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Gusenbauer: top priorities are employment, EU Treaty, EURO 2008

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Austria has become more social, fairer and offers better opportunities."

"Important are reforms in the area of youth employment and youth training as well as an active labour market policy to integrate as many people as possible into the working process."

"During EURO 2008 Austria has to present its best side."

After almost one year after the new federal government has taken the helm, Austria "has become more social, fairer and offers better opportunities", explained Chancellor Gusenbauer in an interview with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) on 3 January 2008. Its balance on current account was quite respectable, and the major goal of reducing unemployment had been achieved. Minimum pensions were stepped up significantly and the remaining pensions recorded higher increases than in the rest of Europe. In addition, the "great reform of opportunities" was kicked off successfully with the educational reform, said Gusenbauer.

As the top priorities on the working schedule for 2008 the Chancellor had already mentioned work, the EU Reform Treaty and the European Football Championship EURO 2008 in an interview with the Austrian Press Agency (APA) on 26 December 2007. These three subject areas were also high on the agenda of the government's closed-door meeting in Vienna on 10 and 11 January 2008. Issues including work, economy, innovation and technology will be discussed on a complex and future-oriented basis at the get-together focusing on reforms of youth employment and youth training. Another priority is an active labour market policy, including innovative training programmes. Its aim was to create a maximum number of jobs against the favourable economic trend in Austria and to train the necessary skilled workers in Austria, he said. At its meeting the federal government will also discuss the future information policy on the EU Treaty of Lisbon (see "Europe" page). Gusenbauer informed that EURO 2008 was the "event of the century, the greatest sports happening ever taking place in the Austrian history" involving numerous challenges, e.g. in the area of security, transport and sustainability. ■

Changes in 2008

In 2008 many things will become easier for the Austrians. Among the beneficiaries are students, families and pensioners as well as the chronically ill.

Salaries and pensions will go up by no less than

3 to 4%. In 2008 minimum pensions will increase by 2.9% to 747 euros/month (+21 euros gross). Higher pensions are topped up with supplements adjusted to social needs (up to 1.7%) or are subject to transition rules. Even pensions of more than 2,161.50 euros monthly benefit from a lump-sum increase.

The burden on parents is significantly reduced. Due to the abolishment of the administrative charges payable on the birth of a child, they can save up to 131 euros. Eligibility for childcare allowance has become more flexible by introducing three models. Families with several children receive higher childcare allowances: for the third child a supplement of 35 euros is paid, every additional child will obtain 50 euros.

Students will also receive more support. By raising the income and discretionary earnings caps, about 4000 students will additionally become eligible for grants.

The chronically ill and low income earners will be the main beneficiaries of lower health costs. The prescription fee was increased by 10 cents to 4.80 euros on 1 January 2008, but the total expense for prescriptions was limited to a maximum of 2% of the individual's net income.

Care services for older family members are also affected by changes. The amnesty for employing illegal foreign carers expired on 1 January 2008. As from that date, carers have to be registered with the social insurance system. Subsidies of up to 225 euros are available for care services by self-employed carers, 800 euros are contributed to the cost of employed carers.

The health insurance contributions for workers, employees, pensioners and farmers rise by 0.15 percentage points.

Travelling by car and train will become more expensive. The motorway toll sticker for 2008 costs 73.80 euros. The price of train tickets increases by 2.5% on average. To promote road safety, fines for traffic offences become heftier: phoning without hands-free devices costs 50 instead of 25 euros, 70 euros will be charged for speeding by up to 30 km/h. Winter tyres become mandatory for cars from 1 November to 15 April. However, driving with the headlights on during the day has been abolished.

The most important changes in the fiscal sector are the abolishment of the inheritance tax (as from August 2008) and gift tax. The latter will be replaced by a reporting duty. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: communicating EU subjects in a better way

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer considers it necessary to intensify communication with the people at political level to communicate the meaning and content of EU legislation. EU treaties such as the Treaty of Lisbon or the Treaties of Maastricht and Nice were not more difficult to understand than Austrian laws. Proposals by the European Commission had to be examined as critically as national laws “but without the reflex of questioning the entire EU if a specific wording is difficult to understand“, Gusenbauer explained in an interview concentrating on external affairs with the Austrian Press Agency (APA) on 2 January 2008. This “false logical conclusion” founded on the criticism of details but questioning the entire system had to be addressed by improving communication.

