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Stately funeral for former Federal President Kurt Waldheim

Federal President Fischer: "In Kurt Waldheim we lose a great Austrian who served our country from the very beginning of the Second Republic."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Austria is very proud that Kurt Waldheim was appointed UN Secretary-General twice and that he made a vital contribution to the peaceful coexistence of the two blocs with his activities."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "The new long-term care model allows people in Austria to live in their familiar surroundings as long as possible. This is another measure showing that the federal government takes its social responsibility very seriously."

Austria mourns former Federal President Kurt Waldheim, who died from a coronary-circulatory failure aged 88 in Vienna on 14 June 2007. The "stately funeral" took place in the presence of President Heinz Fischer, the federal government as well as hundreds of guests of honour and visitors on 23 June 2007. In compliance with Waldheim's request, no foreign dignitaries were invited. A foreign attendee of the funeral was Liechtenstein's Prince Hans Adam II.

At the beginning of the memorial ceremonies Cardinal Christoph Schönborn celebrated a requiem in St. Stephen's Cathedral. President Fischer praised the deceased as a "great Austrian who suffered injustice". The deceased would always be remembered with respect and in appreciation of his achievements for the Second Republic. As a UN Secretary-General, Waldheim had been active "beyond the borders of Austria", stated Fischer. Waldheim deserved it that the actions during his life should be judged "as a whole". Fischer also highlighted Waldheim's commitment to South Tyrol.

After the requiem, the funeral procession – accompanied by the family of the deceased – passed by the offices of the Austrian president at Ballhausplatz and the UN's Vienna headquarters. Waldheim's activities as a federal president and foreign minister as well as a UN Secretary-General were commemorated. Vienna's UN chief Antonio Maria Costa presented a statement of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon.

Waldheim was buried with military honours in the federal presidents' tomb at Vienna's Central Cemetery.

Having been appointed twice UN Secretary-General (1972-1981), Waldheim had reached the top of the diplomatic career ladder. The statesman from Lower Austria had previously served as a foreign minister in the Cabinet of Chancellor Josef Klaus (ÖVP) from 1968 to 1970.

In 1986 Waldheim stood as the candidate of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) for the president's office. The electoral campaign was overshadowed by Waldheim's role as an officer in the German army during WWII. He had not mentioned this episode in his life in his biography. This led to a highly emotionalised electoral campaign, with Waldheim emerging as

the winner. His tenure was characterised by external isolation. He remained barred from travelling to the US until his death. Waldheim was married and the father of three children.

In a message published posthumously, Waldheim called for reconciliation but stressed once more that he was not guilty of sympathising with the Nazis or participating in NS crimes.

Chancellor Gusenbauer expressed his "condolences and sincere sympathy" to the family and reminded of the fact that Waldheim's election to the president's office had initiated an overdue process of confronting Austria's NS past.

However, all Austrian political parties agree that Waldheim's work as a UN Secretary-General was successful and that he made a great contribution to enhancing Austria's position as a seat of the United Nations. ■

Gusenbauer: care package is a milestone in social policy

The coalition partners SPÖ (Social Democrats) and ÖVP (People's Party) reached an agreement on financing around-the-clock domiciliary care services on 13 June 2007. The so-called "amnesty regulation" for illegal carers will remain in force up to the end of 2007. Legal care services will be subsidised as from care level 3. In addition, the government supports the free-lance model. These three measures will be included in the "long-term care package".

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer described this as "a milestone in social policy" regarding long-term care in Austria. Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer praised it as a "real breakthrough".

The model for free-lance carers will be supported with a maximum of 225 euros per month. The employee model is subsidised with up to 800 euros per month. The financial contributions of the Länder and the ceiling for the assets of persons eligible for long-term care benefits have not yet been fixed. ■

Gift tax to be abolished

After the inheritance tax, the Constitutional Court declared the gift tax unconstitutional on 22 June 2007. It granted the legislator a term for amendment until 31 July 2008. Until then the current tax remains in force. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer at EU summit in Brussels

The last large-scale summit meeting of the EU heads of state and government under the German Presidency took place in Brussels on 23 and 24 June 2007. Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik.

An agreement was reached on the fundamentals of a new reform treaty which is to replace the failed EU Constitution. The planned government conference is to be concluded still this year.

