

NEWS

FROM AUSTRIA

Editorial close: 21 May 2012

No. 10/12

DOMESTIC POLICY

Federal government adopted “transparency package“
Federal Chancellor Faymann: 700,000 signatures for a referendum
Governors sign stability pact
National Council adopted a reform of pension funds
Reform of the administrative courts

EUROPE ■ INTERNATIONAL

Chancellor Faymann meets with Obama at NATO summit in Chicago
Federal Chancellor Faymann at EU summit meeting in Brussels
President of Cyprus pays official visit to Austria
Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Tunisia and Morocco
Darabos held talks with Ban Ki-moon in New York
Austria celebrated end of WWII.

ECONOMY

EU spring forecast: Austria improves its position as a growth leader
Reinhold Mitterlehner: good start into the export year 2012
Austrian foreign investments reached almost new all-time high
Minor decrease in inflation rate in April
Rudolf Hundstorfer: numerous improvements thanks to minimum income
New Land Registry – state-of-the-art technology at the courts
Fischer Sports: Austria is global market leader in cross-country skis

EDUCATION ■ MEDIA ■ SCIENCE

1.1 billion euro invested into academic secondary schools
Austria placed 12th in world ranking of universities of University of Melbourne
Crucial agreement on recognition of university degrees signed with Italy
EUROSTARS supports Austrian research projects
Doris Bures increases research funding for production technology
Cyber risk analysis for Austria

CULTURE

13th Mattsee Diabelli Summer Festival
The Salzburg Whitsun Festival 2012
Urban art in Vienna
Erwin Wurm at Gironcoli Museum
The medium Internet at the Linz-based Ars Electronica Centre
Josef Winkler appointed new President of the Austrian Art Senate
Children’s and Youth Book Prizes
Bavarian TV Prize goes to “Wunder von Kärnten”

ENVIRONMENT ■ SUSTAINABILITY ■ TOURISM

Reinhold Mitterlehner plans to attract more bicycle tourists
Carinthia wants to move up to Europe’s top three outdoor destinations
Hiking trail along Semmering Railway
Schloss Hof

IMPRINT

Owner (publisher) and producer: Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service. A-1014 Vienna, Ballhausplatz 1. Editor: Dr. Helmut Wohnout, tel. ++43/1/53115-4154, fax ++43/1/53115-4283, e-mail: helmut.wohnout@bka.gv.at. Dispatch: Division VII/3, Ms. Renate Gaida, tel. ++43/1/53115-2613, fax ++43/1/53109-2613, e-mail: renate.gaida@bka.gv.at. Website: <http://www.bundeskanzleramt.at>. Excerpts from this text may be reprinted. Published by the Federal Press Service – Vienna.

DOMESTIC POLICY**Federal government adopted “transparency package”**

The governing parties – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) – agreed on the “transparency package” at the Council of Ministers’ meeting on 15 May 2012. The political parties bill does not only consist in a “transparency package” but also provides for a reform of the public financing system for political parties. The focus is on transparent party funds and the disclosure of the income and expenses of the parties. The main point of the package is the disclosure of donations to political parties exceeding 5,000 euro.

The government plan provides for the most far-reaching reform of the political parties laws of the last decades. “With these laws we draw political consequences from the past. As far as transparency is concerned, Austria should become a pioneer instead of lagging behind”, explained Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann at the press conference following the session of the Council of Ministers. The government would not miss any chance to take measures that had a preventive effect and helped to remedy grievances. According to Faymann, additional measures ensuring more correctness and transparency in Parliament would be adopted, including a tighter anti-corruption criminal law, incompatibility rules and a Lobbyist Registry. The “transparency package” should take effect on 1 July 2012. Intensive talks would therefore be held with the opposition parties as a two-thirds majority was required to pass the law, said the Federal Chancellor.

Based on other key provisions of the “transparency package”, public enterprises and companies with state ties are not allowed to accept donations. The political parties at Länder and district level will also be subject to disclosure obligations.

The existing system of refunding the parties’ campaign expenses after parliamentary and EU elections will be abolished. Each party is now entitled to a refund of a maximum of 7 million euro.