Gusenbauer replied the question how he would explain the Treaty of Lisbon briefly and understandably to the people by highlighting first of all the Charter of Fundamental Rights that allowed each individual EU citizen to appeal against national laws before the European Court of Justice. Secondly, the Treaty promoted democracy within the EU by strengthening the influence and rights of the EU Parliament and the national parliaments. “In the future the Austrian Parliament will have more influence on what is happening in the EU”, stressed the Federal Chancellor. Thirdly, the Reform Treaty ensured the functioning of the enlarged Union.

Gusenbauer also commented on international affairs. By addressing Taiwan, he pled for upholding the one-China policy so as not to threaten stability in the region.

The participation of Austrian soldiers in the EU mission in Chad was described by Gusenbauer as an “important humanitarian mission“. One should not ignore a humanitarian disaster of this dimension “with hundreds of thousands people fleeing who would not even reach the refugee camps alive without the protection of international troops”, warned the Federal Chancellor. Furthermore, the humanitarian dimension of the Chad mission was emphasised by the participation of neutral and non-allied states. He considered it a European duty “not to

look away but to do something” about the situation in Chad.

Gusenbauer harshly condemned “the cowardly attack” on Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto. “Bhutto was a key figure on Pakistan’s path towards democracy, her assassination was therefore also an attack against democracy” underlined the Federal Chancellor. Pakistan was of key significance for the entire South Asian region with regard to the development in Afghanistan but also in the context of the “still precarious peace process” in India. Any additional destabilisation of the country with nuclear weapons would have “unforeseeable consequences“, not only for the situation in Iran but the Middle East as a whole, said Gusenbauer. ■

Austria-Pakistan: concern after Benazir Bhutto’s assassination

Besides Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, also Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik expressed deep concern over the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan (on 27 December 2007). She described the “barbaric deed” to provoke “disgust and repugnance“. Pakistan had lost a “brave advocate fighting for the country’s return to a pluralistic democracy”, stated the Foreign Minister. ■

Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek pays visit to Austria

Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek pays an official visit to Austria on 7 January 2008. The talks with Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer focus on EU subjects (Treaty of Lisbon), the Czech EU Presidency in the first half of 2009, the recent Schengen enlargement as well as the future of Kosovo. ■

OSCE Vienna: Finland took over the chair

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) headquartered in Vienna has a new Chairman-in-Office. On 1 January 2008 Finland took over the chair from Spain. The key areas of activities of the new chairman will be the security of the borders and water transport routes. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: “When I disagree with something my reflex must not necessarily be to question the whole EU. If somebody does not like a proposal by the Austrian government, he or she will not automatically question Austria as a whole.”

Number of unemployed persons continues to drop

In Austria the number of unemployed persons dropped once more significantly at the end of 2007. Hence, the previous favourable development in the domestic labour market is continuing. The number of jobless registered with the Public Employment Service (AMS) has already decreased for 22 times in a row; in late December 2007 it was 4.9% below the prior-year level. A total of 265,306 persons (minus 13,803) was registered with the AMS. This up-to-date information has been provided by the Ministry for Economic Affairs

The unemployment rate based on the national calculation method decreased from 7.9 to 7.4% in the same period, reaching its lowest level (6.5%) since 2000. Austria's unemployment rate of 4.3% calculated by using the Eurostat method is the fourth lowest in the EU. In addition, the number of participants in AMS training programmes not included in the unemployment statistics recorded another significant increase by more than 11% to 44,081 in the past month. In Austria the number of employees went up by 1.6% to 3,310,200 persons between December 2006 and December 2007.

The unemployment data for the entire year 2007 will be published soon. President of the Chamber of Labour Herbert Tumpel recently spoke of about 280,000 jobseekers on annual average (minus 17,000 persons). As far as youth employment is concerned, the number of apprentices is expected to increase by 3.1% to 129,900 according to preliminary estimates of the Ministry for Economic Affairs.

