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Government agrees on apprentices, carers and heavy workers

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "I am glad that the government has finally come up with solutions to social policy issues on the first anniversary of its swearing-in and is committed to solidarity in society."

The federal government started its intensive working programme for the year 2008 with a two-day meeting behind closed doors, followed by a Council of Ministers on 10 and 11 January 2008. Key measures and future projects for Austria, notably regarding growth, innovation, research and jobs (with a special emphasis on youth employment) were agreed on and/or finalised. Important decisions were also taken in the field of care services, pensions (special rules for heavy workers) and EURO 2008 (security and sustainability concepts).

The coalition parties agreed inter alia on a package for apprentices and skilled workers. The most important new measure is a training guarantee for all young people. Hence, all teens not attending school or not apprenticed will receive full apprenticeship training in supra-plant workshops. "In this third pillar we will create 17,000 training positions by 2010", explained Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer.

Apprenticeship training in the companies will also be restructured and benefit from more financial aid. The new rules will apply to apprenticeships starting on 1 July 2008. Under the new system, basic apprenticeship funding will not consist in lump-sum payments but will be adjusted to the apprenticeship pay. The so-called "Blum bonus no. II" (or "new Blum bonus") previously granted for newly created training positions will be available to start-up companies, enterprises training apprentices for the first time or those taking on apprentices after a break of at least three years. Companies whose apprentices pass a quality exam after half of the training will be eligible for a quality bonus. An important aspect of the "new Blum bonus" is support for young women trained in traditionally male occupations. In this context, Minister for Women's Affairs Doris Bures stressed that the new funding scheme for future-oriented and technical occupations would provide women with better career and earnings opportunities. "This is also a contribution to bridging the income gap", stated Bures.

Another key measure of this package is to promote the training of skilled workers so as to meet the domestic demand. The number of unemployed skilled workers participating in

qualification programmes is to double. 10,000 additional skilled workers should become available by 2010. The package will cost about 1.2 billion euros and "helps to ensure that Austria's state system remains healthy and that the Austrians earn good wages", stressed the Chancellor. For March Gusenbauer and Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer announced a set of measures for older workers.

The government reached a consensus in the debate on care services. According to the new rules, the Republic of Austria will not claim additional social insurance contributions, labour charges and taxes for the period up to 31 December 2007 provided that illegal carers are registered up to 30 June 2008 (with retroactive effect 1 January 2008). The amnesty phased out at the end of 2007 applied only to administrative fines. However, for existing employment relations payments have to be made with retroactive effect 1 January 2008. A respective bill was submitted by the MPs of the governing parties on 16 January 2008.

The Social Democrats (SPÖ) and People's Party (ÖVP) agreed on extending the regulation for heavy workers until 2013. Hence, men aged 60 and women aged 55 may retire after 45 and 40 insured years, respectively, without deductions from their pension benefits. Sick leave periods will be taken into account, and fictitious qualifying periods can be acquired retroactively. A basic agreement was reached concerning sexual offenders. A sexual offenders register, employment prohibitions and stricter punishment are envisaged.

The EU Reform Treaty (of Lisbon) was formally adopted. Ratification can now be initiated in Parliament and "Austria's central position in Europe can be further strengthened", said Gusenbauer, who also announced an information campaign. ■

ÖVP triumphs in the 2008 municipal council elections in Graz

In the municipal council elections in Graz on 20 January 2008, the People's Party (ÖVP) won 38.2% of the votes (23 seats), followed by the Social Democrats (SPÖ) with 19.8% (11) and the Greens with 14.5% (8). The Communist Party (KPÖ) and Freedom Party (FPÖ) received 11.2% (6) and 11.0% (6), respectively. 4.3% (2) went to the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ). ■

Federal President Fischer: anti-Islam statements unacceptable

Federal President Heinz Fischer directly opposed the verbal attacks against Islam by FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party) politician Susanne Winter from Graz and distanced himself clearly from them on behalf of Austria. "If there were absolutely unacceptable statements against Islam in the past days in the preliminaries of a regional election campaign in our country, which I condemn strongly, I would also like to add with emphasis: this was not the voice of Austria, this was a voice from which we distance ourselves", said the Federal President at the New Year's reception of the diplomatic corps at Vienna's Hofburg on 15 January 2008.