Based on Poland's request, the reform of the EU voting procedures was postponed to the end of 2014. The principle of a double majority (55% of the Member States, 65% of the population) will take effect on 1 November 2014 (and for some EU Member States only at the end of March 2017 or later). The original Treaty for a Constitution was maintained in substance but formal aspects were subject to significant changes. Besides the hymn, symbols and flag, EU legislation is to take precedence over national law. The new EU foreign minister's title will be "High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy".

Chancellor Gusenbauer summarised the outcome of the summit as "acceptable". Thanks to this clear mandate, the discussions of several years came to an end. As the Fundamental Rights Charter, sustainable pension systems and climate protection were enshrined in the treaty, the Chancellor was of the opinion that Austria's main concerns had been taken into account. Gusenbauer praised Council President Angela Merkel for leading the EU out of an almost hopeless crisis. ■

President Fischer congratulated Israel's new President Peres

Federal President Heinz Fischer congratulated newly elected Israeli President Shimon Peres on 13 June 2007. In his letter of congratulation the Austrian President praised his "extensive and extensive political experience" as well as his "untiring efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation", especially in the Middle East. This had won Peres great international recognition, which was symbolised by the Nobel Peace Prize.

"I am looking forward to a close cooperation with a view to further developing the good relations between our countries based on our long-standing good personal contacts and numerous common political concepts", Fischer was quoted in a press release. ■

Italian President Napolitano pays a state visit to Austria

On 26 June 2007 Italian President Giorgio Napolitano arrived in Austria for a several-day state visit. He was accompanied by his wife Clio and Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema. Talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer and Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer were on the agenda. The programme also includes visits to Vienna's Boy Choir and the Leopold Museum. Last October Federal President Fischer had paid a state visit to his Italian counterpart Napolitano in Rome. On this occasion he had also conveyed an official invitation to Pope Benedict XVI. in the Vatican. The head of the Catholic Church will come to Austria in September to celebrate the 850th anniversary of the place of pilgrimage Mariazell. ■

Foreign Minister Plassnik: avoid excessive delay of Kosovo solution

"The decision on the final status of the Kosovo cannot simply be put on the backburner for years. We finally have to solve this last status problem to achieve long-term stability in the Balkans and to focus the perspectives of the entire region on a future in Europe", underlined Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik in Vienna on 20 June 2007 after a meeting with UN Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari and his deputy Albert Rohan.

In this context Plassnik highlighted Austria's "firm" support for Ahtisaari's proposal to grant independence to Kosovo under international surveillance. This plan fully guaranteed the far-reaching protection of the rights of the Serbian population and other ethnic groups in Kosovo, said Plassnik.

The UN Security Council currently deliberates on adopting a resolution based on the Ahtisaari plan. ■

Federal President Gusenbauer: "The EU summit led to a typical European outcome after reaching a difficult compromise, which ultimately is a progress compared to the present treaties."

Foreign Minister Plassnik: "We succeeded in deciding on a precise repair order."

Foreign Minister Plassnik: "A solution of the Kosovo status must finally be found to achieve long-term stability in the Balkans."

OeNB: Austrian economy continues on a growth path

This is the second year in a row in which Austria's economy will register an above-average growth. The Austrian National Bank (OeNB) has made a significant upward revision of its economic forecast, now predicting a growth of 3.2% of the gross domestic product (GDP). This is 0.4 percentage points above the forecast of last December. The dynamic economic growth is expected to continue in the following years: 2.7% are forecast for 2008, 2.3% for 2009.

"The reason for adjusting the forecast was mainly a more optimistic assessment of the domestic economic development", said OeNB Director Josef Christl at the presentation of the overall economic forecast for the period 2007 to 2009 on 12 June 2007. Moreover, export demand remained "on a very high level". The euro-zone had also registered a generally favourable export trend. Supported by a strong growth of investments, it had become "self-sustained". The euro-zone was therefore expected to register a more dynamic growth than the USA in 2007, said Christl.

Exports are and will continue to be an important growth engine. According to the OeNB, the investment trend will probably reach its climax in 2007.

The strong economic growth in 2007 will lead to increasing current account surpluses and entail a reduction of the budget deficit. The OeNB expects a budget deficit of 0.7% for 2007, and decreases to 0.5 and 0.2% for 2008 and 2009, respectively. In 2006 the deficit amounted to 1.1%. The unemployment rate is likely to drop significantly, from 4.8% last year to 4.3% in 2007 and to 4.2 % in the two following years. The number of employed persons grows more rapidly than the labour supply. ■

France Telecom buys One

Orange, the mobile radio subsidiary of France Telecom, and the Hungarian financial investor Mid Europa Partners buy 100% of Austria's third-largest mobile phone operator One. On 20 June 2007 Orange outshone its rival, the Dutch KPN, in a tough bidding procedure. The purchase price for the total enterprise amounts to

about 1.4 billion euros.

