

## 2022 in the Rear Mirror | What made this year special

by Jochen Ressel



We will shortly be referring to the year 2022 as "last year". And as various newspapers, TV magazines and new media summarise the year, the Austro-British Society has decided to do likewise, especially from the perspective of the UK and in the light of our activities.

### January 2022 | How it started

- The ABS made its members smile at the beginning of the year with humour at its best, focusing on funny experiences related to language problems. Melanie Sully provided her personal "German Phrase book disaster" ([Link](#)), and Colin A. Munro referred to it with an episode of his diplomatic language problems ([Link](#)). And additionally, Alexander Christiani gave insights from his diplomatic career with the blog "How diplomacy saved a zoo director's job in Africa" ([Link](#)). We are sure, there is no better way to start into a new year than with a smile!

### February 2022 | Olympic Winter Games

- Traditionally, the United Kingdom is not exactly a country of winter sports. Nevertheless, British athletes won one gold and one silver medal and finished 19<sup>th</sup> out of 27 countries in the medal table - both medals were won by the curling team - gold for the women's team and silver for the men's team.

Alpine skier Dave Ryding, who always causes surprises in various World Cup races, achieved a remarkable 13<sup>th</sup> place. The mixed snowboard team reached 6<sup>th</sup> place, while the skeleton team - traditionally in the top group - failed to succeed.

- But two athletes - not from the UK - provided the big stories of the Games: US skier and most successful female skier of all time, Mikaela Shiffrin, was eliminated in races in the three competitions where everyone expected her to win. And then came the final of the skating competition, where 15-year-old Kamila Valieva could not withstand the pressure put on her. Reason enough for ABS sports expert Jochen Ressel to write a blog post entitled “Mental Pressure in Sports – Where is the limit?” ([Link](#)).

### March 2022 | The Russian conflict with the Ukraine

- The whole world is horrified by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and its enormous impact on the global economy, which we all must cope with. The conflict received even more attention in March when the Austrian-born, worldwide famous actor and former Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, addressed the citizens of Ukraine with a video message. ABS General Secretary Jochen Ressel summarised Schwarzenegger’s message and encouraged readers of his blog article to reflect on whether such a message is just a PR stunt or whether such activities can really help to influence the course of events and what role each of us could play in this context. ([Link](#))

### April 2022 | South Africa in the spotlight

- In April 1994 the ANC won the first democratic elections in South Africa. As Tony Leon contributed a highly interesting ABS Policy Paper in April 2022 headlined “The Fading Rainbow Nation” covering the current situation in South Africa ([Link](#)), former Ambassador and ABS Vice President Alexander Christiani contributed valuable personal insights as he was assigned to South Africa when the Apartheid system came to its end. His blog article “Nelson Mandela in the clutches of the African National Congress” is worth reading indeed ([Link](#)).

### May 2022 | Focus on UK-EU relations

- In May disturbing news was daily business, where the PM of these days, Boris Johnson, almost every day released new information on his view on UK-EU relations and his sometimes quirky ideas about what should or should not be done.

The ABS has picked up on this and released two outstanding Policy Papers to shed more light on our members. No. 28 was entitled “Co-operation between the European Union and the United Kingdom in Defence, Security, Intelligence and Justice & Home Affairs after Brexit”, where our ABS expert Alexander Christiani gave a detailed overview on this topic ([Link](#)).

- ABS Policy Paper No. 29, “Improving the UK-EU Relationship”, written by Eric Cummings from the European & International Analysts Group, London, putted the current situation in the UK in a geo-political context and provided top-information complementing the aforementioned ([Link](#)).

### **June 2022 | Starting into the summer**

- At the beginning of the summer, Jochen Ressel, Secretary General of the ABS, provided some cultural insights when he compared holiday habits in Austria with those in the UK and put them in the context of historical developments and social structures. The result is the blog article "Austrian vs. British 'Sommerfrische'" ([Link](#)).

### **July 2022 | Football is coming home!**

- Due to the Covid crisis, the UEFA European Women's Football Championship, initially scheduled for 2020, finally took place in July 2022 - in the motherland of football, in England (not only, but ok...). Pot 1, into which the English women's team was placed, was a real challenge, as they had to compete against their counterparts from the Netherlands, Germany and France and come out on top. But they made it and even beat Spain in the quarterfinals, Sweden in the semifinals and had to face the German women's team again in the grand final, which took place at London's Wembley Stadium. And Football came home that day! They won the championship with a score of 2-1. Overall, the tournament showed the incredible potential of women's Football, with an unprecedented number of spectators on site, a huge crowd watching the TV broadcasts and live streams, and massive media coverage on traditional and social media.

### **September 2022 | Her Majesty passed away**

- The same week the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, took over from Boris Johnson, the sad news shattered not only the UK, but the entire world: Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, passed away on her stay in her Scottish home, Balmoral Castle.

