

News from Austria

No. 12/07

HOME AFFAIRS | EUROPE

Voting at the age of 16 – National Council adopts electoral reform

EUROPE | INTERNATIONAL

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer pays official visit to Poland

ECONOMY

voestalpine acquired a majority holding of Böhler-Uddeholm

CULTURE | MEDIA | SCIENCE

La Biennale di Venezia: Chancellor Gusenbauer opens Austrian Pavilion and pleads for critical art

SPORTS POLICY

Austria intensifies combat against doping

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Voting at the age of 16 – National Council adopts electoral reform

On 5 June 2007 the second chamber of Parliament (National Council) adopted the electoral reform package lowering the voting age from 18 to 16 years at federal level. Young people will be eligible to stand as a candidate in elections at the age of 18 years (previously 19). The new act also provides for the introduction of postal vote and the extension of the legislative term from four to five years. Hence, an important reform project of the coalition government between the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) has been realised. The three ombudspersons were appointed: Peter Kostelka (SPÖ) remains in office for another six years; Maria Fekter (ÖVP) and Terezija Stoisits (The Greens) will take office on 1 July 2007. The government also adopted the new Anti-Doping Act and set up the Climate Fund. ■

Law legalising foreign carers

On 6 June 2007 the National Council adopted two laws by which domiciliary care during 24 hours a day becomes possible. The Domiciliary Care Act defines the employment conditions and establishes a legal framework for domiciliary care organised predominantly illegally in the past. Under the amendment to the Federal Care Allowance Act, subsidies towards domiciliary care expenses become possible. Issues like financing, the eligibility of persons of care levels 3 and 4 and free-lance carers for care allowances and the extension of the amnesty for illegal foreign carers are still under discussion. The Amnesty Act becomes ineffective at the end of June 2007. After the Council of Ministers on 6 June 2007, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer explained that the government wanted to reach an agreement still in June, which would be the basis for negotiating a common financing scheme with the Länder. He also announced a government meeting (10 to 11 July 2007). "A comprehensive package of measures regarding energy, the environment and infrastructure" will be high on the agenda. ■

New shop opening hours

On 30 May 2007 the federal government adopted a number of economic measures in the Council

of Ministers, which – according to Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer – were a clear signal to strengthen Austria's position as an employment and business location. The revised working hours regulations establish a basis for maximum working hours of up to 12 hours per day and 60 hours per week. The new Shop Opening Hours Act provides for shop opening hours of 72 hours per week. On working days shops may open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., on Saturdays to 6 p.m.

This measure would clearly enhance Austria's position as a business location and was an important signal of the reform initiatives and increasingly dynamic economic sector, said Gusenbauer. The Chancellor also highlighted the involvement of the social partners that had agreed on generally acceptable wage schemes. "The interests of both sides were taken into account in the discussion about longer shop opening hours and a reasonable compromise had been reached, which will be reflected in the collective agreements, stressed Gusenbauer. ■

European Forum Wachau in the Monastery of Göttweig

The traditional conference "European Forum Wachau" (2/3 June 2007) at the Monastery of Göttweig was attended by a high calibre audience also this year. Prominent speakers besides Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik and Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll were Portuguese Prime Minister and the next EU Presidency chairman José Sócrates, Hungarian Foreign Minister Kinga Göncz and EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hübner. The motto of this year's international platform for talks and dialogue was "Europe – a value-added". The discussions focused on "closeness to the citizen". On the sidelines of the European Forum, Vice-Chancellor Molterer and Portuguese Head of Government Sócrates gathered for an informal exchange on EU issues. Both sides agreed that solutions to open questions regarding the European Constitution had to be found so as to "keep Europe fit".

Sócrates also held talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer and Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "The new rules for opening hours and working hours are a clear signal to strengthen Austria's position as an employment and business location."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "The government wants to reach an agreement regarding the extension of the amnesty for illegal carers, financial aid to free-lance carers and support for the long-term care levels 3 and 4 still in June. Then discussions about common financing schemes will start with the Länder."

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer pays official visit to Poland

On 11 June 2007 Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer travels to Warsaw for official meetings with Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Speaker of Parliament (Sejm Marshal) Ludwik Dorn. In the preliminaries of the EU summit on 26 June 2007, their talks will concentrate on the future Treaty for a European Constitution.

