8 March 2012 the International Women's Day was celebrated for the 101<sup>st</sup> time. All events staged in Austria focused on part-time work, a month of parental leave for fathers as well as women's quotas for executive positions and in Parliament.

Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek invited to an "open house" in her Ministry. In a panel discussion titled "Working.Time – Working.Happiness", the Minister explained the important relationship between working time, happiness and satisfaction from the perspective of women's policy. In this context, she criticised the unequal distribution of working time between the genders – and above all – unpaid extra hours. In Austria 300 million hours were worked overtime annually, including 70 million hours of unpaid overtime. Women should be paid for extra work, explained Heinisch-Hosek.

The Minister for Women's Affairs also reaffirmed her firm stance against part-time work. It was the task of policymakers to readjust the framework so as to ensure the reconciliation of family and working lives. Countrywide measures and uniform rules were required, especially in the area of childcare. Due to insufficient childcare places or care-giving duties vis-à-vis older family members, part-time work was sometimes the only option for women. Therefore women often stayed in part-time jobs for too long, and this had "disastrous" effects not only on their wages but also on their pensions.

Furthermore, Heinisch-Hosek launched an appeal to promote parental leave for fathers, a regulatory framework for promoting women in enterprises with a minimum of 100 employees and a uniform family allowance. Binding women's quotas were required, "otherwise we will wait forever", said the Minister.

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

In an international agreement 25 (of the 27) EU Member States committed themselves to more budget discipline, including “debt brakes”. The heads of state and government signed the fiscal pact in Brussels on 2 March 2012. Great Britain and the Czech Republic did not join. Ireland will hold a referendum on the fiscal pact. It has to be ratified by the national parliaments and is expected to enter into force no later than at the beginning of 2013.

After the summit meeting, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann stated that the more consistently the countries would apply these rules, “the easier it would be in one’s own country to explain why stronger rescue packages were required“. The aim of the fiscal pact was to prevent countries such as Greece from accumulating again tremendous debts.

According to the text of the fiscal pact, the objectives were nearly balanced budgets and the introduction of a “debt brake” by the Member States. New debts (adjusted for cyclical effects) should not exceed 0.5% of the GDP. Only those euro-zone countries that signed the fiscal pact should be entitled to receive aid from the permanent crisis fund ESM.

**Barroso: Austria is “best practice” model of youth employment**

During his visit to Vienna on 5 March 2012, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso called for solidarity and cohesion within the EU. This was the only way to come to terms with problems such as youth unemployment, which had surged to up to 50% in some Member States. He lavished praise on Austria, which was considered a “best practice“ model with regard to its employment policy for young people.

Together with Faymann and Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer, Barroso paid a visit to the “Jugend am Werk“ (“Youth at Work”) apprenticeship training facility in Vienna. The head of the European Commission was impressed by the fact that in Austria teens aged 15 plus were guaranteed a training place or a job. In this context, Faymann stated that this was a “matter concerning human dignity and decency“. It was the task of the government to support young people searching for a job, said Faymann.

Faymann and Barroso agreed that thanks to its low youth unemployment rate, Austria was among the top EU Member States. In countries

without apprenticeship systems youth unemployment was considerably higher. Barroso therefore plans to send action teams to these Member States. In addition, financial resources from the European Social Fund would be re-allocated and made available for projects to create jobs or apprenticeship places for young people, stated Barroso.

**Federal President Fischer in Croatia**

During his state visit (29 February to 1 March 2012) to Croatia, Federal President Heinz Fischer discussed Croatia’s forthcoming EU accession and bilateral economic relations with his Croatian counterpart Ivo Josipovic in Zagreb. The political situation in the Balkans was another item high on the agenda.

Josipovic thanked Austria for supporting Croatia’s EU membership efforts as well as its quest for independence.

**Macedonian President Ivanov meets with Federal President Fischer**

On the occasion of his visit to Austria, Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov met with Federal President Heinz Fischer in Vienna on 2 March 2012. The subjects for debate included bilateral economic relations as well as Macedonia’s efforts to move closer to the EU.

**Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Rome**

Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger held talks with Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti in Rome on 7 March 2012. They discussed EU affairs as well as issues regarding South Tyrol. He agreed with Monti to intensify cooperation in Brussels with a view to actively promoting economic growth in the EU, stated Minister Spindelegger.

Spindelegger paid tribute to Monti’s achievements in reducing Italy’s national debt. The Monti government had managed to catch up within a short period of time. The image of Italy had been transformed radically, and Monti had succeeded in steering Italy back on course, stressed the Austrian Foreign Minister.

**Bolivian President Morales in Vienna**

Bolivian President Evo Morales will participate in a United Nations conference on drugs in Vienna, starting on 12 March 2012.

Items on the agenda of a meeting with Federal President Heinz Fischer are the European Union, the developments in Latin America and bilateral relations between Austria and Bolivia.

**ECONOMY****Small and medium-sized enterprises remain Austria's job engine in 2012**

Having overcome the financial crisis of 2008 remarkably fast, Austria's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) currently employ more than 1.9 million people. This was a record, informed Walter Bornett, Director of the Austrian Institute for SME Research proudly. Small and mid-sized enterprises are by far the largest employer in Austria, accounting for 66.5 per cent of all employment relationships in the domestic economy. They continue to be the backbone of the business landscape in 2012, and even large companies cannot keep pace with SMEs when it comes to job creation.

**Cold wave has negative effect on labour market**

In Austria the cold wave has led to an increase in unemployment by 6.1%. After a long time, the number of participants in public training programmes also started to rise again, i.e. by 5.2%. Nevertheless, every third unemployed person has already received a favourable reply to his/her application. With an unemployment rate of 4% (based on Eurostat), Austria continues to be the EU Member State with the lowest level of unemployment. On 1 March 2012 Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer pointed out that employment had reached a record level in February: "The number of employed persons went up by 60,000 compared to the same period of the last year – this employment increase is larger than the total number of employees in Innsbruck." Besides the weather, Europe's sluggish economic development has had negative effects on the labour market. For the first time in more than two years, unemployment in the manufacturing sector is increasing slightly, i.e. by 1%. Temporary agency workers have been affected adversely by the economic downturn for some time.

**Austria may refinance itself at considerably more favourable terms**

Following the increase of a ten-year federal government bond by 1.1 billion euro, the average yield accepted by the primary dealers climbed by more than 50 basis points to 2.89% from the issue level in January – even against the background of an inflation rate of currently 2.6%. In parallel, the interest gap vis-à-vis Germany shrank from 150 to about 100 basis points (BPS). 94% of the issue were subscribed by foreign banks. Minister of Finance Maria Fekter was pleased to state: "Today the Aus-

trian spread dropped to below 100 BPS vs. the German benchmark. We are very satisfied with our creditworthiness and its present assessment."

**More investments and jobs in Austria thanks to relocation of enterprises**

Austria's investment promotion company "ABA-Invest in Austria" reported a strong increase in the investment volume of companies moving to Austria by 34 per cent (to 296.2 million euro) for the turbulent financial year 2011. The number of newly created jobs rose by 31.8 per cent (1,822 new jobs) compared to the previous year. "Austria continues to be an attractive business location for international enterprises but faces fierce international competition", explained Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner. Germany – the traditionally most important investor in Austria – continued to be ranked first in 2011 with 71 companies (i.e. 39 per cent of the total). Italy was again the second largest investor (16 enterprises). A prominent investor was the BMW Group, moving its headquarters for the sales region Central and Eastern Europe (comprising ten countries) to Salzburg. The continuing favourable trend in research and development was welcomed. In 2011 ABA provided support to ten R&D companies establishing premises in Austria (2010: eleven, 2009: seven).

**"EcoAustria", a newcomer among Austria's economic research institutes**

The Austrian Economic Research Institute (Wifo) was recently awarded a both prestigious and profitable contract. In the next four years Wifo will coordinate an EU research programme conducted by 33 institutes to develop a comprehensive European economic and social policy model – as an alternative to the Chinese and US models. Austria would benefit from this and other international projects, stressed Wifo head Karl Aiginger. He perceives the new research institute "EcoAustria" funded by the Federation of Austrian Industrialists not only as a rival but also as a cooperation partner. Its manager Ulrich Schuh had been active for the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), where he acquired the know-how for assessing the long-term economic impact of political decisions. IHS boss Bernhard Felderer reacted calmly, drawing attention to other research areas of the IHS, e.g. the "accessibility model" facilitating decision-making regarding traffic and transport policy and infrastructure development.

## CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

**Turning the spotlight on film:  
Diagonale 2012**

The film festival “Diagonale” taking place in Graz from 20 to 25 March 2012 is a platform for presenting and discussing Austrian filmmaking. It is opened with the world premiere of the feature film “Spanien“ by Anja Salomonowitz. Her documentaries “Das wirst du nie verstehen“ (2003) and “Kurz davor ist es passiert“ (2006) won several prizes. Now the 35-year-old Viennese shot her first feature film, for which she wrote the script together with Dimitré Dinev.

Diagonale focuses on outstanding feature and documentary films as well as the best short, animation and experimental films and videos. The programme section “Spectrum” does not only offer a review of the year but also showcases European co-productions in which Austrian participated. Special programmes are devoted to the Austrian filmmaker Ferry Radax and his Israeli colleague Avi Mograbi. Ferry Radax, who will celebrate his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2012, is one of the most famed representatives of the avant-garde film community. With films such as “Sonne Halt!“ (1959), “Testament“ (1967) and “Thomas Bernhard – Drei Tage“ (1970), Radax has also won international renown and numerous awards. Avi Mograbi is an explicitly political filmmaker. His body of work – exploring the situation in Israel and Palestine based on an entirely individualistic approach – is presented in a retrospective. Interweaving documentary, autobiographic and fictional elements, his films are characterised by wit, humour, rage and self-reflection.

A special historical programme portrays film director, cameraman and actor Charles Korvin (who was born in Pöstyény, Austria-Hungary in 1907 and died in New York in 1998). He appeared as a supporting actor in films such as “Ship of Fools“, “Berlin Express“ or “This Love of Ours”.

The series “Shooting Women – Female Pioneers in Austrian Filmmaking” is also continued in 2012, presenting works by Karin Berger, Margareta Heinrich, Edith Hirsch, Käthe Kratz, Carmen Tartarotti and others.

The festival trailer was created by Sofie Thorsen, to whom the exhibition “Cut A-A” at Kunsthaus Graz is devoted.

Johannes Silberschneider receives the Grand Diagonale Actor’s Award 2012 for his services to Austria’s film culture. He gave impressive performances in numerous TV and cinema films, recently as Hans Moser in Oskar

Roehler’s “Jud Süß – Film ohne Gewissen“ (2009). [www.diagonale.at/](http://www.diagonale.at/)

**“Breaking Ground – 60 Years of Austrian Experimental Cinema”**

This film retrospective (with two performances per night) can still be seen at Vienna’s Filmhauskino on 13, 20 and 27 March 2012. It gives an overview of avant-garde filmmaking in Austria over the past 60 years.

The programme of “Breaking Ground – 60 Years of Austrian Experimental Cinema” was curated by Centre Pompidou member Brent Klinkum. The retrospective focuses on the dialogue between generations. All important experimental filmmakers are represented in the programme: Peter Kubelka, Maria Lassnig, the representatives of Vienna Actionism Kurt Kren, Günter Brus and Valie Export, Martin Arnold, Mara Mattuschka and the younger figureheads Virgil Widrich, Thomas Draschan and Johann Lurf. Moreover, Peter Tscherkassy will present his compendium “Film Unframed. A History of Austrian Avant-garde Cinema“. [www.sixpackfilm.com](http://www.sixpackfilm.com)

**Film award: “Papierener Gustl“**

On 29 February 2012 the Association of Austrian Film Journalists and the Austrian Film Critics’ Guild presented the award “Papierener Gustl“ (which does not involve any cash prize) for the best films of the year for the 9<sup>th</sup> time. The 69 participating journalists selected their favourites from 367 films released in Austrian cinemas in 2011: Lars von Trier’s apocalyptic drama “Melancholia“ was acclaimed as the “Best Film of the Year”, followed by Darren Aronofsky’s “Black Swan“ and Karl Markovics’ debut as a filmmaker “Atmen“, which had also won the title “Best Austrian Film”. In the Austrian film ranking “Michael“ by Markus Schleinzer and “Whores’ Glory“ by Michael Glawogger were placed second and third, respectively.