- These were jam-packed days for the ABS, as numerous interview requests from the media had to be dealt with, with which, however, the ABS reached a large public. A special edition of the ABS News summarised all the activities related to Her Majesty's death ([Link](#)) – including interviews, publications and events, like a special Memorial service in the chapel of St. Stephan's cathedral.
- Former Ambassador Colin A. Munro published a special ABS Blog article to honor the Queen ([Link](#)), while Jochen Ressel's blog posted a few days later focused on the new King Charles III ([Link](#)).

### Oktober 2022 | The year of three Prime Ministers

- After the country came to a standstill due to the circumstances mentioned above, the political merry-go-round started spinning again, from which Liz Truss was thrown out just a few weeks after taking office. And it is Rishi Sunak who became Prime Minister and has held the office ever since. In the wake of the events, Melanie Sully, ABS Board member and political scientist, published ABS Policy Paper No. 30, entitled "Political Sea-Change in Britain" ([Link](#)).
- But trust in politics was not only put to the test in the UK but also in Austria when the social media chat disaster reached a new level and revealed a disastrous picture of what was going on in political circles. Jochen Ressel, therefore, published the ABS Blog article "Trust: A Lost Asset?", in which he highlights the importance of trust for social stability. ([Link](#)).
- In parallel, the situation in Ukraine did not get better at all but rather worse. Reason enough for our ABS Vice President Alexander Christiani to publish another fascinating blog post on the topic "We all have seen better days", in which he discusses the Russian paranoia that the West has nothing else in mind but to destroy or at least weaken Russia ([Link](#)).

### November 2022 | America votes and the Brexit effect is openly discussed

- „America votes – three scenarios“ was the headline of the ABS Policy Paper No. 31, written by Dr Josef Braml (Trilateral Commission) and translated from German by ABS Board member Wolfgang Geissler, published the day before the US midterm elections took place – a further proof that the ABS is right on target with its publications. As we know the election's results in the meanwhile, it is pretty interesting to read this fascinating blog article in retrospect ([Link](#)).
- As Anglo-American relations significantly affect the UK economy, it was very interesting that the Financial Times published a documentary on the so-called "Brexit effect" to clarify whether it really exists. Subsequently, ABS Secretary General Jochen Ressel published an ABS Blog article about the evidence presented by the FT ([Link](#)).

- As negotiation skills are key to success, if in political discussions after elections or if in discussions with EU representatives to improve UK's export chances, ABS Vice President Alexander Christiani gave ten suggestions, helpful in any negotiation. His ABS Blog article "The Art of Diplomacy" highlights what we should always think of when negotiating ([Link](#)).

## December 2022 | The FIFA World Cup in Qatar

- All of this month's media coverage was dominated by the biggest global sporting event - the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. But months before the tournament began, there was intense discussion throughout the media world about human and women's rights, working conditions and construction worker deaths. The allegations of corruption that arose immediately after the announcement that Qatar would host the 2022 World Cup were again discussed at length - the accusation that the small emirate had more or less "bought" the right to organise the World Cup. To allow ABS Members to get a compact overview of these discussions, Jochen Ressel published an ABS Blog article titled "The Winner is... Qatar! Really?" ([Link](#)).
- From a sporting point of view, Football has unfortunately not yet come home in the men's world after England's women's team won the European Championship in July. In the group with their counterparts from the British Isles, Wales, Iran and the United States, the Three Lions team made it to the quarterfinals against France, where their journey ended. However, those who saw the final between Argentina and France are unlikely to forget it soon. After many dramatic scenes, FC Messi prevailed and one of the greatest players of all time made himself immortal by winning the World Cup he had so much longed for.
- But it was not all about Football in December. The ABS, namely Vice President Alexander Christiani, summarised the UK outlook for 2023 based on Matt Goodwin's commentary "Winter is coming", clearly addressing the frightening situation in which the UK is trapped ([Link](#)).

Finally, we can proudly state that the ABS's publication work is always spot-on and provides ongoing commentary on the most current political and social events in 2022 to provide food for thought and background information for all members. We promise to continue providing this service in 2023 - in addition to the 38 events that the ABS organised throughout the year, creating a wide range of opportunities for face-to-face encounters. All events are carefully summarised and documented with many photos on our website ([Link](#)).

**The ABS is looking forward to receiving your views and comments!**

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### *About the author*

**Jochen Ressel** is the Secretary-General of the Austro-British Society. He worked several years for a UK company and its HQ in London. He held management positions in various companies and institutions, e.g. as the Executive Director of the Senate of Economy, where he regularly commented on current political and economic developments. Currently, he holds the position as COO of SoccerCoin, a FinTech company active in the field of sports.

The opinions expressed in this article are entirely his and reflect in no way the views of the ABS.