After visiting the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising, Gusenbauer will participate in a discussion on the "Future of the European Left" at the University of Warsaw. ■

Federal Chancellor in Switzerland

On 7 June 2007 Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer met with Swiss Federal President and Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey at the country residence Lohn near Bern. The key topics discussed were European issues, bilateral relations and EURO 2008.

As far as the preparations for the European Football Championship were concerned, Austria was "was on schedule in all respects", emphasised Gusenbauer. In the evening the Chancellor also participated in the "Red & White Night" marking the one-year countdown to EURO 2008 in Interlaken. ■

Portugese PM José Sócrates pays visit to Austria

The future chairman of the EU Council Presidency, Portugal's Prime Minister José Sócrates, and Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer took a common stance on the EU agenda and the priorities of the European Union. A "quick compromise" on the European Constitution based on previous agreements was a "necessary as well as difficult task" of the Portuguese EU Council Presidency, said Sócrates in Vienna on 4 June 2007. Gusenbauer stressed that the standstill had to be overcome and pledged his "proactive support" to the Portuguese EU Presidency starting in one month.

"We came to the conclusion that a solution has to be found with regard to the Constitution issue", Sócrates had explained his position to reporters at the European Forum Wachau one day earlier.

This was also expected by the European citizens. The European Council had to give a "clear mandate" to his country at the final summit meeting of the EU heads of state and government under the German Presidency. Gusenbauer demanded a "crystal clear mandate" and criticised that the constitutional issue was "taking away a lot of energy from the EU". Fresh impetus had to be given to European integration. Europe had many important goals and tasks, e.g. the climate change, a common energy policy, the Schengen area, security and stability, sustainable pension systems and the role of national parliaments in subsidiarity checks, he said. ■

International Women's Conference on the Middle East in Vienna

The prominent participants of the international Women's Middle East Conference at Vienna Hofburg (30 to 31 May 2007) called for more political co-determination and more involvement of women in conflict settlement, in particular in the Middle East. The invitation of Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik had been accepted by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Palestinian Member of Parliament Hanan Ashrawi, the wife of the Iraqi President, Hero A. Talabani, President of the UN Plenary Assembly Sheikha Haya Rashed al-Khalifa from Bahrain and EU Commissioner for External Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

"It is absolutely the case that unless women are fully participants of their societies, these societies cannot really be fully democratic", emphasised Condoleezza Rice, who also met with Chancellor Gusenbauer on the sidelines of the conference.

"There isn't any conflict that is so severe that it could resist to dialogue forever", hostess Plassnik commented the joint commitment of all conference attendees to a non-violent dialogue in the Middle East peace efforts.

Hanan Ashrawi explained that the conference in Vienna demonstrated that there were opportunities for "finding a common platform for peace". Palestinian extremists were clearly rejected. The willingness to find a peaceful solution based on a dialogue with moderate Palestinian personalities was also signalled by Israeli Foreign Minister Livni. ■

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer: "EURO 2008 will become a mega party. Austria and Switzerland will be the focus of global attention during three weeks."

Foreign Minister Plassnik: "We talk, act and rely on the power of dialogue. Committed women leaders aim at participating in politics by networking and above all at promoting the Middle East peace process."

Prime Minister Sócrates: "It is desirable that the EU gets stronger as this would allow Europe to respond more powerfully."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Austria is in favour of the Treaty for a European Constitution and wants to preserve its substance. Issues of a more symbolic nature are less important to us than the content."

voestalpine acquired a majority holding of Böhler-Uddeholm

On 5 June 2007 the Austrian steelmaker voestalpine acquired a slim majority holding of 54.6% of the listed special steel producer Böhler-Uddeholm. The voestalpine deal is the largest acquisition in Austria's industrial history. The purchase price of about 55 percent of the voting stock (i.e. almost 28 million shares) is 2 billion euros; the Böhler shareholders receive 73 euros per share. Böhler's total worth is estimated at 3.7 billion euros. The deadline for the takeover bid ended on 4 June 2007. Analysts expected an acceptance of 60 to 70%.

According to voestalpine CEO Wolfgang Eder, the acquisition of the stake in Böhler-Uddeholm was made by the steel group without capital increase. The deal would be "digested" in two to three years.

The Linz-based steel group voestalpine, which is also listed on the stock exchange, and Böhler had operated jointly under the umbrella of the nationalised industry for several decades. They became independent players after privatisation in the early 1990ies. Both companies developed into highly profitable groups. Böhler-Uddeholm became listed on Vienna Stock Exchange in 1995 and increased its results twelve times since then, as CEO Claus Raidl informed.

