

NEWS FROM AUSTRIA

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Editorial

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to you, our loyal readers of “News from Austria”. It is therefore all the more regrettable that we have to inform you that this issue of the publication is the last appearing also in English and French. Due to major changes in the usage of media and information services, “News from Austria” will be published only in German in the future.

We thank our non-German-speaking readers for their loyalty and are pleased to announce that the foreign-language services on the website of the Federal Chancellery will be enhanced to keep you informed. As from 1 July 2012 onwards, the Federal Chancellery will publish news in English on the English pages of its website www.bundeskanzleramt.at. The editors.

DOMESTIC POLICY**Federal Chancellor Faymann: “Our economy needs the euro”**

In an interview with the daily “Kurier” (15 June 2012) Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann reaffirmed the importance of the single European currency for Austria and highlighted new ways to tackle the euro crisis. It was the task of politicians to strengthen people’s trust, “fear mongering is very bad”, stated Faymann.

Together with Germany, Austria was one of the soundest countries. “Our economy needs the euro, every third job depends directly or indirectly on exports, e.g. in the car industry”, Faymann argued on the basis of concrete facts. Austria’s car components industry profited enormously from the German sales markets in Southern Europe, where “we earn a major part of our wealth”. Chancellor Faymann called for solidarity: “Occasionally, we should come to the defence of the community”.

According to Faymann, nobody questioned the continued existence of the euro. But now concrete steps had to be taken, e.g. by issuing eurobonds or establishing a debt repayment fund – “we want to have the same instruments as the USA”, said Faymann.

Austria’s sovereignty was not threatened “unless we had no more money”. But as Austria managed its finances properly, it was not affected by interventions. The next measure recommended by the Federal Chancellor was to enable the ECB to buy more government bonds. And he added: “As a final step, we want a common debt management for Europe”.

To this end, the admissible debt had to be defined clearly and subject to rules.

Faymann expected that suitable proposals for a solution would be found at the forthcoming EU summit on growth and employment. Unused funds of the European Commission should to an increasing extent be reallocated to concrete projects. Other measures considered were to issue EU project bonds and to increase funding for the European Investment Bank.

Beauty surgery: better protection for young people

A bill providing for stricter beauty surgery regulations was passed by the Council of Ministers on 12 June 2012. According to the Ministry of Health, the new law will enter into force on 1 January 2013. Its main objective is to protect young people. Beauty surgery without medical indication will in general be prohibited for teens younger than 16 years. Cosmetic surgery may be performed on teenagers aged between 16 and 18 years (by certified specialist surgeons) only after psychological counselling. Moreover, the explicit consent of the parents (or legal guardian) and the patient is required. A waiting period of at least four weeks between giving consent and undergoing surgery has to be observed.

Health reform: agreement in principle between federal government, Länder and social insurance institutions

The federal government, the Länder and the social insurance institutions agreed on the basic principles of a comprehensive reform of the health system. The agreement on a system of management by objectives was presented by Minister of Health Alois Stöger, Minister of Finance Maria Fekter, Upper Austria’s Governor Josef Pühringer (on behalf of the Länder) and Head of the Federation of Austrian Social Insurance Institutions Hansjörg Schelling on 13 June 2012. The key issue is a common system for planning, managing and financing hospitals and private practices to avoid duplication and cut costs. Countrywide healthcare objectives and quality standards will be defined for the first time. Based on the agreement, the increase in healthcare expenditure has to remain below economic growth. Increases in expenditure will be reduced gradually to 3.6% by 2016. This means that the expenditure in the current year has to decrease to 21.87 billion euro (instead of 22 billion euro). The cumulated cost dampening effect is likely to amount to almost 1 billion euro by 2020.

EUROPE ■ INTERNATIONAL**Federal President Fischer attends four-country meeting in Switzerland**

Federal President Heinz Fischer participated in the traditional meeting of the heads of state of Switzerland (Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf), Austria, Liechtenstein (Hereditary Prince Alois of Liechtenstein) as well as Germany (Joachim Gauck) in Chur (Switzerland) on 11 June 2012. European policy was the main topic discussed at their meeting.

The EU Member States still had a long way to go before becoming the “United States of Europe”, stated Fischer. According to his spokeswoman Astrid Salmhofer, the President also emphasised the need to deepen integration and to return to a more matter-of-fact approach in European policy. The “difficult issue Europe” had to be explained in a simpler way in the future to reach the population. But as far as the future of the Union was concerned, the Federal President had an optimistic European outlook”, said Salmhofer.

