

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

Editorial close: 10 April 2012

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HOME AFFAIRS

Federal Chancellor Faymann: Austria is among Europe's role models
National Council adopted consolidation package
Decreased budget deficit for 2011
Federal Chancellor Faymann: ÖBB investments safeguard jobs

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL

Federal President Fischer pays official visit to Portugal
Croatian Foreign Minister Pusic visited Vienna
Tunisian Secretary of State Bettaieb holds talks in Vienna
Austrian-Serbian cooperation against drug trafficking

ECONOMY

Spring upturn in the Austrian labour market
Wifo/IHS forecast: economy increases investments, credit crunch prevented
Austria invited to conference of OECD Environment Ministers in Paris
Doris Bures: additional support for innovative SMEs
"Global Cities Index": Vienna ranked 13th
New Business Park to be built on the outskirts of Vienna

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE

Vorarlberg: Schubertiade 2012
Elisabeth Schwarzkopf Museum
Special exhibition at Jewish Museum of Hohenems
Letters of Franz Michael Felder become available online
Museum gugging presents August Walla
"The World of Operetta" at the Austrian Theatre Museum
Sound:Frame 2012 in Vienna
"Wean hean": festival of Viennese songs focuses on Jewish contributions
Vienna Film Fund supports ten projects
Diagonale awards ceremony in Graz
New comprehensive school: school reform adopted by National Council
Austria offers post-doctoral researchers "excellent framework conditions"
New research institute investigating human-animal interactions opened
Girls' Day 2012
Rudolf Hundstorfer: facilitating the recognition of foreign qualifications
Minister of the Interior launches information initiative on Internet security

SPORTS

Minister of Sport Darabos attends Leonidas Sports Gala Night 2012
"Sportvision 2012" in Copenhagen focuses on doping in leisure activities
Mario He won first gold medal in men's billiards in Luxembourg in 20 years

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HOME AFFAIRS

Federal Chancellor Faymann: Austria is among Europe's role models

“Just look at the situation in Austria, you will not find any evidence of unstable economic conditions. We are among the role models in Europe“, stressed Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann in the National Council on 28 March 2012 – the day on which the consolidation package was adopted (see below). He also highlighted Austria's high employment figures, a moderate overall unemployment rate and the EU's lowest youth unemployment rate. The interest rate for Austrian government bonds (2.8%) was also on an extremely low level. “It reflects the trust placed in our country. The economic situation in Austria has been assessed as very stable“, stated Faymann. Austria owed this success to its enterprises, employees as well as the political framework conditions. 14 of the EU-27 had increased their value-added tax rates – a measure having particularly negative effects on poorer people and families. The Austrian federal government had chosen a different approach, e.g. it did not cut small pensions in real terms. Austria was different “as we do not tackle the crisis by dismantling the welfare state but rely on a solidarity tax for top earners, an increase in bank tax and a tax on real estate gains“, said Faymann. The “debt brake” would help to stabilise the financial situation and was another tool to combat the most severe economic crisis since the 1930s. However, this struggle could not be won by acting independently, a stable Europe was required to which Austria was firmly committed, stated Faymann.

National Council adopted consolidation package

On 28 March 2012 the National Council adopted the consolidation package of the federal government, which will generate savings of 27.9 billion euro in the next five years. Two thirds of this amount would be achieved by cutting costs and one third through tax measures. The Stability Act 2012 consists of two sections. The tax-related section entered into force on 1 April 2012, while the cost-cutting measures will take effect as from 1 May 2012.

The set of measures adopted includes a capital gains tax on real estate, a solidarity tax for top earners (annual gross income of more than 185,920 euro) and a 50%-reduction of the government bonus granted towards building society savings contracts.

The Ministry of Finance informed that negotiations on a tax agreement at technical level with Switzerland (based on the example of the agreement recently signed between Germany and Switzerland) were underway. The talks were very likely to be concluded still in April. According to the federal government, the one-time tax payment for black money deposited with Swiss banks could amount to 1 billion euro. Most savings will be generated in the area of pensions and the public service. Wage increases remain below the inflation rate. Next year collective agreements for civil servants will provide for zero wage increases. A freeze in civil service recruitment has been imposed (exceptions: police, teachers, judicial officers and temporary soldiers).