Federal Chancellor Faymann: 700,000 signatures for a referendum

In the current debate about a democracy reform, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann called for a mandatory referendum if a cause was supported with at least 700,000 signatures. In an interview with the daily “Kronen Zeitung” (issue of 14 May 2012), Faymann

advocated that “this instrument of direct democracy” should be used considerably more frequently. The introduction of a professional army was an issue that could for example be decided by referendum, stated Faymann.

Governors sign stability pact

Representatives of the Federal Republic, the Länder and municipalities signed a new national stability pact at the Federal Chancellery on 9 May 2012. According to the provisions, a zero deficit should be achieved by 2016 and the structural (cyclically-adjusted) deficit was limited to 0.45% of the GDP as from 2017. The joint share of the Länder and municipalities in the deficit must not surpass 0.1%. The government leaders and Governors of the Länder also signed a timetable for the planned Transparency Database. The public expenditure of the Federal Republic will become available for inspection as from January 2013, that of the Länder one year later.

(see: <http://www.transparenzdatenbank.at>)

National Council adopted a reform of pension funds

On 16 May 2012 the National Council adopted a reform of the pension fund system with the votes of the governing parties (Social Democratic Party and Austrian People’s Party). The new rules allow persons eligible to a pension aged 55 plus to opt into a very safe collective investment scheme guaranteeing a minimum pension. Persons who are already receiving benefits are entitled to change over to the new system. A new “life-stage model” was introduced allowing to choose between more risky and safer investments.

Reform of the administrative courts

On 15 April 2012 the National Council adopted a reform of the administrative court system with the votes of the five parties represented in Parliament. With effect 1 January 2014, more than 120 senates of appeal and special authorities are dissolved and replaced by 11 administrative courts. An administrative court of first instance will be set up in each Land, while a Federal Administrative Court and a Federal Finance Court will be established at federal level. The future system will have two instances. Appeals against administrative decisions of an authority (e.g. decisions on building permits or tax assessment notices) may be lodged directly with independent administrative courts instead of filing complaints with the superior administrative authority (except: municipal matters).

EUROPE ■ INTERNATIONAL**Chancellor Faymann meets with Obama at NATO summit in Chicago**

Although Austria is not a NATO member, it is represented at high level at the summit meeting of the transatlantic military alliance in Chicago (20/21 May 2012), namely by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Wolfgang Waldner. At two working meetings of the NATO partnership summit, Faymann also meets with US President Barack Obama. Besides NATO's new partnerships, missile defence in Europe and Afghanistan are the main subject for debate at the conference.

The non-NATO member Austria had no intention to join the organisation, reaffirmed Minister of Defence Darabos recently. The country has engaged in military cooperation with NATO in the framework of the "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) since 1994.

Federal Chancellor Faymann at EU summit meeting in Brussels

After the NATO meeting in Chicago, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann will travel to Brussels to participate in the informal meeting of EU heads of state and government on 22 May 2012. The gathering will discuss once more ways to pull Europe out of the crisis.

Faymann presented Austria's position on Europe Day (9 May). He emphatically requested that common rules had to be adopted and complied with, especially in the euro-zone. Moreover, Faymann explicitly warned against setting issues such as employment and social justice against austerity policies or joint guarantees. Both approaches were needed – the consolidation of public budgets was inseparably linked to measures promoting employment and social security. It was an absolute must to ensure acceptance by the citizens, said Chancellor Faymann.

President of Cyprus pays official visit to Austria

The President of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, pays an official visit to Austria from 21 to 22 May 2012. The programme of his visit includes meetings with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer. Issues such as the forthcoming EU Presidency of Cyprus as well as the situation in Greece and the Middle East will be discussed. A double-taxation agreement will be signed.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Tunisia and Morocco

On 16 May 2012 Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger held talks on Tunisia's development towards democracy and the rule of law with President Moncef Marzouki, Minister for Foreign Affairs Rafik Abdesslem as well as representatives of human rights organisations. According to Spindelegger, radical religious groups posed the greatest threat. Tunisia had to maintain its "leading position" within the "Arab spring" countries, also in implementing the reform process. The government did not pose any obstacle to preparing a new Constitution but the influence of the previous regime was still manifest in bureaucracy, stated Spindelegger.

