News from Austria

No. 17/07

EUROPE | HOME AFFAIRS
Pope Benedict XVI. in Austria

EUROPE | INTERNATIONAL Chancellor Gusenbauer paid visit to Israel and Palestinian regions

ECONOMY
Partial labour market opening in 2009

CULTURE | MEDIA | SCIENCE Austria's Grand State Prize goes to Georg Friedrich Haas

SPORTS POLICY EURO 2008: stadium in Klagenfurt opened

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Pope Benedict XVI.: "Austria is a country blessed with natural beauty, unique cultural treasures, many artistically

talented people and great creative

power.

"Much of what Austria is and possesses, it owes to the Christian faith and its beneficial effects on the individual people."

"The 'House of Europe' will be a good place to live for everyone only if it is built on a solid cultural and moral foundation of common values drawn from our history and our traditions. Europe cannot and must not deny its Christian roots."

Pope Benedict XVI. in Austria

Despite pouring rain, Pope Benedict XVI. started his three-day visit to Austria on 7 September 2007 "with great joy". The pontiff had highlighted the religious-spiritual character of his visit to Austria already in the preliminaries and described himself as a "pilgrim among pilgrims". As the head of Vatican state, the Pope was received with military honours and officially welcomed by Federal President Heinz Fischer at Vienna-Schwechat Airport.

After a liturgical opening ceremony with thousands of young people at "Am Hof" square in Vienna's first district, Benedict XVI. – together with Chief Rabbi Chaim Eisenberg – paid a silent tribute to the victims of the shoa at the Holocaust memorial at Judenplatz.

In the evening the Pope met with Austrian officials and members of the diplomatic corps in the former imperial Hofburg palace. In his address – noted for its quite political tone – the head of Church stressed that the "right to life itself" was a "fundamental human right". He pled that Europe should in general be made more "child-friendly" and remember its Christian roots. The pontiff also expressed his concern over the debate about actively assisted death and demanded "accompaniment on the journey towards death".

The Pope praised Austria's economic and social system, in particular the social partnership. Benedict also stated that Austria was a "very blessed country", owing many possessions to the Christian faith.

On the second day of his pilgrimage (8 September 2007) the Pope celebrated a Mass in front of the basilica in Mariazell, a place of Upper Styria. The 850th pilgrimage in anniversary of the Marian sanctuary had motivated his trip to Austria. Besides the Federal President, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and members of the government, more than 30,000 Christians from Austria and all over Europe participated in the Mass. In his sermon the Holy Father stated that the loss of truth lied "at the heart of the crisis of the West" and deplored once more that Europe had become "child-poor". Furthermore, he stressed the "great moral strength" of Christianity.

At the festive Sunday's Mass in Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral on the last day

(9 September 2007) of his visit, Benedict fervently pled for respecting Sundays in the Christian tradition. Sunday should not degenerate into a day of rest but as "the day of the Lord" it demanded a "spiritual focus giving a sense of direction towards wholeness". About 20,000 believers gathered for the Mass, followed by the Angelus prayer on St. Stephen's square.

During a short visit to the Cistercian monastery Heiligenkreuz in the Vienna Woods (Lower Austria) on Sunday afternoon, the Holy Father described monasteries as "spiritual oases". Using a play on words, the Pope also stated that Austria (Österreich) was "klösterreich", i.e. a country 'rich in monasteries'. He also paid a visit to the "Papal University", named after Pope Benedict XVI

Before leaving Austria, Benedict met with volunteers of charity organisations and voluntary services to praise their humanitarian commitment and to thank them.

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: neutrality undisputed

After the Council of Ministers on 29 August 2007, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer emphasised that Austria would never join NATO, ending the recent debate about the political status of the Austrian neutrality.

The Federal Chancellor also reminded of the fact that Austria's foreign and security policy was based on the principle of permanent neutrality enshrined in the Constitution also after the Council of Ministers on 5 September 2007. According to the Constitution, Austria would not tolerate foreign troops on its territory, accede to a military pact and participate in wars. Austria had been practising far-reaching and internationally recognised solidarity in the framework of the United Nations, the OSCE and the EU for several decades.

The federal government wants to decide by mid-October how many Austrian soldiers are to participate in the battle groups of the European Union. From the perspective of neutrality policy, there was no obstacle to Austria's participation, informed Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos. Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany formed together one of a total of 13 battle groups.