Decreased budget deficit for 2011

Austria's budget deficit for 2011 is considerably lower than assumed. Based on preliminary data of the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) of 29 March 2012, the general government deficit was 2.6% of the GDP (or 7.8 billion euro) and therefore significantly below the Maastricht threshold of 3%. In January the Ministry of Finance had still assumed a deficit of 3.3% (compared to 4.5% in 2010).

According to the head of Statistik Austria, Konrad Pesendorfer, this result was mainly due to the very good economic development in 2011. Tax revenue had developed better than forecast (+7.1%) and government expenditure increased less drastically than expected.

Minister of Finance Maria Fekter was satisfied about this trend but stressed that the effects of the crisis in Greece would be reflected only in the budget of 2012. The government would in any case stick to the recently adopted consolidation path. Apart from the financial aid to banks, the budget was developing “very favourably”. Austria was making “good progress towards a zero-deficit”, said Fekter.

Federal Chancellor Faymann: ÖBB investments safeguard jobs

On 27 March 2012 the Council of Ministers passed the Framework Plan for the Austrian Railways (ÖBB). “Despite the austerity measures and a revision of all projects, we will invest 2 billion euro annually in rail projects, which will help to safeguard 35,000 jobs per year”, explained Chancellor Werner Faymann at the press conference after the Council's session. This showed very clearly that “austerity and investments were closely linked in Austria. This principle should be adhered to also at European level“, said Faymann.

EUROPE INTERNATIONAL**Federal President Fischer pays official visit to Portugal**

Federal President Heinz Fischer will pay an official visit to Portugal from 11 to 13 April 2012. He will be accompanied by his wife Margit as well as Minister of Finance Maria Fekter, Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer and a trade delegation.

His official programme includes talks with Portuguese President Anibal Antonio Cavaco Silva, Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho and Speaker of Parliament Assuncao Esteves. The two heads of state will participate in a Portuguese-Austrian economic forum.

Croatian Foreign Minister Pusic visited Vienna

Croatian Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic paid her first formal visit to Vienna on 30 March 2012. After the meeting with Pusic, her host, Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger, stated that Austria would continue supporting Croatia after its EU accession next year. Pusic thanked Austria for backing Croatia's efforts of coming closer to the EU – “from the very first moment and above all, even in difficult phases”, emphasised the Croatian Foreign Minister.

Austria would ratify Croatia's EU Accession Treaty still before the summer break of Parliament, promised Spindelegger. Both sides reaffirmed their joint commitment to supporting other countries in the region on their way to the EU. “Croatia is a frontrunner but there are still plenty of other countries that need to be given a helping hand”, underlined Spindelegger. In their efforts of joining the European Union, the countries of the region could take advantage of Croatia's experience as their initial situation was similar to that of Croatia and as they had to overcome the same difficulties, explained Pusic. The two countries advocated a speedy EU integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as of Serbia.

Pusic also held talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer.

Tunisian Secretary of State Bettaieb holds talks in Vienna

In the framework of a working visit to Austria, Tunisian Secretary of State at the Ministry for International Cooperation and Investment Alaya Bettaieb met with Secretary of State for Financial Affairs Andreas Schieder on 3 April 2012. Subjects for debate were the political

and economic situation in Tunisia as well as possible bilateral cooperation and investment projects. Schieder emphasised that the two states had a great interest in strengthening cooperation, in particular in the area of renewable energies and environmental protection.

“Economic cooperation could still be intensified. To date, 18 Austrian enterprises with a total of 1,350 employees were active in Tunisia. Austrian exports to Tunisia had increased by 10.2% in 2011 compared to the previous year, but the export volume of 88.3 million euro was still relatively low”, explained Schieder.

Tunisia launched an international campaign to boost political confidence and foreign investment. Minister for Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger will travel to Tunisia in May.