Minister Spindelegger was optimistic about the political reform efforts in Morocco, the second stop on this tour of North Africa (17/18 May 2012). In Rabat he met with Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane, Foreign Minister Saad Eddine as well as representatives of the Human Rights Advisory Board (set up by the King). Spindelegger identified "true progress towards democratisation and in human rights issues".

Darabos held talks with Ban Ki-moon in New York

Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos discussed the situation in Syria with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and high-ranking UN representatives in New York on 17 May 2012 (local date). An important concern of Darabos was the adoption of a code of conduct for UN soldiers in the Golan Heights to deal with Syrians persecuted by Syrian troops approaching the UN camps to seek help. Darabos pled for supporting the refugees but called for clear rules and legal certainty.

Austria celebrated end of WWII.

To mark the anniversary of the capitulation of the Nazi regime on 8 May, the government leaders held for the first time a liberation ceremony at the Federal Chancellery. Among the numerous guests were Federal President Heinz Fischer and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer. More than 6 million victims of the Shoah and about 80 million people who were killed during WWII, and became victims of NS extermination were honoured in the ceremony. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann warned against political agitation and racial fanaticism and stated that also Austria had to confront its guilt and co-responsibility.

ECONOMY**EU spring forecast: Austria improves its position as a growth leader**

Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner said that he was very pleased about the EU spring forecast: “Thanks to the performance of our enterprises and the good framework offered by the business location Austria we have developed a clear growth edge.” Based on the forecasts of the EU Commission, Austria’s economy will grow by 0.8% in 2012 – i.e. double the rate of the latest forecast of the Economic Research Institute (WIFO) – and by 1.7% in 2013. The GDP of the eurozone will shrink by 0.3% in 2012 and increase by merely 1.0% in 2013.

Reinhold Mitterlehner: good start into the export year 2012

“After the record year 2011, Austria’s export enterprises are doing very well again also in 2012. The favourable trend shows that domestic products and services are internationally competitive and that the business location Austria offers finely-tuned conditions”, Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner commented on the export data published by the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) for the months of January and February. Compared to the same period of the previous year, exports grew by 5.4 percent to a total volume of 19.51 billion euro, clearly surpassing the forecasts.

Austrian foreign investments reached almost new all-time high

Amounting to about 22 billion euro in 2011, Austria’s foreign direct investment nearly jumped back to the pre-crisis level. Almost one fourth of Austria’s foreign direct investments went to Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe in 2011. The number one destination were the Netherlands, followed by Germany and Turkey, where the Austrian oil group OMV has expanded its petrol station chain. Direct investments made by foreign countries in Austria went up to 10.2 billion euro in 2011, compared to 3.2 billion euro in 2010. The three leading investors in Austria are Italy, Germany and Switzerland.

Minor decrease in inflation rate in April

Based on calculations of the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria), the inflation rate was 2.3% in April, corresponding to a minor decrease from the level of the previous months (March 2.4%, February 2.6%). This means that in April inflation reached the lowest level since

December 2010 (2.3%). Fuel prices went up by 8% year-on-year, while food prices increased by only 1.3%. However, increases in the prices of the spending group “housing, water and energy” (+3.4%) accounted for more than one fourth of the inflation.

Rudolf Hundstorfer: numerous improvements thanks to minimum income

“Thanks to the guaranteed minimum income, the people affected have a considerably better chance of returning to the labour market. Since the introduction of the guaranteed minimum income, more than 23,300 people were reintegrated into the job market”, informed Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer on 10 May 2012. More than 36,900 people are now covered by adequate health insurance. The guaranteed minimum income system has led to significant improvements, particularly for sole parents, emphasised the Minister. The objective of ensuring uniform minimum social security standards had been achieved.

New Land Registry – state-of-the-art technology at the courts

On 7 May 2012 the “New Austrian Land Registry” – using state-of-the-art technology and offering new services – became publicly available. “By launching the ‘New Land Registry’, we bring the electronic land registry, which has existed for 30 years, into the 21st century. The new application is significantly more user-friendly and easier to operate – this is in line with the goal of a citizen-oriented justice system“, stressed Minister of Justice Beatrix Karl. The second project stage focuses on the complete digitalisation of data flows between the property and proprietorship registers. Implementation has started and is expected to be completed by July 2013.