Chancellor Gusenbauer paid visit to Israel and Palestinian regions

Israel was the first stop of the three-day Middle East trip of Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer. On 2 September 2007 he paid a visit to the City Hall in Tel Aviv, where Prime Minister Ytzhak Rabin was assassinated in November 1995. Gusenbauer laid a wreath at his memorial in the presence of the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Ron Huldai, as well as Rabin's children.

In the evening the Honorary Fellowship of the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Centre, a renowned Israeli private university, was bestowed on the Chancellor. In his thank-you statement he underlined Austria's moral responsibility in view of the crimes committed against the Jews. "Many perpetrators of the Holocaust were Austrians. Many Austrians formed part of the Nazi machinery bringing death, suffering and destruction to Europe. Many Austrians preferred to look away when their Jewish neighbours were killed and suffered", explained Gusenbauer. It had taken Austria many years to recognise its moral responsibility for the "darkest period in our history". said Gusenbauer.

As far as the Iranian nuclear programme was concerned, the European position was clear. Europe was ready to engage in a dialogue if Iran was prepared to meet its obligations: "A nuclear Iran is not acceptable." Gusenbauer stressed the humanitarian disaster in the whole region and especially in Iraq, with two million refugees above all in Syria and Jordan.

Like the EU, Austria considered a two-state model the only solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "This does not give room for interpretations on Israel's right of existence", stressed Gusenbauer. "Fair" solutions were also necessary for Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugee problem.

On the second day of his trip to Israel the Austrian Federal Chancellor visited the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, where he laid a wreath and, deeply moved, stressed the need to be alert to anti-Semitism and racism. Gusenbauer wrote in the guest book of Yad Vashem that the memorial reminded of the "incredible horror of Holocaust" and the responsibility to "learn from the past".

After visiting the memorial, the Federal Chancellor held talks with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and politicians of the opposition.

Israel appreciated the "clear position of Austria" against the phenomenon of terror and the nuclear ambitions of Iran, stated Israeli President Peres, who also underlined the "excellent relations" with Austria. An invitation to visit Israel was extended to Federal President Heinz Fischer in Vienna

Gusenbauer described the talks of the Israeli government with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as a "great hope". An agreement of Israel with the moderate Fatah would strengthen its position among the Palestinians and weaken the radical Hamas.

Prime Minister Olmert described Austria as a "central country in Europe" and as a country of "central significance" for shaping the Middle East policy in the EU. Both heads of government underlined the close economic, cultural and political cooperation between Israel and Austria. The Austrian Chancellor invited Olmert to Austria

Gusenbauer concluded his Middle East trip on 3 September 2007 in Ramallah (West Bank), where he met with Palestinian President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as well as chief negotiator Saeb Erekat. He welcomed the direct bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians also on this occasion. Moreover, he proposed to invite Syria and the Lebanon to the planned international Middle East conference in November.

The Federal Chancellor emphasised the "profound solidarity" of Austria with the Palestinians. Austria was aware of the suffering of the Palestinian people and supported the peace process. Gusenbauer laid a wreath at the tomb of former Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Austria pays homage to Kofi Annan

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan received the Great Golden Medal for Services to the Republic of Austria and the Bruno Kreisky Prize in Vienna on 10 September 2007. On 11 September 2007 a building of the Vienna International Center (VIC) will be named after him in a ceremony held in Vienna's "UNO City". ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Yad Vashem reminds us of the incredible horror of the Holocaust and the need to be alert to all forms of anti-Semitism and racism. It reminds us of our responsibility to learn from the past and to educate our children for a better future. It reminds us of the necessity to safeguard the security of Israel and its neighbours and to secure the rebirth of the Jewish people."

"The Middle East is an example for Austria's foreign and security policy. Austria's role is highly appreciated by Israel and the Palestinians."

Shimon Peres:
"Israel appreciates
Austria's clear
position against
the phenomenon of
terror and Iran's
nuclear
ambitions."

Mahmoud Abbas:
"Bruno Kreisky
was the first
European to
accept the
legitimacy of the
Palestinian
national struggle
and to plead for an
end of the Israeli
occupation."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer states with regard to the gradual opening of the labour market: "Qualification measures for domestic job seekers have priority. But if there is a demand

qualified personnel

countries has to be

for labour.

from other

recruited."

www.frauen.bka.g v.at

Austria registered 29.6 million hotel nights from May to July 2007, corresponding to a plus of 4.6% and an increase in turnover from 6.7% to 5.45 billion euros.

