

News from Austria

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Issue no.16/07 will appear on 27 August 2007.

We wish you a wonderful, relaxing summer

Your editorial team

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "We have cooperated extremely well with regard to all three items on the agenda of the government meeting."

"If a reasonable form of co-financing is found, we could create an additional childcare facilities for 10,000 kids per year."

Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer: "We have both hands free for further fruitful work."

Minister for Social Affairs Erwin Buchinger: "The cap for prescription fees is a substantial social improvement for some ten thousands of people in Austria."

Health Minister Andrea Kdolsky: "The cap on the dispensing fees for prescription drugs ensures equal treatment in our health system – not only in respect of diagnosis but also therapy."

Minister for Economic Affairs Martin Bartenstein: "Currently, 8.8% of the electricity in Austria is produced from renewable energies and small hydroelectric plants. The target is to increase this share to 10% by 2010."

SPÖ-ÖVP agree on childcare, prescription fees, climate protection

In their two-day closed-door meeting in Eisenstadt (10/11 July 2007) the governing Social Democrats (SPÖ) and People's Party (ÖVP) reached an agreement on childcare facilities, a cap on prescription fees and a comprehensive climate protection and energy policy programme.

In the school year 2008/09 a compulsory kindergarten year will be introduced for children having language problems. "Due to the changed population structure, we have to ensure that kids know enough German when they attend primary school, explained Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer. The educational opportunities of children with language problems have to be improved. Therefore their language skills will be examined 15 months before they are sent to school. Attendance of a kindergarten will be compulsory for those having problems with the German language. In the introductory phase parents refusing to send their children to kindergarten will not be sanctioned. However, they could be deprived of the entitlement to family allowance or administrative fines could be imposed as from 2009. The kindergarten fees will have to be paid by the parents (depending on their income).

Moreover, the government agreed on expanding childcare facilities in Austria. For the "initial financing" of both projects the Federal Republic allocates 20 million euros to each Land in the next three years but requires the Länder to contribute the same amount ("15a agreements"). "This is only a subsidy to finance additional facilities. We want to promote a steady increase in the number of childcare facilities", stated Gusenbauer. Besides a quantitative increase, the government aims at a qualitative improvement to ensure optimal pedagogical support, he stressed.

The government also agreed on a model introducing a cap on prescription fees. As from 2008, the maximum amount spent on prescription fees will correspond to 2% of a person's net income (excluding the 13th and 14th salary). Compliance with the limit will be monitored through a "prescription fee account" managed by the Federation of Social Insurance Institutions. Practical implementation will be based on the electronic health insurance card. Rules on exemptions from the prescription fee will not be changed. Moreover, concrete measures regarding

climate protection and energy policy were agreed on. The "Eco-Electricity Act" will be re-amended. A draft revising the subsidised feed-in tariffs and tariff terms fixed for eco-electricity facilities will be presented in autumn. ■

Mourning for former Health and Environment Minister Kurt Steyrer

Kurt Steyrer passed away on 16 July 2007, only one month after Kurt Waldheim, whom he had once unsuccessfully challenged in the presidential elections. The Social Democrat died aged 87 after a short severe illness at the hospital "Wiener Rudolfsstiftung". The committed physician had been appointed Health and Environment Minister by SPÖ Chancellor Bruno Kreisky in 1981. Steyrer was also a member of the coalition government of the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and Freedom Party (FPÖ) under Chancellor Fred Sinowatz, who urged him to present himself as the SPÖ's presidential candidate running against Waldheim in 1986. He lost the electoral race after a very emotional campaign revolving around Waldheim's NS past. The politician born in Linz then withdrew from politics at federal level and became active as the spokesman of the SPÖ in Vienna. Steyrer leaves a wife and two grown-up sons. The memorial ceremony took place in Vienna on 25 July 2007. The government and opposition paid tribute to Steyrer as a competent bridge builder. President Heinz Fischer explained: "Fairness, tolerance, love for the people and nature were outstanding qualities of Kurt Steyrer." Chancellor Gusenbauer described him as a "loveable, cheerful and always conciliatory man". Steyrer had been respected "across the political spectrum", Austria had lost a "great personality in politics", emphasised Vice-Chancellor Molterer. ■

Reward for information on NS criminals

The Ministry of Justice has offered a reward for information leading to the arrest of two alleged NS criminals. 50,000 euros will be paid for information contributing to the "identification, arrest and conviction" of concentration camp doctor Aribert Heim and Gestapo officer Alois Brunner, explained Minister of Justice Maria Berger (www.bmj.gv.at). ■

Federal President Heinz Fischer visited Macedonia

Federal President Heinz Fischer paid an official visit to Macedonia on 12 and 13 July 2007. He was accompanied by Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos and a trade delegation. In the Macedonian capital Skopje Fischer held talks with his counterpart Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Speaker of Parliament Ljubisa Georgievski. Items on the agenda were the Kosovo issue, Macedonia's EU perspective and the bilateral economic relations, which have developed excellently in the past few years and are to be intensified in the future. Austrian companies are among the leading investors in the former Yugoslav state.