The next meeting of the heads of the German-speaking states will be held in Austria in 2013. But before that, German Federal President Gauck will pay an official visit to Vienna, announced the Austrian President’s Office.

Federal President Fischer pays state visit to Slovakia

Federal President Heinz Fischer paid a state visit to Slovakia on 5 June 2012. He met with his counterpart Ivan Gasparovic and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico in Bratislava.

After the talks, Fischer informed that the bilateral relations were excellent, only Slovakia’s nuclear policy posed a problem. At European level the two countries held different views regarding Kosovo. As far as other matters were concerned, there was “a high level of agreement” with the new Slovak government led by Prime Minister Fico.

Slovakia tackled the problem of the official recognition of Kosovo (independence in 2008) in a “fairly pragmatic way”. After all, it recognised that there was a border between Serbia and Kosovo, said the Federal President. With regard to nuclear policy, Fischer described the situation as “good co-existence” provided that the fact was taken into account that Slovakia – just like France or Switzerland – could decide independently on its energy mix. Slovakia was, however, aware of the fact that “serious attention” was paid to safety and security issues in Austria. Slovakia had to meet European security standards, stated Fischer.

Hungarian Prime Minister Orban in Vienna

Hungarian Prime Minister Orban travelled to Vienna on 12 June 2012. His official programme included talks with Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger.

At his meeting with Orban on the sidelines of a cultural event (the wrapping of Vienna’s Ringturm by Hungarian artist Laszlo Feher), Faymann stressed the need of cooperating in Europe. Orban called for more diversity in Europe.

Mikl-Leitner: strengthening Schengen and preserving the freedom of travel

The EU Ministers of the Interior agreed on a reform of passport-free travelling within the Schengen area at their meeting in Luxembourg on 7 June 2012. If required due to exceptional circumstances and as a last resort, a new emergency mechanism would be applied, which allowed the re-introduction of border checks for a period of up to two years. The aim was to strengthen Schengen, to preserve the freedom of travel and to guarantee the safety of the EU and the Member States, explained Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger in Nigeria

Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger was Austria’s first leading politician to visit the west African country since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Austria and Nigeria 50 years ago. During his four-day visit (5 to 8 June 2012) Spindelegger met with religious and political representatives, including Nigeria’s head of state Goodluck Jonathan.

A bilateral agreement on the return of illegal refugees was signed. This repatriation agreement was a “starting point for very close cooperation in security issues” between Austria and Nigeria, informed Spindelegger.

Austria supports EU accession of Albania

“Austria fully supports Albania’s efforts to become a member of the EU by the year 2020”, emphasised Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger during the official visit of his Albanian counterpart Edmond Haxhinasto to Vienna on 14 June 2012. The two countries also expressed their willingness to intensify bilateral economic relations.

ECONOMY

Inflation was down to 2.1% in May

The Austrian inflation rate decreased to 2.1% in May (April: 2.3%, March: 2.4%), reaching the lowest level since November 2010. The expenditure group “housing, water and energy” (+3.5%) accounted for almost one third of the inflation rate. The prices of foodstuffs went up by 2.1%, those of fuel surged by 5%. The EU-wide harmonised and comparable inflation rate for Austria was 2.3% – this is below the average rate of the euro-zone countries (2.4%) as well as of the whole EU (2.6%).

Austria’s economy on a growth path despite difficult general setting

The Austrian National Bank (OeNB) expects Austria’s GDP to grow by 0.9% in the current year (December forecast 0.7%) and by 1.7% in 2013 (previous forecasts 1.6%). The Economic Research Institute (Wirtschaftsforschungsinstitut / WIFO) also informed that the Austrian economy had returned to a growth path in the first quarter of 2012. However, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner warned that international developments threatening Austria’s favourable economic trend were increasing and highlighted countermeasures taken for example by the funding bank “Förderbank Austria Wirtschaftsservice”. Its budget for loans, guarantees and subsidies amounted to a total of about one billion euro in the current year: “This will allow us to continue providing well-aimed support for innovation and to prevent a credit crunch despite the turbulent situation in the financial markets and the EU’s stricter regulatory capital requirements for banks.” As a vital growth engine, the export sector also benefited from targeted financial assistance.

