

# News from Austria

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## Government invites to climate protection summit

On 16 April 2007 Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Minister for the Environment Josef Pröll invited to a climate protection summit at Vienna's Hofburg. Besides members of government, representatives of the Länder, the economy, interest groups and the opposition participated in the summit. The opening statement was delivered by British economist Chris Taylor, co-author of a climate change report in the magazine "Stern". The meeting was devoted to the government's climate protection strategy. Working groups discussed the topics "environment, agriculture and regional economy", "transport and innovation", "industry and energy" as well as "consumers, housing and energy efficiency".

The climate strategy should be evaluated and revised annually, said Gusenbauer. In the preliminaries of the meeting, he had pointed out that "Austria was Europe's first government to fully integrate the European Council conclusions into its climate protection strategy". On this basis, the Austrian government was engaged in a "permanent dialogue" with the civil society, regional authorities and the economy to jointly further develop the "red-white-red climate protection strategy", stated the Chancellor. The aim was a long-term reduction of CO2 emissions. However, Austria's position as a business location and living environment had to be taken into account, he stressed.

The Chancellor mentioned his talks in Brussels about the allocation of CO2 emission certificates to the Austrian industry. The EU Commission was now reassessing the Austrian share as the Austrian Climate Fund endowed with 500 million euros had not been taken into account. The Fund would lead to further sustainable CO2 emission reductions, said Gusenbauer. The background are the CO2 emission allowances for the Austrian industry cut by the EU Commission. To achieve its national Kyoto target, Austria is required to reduce its proposed annual cap by 2.1 million tons of CO2 emissions to 30.7 million tons. The Ministry of the Environment explained that the Austrian industry and energy sector had to reduce their CO2 volume by 7.43 million tons (19.5%) from the estimated level required between 2008 and 2012. ■

## Ten years after popular initiative on women: government takes action

On 6 April 2007, Minister for Women's Affairs Doris Bures presented the government's five key projects regarding women's affairs. According to Bures, the projects addressed the demands of the popular initiative on women's affairs in 1997. They would now be implemented as laid down in the government agreement. "Feeling committed to the 650,000 persons signing this motion, we will pursue a proactive and social women's policy", stressed the Minister.

One important demand has already been met. Thanks to raising the top-up benefits, the monthly minimum pensions of 726 euros for the first time surpass the official poverty threshold. More than 150,000 women benefited from this measure. The talks with the social partners about the introduction of a general collective agreement are to be concluded still before the summer. A minimum income of 1,000 euros for full employment is envisaged. This would above all improve the situation of occupations with a large share of women, explained Bures. The third main project was to reduce the income gap by offering qualification measures to women and supporting companies training girls in not traditional women's occupations.

The fourth goal listed by Minister Bures was to improve the reconciliation of family and working lives by providing more childcare facilities. The fifth priority was a reform of childcare benefits (e.g. higher discretionary earnings cap, more flexible entitlement). ■

## "Never again" – Viennese pupils in silent march in Auschwitz

About 10,000 young people from all over the world will participate in the commemorative event "March of Remembrance and Hope" (14 to 17 April) also this year. Marching for example from Auschwitz to Birkenau they will follow the same route that led thousands of prisoners of concentration camps into annihilation more than 60 years ago. For the first time Austrian pupils participate, about 300 of them coming from Vienna. In their voyage through the past in Poland they will visit former Jewish communities and places that stand for something that should never be repeated. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Austria cannot save the climate on its own. But it must make its contribution. To this end, the economy, transport, industry, the Länder, communities and environmental organisations have to cooperate."

Minister for Women's Affairs Bures: "Qualification measures are to facilitate the reintegration of women into the labour market after child-raising breaks or family-related interruptions of their careers."