Federal President Fischer pledged his support to Macedonia on its way to the European Union. "Austria will not be an obstructive but supporting factor", he told journalists. According to Macedonian President Crvenkovski, this EU candidate country expects the accession negotiations to start during the Slovene Presidency in the first six months 2008.

Fischer referred to the European Commission's next Progress Report on Macedonia and stated that he was in favour of bringing the Western Balkan states closer to the EU, which represented not only an economic but also a peace project.

With regard to the future status of the South Serbian province Kosovo, which was neighbouring Macedonia, the two heads of state agreed that the best way to find a solution was a resolution of the UN Security Council.

The second destination of Fischer's visit to Macedonia was Ohrid on the lake of the same name in the southwest of the country, where he attended the opening ceremony of the annual cultural festival. ■

Speaker of Parliament Prammer in Israel

During her official visit to Israel (9 to 14 July 2007) Speaker of the Austrian Parliament Barbara Prammer also met with newly elected President Shimon Peres. She handed over a letter of Federal President Heinz Fischer and conveyed his "best wishes and regards". Like all other EU Member States, Austria was represented by its

ambassador at the inauguration of President Peres (15 July 2007).

Prammer also held talks with her counterpart Daliah Itzik, whom she had met at an event of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in New York.

Prammer stated that she visited Israel in her capacity as the chairwoman of the National Fund for NS Victims and the General Settlement Fund. As the National Fund had to approve each individual project it was very important to obtain information in situ about the projects to be co-financed by the National Fund, stated Prammer. ■

Plassnik at EU Intergovernmental Conference in Brussels

On 23 July 2007 Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik participated in the meeting of EU foreign ministers. In the framework of this meeting, the Intergovernmental Conference on the future EU Treaty was opened. A draft of the reform treaty is to be presented by October. Negotiations are to be conducted predominantly at expert level.

Other topics discussed at the meeting of foreign ministers were the Kosovo issue and the situation in the Middle East. ■

Portugal's Foreign Minister and EU Council President Amado in Vienna

On the occasion of his visit to the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) in Vienna on 12 July 2007, EU Council President and Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Filipe Marques Amado also met with Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik. In a joint press conference Amado underlined the most important projects of Portugal's EU Presidency, i.e. to conclude the negotiations on a new EU Treaty, to strengthen the relations with the USA and to solve the Kosovo issue.

Plassnik and Amado considered that, besides the new EU Treaty, the enlargement of the Schengen area and the Kosovo status talks were among the most important tasks of the EU in the future. Plassnik stated that Austria supported Portugal's efforts to intensify cooperation with Africa. In November Foreign Minister Plassnik will travel to several African countries. ■

Federal President Fischer: "Austria will not be an obstructing but supporting factor on Macedonia's way to the European Union."

Federal government presented "Economic Report Austria 2007"

"Economic Report Austria 2007" : www.bmwa.gv.at

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Economically successful countries like Austria have always been pioneers of social and ecological policies."

"In the future Austria should be the first choice when it comes to selecting economic and socio-political reference models."

The Austrian federal government expects an economic growth of more than 3% for 2007.

Secretary of State Kranzl: "Employment increases by 14,000 new jobs if research expenditure is raised by 1 billion euros by 2010."

Together with Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Finance Wilhelm Molterer, Minister for Economic Affairs Martin Bartenstein and Infrastructure Minister Werner Faymann, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer presented the "Economic Report Austria 2007" at the Vienna Stock Exchange on 9 July 2007. The Chancellor stated that the Economic Report proved that Austria's economic strategy had been "highly successful". His speech delivered before numerous VIPs of the economic and political arena focused on the recent economic development as well as future priorities, such as climate protection, social policy, education and innovation.