"Industry-related considerations" had been decisive for forming the steel alliance, stated Eder and Raidl. voestalpine and Böhler-Uddeholm wanted to become joint "premium suppliers" of "steel products in the top quality segment" and market leaders in important niches. The synergy potential is estimated at about 65 million euros annually.

Böhler-Uddeholm has more than 14,000 employees worldwide (more than 4,100 in Austria); its sales totalled almost 3.1 billion euros in 2006.

One day after acquiring the Böhler shareholding, voestalpine AG presented the balance sheet for the financial year 2006/07 – the third record balance sheet in a row. In 2006/07 the earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) exceeded the 1-billion-euro threshold for the first time in the corporate history. The operating profit increased by almost 40% year-on-year to 1.01 billion euros; sales rose by 13.1% to 7.05 billion euros. The result after taxes improved from 526 to 765 million euros.

voestalpine plans a 100% takeover of Böhler. However, it was not possible to predict the date of the finalisation of the deal, stated Eder at the balance sheet presentation press conference. Böhler-Uddeholm was in any case the fifth division of voestalpine.

voestalpine wants to distribute a dividend for the past financial year, that has almost doubled from 0.78 to 1.45 euros. The earnings per share increased from 3.25 to 4.77 euros. In 2006/07 the voestalpine group had about 22,750 employees (excluding apprentices) around the globe. ■

Lower unemployment due to good economic conditions in Austria

Thanks to the favourable economic conditions, unemployment in Austria dropped under the magical 200,000 threshold already in May (and not as usual in June). According to the Public Employment Service (AMS), 197,796 unemployed persons were registered at the end of May, corresponding to a decline of 6.6% or 14,054 persons. Thus the unemployment rate in Austria (based on national statistics) was about 6.1%, which is below the prior-year level of 6.5%. The number of participants in AMS training programmes decreased by 5,471 (minus 8.7%) to 75,155.

Due to the favourable cyclical development, the Economic Research Institute made an upward revision of its growth data: the GDP grew by 0.9% from the previous quarter and by 3.5% from the prior-year level. ■

"60th anniversary of Marshall Plan" celebrated at Belvedere in Vienna

60 years ago the USA laid the foundation for Austria's economic recovery after WWII with the "Marshall Plan" for the reconstruction of Europe. The anniversary was celebrated at Belvedere Palace on 5 June 2007 in the presence of Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer, Economic Minister Martin Bartenstein and US Ambassador to Austria Susan R. McCaw.

Austrian President Fischer had underlined the importance of the Marshall Plan for reconstruction and democracy in Europe and Austria one day earlier in a meeting with former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who stayed privately in Austria. ■

Voest CEO Eder: "We intend to fully consolidate and integrate Böhler-Uddeholm with effect 1 July 2007."

"In the financial year 2006/07 the earnings before interest and taxes rose by almost 40% to 1.01 billion euros, surpassing the one-billion-euro threshold for the first time in the corporate history. This is what we understand by value-oriented growth."

Federal President Heinz Fischer: "Of all relief and reconstruction programmes, the Marshall Plan was undoubtedly the most important and most valuable one, with positive effects throughout several decades."

In the framework of the Marshall Plan, Austria received US assistance of about 962 million dollars up to 1953.

La Biennale di Venezia: Chancellor Gusenbauer opens Austrian Pavilion and pleads for critical art

77 countries – among them for the first time the Lebanon and Turkey – present themselves at the 52nd International Art Exhibition in Venice. “La Biennale” ending on 21 November 2007 is staged in the Giardini pavilions and on rented premises. The general motto selected by US curator Robert Storr is “Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense ...”. In the large collective show also three Austrian artists participate: Valie Export, Franz West and Rainer Gahnal.

The Austrian pavilion with Heinz Brandl’s colourful, multi-faceted “realistic” paintings inspired in landscapes from Waldviertel to Burgenland quickly came to be known as a spiritual place of silence and contemplation.

The Austrian pavilion was opened on 8 June 2007 in the presence of Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied. While Minister Schmied described Heinz Brandl in her statement as a “landscape painter of a very special kind”, Gusenbauer underlined the importance of modern art in his opening remarks. “It is a priority of the federal government to promote contemporary art. The relationship between politics and art should be critical. It should be characterised by mutual curiosity and not by attempts of politics to control art. We want to provide stimuli to promote art and to further develop the strengths of Austrian cultural creators. We want (...) to enhance the international presence of Austrian artists because the creativity and the artistic potential of the cultural creators makes an important contribution to the discussion of social issues and to the future viability of our society. The input of artistic and cultural creators is indispensable for a critical examination of current socio-political developments“. ■

Kreisky Prize: Chancellor Gusenbauer pays homage to Lerner

Gerda Lerner, a researcher specialised in women’s history, received the Bruno Kreisky Prize for her life-time achievements and the political book of the year 2006.

