Projekt “Upper Austrian Winter Sport Week” (Regional Government of Upper Austria, Directorate for Education and Society, Family Affairs Department)

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The Upper Austrian Winter Sports Week is a pilot project of the platform ‘school and snow sports’ based on an innovative e-Voucher system to counteract the following trends:

- lack of exercise and sports activities during the compulsory education years;
- sinking number of participants in ski courses due to costs and little relation of parents’ and pupils’ with skiing;
- decreasing numbers of teachers trained to teach ski course groups;
- winter sport is of high economic significance for areas in Upper Austria that lack infrastructure. The absence of winter sportsmen/women would deprive many inhabitants in the valleys and outskirts in this region of their livelihoods.

Since 2009, the state of Upper Austria provides all participating pupils from Upper Austrian schools – and since the 2013 winter season, also kindergarten children – with a voucher for each winter season, to make children more familiar with skiing and snowboarding while reducing the financial burden of winter sports for parents/legal guardians. This voucher allows the free use of lift-type services (lifts, cable cars) in Upper Austrian ski regions in connection with a winter sports week, or schools’ winter sports days. Thanks to this initiative, the number of participants in ski courses rose by over 20%. In particular the customer-friendly online process, which was developed together with partners, and the little administrative effort required, are seen as success criteria. The e-Government solution facilitates exact documentation and statistical analyses. The increased demand for accommodation also led to investments in hotels.