"We are in the favourable position that the economic research institutes surprise us with upward revisions of their growth forecasts. A real increase in the GDP (gross domestic product) by more than 3% is forecast for the current year. The trend is more extensive and stronger than originally assumed and is driven by export and domestic demand", stated Gusenbauer. The total domestic export volume rose by 9.5% in 2006, exceeding for the first time the threshold of 100 billion euros.

The Federal Chancellor pointed out that Austria's activity rate of 70.2% was one of the highest in the EU. Moreover, the activity rate of women was increased, even though this was partly due to part-time jobs. The unemployment rate had dropped to a low level of 4.3% in June 2007, explained Gusenbauer. It was expected to decline to slightly above 4% in 2008.

The continuing current account surplus highlighted the international competitiveness of Austrian companies, especially of the small and medium-sized enterprises that were excellently positioned thanks to the successful internationalisation strategy. However, ongoing efforts were required to safeguard the competitive advantages resulting from economic policies and Austria's geographical situation, stressed the Federal Chancellor.

Gusenbauer mentioned climate protection, social policy as well as educational and innovation policy as priorities for common action. "In the field of climate protection the federal government concentrates on energy efficiency,

energy saving and renewable energies. By establishing the Climate and Energy Fund we have made a fundamental step to promote new technologies", said Gusenbauer. Moreover, transport policy was an integral part of the climate strategy.

Other key concerns of the federal government were the combat against poverty and the further reduction of unemployment, but not only quantitative targets were pursued: "Adequate jobs were characterised by fair wages, security, a fair income distribution between women and men, health measures and the reconciliation of working and family lives", stressed the Federal Chancellor. Important measures had already been agreed on with the social partners, e.g. the introduction of a minimum wage.

Other "pressing tasks" mentioned by Gusenbauer were to modernise the educational system and to promote innovation. ■

Innovation campaign for SMEs: "Research creates jobs"

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – the "backbone of the Austrian economy" – are to be strengthened and do a lot more research than in the past. In view of this objective, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Secretary of State for Research Christa Kranzl presented the innovation campaign "Research creates jobs" of the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology on 17 July 2007. A total of 22 million euros will be made available for this programme.

The aim of the campaign was to introduce traditional SMEs to state-of-the-art research and the latest technology developments by cooperating with R&D institutions in Austria. "Research creates jobs" is based on numerous measures implemented jointly with the Austrian Research Promotion Agency and the Austrian Institute for SME Research.

Core elements of the campaign are a counselling programme on the comprehensive opportunities for in situ support and the so-called "Innovation Cheque Austria". The latter has been conceived as a starter kit creating incentives for the optimal integration of SMEs into the research process. The cheque of 5,000 euros can be cashed for research projects, studies, analyses and individual counselling. ■

Austria mourns for Leon Zelman

Leon Zelman, the head of the Jewish Welcome Service, died aged 79 at Wilhelminenspital in Vienna on 11 July 2007. Born in Szcokociny (Poland) in 1928, he lost his father after the occupation by German troops in September 1939. His mother starved in the ghetto of Lodz. In 1944 he was deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp together with his younger brother, who was killed there. Leon escaped the gas chamber because he pretended to be two years older. After detention in different concentration camps he was liberated in Ebensee in 1945. After three years of a difficult recovery, he studied journalism at the University of Vienna and became active in the Jewish Students' Association. He founded "Jüdische Echo", which to date is one of Austria's most important periodicals. His historic achievement was the foundation of the "Jewish Welcome Service Vienna" (JWS), an organisation that builds bridges between the displaced Austrian Jews (and their descendents) and their former mother country, encouraging them to visit Vienna. Since 1980 the JWS has invited about 4,000 persons expelled by the Nazis to visit Austria. Until his death Zelman considered it a crucial political task to raise the awareness of young people. He received high official awards, such as the "Great Badge of Honour for Meritorious Service to the Republic of Austria" and the Ring of Honour of the City of Vienna. On 13 July 2007 Leon Zelman was buried in a tomb of honour of the City of Vienna in the Jewish section of Vienna's Central Cemetery. Leading representatives of the state and government paid tribute to the deceased. President Heinz Fischer described Leon Zelman as "an exceptional personality" and stressed his achievements in the framework of the JWS, a non-profit organisation wishing to contribute to a better understanding between Jews and non-Jews. Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Finance Wilhelm Molterer mourned for the "activist and bridge builder". In his speech held in the Hall of Ceremonies of the Jewish Religious Community at the Central Cemetery Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer emphasised that Zelman had never tired of standing up against anti-Semitism and building a culture of remembrance. "He wanted the world to become a better place and overcame evil with

good", said the Chancellor. This places him in the elite company of personalities like Nelson Mandela. Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl also dedicated very personal words to Zelman. With Leon Zelman and his cheerful, sometimes "rough" character, an irreplaceable person had been lost who had survived the unsupportable without "surrendering himself to vengeance or hatred". In a low voice Häupl added: "I do not know how such a wonderful person could develop from the unsupportable". ■