Youth Employment Report highlights achievements but also need for action

On 12 June 2012 Minister for Economy and Youth Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner submitted the latest “Report on Youth Employment and Apprenticeship Training in Austria for the period 2010-2011”, stressing that Austria’s performance was excellent by European comparison: “Despite the international financial, debt and economic crisis, Austria is one of the best-performing countries of Europe in terms of youth employment”. It was nevertheless necessary to respond to new challenges: “To meet the economy’s demand for skilled workers on a long-term basis, we have to ensure that vocational training remains attractive, to open

up new target groups for apprenticeship training and decrease the number of drop-outs from training programmes”, affirmed the Minister. The integration of young people with a migration background into the training and employment system was a crucial task. Multilingualism had to be recognised as a competitive advantage enhancing the export performance of the Austrian economy.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Economy developed a new vocational training package to provide additional support for the vocational training programmes of Austrian enterprises.

Government tightens competition and anti-trust law

Austria’s competition and anti-trust law is harmonised with the EU legislation and tightened. The Federal Competition Authority will be given more powers and monitor competition more closely. The leniency programme will be strengthened. Immunity will be granted to chief witnesses giving evidence against a trust. Electricity and gas suppliers will be required to justify prices if they exceed the price level of comparable markets. The scope of the anti-trust law will also be widened. While the law previously applied only to trusts with a high level of market dominance, it will now govern all types of price-fixing arrangements and market restrictions. The decisions of the Restrictive Practices Court will be published. According to Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner and Minister of Justice Beatrix Karl, the anti-trust package is likely to enter into force on 1 October 2012.

New owner of Telekom Austria

Via his telecom group América Móvil, Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim gradually takes over the entire block of shares of 21 percent of investor Ronny Pecik. After the state holding company ÖIAG (28.4 percent), Slim will become the second largest shareholder of Telekom Austria (TA). TA’s market presence in Central and Eastern Europe and its expertise in new technologies sparked the interest of the Mexican group. The response of ÖIAG and Telekom has been favourable, especially as Slim expressed his commitment to the “business location Austria” and plans to keep the headquarters of the group (and its Eastern European branch) in Vienna. TA chief Hannes Ametsreiter is looking forward to cooperating with “one of the most successful telecommunications enterprises in the world”.

EDUCATION ■ MEDIA ■ SCIENCE**New enrolment period enhances planning certainty for universities**

Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle, the Austrian National Union of Students as well as the Teaching Forum of the University Conference are pleased about the successful outcome of their negotiations. A new university enrolment period will take effect next autumn. The general deadline of all Austrian universities for admitting first-year students to bachelor or diploma study programmes will end on 5 September 2012. A clearly defined list of exceptions will be applied in cases of hardship. “The new enrolment deadline facilitates the planning processes of the universities, and this of course will also benefit the students”, said the Minister. For detailed information see:

www.studienbeginn.at

Research and Technology Report 2012 documents increase in funding

Minister of Innovation Doris Bures, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner as well as Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle presented the Austrian Research and Technology Report 2012 on 12 June 2012. The key findings may be summed up as follows: Thanks to increasing investments in research and development, Austria’s research ratio stands at 2.8 percent of the GDP, which is still significantly above the EU and OECD average. The report praises the clearly intensified cooperation between research and economy, the dynamic development of Austria’s patent activities as well as the high number of university spin-offs.

Doris Bures: 1 million euro for “regional talents”

“We want to kindle the enthusiasm for research and technology in children all over Austria”, said Minister of Innovation Doris Bures when the jury of the “regional talents programme” of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology announced its first decision. It was worthwhile to strengthen and stimulate children’s interest in the natural sciences and technology. This was not only important with regard to the children’s future occupational and educational choices but also with regard to Austria’s position as a business location as the business and research communities depended on creative future generations, stressed Doris Bures.

The “regional talent projects” selected by the jury will be launched in Carinthia, Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Tyrol, Vienna and Styria at the beginning of the next academic year. Children and young people will be able to try themselves in the role of researchers. The methods chosen are as varied and exciting as the subjects, ranging from energy saving and cancer research to aviation technology. For more details on the regional talents programme see: www.ffg.at/talente.