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer paid homage to the professor emeritus of history at the University of Wisconsin (USA) in the festive hall (“Prunksaal”) of the Austrian National Library in Vienna. He praised her not only as a “doyenne and pioneer of women’s historiography” but also the as “the person devoting most efforts to the academic recognition and institutionalisation of women’s historiography”. The “godmother of women’s history“ – the Chancellor quoted from the New York Times – was known far beyond academia and had always considered her activities for the “others”, those on the fringes of society, to be of high political relevance. The discrimination against women in history was only one but a “significant form of discrimination” since women were “the group stigmatised as “others” for the longest period in history“, stated Gusenbauer.

Lerner was born to Jewish parents in Vienna in 1920. Together with her parents she had to flee the National Socialists. She was able to become a “recognised citizen and scholar only in the USA“. In 1972 Lerner had succeeded in establishing the first study programme for women’s history in the USA in 1972 and a PhD programme in 1980. Society owed it to the laureate that the “environment for women in science and the humanities had changed“. After her “generations of women had followed her example and were able to rely on her support“. Through her work Gerda Lerner finally gave “the oppressed majority of women the history which the male history had denied them for such a long time“. She had realised “before the others that social discrimination was complex and that exploitation, oppression, discrimination were the effects of historical processes”.

By way of conclusion the Chancellor stated that it was a great pleasure to him “to award this very important prize to the most active and brightest historian at the beginning of the new women’s historiography”.

Among Gerda Lerner’s most outstanding works are “The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy (Oxford University Press, 1994). The German translation “Die Entstehung des feministischen Bewusstseins: vom Mittelalter bis zur ersten Frauenbewegung“ was published by dtv in Munich in 1998. ■

La Biennale di Venezia: ending on 21 November 2007 www.labiennale.org

More details about Heinz Brandl’s contribution to the Biennale: www.biennale07.at

Dominique Meyer & Franz Welser-Möst – a new duo at the Vienna State Opera

As Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied announced on 6 June 2007, Dominique Meyer (51), general manager of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, will become the new head of Vienna State Opera in the opera season 2010/11. Meyer will be supported by Austrian conductor Franz Welser-Möst (46) as a general music director. The employment contracts of the two heads are effective for five years. Meyer succeeds Ioan Holender, who has been the director serving longest at Vienna State Opera (from 1992 to the end of August 2010).

Dominique Meyer was born as the son of a diplomat in Alsace in 1955. Having lived e.g. in Bonn as a child, he speaks perfect German. As a devotee of art, he attended opera, theatre and concert performances almost on a daily basis during his studies of economics in Paris. In 1980 he started to work for the French Ministry of Industry, where he was responsible for the electronic and computer industry. He began working in the cultural sector after then Minister of Culture Jack Lang took him on as an advisor in 1984. In 1989 Meyer was appointed director general of the opera house in Paris. Later he also co-founded the TV channel ARTE. He became active at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1999. In addition, he gave lectures on music management at various universities (this is something he has in common with Claudia Schmied). According to the plans of the new opera director, the State Opera will become a venue for the extraordinary and the new. Composers should “not create operas that are removed from the programme after some performances. They have to understand for whom they compose music“. At the European Forum Alpbach 2005 Meyer said that it was necessary to respond to the ageing of the opera audience by revising programmes and ticket price policies.

Franz Welser-Möst was born in Linz (Upper Austria) in 1960. He studied composition with Balduin Sulzer and violin and then became a conductor. In 1996 he made his international breakthrough with a concert of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He led this orchestra from 1990 to 1996. From 1995 to 2002 he was

the music director of the Zurich opera house. Since 2002 he has been the chief conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra. In September 2005 he was appointed general music director of the Zurich opera house. Moreover, Welser-Möst gave guest performances at Vienna State Opera, the German Opera Berlin, the Glyndebourne Festival. In 2004 he participated for the first time in the Salzburg Festival. He was awarded the title “Conductor of the Year“ in 2003.■