Partial labour market opening in 2009

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer demanded a "selective and gradual" opening of the Austrian labour market in 2009. "Those that we need may come" but the labour market will remain closed for those "that we do not need", explained Gusenbauer on 31 August 2007 in the economic talks at the European Forum Alpbach and in "Summer Talks", a TV evening programme of the ORF (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation). If the demand for skilled workers cannot be met

by qualification programmes in Austria, qualified workers have to be recruited in other countries. A list of those sectors with a shortage of skilled workers was being compiled by the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) and the social partners, stated the Federal Chancellor. At the same time, Gusenbauer stressed that qualification measures for domestic job seekers had absolute priority. Moreover, the government's "training guarantee" programme providing each young person with a place in a school, as an apprentice or in a "rescue network" was realised, stated the Federal Chancellor.

Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Finance Wilhelm Molterer announced at the economic talks in Alpbach that a more "proactive approach" would be adopted to the labour market opening. According to the plans of Economic Minister Martin Bartenstein, after 2009 protective clauses would be applied only to unskilled workers, while the current quota system for key workers would cover new occupational groups already in 2008 by virtue of a "skilled workers regulation".

Wishing to improve the labour market opportunities of women, Minister for Women's Affair Doris Bures presented in Vienna on 6 September 2007 the new mentoring project "frauen.kompetenz.netz". The aim is to support women to be reintegrated into the labour market, female migrants as well as disadvantaged women and girls in the career orientation phase.

Unemployment rate decreased by 4.8 per cent in August

Unemployment continues to drop in Austria thanks to a booming economy. In August the number of unemployed decreased by 4.8% to

191,226 registered job seekers (9,576 persons less than in 2006). Including the 43,025 unemployed persons undergoing training (-13%), 234,251 people in Austria are still without a job. Long-term unemployed persons are the group benefiting most from the economic upswing. The number of those jobless for more than one year dropped by 23.5% to 5,933 from the level of 2006. Young people (aged 15 to 24) registered a decrease in unemployment by 5.6% to 32,290 persons. There was no gender-specific difference as unemployment declined by 4.8% among women and men. Austrian nationals registered a decrease of 5.1%, foreigners of 3.2%.

With an unemployment rate (based on EU statistics) of 4.3% in August (0.4% below the prior-year level), Austria is among the EU's leaders in employment – after Denmark, the Netherlands and Cyprus (EU-27 average unemployment rate: 6.8%). ■

Summer tourism: increase in turnover and hotel nights

In this summer season the Austrian tourist industry has boasted excellent results. Between May and July 2007 29.6 million hotel nights were registered. Compared to last year this is a plus of 4.6%, as evidenced by the hotel nights statistics of the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria). According to estimates of the Economic Research Institute (Wifo), this also means that Austrian tourist enterprises benefit from a strong increase in turnover (by 6.7% to 5.45 billion euros compared to 2006). Since 2003 this could be the first summer in which a growth is registered. In addition, the summer result could make up for the weak winter season. A slight overall growth can be forecast for the Austrian tourist industry this year. Due to the lack of snow in winter, until very recently the result of the tourist sector was still negative.

BAWAG posts operating profit

After the take-over of BAWAG by US financial investor Cerberus, the earnings position of the bank has improved gradually. While in the first six months 2006 a loss after taxes of 5.4 million euros had been registered, a net surplus of 81.9 million euros was achieved in the same period of the current year.

Austria's Grand State Prize goes to Georg Friedrich Haas

Composer Georg Friedrich Haas will be awarded the Grand State Prize 2006 on 28 November 2007. Haas was born in Graz in 1953 and is one of Austria's most acclaimed contemporary composers. A special programme is dedicated to him at the forthcoming "Wien Modern" festival. A new concert for piano and orchestra will be premiered with Thomas Larcher and RSO Wien in Vienna on 7 November 2007. Other works to be premiered: the 5th String Quartet interpreted by Arditti Quartet at the Klangspuren Schwaz festival (Tyrol) on 20 September 2007; "Open Spaces", an ensemble work for percussionists and two groups of six string instrument players, at the Warsaw Autumn festival on 28 September 2007, and his new opera "Melancholia" at the Paris opera house in Palais Garnier on 9 June 2008. Georg Friedrich Haas, who studied with Gösta Neuwirth, Doris Wolf and Friedrich Cerha, tries to break new ground in his works and to captivate the listeners with his radical sound adventures.

