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- 17% - ... savings accounts.
- 8% - ... properties.
- 3% - ... stocks.
- 2% - ... government bonds.
- 1% - ... objects of art.
- 11% - ... pillows crammed full of cash.
- 11% - ... a well-considered mixture.
- 47% - ... something else. / I don't know.

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**FPÖ under fire after trip to Grozny**



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The Freedom Party (FPÖ) has been harshly criticised for meeting with Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.

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## Set up tax on financial transactions soon, says Katzian



© SPÖ / Lehmann

The head of the Association of Private Employees (GPA-djp) has called for a quick introduction of a tax on financial transactions.

Social Democrat (SPÖ) Wolfgang Katzian said today (Thurs) his party's team of ministers should try to agree with the board of the People's Party (ÖVP) about setting up such a levy in the coming years. He told the *Kurier*: 'A tax on financial transactions must be a discussion topic now as talks concern a savings package with effects until 2016.' Katzian claimed that there is widespread accord about such a measure in Europe. The politically muscular unionist said all European countries but Great Britain were ready to implement such a measure. SPÖ Financial Affairs Councillor Andreas Schieder recently stressed that the Austrian and European Social Democrats were applying 'an extreme amount of pressure' at meetings in Brussels to introduce financial

transactions taxation.

Public opinion research agency Oekonsult found last month that 89.1 per cent of Austrians approved the idea of a tax on financial transactions, a measure more and more politicians see as a reasonable measure against reckless stock market speculation and risky financial deals.

Especially left-wingers call for an introduction of a tax on financial transactions. However, it was France's conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy who announced in a recent interview on French television that his country would set up such a taxation measure in August. This step would make France the first country in Europe with a fee of that kind.

SPÖ Chancellor Werner Faymann, who has called for a tax on financial transactions across the European Union (EU) or within the Eurozone for years, welcomed Sarkozy's decision. Faymann told radio station Ö1 he assigned a team of experts to check how much money Austria could generate by creating a charge for financial transactions.

Speaking about the current austerity measures negotiations within the SPÖ-ÖVP government, Katzian stressed today he was not informed about the details. The coalition plans to finalise the talks within the coming days.

Katzian claimed he learned about alleged measures only by reading the papers. The GPA-djp boss admitted that an increase of Austria's tax on assets would be linked with immense political friction, but also said: 'The rich must contribute.'

Katzian told the *Kurier* that the wealthiest Austrians must be asked to pay higher taxes. He said: 'You cannot argue towards a shopkeeper why she has to do their bit in this concern &ndash; in contrast to the multimillionaire.'

Speaking to magazine *profil*, Katzian labelled higher taxes on assets as a 'question of fairness.' The president of Austrian Bundesliga football club FK Austria Vienna said: 'I do not begrudge anyone's assets but they also have to participate.'

The Austrian government decided around one and a half months ago to increase its efforts in restoring the state budget. SPÖ and ÖVP plan to reduce Austria's budget deficit and debts significantly by 2017 to fulfil the EU's criteria on member countries' financial situation by 2020. The Social Democrats are expected to call for an end to tax privileges for farmers while the ÖVP may have the final say on taxes on inheritance and assets. The conservative party of Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger is against both measures

while the Labour Chamber (AK) and the Federal Trade Union (ÖGB) keep campaigning for an introduction.

### **Pühringer rejects U-turn on rightist ball**



© www.neumayr.cc

Young Social Democrats (SPÖ) have appealed to Upper Austrian Governor Josef Pühringer not to attend the Burschenbundball in Linz this Saturday. The pressure on the head of the Upper Austrian branch of the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) increased following controversies regarding last month's Viennese Corporations Ball. The event is widely considered as a get-together of Europe's right-wing extremists. Anti-fascism campaigners claim that many guests of the ball deny the Holocaust.

The Vienna Corporations Ball is co-organised by a member of the Freedom Party (FPÖ). The right-wing

faction's boss, Heinz-Christian Strache, caused a heated discussion by claiming that what occurred ahead of the event bore resemblance to the Reichskristallnacht. Shops and synagogues across Germany and Austria were destroyed and set on fire on the Night of Broken Glass of 9 November 1938.