Fischer Sports: Austria is global market leader in cross-country skis

There is hardly any other country having produced more international ski brands than Austria: Atomic, Head, Kneissl, Blizzard, Kästle, Fischer. Fischer is the only large ski brand that is still family-owned. In 1970 the company produced the first cross-country skis. More than 40 years later, Fischer is the global market leader in cross-country skiing equipment. About 2.2 million pairs of cross-country skis are sold annually all over the world. Almost every second pair is of Austrian origin. 95% of the cross-country skiing equipment is exported as the Austrians enjoy first and foremost Alpine skiing.

EDUCATION ■ MEDIA ■ SCIENCE**1.1 billion euro invested into academic secondary schools**

Minister of Education Claudia Schmied informed that investments totalling about 1.1 billion euro have been earmarked for improving the infrastructure and quality of education of academic secondary schools in the next few years. The financial resources will be used to create cooperative classrooms, to expand all-day school programmes and to reduce class sizes.

Austria placed 12th in world ranking of universities of University of Melbourne

According to Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle, the new world ranking of universities drawn up on behalf of the international network “Universitas 21“ by researchers of the University of Melbourne shows very clearly: “Our universities and research facilities are considerably better than the current discourse suggests.” The fact that Austria was ranked twelfth – ahead of countries such as France and Germany – “proved the commitment and excellence of Austrian universities”. But consistent efforts to improve the framework conditions were required. As far as university funding was concerned, Austria occupies place 11 – and this was in fact remarkable in view of the comparatively low share of private funding, stressed the Minister.

Crucial agreement on recognition of university degrees signed with Italy

The mutual recognition of academic degrees and titles between Austria and Italy offers many advantages to students from South Tyrol (Alto Adige, Italy). “I am pleased that our negotiations with Italy have been successful and that we satisfied an important demand of South Tyrol. Above all students from South Tyrol will benefit from the mutual recognition scheme for university degrees”, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger commented on the new regulations.

Minister of Science Karlheinz Töchterle also expressed his satisfaction that “the new rules will lead to improvements for students from Austria and South Tyrol, while promoting mobility”.

EUROSTARS supports Austrian research projects

Thanks to the support of the European Commission, twelve new Austrian innovation projects were funded with a total of four million

euro: “Specific cooperation activities such as those of the EUROSTARS initiative strengthen Austria’s position as an “innovation location” and provide new impetus to growth”, stressed Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner. EUROSTARS is a joint funding programme of the European research initiative EUREKA and the European Commission. Current innovation projects range from new anti-cancer agents and heart valve diagnostics to laser technologies and interactive multilingual applications for computer games.

Doris Bures increases research funding for production technology

Minister of Innovation Doris Bures launched a new call for proposals concerning “intelligent production”. The total funding budget amounts to 22 million euro. The Ministry of Infrastructure invests 70 million euro (i.e. 40 percent more than last year) into the priority sector “production technology” in the current year. “As the overwhelming interest of the industry shows, we touched a nerve with this initiative”, said the Minister. According to her, Austria competed successfully at international level – based on quality and high technology instead of low wages. “In the framework of research funding we therefore concentrate on investing into ‘intelligent production’.” Thanks to this strategy, Austria retains its fourth place in the international productivity ranking, behind the USA, the Netherlands and Ireland.

Cyber risk analysis for Austria

“Cyberspace security and the security of people in cyberspace is a legal asset which has to be protected with all constitutional means“, emphasised Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner. The federal government plans to prepare a national cyberspace security strategy by the end of 2012. A “Cyber Risk Analysis for Austria” – prepared with the support of administrative experts – was presented by the Minister on 15 May 2012. The main recommendation of the five-point programme is to establish a common information network of authorities and enterprises: “Cyberspace security should be promoted by the authorities through behavioural incentives.” The government could provide well-aimed stimuli to strengthen the business sector’s willingness to cooperate. In concrete terms, Minister Mikl-Leitner proposed a “personnel exchange programme to promote cyberspace security”.