The Grand Austrian State Prize is the highest distinction granted by the Republic of Austria once a year to an artist for outstanding achievements. It was founded by then Minister of Education Felix Hurdes in 1950 and is awarded based on a proposal by the Austrian Board of Cultural Affairs in the categories literature, music, visual arts and architecture (no regular rotation) in recognition of an artist's lifetime achievements. Since 1971 the prize, which had previously been granted in several categories each year, has been conferred on only one personality per year.

Albertina: From Monet to Picasso. The Batliner Collection.

From 14 September 2007 to 6 April 2008 Albertina in Vienna presents a selection of paintings from the Collection of Rita und Herbert Batliner comprising more than 500 works. The Batliner Collection was donated to Albertina as a permanent loan in May 2007. With key works by Cézanne, Chagall, Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, Francis, Rothko, Lichtenstein or Bacon, it is one of Europe's most important private collections. Thanks to this permanent loan of key works of

French Impressionism and post-Impressionism, German Expressionism, Fauvism or the Russian avant-garde including Malevich, Albertina has become Austria's only museum that can fill the existing gap in international classic modern art in the country's museum scene. After the donation of the Batliner Collection, Albertina boasts one of the world's largest museum collections of Picasso, including important paintings, drawings and ceramics. About 300 pioneering, sensational works – including a pastel paining of a girl by Renoir, the late water lilies painting by Monet and the "Young Woman in Chemise" by Modigliani – are presented to the public in this exhibition.

Cross of Honour for Science and Art to Paul Zwietnig-Rotterdam

On 3 September 2007 Federal Minister for Education, Art and Culture Claudia Schmied awarded the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art to Paul W. Zwietnig-Rotterdam. The artist and philosopher was born in Wiener Neustadt (Lower Austria) in 1939. The award was conferred on him in a ceremony at the Vienna Leopold Museum (Museumsquartier) currently presenting the Rotterdam exhibition "The Art of the Line - The Drawings" (ending on 1 October 2007). The laudatory speech was given by Joachim Rössl. "Paul Rotterdam deserves this homage not only for his outstanding achievements as painter, a theoretician and teacher, which have won international acclaim, but also because he has always shown his emotional connection with Austria stated Schmied. "With his creative work and public lecturing, he acts as an ambassador of art and an unofficial envoy of Austria". In the USA Paul Rotterdam enjoys the reputation of being one of Austria's most high-calibre personalities. After his appointment to the Visual Arts Centre in Harvard in 1968, he has lived in or near New York. His works are represented in MoMA, the Guggenheim Museum and the Metropolitan Museum. In Austria Rotterdam's paintings are owned by Vienna Albertina, the Regional Museum of Lower Austria (Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum) in St. Pölten, the Regional Museum of Styria (Landesmuseum Joanneum) in Graz as well as the Museum of the City of Leoben. ■

Albertina, Albertinaplatz 1, 1010 Vienna. www.albertina.at More funds for the federal museums

An additional 6 million euros will be allocated to the federal museums in 2008. This decision was made based on an analysis of the unit responsible for economics and law within the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture. Additional funds of 1.8 million euros (total 21.99 million) go to the Museum of Art History, 1.7 million euros (total 22.48 million) to the Austrian National Library, 1.7 million euros (total 6.18 million) to Belvedere and 500,000 euros (total 8.5 million) to the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK). The remaining difference will "not be held as a reserve but is earmarked for discretionary use in 2008", said Schmied. Vienna Albertina, the Technical Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Modern Art (MUMOK) are not granted budget increases for 2008. They still have sufficient reserves, informed the Minister. As in the past, Albertina receives 5.75 million euros, the Technical Museum 11.27 million euros, the Museum of Natural History 12.74 million euros and the Museum of Modern Art (MUMOK) 7.37 million euros. The infrastructure and security budget will be stepped up by 10.8 million euros.

