NEWS FROM AUSTRIA



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HOME AFFAIRS

About the death of Carinthia's Governor Jörg Haider

Carinthia's Governor Jörg Haider (†58) died in an accident with his official car on the Loiblpass federal road in the early morning hours of 11 October 2008. After taking over another vehicle at a speed of 142 kph, the car skipped out of control, crashed against a concrete barrier and flipped over several times. Haider suffered massive head and chest injuries and died during transport to the hospital in Klagenfurt. According to the forensic findings (15 October 2008), he was very drunk when the accident occurred. Haider is survived by his wife Claudia and his two adult daughters Ulrike and Cornelia.

Despite all political differences, the dignitaries of the state and government as well as politicians of all parties showed themselves deeply affected by his death in their first reactions. Thousands of people gathered in front of the regional parliament in Klagenfurt to commemorate him silently.

President Heinz Fischer expressed his condolences to the family of the leader of the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) and described his death as a "human tragedy". Haider had been a politician of great talents", whose political activities had aroused enthusiasm and criticism. This was also the tenor of the statements by all other leading representatives of Austria's political sphere. Haider's colleagues in the BZÖ were in a state of speechlessness and shock.

The official funeral took place in Klagenfurt on 18 October 2008. The ceremony started in the morning with a funeral procession from the regional parliament to a square in the city centre. Then bishops Alois Schwarz and Egon Kapellari celebrated the requiem mass in the Cathedral. Haider's body was cremated in Villach. The urn with his ashes was buried later in a private ceremony for his closest family in Bärental.

Tens of thousands of people attended the funeral ceremony. Media from all over the world reported. Among the numerous mourners from Austria and abroad were not only the President and the entire federal government but also the Länder Governors and the Presidents of the North Italian regions Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto.

In his address the Chancellor underlined the merits but also the polarising ambivalence of the deceased's personality. Gusenbauer paid "respect and tribute" to Haider as a human being.

In the meantime the BZÖ has taken the first political steps. The party executive nominated

previous Secretary-General Stefan Petzner as the new party boss. Haider's former deputy Gerhard Dörfler became Carinthia's Governor designate; he will be formally appointed in an election by the Regional Parliament on 23 October 2008.

With Haider, the figurehead of the right, one of the most controversial but also influential personalities of domestic politics has died. He polarised or kindled enthusiasm but hardly left anybody cold. His political opponents condemned in particular his uncritical attitude towards the NS regime, his rigorous policy towards foreigners as well as his rigid attitude in the conflict over bilingual topographical signs. The politician born in Upper Austria made a career in politics in Carinthia, where he became the regional party secretary of the Carinthian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in 1976. In 1979 he became a FPÖ member in the National Council. He succeeded to Norbert Steger as the federal party chairman at the party convention in Innsbruck in 1986; as a result then Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, a member of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), dissolved the coalition government with the FPÖ. Despite this "exclusion", Haider doubled the share of votes for the FPÖ from 4 to 8%.

He was elected Carinthian Governor in 1989 but was forced by the SPÖ and the People's Party (ÖVP) to resign from the post due to his statements about the "orderly employment policy" of the NS dictatorship. In 1999 he succeeded in returning as Carinthia's Governor, and would certainly have been re-elected next year.

At the federal level, he formed a coalition government with the ÖVP led by Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel in 2000 - with the wellknown consequences (EU sanctions). He then turned over party leadership to (Vice-Chancellor) Susanne Riess-Passer. Fierce controversies between Haider and the FPÖ government team (party convention in Knittelfeld) led to Riess-Passer's resignation in November 2002 and the collapse of the coalition. In the subsequent elections, the FPÖ suffered dramatic losses. However, a new ÖVP-FPÖ federal coalition government was formed in 2003. In 2005 Haider split from the FPÖ and formed the BZÖ. In the parliamentary elections in 2006 the BZÖ made it into Parliament (with 4.1% of the votes). In August 2008 Haider succeeded to Peter Westenthaler as the BZÖ leader and tripled the percentage of votes for his party at the national election on 28 September 2008.

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SPÖ and ÖVP start coalition talks

The Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) meet in large groups for the first round of coalition talks in Parliament on 21 October 2008. The leadership of the two parties appointed nine participants for each delegation. In addition, eight subgroups were set up to discuss EU/foreign policy, finance/taxes, women/family, security, education/school, social affairs/security, administration/Constitution and economy. SPÖ federal whip Doris Bures and ÖVP Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter were entrusted with coordinating the coalition talks. Besides party leader Werner Faymann and Bures, the SPÖ negotiation team includes Secretary of State Andreas Schieder, Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer, Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos, Secretary of State for Finance Christoph Matznetter, Burgenland's Governor Hans Niessl and Wilhelm Haberzettl, boss of the Group of Social Democratic Unionists (FSG). The negotiators of the ÖVP team are party leader Josef Pröll, Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, Minister of the Interior Fekter, Minister of Science Johannes Hahn, Secretary of State Christine Marek, Vorarlberg's Governor Herbert Sausgruber, Secretary-General of the Austrian Economic League (Wirtschaftsbund) Karlheinz Kopf and Fritz Neugebauer, head of the Public Service Union.