As the experts informed, the favourable trend in the labour market is not only due to the cyclical high but also the decline in unemployment in the building sector (minus 3.7%) (which is quite surprising in the cold season) and fewer jobseekers in trade and tourism (both minus 5.7%). ■

Austria is fourth richest country in the EU

According to a recent projection of the EU Statistical Office Eurostat (December 2007), Austria remains the fourth richest country in the European Union. The gross domestic product

(GDP) per capita in Austria exceeds the EU average by 28%. The latest Eurostat survey shows that Luxembourg is the undisputed leader. Its GDP per inhabitant – expressed in 280 purchasing power standards – is almost three times the EU average.

Besides Luxembourg, Ireland (146) and the Netherlands (131) rank before Austria (128). Places 5 to 10 are taken by Denmark (126), Sweden (125), Belgium (120), Great Britain (118), Finland (117) and Germany (114).

Bulgaria, whose GDP per capita corresponds to merely 37% of the EU average, remains on the bottom of the list. ■

Longer opening hours for Austrian shops

On 1 January 2008 new shop opening hours took effect in Austria. Shops may now open until 9 p.m. on working days and until 6 p.m. on Saturdays. In total, shops are allowed to open for 72 (previously 66) hours per week. The rules concerning Sundays remain unchanged. ■

ÖBB acquires Hungarian MAV Cargo

The Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) take over MAV Cargo, the freight subsidiary of the Hungarian state rail company MAV, for 405 million euros. The privatisation contract was signed in Budapest on 2 January 2008. The buyer is a consortium of ÖBB subsidiary Rail Cargo Austria (RCA) and the predominantly Hungarian Raab Railways (Raaber Bahn). This is the first time the ÖBB have acquired a foreign rail company. ■

EU wine market reform: Austria may continue adding sugar to wine

On 19 December 2007 the EU ministers of agriculture agreed on a reform of the wine market. They dropped the plan to prohibit the adding of sugar to wine before fermentation to achieve the desired alcohol content, which had been rejected by 20 countries including Austria. Austria also succeeded in reaping about 20 million euros for the wine sector, explained Minister of Agriculture Josef Pröll. He was "highly satisfied" that the wine location Austria had been safeguarded, said Pröll. ■

The number of unemployed persons in Austria decreased in December for the 22nd time in a row.

With 4.3%, Austria registers the fourth lowest unemployment rate in the EU.

Wiener Festwochen 2008

Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival) – directed by artistic manager Luc Bondy, drama director Stéfanie Carp and music director Stéphane Lissner – takes place between 9 May and 15 June 2008. The varied programme comprises 42 productions – among them four premieres and eight new productions – from 22 countries and offers 144 performances. The artists and groups come from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Estonia, France, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Iran, Japan, Latvia, the Lebanon, the Netherlands, Poland, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, Spain, South Africa, Hungary and the USA.

The performing arts programme starts already on 3 May 2008, when Ariane Mnouchkine's "Théâtre du Soleil" returns after twelve years to the festival with "Les Ephémères". In the seven-hour epos the director provides insights into the "20th century life" through a densely knit network of every-day stories. In a "dramatic installation" of Shakespeare's "Roman Tragedies" of almost the same duration Ivo van Hove goes further back into history. Shakespeare is also represented in Luk Perceval's production of "Troilus and Cressida". Another artist returning to the festival, Johan Simons, tests his skills at a great literary work – Joseph Roth's "Hiob" ("Job").

Besides these well-known personalities, the festival also features new artists, often addressing Eastern European identity problems. Dimitris Dimitriadis' "I am dying as a country" projects "the broken identity of Greece into the future", disfiguring it past recognition. The play is presented by 150 citizens of Athens and twelve actors forming a huge queue. Dorota Maslowska from Poland shows the road movie "Two Poor Poles Speaking Romanian", and Latvian Alvis Hermanis compiled the play "Fathers" from biographical and documentary material, in which a Latvian, Russian and German actor exchange memories of their fathers, thereby reconstructing the societies of their respective countries.

There are numerous other fascinating performances, e.g. "July" by the young Russian poet Ivan Vyrypaev. The spectacular verbal oratory tries to provide psychological support amidst the turmoil of the new Russian reality.