According to Schmied, a more radical redistribution of government funds is envisaged for the fiscal year 2009. "The focus will shift but there will be no revolution"

"The Counterfeiters": nominee for Best Foreign Language Film Oscar

On 27 August 2007 the Austrian Film Commission, a jury composed of ten representatives of the film industry, unanimously decided to choose Stefan Ruzowitzky's film "The counterfeiters" ("Die Fälscher") Austria's candidate for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar. In 1998 the film "The Inheritors" ("Die Siebtelbauern") by the filmmaker born in 1961 had been Austria's nominee. The new film is based on the memories of Holocaust survivor Adolf Burger about a counterfeiters' workshop in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The leading roles are played by Karl Markovics, August Diehl and David Striesow. According to the jury, Ruzowitzky's film successfully "combined the historical and human aspects of the story and treated the content impressively and harmoniously in all respects". After the countries submitted their contributions, the final selection of the best non-English-language film takes place: the "Best Foreign Language Film Oscar" will be awarded in January 2008. ■

Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek again "Dramatist of the Year"

Viennese author and Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek was selected "Dramatist of the Year" for the third time (after 1993 and 1998) by a jury of independent critics. In a survey of the magazine "Theater heute" Thalia Theater in Hamburg under the artistic management of Ulrich Khuon became the "Theatre of the Year". The title "Actress of the Year" went to Judith Rosmair of Thalia Theatre, playing Gudrun Ensslin in Jelinek's "Ulrike Maria Stuart" and Dorine in "Tartuffe". "Actor of the Year" is Joachim Meyerhoff as Hamlet at Schauspielhaus Zurich and Benedikt in "Much Ado About Nothing" at Vienna's Burgtheater. Dimiter Gotscheff became the best director with "Die Perser" ("The Persians") at Deutsches Theater in Berlin.

Kunsthalle Krems: Brazil. From Austria to the New World.

Vibrant insights are given into the history of Brazil - from the destiny of the indigenous population to Christianisation, from the jungle to the mega-cities - at Kunsthalle Krems from 16 September 2007 to 17 February 2008. The masterpieces of Brazilian 19th century painting (e.g. by Almeida Júnior, Pedro Weingärtner) from the Museu Nacional des Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro as well as the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo are shown for the first time in Europe. The exhibition also explores the relations between Austria and Brazil, which have not always been unproblematic. In addition, the show illustrates the history of the great expedition to Brazil in 1817 with travel photos by Thomas Ender as well as numerous botanical, zoological and cultural exhibits. The multifacetted links between Austria and Brazil in the 19th century are shown against the background of the marriage of Archduchess Maria Leopoldina with Portuguese Crown Prince Dom Pedro, future emperor of Brazil.

www.theaterheute

Brazil. From Austria to the New World: www.kunsthalle.at

Mourning for Luciano Pavarotti

On 6 September 2007 legendary opera star and crossover singer Luciano Pavarotti died from a kidney failure aged 71 at his home in Modena (Italy), where he had been born as the son of a baker in 1935. Pavarotti had suffered from pancreatic cancer for two years.

He sang 55 times at Vienna State Opera, for the last time in 1996, singing the title role of the opera "Andrea Chenier". The flawless intonation and phrasing of the master of the high C was unrivalled. The portly singer captured the attention of a large non-opera audience in a concert given together with his colleagues Plácido Domingo and José Carreras - as "The Three Tenors" - in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome in July 1990 in the framework of the Football World Cup in Italy, reaching about one billion people via TV. The video of the live performance is still one of the leading classic bestsellers. In 1999 the three tenors appeared in "Christmas in Vienna". Numerous opera recordings starring Pavarotti are outstanding, e.g. Puccini's "La Bohème", with singer Mirella Freni (also from Modena) and conductor Herbert von Karajan.

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, who is also a great opera fan, was deeply moved by the death of the opera star. "With his great voice Luciano Pavarotti opened the door to opera for millions of people who would have never thought of setting a foot inside an opera house. He represented the world of art but never an artificial world. Wherever he performed, he could be sure to hold the multitudes spellbound." Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied stressed the performances of the singer at Vienna State Opera, which were among "the musical and social highlights of the respective season".

State Opera Director Ioan Holender mourned the "loss of the most beautiful tenor voice" of his time, gave orders to raise a black flag over the opera house and delivered a commemorative address before the evening performance.

Conference on Austrian Culture Abroad: Plassnik promotes Cold War museum project

This year's conference on Austria's cultural activities abroad was held at Vienna's

Künstlerhaus. It focused on the question "Where is Europe?" and the search for an approach to a common European cultural policy.

Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik opened the meeting with a lecture, in which she announced the go-ahead for a museum project mentioned in the government agreement. The museum would cover the period from the Cold War to the fall of the Iron Curtain, spotlighting the European context. Plassnik also addressed the relations between Europe and the Islamic world. With regard to a possible site for the new museum, the Minister stated that Vienna was in general excellently suited but that maybe in this case Andau (Burgenland) or another place near the border would be more adequate. Virtual museums also offered interesting options. The year 2009 - 20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain – would be the right moment to treat this historical period that was so important for the European identity, especially since for example pupils now taking the A-levels had no personal memories of that epoch. Some day European and Austrian foreign policies would be "conveyed to the world with one voice". In fact, Austria had already demonstrated its international orienttation, e.g. in its approach to Islam and the cultures shaped by Islam. We work "in a very proactive way". Austria was for example the only Western country operating a cultural forum in Teheran, which was "an absolute gem of Austria's cultural activities abroad", although one did not agree with many things that were going on in Iran and also voiced an opinion on them.

In 2007 a budget of 7.6 million euros has been made available for Austrian cultural activities abroad, which is 1.5 million euros more than in 2006.

Austrian cultural policy is currently supported by a worldwide network of 30 cultural forums (another one was opened in India in March), 52 Austrian libraries, five language institutes, special liaison offices in Washington and Lvov as well as by the embassies and consulates, which are also involved in cultural activities.

At the conference lectures were given by other eminent personalities, such as Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied, philosopher Rudolf Burger, literature expert Wolfgang Müller-Funk and writer Doron Rabinovici.

Conference on Austria's external cultural activities: www.bmeia.gv.at EURO 2008: stadium in Klagenfurt opened

The Wörthersee stadium in Klagenfurt – the only newly built venue for EURO 2008 - was opened on 7 September 2007. The Austrian national football team met the Japanese team in a friendly match in the framework of the "Tournament of the Continents". The stadium passed the opening test, with Austria defeating Japan 4:3 in a penalty shooting after their regular match had ended 0:0. The stadium accommodates 32,000 seats; at the opening only 26,500 were, however, mounted. The costs of the new building amount to about 66.7 million euros. After EURO 2008, the stadium will be named "Hypo-Arena", the natural lawn will be replaced by an artificial one. On 16 September 2007 the stadium will become the home venue for the SK Austria Kärnten team =

Football: 1:1 against Czech Republic is a real success

The match Austria against the Czech Republic – with which the Ernst Happel stadium in Vienna was reopened after a complete overhaul for the European Football Championship 2008 on 23 August 2007 – was a real success for the national team of the ÖFB (Austrian Football Federation). A 1:1 victory against the strong Czech team is a reason of joy for the team and its coach Josef Hickersberger. The Tivoli stadium in Innsbruck will be the last of four stadiums having to undergo the test for EURO 2008: the Austrian national team will play against Ivory Coast on 17 October 2007. The restructuring costs of the Tivoli stadium opened in September 2000 will total 30.6 million euros. ■

Austrian diplomats "Ambassadors of Passion"

The worldwide attention Austria enjoys thanks to EURO 2008 is not only of great relevance for Austria's foreign policy but is also invaluable to promote the country as a tourist destination. At the annual ambassadors' conference, Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka and Heinz Palme, the government's EURO 2008 coordinator, briefed the about 100 heads of Austria's representations. The diplomats

participating in the event were appointed "Ambassadors of Passion". The Secretary of State for Sport appealed to the ambassadors to lend their support in promoting the world's third largest sports event in the respective countries. With 81 embassies, six permanent representations at international organisations, two foreign representations and 15 consulates, Austria has more than 100 EURO 2008 ambassadors around the globe. ■

Austrian sports world pays tribute to late Helmut Senekowitsch

Legendary Austrian football team chief Helmut Senekowitsch passed away. Senekowitsch, who was born in Graz, died in Klosterneuburg during the night from 8 to 9 September 2007 aged 73 after a long and severe illness. He became famous as a national coach between 1976 and 1978. The highlight of his coaching career was at the same time hailed as a highlight of the Austrian football history. After the successful World Cup qualification, the ÖFB (Austrian Football Federation) team enthralled the nation in the finals in Argentina in 1978 and became number seven. "We all remember Austria's victory over Germany leading to collective joy and also national pride in Austria. He proved that even a country quite often considering itself a 'football dwarf' can enjoy moments of greatness if the right preparations are made. His death deprives our country of one of the greatest in its sports history", stated Chancellor Gusenbauer. "Senekowitsch was an Austrian football legend already during his own lifetime. He led our national team to one of its most important victories and gave it a hope for the future on which coaches can build even today. The "spirit of Cordoba" inspired by him can still be felt". With these words Secretary of State for Sport Lopatka expressed his condolences to the family of the deceased.

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