Austria participates in new high-performance telescope (E-ELT) project

Austria participates in the new high-performance telescope project “European Extremely Large Telescope” (E-ELT). Subject to the final approval of some ESO member states, the E-ELT will be erected in the Chilean Atacama desert with a view to opening up new vistas in research. “The so-called eye on the universe will be a valuable tool for researchers of different disciplines, adding a new dimension to their work. It gathers 15 times more light than the largest telescope existing today”, stated Minister of Science and Research Karlheinz Töchterle. The E-ELT will consist of more than 900 mirror segments and is expected to start operating in 2021 at the earliest. The European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere (ESO) was founded in Paris in 1962. It has seats in Munich-Garching (Germany) and Santiago (Chile). Austria joined the organisation in 2008. Since then numerous Austrian researchers in the field of astronomy, astrophysics, particle astrophysics, theoretical physics, mathematics and computer science have enjoyed the advantages of ESO membership.

“Nation Branding Austria“: a compact image based on diversity

At the opening event of the “Competitive Identity Project” on 11 June 2012, Secretary of State Josef Ostermayer stressed the federal government’s goal to improve Austria’s “good 13th rank in the Nation Brands Index“. Ostermayer stated that Internet played a major role in this context: “In the nation branding project a unique and up-to-date national design will be created for Austria, which will strengthen our country at international level. Discussing the ‘brand Austria’, we also have to take the Internet into account. To ensure the success of the ‘brand Austria’, it is of crucial importance to position and publicise it in the worldwide web.”

CULTURE**Spotlight on Styria:
"Regionale12"**

24 contemporary art and culture projects are presented under the motto "City.Country. River" in 20 municipalities of the Murau region in Upper Styria (22 June to 22 July 2012).

The Regionale12 festival programme offers guided walks through the "Acoustic City Murau". At the St. Lambrecht Benedictine Abbey artist Oliver Ressler stages the show "Occupy Everything", in which he explores different ways of co-existence. An art installation in the Krakau valley focuses on sustainability. The artists' duo Köbberling/Kaltwasser from Berlin designed a giant tree from recycled material in the Wood Museum of St. Ruprecht/Murau. On the Frojach waste dump site the Graz-based Theater im Bahnhof delves into the dreams of private house builders in the "Cemetery of One-Family Houses" against the background of stories from the region. The festival comes to an end with the world premiere of a composition by Klaus Lang: Eight brass bands and eight choirs will participate in "The Breathing of Time" on Lake Etrach. www.regionale12.at

Neuberg Culture Days

The "Culture Days" taking place in Neuberg in the Styrian Mürz valley from 14 to 29 July 2012 present organ concerts, piano recitals and chamber music, including Joseph Haydn's "The Creation" at the Neuberg Minster. The also offers a unique blend of literature and music (texts by Thomas Bernhard meet with the "Goldberg Variations", Michael Heltau reads "I Brauch kan Pflanz"). Jazz will be fused with traditional Viennese music (Roland Neuwirth and Trude Holzer). The exhibition "Permanent is Nowhere" by Birgit Sauer is dedicated to art historian Walter Koschatzky. www.neuberger-kulturtag.org

styriarte 2012: FamilyPersons

While styriarte had focused on Johann Sebastian Bach in its first year (1985), "FamilyPersons" will be in the limelight of the 2012 edition. After all, many musical geniuses would never have become what we think they became without their families. styriarte tells us stories about the joys and sorrows of families, e.g. about Johann Sebastian Bach, who came from a vast dynasty of musicians, and his children; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whose father Leopold planned the career of his son with military precision and was alarmed by his son's efforts to become independent; or Johann

Strauß and his fiercely competitive family of musicians. The festival's aim is to demonstrate how private matters are turned into art and that even the sacred is based on private matters.

In the Catholic tradition Virgin Mary experiences the death of her son Jesus as a very personal tragedy, allowing the people to share the passion at a very human level. Antonín Dvořák understood it that way when he composed his great "Stabat mater" in 1877 after the death of his three children. Nikolaus Harnoncourt turns the spotlight of styriarte 2012 on this masterpiece: a family story that is not only about personal mourning but offers comfort and hope. On 22 June 2012 styriarte – <http://styriarte.com> – is opened with Humperdinck (from "Hänsel und Gretel"), Offenbach ("Orpheus in the Underworld"), Schubert and Strauß. Guided theme tours through the historic centre of Graz are organised on Saturdays. On the first Saturday (23 June) a great music event will be staged at Eggenberg Palace providing in-depth insights into the festival's "family concepts". styriarte ends at Helmut List Hall on 22 July 2012: Jordi Savall embarks on a journey to the "golden age" of British music and the deadly feud between the Tudor and Stuart families.