The performance consisting of acting, video screenings and music by the New York Big Art Group "SOS", revolves around the significance of the victim in a technocratic society. Luc Bondy's new production of Jean Genet's "The Maids" starring Edith Clever, Caroline Peters and Sophie Rois is expected to enthrall the audience.

More than 50,000 tickets are issued. In addition, some events will be offered with free admission.

The music programme of Wiener Festwochen focuses on contemporary European music theatre, presenting works of eminent contemporary composers with their own individual musical languages and styles, such as the key works of the opera composers Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007) and Hans Werner Henze (born in 1926). The festival also stages the first opera of George Benjamin (born in 1960) and an early work of Wolfgang Rihm (born in 1952).

Turning the spotlight on topics such as the prison system, intercultural dialogue and the transformation of urban space, the third edition of the festival section "Into the City" seeks to enter into a dialogue with young prisoners, the 8th districts of Vienna and Budapest as well as black people living here. In the framework of another programme section, the Technical University at Karlsplatz opens up to new theories and sounds at the interface between science, art and music. A football picnic in the Augarten park is the musical starting signal for the European Football Championship 2008. ■

Piano manufacturer Bösendorfer goes to Japanese company Yamaha

The traditional piano-maker Bösendorfer, whose instruments enthuse "piano tigers" from Franz Liszt to Oscar Peterson, Cecil Taylor, Roland Batik and Paul, will be taken over by the Japanese group Yamaha. BAWAG PSK and Yamaha agreed on selling 100 percent of their shares to L.Bösendorfer Klavierfabrik GmbH on 20 December 2007. Yamaha have guaranteed to maintain the company seat, headquarters and production of the enterprise in Austria. The "cultural heritage" of this very special company would be preserved, said BAWAG boss Ewald Nowotny. ■

www.festwochen.at

www.boesendorfer.at

Promoting women at universities

In the framework of the programme “fORTE Excellentia“ promoting women in academia, ten universities that had succeeded in increasing their number of women professors, were granted funding of about 644,000 euros in 2007. The universities appointed a total of 19 new women professors in 2007. In 2008 the scope of the funding programme will be widened to include the middle echelons. Under the programme, universities receive about 34,000 euros for each woman appointed to a professorship that actually raises the number of women from the prior-year level. The largest number of top positions for women was created by the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz. ■

European Research Council supports scientists from Austria

Two scholars of Austrian research institutions receive the “Start grants“ of the European Research Council (ERC). Stefan Westermann of the Institute of Molecular Pathology (IMP) from Germany and the Japanese Kazufumi Mochizuki of the Institute of Molecular Biotechnology (IMBA) of the Academy of Sciences (both in Vienna) have outshone more than approx. 300 rivals from 32 countries in a two-phase application procedure, with 9,000 scholars from almost 90 countries participating in the first round.

This is the first time the European Union supports basic research under the 7th Research Framework Programme through its research funding mechanism ERC, focusing on “elite research”. In the next seven years a total of 7.5 billion euros will be available for this purpose. In the first year the grants are exclusively awarded to fledgling researchers: 100,000 to 300,000 euros of funding annually for periods of up to five years.

Kazufumi Mochizuki (born in 1972) obtained his PhD in Japan and spent his post-doc years at the National Institute of Genetics in Japan and the University of Rochester (USA). He has worked as a head of group at IMBA since 2006. Mochizuki applied for 1.6 million euros of funding for his project “RNA-directed DNA elimination in Tetrahymena“ investigating the functions of RNA in the mono-cellular organisms “Tetrahymena”, also called “ciliate”,

which are used as model organisms in molecular biology.

Stefan Westermann (born in 1971) earned his doctorate in Germany and then became active at the University of California. Since 2006 he has been head of group at the IMP. He concentrates on special cell division procedures in his project “Molecular Dissection of the Kinetochore-Microtubule Interface“, for which he applied for 1.8 million euros of funding. ■

New Austrian Library opened in Yekaterinburg

The network of Austrian Libraries has been gradually expanded since its foundation stone had been laid in 1989. The 53rd Austrian Library was inaugurated in Yekaterinburg on 20 December 2007. After Moscow, St. Petersburg and Nizhnij Novgorod, Yekaterinburg has come to host Russia’s fourth Austrian Library. The branch in Yekaterinburg is the first Austrian Library in the Asian part of the Russian Federation.