Strache stressed a few days after the ball that he had made the remark under the impression of crying women who were physically and verbally attacked by protesters outside Vienna's Hofburg Palace. The SPÖ branded Strache's approach to historical fact as 'absurd' while the ÖVP urged him to 'apologise, at least'.

Now left-wingers appeal on Pühringer not to attend this weekend's Burschenbundball. Representatives of the SPÖ's youth and student groups in Upper Austria said yesterday (Weds) Pühringer would legitimate right-wing extremism by showing up at the bash of student fraternities with far-right background.

Dozens of people joined a demonstration in the centre of Linz, the provincial capital of Upper Austria, yesterday. Hundreds are expected to take to the streets against the Burschenbundball on Saturday. Pühringer argued that the governor's visit of the ball had a long

tradition. He said this was the reason why he decided not to cancel his attendance. The ÖVP Upper Austria leader promised to stay away from the ball in the future if he noticed any kind of right-wing tendencies at this year's edition.

Meanwhile, Franz Vranitzky said he felt 'confirmed' in his long-lasting anti-FPÖ policy by the most recent statements of Strache and Franz Obermayr, a member of the FPÖ's delegation in the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg, France. Obermayr said that there had been a 'pogrom atmosphere' outside Hofburg Palace on the night of the Vienna Corporations Ball. Viennese police said five guests of the event and three officers were injured in altercations with activists.

Vranitzky, who stepped down after 11 years as Austrian chancellor in 1997, told Die Presse last week that Obermayr's statement was 'proof of a lack of historical knowledge & or historical impertinence.' Vranitzky kept ruling out a cooperation of his party with the FPÖ when Jörg Haider, who died in 2008, became chairman in 1986.

Hundreds of people from all over the continent attended a peaceful demonstration against xenophobia and fascism in Vienna on the night the ball took place before violent activists gained

the upper hand of the scenery. Newspapers reported that hundreds of left-wing campaigners, most of them German, came to the Austrian capital to protest against ball guests' attendance of the event.

## FPÖ under fire after trip to Grozny



© FPÖ

The Freedom Party (FPÖ) has been harshly criticised for meeting with Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.

It emerged yesterday (Weds) that a delegation of FPÖ officials travelled to Chechen capital Grozny to meet with the autocratic leader of the country which still suffers from the effects of several military conflicts and a dramatic civil war. FPÖ foreign affairs spokesman Johannes Hübner said his team's intention was to make Chechnya a safer place. Speaking to a Chechen TV station, the member of the Austrian parliament (MP) said he was 'impressed' by the Caucasian country's

progress.

The Austrian foreign ministry branded the FPÖ's decision to travel to Chechnya as 'absurd'. A spokesman for the ministry underlined yesterday (Weds) that the right-wing opposition party failed to inform Austrian authorities about their meeting with Chechen politicians and businessmen in Grozny. The foreign ministry also said that the journey of the FPÖ delegation was 'politically irrelevant'.

Greens MP Peter Pilz said the FPÖ acted 'irresponsibly'. Pilz said a parliamentary commission must investigate the background of the trip. He called on the FPÖ to clarify whether it financially benefited from the gathering with Kadyrov. Pilz said yesterday it seemed that the FPÖ was seeking new friends after its partnership with Muammar al-Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein.

Late FPÖ leader Jörg Haider, who founded the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) seven years ago, met with the late Libyan dictator several times. Haider, who died in a car accident in 2008, also travelled to Baghdad to meet with Hussein, the late leader of Iraq. The trip caused worldwide outcry while some observers claim that the Austrian right-winger may have spoken with a lookalike of the infamous dictator of the war-shattered Arabian country.

There are rumours that Gaddafi and Hussein agreed to finance several FPÖ election campaigns. Political magazines claim that envoys of the feared dictators travelled to Austria with tens of millions of US dollars in cash following their superiors' gatherings with Haider.