Austrian-Serbian cooperation against drug trafficking

The Balkans route continued to play a key role in drug trafficking as heroin was transported – predominantly from Afghanistan – through Turkey, the Balkans, Italy and Austria to Western Europe, explained Serbian Minister of the Interior Ivica Dacic at a press conference in Vienna on 28 March 2012. But drug trafficking in the opposite direction was also of increasing importance. South American cocaine was smuggled from Dutch and Belgian harbours along the Balkans route to South Eastern Europe, informed Dacic.

The EU project “Drug Policing Balkans“ and bilateral cooperation efforts between Austria and Serbia as well as other states focused on the joint combat against drug trafficking. Investigators from all 27 EU Member States, various candidate countries, the Western Balkans states, Switzerland, Ukraine, the USA as well as representatives of Europol, Eurojust, Interpol, EMCDDA, UNODC and the European Commission cooperate at operational level under Austria's chairmanship.

According to Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner, “the result was quite remarkable”. Since 2009 in Austria alone 11 international arrest warrants had been issued, 145 persons had been arrested and 60 defendants had been sentenced.

Furthermore, 26 cases of robbery and six company burglaries were cleared up, while 105 kilos of cocaine, 351 kilos of heroin, 52 kilos of cannabis, two kilos of amphetamines and 452,000 euro had been seized, reported Minister Mikl-Leitner.

ECONOMY

Spring upturn in the Austrian labour market

A cyclical spring upturn could be observed in the Austrian labour market as early as in March, Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer was pleased to inform. The number of jobless persons decreased from the level of the previous month. Compared to the same period of last year, a minor increase was reported, which was, however, slowing down. Thanks to an unemployment rate of 4.2 per cent, Austria remained the EU Member State boasting the lowest unemployment. “The Austrian approach to budget consolidation based on growth, employment and necessary, but socially balanced belt-tightening measures was considerably more successful than policies cutting down on social services and increasing mass taxes”, emphasised the Minister.

Wifo/IHS forecast: economy increases investments, credit crunch prevented

According to forecasts of the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) and the Institute of Advanced Studies (IHS), Austria’s economy was developing favourably despite the difficult international setting and was positioned well in key sectors. “Our enterprises pressed ahead with structural reforms and had focused on new markets, products and innovation just in time. Based on the economic outlook, they will invest more in 2012 than originally assumed as business sentiment is better than the difficult financial and economic conditions would suggest”, stressed Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner. Next year growth is expected to increase by about one percentage point. Wifo and IHS predict a plus of 1.4 and 1.7 percentage points, respectively, for 2013. After the record year 2011, exports will remain the growth engine, expanding by 3.5 per cent in 2012 and 6.5 per cent in 2013.

Austria invited to conference of OECD Environment Ministers in Paris

Strategies for reconciling economic development with environmental protection were discussed at the meeting of OECD Environment Ministers in Paris from 29 to 30 March 2012. Environment Minister Nikolaus Berlakovich was invited to present the successful eco-strategies of the “model country” Austria. “Austria belongs to the role models in the area of green jobs, renewable energies, water supply, organic farming and waste management. We prove that ecology and economy are com-

plementary. We want to present and pass on our successful model of ‘green growth’ at the big UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio in June”, said the Minister.

Doris Bures: additional support for innovative SMEs

Austrian inventors will receive additional support. The Ministry of Innovation launched the “Market Bonus” initiative to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in marketing their inventions and in opening up new markets. It will grant subsidies of 10,000 euro per company to facilitate market analyses, patent research, the development of attractive packaging, marketing concepts or the establishment of new sales channels. The new programme has been motivated by the fact that domestic technology-oriented SMEs are very successful in development. 87 per cent of all innovative ideas were realised perfectly from a technical perspective. But only 54 per cent of all product innovations entered the market. “We would like to bridge this gap”, said Minister for Innovation Doris Bures.

“Global Cities Index”: Vienna ranked 13th

In cooperation with Bloomberg, the consulting firm A.T. Kearney identifies the cities that could be described as the “urban elite of this world” and that are therefore positioned optimally to meet future challenges in a globalised world. The so-called “Global Cities Index” is published every second year and ranks 66 cities across five dimensions: economic activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience and political engagement. Moving up five ranks from the level of 2010, Vienna is now placed 13th.