"Based on our firm belief, Austria is committed to a peaceful and respectful dialogue of cultures and religions", said Fischer. To Austria unceasing efforts to achieve peace and mutual understanding in international relations are of vital importance. "A key strategy are intensified endeavours to establish a 'dialogue of cultures and religions', in which Austria will continue to participate actively with its specific experience and long-standing tradition in this field", stressed the Federal President. In this context, he referred to the UN Forum on Civilisations conference focusing on a dialogue with Islam, which was held at the same time in Madrid. Austria was represented by Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik. Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer also rejected the statements of the FPÖ politician. "In our Austria we will not permit that peace, freedom and tolerance are crushed under their feet or beer mugs."

Foreign Minister Plassnik praised the "calm" reaction of the Islamic Religious Community. "I would like to pay my respect to the Islamic Religious Community, which refused to be provoked", said Plassnik in "ZIB 2", the TV news of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) on 15 January 2008. ■

Chancellor Gusenbauer for severe punishment of doping offenders

Against the background of the recent doping scandal around a blood laboratory in Vienna, which – according to the daily "Kurier" – involves numerous Austrian and foreign athletes,

Federal Chancellor and Minister for Sport Alfred Gusenbauer called for new anti-doping strategies, severe sanctions for doping offenders and other measures in an interview with Kurier (12 January 2008).

In response to the question whether more efficient prevention could have protected Austria from making once more international doping headlines, Gusenbauer answered that in the end anti-doping measures were always late. However, sport and politics had closely cooperated and treated the issue exhaustively over the recent months. A concrete outcome was, for example, the new Anti-Doping Act. This was a first step towards restructuring the combat against doping, control and prevention measures. To this end, the newly established National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA Austria) will be provided with a budget of about 1.2 million euros.

As organised doping was, however, based on "mafia structures" criminal law, notably the Drug Abuse Act, was applicable, rather than the Anti-Doping Act. The competent ministries were examining possible revisions of legal provisions. In this context, the Federal Chancellor emphasised his view that criminal law was applicable only in cases involving the distribution of or professional trade with forbidden substances. The doping offences of individual athletes would be sanctioned with bans, "which in my view is a hard punishment anyway", said Gusenbauer. Sport organisations had already taken measures: The Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC) had banned doping offenders from the Olympic Games and Sporthilfe was also planning such a ban. The initiative of the Austrian Skiing Association (ÖSV) to set up a database was also welcomed, on its basis a pilot project could be developed for all professional sports in Austria, stated the Federal Chancellor. In any case, he did not want to see athletes in handcuffs.

Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka made a similar comment in an interview with Kurier on 15 January 2008. In the struggle against doping, NADA was "an important step ahead", especially because it had been established as a non-profit limited company with an independent manager. The main responsibility rested still with the athletes and sports clubs. ■

Federal President Fischer: "Based on our firm belief, Austria is committed to a peaceful and respectful dialogue of cultures and religions."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "We will not permit that peace, freedom and tolerance are crushed."

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "The National Anti-Doping Agency has a budget of 1.2 million euros for control, prevention and information in the combat against doping."

Economic Chamber: Austria is European export champion

According to estimates of the Economic Chamber Austria (WKÖ), in 2007 Austria registered a significant foreign trade surplus of 1.5 billion euros for the first time in decades. In the current year the foreign trade surplus is expected to double to about 3 billion euros.

In the past year exports rose by 9.8% to 113.9 billion euros, while imports grew by 7.9% to 112.4 billion euros, informed WKÖ President Christoph Leitl at a press conference in Vienna on 10 January 2008. Austria had recorded a slightly positive trade balance – with a surplus of 300 million euros – already in 2002.

For the period 2002 to 2006 Austria had posted an export plus of 49% and, together with Germany, it was the “European export champion” among the EU-15, stressed Leitl. “We used to register a huge commodity trade balance deficit, which had to be compensated for by tourism and services. Now goods alone achieve a surplus, said the WKÖ boss.

For 2008 the Economic Chamber expects the foreign trade surplus to double to 3 billion euros. However, exports will continue to grow but the growth rate will decline to 8%. “Eastern Europe will compensate the economic slowdown in Western Europe“, stated head of the Foreign Trade Department of WKÖ Walter Koren. He is convinced that the dynamic development will continue.