Hübner and FPÖ Vienna whip Johann Gudenus &ndash; who was also part of the FPÖ delegation &ndash; said they agreed with Kadyrov and his team about the creation of a cultural association for Chechen refugees in Austria. The Austrian right-wing politicians said the planned club should encourage them to return to their home country. Gudenus said: 'We were able to convince ourselves that Kadyrov would not persecute them.'

Around 24,000 Chechens are currently living in Austria. Many of them fear being ordered to leave the country again as authorities often need years to decide about whether refugees should be granted political asylum. The Austrian interior ministry said its aim was to shorten the time these procedures lasted to take some pressure off people looking after asylum seekers in refugee centres. Many of these institutions are constantly over-occupied.

News that a group of FPÖ officials met with Kadyrov, who is a political protégé of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir

Putin, follows FPÖ leader Heinz-Christian Strache's decision to send FPÖ Vienna official David Lasar to Libya during the latest violent conflict between the North African country's regime and representatives of its repressed opposition. Lasar said he had met with high-ranking government officials but also rebels in an attempt to bring peace to Libya.

### Woman and child run over in Vienna



A woman and child have died in a road accident in Vienna, Austria. The lorry driver was making a right turn when he drove into a group of pedestrians leaving a 59-year-old and a 12-year-old dead. The mother of the school girl was left with serious injuries.

The emergency services arrived at the scene of the accident at around 11.20 yesterday (Weds) to find a woman stuck under the front left wheel of a large lorry and a girl stuck beneath the rear axle. Doctors did all they could to help the victims but they stood no chance against the huge vehicle. The mother of the 12-year-old and friend of the

59-year-old were left with a broken lower leg and flown to hospital.

According to a witness statement the lights were green at the crossing when the three women crossed the street. The 26-year-old driver of the lorry, who is thought to have possibly have been blinded by the low winter sun, did not see the pedestrians coming. 'The driver was in complete shock and has not yet been questioned,' said police spokesman Roman Hahslinger. The breathalyser test carried out on the driver proved negative and investigations into the real cause of the fatal accident is now being carried out.

### SPÖ sees smaller parliament as key signal



© SPÖ / Lehmann

The general secretary of the Social Democrats (SPÖ) has argued his support for a reduction of the size of the parliament.

Günther Kräuter told newspaper Die Presse today (Thurs) that slashing the number of seats by 18 to 165 'would

increase people's acceptance for the austerity package'. Kräuter said it was of great importance that politicians made clear that they were not scared of carrying out cutbacks affecting their professional environment.

Kräuter admitted that such a reduction may not occur in the near future due to various technical and bureaucratic issues, but also said that the government should formulate a mandatory declaration of intent. Kräuter added that another important aspect of a possible reduction of the number of members of the federal parliament (MPs) was to avoid a limitation of the opposition's rights.

Styrian SPÖ Governor Franz Voves and Lower Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) Governor Erwin Pröll recently spoke out in favour of such a step. Pröll also suggested considering a reform of the duties and responsibilities of the federal president. He was harshly criticised by constitutional experts for this appeal.

Voves said the federal council (Bundesrat) should be reduced as well. The head of the Styrian Social Democrats suggested lowering the number of members from 62 to 52. Experts think that five million Euros could be saved a year with a smaller parliament and Bundesrat &ndash; a comparably low sum considering the

SPÖ-ÖVP administration's willingness to lower costs by 10 billion Euros or more by 2017.

The Greens said appeals to reduce the number of MPs were nothing but populism. Barbara Prammer, the Social Democratic president of the parliament, is sceptical as well. However, Prammer generally welcomed the discussion about a reform of the Bundesrat. The former women's minister admitted that current regulations kept the federal council from acting efficiently.