New Business Park to be built on the outskirts of Vienna

The municipality of Wiener Neudorf – one of the most popular business locations in the surroundings of Vienna – has ambitious plans with its prominent plot of land near Shopping City Süd (SCS). Mayor Christian Wöhrleitner pursues the idea of building an Eco-Park based on the model project in Hartberg (Styria), where research and education have been integrated into the concept. Various measures have to be taken to pave the way for this project, e.g. to increase the share of public transport in rush-hour traffic. Land owners, local enterprises of the environment technology sector but also the municipality and the citizens have expressed their interest in this project.

CULTURE MEDIA SCIENCE**Vorarlberg: Schubertiade 2012**

The Schubertiade festival was founded in Hohenems in 1976 by Hermann Prey to give Schubert the place he deserves, alongside with Mozart and Beethoven. With 90 events and almost 45,000 visitors annually, Schubertiade is today's most important and most prestigious Schubert festival in the world. After its foundation it has been held at different additional venues, including Feldkirch, Schwarzenberg and Lindau. Schwarzenberg in the Bregenz Woods has become a permanent Schubertiade venue since the refurbishment of the Angelika Kauffmann Concert Hall in 2001. The concerts in Hohenems are held in the Markus Sittikus Hall, which has been protected as a historic monument and offers excellent acoustics after renovation. Performances will be given from 20 to 24 April 2012 by Sol Gabetta and Gautier Capuçon (violoncello), Paul Lewis, Mihaela Ursuleasa, Dejan Lazić, Michel Dalberto and Frank Braley (piano) as well as by violinist Renaud Capuçon and tenor Mark Padmore.

Additional concert series will take place in Schwarzenberg from 16 to 25 June and from 27 August to 9 September 2012 as well as in Hohenems on 11 October 2012.

www.schubertiade.at

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf Museum

In the framework of the Schubertiade festival, a small museum for Elisabeth Schwarzkopf has been set up in Hohenems. The great soprano Schwarzkopf spent her retirement years in Vorarlberg and died aged 90 years in Schruns in 2006. Schubertiade founder Gerd Nachbauer gathered the artefacts of the musical-historical estate of the singer and her husband Walter Legge for the Elisabeth Schwarzkopf Museum at Villa Rosenthal, which also accommodates the administrative office of Schubertiade. The Museum is open on Sundays and holidays between 15 April and 14 October 2012.

Special exhibition at Jewish Museum of Hohenems

The exhibition "Everything you always wanted to know about Jews...but never dared to ask" will provide witty answers to frequently asked questions about Judaism (running until 7 October 2012). Together with artists from Israel, the USA and Europe, curator Hannes Sulzenbacher and director Hanno Loewy tried to provide curious visitors with "food for thought", consisting of artwork, objects of everyday life,

historical exhibits as well as quotes by writers, intellectuals and politicians.

www.jm-hohenems.at/

Letters of Franz Michael Felder become available online

In cooperation with the Franz Michael Felder Association, the Regional Archives of Vorarlberg provide gradual online access to a total of 714 letters written or received by the farmer, writer and social reformer Franz Michael Felder. The project will be completed by 2015. In January 2012 the go-ahead was given to publish the letters in historical real time – on the same day but 146 years later – in Felder's Letters Blog. The aim of the project initiated by Jürgen Thaler is to arouse enthusiasm among new addressees, especially young people, for the work of Felder. When he died aged 30 years, Felder was only at the beginning of his literary career.

Criticised for his works and ideas in the past, today Felder is recognised as a pioneer of democracy and a politically conscious writer, who even helped to found a cheese trade cooperative. His two novels "Sonderlinge" and "Reich und Arm" won renown in Germany and the Netherlands during Felder's lifetime.

www.felderbriefe.at

Museum gugging presents August Walla

Under the title "august walla.! weltallende", Museum gugging pays homage to one of the most creative and most eccentric protagonists of Art Brut in an exhibition (until 28 October 2012) as well as in a monograph. The publication consisting of four volumes was presented at Novomatic Forum on 21 March 2012. Some exemplary works of companions of Walla were showcased in the exhibition "gugging favorites.!" at this venue.