## Federal President Fischer at presidents' meeting in Riga

At a two-day meeting in Latvia's capital Riga (10/11 April) the presidents of state of eight EU Member States jointly declared that climate protection and the EU Constitution were the two most important future challenges facing Europe. The heads of state of Latvia, Finland, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Austria participated in the meeting, in which Austria was represented by Federal President Heinz Fischer. According to Fischer, all eight presidents agreed to lend their full support to the recent commitments of the European Council to combat climate change. However, opinions diverged with regard to the EU Constitution crises. The necessary institutional reform as a prerequisite for future EU enlargement rounds and the success of the European Union as a whole were generally undisputed.

Other subjects explored at the meeting, which was held for the fourth time, were immigration, environmental issues as well as enlargement and the EU's neighbourhood policy, in particular with countries such as Russia and Ukraine. In separate talks with host Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Fischer discussed bilateral issue, which had reached a "very high level" notably in the cultural field, as the Federal President put it. Fischer explained vis-à-vis the Austrian Press Agency (APA) that Vike-Freiberga had promised Latvia's support for Austria's efforts of becoming a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Fischer then left Latvia for a working meeting taking place in Estonia.

These meetings date back to an initiative of Portugal in 2003. This year the event was for the first time referred to as the "Arriolos Group" (named after the first conference venue in Portugal). ■

## Federal President Fischer in Estonia

On 12 April 2007 Federal President Heinz Fischer met with his Estonian counterpart Toomas Hendrik Ilves for official talks in Estonia's capital Tallinn. Top items on the agenda were the future of Kosovo, the domestic crisis in Ukraine as well as bilateral issues.

In a joint press conference Fischer stated that UN special envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari "had done a good job" but stressed at the same time that the proposals submitted by Ahtisaari to the UN Security Council were "not directed against Serbia".

With regard to political intervention in the domestic crisis in Ukraine, Fischer and Ilves were of the opinion that now Brussels, or rather the German EU Council Presidency should take action. ■

## Palestinian Foreign Minister Abu Amr pays official visit to Austria

Following an invitation by Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, new Palestinian Foreign Minister Ziad Abu Amr paid a two-day visit to Vienna (3/4 April 2007). Before arriving in Austria he had held talks with the French government in Paris. His programme in Vienna included a meeting with Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer and official talks with Foreign Minister Plassnik.

Abu Amr criticised in a joint press conference with Plassnik that the Israeli government was not prepared to enter into serious peace negotiations. The Palestinian national unity government wanted to resolve misunderstandings and establish "clarity of standpoints". Abu Amr expressed his hope that the EU would cooperate in the future with the entire national unity government.

Plassnik stressed that the EU felt committed to the idea of a solution of two states and was ready to lend its support in this respect. The aim was to establish relations with the entire Palestinian government. However, the expectations of the EU had not yet been fully met. Basic values, such as the renunciation of violence and the recognition of Israel, had to be fully accepted, stated the Foreign Minister. "I welcome the government as a way out of the vicious circle of internal Palestinian violence", emphasised the Minister Plassnik. Therefore, Austria had deliberately made the gesture of inviting Abu Amr so shortly after his assuming office. The new dialogue between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as well as Arab peace efforts, especially by Saudi Arabia, inspired hope, stated Plassnik. ■

Federal President Fischer: "The next meeting of the eight European presidents of the Arriolos group will take place in Vienna in 2008."

Foreign Minister Abu Amr: "I thank the Austrian government for its conflict settlement efforts and the support of the Palestinian people."

Foreign Minister Plassnik: "Austria will firmly uphold its constructive engagement in the Middle East."