Yekaterinburg – situated in the centre of the Ural mountain region – is Russia’s fourth largest city. Today the region around Yekaterinburg is considered the third most important in Russia, after Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The new library is expected to give fresh impetus to the traditional and diverse cultural and scientific relations between Russia and Austria. “By establishing the Austrian Library Yekaterinburg, I hope that we will kindle the interest of many people in the region living on the imaginary border between Europe and Asia in learning the German language and getting to know Austria’s rich culture“, said Ambassador Emil Brix, head of the Cultural Policy Department of the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs. ■

Premiere of Bernhard book in Finnish language

Recently the first Finnish translation of a book by Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989) has appeared – more than 18 years after the death of the Austrian author. The weekly magazine “Suomen Kuvalehti“ listed the novel “Hakkuu“ (“Holzfällen“ in German, 1984), published by Teos in autumn 2007, under its book tips in the

December issue. The reviewer of "Suomen Kuvalehti" compares Bernhard's critical stance on the Austrian society with the attitude expressed in the works of Elfriede Jelinek and Robert Musil. The translation of Bernhard's specific language into Finnish by Tarja Roinila was praised strongly for being subtle, precise and fluent at the same time. ■

New Year's Concert 08 with Prêtre: seductive French elegance

Frenchman Georges Prêtre made his debut as the conductor of the New Year's Concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at Vienna's Musikverein with nonchalant elegance. The concert programme included six new pieces, among them the "Napoleon March" by Johann Strauß (son) and "Versailler Gallop" by Johann Strauß (father) demonstrating the love of the Strauß family for the "Grande Nation". The "Austrian Kick-off" in Georg Riha's film presented in the interval of the 50th broadcast by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) was a prelude to the European Football Championship (EURO) 2008. The ballet company of the Vienna State Opera and Volksoper danced a witty "football piece" at Karlsplatz and gave its first live performance of the "Blue Danube Waltz" at Musikverein. The New Year's Concert 2008 was televised live or at the corresponding times around the world by 54 TV and 35 radio channels. Daniel Barenboim will be the guest conductor of the New Year's Concert 2009. ■

OsterKlang Wien Festival 2008

Yehudi Menuhin described "singing as the real mother tongue of the human being", the direct language of emotions. In his "Birth of Tragedy" Friedrich Nietzsche said "... for my own soul sings when it is moved". "Listen how it sings, listen how it laments" is a line in Robert Schumann's oratorio "Paradise and the Peri", with which the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt will open the OsterKlang festival 2008. Based on the text of the same name from the collection of oriental fairy tales by Irish poet Thomas Moore, the work presents the story of redemption in three sections. Peri, an angle-like creature, repudiated for a misdeed from the divine community,

struggles for re-admission to paradise. Robert Schumann said that he had not created the oratory for "houses of prayer but for cheerful people". Anette Dasch sings the role of Peri.

Franz Schubert's enchanting songs about love and contemplation are interpreted by Michael Schade. Martin Haselböck conducts Bach's "St. John Passion", the Patriarchate Choir of Moscow presents Russian liturgy chants and Ann Murray Boccherini's "Stabat Mater". Fabio Luisi and Torsten Fischer show Cherubini's "Médée" – the human tragedy of an outsider torn between love and hatred. On Easter Monday the festival is concluded with a Beethoven matinee starring pianist Melvyn Tan. ■

Central European Prize goes to Austrian author Karl-Markus Gauß

The Central European Prize 2007 offered by the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) and created by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research went to the writer, critic and the editor of the magazine "Literatur und Kritik" Karl-Markus Gauß (born in 1954). The award ceremony took place at Hunyadi Palace in Maria Enzersdorf near Vienna (Lower Austria) in December. Hungarian writer György Dalos gave the presentation speech. The IDM board stated that it had decided in favour of Gauß because he was "bringing Europe closer to us and tries to bring Austria closer to its Central European neighbours". He represented the "ethnic and cultural diversity" of Central Europe. Stunning books by Gauß were published by Zsolnay, e.g. "Die sterbenden Europäer" (2001), "Die Hundeesser von Svinia" (2004) and "Die versprengten Deutschen" (2005) (English titles: "Extinct Europeans", "The Dog Eaters of Svinia", "The Widely Spread Germans"). ■