One day after the take-over, the French spokesman of the group, Bertrand Deronchaine, announced quick changes in management and profound restructuring of the company. Within 12 to 18 months the company will be renamed "Orange", the name of the international brand of France Telecom.

Although statistical data show that no less than 113% of the Austrians are mobile phone owners, France Telecom assumes that there is still a significant growth potential in Austria. Precisely because the usage rate of mobile phones was extremely high, new products would be accepted more easily, informed Orange. This was where opportunities for profit were arising.

In Austria France Telecom now holds 35% of One. The remaining 65% are owned by Mid Europa Partners from Hungary. As a result, the French company does not have to include One in its consolidated financial statements. The complete takeover is to be realised only after completing the restructuring of One. ■

Vienna Airport is Austria's most important job engine

In the past few years Vienna Airport has developed into Austria's most important job engine. Almost 16,000 persons hold full-time positions in 230 enterprises located directly in Schwechat. Airport Vienna safeguards indirectly another 52,000 jobs (30% more than in 1999) in supplier companies. According to the recent study "Economic Factor Vienna Airport" by the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) and Joanneum Research (JR), this corresponds to an annual plus of 5%.

For comparison: in Austria the number of employed persons increases annually by about 0.5%. "Per 1 million passengers Vienna Airport creates 1,000 jobs – probably there is no other business location in Austria generating jobs at a comparable pace", Vienna Airport CEO Herbert Kaufmann informed reporters on 22 June 2007. The most important employer at Vienna Airport is currently Austrian Airlines (AUA) with almost 7,000 staff members. Vienna and Lower Austria benefit most significantly from the airport. The total value-added generated by the aviation sector amounts to 4.8 billion euros. The tax revenue totals almost 1 billion euros. ■

OeNB: this year Austria's economy will grow by 3.2%.

Vienna Airport creates jobs for about 70,000 people.

The value-added amounts to 4.8 billion euros.

The tax revenue from the operations of Vienna Airport totals almost 1 billion euros.

E-government successful: 10 years of HELP.gv.at and RIS.bka.gv.at

HELP.gv.at and RIS.bka.gv.at (the legal information system of the Federal Republic of Austria) have offered services to the citizens and the economic sector on the Internet for 10 years. This anniversary was celebrated in a comprehensive presentation at the Austrian National Library on 20 June 2007. ORF reporter Barbara Rett moderated the event, in which Secretary of State for Regional Policy and Administrative Reform in the Federal Chancellery Heidrun Silhavy, former Federal Minister Franz Löschnak, Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Finance Wilhelm Molterer, Director General at the Federal Chancellery Manfred Matzka, Head the Constitutional Law Service Georg Lienbacher and the Spokesman of the Platform Digital Austria of the Federal Chancellery, Christian Rupp, explained in a humorous presentation how difficult it had been to guide the Austrian society from the bureaucratic and complex pre-digital age – accurately described by authors of the Old Austria such as Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando – into the digital present and the “Second Life“ of the future.

In the meantime Austria has become Europe’s e-government leader. HELP and RIS – the most noteworthy examples of digital Austria – have received several national and international rewards. HELP.gv.at dates back to plans developed in 1997. Important projects in the field of electronic services for the citizens were tested successfully at the first meeting of the HELP advisory board. In 1998 it was already possible to access the websites of the cities, communities and local authorities via links. In the same year the Platform registered about 950,000 hits. In 2006 more than 100 million hits by more than 300,000 visitors were recorded.

HELP.gv.at is structured based on “life situations”, which are citizen-friendly and easily comprehensible to the users. This has made it possible to “bundle” official contacts and to overcome traditional hierarchical structures and the distribution of powers among the authorities. Today the catalogue of themes comprises almost 200 “life situations“, while in 1998 there were only 15 “life situations“. The 10 most frequently requested life situations are: passport, employee

benefits, driving licence, motor vehicles, grants and subsidies, residence permits and visa, (de)registration with the police, birth, housing and basic information on “marriage”.