## Chancellor Gusenbauer: SMEs strengthen Austrian economy

On the occasion of appointing new members of the economic panel set up within the federal institute "Austrian Statistical Office" (Statistik Österreich) on 12 April 2007, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer stressed the special achievements of the SME sector. Austria was one of the most competitive countries of the world. "The continuing high economic growth underlines the locational advantage of our country characterised by a high level of innovation, social stability and progress-orientation", said Gusenbauer in his laudatio. Austria was a country of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which had earned a reputation as "European players" and succeeded in outshining rivals in international markets with top quality products, stressed Gusenbauer. ■

## Record level of Austrian exports to America

In 2006 Austria's exports to the American region increased by 16% to 8.2 billion euros; thus the growth rates and volumes of the long-term boom region Asia were exceeded (plus 14.4% to 7.2 billion euros). Although the euro-dollar exchange rate was unfavourable for exporters, the supplies to the countries of North and Latin America have grown more strongly than Austria's worldwide exports, which rose by 12.7%. One of the reasons for this trend has been the general recovery of the American market. Austria's trade balance of 3.26 billion euros with the countries of the American region was "more than favourable", emphasised the deputy head of the Foreign Trade Department (Außenwirtschaftsorganisation /AWO) of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKÖ), Gudrun Hager, at a presentation of the respective foreign trade data on 3 April 2007. Thus the share of exports to America in Austria's total exports increased from 7.4 to 7.7%. The USA accounted for 2.6 billion euros of the surplus. Imports from the American region grew by 10.2% or a volume of 4.9 billion euros.

In 2006 Austrian foreign trade with the USA reached a new all-time high. 5.7% of the domestic export volume (worth 6.2 billion euros) went to this destination. This corresponds to a

plus by 15.5%. However, this figure of 2006 includes the restitution of the Klimt paintings. After deduction of the price of the works of art, the plus is still 10.5%. In 2006 imports from the USA increased by 11.3% to 3.5 billion euros.

Among Austria's leading export products to the region are motor vehicles, chemical and pharmaceutical products, food and beverages as well as machinery and equipment. Environmental and energy technologies offers great export opportunities for the future.

Austrian foreign trade to Canada – the second most important market for Austrian exporters after the USA in the region of North and Latin America – grew by 9% to about 900 million euros in 2006. This was another record achieved by Austria. Austria has doubled its exports to Canada in the past six years. In 2006 Austrian exports to Latin America surged by almost 30%: Mexico plus 29% to 280 million euros, Brazil plus 13.4% to 319 million euros, Argentina plus 26% to 92 million euros, Venezuela plus 35.6% to 74 million euros, Columbia plus 76% to 68 million euros. ■

## ÖBB considers take-over of Hungarian freight transport

Austrian Rail (ÖBB) could take over the freight transport of the Hungarian state railways (MAV Cargo) by year-end. The sale should be completed by the end of 2007, explained the boss of the group, Tamas Kozák, in Budapest in early April. The privatisation consultancy Pro Cargo Konzorcium led by UniCredit Markets & Investment Banking (a subsidiary of Bank Austria) is to prepare the sales documentation by June. Submission of a bid for MAV Cargo would ultimately depend on the economic efficiency of such as deal, was the reply to an inquiry by the Austrian Press Agency (APA). ■

## voestalpine acquires 20.95 percent of Böhler-Uddeholm

On 10 April 2007 the Austrian steel producer voestalpine signed an agreement to confirm its investment in Böhler-Uddeholm. For 737 million euros voestalpine acquires a stake of 20.95% in Böhler-Uddeholm. At the same time, the company submits a bid for acquiring the remaining shares. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "With the aid of well trained and highly motivated staff, the domestic enterprises produce high-quality products, securing Austria's locational advantages in the international market."

In 2006 Austria's trade balance with the American countries reached a record level of 3.26 billion euros.

## Unprotected Games: Krems Danube Festival is not at all provincial

The Danube Festival (“donaufestival”) in Krems is the platform for “dangerous artistic games” during the weekends of 19 to 21 and 27 to 30 April 2007 – tight in form and content. Artists of various disciplines meet under the motto “Unprotected Game(s)”. Social and spiritual systems, mental attitudes and their codices are to be addressed, deconstructed and questioned in artistic games. Computer games take on real form and interweave real and virtual space, people become parts of mechanical sound systems, obsessive performance-like games verging on social taboo, private myths produce playful counter-worlds. In the field of tension between experimental, sub and pop culture, the Danube Festival 2007 acts on the fine line between game and reality with an anarchic freedom denied to us in the real game of our every-day lives.