CULTURE**13th Mattsee Diabelli Summer Festival**

The small summer festival in Salzburg's lake region draws renowned artists. 18 concerts (31 May to 7 September 2012) are staged under the motto "Texts, Sounds and Cantabile". Besides classical music interpreted by Lukas, Veronika and Clemens Hagen, Beni Schmid, Stadler Quartet, the members of the Vienna Philharmonics Werner Hink, Peter Schmid and Albena Danailova, the festival-goers may enjoy jazz musicians like Herb Berger or the folk music groups Hollerschnapszuzler and Ausseer Bradlmuusi at the Abbey Church and the Palace of Mattsee.

The intimate summer festival offers unusual, rarely performed programmes, e.g. Bach's Goldberg Variations for String Trio, an Italian Night (from Boccherini to Rota), Tauern mountain blues by guitarist David Hauser or music by Salzburg's "Brazilian" Sigismund Neukomm (1778- 1858). Other highlights are the "Requiem Mass for Archbishop Sigismund" for choir and orchestra as well as the Portuguese Sabia Quartet, which will start with Hindemith and end with Piazzolla, samba and chansons. Later in year, the concert titled "Novo Día – Groove, Polka, Pop and Cordiality" and the Christmas Pasticcio will follow.

According to plans for the next year, the festival will turn the spotlight on Wagner, Verdi and Britten. The music-theatrical performance of the commissioned composition "Tassilo" by Herbert Grassl (lyrics: Gottfried Kasperek) will receive its world premiere.

The Salzburg Whitsun Festival 2012

The new artistic manager of the Salzburg Whitsun Festival 2012, mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli, devotes her first programme to the various facets of the legendary Egyptian pharaoh Cleopatra. The festival titled "Cleopatra – in the Labyrinth of Eros and Power" (25 to 28 May 2012) features baroque works such as Händel's "Giulio Cesare in Egitto" (with Bartoli singing the Cleopatra), a concertante performance of Massenet's opera "Cléopâtre", plays (e.g. Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra") as well as culinary events under the motto "Cleopatra". Rodion Shchedrin composed the commissioned work "Cleopatra and the Asp", which will star Anna Netrebko, Valerie Gergiev and the Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre of St. Petersburg. Commissioned works will become an integral part of the Whitsun Festival's programme in the future. www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/

Urban art in Vienna

The exhibition "Escape the Golden Cage" at Vienna's K&K Telegrafenamts (closing on 25 May 2012) and various performances in the public space provide exciting insights into "street art", namely urban art that speaks an every-day language and reflects the dynamism of daily urban life.

Leading art institutions such as the Fondation Cartier in Paris, the Tate in London and Moca in California have devoted exhibitions to urban art in the past few years. Due to the ever-growing interest, art fairs have included urban art in their programmes – a trend followed by leading auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's.

The series of art performances in public space also features multidisciplinary artist Abner Preis (living in the Netherlands) with his "Super Hero Project" at Naschmarkt and "The Ring" hotel. Painter and graffiti artist Christian Awe (Germany) staged a live painting performance near Museumsquartier. Other artists participating in Vienna's urban art festival are as follows: Dan Witz (USA) creates works in the tradition of fantastic realism; Katrin Fridriks (Iceland) presents installations combining abstract expressionism and Japanese calligraphy; the works of Lies Maculan (Austria) blend photography, object and installation art; the Low Bros from Berlin present geometrical shapes in different styles, mystical depth and expressive colours; Mark Jenkins (USA), became famous with tape sculptures in public space; Robert Proch (Germany), who also produced award-winning short films; SatOne (Germany) with geometrical abstraction and futuristic graffiti; the Berlin-based artists' duo Various & Gould (Germany) playfully addresses socially-relevant issues in works between pop art and dada; WK Interact (USA), whose work focuses on the presentation of moving human bodies.

Organiser Sarah Musser had staged the first urban art show already in 2010 and plans to organise urban art events on a regular basis.

www.escape-goldencage.com

Erwin Wurm at Gironcoli Museum

The Gironcoli Museum (within the precincts of the Palace of Herberstein, eastern Styria) presents an exhibition of new works by Erwin Wurm curated by Nikolaus Breisach (until 16 June 2012). New "rage sculptures" – sculpted blocks of clay cast into bronze – are on show under the title "Hitting and Kicking" ("hit me,...hit me...").