The artist, who died in 2001, would have celebrated his 76th birthday on 22 June 2012. The presentation of his work will be rounded off by a "Walla Party" on 24 June 2012, where the music group Netnakisum will give a performance. Moreover, the Walla radio play "GOTT IST BRAV-Zauberrevolfer" by Krok and Petschinka will be premiered; interpretation: Karlheinz Essl (electronic sound) and Agnes Epinger (vocals). www.gugging.org

"The World of Operetta" at the Austrian Theatre Museum

The Austrian Theatre Museum opens its doors to the "World of Operetta" until 24 September 2012. The exhibition presenting the history of

operetta from its early days to the present is accompanied by a special programme at the “Operetta Café”, with Austrian operetta stars answering questions of the audience. The exhibition has been conceived as a tour through the history of Viennese theatre-making and music, illustrating that the operetta is not an outdated and old-fashioned genre but has always been humorous, socio-critical and frivolous. After its leap across the Atlantic, it led to the creation of musicals or the popular US series “Glee”. The show will be presented at the German Theatre Museum in Munich as from October 2012. www.theatermuseum.at/

Sound:Frame 2012 in Vienna

Under the title “substructions”, the sixth edition of the Sound:Frame festival will for the first time explore the framework conditions of audio-visual trends and works. Issues such as cultural economy, the positioning of audio-visual works in the art context or sustainability are examined against the background of the system ‘festival’ and discussed in the exhibition, at a conference and various fringe events. The mission of the festival is to make underlying structures and framework conditions more transparent.

A room installation on the upper floor of the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) will be an artistic highlight, to which several visual artists make contributions. “Substructions“ will be on show from 12 to 29 April 2012. The “departure conference” from 13 to 14 April 2012 will offer opportunities for more in-depth discussions of the key topics explored in broader terms in the exhibition. As usual, all festival venues will be transformed visually. Besides special AV acts (audio-video shows), the programme offers international and national music live acts and DJs, visual live shows and installations.

<http://2012.soundframe.at/>

“Wean hean“: festival of Viennese songs focuses on Jewish contributions

This year the festival “Wean hean” (literally translated from Viennese dialect: “Listening to Vienna”) will focus on the contributions of Jewish composers and lyricists to Viennese songs in 7 out of a total of 12 events. The festival (19 April to 23 May 2012) organised by the Association for Viennese Folk Songs (Wiener Volksliedwerk) will be opened at three different venues: at the Jewish Museum, at Café Hawelka and the “Camineum” of the Austrian National Library. The festival opening – under a motto derived from the Jewish

song “Lomir sich iberbetn“ (“Let’s make peace”) – is entirely devoted to Jewish contributions to Viennese music. (Ensemble Klesmer Wien & Tini Kainrath, Smart Ensemble, Clemens Schaller, Ingrid Diem and others).

Among the highlights of “Wean hean“ are a performance dedicated to Hermann Leopoldi at Konzerthaus (sold out), the cabaret “Lotzelach im Wurstelprater“ (Theater L.E.O. and the Armin Berg Society), die Brauers and “Sprachtonkünstler“ (Tommy Hojsa and his ensemble set texts of Wiener Gruppe to music, guest performance by Friedrich Achleitner). The festival closes with a musical encounter between the cities of Vienna and Wroclaw (Poland) titled “Dunaj, oder?“ (Kammerorchester Leopoldinum Breslau and Neue Wiener Concert Schrammeln) at Radiokulturhaus on 23 May 2012. www.weanhean.at

Vienna Film Fund supports ten projects

One of the ten new Austrian film projects funded with a total amount of 870,250 euro by the Vienna Film Fund is “Amour Fou” by Jessica Hausner, who had already been successful with her previous film “Lourdes”. The film describes the last months in the lives of Heinrich von Kleist and Henriette Vogel. Martin Gschlacht was the cameraman. Other funded films are “Revolte!” by Paul Poet, exploring current protest movements as well as “2Sitzrakete“, the feature film debut of Hans Hofer. The documentaries “Chinatown Vienna“ by Judith Benedikt about Chinese migration to Austria and “Oper. Kraftwerk der Gefühle“ by Florian Gebauer, taking a look behind the scenes of Vienna State Opera, were also eligible for financial aid.