Federal President Heinz Fischer inaugurates Bregenz Festival

On 18 July 2007 Federal President Heinz Fischer inaugurated the Bregenz Festival ("Bregenzer Festspiele"). For the programme consisting of about 60 events 190,000 tickets are available, 80 percent of which have already been sold. The Lake Stage has for the first time in the festival's history presented Giacomo Puccini's opera "Tosca" since 19 July 2007. On 18 July 2007 the festival had been opened with Benjamin Britten's "Death in Venice", which has become part and parcel of the festival programme. Festival Director Günter Rhomberg criticised in his statement that in the past few years "existing structures of our ever so productive Austrian theatre scene had been jeopardised by stagnating budgets for art and culture". Since 1997 the Bregenz Festival had lost one fourth of its subsidies in real terms due to non-revaluation. Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied made the freedom of society the key subject of her speech. Federal President Heinz Fischer also addressed the free society in his spectacular opening statement. In Austria Benjamin Britten "would have had to face criminal prosecution" for his homosexuality still in the 1970s. Since then a lot had changed for the better, i.e. discrimination had been reduced. "But there are still social and legal barriers that I consider problematic", stressed Fischer. The programme of the Bregenz festival encouraged "not to avoid these topics, not to look away, but to recognise that there is still discrimination – and hence unsolved social issues which we must address – and that we should not ignore the respective approaches in art". Among the guests of the premiere were Chancellor Gusenbauer and Vice-Chancellor Molterer. ■

Jewish Welcome Service Vienna:
<http://www.jewish-welcome.at/>

www.bregenzerfestspiele.at

Oxford: Koglmann performs at exhibition of Harsieber and Huber

From 2 to 28 September 2007 Lolapoloza Project Space in Oxford (England) presents the exhibition “Monika, Herbert, and for evermore they wait“, with works by Viennese photographer Heidi Harsieber and by Bernadette Huber from Linz, who has a similar but still very different approach. Her art covers web projects, video installations, objects, painting and artistic photography. Huber calls her ironic reflection on the role of women and men “Monika and Herbert“. Harsieber’s photo collages titled “and for evermore they wait, wait in the midst of opportunity“ are mysteriously cool, full of longing and melancholy. Given the special flair of the exhibits it is not surprising that Viennese composer Franz Koglmann, who combines cool jazz with classical modern music, will give a solo flugelhorn performance at the opening on 1 September 2007. The inspiring exhibition is supported by the Austrian Cultural Forum in London and the Oxford City Council. ■

Lolapoloza Project Space, Blue Boar Street, off St Aldates Oxford, OX1 1DL.

www.bernadettehuber.at

ImpulsTanz festival highlight: Wim Vandekeybus & Ultima Vez

Choreographer, director, actor and photographer Wim Vandekeybus was born as the son of a veterinarian in Herenthout (Belgium) in 1963. Hence, as a child he came into contact with animals freely moving in nature. Their instinctive reactions and movements as well as their confidence into their own physical strength fascinated him and became the leitmotif of his work. In 1986 he worked on his first production with a group of young dancers in Madrid. Under the name “Ultima Vez“ – which means “the last time” in Spanish – he founded his own dance company. It gave its first performance – “What the Body Does Not Remember“ – in Haarlem (Netherlands) in 1987, which marked the beginning of an international career. The audience was fascinated by this unprecedented tough confrontation between dance and music. Bodies and stones flew through the air to be caught in the very last moment by other dancers and to be dropped again. The dancers embraced briefly and tightly and then became indifferent. The longing for a suitable partner remains unfulfilled. Vandekeybus named the selection

www.impulstanz.at

from the best of his works of the past 20 years “Mirror“. The dance performance was presented at Volkstheater in Vienna from 18 to 20 July 2007. The enthusiastic audience was also offered an additional performance. The members of his dance company have an incredible body control. This is dance leading to total exhaustion, reflecting life with its struggles, suffering, eroticism. It is driven by the free, hefty and wild music of Arno & Ad Cominotto, David Byrne, Thierry De Mey, Pierre Mertens, Marc Ribot and Peter Vermeersch. ■