SPÖ and ÖVP may focus on a reform of the parliament after having finished the current savings package negotiations. The government coalition is pressurised to accelerate its cost reduction strategy due to Austria's exploding debts. Trying to lower the number of MPs could boost their popularity after following the expected bad news for pensioners and public servants. Both groups are bracing for drastic cutbacks in the coming years. The government coalition might identify a restructure process of the parliament as its chief task of the next months as the parties must fear significant losses in next year's general election. The SPÖ claimed 29.3 per cent in the most recent federal ballot in 2008, down from 35.3 per cent in 2006. The ÖVP garnered 34.2 per cent in 2006 before its share dropped to 26 per cent.

The right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) managed to do 6.5 per cent better in 2008 when it won 17.5 per cent than in 2006. The Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) bagged 10.7 per cent in the latest federal vote (2006: 4.1 per cent). The Green Party suffered a loss of 0.6 per cent from 2006 to 2008 when it garnered 10.4 per cent of the votes.

### Brothel for the homeless in Vienna



© abcpix.net

Homeless people are queuing up for free rooms in an Austrian brothel after owner Peter Laskaris said it would be unfair not to do everything he could during the current cold spell.

Laskaris, owner of the Red Rooms Laufhaus in the Austrian capital Vienna, has opened his door to the homeless as temperatures of minus 20 hit the city.

He is offering 10 people a night a bed in his brothel for free, including a hot shower and a hot meal.

But he added: 'Other services are not included.'

He added: 'We are not really doing much business in the current cold weather anyway and it is the school holidays - a lot of people are off away with their families. Lots of our rooms are empty and it seemed a shame not to use them for a good cause.'

'In these cold temperatures nobody should be left out on the streets.'

He said that every room has a bed and a private shower and each guest will get clean bedding each day and fresh towels. He said: 'I have told staff to make sure that the ten rooms are reserved for homeless people. I don't want anyone out in the cold.'

And he added that it had been so popular that he was now in talks with other brothels in Vienna to open their doors to the homeless. He said: 'The homeless shelters are completely full. People need a warm place to stay. Giving away 10 rooms means that we only have five rooms remaining in our brothel and these are running as normal. None of my goals are complaining &ndash; they will have a lot of sympathy for the homeless. 'We have security staff here anyway but it's been no problem &ndash; everyone has taken up the offer has been very grateful to have a warm roof over their heads.'

### Deep-freeze snacks for orangutans in Schönbrunn



© Schönbrunn Zoo

The lucky orangutans who take up residence in Europe's oldest zoo have been indulging in a twice weekly take-away. Despite the trees in Schönbrunn Zoo in Vienna, Austria now being completely bare the furry friends have fresh branches and leaves delivered twice a week.

For the first time, the leaves of the oak, maple and ash trees as well as native shrubs were put in the deep freeze this year. 'In summer the zoo keepers collected small branches and plants in cooperation with the Vienna forest department and these were then chopped up and put in the freezer in the zoo. This means that the monkeys don't have to go without their favourite snack over the winter', explained Zoo Director Dagmar Schratte.

Throughout the winter fresh twigs appear on the menus of the four orangutans every day. In their home of Borneo, leaves make up one main meal of the animal on a daily basis and it is important to mirror that here. Although the twigs are mere healthy snacks in comparison with sweet fruit, they still

provide a welcome activity. 'The zoo keepers spread the twigs around the entire enclosure so the monkeys have to look for them. Our male Vladimir tends to steal large bundles of the sticks but Nonja is quite content chewing on the leaves,' Schratte said.

The remaining branches are then used in the evening when the orangutans use them to build a nest, just as they would in the wild.

### **Austrian woman takes legal action against silicon implant company**



A woman from Vienna, Austria, who received silicone breast implants from French firm PIP, has appealed to the Austrian Consumer Information Association (VKI) for help. The woman plans to take legal action against the company who made the suspect implants.

The French government advised at the end of last year that all women who had received the implants from the company should have them removed after health officials discovered several cases of cancer in patients with the silicone

implants from PIP. The French health minister later shunned these fears but suggested removal of the implant merely as a preventative measure. Boss of the company, Jean-Claude Mas now faces charges of bodily harm.

