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1,000 euros minimum wage in 2009

On 2 July 2007 the social partners agreed on a gross minimum wage of 1,000 euros per month for full-employment in Austria, which corresponds to an increase in gross wages by partly more than 100 euros. The net minimum wage is 818 euros for blue-collar workers and 820 euros for white-collar workers, exceeding the guaranteed basic income of 726 euros. This minimum wage is to be introduced gradually by 2009. If the individual sectors fail to adjust the wages up to that date, a general collective agreement will enter into force.

About 30,000 employees are to benefit from the new rules, explained President of the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB) Rudolf Hundstorfer and Christoph Leitl, head of the Economic Chamber Austria (WKÖ), at a joint press conference on 2 July 2007. Those profiting most were the employees in small business, the crafts, some industrial sectors and in trade.

However, this agreement covers only the sectors for which the Economic Chamber and the Federation of Trade Unions jointly negotiate collective agreements. The liberal professions having their own chambers negotiating collective agreements (doctors, lawyers, notaries public) and employees whose employers are not entitled to participate in collective agreement negotiations, e.g. associations, are not affected. For them and the large group of independent contractors talks have to be continued.

The minimum wage of 1,000 euros forms part of the government agreement. Its implementation was entrusted to the social partners by the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP). After agreeing on measures against social fraud, longer shop opening hours and more flexible working hours, the minimum wage was the fourth success of the social partners and a vital contribution in combating poverty, underlined Hundstorfer. "It is important that it pays off to work in Austria and that the income is significantly above the unemployment benefit, stressed WKÖ President Leitl. Praise came also from the government. Minister for Economics Bartenstein highlighted the vital role the social partners played in the state, Minister for Women's Affairs Doris Bures underlined the decisive contribution to the fight against poverty and fairer incomes. ■

ÖGB boss Hundstorfer: "In Austria all workers will receive a gross minimum wage of 1,000 euros per month for full-time employment by 2009."

WKÖ President Leitl: "Work must pay off. There is a clear difference between a minimum wage of 1,000 euros and a guaranteed basic income and unemployment benefits."

Minister for Economic Affairs Bartenstein: "The social partners have once more proven that they are partners of the government in shaping our country."

Minister for Women's Affairs Bures: "The minimum wage is a vital contribution to combating poverty."

Investigating committees on Eurofighters and banks dissolved

The governing parties – the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – reached an agreement on key issues in the last week of the Austrian Parliament's plenary sessions before the summer break. Against the votes of the opposition, a final report on the Eurofighter planes was adopted on 3 July 2007. The activities of the investigating committee resulted in joint recommendations on tender procedures as well as control by Parliament and the Court of Auditors. One day later, the two coalition partners also decided to dissolve the investigating committee on banks with effect 6 July 2007. In addition, laws extending the amnesty for illegal carers and on more flexible working hours (maximum working hours of 12 hours per day and 60 hours per week), a new Animal Transportation Act as well as amendments to the Civil Servants' Employment Act and the agricultural market regulation (see Economy) were passed. ■

The Eurofighters are arriving

Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos opted against a complete pull-out from the Eurofighter contract. He based his decision on an opinion by private law expert Helmut Koziol recommending a settlement with the producer EADS as it was impossible to back out of the deal. In a "basic agreement" with Eurofighter GmbH a reduction of the number of military jets from 18 to 15 and of the costs by about 400 million euros was laid down, said Darabos on 26 June 2007. The first Eurofighter will soon land in Austria. ■

New civil service regulations

Doris Bures, the responsible minister for civil servants, and Fritz Neugebauer, the trade union head representing them, agreed one new civil service regulations. The amendment to the civil service regulations was adopted by Parliament on 3 July 2007. For teachers there will no "positions linked to specific schools" (without affecting those already holding such jobs) as from 1 September 2008. New sabbatical rules for all civil servants and public-sector employees and improved pension rules were also adopted. ■

Serbia's new Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić pays visit to Austria

Serbia's new Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić paid his first official visit to Austria on 4 July 2007. In Vienna he held talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer and Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik. Besides bilateral issues, Serbia's approximation to the EU as well as the future status of the South Serbian province Kosovo, which has been administered by the UN since 1999, were items on the agenda.

Foreign Minister Plassnik expected a "speedy solution" of the status issue. Jeremić told reporters that the new government in Belgrade wanted to continue the efforts to reach a peaceful compromise but considered the independence of Kosovo unacceptable.