**Haushofer’s novel “Die Wand“ filmed**

The novel “Die Wand” (“The Wall”) – published in 1963 – is considered one of the most important works of Austrian post-war literature. It was presented to a larger audience in a radio series of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) and later became a cult book of the peace and women’s movement. Earlier works by Marlen Haushofer (1920-1970) were the novels “Eine Handvoll Leben“ (1955) and “Die Tapetentür“ (1957) as well as the story “Wir töten Stella“ (1958). In 1968 she received the Austrian State Prize for Literature.

“The Wall” is the story of a woman in a secluded valley, who suddenly finds herself separated from the world through a glass wall behind which all life seems to have vanished. This novel has now been filmed by Julian Roman Pölsler (“Blumen für Polt“) and premiered at the Berlinale in the framework of the programme section “Panorama”. The lead character is played by Martina Gedeck (“The Lives of Others“, “The Baader Meinhof Complex“), one of the best actresses in the German-language area.

The Ecumenical Jury of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Berlinale selected Julian Pölsler’s film adaptation of Haushofer’s novel as the prize winner of the programme section “Panorama” for sensitising the audience to human and social values. The Austrian cinema release date is not yet known.

### **Oskar Kokoschka Prize to Yoko Ono**

On 1 March 2012 performance artist and John Lennon’s widow Yoko Ono received the Oskar Kokoschka Prize of the federal government. The prize worth 20,000 euro was handed over by Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle. The prize presentation speech was given by Valie Export. On 2 March 2012 Ono hosted a press conference at Hotel Sacher, where she and John Lennon had caused a worldwide stir in 1969. At a charity preview of the exhibition “MIRACLES. Art, Science and Religion from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the present” at Kunsthalle Krems on 3 March 2012, the artist gave a live performance, inscribing messages with Japanese calligraphy. Yoko Ono then joined her colleagues from the art scene for a fundraising dinner.

### **Rauris Literature Days**

Under the motto “The invention of truth“, the Rauris Literature Days will take place in the village of Rauris in Pinzgau (Salzburg) for the 42<sup>nd</sup> time from 21 to 25 March 2012, Long-term Festival Manager Brita Steinwendtner, who will be succeeded by Manfred Mittermayer and Ines Schütz next year, invited again many audience favourites to the literature festival. Her invitation was accepted by Karl-Markus Gauß, who will read from his unpublished book “Ruhm am Nachmittag“, as well as Sibylle Lewitscharoff (Bachmann and Rauris Prize laureate) and Christoph Ransmayr, who will present their new works. Other authors on the guest list are Nora Gomringer, Monika Helfer, Wolfgang Kubin, Aleš Šteger, Nicol Ljubić, Patrick Roth, Chinese writer Wang Jiaxin, the Swiss Peter Stamm and the South Tyrolian farmer Roberta Dapunt, who writes in

Ladin and is considered one of Italy’s most authentic contemporary poets.

The programme is rounded off with a concert by Juri Andruchówytsch, who this year will present songs based on his poems, and the festival section “Rauris extreme“, where Bodo Hell and Peter Gruber will participate in a reading at Zittelhaus on the summit of the Sonnblick mountain.

The Rauris Literature Prize (prize money: 8,000 euro) goes to Maja Haderlap, who had received the Golden Badge of Honour of Carinthia on 5 March 2012. The Prize for Newcomers is conferred on Elke Laznia for her text “Blinde Fenster“.

[www.rauriser-literaturtage.at/](http://www.rauriser-literaturtage.at/)

### **Tanzquartier Vienna 2012**

Having attracted an audience of 57,800 in 2011, Vienna’s centre for contemporary dance performance Tanzquartier Wien (TQW) started off into the dance season 2012 with numerous cooperation projects and a new funding programme for guest performances. In view of the booming demand, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will grant co-funding in the framework of the “International Network for Dance and Performance Austria” (INTPA) to international organisers presenting Austrian guest performances. The project would be coordinated by TQW, said Walter Heun, who has already received many enquiries. Among the forthcoming international productions presented at TQW are “Faux Mouvement“ by Fabrice Lambert and “Blue Lady“ with US dance icon Carolyn Carlson. National cooperation projects have been launched with Schauspielhaus (world premiere of Christine Gaigg’s choreography of “Wenn Kinder die Steine ins Wasser werfen” authored by Xaver Bayer, 15 March 2012) and Museumsquartier (in the framework of the programme “Summer of Fashion“ choreographer Lucia Glass will present “Sensations“, exploring the influence of clothes on our movements, 29 June 2012i.