The most important destination for domestic exports remained Germany, receiving about 31% of the Austrian deliveries. In 2007 21.8% of the Austrian exports went to Eastern Europe. “The countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe form part of Austria’s success story“, underlined Koren. A comparison by regions shows that 80% of the domestic products remain in Europe, while 20% are exported overseas.

The most important overseas market and third-most important trading partner of Austria are the USA. However, the unfavourable euro-dollar exchange rate had contributed to a dramatic price increase of Austrian goods in the USA, which had adverse effects above all on the consumer goods sector, explained Koren.

A record of food exports was announced by Agrarmarkt Austria (AMA), Austria’s agency responsible for agricultural marketing, at the

third-biggest food fair “Green Week” (ending on 27 January) in Berlin on 17 January 2008. Based on this information, in 2007 Austrian agricultural exports exceeded for the first time the threshold of 7 billion euros (+5.4%). “Austrian agricultural products definitively play in the top league of the European market”, AMA managing director Stephan Mikinovic was pleased to comment on the increasing demand in Western and Eastern Europe for food “made in Austria”. Germany continues to be the most important market, where Austria’s exports have registered a plus of 7.8%.

As the imports of agricultural products to Austria rose by a projected 7.1% to 7.2 billion euros the agricultural trade balance is again almost in equilibrium. ■

Austria is among the leading investors in Eastern Europe

With a volume of investments of about 76 billion euros, Germany, Italy and Austria are the most important investors in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). More than 30% of the foreign capital is injected by investors from these three countries. Austria has optimally taken advantage of the opportunities of the opening up of the former Eastern bloc countries. Based on the latest locational analysis of Bank Austria Creditanstalt (BA-CA) published on 15 January 2008, domestic exports to the CEE region have risen tenfold since then.

“Every tenth euro invested by foreign companies in Central and Eastern Europe comes from Austria”, explained Regina Prehofer, who is responsible for the corporate customer business in BA-CA. “With a per-capita GDP of about 32,000 euros, Austria is the EU’s number four market in terms of purchasing power”, said Prehofer. ■

Vienna Airport expects more than 20 million passengers

After a major increase in passenger numbers in 2007, Vienna Airport, listed on the stock exchange, expects to register for the first time more than 20 million passengers in 2008. Last year the passenger volume climbed by 11.3% to 18.8 million (254,870 departures and arrivals), informed the company on 17 January 2008. ■

Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler "Scholar of the Year 2007"

The German language specialist and literary scholar Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler became Austria's "Scholar of the Year 2007". This title was awarded to the 65-year-old head of the Department for German Language and Literature of Vienna University and of the Literary Archives of the Austrian National Library by the Club of Educational and Scientific Journalists (Klub der Bildungs- und Wissenschaftsjournalisten) in Vienna on 8 January 2008. It pays tribute to researchers devoting special efforts to presenting their work and discipline to a wide public, contributing to an improved image of research in Austria. Schmidt-Dengler has met this criterion in his disciplines literature and linguistics in an exemplary way for decades. Students, the media and the general public value him for his skill in explaining the topicality of his scholarly work in eloquent lectures and brilliant texts, dealing with Austrian contemporary literature or research on the impact of the literature of antiquity. The laureate always adheres to Wittgenstein's motto often cited by him: everything that can be said, can be said clearly.

Schmidt-Dengler himself is of the opinion that the award bestowed on him offers "in any case strategic advantages" for his discipline. "Of course, one is personally very pleased, but when the award goes to me, it also goes to my colleagues and to many excellent students of German language and literature", underlined the "Literature Pope". It is especially the students that should feel "that they study a discipline that has a function in the public".

Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler was born in Zagreb in 1942, where his father owned Croatia's biggest meat factory. After its confiscation, the family went to Graz and finally settled in Vienna. In 1960 Schmidt-Dengler took his A-levels at Stubenbastei-Gymnasium, a grammar school in Vienna. After completing his studies of classical philology as well as German language and literature at the University of Vienna, he became the assistant of Werner Welzig in 1966. In 1989 he was appointed full professor at the Department for German Studies. Since 1996 he has also headed the Austrian Literature Archives of the Austrian National Library.

Schmidt-Dengler was a guest professor at numerous universities in Austria and abroad (Pisa, Naples, Klagenfurt, Salzburg, Stanford, etc.). He boasts a long list of publications and awards, among them the Theodor Körner Prize (1968) and the Austrian State Prize for Literary Criticism (1994). However, the ardent advocate of a new literature is of the opinion that his academic success should not be measured by these prizes or his numerous presentations in the media or at literature events. "You write a book. This is a very old method. When you finally hold the volume in your hands, either on CD-Rom or as a printed book, you can be satisfied."