Thus HELP.gv.at became the first citizens’ portal in Europe – and probably of the whole world – to be structured on the basis of life situations. It set an example to many platforms in other countries, e.g. the citizens’ portals in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Saxony and Saarland.

Some sections of the HELP.gv.at project are still pioneering, e.g. the HELP visitors’ book as well as the full text search. The functionalities include a “glossary”, which was highly praised by Secretary of State Silhavy. It explains more than 200 terms, phrases and terms of officialdom in an easily comprehensible way. HELP visitors may forward terms not found to the HELP team. In this way the “glossary” is extended continuously.

“Forms/online official contacts” is one of the most frequently requested pages. Currently, HELP.gv.at offers access to more than 1,000 forms available in different formats. With the citizens’ card function an increasing number of procedures can be handled fully electronically, from the application and payment to delivery. While in the late 1990s there were only 9 project partners at municipal level and one at local level, today there are 742 partner authorities, which can choose from among 42 online forms made available by HELP. As Silhavy explained, the number of hits of HELP.gv.at had increased more than twentyfold since the introduction of the system. 12,000 hits were registered per day.

HELP-business.gv.at was released in 2001. This website does not only support entrepreneurs in starting up businesses but also contains basic information on personnel, finances, foreign trade, general information for existing companies, etc. In the next years new fields and themes will be covered by HELP.gv.at. Currently preparations are underway to provide access to subjects like security/economic crime (entrepreneurs), additional information on taxes (citizens), the Environmental Information Act (citizens and entrepreneurs), financial difficulties, courts and health (in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth).

HELP.gv.at, which is further developed on an ongoing basis, also tries to conform to

The E-Government Initiative of the Austrian federal government is leading in Europe:

www.help.gv.at

www.ris.bka.gv.at

www.help-business.gv.at

state-of-the-art barrier-free presentation to allow people with specific disabilities to take advantage of the full range of electronic services. Besides, the services of HELP.gv.at can be accessed free of charge from all new multimedia telephone pillars in Austria.

HELP.gv.at is the world's first e-government platform opening its "office doors" to "second life" This virtual island is visited by no less than 60,000 Austrians on a regular basis. There are different communication levels on the virtual 100,000m² "office premises", ranging from information charts and videos to functionalities for arranging appointments or personal counselling by the first avatar of an official in the "Second Life", "Sizzi Winkler".

The foundation stone for RIS.bka.gv.at – the Austrian legal information system on the Internet – was laid in 1986 based on a resolution of the Council of Ministers. The beginning was made by integrating the Austrian federal law, with a focus on the employment regulations for public-sector employees and on the Federal Constitution Act. The next step was the documentation of the federal law gazettes. In 1990 the rulings of the supreme courts were integrated in the database. RIS became accessible through the Internet in 1997. It is a public and free-of-charge platform providing information on the legislation of the Republic of Austria, including the federal law, the law and the law gazettes of the Länder, some parts of municipal law. It also documents the rulings of the Administrative and Constitutional Courts, decrees and EU law (CELEX). The Internet version of RIS currently contains 1.4 million documents; the number of requests exceeded the threshold of 120 million 2006, explained Head of Department Lienbacher. Since customer orientation was an important goal of RIS, a font will be used in the future that can be read more easily and is more suitable for the presentation of tables and charts. Just like in the case of HELP.gv.at, efforts to improve the quality of RIS.bka.gv.at continue.

Besides barrier-free access and the speedy processing of official transactions, the cost factor was another argument in favour of e-government, as Head of Department Matzka stressed. These portals could help to save administrative expenses of several 100,000 euros per year.

After promulgating laws exclusively via RIS, it

has for example become possible to save about 60 tons of paper annually. ■

Kreisky Prize: Chancellor Gusenbauer paid homage to historian Tony Judt

Tony Judt has recently received the Bruno Kreisky Prize for the Political Book 2006 in Vienna. The historian and director of the Erich Maria Remarque Institute of New York University was born in London in 1948. The Prize was awarded to him for his monumental work of more than 1,000 pages "Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945". In the past 60 years the so-called "old continent" has undergone a radical change. The Second World War was followed by the Cold War. The revolutions after 1989 did not only pave the way for predominantly democratic processes but also created the basis for the accession of an increasing number of nations to the European Union. Judt presents an analytical outline of the political trends, the society, culture and everyday life in Europe. This thrilling historical narration conveys the impression that the era of nation states has finally been overcome in European history. In his laudatio Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer stated that he did not know "any other work that described the long shadows of the time before 1945 to the present day, the lies and taboos of the after-war period as well as the often painful confrontation with this past in such an impressive and plausible way" as Tony Judt's book.