Neue Galerie in Graz: Pistoletto

Neue Galerie of Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz showcases 58 early works (1950s to 1970s) of Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto (closing on 14 October 2012). Besides self-portraits ("Mirror Paintings"), in which the onlooker becomes part of the piece of art, the representative of Arte Povera created acrylic glass objects, silkscreen prints and videos. The gallery also presents his "Minus Objects", for which Pistoletto playfully arranged various objects collected and found. Pistoletto founded the trans-disciplinary network "Cittadellarte", with which Kunsthaus Graz will mount an exhibition during the festival "steirischer herbst". www.museum-joanneum.at

European Weeks in Passau

The transnational festival "European Weeks" founded in 1952 will be a manifestation for a Europe of peace and freedom (29 June to 29 July 2012). In view of the geographical situation of Passau, it has been an obvious idea to involve the whole region in the festival. Besides Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic have contributed to the concept. Under the motto "To the beautiful blue Danube", the festival celebrates its 60th anniversary with a varied programme in stunning venues.

The commissioned work of Austrian composer Alfred Huber “Východ – Lichter zeigen an den Tag“ (Wiener Concert-Verein under Alicja Mounk and others) will be performed at the opening. Further highlights of Austria’s festival contribution are as follows: other concerts by Wiener Concert-Verein, which was founded in 1987 by members of the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra and is presented by the festival as the “orchestra in residence”, a performance of the 7th Symphony of Anton Bruckner by the Bruckner Orchester Linz conducted by Dennis Russell Davies (5 July), the “Dream Day in Upper Austria” (7 July) showcasing the region’s diversity (including its natural history, cuisine and music), “A Summer Night’s Dream” by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (lyrics based on William Shakespeare, read by Klaus Maria Brandauer, piano duo Andreas Grau and Götz Schumacher) as well as a picnic concert given by Art of Brass Vienna. www.ew-passau.de

22nd Vienna Jazz Festival

Two of the most eminent jazz pianists – Keith Jarrett and Herbie Hancock – as well as more singers than ever before are awaited in Vienna between 25 June and 9 July 2012. “Jazz Fest Wien” is ushered in with performances by Harri Stojka Express and soul singer Charles Bradley, who was enthusiastically acclaimed by the Viennese audience in 2011. The series of events hosted by the Vienna State Opera is opened with a concert by Eric Burdon and the Animals (1 July) – followed by Bobby McFerrin (2 July), Melody Gardot and Gregory Porter (4 July), the Herbie Hancock Quartet (5 July) and Rufus Wainwright / Joe Bonamassa (6 July). Keith Jarrett will perform together with bassist Gary Peacock and percussionist Jack DeJohnette at Konzerthaus on 8 July – a highlight of this year’s festival. Performances by domestic musicians include Wolfgang Muthspiel with “Vienna Naked“ (30 July, WUK), Georg Breinschmid and Thomas Gansch (26 June) as well as the Travel Image Quintet with a “Tribute to Joe Zawinul“ (6 July). Eagerly awaited performances will be given by John Scofield and Marc Ribot (7 July, City Hall) or Mike Stern with the Richard Bona Quartet and Dave Weckl (3/4 July, Porgy & Bess), acclaimed young star Ambrose Akinmusire (9 July, Porgy & Bess), Mother’s Finest, A Soulful Night Of Keys as well as Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings. The traditional Fernwärme Open Air Concert (30 June) will feature trumpeter Till Brönner, Count Basic and Jazzkantine. www.jazzvienna.org

44th Adult Education TV Prize awarded

The prizes granted by the Working Community of Educational Facilities, the Federation of Libraries, the Federation of Austrian Adult Education Centres and the Institute for Economic Development (WIFI) were awarded at Vienna University of Technology on 5 June 2012. The prize in the category “TV film” was conferred on director Wolfgang Murnberger and scriptwriters Tac Romey, Don Schubert and Rupert Henning for their integration comedy “Kebab mit alles” (with Andreas Vitasek and Tim Seyfi). The prize in the category “documentary” went to the matter-of-fact and informative “Projekt Jugoslawien” by Radovan Grahovac and Matija Serdar (Okto TV), while Franz Grabner earned the prize for the “best series” with his format “dok.film”.

At the TV Prize award ceremony, the 15th Axel Corti Prize was handed over to Barbara Rett, a moderator of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF).