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

### **University of Applied Arts features Elfie Semotan**

At Heiligenkreuzerhof in Vienna’s historic centre photos and objects by Elfie Semotan are exhibited until 30 April 2012. The exceptional fashion and portrait photographer, who increasingly focused on book and exhibition projects in the past few years, is one of Austria’s most eminent contemporary artists.

[www.dieangewandte.at/jart/prj3/angewandte/main.jart](http://www.dieangewandte.at/jart/prj3/angewandte/main.jart)

### **New teacher training scheme**

In a press conference devoted to the “new teacher training scheme” – jointly held with Minister of Education Claudia Schmied – Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle outlined the key elements of this project, which he also expected to play an important role in raising the social prestige of the teaching profession. The newly set up Development Council will act as an advisory board issuing recommendations. Hence, the two ministries will benefit from the ongoing assistance of recognised experts of the educational system. “With the support of the Development Council, we will manage to fit the numerous existing cooperative efforts as well as regional and school-type-specific needs into an organic whole”, said Minister Töchterle, who was pleased about the fact that “the universities become increasingly involved in this area and make valuable contributions“.

### **Doris Bures: 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of federal government’s RTI Strategy**

Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures considers the increase in research investments in the business sector a key criterion that would allow Austria to achieve the goals of the federal government’s Research, Technology and Innovation Strategy (RTI Strategy). “We concentrate on the priorities environment and energy, mobility and transport, information and communications technologies as well as production technologies, i.e. on innovation to meet the great social challenges.” The Minister also drew attention to the call for proposals in the area of “innovation-oriented procurement” launched in autumn of last year. Public procurers do not request quotes for existing products but search for innovative solutions. An important aspect of this new approach is collaboration between the public sector and enterprises, said Doris Bures.

### **Facilitated recognition of qualifications of graduates from third countries**

On 5 March 2012 Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle and Secretary of State for Integration Sebastian Kurz presented a 5-point plan to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications of university graduates from third countries. It comprises more information, improved services and shorter recognition procedures for applicants. “People who received good education and training abroad should not be forced to drive a taxi in this country”, stressed Secretary of State for Integration Kurz. An information campaign will

raise awareness of the existing competent office NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre). A special homepage will be created before summer.

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

### **Pathways to environment-friendly careers: training guide for green jobs**

The brochure “Green jobs. Your Future – Your Career – Your Green Job!” published by the Ministry of Agriculture is a comprehensive source of information on numerous basic and further training programmes for green jobs, which particularly young people will find useful. By using occupations such as renovation engineers, water ecologists or mobility counsellors as examples, the guide provides an overview of the various tasks, activities and job descriptions of professions in the environmental sector. Moreover, it informs on concrete pathways and institutions for basic and further training. This new publication on green jobs is another important step to implement the “Master Plan for Green Jobs“. Its objective is to create 100,000 new green jobs in Austria by 2020.

[www.green-jobs.at](http://www.green-jobs.at)

### **Heinisch-Hosek congratulated on 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ariadne Database**

The “Ariadne“ Database is a women-specific knowledge portal. In its framework, the Austrian National Library has collected, documented and digitised women’s, gender-theoretical and feminist literature for 20 years with a view to facilitating access to this material.

“Ariadne” means to make visible women-specific literature – and that is a vital element of our political work”, Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek praised the database at a ceremony at the Austrian National Library on 7 March 2012.

[www.onb.ac.at/ariadne](http://www.onb.ac.at/ariadne)

### **Vienna’s University of Technology presents [www.frauenspuren.at](http://www.frauenspuren.at)**

The idea and objective of this website is to raise public awareness of women active at the Vienna University of Technology, to present female engineers in their work contexts and to make visible role models. “This is university support for women as its best“, stated Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek at the presentation of the website in the preliminaries of the International Women’s Day.