Wurm's work often expresses strong criticism as the artist considers it important to articulate the inconvenient truth: "It is always best when it hurts and when it is cynical but not nice." One could not change the world "but I am a political person. I am living in the present and I am of the opinion that it is an important right to criticise our times."

The Gironcoli Museum was opened in 2004. Since 2005 the Association of the Friends of the Gironcoli Museum has tried to organise three temporary exhibitions per year. Past shows include retrospectives of Elfie Semotan, Hartmut Skerbisch or photo artist Branko Lennart.

www.gironcoli-museum.at

The medium Internet at the Linz-based Ars Electronica Centre

The exhibition "Out of control – what the web knows about you" explores the transformation of the Internet from a technical tool into a medium of public and social relevance. Another goal of the exhibition is to raise awareness and to allow the visitors to take a first step into a future with greater data safety. After new legislation on data retention entered into force, the protection of the individual's identity has become a hotly debated issue. With the support of the University of Applied Sciences at the Hagenberg Software Park (district of Freistadt), the show provides information on safety measures and offers exhibition-goers an opportunity to improve their media skills – and consequently their personal responsibility – by attending lectures and workshops. The information is illustrated through the "Password Hacker Station" (which shows how long it takes to crack a code), "Mobile Phone Tracking", "Newstweek" (manipulation of news) as well as the film "faceless" by Manu Luksch (recordings from surveillance cameras). On show until the end of the year.

www.aec.at/center/2012/03/12/ausserkontrolle

Josef Winkler appointed new President of the Austrian Art Senate

The Art Senate Board consisting of 21 members elected Carinthian writer Josef Winkler as the President of the Senate for a three-year term. He succeeds to Pritzker Prize laureate Hans Hollein. Vice-Presidents are Brigitte Kowanz and Heinz Karl Gruber. The appointment was formally confirmed by Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied in April.

The tasks of the Art Senate are to advise public bodies on important art matters and to make recommendations to promote art and to pre-

serve the cultural heritage. It is also responsible for nominating candidates for the Grand Austrian State Prize and appointing State Prize laureates to the Art Senate.

Josef Winkler wants to make the Art Senate more active and to introduce the Grand State Prize category "film". A concrete project mentioned by him was to initiate the adoption of a library law, which has been requested by the Library Association for many years.

Children's and Youth Book Prizes

The Austrian children's and youth books prizes (each amounting to 6,000 euro) were awarded in Gleisdorf (Styria) on 9 May 2012. The four children's books selected by the jury address social exclusion and otherness, burning political issues such migration or the situation in the Middle East. The prize-winning books are: "Tee mit Onkel Mustafa" by Andrea Karime / Annette Bodecker-Büttner (Picus), "Willy Puchners Welt der Farben" by Willy Puchner (Residenz), "Hier gibt es Löwen" by Michael Stavaric and Renate Habinger (Residenz) as well as "Krokodil" by Alice Wellinger (Bibliothek der Provinz). Ten other outstanding works were included as special reading tips in the "Collection of the Austrian Children's and Youth Book Prize 2012".

Literaturhaus Graz is the venue of an exhibition of book illustrations by Willy Puchner and Helga Bansch titled "The Secret of Colours" (running until 25 May 2012), which is accompanied by illustration workshops.

Bavarian TV Prize goes to "Wunder von Kärnten"

The coproduction between the two TV corporations ORF and ZDF "Das Wunder von Kärnten" has been awarded a second prize. In the framework of the Bavarian TV Prizes 2012, which were presented at Prinzregententheater in Munich on 4 May 2012, Andreas Prochaska received one of the much-sought-after Blue Panther trophies in the category "Best Direction – TV Film".

The film of the year 2011 is based on the true story of a young heart surgeon's seemingly hopeless fight to save the life of girl who fell into a pond. The girl's rescue went down in the history of medicine as the "miracle of Carinthia". When the film was shown for the first time on ORF 2 (18 January 2012), it was watched by more than one million Austrian viewers. It attracted an audience of about 5.8 million people on the German TV channel ZDF.