Leopold Museum: Kolo Moser. universal Art Nouveau genius

The Leopold Museum in Vienna presents the so far most comprehensive show (until 10 September 2007) on the body of work of Koloman Moser (1868-1918), one of the most important artists of Viennese Art Nouveau (called “Jugendstil” in the German-speaking countries). It gives insight into the development and great diversity of the work of the trend-setting artist and highlights the eternal beauty of his interiors, which from pieces of furniture and drapery to a desk lamp illustrate an artistic creation aspiring to reach a synthesis of the arts. It also showcases works of art reaching the entire population of the former Danube monarchy (stamps and banknotes based on his design) as well as his comprehensive oeuvre as a painter. Teaching for almost 20 years at the Crafts School in Vienna (an early predecessor of today’s University of Applied Arts), the universal genius passed on the elements of a new art to several generations of disciples.

In 1897 Kolo Moser became a co-founder of the art movement “Vienna Secession“. He designed the owls and the cross-bearers (disappeared during the war) for the front of the building by architect Joseph Maria Olbrich and a significant part of the colourful “Jugendstil” glass windows of the church by Otto Wagner in Steinhof. Together with the group around Gustav Klimt he withdrew from Secession in 1905. Moser won international renown as an artist of Wiener Werkstätte, which he founded in 1903 with Josef Hoffmann, an architect and designer of the same calibre, as well as financier Fritz Waerndorfer. By revaluing the crafts, they wanted to promote the “Gesamtkunstwerk“, the concept of the synthesis of the arts, propagated by the Secession movement. The exhibition highlights

Leopold Museum at Museumsquartier (MQ), Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna www.leopoldmuseum.org
Recommendable catalogue “Koloman Moser 1868-1918“, ed. by the Leopold Museum Private Foundation, 448 pages, richly illustrated, about 30 euros.

Koloman Mosers's importance as a painter. Influenced by Klimt and later Ferdinand Hodler, he found a unique abstracted form of expression characterising his landscapes, still lifes, portraits and mythological works. His delicate costumes accentuated the beauty of Isadora Duncan's art of dance. He also created the sets for operas like Julius Bittner's "Der Bergsee". ■

Kunsthalle Krems: Roma & Sinti

The exhibition at Kunsthalle Krems (Lower Austria) from 17 June to 2 September 2007 gives an overview of the changing and more differentiated perception of the Roma und Sinti in the visual arts, with works by Giacomo Francesco Cipper, August von Pettenkofen, Anton Romako, Mihály Munkácsy, Otto Mueller and many others. Defamed "gypsies" shown in stereotype occupations – from knife grinders to fortune-tellers – mark the beginning of a European tradition in the visual arts of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century "gypsy paintings" became a popular genre. These portrayals of the Roma and Sinti represent a mythical transfiguration of the social outsiders. The ethnic group marginalised over the centuries has been recognised as an important part of society only in modernity. The exhibition project was developed in cooperation with the Budapest Ethnographic Museum. The art show is under the aegis of the chairman of the cultural association of Austrian Roma, Rudolf Sarközi, and Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll. In parallel to this exhibition, Kunsthalle Krems shows "Yves Leresche. Rroma". The prize-winning photo documentations were shot by the Swiss artist Leresche in Europe. In 1990 he worked for the first time in Romania, where he got to know Roma families, learned their language and shared their every-day lives, sorrows and joys. He gradually turned from a stranger – a "Gadjo" – into a friend. With his photo series composed of about 80 works, he created a respectful and emotional portrait. All photos are loans from the Musée de l'Élysée Lausanne. ■

Wiener Albertina: painters's group "Die Brücke" from private collection

Vienna's Albertina offers a profound insight into the extraordinary and expressive visual worlds of

the German painters' group "Die Brücke". The exhibition titled "Expressive! The artists of "Die Brücke". The Collection of Hermann Gerlinger" (closing on 26 August 2007) presents about 260 works from the Gerlinger Collection, the Moritzburg Foundation, the Art Museum of the German Land of Sachsen-Anhalt, Albertina and other museums in Vienna. More than 10 years after the previous "Brücke" exhibition in Vienna, Albertina aims at presenting all aspects of this highly influential group of expressionist artists by covering all media and genres.