'I want to get justice for the pain and suffering that I have gone through,' explained Katharina H from Austria. The 32-year-old woman got her implants in the Czech Republic and is one of the first women to come forward to the VKI in order to claim compensation.

'At present we have five women who have come forward to VKI with implants from Poly Implant Prothese based in France,' said chief of VKI-legal department, Peter Kolba.

PIP however is unable to provide compensation for the damages and suffering caused by their faulty implants as they went bankrupt in May 2009. According to French Law the appeal from Katharina H. and other Austrian victims, who could receive millions in compensation, can only be carried out against insurers Allianz.

'Having spoken with French and German colleagues, we are confident that we can win in a case under liability law,' said Kolba.

The VKI is now looking for more victims on behalf of the Minister for Social and Consumer protection, Rudolf

Hundstofer. 'We are in the phase of collecting data. I hope that many more women file reports,' said Katharina H.

### WKO boss wants pension age hike incentives



© www.neumayr.cc

Federal Economy Chamber (WKO) President Christoph Leitl has identified attempts to raise the average retirement age as the key issue regarding Austria's budget.

Leitl told radio station Ö1 yesterday (Weds) the Austrian government of Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP) must create a new system which encourages people to work longer. Leitl said men's average retirement age must rise by four years to 62 soon. Such a step would mean Austrians are getting closer to fulfilling labour laws which say men must work until aged 65. Work regulations also have it that women should not retire before turning 60. However, the country's average retirement age for

women is 57.5 years at the moment.

The WKO boss rejected fears that the economy was not prepared for employees. He underlined the urgent demand for high-skilled workers and trainees. Leitl said the labour market would manage to create circumstances which allowed people to work longer than before. He appealed to the government to create a political frame which guaranteed that later retirement was financially more attractive than an early farewell to work. Leitl said those interested in working longer than others must also be rewarded sufficiently after retirement while people quitting before the regular retirement age should accept lower pensions.

Austria has the lowest unemployment rate in Europe at 4.1 per cent but statistics also show that only 42 per cent of Austrians aged between 55 and 65 have a job. Sweden is the European Union's (EU) role model in this regard at 70 per cent with Germany in second place (58 per cent). Leitl stressed yesterday that any kind of reform of the pension system must consider people's individual lifestyles and preferences. Experts suggest to concentrate on providing health checks and sports courses to employees of all ages to help them stay in the labour market as long as possible. Some researchers think elderly

people should be allowed to work only three or four days a week.

The WKO has a strong influence on decision-making procedures in the ÖVP while the policies of the Labour Chamber (AK) and the Federal Trade Union (ÖGB) are normally not ignored by the SPÖ board. ÖGB President Erich Foglar suggested laws should force firms to employ older people. Foglar claimed a legal measure may be needed to raise the number of older employees since most enterprises would ignore recommendations and initiatives focusing on voluntary participation.

Speaking about the current austerity package negotiations between SPÖ and ÖVP, Foglar criticised that new claims about how much money must be saved in the coming years were leaking every day. He called on the coalition for precise information &ndash; and warned from increasing the tax burden on workers and the middle class. The political leaders of Austria's nine provinces are also demanding further facts. Reports have it that talks between the federal government and regional lawmakers about how strongly the provinces must tighten their belts in the next years will take more time than initially scheduled by SPÖ and ÖVP.

Only on Monday, ÖVP pensioners' association head Andreas Khol revealed

that ÖVP chairman and Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger summoned the federal board of the party for the same evening. Khol explained that Spindelegger hoped having finalised the negotiations with SPÖ, ÖGB and the provincial governors by then. The ex-ÖVP whip said the savings package would probably be presented 'in six to seven days' time'.

The Austrian budget deficit has soared to 72.2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) over the years while the state's debts exploded to 215 billion Euros. Austria is forced to offer increasing interest rates to investors interested in buying government bonds because of these developments. The pressure on the coalition to act rose dramatically last month when Standard & Poor's (S&P) downgraded Austria from the best possible estimation of AAA by one grade to AA+. Moody's and Fitch, the world's other leading rating agencies, confirmed their AAA rating for the country.