Speedy negotiations are to be conducted. Faymann, who was mandated by President Heinz Fischer to form a new government, hopes that this will be accomplished before Christmas. Pröll has not yet mentioned any time limit but thinks that a decision will probably be taken at the special party convention of the ÖVP on 28 November 2008. The ÖVP leader stressed right from the beginning that the coalition talks would be held "without giving preference to a specific party". Several face-to-face talks between Faymann and Pröll have already taken place. According to the plans of SPÖ Chairman Faymann, a new government was to be formed as quickly as possible in view of the economic situation (financial crisis, economic slowdown). Facts but not fights about positions and spheres of responsibility were in the foreground. This was the "new style" of dealing with one another. In addition to guarantee and protection measures for savers and banks passed in Parliament on 20 October 2008, it was now necessary to adopt several economic policy

packages and to counteract the increase in unemployment, Faymann stated. An economic package for small and mid-sized companies had been agreed on with the ÖVP. Moreover, Faymann announced tax cuts for employees and massive investment in all sectors. Sensitive subjects in the talks on a government agreement are e.g. EU policy, tax reform, the planned constitutional/administrative reform, university study fees, pensions and the health reform. The main subjects discussed at the so-called "Austria talks" of the heads of all parties represented in Parliament on 14 October 2008 were the financial crisis and the planned economic policy package. Another meeting will be held for "stocktaking". ■

Austria receives a seat on the UN Security Council

As from January 2009 onwards, Austria will be a non-permanent member of the most important body of the United Nations. In the meeting of the UN General Assembly on 18 October 2008, 133 of the 192 UN member countries voted in favour of admitting Austria to the UN Security Council. Winning 152 votes, Turkey also received a seat. Iceland was defeated, obtaining only 87 votes. Austria will hold its seat on the UN Security Council for two years and participate in making vital decisions on peace, security, human rights and humanitarian aid.

There was joy about Austria's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council across the party lines. President Heinz Fischer stated that Austria had been rewarded for its "joint efforts", Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer underlined the "great responsibility" in the commitment to the interest of small countries and the EU. Foreign Minister Plassnik described the election of Austria as a "great sign of confidence". \blacksquare

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer travels to EU-Asia summit in Beijing

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer will depart for China on 22 October 2008 to attend the EU-Asia summit (24/25 October 2008) in Beijing. The top items on the meeting agenda include the international financial crisis, environmental issues and the dialogue between cultures. Representatives of 43 countries from the European Union and Asia are expected. ■

EUROPE = ECONOMY

Bank package with guarantee for all private savings deposits

The outgoing National Council (1st chamber of Parliament) adopted the bank and finance package prepared by the federal government at its last special session on 20 October 2008. The comprehensive support measures aim at providing security and stability to savers and banks in view of the worldwide financial and banking crises as well as dramatic share price slumps on international stock exchanges. By giving a clear signal of confidence building to the public, the government wanted to help calm down the markets and savers, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Vice-Chancellor Molterer assured.

The national bank assistance package provides for example unlimited guarantees for savings deposits and private accounts as well as state guarantees for inter-bank loans and possible government subsidies to banks with liquidity problems. Moreover, short selling – a type of speculation based on dropping share prices – will be forbidden.

The guarantee limit for securing deposits is significantly raised. Private savings and accounts will benefit from an unlimited guarantee up to the end of 2009; on 1 January 2010 a guarantee limit of 100,000 euros will take effect.

The volume of the package totals 100 billion euros. 75 billion euros have been earmarked for government guarantees and guarantees for interbank loans to ensure that banks will again lend money to one another. 15 billion euros are made available for government subsidies in case the banks will really face liquidity problems. If a bank requires government help, the Federal Chancellor and the Minister of Finance will be granted a say in its internal affairs, e.g. money investments or the salaries of managers. In addition, measures to safeguard jobs are required. In this context, the establishment of a "liquidity clearing centre" is considered to help banking institutions with liquidity needs. If necessary, it should become easier for the Financial Market Supervisory Authority to force banks to raise the level of their own funds.

The Austrian federal government acts in accordance with the joint decisions of the euro-countries and in agreement with the measures of US/international financial institutions. In Germany a rescue package of up to 500 billion euros was adopted on 18 October 2008, the

French package covers a guarantee limit of 360 billion euros.

In view of the historical price slumps on the Vienna Stock Exchange, the Financial Market Supervisory Authority (Finanzmarktaufsicht) passed new rules for stock trading on 10 October 2008. Besides the prohibition of short selling, trading in all types of securities can be suspended temporarily if the price of the security concerned fluctuates by more than 10 percent. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer at EU crisis summit in Brussels

Coordination of the financial market supervision within the EU is to be improved. This decision was adopted by the heads of state and government at their summit meeting in Brussels on 16 October 2008. In addition, the chairpersons of the national supervisory authorities are to meet for an exchange of information at least once a month. The high-ranking reform group chaired by former IMF head Jacques Larosiere announced by the EU Commission was welcomed.