In 1905 some autodidactic students of architecture shocked the art audience with intensive colours, taboo-breaking realistic motifs and shapes reminding of woodcuts. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Erich Heckel, Fritz Bleyl as well as later representatives like Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein and Otto Mueller strove for pure and direct expression by experimenting with colours and shapes in drawings but also in woodcuts, lithography, etchings as well as paintings. The artists were not interested in creating works true to nature or based on imitation. They tried to transform the visible reality through an agitated process of abstraction into a pure image of emotions. The most important means of expression was colour, and form was simplified or exaggerated expressively. The formal principles of African and Oceanian art became important sources of inspiration. These early representatives of "Aktionismus" (the Austrian version of the happening) searched for a simple, natural but also erotic life at the lonely lakes of Moritzburg or the Baltic Sea – their "exotic paradise" in Germany. ■

Commemorating Franz Hubmann

Franz Hubmann, the doyen of Austrian photography, died aged 92 in Vienna. The artist born in Ebreichsdorf (Lower Austria) in 1914 covered the entire spectrum of contemporary themes: music, dance, architecture, visual arts and design, children and leisure time. He became famous as the editor and chief reporter of the cultural magazine "magnum" founded in 1954. Chancellor Gusenbauer praised the deceased as "an eminence of international photography, who had also contributed to shaping the image of Vienna and Austria by unique photos. ■

Kunsthalle Krems:
Roma & Sinti.
17 June to
2 September 2007.
Exhibition
catalogue:
EUR 19.
www.kunsthalle.at

Yves Leresche is
artist in residence
(AIR) in Krems in
summer 2007.

Expressionism
show at Vienna
Albertina:
„Expressiv! Die
Künstler der
Brücke“. Bis 26.
August.
www.albertina.at

Austria intensifies combat against doping

After adopting the Anti-Doping Act and ratifying the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport, Austria has made a quantum leap in the anti-doping fight. The Anti-Doping Act and the independent Anti-Doping Agency are two badly needed initiatives of the Secretariat of State for Sport in the combat against doping, which have also been applauded internationally. The adoption of the Anti-Doping Act in the plenary session of the second chamber of Parliament (National Council) makes Austria the leader of the EU-27 in the area of anti-doping legislation. It is true that no law in this world can eliminate doping, but Austria succeeded in defining clear rules to hold responsible those using drugs. The Austrian law has also an international dimension as it fully incorporates the latest version of the Code of WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency). The main innovation of the new law supported by all five parties represented in Parliament is the establishment of an independent doping control institution. The responsibility in the context of doping offences is transferred from the sports institutions to a national Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), which is independent of the sports clubs. Doping controls can be performed 24 hours a day even outside competition periods. The new Act does not only address the responsibility of the athlete but also his environment. Persons distributing doping substances are subject to criminal prosecution. The athletes affected can be banned from competitions, which corresponds to a prohibition to exercise their occupation. Sports clubs not implementing a NADA decision are deprived of all financial aid. Hence, more effective measures have become available in the combat against doping. Austria increases the funds earmarked for its anti-doping campaign comprising information, prevention and controls to more than 1 million euros. ■

One year before EURO 2008

Safe, sustainable and environment-friendly – these are the three criteria to which the Austrian federal government has committed itself in the preparatory phase of EURO 2008. The arrangements for the final tournament of the

largest football event (e.g. stadium construction, transport and sustainability concepts, public viewing rules as well as draft bills in the field of security) are progressing according to plan. The Austrian federal government makes its contribution to the greatest football party of the century. Ten of fourteen ministries are directly involved in preparing and realising EURO 2008. This common engagement reflects the uniqueness of this large-scale sports event. The supranational transport project developed jointly with Switzerland was presented recently. Besides organisational measures regarding stadiums, security, ticketing and accommodation, an effective transport concept is among the most important and most difficult tasks in preparing EURO 2008. The objective is to control the traffic flows generated by EURO 2008 in a way that is as benign to the environment as possible. Experts expect up to two million foreign guests in June 2008. Fans will benefit from the further development of the combined ticket based on the experience of the world championship in Germany. The combined ticket for EURO 2008 will include long-distance transport. Match tickets will be valid as tickets for public transport in Switzerland, the entire network of the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) as well as for local transport in the host cities. The common sustainability concept with Switzerland will be presented in late June. Besides sustainability and transport, security plays a key role in the preparations for EURO 2008. In security issues Switzerland and its security regulations are an example to Austria. Analogously to the Swiss Hooligans Act, Austria will introduce a registration duty for hooligans to realise the common goal of maximum security in and around the football stadiums during EURO 2008. This regulation makes it possible to detain registered hooligans for preventive reasons. Data about hooligans are, of course, exchanged across the borders. ■

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