New head of Vienna Kunsthalle

On 14 June executive city councillor Mailath-Pokorny presented the experienced exhibition maker and art manager Nicolaus Schafhausen as Kunsthalle’s new artistic head. Ursula Hühnel-Benischek will be in charge of administration. At a press conference Schafhausen said that he planned to enhance the visibility of Kunsthalle and to raise public awareness of this art institution.

ÖBB show: railways in the NS period

With the exhibition “Repressed Memories – The Railways in Austria during the National Socialist Period 1938–1945“ the Austrian Railways (ÖBB) wish to shed light on the darkest chapter of their corporate history and to confront this period on the occasion of their 175th anniversary. The show can be visited at Praterstern 3 (2nd district of Vienna) until the end of September.

Exhibition about displacement of Carinthian Slovenes

The displacement of more than 1,000 Carinthian Slovenes by the Nazis is the theme of the exhibition “The Deportation of Slovene Families from Carinthia in 1942” at the Regional Archives in Klagenfurt. Additional records from Carinthia were added to the show conceived by the League of Human Rights and presented in Vienna already in 2003. It opens its doors during the Carinthian Slovenes’ 20th Cultural Week (until 6 July 2012).

ENVIRONMENT ■ SUSTAINABILITY ■ TOURISM

EU Commission acknowledges Austria's approach to renewable energies

The strategy paper "Renewable Energy: a major player in the European energy market" acknowledged Austria's approach to promoting green electricity. "An efficient and market-oriented further development of renewable energies speeds up the turnaround in energy policy. Thanks to our Eco-Electricity Act, we increase the share of renewable energies in the electricity consumption to 85 percent by 2020. By gradually decreasing subsidies, we also take clear steps towards a stronger market orientation of the individual green technologies", stressed Minister for Economy and Energy Reinhold Mitterlehner.

According to the Minister, the aim was to integrate renewable energies into the EU-wide energy markets and to gradually reduce subsidies. Programmes promoting their further development would be a priority even after 2020. Stable conditions would strengthen the security of supply and help to expand green energies, emphasised Mitterlehner.

Environment Promotion Report 2011: Austria relies on sustainable growth

In the Environment Promotion Report for the year 2011, Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich underlined the economic importance of investments in environmental and climate protection. In this context, he also highlighted the fact that subsidies helped to promote energy autarchy, which Austria is to achieve by 2050. "Financial support for energy from sustainable resources and increased energy efficiency are prerequisites for the country's supply with domestically generated energy", explained Berlakovich. Hence, energy efficiency was a new priority of his ministry.

According to Berlakovich, goals were to change over to LED lighting systems and efficient electrical power generators as well as to promote the thermal rehabilitation of buildings, for which the Ministries of Environment and Economy had made available 100 million euro under their "thermal rehabilitation campaign" in 2011. This had triggered a total investment volume of more than 800 million euro. "Environmental protection is an important growth and job engine", said Berlakovich. In 2011 more than 12,000 green jobs were created.

Based on the report, subsidies for 23,587 environmental projects had been approved in 2011. A present value of subsidies totalling

350.5 million euro had triggered environment-friendly investments of about 2 million euro.

A third nature park for Upper Austria

After Mühlviertel and the Alpine foothills, Upper Austria will open a new nature park in the Alpine region. The respective resolution of the regional government was announced on 13 June 2012. With a total surface of 77 square kilometres, the "Attersee-Traunsee Nature Park" is situated in the municipalities of Altmünster, Weyregg, Steinbach, Schörfling and Aurach/Hongar. The aim of this decision is to preserve habitats with ecologically important landscapes.

"Austrian Innovation Prize for Tourism" – submission deadline: 26 June 2012

The Ministry of Tourism and the Länder created the "Austrian Innovation Prize for Tourism" (ÖIT). The submission deadline for proposals concerning innovative, bookable products or programmes of the Austrian tourist and leisure industry ends on 26 June 2012. The prize is awarded for "new products and programmes that set an example, make a lasting contribution to quality improvements and increase the regional value added", informed Minister for Tourism Reinhold Mitterlehner.

The ÖIT is awarded in two categories: for individual enterprises as well as cooperation projects between enterprises and tourist entities, tourist associations or service providers with ties to the tourist sector. The prize money amounts to 10,000 euro in each category.

<http://bmwfj.gv.at/Tourismus/TourismuspolitischeAktivitäten/Seiten/ÖsterreichischerInnovationspreisTourismus.aspx>