### Schlecker says Austrian jobs are safe



© www.schlecker.com

The son of Schlecker founder Anton

Schlecker has claimed that the company has no plans to sell its Austrian affiliate. Lars Schlecker said in Vienna yesterday (Weds) that Schlecker Austria was doing better than any of the other subsidiary companies of the German drugstore chain. 'Austria is our best country. A sale is out of the question,' he stressed.

Lars and his sister Meike Schlecker manage the company their father established in 1975. Schlecker announced last month it decided to start controlled bankruptcy proceedings to avoid a sudden collapse. The enterprise runs 7,000 shops in Germany, 930 in Austria and hundreds more in six other countries across Europe.

Schlecker said yesterday the plan was to keep operating with nearly unchanged capacities in Poland, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy as well &ndash; but refused to comment when being asked whether Schlecker Austria could survive on its own if its mother firm went bust.

Schlecker explained the plan was to keep reshaping the image and design of Schlecker Austria branches to let them appear more modern and up to date. He explained that around 30 of the stores in Austria may close down shortly nevertheless.

A new poll by Linz-based public opinion group Imas shows that

Schlecker has lost customers in the past three years while Austrian top dog leader Bipa managed to increase its leadership. Bipa is part of German Rewe Group's Rewe International branch. The company manages 560 Bipa stores all over Austria. Leading supermarket chain Billa, megastore group Merkur and discounter Penny are also affiliated with Rewe International.

DM reportedly managed to get closer to Bipa recently but the Imas check discloses that the firm suffered between 2008 and 2011 as far as customer figures are concerned. Imas said the number of shoppers buying household products and cosmetics at Müller shops was on the rise. However, the German company &ndash; which focuses on running large stores &ndash; is still fourth in Austria.

Lars Schlecker's sister dismissed allegations that her family were still wealthy. Meike Schlecker told German media last week: 'There is nothing left.' The businesswoman added that her family had invested millions of Euros of private assets into the firm in the past few years. Business newspapers are speculating that the Schlecker family may try to stash their assets into accounts and into foundations to protect them from the demands of their firm's creditors.

In related news, Zielpunkt chief Jan

Satek revealed he decided to buy the supermarket chain he has managed since 2010. There are 300 Zielpunkt branches in Austria. Satek said he paid a 'seven-digit figure' for the enterprise which has a workforce level of 3,000. The German entrepreneur said he cooperated with two other investors who wished to remain anonymous.

### Price check confirms AUA staff's friendly fire complaints



© Austrian Airlines

Austrian Airlines (AUA) employees' representatives feel confirmed in their criticism of Lufthansa as a price check reveals that the Viennese airline's German mother company offers cheaper connections.

Comparison by online platform Travel Express shows that a ticket for a Lufthansa flight to Indira Gandhi International Airport (DEL) in Delhi, India, cost around 500 Euros less than a ticket for a flight operated by AUA. The Lufthansa connection features one stop at an airport in Europe while AUA offers nonstop connections, according to Austrian business newspapers' reports from today (Thurs).

AUA unionists recently claimed their employer would not get back in the

black as long as long as Lufthansa remained its biggest rival. The Austrian aviation company's executive board rejected such claims. AUA managers said firm-internal codes of conduct kept Lufthansa from offering significantly cheaper tickets for the same connections. They added that Lufthansa would not undercut AUA. The struggling Vienna-based carrier's board did not comment the results of the latest Travel Express investigation.

AUA staff are currently gearing up for a possible labour conflict after company chairman Jaan Albrecht's decision to make changes to existing contracts. Albrecht – who headed Star Alliance before taking over at AUA last year – warned that the debt-stricken carrier 'would crash against the wall' without intensified attempts to reduce its losses.