Performances play an important role in the festival. Gob Squad, Showcase Beat Le Mot und Big Art Group show their new works. God’s Entertainment, Blast Theory und PainStation will develop performance games to highlight the blurred borders between virtual game and social reality. In cooperation with Club Transmediale Berlin, the “donaufestival” will realise a series of audio-visual performances.

The music programme of the festival is under the impact of three special projects. The spectacular two-day project of David Tibet – who became famous with music groups such as Current 93 and Psychic TV (after the break up of Throbbing Gristle) – presents numerous luminaries like Baby Dee, Julia Kent, Hush Arbors.

Together with Pablo Fiasco, Jamie Lidell will hold a workshop for young artists in the disciplines vocals, beat boxing, electronics and video.

The festival will be closed by starring the legends of “industrial music”, Throbbing Gristle. On the occasion of the release of their new album after an absence of 25 years, the musicians give two performances. The star of “new electronic“ from Austria (Christian) Fennesz and the momentous punk pioneers Gang Of Four are expected to be additional highlights of the music programme. ■

## Free downloads of Elfriede Jelinek’s new novel “Neid“

Elfriede Jelinek, Noble Laureate in literature 2004 from Vienna, surprises her wide readership with an unusual way of presenting her new novel “Neid“ (“Envy”). The author published the text, which will never appear as a book, on the Internet and invites her readers to download and print the text for private use. All other forms of publishing are forbidden. The media may not quote from the work and no publishing house will be allowed to print excerpts from the text.

So far a total of 87 pages can be downloaded from Jelinek’s website. The first chapter was put online on 3 March 2007, the second chapter has been available on the worldwide web since 7 April 2007. The author reserves the right to revise existing text.

The style of “Neid“ is characterised by associations and fast rhythm. The novel is set in a town that is economically dead after ore production was abandoned. Eisenerz, a small town in Styria, could have served as a model. The financial resources are depleted, the people spend their empty lives hunting for pleasure, full of greed and envy. ■

## Mourning for photographer Harry Weber

Austrian photographer Harry Weber died aged 85 in the night to 10 April 2007 after suffering from a heart disease.

Weber was born in the town of Klosterneuburg (Lower Austria), fled from the Nazis to Palestine and returned to Vienna after WWII. He was one of the most eminent representatives of Austrian photo- journalism. As the chief photographer of the magazine “Stern” for Austria, Weber shaped the discipline of documentary photography for many years. He soon also won renown as a photographer of music and theatre productions. In 2002 he was awarded the Great Austrian State Prize for Artistic Photography and the professional title “professor”. Being a modest personality, he always refused to be referred to as an “artist”. Nevertheless, he is considered to belong to the Austrian elite of classical photography – together with Inge Morath, Franz Hubmann und Erich Lessing. Weber published several excellent photo volumes, e.g. “Wien

[www.donaufestival.at](http://www.donaufestival.at)

Download the new Jelinek novel “Neid“ (“Envy”) from the Internet: <http://ourworld.com/serve.com/homepages/elfriede/>. Click on the link “Prose” to access the novel.

[www.harry-weber.com](http://www.harry-weber.com)

Grafenegg Music Festival 2007. For the programme and more details see: [www.grafenegg.at](http://www.grafenegg.at)

bei Nacht“ (Vienna By Night), “Wien – Gesichter einer Stadt“ (Vienna – Faces of a City) and “Salzburg im Licht“ (Salzburg in the Light), “Die Wiener Philharmoniker“ (The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra) and “Jerusalem“.