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky exhibition at Heiligenkreuzerhof

200 objects from the estate of Austria's legendary architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897-2000) can be admired until 25 January 2008 in the exhibition "I am not a kitchen" at Heiligenkreuzerhof in Vienna. The pioneer of a space-saving and cool design invented the Frankfurter (fitted) kitchen. The show was opened by Margit Fischer. ■

The CD (Decca) of the 50th New Year's Concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Georges Prêtre is already available in the shops. For more details see: www.wienerphilharmoniker.at

OsterKlang Wien Festival: 14 to 24 March 2008. Musikverein, Theater an der Wien, Minoritenkirche. www.osterklang.at

www.dieangewandte.at, www.ichbinkeinekueche.at

2007 was a highly successful year for the Austrian sport

With 30 world and 33 European championship titles, 2007 was a very successful year for the Austrian sport. This has been reflected in the Austrian sports policy by stepping up the funds for mass, health and high-performance sports. The budget surpassed for the first time the 100-million-euro threshold and doubled from the level of 2000. Furthermore, the federal government did not only implement a new Anti-Doping Act and double the funds for information, prevention and control to more than 1 million euros but also initiated a comprehensive sports reform process. ■

2008 is under the impact of EURO and the Summer Olympics in Beijing

UEFA EURO 2008 and the Olympic Summer Games in Beijing are of course the dominating sports events in the “super sports year“. The European Football Championship is expected to have beneficial long-term effects on tourism and the economy. EURO 2008 will be taken advantage of to kindle enthusiasm for ball sports in young people. The Secretariat of State for Sport in the Federal Chancellery has earmarked 500,000 euros for this purpose. In elite sport the funding for TOP SPORT AUSTRIA is increased once more, reaching an unprecedented level of 4.7 million euros in the Olympic year 2008. The aim is to provide optimal support to the Austrian athletes in the competitions with more than 200 nations. ■

Priorities in sports policy: school sport and the future of sport

The Federal Chancellery’s campaign to intensify “cooperation between schools and sports clubs” will be another priority in the current year. As far as the topic “school and sport” is concerned, all reports about the increasing obesity of Austrian children demonstrate that there is urgent need for action. First steps will therefore be taken in the nurseries and schools. The funds for innovative cooperation projects between nurseries, schools and sports clubs for 2008 were doubled from 1.8 to 3.6 million euros in the framework of an initiative of the Federal Chancellery/Secretariat of State for Sport. The “SPORT:Future“ reform

process is another major challenge on the agenda. To pave the way for Austrian sport in the future, the structures will be overhauled completely in new specialised working groups by September 2008. ■

Austrian youth caught EURO fever

Five months before the beginning of EURO 2008, Austrian youngsters caught football fever. 9 out of 10 young people interviewed describe EURO 2008 as the most important sports event. In general, young people doing sports are more enthusiastic than inactive teens. These are the findings of the second “Youth and Sport“ survey about the European Football Championship commissioned by the Secretariat of State for Sport. The first survey of the Fessel-GfK polling institute about “Youth and European Football Championship” 2008 had been conducted among 1,200 young people aged 12 to 24 years already in June 2007. After the “final draw“ in Lucerne in early December 2007, another survey was conducted with 500 young people. In general the attitude to EURO has improved since June 2007: 92 percent know about the epoch-making football event and are convinced that the European Football Championship will become a success for Austria, especially for the economic and tourist sector. The most significant improvement in this respect was recorded among young women. In June 2007 73 percent knew about the European Championship, six months later it were no less than 90 percent. Another crucial finding of the survey demonstrates that young people practising sports two to seven times a week are far more optimistic about EURO 2008 than those inactive. 50 percent are of the opinion that EURO will have favourable effects on the image of the Austrian athletes. Among those polled never doing sport only 34 percent chose this answer. Merely 75 percent believe that the national team of the Austrian Football Federation will make it to the quarter finals. ■

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