His studies on 19th and 20th century Austrian literature – Nestroy, Thomas Bernhard, the inter-war period – as well as on the reception of the literature of antiquity (a subject he also treated in his doctoral thesis on the "Confessions" of Augustus) were pioneering. He also focused on language and poetry as the editor of works by Doderer, Herzmanovsky-Orlando and Albert Drach.

The enthusiastic German language expert and football fan (Rapid Vienna) remained loyal to his love for the Hellenes and Romans to the present day, from his "Habilitation" (qualifying paper for lecturing at university) in 1974 and the history of impact of antique mythemes in Goethe's era to his present lectures on comparisons of classical and modern dramas.

Just like the preceding "Scholar of the Year 2006", philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann, Schmidt-Dengler also guarantees full lecture halls and an academic performance attracting large audiences. "As representatives of the humanities we may communicate more easily to the public what our research is about", Schmidt-Dengler explained his "starting advantage" over the natural sciences or law studies. However, he also emphasised that there was an eternal fight for legitimisation vis-à-vis the "hard sciences".

This year the title was for the first time awarded together with a trophy. The sculpture from aluminium foam was created by Philipp Aduatz from the University of Applied Arts Vienna. ■

"European Year of Intercultural Dialogue"

On 8 January 2008 the European Union launched its "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue"

Dialogue of
Cultures:
www.interkultureller-dialog-2008.at
as well as
www.dialogue2008.eu

(EYID 2008). It raised the previous achievements of the Union in this area to a higher level, explained incumbent EU Council President, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša in the preliminaries of the official opening event in Slovenia's capital Ljubljana.

National projects in the 27 Member States of the European Union and seven transnational European projects are financed with a budget of 10 million euros up to the end of 2008. According to the organiser, meetings of artists and cultural creators are to be held across Europe before the European Football Championship (EURO) 2008. The EU won the support of prominent artists such as French chanson singer Charles Aznavour, Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho or Belgian filmmakers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, acting as ambassadors of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

According to a press release of the competent Ministry of Education of 8 January 2008, the Austrian EYID 2008 opening event takes place at Vienna Stadthalle on 28 February 2008. Between 4 April and 6 May 2008 the "Dialogue Tour Convoy" will stop in the centre of the capitals of the nine Austrian Länder. In Vienna the project "Radio Dialogues – Voices of Diversity" (www.radiodialoge.at) will provide people from different cultural backgrounds with training in journalism in six independent radio stations. Based on the information provided in the press release, the Ministry of Education will also increase funding for ongoing exemplary intercultural dialogue projects in schools (www.projekt-querdenken.eu).

In a press report, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik underlined the growing cultural diversity of the enlarging EU: "To ensure that Europe remains a region of peace, stability and security, every-day dialogue across cultural and religious borders is simply indispensable." Plassnik also stressed the great importance of intercultural dialogue for the integration of migrants and the development of a European Muslim identity in the framework of a "European Islam". ■

Peter Turrini receives Würth Prize

The Würth Prize for European Literature (25,000 euros) goes to Austrian author Peter Turrini. The 63-year-old artist was "an outstanding stage poet

in the German-speaking area and a classic of the politically and socio-critically reformed popular drama", the jury explained its decision. As a lyric poet and prose writer, Turrini had also "masterly understood to reveal the delicate in the crude and the human in the terrible". The award will be conferred on the writer at Schauspielhaus in Stuttgart on 9 February 2008.

Today Turrini, born in Carinthia in 1944, is one of Austria's most-performed contemporary playwrights. Among his best-known plays are "Tod und Teufel", "Alpenglüh" ("Alpine Glow") or "Die Schlacht um Wien". Before he settled down as a free-lance writer in Vienna in 1971, Turrini worked for example as a woodsman, steelworker and copywriter. Today his plays are performed all over the world and have been translated into more than 30 languages.