The Kosovo issue was not only a "test case" for European and international foreign policy but also a "reality test for Priština and Belgrade", stated Plassnik. The EU knew that Priština strove for independence. "The EU acts with unanimity and in unity" and supported UN special envoy Martti Ahtisaari's proposal to grant Kosovo independence under international surveillance, stressed Plassnik. It was decisive that everybody made a contribution.

Both sides stated that they were pleased about the bilateral relations. Plassnik said that Austria was a "close friend of Serbia" and that it would continue to support its European perspective. The economic dynamism was developing very well and favourably. Jeremić emphasised the "complete agreement on the future of the Balkans in the EU". Serbia's approximation to the EU was the "absolute priority" of the new Serbian government, stated Jeremić. ■

Ursula Plassnik at foreign ministers' meeting in Bratislava

On 3 July 2007 Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik participated in the meeting of foreign ministers of the Regional Partnership in Bratislava. The talks focused on the future of Kosovo and Serbia's EU integration. Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary planned to coordinate their positions on the future status of Kosovo under international law, explained Slovak Foreign Minister Ján

Kubiš after the talks. Among the participants in the meeting was Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić, who arrived in Austria one day later.

Minister Plassnik drew attention to the important role the Slovak diplomacy had played in reaching a solution on problems of the Western Balkan States. In this context, she also mentioned Miroslav Lajčák, who was recently appointed to the office of the international community's High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With regard to concerns of some neighbouring countries of Austria about the enlargement of the Schengen area, Plassnik reassured that Austria had a positive attitude towards the enlargement but that security criteria had to be met. Plassnik expressed her conviction that the future Schengen states – Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary – would be able to provide the necessary security guarantees. ■

Palestinian Member of Parliament Hanan Ashrawi in Vienna

The current divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has hit "a low in the efforts to form a Palestinian state", said Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik after a meeting with Palestinian Member of Parliament Hanan Ashrawi in Vienna on 2 July 2007. According to a press release, Plassnik called on the Palestinians to return to dialogue to "prevent a humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip" and so as not to have to "give up hope for an independent state".

As far as the position of the EU was concerned, Plassnik explained: "We will continue to give unwavering support to President Mahmoud Abbas, the divide within Palestine has to be overcome. This reconciliation has to be brought about by the Palestinians themselves", said the Austrian Foreign Minister. Plassnik expects Tony Blair, the new special envoy of the Middle East Quartet, to take concrete measures to improve the living conditions of the Palestinians together with Israel and to finally initiate substantive talks about a two-state solution.

With regard to the recent developments in the Middle East, Hanan Ashrawi pointed out that "peace was not possible with only half of the population". She appealed to the international community that talks had to be held with everybody. ■

Foreign Minister Plassnik: "We will continue the strategy for encouraging Serbia's approximation to Europe even if there will be difficult moments. The route is clear and our support is guaranteed."

Hanan Ashrawi: "It is cruel and wrong to punish the people in the Gaza Strip collectively. An error cannot be remedied by a second one. Talks have to be held with everybody."

"The overthrow by Hamas has been completely wrong because the institutions were taken over violently and the people were threatened."

"When things calm down we will try to restore dialogue and unity."

Austria is the fourth richest country in the European Union

According to recent estimates of the EU's statistical office Eurostat, Austria is the fourth richest country in the European Union. Austria's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita – based on purchasing power standards (PPS) – exceeded the average of the 27 EU Member States by 29% in 2006. The by far richest EU country remains Luxembourg, followed by Ireland and the Netherlands. Bulgaria and Romania, the most recent EU members, are at the bottom of the list, with more than 60% below the EU average. In Luxembourg the GDP per capita was more than two and a half times the average of the EU-27. ■

Economic boom – upward revision of Wifo and IHS forecasts

The boom in Austria is continuing. The domestic economic growth accelerated also during the first quarter of this year. The Institute of Economic Research (Wifo) and the Institute of Advanced Studies (IHS) revised their respective forecasts for 2007 by 0.2 percentage points on 28 June 2007. Wifo expects the Austrian gross domestic product (GDP) to increase by 3.2% in 2007 and by 2.5% in 2008. IHS predicts a GDP growth of 3.1% in 2007 and 2.8% next year. Thus Austria's economy is growing more significantly than in 2006. In spring the two institutes had assumed growth rates of 3.0 and 2.9% for 2007 and of 2.4 and 2.6% for 2008.