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

## SPORTS

**Schladming: Ski World Cup finals 2012 as a “dress rehearsal” for the World Championships in 2013**

The Ski World Cup season 2011/2012 is reaching the final stage. In Schladming (Upper Styria) the final races for women and men of the Alpine Ski World Cup take place from 14 to 18 March 2012. Schladming considers them a “dress rehearsal” for the Alpine Ski World Championships in 2013 and also plans to apply as a host of the Special Olympics 2017.

Between 30,000 and 35,000 spectators are expected, among them Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and other members of the government as well as numerous prominent personalities from the economic, sports and cultural arenas. The World Cup finals in Schladming are opened on 13 March 2012 with an evening event next to the stadium. The Austrian Eurovision Song Contest candidates “Trackshittaz“ and other stars will rock the huge World Cup party on 17 March 2012.

On the sidelines of the World Cup finals, the foundation “Wings for Life” will host a charity dinner at the Alpine restaurant “Schafalmhütte” on 17 March 2012. The VIP guest list includes Red Bull boss Dietrich Mateschitz, “football emperor” Franz Beckenbauer and ski star Lindsey Vonn. The entire revenue of the charity night will be donated to spinal marrow research.

As far as the infrastructure, ski slope technology, safety, etc. are concerned, at this year’s World Cup finals everything should work already as smoothly as at the Ski World Championships in 2013 (5 to 17 February). In general, great importance is attached to sustainability and the future development of Schladming, as the organisers and representatives of the tourist industry stressed.

At the end of the current season, the athletes have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the ski slopes of the World Championships under race condition. While the men’s slopes were partly existing and just needed to be redesigned along individual sections, completely new ski runs had to be conceived for the women’s competitions.

The security concept for the World Championships will also be tested at the World Cup finals. About 700 persons will guarantee security (300 security guards, 360 police officers). A mountain rescue team consisting of 40 persons, two medical emergency teams and about 200 Red Cross helpers stand ready to respond.

**The call of the mountain – 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alpine Association**

The Austrian Alpine Association (OeAV) celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012. With currently 415,000 members, the OeAV is Austria’s largest association of mountaineers. It was founded in 1862 on the initiative of the students Paul Grohmann, Edmund von Mojsisovics and Guido von Sommaruga and is the world’s second-oldest association of alpinists (after the British Alpine Club).

The Austrian Alpine Association maintains blazed mountain and hiking trails, iron mountain paths and climbing crags. With 238 leased mountain huts, it is Austria’s largest accommodation provider. It is also in charge of all issues concerning Alpine skiing and ski tours. In 1980 the OeAV set up a special department for land-use planning and nature protection, which is active in areas such as comprehensive nature conservation, Alpine spatial planning, the Alpine Convention and environmental education.

The merger with the German Alpine Association in 1873 was of historic importance. Among the dark chapters of the Association during the interwar period is its anti-Semitic position, which started to prevail under the National Socialist Chairman of the Austrian Branch of the Association in 1921. In the same year the Danube Region Branch was founded, in which expelled Jewish mountaineers (among them Viktor Frankl, Fred Zinnemann and Joseph Braunstein) gathered. It was excluded from the Alpine Association in 1924. This movement is commemorated at the Friesberghaus in the Zillertal valley, which was proclaimed “Meeting centre against hatred and intolerance” by the German Alpine Association in 2003. (The hut is the venue of Martin Pollack’s novel “Anklage Vatermord“). After Austria’s annexation to Nazi Germany, then Austrian Federal Chancellor Arthur Seyß-Inquart became the Chairman of the Association. The OeAV was re-founded in 1945.

**“Mountain Experience – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Alpine Association”**

From 14 March to 22 June 2012 an exhibition on the premises of Wien Energie (organised by volunteers) informs about the activities of the Alpine Association and delves into its history.

The touring exhibition “**Uphill – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Alpine Association**” (26 March to 31 December 2012), including information panels on the period 1862 to 2012, will be shown throughout Austria (first stops: Linz und Innsbruck).

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