Applications for film funding had been filed for 40 film projects, some of which are still in the development stage, e.g. “Viyana” by Max Gruber and Asli Kislal, who transfer Horvath’s “Tales from the Vienna Woods“ to 21st-century Vienna, a comedy of errors by Arne Nolting and Ali Samadi Ahadi titled “Die Mamba“, “High Performance“ by Johanna Moder (about a shady job offer to an actor) and Tina Leisch’s long-term study “Echte Männer”.

Diagonale awards ceremony in Graz

Sebastian Meise’s “Stilleben” won the Grand Diagonale Prize for the best Austrian feature film as well as the Prizes for the Best Cinematography and Best Costume Design. “Richtung Nowa Huta” by Dariusz Kowalski was selected as the Best Documentary. The actors’ awards went to Christine Ostermayer for “Anfang 80” and Michael Fuith for “Michael”.

New comprehensive school: school reform adopted by National Council

Minister of Education Claudia Schmied plans to convert all secondary schools into “new comprehensive schools” by 2019. The respective amendment of the School Organisation Act was adopted with the votes of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), the People’s Party (ÖVP) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) on 29 March 2012. Werner Amon, ÖVP Spokesman for Education, praised the new educational model, which would provide “optimal support to pupils on the school premises” and ensure the continued existence of grammar schools. The Minister of Education described the compromise as a “school reform to the extent feasible” but one should “stay the course to a common school for all”.

Austria offers post-doctoral researchers “excellent framework conditions”

Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle affirmed that he had every reason to be proud of the domestic universities and research facilities. According to a survey of the journal “The Scientist”, two institutes of the Austrian Academy of Science are among the three best international workplaces for post-doctoral researchers. The Institute of Molecular Biotechnology and the Research Centre for Molecular Medicine offer “excellent framework conditions” to post-doctoral staff, emphasised the Minister. The survey took different factors into account, e.g. support for reconciling family and working lives, quality of education, pay and opportunities for career development.

New research institute investigating human-animal interactions opened

The new Messerli Research Institute on Human-Animal Interactions was opened in a ceremony at the Vienna University of Veterinary Medicine on 29 March 2012, which was attended by high-ranking guests. The Institute will do research into interactions between human beings and animals by taking into account basic research in ethics, comparative medicine as well as animal cognition and behaviour. It is characterised by a broad interdisciplinary approach encompassing biology, human medicine, veterinary medicine, philosophy, psychology and law studies as well as a strong international focus.

“Research at the Messerli Research Institute is of great relevance to our society as animals are of crucial importance for society – even though many of us are not aware of this fact – and we

also bear a great responsibility in this respect”, said Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle.

Girls’ Day 2012

Since 2001, “Girls’ Day” or “Daughters’ Day” has been staged in Austria on the fourth Thursday in April of every year, i.e. on 26 April of the current year. The aim of this campaign day is to encourage girls and young women to choose non-traditional, technical-scientific, and consequently very promising, educational pathways, study programmes and occupations. As experience has shown, they lead to higher incomes and greater social recognition. On Girls’ Day various events offering a wide spectrum of theory and practice are organised in the federal civil service, at regional level, at universities and companies.

[Girls’ Day im Bundesdienst
Wiener Töchertag](#)

Rudolf Hundstorfer: facilitating the recognition of foreign qualifications

Many people with a migration background who completed training programmes and acquired qualifications in their country of origin are not employed or paid adequately in Austria as they did not obtain formal recognition of their qualifications. “It is our task to facilitate and speed up procedures for recognising professional qualifications earned abroad. This is indispensable to improve equal opportunities in the labour market”, said Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer.