Film director Jörg Kalt died

Jörg Kalt died aged 40. The film director born near Paris in 1967 has been one of the protagonists of the new Austrian film since the mid-1990s. As his family informed, “he decided to take his own life at the age of 40 in the middle of his comprehensive process of creation“. After having been active for many years as a journalist, Jörg Kalt scored a great success with his film “Crash Test Dummies“ at numerous film festivals in 2005. He worked on two new projects titled “Tiere“ (“Animals”) and “Zum Essen“ (“To eat”) until his death. ■

Vienna Museum Karlsplatz: At the Bottom. The Discovery of Poverty.

Vienna Museum Karlsplatz shows the exhibition “At the Bottom. The Discovery of Poverty – Vienna, London, Berlin, New York“ (closing on 28 October 2007). Urbanisation towards the end of the 19th century, the dismal housing conditions and fear of social unrest sparked a new interest in the “dark” zones of large cities. In London and Paris, later also in New York, Vienna and Berlin writers and visual artists, urban researchers and reporters of the yellow press, who often worked undercover, tried to put the acute poverty into words or capture it on pictures. They did it for different reasons: awareness, attraction, agitation. The new mass media discovered a huge reservoir of stories, which they told in flashy images. The exhibition turns the spotlight on a famous report by journalist Emil Kläger, who – together with amateur photographer Hermann Drawe – explored the “Viennese districts of poverty and crime” in 1904. They presented their shocking pictures in slide lectures

attracting large audiences. The reconstructed version of the Kläger/Drawe slide series is shown for the first time. But the exhibition showcases also international art, e.g. the print series of Käthe Kollwitz and Heinrich Zille, a documentation of the living conditions in Vienna, reports about Jewish poverty in Vienna by Bruno Frei or the photo documentation about social outcasts "How the Other Half Lives" published in 1890 by New York police reporter Jacob A. Riis.

Since the early 20th century the political dimension of poverty – and the call for a radical social change – have come to the fore. The question whether poverty should be depicted, with attitudes ranging from empathy to voyeurism, is still hotly discussed. ■

Georg Kreisler is 85 years young

Georg Kreisler, a legend of the Viennese cabaret and an outstanding writer, musician and performer, celebrated his 85th birthday on 18 July 2007. The Viennese born in 1922 fled from the Nazis in 1938 to the USA. After his return in 1955, his attitude to his birth city has remained ambiguous. He became famous with songs like "Gemma Tauberln vergiften im Park", "Zwei alte Tanten tanzen Tango" and "Der guate alte Franz". He composed film music for Hollywood, e.g. for Charlie Chaplin, in exile. Together with Gerhard Bronner, he managed the "Intime Theater" in the 1950s. In 2000 his opera "Der Aufstand der Schmetterlinge" was premiered. He is currently working on a new opera. ■

MUSA: Museum on Demand

Museum on Demand (Museum auf Abruf/MUSA) is the name of the contemporary art collection of the Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Vienna. MUSA offers a presentation space for thematic exhibitions compiled from works of the collection, a "Start Gallery" for young Viennese artists at the beginning of their careers, and Artothek, a gallery lending graphic art to private persons in Vienna. A special section of this institution allows the staff of the Administration of the City of Vienna to borrow works of art for their offices. MUSA presents one of the largest collections of its kind in Austria, comprising

approximately 16,500 objects of all disciplines of art created by about 3,000 artists. The works of art were acquired by the Department for Cultural Affairs in the framework of a programme supporting artists as from 1951 onwards and offer an excellent overview of the development of the arts in Vienna during the past few decades. It is the aim of Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl und City Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny to present these works to the citizens, especially as public perception is vital to every art collection. Now a presentation surface of about 600 m² has become available for the collection. Every year three thematic exhibitions based on the collection as well as guest exhibitions of comparable foreign institutions will be realised. The first show "Long Time No See" was curated by Iara Boubnova of the Contemporary Art Institute in Sofia (Bulgaria). ■