Albrecht wants an end to employees' automatic salary increases every few years. Rumour has it that the executive board head also plans to ask pilots to work longer hours for the same salaries. A further reduction of AUA's workforce level – the company currently employs 5,800 full-time staff – is also expected. Hundreds of ground personnel and cabin crew lost their jobs since Lufthansa acquired a majority interest in AUA in 2009.

Unionists ignored the two most recent invitations for talks about savings measures by the board. They branded the suggestions of bosses as 'insulting' and 'nothing worth discussing'. AUA employees' representatives underlined that staff had been affected by several austerity packages in the past years. They said pilots and other employees must not bear the full brunt of the general economic downturn.

A spokesman for the AUA executive board – which consists of Albrecht, Peter Malanik and Andreas Bierwirth – recently said one planned measure which should make the airline more efficient was to allow pilots of affiliate Tyrolean Airways (Austrian Arrows) to operate larger planes. Tyrolean Airways is part of the AUA Group. It focuses on domestic flights while AUA provides connections to destinations across Europe but also to other continents.

AUA was established in 1957. The firm registered 11.26 million passengers in 2011, up by 3.4 per cent compared to the previous year. AUA said it managed to sell around 74 per cent of offered tickets last year. The whole Lufthansa Group counted 106.3 million customers last year. Lufthansa has 117,000 staff. Europe's busiest aviation enterprise has been headed by German businessman

Christoph Franz since January 2011. Austrian Wolfgang Mayrhuber was the carrier's CEO for seven years before Franz took over.

### Austrian food to feature in organic trade fair



© NuernbergMesse/Thomas Geiger

Austria is expected to be well represented at next week's BioFach 2012 international organic trade fair in Nuremberg, Germany. Some 90 companies and organisations from the Austrian organic good sector will feature at the fair from 15 to 18 February.

For several years now BioFach have been pioneering organic food and will once again be promoting it at the world's leading exhibition for certified organic products. Some 40 of the Austrian businesses participating will put on a group exhibition in collaboration with Bio Austria and the Chamber of Commerce organised by

Agrarmarkt Austria Marketing.

The organic market is growing worldwide every year, above all in Europe and the USA and through BioFach the organisation hopes to market the industry in a 'purposeful and sustainable way'. Around 2,500 companies will be exhibiting in Nuremberg next week with some 44,000 visitors expected to attend.

For more information visit: <http://www.biofach.de/en/>

### Fruit trees springing up in Vienna



The city of Vienna will see the arrival of fruit trees around the capital in 2012. With the support of wine growers, farmers and landholders the new plants will be sponsored and cultivated in specific districts of the city in autumn.

Together with the help of the Wienerwald Biosphere Park, the city will take on two thirds of the cost of seeds, environment councillor, Ulli Sima explained. Therefore, only the remaining third is to be paid by the resident and there is not a limit to the number of trees

that can be bought and planted. The districts involved in the project are those on the so called buffer zone between the city and the Biosphere Park including the districts of Liesing, Hietzing, Penzing, Ottakring, Hernals and Döbling.

The price of a tree is between 5.10 and 16.70 Euros. In the extensive order list are such species as the Countess from Paris (pears), the Mottled Cardinal (apples) and the morello cherry. The trees are expected to be distributed at the end of October in Mödling. Customers will be informed of the exact collection date and location but must order before 9 March 2012 if they wish to be involved.

'A standard fruit tree yields a rich harvest for decades and not only provides welcome shade or place for a hammock, but provides a home for insects and rare species,' explained Sima. An old fruit tree can accommodate up to 1,000 animal species from caterpillars and beetles to birds and bats.

For more information or to order a tree visit:

<http://www.bpww.at/regionales/weinbau-landschaft/obstbaeume/>

### Celebrity ski race in Zau[:ber:]g



© Zau[:ber:]g Semmering

The annual charity celebrity ski race is to take place once again this weekend on the Semmering, Austria. The event in the resort of Zau[:ber:]g involves various famous faces or 'Promis' who will all come together for a night race for a truly good cause.