A new brochure, a glossary of relevant terms (“Anerkennungs-ABC”) as well as a new website provide guidance to migrants on facilitated and faster procedures for the recognition of occupational and educational qualifications earned abroad.

www.berufsanerkennung.at

Minister of the Interior launches information initiative on Internet security

The Ministry of the Interior launched a new initiative for more Internet security at Austrian schools. 300 special investigators visit schools across Austria to inform young people aged 12 and above about cyber crime, online mobbing and the appropriate use of social media such as Facebook.

“Children often disclose private data and information, exposing themselves to great risks and becoming easy prey of online harassment or mobbing“, stated Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner.

SPORTS**Minister of Sport Darabos attends Leonidas Sports Gala Night 2012**

On 29 March 2012 Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos was the guest of honour of the annually held “Salzburg’s Athletes of the Year” gala night, where the much-sought-after Leonidas trophies were awarded.

The traditional tribute ceremony for Salzburg’s most successful athletes took place in the presence of Austrian sports VIPs at Terminal 2 of Salzburg Airport. Besides Olympic medallists as well as world and European champions, numerous high-ranking personalities from the business community and the political arena attended the event.

Drawing attention to the special interaction and interdependence of high-performance sports and mass sports in his welcoming remarks, Minister Darabos also highlighted the social value and great responsibility of elite athletes. Salzburg’s Athletes of the Year contest has been organised by the newspaper “Salzburger Nachrichten“ as a public voting competition since 1984. This year’s contest focused on winter sports. As expected, overall World Cup winner Marcel Hirscher and Marlies Schild, who has earned the title for the seventh time, were selected as “Athletes of the Year”. The title “Newcomer of the Year” went to ski jumper Manuel Kraft. The trainer of the US ladies’ ski team Alex Hödlmoser became the “Coach of the Year”. The event full of touching moments reached its emotional climax when Petra Kronberger was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Minister of Sport Darabos also attended the “Sport Lorbeer” (“Sport Laurel”) awards ceremony in Linz at the end of March. Together with Fritz Hochmair, President of the Upper Austrian branch of the association ASKÖ, and provincial councillor for sport Viktor Sigl, he conferred awards on the most successful ASKÖ athletes (young talents and general category) of the last year. “Without mass there is no elite but without elite there is no sufficiently broad basis. Therefore success on all levels is important”, Darabos stated at the ceremony.

“Sportvision 2012“ in Copenhagen focuses on doping in leisure activities

“Sportvision 2012“ – an international conference organised by the Danish EU Presidency together with several stakeholders of the sports movement – took place at the congress centre of Copenhagen (Bella Center) from 19 to

20 March 2012. 375 international experts from different sports sectors participated in the event.

In her statement to the conference, EU Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou reminded of the fact that practising sport was more than mere entertainment, for many people it was a life-line. The “Preparatory Actions” for developing a European dimension of sport“, which would be continued until 2014, were a vital basis for the new “Erasmus for All” programme.

The next speaker, Member of European Parliament Santiago Fisas Ayxela, conveyed greetings of the European Parliament. The Lisbon Treaty was a revolution for the world of sport, and the respective White Paper and EU Communication were important steps forward. The combat against all forms of discrimination in sport was a major concern of the European Parliament, which had always been firmly committed to promoting mass sports.

An important module of “Sportvision 2012” examined the risks of doping and of the abuse of specific substances (particularly steroids) in amateur fitness activities. In view of the fact that the topics were explored from different perspectives and positions, the conference had substantial results. Representatives of politics, medicine, research, but also of customs and police authorities held speeches covering a wide range of topics. Two other modules focused on the subjects “Financing and Health Challenges” as well as “Volunteering”.

Mario He won first gold medal in men’s billiards in Luxembourg in 20 years

21-year-old Mario He from Vorarlberg delivered an outstanding performance at the European Pool Championships 2012 in Luxembourg. Winning the 8-ball competition, he earned the first gold medal in a men’s event of a European Pool Championship in 20 years.

Austria achieved another success at this tournament. In the 10-ball competition Jasmin Ouschan won her 27th European Championship title, and was awarded medals in other competitions as well.

Austria had every reason to cheer at the Snowboard Junior World Championships in Sierra Nevada. Alessandro Hämmerle aged 18 years won a gold medal in the snowboard cross event.