Exports and the currently strong investment activities are the driving force behind the favourable economic trend, benefiting above all the production of physical goods and the building sector. The booming global economy is another growth engine.

According to the analysts, the strong economic performance has led to a substantial employment growth (by up to 60,000 jobs). The number of unemployed dropped by 15,000 persons. ■

Record number of foreign start-ups

Austria continues to be an attractive location for foreign companies. The responsible body in Austria, Austrian Business Agency (ABA), reported a new record of foreign investments in the first six months 2007. This year no less than

91 foreign companies were established in Austria – 34% more than in the same period 2006. This is an all-time high in the 25-year history of the Agency, informed ABA in a press release of 3 July 2007.

91 companies invested 135.6 million euros and created 930 new jobs. Establishing 40 new companies in Austria, Germany tops the country ranking, followed by Italy with 13 start-ups as well as the USA and Japan with 6 each.

The location chosen most frequently remains Vienna, where 48 companies have already been founded this year. ABA has issued an optimistic estimate for the entire year 2007 as 592 companies had been counselled on start-ups in Austria by the end of June. ■

Agreement on agricultural market regulation

On 3 July 2007 the governing coalition of the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and People's Party (ÖVP) agreed on a compromise for the agricultural market regulation. The most important outcome is that farmers were provided with a serious horizon for planning up to 2013. The SPÖ considers the agreement very beneficial to the "small farmers", the ÖVP is content that all farmers can plan ahead on a reliable basis.

In the future the milk quota system will cover all dairy farmers, including the 38,000 who did not receive their share in 2003. Changes affected the premiums for suckler cows. As far as the single farm payment scheme is concerned, a committee will be responsible for deciding on cases of hardship. Moreover, animal and consumer protection were enshrined in the new market regulation. As from 2009 onwards, the farmers will have to disclose the subsidies received in accordance with EU requirements.

The agricultural market scheme is a key support instrument for agriculture in the EU. ■

Wifo and IHS in Germany

The German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs selected the Austrian economic research institutes Wifo and IHS – together with institutes in Germany and Switzerland – to prepare economic forecasts for the period up to spring 2010. ■

EU comparison of GDP per capita in purchasing power standards in 2006 – see Eurostat/press releases: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

For 2007 IHS and Wifo forecast an economic growth between 3.1% and 3.2% of the GDP as well as an increase in the number of employed by 60,000.

New record of foreign start-ups: in the first six months 2007 91 foreign companies were established in Austria.

Guatemala: Chancellor Gusenbauer visits Austrian school

With self-made Austrian flags in their hands, wearing red trousers and white T-shirts, hundreds of children waited excitedly in the school yard of the Austrian school and cheered when a jeep arrived. On 2 July 2007 Alfred Gusenbauer became the first Austrian Chancellor to pay a visit to the Austrian school founded 59 years ago in Guatemala City. At this comprehensive school the pupils can take both the A-levels of the Guatemalan and Austrian school systems. After attending this school, 50 young people even studied at universities in Austria, said the Chancellor sitting amongst the pupils in a classroom. This school is Austria's largest cultural project in Latin America; about 25 Austrian teachers teach there. The project is run by the Austrian Guatemalan Cultural Foundation. The Chancellor was accompanied by Salzburg's Governor Gabi Burgstaller, Salzburg's Mayor Heinz Schaden and numerous athletes. They had all come to Guatemala to await the result of the election of the host city for the Olympic Winter Games 2014 at the IOC session, where finally the Russian city Sochi was announced as the winner. ■

“DedicatedToHaydn“ presented

To mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Joseph Haydn, a piano composition project for six French composers was initiated in 1909 by the leading French music magazine “Revue musicale mensuelle de la S.I.M.“. The “Hommage à Joseph Haydn“ was created by Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy, Paul Dukas, Reynaldo Hahn, Vincent d'Indy and Charles Widor. This idea was revived to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Haydn's death in 2009 at the Haydn Festival in Eisenstadt. Six selected Austrian composers, six composers from other European countries – representing the international and domestic locations where Haydn lived – and six composers from all other continents will compose a piano trio for Joseph Haydn by 2009. The premieres of the new works will be performed by the Haydn Trio Eisenstadt, which has recently completed the recording of all Haydn trios. The premiers take place in the countries of origin of the composers. The

European premieres will be staged in Austria. The Austrian composers of “DedicatedToHaydn“, who are all in their middle thirties, are: Johanna Doderer, Jury Everhartz, Elisabeth Harnik, Helmut Hödl, Gerhard Krammer and Gernot Schedlberger. ■