ENVIRONMENT ■ SUSTAINABILITY ■ TOURISM

Reinhold Mitterlehner plans to attract more bicycle tourists

The Ministry of Economy and Tourism opened the cycling season by publishing two new guides under the motto “A Bicycle Ride through Austria” to support bike-friendly tourist enterprises and to optimise routes. “By recommending new criteria and guidelines, we wish to adjust the available infrastructure more strongly to the needs of bike tourists”, said Minister for Economic Affairs and Tourism Reinhold Mitterlehner.

Austria’s network of cycle routes covers about 11,000 km. 6 routes were selected as the first “quality cycle routes” outside Germany by the General German Bicycle Club. The Danube cycle route from Passau to Vienna, the Drau, Mur, Tauern and Traisental cycle routes were awarded four out of five stars, the Lake Neusiedel bike trail was granted five stars. The print versions of the two guides may be ordered by [e-mail](#) or downloaded from “[Tourism Studies and Publications](#)”.

Cycling also helps to avoid CO2 emissions. The countrywide initiative “Cycling to Work” of the Interest Group Bicycle kicked off in Vienna in 2011 is being continued in 2012. Participants of this programme earn credits on their way to work. The most active bike riders will receive awards. [wien.radelzturarbeit.at](#)

“With the programme ‘climate:active mobile’, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management supports enterprises by providing free counselling and targeted funding. In this way we create the right conditions to make cycling in Austria even more attractive”, said Minister of the Environment Niki Berlakovich.

Carinthia wants to move up to Europe’s top three outdoor destinations

The trilateral long-distance hiking trail comprises 38 sections of 17km each (or 6 hours walking time) The Alpe-Adria Trail under the motto “Hiking in the Garden of Eden” has a total length of 690km. It runs from Muggia near Trieste through Slovenia and Friuli to Carinthia, ending at the Großglockner mountain (or vice versa). The mounting of the trail signs along the Carinthian section of the trail, whose first stage leads from Heiligenblut to Lake Millstatt, will be completed by the end of May 2012. The trail is to become “fully operative” in 2013. The project has been funded by

the Tourism Department of Carinthia. Long-distance hiking is a new global megatrend.

Hiking trail along Semmering Railway

On 5 May 2012 the hiking season along the UNESCO world heritage “Semmering Railway” was opened. The railway route along the Semmering mountain was worked out by Carl Knight of Ghega. Built between 1848 and 1854, Semmering Railway was the first mountain railway. The 41km-long Semmering route has 16 viaducts, 100 arched and railway bridges as well as 15 tunnels. The maximum difference in altitude along the track is 457m, and the highest point on the route is 896m above sea level.

Guided tours are offered on request. They start at the Semmering Railway Station, where an exhibition on the railway’s history is presented, and end with the view on the Semmering Railway which had been depicted on the 20-Schilling banknote. A picnic with musical accompaniment is offered. [www.semmering.at](#)

Schloss Hof

The baroque gem in Lower Austria was renovated for more than 80 million euro. Transformed into a tourist destination, it safeguards about 100 jobs in the local economy. By opening the exhibition “The Making Of Beauty”, Economic Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner and Governor Erwin Pröll celebrated the end of the most important stage of renovation in April.

The revitalisation of the palace “Schloss Hof” is a “successful example of the cooperation between the Federal Republic and Lower Austria”, said Mitterlehner. The Bakers’ Court (former bakery) has not yet been renovated. It will be used as an exhibition space and accommodate artists’ studios. The groundbreaking ceremony was held in the framework of the exhibition opening.

In a next step the palace will be incorporated into “Schloss Schönbrunn Gesellschaft” still in 2012. Combined tickets for Schloss Hof and Schönbrunn Palace will be offered with a view to presenting the former country residence of Prince Eugene of Savoy and Empress Maria Theresa to a larger number of international visitors. After all, the almost unchanged masterpiece of baroque architecture and art is Austria’s largest palace complex in the countryside. The splendid baroque gardens do not only enchant garden lovers (Garden Days: 17 to 20 May 2012) but also attract visitors with culinary delights, parties, children’s events and a season ticket for 2012. [www.schlosshof.at](#)