In 1994 the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna presented his photo series “The Others“. In 1996 the Jewish Museum Vienna staged the show “Today in Vienna. Photographs Documenting Contemporary Jewish Life by Harry Weber“. In 2001 an homage was paid to him with “A Life in Photographs“ at Palais Harrach in Vienna.

Federal President Heinz Fischer showed himself deeply moved by the death of the photographer and praised in particular his documentary work, from the photos illustrating the process leading to the Austrian State Treaty to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied stated in a press release that Harry Weber’s photos depicted “cruelty and every-day life in a condensed reality“. Nevertheless, he had been one of “the kindest persons in the hectic environment of photo-journalism“. ■

#### “A Rest in the Garden“ – daydreaming at Seitenstetten

This year’s exhibition of Lower Austria is devoted to the theme “Fire and Earth” and takes place in Waidhofen/Ybbs and in St. Peter from 28 April to 4 November 2007. In the framework of its project “A Rest in the Garden“, the Benedictine monastery Seitenstetten located between these two venues invites to take a rest in its Baroque gardens after visiting the exhibition. Some parts of the kitchen garden were turned into “separées in the open air“ with different seating furniture. Areas for chatting, picnicking, holidaying and meditating allow the visitors to relax. A pilgrimage to the soul can be embarked on by walking through the “rosary labyrinth” with beads made of roses and ball-shaped box trees. Based on a deliberately simple design by padre Martin Mayrhofer, the “chapel under the open sky” with a sculpture of the Holy Family in the shadow of mighty yew trees is the ideal place for devotions and meditation. Until 28 October 2007 padre Martin shows his paintings and prints in the exhibition titled “Gardens – Blossoms – Leaves” at the monastery. ■

[www.noel-an-desausstellung.at](http://www.noel-an-desausstellung.at)

Abbott Berthold Heigl: “In silence one can feel the breath of God“.

Holidays in the monastery, in the heart of Mostviertel. For other initiatives of the monastery see: [www.stift-seitenstetten.at](http://www.stift-seitenstetten.at)

#### Grafenegg Music Festival 2007

Pianist Rudolf Buchbinder, who had celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in December, received the “Golden Medal of Honour of the Federal Capital” from City Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny at Vienna’s town hall on 10 April 2007. In his laudatory speech his friend Otto Schenk stated that the pianist, who (aged only five) had been the youngest student in the history of the University of Music in Vienna, had prevented him “from enjoying most of the others which I had listened to before him”.

The highly acclaimed personality, who is one of the leading artists of his generation, recently became the manager of a new music festival in Grafenegg (Lower Austria) near Vienna, which is held under the aegis of Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll. The festival is committed to “supreme quality” (Buchbinder). Between 23 August and 9 September 2007 it offers an outstanding programme with Renée Fleming and Tonkünstler-Orchester led by Kristjan Järvi, the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev and with soloist Rudolf Buchbinder, pianists Alfred Brendel and Arcadi Volodos, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under Zubin Mehta, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra led by Philippe Herreweghe, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under Zdeněk Mácal with violinist Ernst Kovacic and again Tonkünstler-Orchester led by “Composer in Residence 2007” Krzysztof Penderecki and with cellist Heinrich Schiff. If Grafenegg maintains this high artistic level in the future, it will become an integral part of Europe’s map of top music events. The palace, the peaceful landscape and the music make the festival a “sensual, profound total experience” stated Buchbinder. ■

#### Commemorating the French-Austrian author Christiane Singer

French-Austrian writer Christiane Thurn-Valsassina, known as “Christiane Singer”, died aged 64 from cancer in a hospital in Vienna on 4 April 2007. From 1990 to 1998 she had been Secretary-General of the Austrian P.E.N. Club. Singer lived as a countess in the palace of Rastenberg in Waldviertel (Lower Austria) for more than 30 years. She was married to the architect Georg Thurn-Valsassina, with whom