Gala celebrating Romania's EU membership at Konzerthaus

Together with the Vienna Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra led by Claudius Traunfellner, the Romanian singers of Vienna's State Opera and Volksoper gave a gala concert to celebrate Romania's accession to the EU. The singers were sopranos Mimina Ivan and Ileana Tonca, mezzo soprano Mihaela Binder-Ungureanu, tenor Marian Talaba, bass-baritone Ion Tibrea and bass singers Alexandru Moisiuc and Dan Paul Dumitrescu. They presented arias, e.g. by Mozart, Rossini and Bizet, and the works of the Romanian composers Aurel Eliad and George Enescu. In accordance with the EU motto “unity in diversity“, the concert was concluded with Mozart's Figaro finale, performed by all the singers. ■

Mariensee sawmill: great theatre with Sartre's “The Flies“

At the sawmill in Mariensee am Wechsel tree trunks were processed into sawn timber for more than 100 years. In the recent past the sawmill has become a theatre venue, earning a reputation for original and outstanding theatre productions directed by Pétra Jendrzejek – from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's “The Little Prince“ and Felix Mitterer's “No Place for Idiots“ to Bert Brecht's “The Good Person of Sezuán“ (in 2006), which has undoubtedly been the best interpretation of the play in Austria in many years.

This year the director chose Jean-Paul Sartre's “The Flies“. The play written in the occupied France during the war in 1943 also aimed at encouraging the people to put up resistance. Sartre resorted to the Greek myth about Orestes and Electra in the City of Argos to show provocatively that oppression could be remedied only by the decision to take action and that each individual person was responsible. By addressing this theme, Jendrzejek also wants to combat widespread attitudes of resignation and lethargy.

Austrian-Guatemalan Cultural Foundation:
[www.iagcovi.edu.g
 t/Homepagiag/inde
 x.htm](http://www.iagcovi.edu.gt/Homepagiag/index.htm)

Romanian Cultural Institute,
 Argentinierstraße
 39, 1040 Vienna.
 Tel:
 0043/1/3191081.

www.haydn2009.at

www.d2h.at

Haydn Trio Eisenstadt: Joseph Haydn. Die Klaviertrios/The Piano Trios/Trios Avec Piano.
[www.haydntrioei-
 sensstadt.at](http://www.haydntrioeisensstadt.at)
www.capriccio.at
[www.deltamu-
 sic.de](http://www.deltamu-

 sic.de)

The CD label Capriccio will publish the works by “Dedicated-ToHaydn“ in a CD box by 31 May 2009 – Haydn's 200th death anniversary.

Sawmill Mariensee/Wechsel (Lower Austria): Jean-Paul Sartre: "The Flies";
20, 21, 27, 28 July, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12 August, 12, 14, 15 September, at 7 p.m.
Tickets:
0043/664/8494900,
www.kshm.at

Karl Schubert Haus, Mariensee 30, 2870 Aspang am Wechsel, Tel: 0043/2642/7439
www.kshm.at

www.ingeborg-bachmann.cc

www.styriarte.com

www.nestroy.at

www.steirischerherbst.at

The performance was developed with professional actors, amateurs and people with disabilities, who receive residential care at the "Karl Schubert Haus". The "Karl Schubert Haus Mariensee", an association for social therapy and life concepts, combines socially stabilising elements of the family with those of a modern work environment. A team of four professional carers provides care to groups of about six clients. The clients have the same contact or coach throughout the day, who supports them in their daily activities from getting dressed in the morning to going to bed at night. To avoid rigid routines and to facilitate the exchange of experience both the clients and the staff may change the groups. The theatre performances of the past few years conforming to the highest professional standards demonstrated that many clients were able to enact their roles in such a convincing way that they bear comparison with the professional actors. To cope with the enjoyable and difficult tasks on the stage is an invaluable experience, enhancing the self-worth and personal development of the clients. The outcome of the project in Mariensee: overwhelming theatre in a unique ambience – sensational. ■

styriarte 2007 – Wanted: Europe

The 2007 styriarte festival – under the motto "Wanted: Europe" – is held at various venues in Styria till 22 July 2007. Its aim is to show how different musical styles and forms overcame the "national styles", e.g. the madrigal and string quartet. Renaissance and classical music were supranational styles. Bach cultivated a "mixed taste" already in Baroque. The programme includes Concentus Musicus, Jordi Savall and Quatuor Mosaique. ■