Turrini is the fifth author receiving the prize offered by the Würth group. The laureates before him were Hermann Lenz (1998), Claudio Magris (2000), Claude Vigée (2002), Harald Hartung (2004) and Herta Müller (2006). The aim of the prize is to turn the spotlight on a Europe characterised by cultural diversity. ■

Cultural Prize of Berliner Zeitung went to Klaus Maria Brandauer

This year Austrian actor and director Klaus Maria Brandauer (64) received the Cultural Prize of Berliner Zeitung (B.Z.) in the category "theatre". He won the award for playing the lead role in the spectacular production of Schiller's "Wallenstein" by Peter Stein at Berliner Ensemble. Brandauer had set a "milestone in the art of stage acting", stated the B.Z., he was "the standard for all actors playing this role in the future". The renowned prize was presented to Brandauer at the Axel-Springer-Haus in Berlin on 17 January 2008. ■

Hans Staudacher celebrated 85th birthday

Hans Staudacher, one of the Austrian masters of "Art Informel" celebrated his 85th birthday on 14 January 2008. Galerie Gerersdorfer in Vienna extends cordial congratulations in the exhibition "HERZlichst zum 85. Geburtstag", opening on 1 February 2008. It presents an overview of the

oeuvre of the artist, who developed his own painting style of lyrical abstraction, free from influences of changing styles, fashions and art discourses. Galerie Hilger showcases a representative selection of Staudacher's graphic work as well as paintings on paper and canvass (opening on 25 January 2008). The Carinthian Museum of Modern Art dedicates a comprehensive retrospective to the artist celebrating his birthday (up to 20 January 2008). Hans Staudacher was born St. Urban/Lake Ossiach (Carinthia) on 14 January 1923 and grew up in Villach. While his early work was still revealing the language of realism, the autodidact started to create his first synthetic resin paintings in the style of Tachism already in 1951. Staudacher has lived in Vienna since 1950 but was decisively influenced by longer stays in Paris. He intensively studied the work of George Mathieu and Lettrism (Letterism), incorporating writing into painting.

1956 was the year of his break-through. Josef Hoffmann selected him as one of Austria's representatives at the Venice Biennale. Subsequently, he presented his works at Wiener Secession und in international exhibitions. In 1965 he received one of the main prizes of the Tokyo Biennale and the Josef Hoffmann Award of Wiener Secession. In 1976 the title "professor" was bestowed on him. In 1989 he won the Cultural Prize of the Land of Carinthia. In 2004 he was awarded inter alia the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art. ■

Comprehensive Alfred Hrdlicka retrospective in Germany

"Art does not only live on the pleasant alone but is political in substance", stated Austria's most important contemporary sculptor Alfred Hrdlicka at the opening of the great retrospective "Alfred Hrdlicka. Sculptor – Painter – Drawer" at Kunsthalle Würth in Schwäbisch Hall (Germany) on 18 January 2008. To mark his 80th birthday (27 February 2008), about 300 works from stone and bronze, on canvass and paper of all the different periods of the artist are displayed. The show – supplemented with numerous loans from Austria – is open until 29 June 2008. An adapted version will be presented by Vienna's Künstlerhaus as from 8 August 2008.

Hrdlicka has repeatedly addressed themes like

war, violence and fascism. The focus of his body of work is on the human figure in a realistic but always expressive form. In the exhibition the series of works and cycles created in the course of five decades are grouped into ten themes, with expressive titles like "Eros and Thanatos", "Violence and Martyr" "Mythological and Biblical Themes" or "Pain and Psyche". Last but not least, the show also displays a sketch for the "Memorial against war and fascism" at Albertinaplatz in Vienna. ■

Early work of Kokoschka at Belvedere

Lower Belvedere in Vienna presents the early work of Oskar Kokoschka, the most significant representative of Austrian expressionism in an exhibition titled "Kokoschka. Dreaming Boy – Enfant Terrible". The works of art are on show from 24 January to 12 May 2008.

Under the impact of the linear style of "Wiener Secession", Kokoschka won early international renown with his graphic and literary contributions to the avant-garde magazine "Sturm". At the same time, his portraits caused a furore, in which he concentrated on the subjective state of the persons portrayed, rather than on reproducing their physical appearance.