she had two sons. Born in Marseille in 1943, she wrote under her maiden name (mainly) in French. Her work explores the spiritual and ethical dimensions of life. Among her novels and essay volumes, which were translated into German, are “La guerre des filles“ (“Mädchenkrieg” 1981), “Histoire d’âme“ (“Seelengeschichte” 1988; Prix Albert Camus 1989), “Éloge du mariage, de l’engagement et autres folies“ (“Lob der Ehe, des Engagements und andere Verrücktheiten” 2000; Prix Anna de Noailles de l’ Académie française) or “Les sept nuits de la reine“ (“Die sieben Nächte der Königin” 2002). For her last novel “Seul ce qui brûle“ (“Nur was brennt” 2006) Singer received the French Language Prize (“Prix de la langue française“) in 2006. The novels “Rastenberg“ (1996), “Der Tod zu Wien“ (“La mort viennoise“, 1978), for which she received the Prize of the French Book Trade, as well as “Zeiten des Lebens” Von der Lust sich zu wandeln“ (“Les âges de la vie“, 1983) were authored in German. Besides her literary career, Singer was a psychotherapist and a much sought-after lecturer. Her French publisher Albin Michel will soon publish her diary entries describing her suffering and dying under the title “Dernier fragment d’un long voyage“ – the last fragment of a long trip.

The obsequies took place at the monastery of Zwettel on 14 April 2007. Singer was buried at the cemetery of Rastendorf. ■

### Carinthian Summer festival 2007

The Carinthian “festival vintage 2007” (13 July to 26 August 2007) – described as “summery vivid and varied” by festival manager Thomas Daniel Schlee – comprises 40 events for which tickets are sold. In addition to the 13 events with free admission, this year’s programme also comprises Sunday masses at the collegiate church of Ossiach with a musical programme developed by the “Carinthian Summer”. Carinthia’s large-scale festival will be opened at the Congress Center Villach on 13 July 2007 with Mauricio Kagel’s “Der Tribun“, a legendary example of avant-garde music performances, and a concert by the gipsy brass band “Fanfare Ciocărlia“. The church opera “Ich, Hiob“ (music: Thomas Daniel Schlee, libretto: Christian Martin Fuchs, director: Mascha Pörzgen) will receive its

world premiere in Ossiach on 15 July 2007. The fascinating *sacra conversatio*, with its intimate atmosphere and chamber music instrumentation, revolves around the subjects suffering and loss, sense and destiny. The line-up of international stars and exquisite ensembles will be opened by Gidon Kremer with his Kremerata Baltica; followed by the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra under Pavel Kogan; concert performances are given by master soloists such as Oleg Maisenberg, Robert Holl, Rudolf Buchbinder and Gábor Boldoczki, a trio of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Kiev Chamber Orchestra led by Ronald Zollman, RSO Wien conducted by Bertrand de Billy and the London Symphony Orchestra under Valery Gergiev. Music and literature are for example combined in the artistic encounter between Marjana Lipovšek and Peter Simonischek. Old Music is offered by Concerto Italiano, Oman Consort, the ensemble “Echo du Danube“, etc. As usual, the children’s Carinthian Summer festival offers a very varied programme. ■

### The world’s best adult education system: 20 years Vienna Lectures

During the First Republic Vienna was a stronghold of the Social Democrats. The “Red Vienna” pioneered municipal welfare policy, urban housing, cultural and educational policy. This tradition has been continued with “Wiener Vorlesungen”. The “Vienna Lectures” had been initiated in spring 1987 by Hubert Christian Ehalt, who is not only an academically qualified lecturer on social history but also the City of Vienna’s responsible officer for science. In the past 20 years exciting lectures and discussions were staged in the sacred halls of the Old and New Town Halls of Vienna. About 3,000 leading scholars gave lectures to an audience of about 500,000. This series of lectures is a free service offered by the City of Vienna to people from all walks of life who are thirsty for knowledge. The “Vienna Lectures” are published as easily understandable texts for a large audience in inexpensive books by the Vienna-based publishing house Picus Verlag. A list of all the famous scholars of the humanities, natural sciences, social and economic sciences, theology and medicine, who lectured in Vienna, would certainly fill many pages. ■