The race organised by Kurt Faist is held on the FIS World Cup Panorama slope and has continually attracted big crowds over the years. Before the event, which begins at around 5pm, the stars will provide entertainment for spectators on stage in front of the ZaubERBAR. The race will also be followed by an Après Ski Party in the bar.

The celebrity event is organised in support of the Franz Klammer Foundation and all the net proceeds of the race will go towards the good cause which supports seriously injured athletes.

Several celebrities have put their name down for the race including Franz Klammer himself. The event will begin at 2pm and finish at 8pm before the Après Party is due to begin.

For more information visit: <http://zauberberg.at/de/zauberberg/event>

s/get/page/promi-ski-rennen-2012/

### Clem Chambers - All the pointers say there is light at the end of the tunnel



© europics

PERMA-BEARS BEWARE: 2012 LOOKS BULLISH, says Clem Chambers, CEO of leading stocks and shares information website ADVFN.com and author of '101 Ways to Pick Stock Market Winners'.

From a market perspective, rarely is the eternal pessimist &ndash; i.e the investor currently thinking the world is going to hell in a hand basket &ndash; correct.

On the other hand, things never seem to turn out quite as well as the permanently optimistic would have you believe.

Permanent 'bullish' or 'bearish' positions are simply not useful.

In investment, you must be able to swing from happy to sad. Doing so is essential if you are to be in phase with

the market - and be right about your investment bias - more than 50 per cent of the time.

This can be tricky. You should be feeling bearish at the top of the market when everything looks great. Conversely, you have to be happy and optimistic just after a train collision of market and economic factors.

In Austria, the coalition government announced in November that both its members agreed on establishing a constitutional debt limit. The government leaders said the measure would help to regain the trust of the financial markets in the Austrian economy during difficult times.

Now, the government faces claims it has abandoned the 'debt brake' proposal, after the most recent summit of European Union (EU) decision-makers. The EU's state and government leaders met to discuss details of the planned EU-wide federal debt brake accord. They eventually agreed that passing regular laws would be sufficient &ndash; a decision which was widely seen as one step back compared to initial ambitions to introduce constitutional debt limits in all 25 participating nations.

It would seem the world is becoming a slightly more optimistic place.

I should be glad I'm starting to feel

'bullish'. Encouragingly, the market is rallying. Although a correction does seem likely as the Dow arrives back at pre-2011 summer slump levels, it still feels like the start of a very good 2012.

Market psychology appears to have made a strong reversal; terror has flipped to greed and I don't see why.

As CEO of one of the world's largest stock market websites I can see broad interest has rocketed in 2012, the same way it was chilled to the bone through the gloomy weeks of pre-Christmas euro crisis. Whatever the cause, something threw the switch and that is very bullish.

The US recovery had been going on in the background over most of 2011. This recovery is only now popping up in the official numbers. The sudden shift in sentiment is still a mystery. The current rally is impressive, especially when you consider the supposed cause of markets' recent trouble (i.e the euro crisis) is still in the semi-random zone of political shenanigans.

If the market can rally like this then it can run a lot further this year. The crowd appears to be pre-empting dramatic economic improvements. Remember, the stock market looks a year out, so it is seeing 2013 as a year where the economy is good for stocks.

This is, of course, good news for everyone. After so many years of

increasingly grim developments it is about time for turning points to be reached.

There are a lot of 'perma-bears' disappointed the euro hasn't imploded, taking a large chunk of the world economy with it. For a moment they were basking in the glory of prophets standing on the mountain top as the clouds part. Sadly for them, and happily for us, it doesn't look like the apocalypse is going to unfold. Instead, it looks like recovery is on its way.

It still seems amazing to me after such a rough and dangerous economic ride that we could be in for a positive 2012. Yet all the pointers say there is light at the end of the tunnel and it's not a train coming the other way.

As such, this 'bear' is starting to moult his fur and grow horns. Optimism, of course, doesn't make such compelling copy as premonitions of disaster, but even if we are starting on the road to recovery there will be plenty of potholes on the path and precipices to look over along the way to keep it interesting.

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