MUMOK: The Modern Laboratory

MUMOK – the Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation Vienna – shows highlights from its collection of classical modern art: paintings, drawings, photos, furniture, architectural designs and sculptures. At the beginning of the 20th century the new large cities, railways and cars, the wireless, telegraphy and radio led to new ways of experiencing the world. Artists like Frantisek Kupka, Giacomo Balla or Piet Mondrian tried to express themselves in Cubo-Futurism or Constructivism. The exhibition running until 7 October 2007 was created in cooperation with the Austrian Film Museum and the Albertina. ■

Vienna Museum: The Gänsehäufel

During the dog days in Vienna a visit to the public open air swimming pool "Gänsehäufel" on the Old Danube is highly recommendable. The "beach pool" is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The wonderful show at the Vienna Museum gives insight into the development of the municipal open air swimming pool inaugurated by the Municipality of Vienna in 1907. Still before World War I, it attracted more than 200,000 people every summer who tried to escape every-day life by indulging in sand treatments, having fun in the water and drinking beer. ■

At the Bottom. The Discovery of Poverty. Ending on 28 October 2007: www.wienmuseum.at

Museum on Demand (MUSA). Vienna 1, Felderstrasse 6-8 (next to the town hall). Tel.: 00431 4000-8400.

The Modern Laboratory. MuseumsQuartier (MQ). Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna. www.mumok.at

The Gänsehäufel. Vienna Museum Karlsplatz, 1010 Vienna: www.wienmuseum.at

U-20 Football World Cup: Austrian team among the world's best

The fourth place in the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Canada can be described as a historic success for Austria's youth football. The U-20 team of the Austrian Football Federation (ÖFB) has delivered a top performance in the "minor tournament" in the World Cup. In the match for third Austria suffered an unfortunate 0:1 defeat against Chile. This fact does not diminish the overall success as the exemplary fighting and team spirit of the juniors of the Austrian Football Federation impressed both at international and national level throughout the tournament. The international football audience got to know great talents of Austria's training programmes for fledgling kickers. The fourth place in the U-20 World Cup is one of the biggest achievements of the Austrian national team. Thus Austria boasts one of the four best junior teams in the world. ÖFB junior team coach Paul Gludovatz and the U-20 team led by team captain Sebastian Prödl must be congratulated warmly. In the final tournament Argentina succeeded in securing a record sixth world U-20 title and was crowned world champion after a 2:1 victory over the Czech team, which had defeated Austria. ■

Tour of Austria: a highlight in European cycling

Hopes for the first domestic final victory since 2003 have not realised in the 59th International Tour of Austria. Nevertheless, it has been another milestone in the history of this sports event. The title of Austria's cycling event with the most longstanding tradition was changed back to the original name "Internationale Österreich Rundfahrt". After the successful double cycling events World Championship Salzburg and Tour of Austria in 2006, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) extended the Tour of Austria to a total of eight days. The event took place in Europe's highest cycling category for the second time. The UCI officials offered admission to the ProTour, the group of best races, in the next season. The date of the Tour of Austria coinciding with the first week of the Tour de France will, however, remain unchanged even for the 60th anniversary edition of the event. The best athlete was the Belgian Stijn Devolder.

The 27-year-old had been considered one of the favourites of the race. He won over Thomas Rohregger from Tyrol, leading 1:04 minutes ahead after eight stages and 1,247.6 kilometres. Rohregger had started the time trial in the yellow jersey. Behind Jure Golcer (+1:13 min.) from Slovenia, last year's number three and incumbent Austrian Champion, Christian Pfannberger, (+1:25) came in fourth. ■

Dornbirn: successful gymnastics festival World Gymnaestrada

The 13th World Gymnaestrada (8 to 14 July 2007) ended with the great closing ceremony at the Birkenau stadium in Dornbirn (Vorarlberg). For the first time in the 54-year history of the international gymnastics festival, representatives of all five continents participated in an official closing ceremony. The world's most important and largest mass sports festival became a success both for gymnastics and the organisers. It was not only characterised by a high athletic standard but also offered creative cultural experiences, free from any pressure to achieve top positions. Every individual of the about 22,000 gymnasts from 57 nations of all continents was a winner. The 2007 World Gymnaestrada has been Austria's largest sports event this year and has developed into a very special event with a unique atmosphere. 85,000 tickets were sold for the performances at the trade fair centre of Dornbirn, about 10,000 people watched the demonstrations of the large groups of gymnasts in Lustenau. 28,000 participants and visitors had attended the opening ceremony at Birkenwiese stadium in Dornbirn. The successful event and professional organisation were highly praised by the International Federation of Gymnastics, the national delegations and the Gymnaestrada participants themselves. ■

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