steirischer herbst: close enough

"Close enough" is the leitmotif of the festival "steirischer herbst" ("Styrian autumn") from 20 September to 14 October 2007 in Graz. To be close enough – in geopolitics, love and art – is a desire, a movement towards and from one another. It is the motif of artistic creations in the sphere of theatre, dance and performance, e.g. Tim Etchells with the Belgian theatre group Victoria, the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma,

exhibitions at Kunstverein Medienturm, at Kunsthaus Graz and at Haus der Architektur Graz. Moreover, this theme has inspired the key productions of the music programme "musikprotokoll". With "Closed Enough", Staalplaat Soundsystem will provide a special experience at the festival opening at Helmut-List-Halle. ■

Bachmann and other prize winners

In Klagenfurt German writer Lutz Seiler (44) was awarded the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize 2007 for his prose text "Turksib" about a railway trip through Kazakhstan, a former state of the USSR. The Telekom Austria Prize went to the Austrian Thomas Stangl, who portrayed Vienna as a ghostly city. The 3sat Prize and Prize of the Audience was conferred on the German musician and writer Peter Licht. The German Jan Böttcher received the Ernst Willner Prize for his text describing different generations in the former GDR. ■

Nestroy-Spiele Schwechat 2007: The Mystery of the Grey House

Nestroy-Spiele at Rothmühle Palace in Schwechat (Lower Austria) have been the place to go and see the work of the brilliant Viennese playwright and actor Johann Nestroy (1801-1862) for many years. "The Mystery of the Grey House", a burlesque comedy (a special genre called "Posse") about social rise and fall is on this year's programme till 4 August 2007.

The play is set in an eerie place somewhere in the "Giant Mountains". Nestroy described proletarian dreams of power and wealth, bourgeois utopias of the ideal education and the search for true love, not only by the nobility – dreams that continue to be dreamt to the present day. The detective story does not only reveal the human nature but also alludes to topical issues.

The production by Peter Gruber is very modern but at the same time very accurate. Okki Zykan's costumes are fantastic. The actors deliver a superb performance, first of all Christian Graf playing the main character who suffers a hard lot. Last but not least, mention should be made of the fact that this comedy by Nestroy, which today is performed only rarely, was a huge success from the 1830s to the 1850s. ■

WAGNER:WERK Museum Postsparkasse: aluminium and modernity

WAGNER:WERK Museum Postsparkasse presents the exhibition "Aluminium. The Sheen of Modernity" (ending on 1 September 2007). Based on the exterior and interior designs for Otto Wagner's postal savings bank, the history of the utilisation of this metal is described. The exhibits include sabres of the emperor's horse guard, mass products such as pots and cutlery, so-called "streamline design" products, e.g. a caravan and the aluminium Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith of the 1950s, as well as works of art from aluminium created by Peter Weibel and Hans Kupelwieser in the 1980s and 1990s. The frame of the Audi series is an example of state-of-the-art high-tech aluminium technology. The metal has also become a symbol of modernity, especially in architecture and design. ■

ImpulsTanz – Vienna International Dance Festival 2007

The ImpulsTanz Festival brings celebrated choreographers, masterly dancers as well as promising newcomers to Vienna, presents world and European premiers, offers workshops, research projects, auditions and parties. The work of Meg Stuart is presented in a number of performances. Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui uses his multicultural identity to bridge the gap between the Orient and Occident. The Canadian dance group La La La Human Steps performs "Amjad", inspired in the classical ballets "Swan Lake" and "The Sleeping Beauty". Austria's dance scene is inter alia represented with the latest works by Chris Haring & liquid loft, Tanz Company Gervasi, Saskia Hölbling and Doris Stelzer. ■

Upper Austria: Salzkammergut Festival Gmunden 2007

As Minister for Art and Culture Claudia Schmied stated in the programme booklet of the "Salzkammergut Festival Gmunden", the Salzkammergut was "a region, where – thanks to the very special landscape – the townsfolk (among them intellectuals and artists) and the local population met and engaged in a fruitful exchange in the summer months already more

than 100 years ago."

Today this absolutely wonderful holiday region faces international competition and has to reposition itself constantly in the tourist market. The visitors do not only want to enjoy the landscape around Lake Traun but also demand exciting cultural programmes. The varied six-week programme running through 14 September 2007 is devoted to preserving traditions on the one hand and explores new positions in art on the other hand.