In his thank-you statement the laureate said that he was pleased "to receive the prize named after Bruno Kreisky". He reminded of Kreisky's role in developing the welfare state and of his active foreign policy focusing not only on Austria but also Europe. The European model was considered exemplary in many regions of the world. It was the only model that provided for collective decision-making mechanisms.

Chancellor Gusenbauer also pointed out that it was a task of contemporary history research to continue presenting and teaching up-to-date facts about the past. With regard to Judt's optimistic attitude, who predicts a bright future for Europe, he stated thoughtfully: "We'll see if Europe will really shape the 21st century". ■

Historian Tony Judt receives the Kreisky Prize for the Political Book 2006:

"Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945". Penguin Press. ISBN 1-59420-065-3

("Geschichte Europas von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart". München: C. Hanser 2007. ISBN 9783446207776)

www.renner-institut.at

Deep mourning for Austro Pop poet Georg Danzer

Georg Danzer, the poet of Austrian pop music ("Austro Pop"), died aged 60 from lung cancer on 21 June 2007. As a member of the internationally successful group "Austria 3", he had been enthusiastically celebrated together with his colleagues Wolfgang Ambros und Rainhard Fendrich at Vienna's Stadthalle still in April. His death was announced only after his cremation on 22 June 2007.

Georg Danzer was born in Vienna in 1946. He started to play the guitar intensively when he was 13 years old. He caused a sensation as the writer of charming songs for Austrian singers like Ambros and Marianne Mendt. He made his breakthrough in the German-speaking area with his LP "Tschik" (meaning "cigarette" in colloquial Viennese). The song "Jö schau" about the Viennese Bohemian Café Hawelka won a Golden Record in 1976. He became Austria's most successful singer in Germany.

The Austro Pop legend described as shy by other singer-songwriters like André Heller withdrew to Spain. He did not only write songs but also translated books. After returning to Vienna in the 1990s, he triumphed as a member of the group "Austria 3". With his second wife, a veterinarian, and two small children he led a quiet family life in the Vienna Woods. His last CD released in 2006 was titled "Träumer" ("Dreamer").

About one year ago cancer was diagnosed. Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer was deeply affected by Danzer's death: "Many of his songs will remain unforgettable to a whole generation". The Chancellor stressed Georg Danzer's humanitarian commitment, e.g. in the framework of the human rights organisation "SOS Mitmensch". Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied said that the songs of the pop poet formed "part of Austria's post-war history".

Rainhard Fendrich paid an artistically outstanding homage to his deceased friend "Schurl" (Viennese nickname for "Georg") at his concert at "Donauinselfest", a giant outdoor party on the Danube island, in the evening of 23 June 2007. 200,000 people joined in the songs, among them hits like "Mamas Fenster", "Griechenland" or "Ruaf mi ned au": "Don't call me because you know very well that I don't want to and can't go on – please don't call me". ■

Beatification of the peasant and sacristan Franz Jägerstätter

At the funeral ceremony for Kurt Waldheim at Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral President Heinz Fischer did not only praise the achievements of the former UN Secretary-General and Austrian Federal President but also referred to his problematic statement about "doing one's duty". The President reminded of the fact that those who refused to do their duty had been denied respect for a long time in the Second Republic. The wife of Franz Jägerstätter, who had been executed by the Nazis, did not even receive a widow's pension after 1945.

Franz Jägerstätter was born in St. Radegund (Upper Austria) in 1907 and was executed in Berlin-Brandenburg in 1943. The Catholic had refused to serve in the German army ("Wehrmacht") on religious grounds. The beatification of the "martyr of conscience" will probably take place in Linz on Austria's national holiday on 26 October 2007, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn informed recently. The Bishops' Conference stated that the "peasant and sacristan Franz Jägerstätter had realised more clearly than many of his contemporaries that the Christian faith and the criminal National Socialist system were completely incompatible". ■