About 120 exhibits encompass all forms of Kokoschka's artistic expression and illustrate his development from the "dreaming boy" of Art Nouveau to the expressive "enfant terrible" in European art history. The show is rounded off by a replica of Kokoschka's Alma doll and a mural painting from Alma Mahler's villa on the Semmering mountain presumed lost for a long time. ■

Exhibition at Cultural Forum New York addresses death penalty

With its presentation of 20 Austrian and international artists, the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York addresses one of the most highly controversial subjects between the USA and Europe. Death penalty is in the limelight of the exhibition "Under Pain Of Death" (22 January to 10 May 2008), with works by Andy Warhol, Raimund Abraham or Andres Serrano. ■

Exhibitions of the work of Hans Staudacher: "HERZlichst zum 85. Geburtstag". Galerie Gerersdorfer, 1090 Vienna, Währinger Straße 12; 1 February to 1 March 2008 www.gerersdorfer.at

"Hans Staudacher – A Retrospective". Galerie Ernst Hilger, 1010 Vienna, Dorotheergasse 12; 25 January to 21 February 2008 www.hilger.at

Exhibition "Oskar Kokoschka. Dreaming Boy – Enfant Terrible" Lower Belvedere, Orangery; 24 January to 12 May 2008 www.belvedere.at

Exhibition "Alfred Hrdlicka. Sculptor – Painter – Drawer". Kunsthalle Würth, Schwäbisch Hall; 19 January to 29 June 2008 <http://kunst.wuerth.com>

"Under Pain Of Death". Cultural Forum New York www.acfny.org

“Austria on the Ball” trophy: EURO is more than just football

The European Football Championship (EURO 2008) is a unique chance, not only for the Austrian football but also to present Austria as a country of sport. Thus the “Austria on the Ball” trophy will highlight all ball games. “This will allow us to make more people interested in sport“, argued Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka, “for the best advertising for sport is sport itself!“ Therefore, 15 clubs competent for special sports, from American football to water polo, will show in the context of EURO 2008 that “Austria is on the ball“. The European Football Championship should also demonstrate that our country is an excellent host as Austria also applied to host large-scale events in other sports disciplines. The Handball World Championship 2010, the Fistball World Championship 2011 and the Swimming World Championship 2012 are to take place in Austria as well. ■

No evidence of blood doping

Allegations that there was a “blood doping laboratory” in Austria caused a great stir in the last few weeks. However, so far there has been no evidence confirming the suspicion against the blood bank and the athletes named have not been confirmed. Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka is prepared to use every possible means in the combat against doping but condemns any prejudgment of athletes: “We lend our full support to clearing up the case but reject contributions to rumours,“ said Lopatka. He requested the Ministry of the Interior and ÖADC (Austrian Anti-Doping Committee) to conduct investigations and is in contact with the IOC and WADA. Minister for Sport Alfred Gusenbauer announced that an interministerial working group would examine legislative proposals to facilitate the combat against systematic doping: “But we have to be aware of the fact that organised doping is based on mafia structures and that it is not the Anti-Doping Act but the criminal law (Drug Abuse Act) that provides a foundation for anti-doping measures.“ Currently persons supporting an athlete for example in blood doping can be punished only under Section 22 of

the Anti-Doping Act. The maximum administrative fine of 21,800 euros is imposed only in very severe cases, in which for example an athlete’s life was in danger, otherwise the maximum fine is 3,630 euros. ■

Hockey – men win bronze in European Championships

Austria scored an important triumph in the Euro Hockey Indoor Nations Championships in Yekaterinburg. The Austrians beat the Spaniards in the game for rank three with 3:0, earning the bronze medal. This had been preceded by Austria’s winning against Italy (10:4) and its runaway victory against Switzerland (7:1). Our national team was defeated only by the new European champion Germany (3:5) and Russia (4:5 after extra time). Moving up to the final tournament seemed so near. This was the second bronze medal the ÖHV (Austrian Hockey Association) has won in European Championships after 1988. The red-white-red select team is the only Austrian team that still has a chance of qualifying for the Olympic Games in Beijing. ■

European Luge Championship, artificial track, in Cesana: Austrians are among the top

The European Luge Championships, artificial track, in Cesana/Italy ended with a success for our Austrian athletes. In the women’s singles, Veronika Halder took the bronze medal, Olympic medallists Andreas and Wolfgang Linger won silver in the men’s doubles. The luge team crowned its achievements with a silver medal in the team competition, missing the first rank only by an eight thousandth of a second. The Austrian Luge Association was rewarded with this top result for its outstanding work to promote young athletes. With this fledgling team Austria stands a good chance of winning many medals in the future. ■

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