The festival also celebrates the Austrian writer Peter Handke during four days. Friends and companions, admirers and critics, theatre-makers and film people, reporters and German literature specialists present various aspects of his body of work.

The prose text "Holzfällen" by his great Austrian colleague Thomas Bernhard is presented in scenes. Important musicians such as Maki Namekawa and Dennis Russell Davies interpret musical pieces by Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms, Hugo Wolf, Erich Wolfgang Korngold or Arnold Schönberg, whose creations have been inspired in the Salzkammergut. Together with trumpeter Brian Lynch, pianist Eddie Palmieri gives a (Latin) jazz concert. ■

Jewish Museum Vienna: first presentation of the archives

The Jewish Museum Vienna (JMW) stages its first presentation of documents from the archives of the Jewish Religious Community (IKG), which were officially established in 1816. The show titled "Ordnung muss sein" ("Proper documentation is needed") runs until 21 October 2007. The oldest documents archived date back to the 17th century. ■

Rector Ingela Bruner is the first woman to head a university

For the first time a woman was elected to head an Austrian university. Ingela Bruner (54), former Vice-President of Danube University Krems and OMV head of research, was appointed rector by the Council of Vienna's University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences. She will assume her office on 1 October 2007. ■

**WAGNER:WERK
Museum Postsparkasse:
"Aluminium".
Georg-Coch-Platz
2, 1018 Vienna.
Tel:
0043/1/524964622
www.ottowagner.com/ow-werk/museum.html**

www.impulstanz.com

www.jmw.at

www.festwochen-gmunden.at

Sochi to host 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

The outcome of the election of the host city for the XXII. Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games 2014 in Guatemala on 4 July 2007 was disappointing for Salzburg. Just like four years ago in Prague, Salzburg was the first of the three finalists to be eliminated in the first round of voting at the session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Guatemala City. In the second round the IOC members had to choose between South Korea's candidate Pyeongchang and Russia's application. With 51:47 votes, the city on the Black Sea Sochi was selected to host the Olympic Winter Games taking place from 7 to 23 February 2014. "Sochi presented a strong and visionary project. I have every confidence that Sochi will host excellent Games in 2014", commented IOC President Jacques Rogge after signing the host city contract. ■

David Salzburg against two Goliaths

The 60 members of the Austrian delegation led by Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, Austrian Olympic Committee President Leo Wallner, Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka, Salzburg's Governor Gabi Burgstaller, Mayor Heinz Schaden as well as Olympic downhill gold medallist Franz Klammer and other sports stars tried to convince the IOC delegates of Salzburg's concept in countless individual talks and an excellent presentation. "The Olympic values have not prevailed in this decision. The International Olympic Committee decided in favour of a different concept of Olympic Winter Games. Therefore we wish Sochi the best as a host of the Winter Games and look forward to the participation of the Austrian athletes", stated Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer.

"Up to the very last moment, all Austrians have fought for each individual vote in dozens of individual talks with the IOC delegates to make it possible that the David Salzburg can win against the two Goliaths Pyeongchang (South Korea) and Sochi (Russia)", said Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka. "Finally it was not the athletic concept but once more the financial interests that were decisive". A development indicating that only large countries

are suitable candidates in this kind of competition posed a threat to the Olympic movement. "The question whether Austria should try once more to present an application to host Olympic Games will have to be decided by the Austrian Olympic Committee". To Secretary of State for Sport Lopatka it is clear that, as a winter sports nation, Austria has to continue presenting candidacies as a host of international top events. ■

Further strengthening sport in the European Union

As a result of the initiative "White Paper on Sport", which will be presented by the European Commission in July, sport will be attributed the same importance at European level as in the Member States. The White Paper is a crucial step to strengthen sport, which fulfils complex functions in EU policies. Sport is a vital social, pedagogical, economic but also health-political factor playing an important role in the lives of the Europeans. As a cross-sectoral matter, sport should be taken into account in the EU's health, educational, research and social inclusion policies.

Austria welcomes the fact that important concerns and stimuli of the Austrian Council Presidency are reflected in the White Paper, e.g. the whole group of topics concerning "sports and development policy" and the demand for a "sport satellite account" to illustrate the economic significance of sport in Europe. In addition, Austria's appeal to simplify visa procedures for foreign athletes was incorporated.

The White Paper on Sport provides important suggestions regarding the combat against doping, which is one of the main concerns of the Austrian sport policy. ■

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