Homage to Elfriede Gerstl

Elfriede Gerstl celebrated her 75th birthday on 16 June 2007. In his letter of congratulation Federal President Fischer praised the poems, essays and prose "focusing on gender roles". The writer born in 1932 as the daughter of a Jewish dentist was very lucky to survive the NS period in several hiding places. Her novel "Spielräume" (1977) treating sub-culture mechanisms in Vienna and Berlin became famous. One of the most brilliant books of the fragile, red-haired lady, who always wears a hat and extravagant clothes, is "Kleiderflug. Texte – Textilien – Wohnen" (1995). Elfriede Jelinek hailed the "incredibly precise fragmentation" of the poems of her friend, who once said about her own work: "Everything you can say can be said casually". On 19 June 2007 Elfriede Gerstl was awarded the renowned Heimrad Bäcker Prize at the Stifter Haus in Linz. ■

On 23 June 2007 the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF 1) spontaneously transmitted Rainhard Fendrich's memorial concert for Georg Danzer, which was watched by about 330,000 people.

Elfriede Gerstl:
"Kleiderflug,
Schreiben-
Sammeln-
Lebensräume
2007",
Edition Splitter
Wien. ISBN
9783901190445

www.splitter.co.at

www.stifterhaus.at

"Ruaf mi ned au":
"Don't call me
because you know
very well that I
don't want to and
can't go on –
please don't call
me".

www.georgdanzer.at

“Fit for Austria” campaign launched by the Secretariat of State for Sport

The Secretariat of State for Sport at the Federal Chancellery launched a countrywide “Fit for Austria” campaign. With the support of the 14,500 sports clubs of the three sports federations ASKÖ, ASVÖ and Sportunion, a maximum number of Austrians not practising any sports are to be motivated to do more exercise and thus to lead healthier lives.

The aim of “Fit for Austria“ is to make “health sport” part and parcel of the sports and exercise programmes of the sports clubs to promote wellness, fitness and health. “One euro invested in exercise and sport saves three euros of health-related expenses”, stressed Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka at the kick-off event. “Fit for Austria” provides a triple opportunity to the sports clubs, i.e. to attract new club members, to gain more recognition in society by providing services to the people and to benefit from professional marketing.

The “Fit for Austria“ campaign was launched against the background of an increasing lack of exercise, the reversal of the age pyramid as well as the fact that 60 percent of the population do not exercise or practise sports, with the known adverse effects on people’s health. The “activation study” of the Federal Sports Organisation (BSO) highlighted the opportunities for the sports clubs. One third of the inactive people would increasingly take advantage of exercise programmes if they were not only achievement-oriented but also conveyed a subjective experience of wellness and relaxation. This corresponds to 1.6 million people who would like to do more for themselves and their health but did not know where to find suitable exercise programmes. The Secretariat of State for Sport allocates a total of 1.7 million euros per year for this purpose. ■

Promoting women’s football in Austria

Equal participation of girls and women in sport is the declared aim of the government’s sport promotion scheme. Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka is of the opinion that the women’s share of 1.8 percent in Austrian football, with 525,000 active players in more

than 2,200 clubs, is far too low; double-digit percentages were registered at international level. “Our EURO 2008 partners Switzerland and Germany have a women’s share roughly corresponding to the FIFA average of ten percent. The US top the FIFA world ranking of women’s football with 40 percent”, stated Lopatka. From the perspective of women’s and sports policy, the pilot project “Girls’ Football” – with which the ÖFB (Austrian Football Federation) wants to encourage more girls to play football – is a first step. “It is important for discovering new talents as well as for the basic and further training of women in men-dominated sports.” About 600,000 euros have been earmarked for women’s football within the federal government’s special sports promotion budget of 15 million euros granted to the Austrian Football Federation. The Federal Chancellery will support the innovative ÖFB pilot project “Girls’ Football” with an additional 30,000 euros. ■

Secretary of State Lopatka: sport and the army are Siamese twins

“Sport and the Federal Army are Siamese twins that cannot be separated“, emphasised Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka at the 40th anniversary ceremony of the Austrian Army Sports Association (Österreichischer Heeres-sportverband/ÖHSV). 40 years of Austrian Army Sports Association stand for four decades of top achievements in sport, successful Austrian athletes of world calibre as well as for a reliable partnership. Besides the general sports service and competitive sport, the ÖHSV is one of the three pillars of army sport in Austria. As a sports federation and the mouthpiece of more than 100 Austrian army sports associations with about 30,000 members, the ÖHSV is indispensable for top-level and mass sports. Sport and the Federal Army are also partners supporting Austria’s successful activities as a host of national and international large-scale sports events. ■

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