[www.carinthischersommer.at](http://www.carinthischersommer.at)

To learn more about the “Red Vienna” see also: Siegfried Mattl: Wien im 20. Jahrhundert. Geschichte Wiens Volume VI. Pichler Verlag, Vienna 2000. ISBN 3-85058-180-2

[www.wien.gv.at/kultur/abteilung/vorlesungen/](http://www.wien.gv.at/kultur/abteilung/vorlesungen/)

## Football as a job engine in Austria

Football is the number one sport worldwide. There is no other sport arousing more emotions and mobilising more people. But it is also the sport that has proved to be the top job engine. In Austria it has created thousands of jobs. Both as a top-level and mass sport, football activates hundreds of thousands of Austrians. According to a study of the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), professional and amateur football clubs are economic entities that safeguard more than 5,500 jobs on a permanent basis in Austria and create a value-added of 280 million euros and a purchasing power of almost 230 million euros. In addition, as a mass sport football is an important health factor, with about 600,000 active men/women kickers in more than 2,200 clubs. A comparison of the total costs of sports accidents with the beneficial effects of regularly practised sports on people's health and the health system shows that the national economy reaps a profit of 77 million euros from football. ■

## Health sport instead of long-term care

The benefits of sport have been given inadequate attention in the discussion on long-term care. Medical specialists recognise health sport as a measure preventing long-term care requirements by the people. In general, the main cause for the need for long-term care are not diseases but physical weakness due to the biological ageing process. Well-aimed training helps to slow down biological ageing, build muscle mass and strength as well as to boost oxygen intake and stamina. Physical exercise and sport do not prolong life. But the phase in which independent living without long-term care requirements is possible is in fact prolonged by up to 15 years. The Secretariat of State for Sport promotes health-oriented "Fit for Austria" exercise programmes geared to the needs of the individual age groups. Based on a study of the Federal Sport Organisation (Bundes-Sportorganisation/BSO), health-related costs of 836 million euros could be saved if only half of those Austrians practising hardly any or no sport at all, were motivated to take up a health sport. ■

## Two million euros for Olympic Summer Games in Beijing

Austria's preparations for the 2008 Olympic Summer Games in Beijing are in full swing. The federal government invests more money than ever before in sport to score another spectacular success. In 2007 the financial resources allocated to "Top Sport Austria" for 2007 were increased to 3.5 million euros. Based on an initiative of the Secretariat of State for Sport, two million euros out of this total have been earmarked for the Olympic project. After Eastern the Austrian Olympic Committee held exploratory talks with athletes to prepare the Games in Beijing in 2008 by providing optimal financial and athletic support. The aim of an analysis in the preliminaries is to invest the funds allocated to Austria's elite sport in the best possible way. Athletes, coaches and the sports associations of the individual sport disciplines are involved in the qualification process. The athletic goal is to defend the seven medals of Austria's so far most successful Olympic Summer Games in Athens. ■

[www.oec.at](http://www.oec.at)

## Pilot project promoting sports at school

Based on a recommendation by the Secretariat of State for Sport, an exemplary project promoting physical exercise and sports at school will be launched in Upper Austria. The system of one teacher teaching all subjects at primary schools will be abolished from the school year 2007/08 onwards. Instead, a sport-enthusiastic teacher will be in charge of sports instruction for all pupils of the third and fourth grades of primary school. By exchanging lessons, this system can be implemented without entailing additional costs. To quantify the effects, the Secretariat of State for Sport also finances scientific monitoring of the project by a university institute from federal government funds. ■

Secretariat of State for Sport launches initiative promoting physical exercise and sports in schools.

[www.fitfueroester-reich.at](http://www.fitfueroester-reich.at)

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