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer informed that in view of the financial crisis and the threatening economic downturn there was a "wide consensus" among the EU Member States on the measures to be taken for the real sector of the economy. Besides further structural reforms, steps to stimulate the economy were considered important. Examples given by Gusenbauer were advanced infrastructure projects, tax incentives for small and mid-sized companies, tax relief for employees as well as investments in the climate and environmental sector. The EU will agree on a climate protection and energy package still in 2008.

Constantia private bank saved

The international financial market crisis has had its first victim also in Austria. The renowned Viennese banking house had to be rescued after dramatic cash outflows. Its new owners are the large banks Bawag, UniCredit Bank Austria, Erste Bank, RZB and Volksbanken. They now inject funds of 400 million euros for which the Republic of Austria provides a guarantee. The Austrian National Bank (OeNB) contributes another 50 million euros. The bank has previously been owned by Christine de Castelbajac, daughter of the legendary industrial baron Herbert Turnauer. The bank was to be sold at a high price this year.

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Grand Austrian State Prize goes to sculptor Karl Prantl

Sculptor Karl Prantl born in Pöttsching (Burgenland) in 1923 receives the Grand Austrian State Prize 2008, the highest art award of the Republic of Austria. According to the Ministry of Culture, the award ceremony will take place in the assembly hall of the Academy of Visual Arts in Vienna on 25 November 2008. The presentation speech will be held by Yehuda E. Safran, professor for architecture at Columbia University in New York. An exhibition of sculptures by Karl Prantl has been presented at Galerie Ulysses in Vienna since 14 October 2008.

Originally, Prantl did not study sculpture but painting with Albert Paris Gütersloh at the Academy of Visual Arts. In 1958 he worked for the first time during a longer period in the quarry of St. Margarethen (Burgenland), where he organised the first international open air sculpture symposium in 1959. The artist considers that his real – much underrated – oeuvre consisted in the work he did there together with colleagues from all over the world and not in his personal "dialogue with stone" resulting in fascinating soft, organically-shaped sculptures. "We have never been accepted by academia. Many people considered us scouts breaking stones out there in the quarry", Prantl said. He expressed his regret about the increasing cultural tourism in the framework of the opera festival, which has made him remove some of his sculptures from the quarry. He also stated grumpily: "I do not need any award if my life's work in St. Margarethen is not recognised. This has been my dilemma. Individual artistry has not been my life – and this will not change". Among the internationally most famed works of the State Prize winner, whose children are also artists - daughter Katharina is a painter, son Sebastian is a dancer and choreographer - is the "Nuremberg Way of the Cross" made from stone slabs of the parade road of the NS Party Rally Grounds.

Memorable "concert for Austria" on 12 November 2008

This year the "Concert for Austria" organised by the Republic of Austria is for the first time not held on 26 October – the Austrian national holiday – but on another memorable day, 12 November. On 12 November 1918 the foundation for the Republic of Austria was laid.

After WWI., the Republic German-Austria was proclaimed in front of the Parliament building in Vienna. On this date 90 years ago, after the collapse of the Danube monarchy, Austria's history as a parliamentary democracy with structures shaping the country to the present day started.

The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniel Harding dedicate this year's traditional "Concert for Austria" to this historic date and anniversary. Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 2 in C major will be performed in the Great Hall of Vienna Musikverein.

Information: <u>www.bundeskanzleramt.at</u>, tickets: www.musikverein.at ■

The stone house in Carinthia: Domenig's main work is completed

22 years ago Carinthian architect (aged 74) Günther Domenig started his project "stone house on Lake Ossiach" (Steinfeld/ Carinthia). On 5 October 2008, it was officially opened in the presence of Minister of Culture and Education Claudia Schmied, Governor Jörg Haider (who was to die tragically one week later) and the Executive Board of the "Private Foundation Stone Domenig". Günther The speakers unanimously praised Domenig's great importance for the Austrian and international architectural scene. In the early 1970s he created a radical design for the branch of Zentralsparkasse in Favoritenstraße in Vienna. Drivers on Vienna's South East Expressway perceive the spectacular T-Mobile company building as swimming towards them like a big ship. Another outstanding work by Domenig is the NS documentation centre in Nuremberg.

"The stone house is the most important work in Domenig's life, and it served as a test and research station for him in the realisation phase", Haider said. In the course of the years the public had realised that it was an architectural centre. The house reflected the builder's philosophy of life. "He used the building culture of the region as a basis and created a work emerging from tradition", Haider stressed. For Carinthia the building was a "lighthouse project", which will become a centre of cultural encounters and serve for example as an alternative venue of the Carinthian Summer Festival. Carinthia supported the realisation of the building with 400,000 euros from the "Future Fund".

"A thing done well cannot be done quickly", with

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these words, Minister Schmied started her speech. She considered the house "an architectural masterwork, a standing and floating rock of poetry and a sign of the region's cultural diversity". She also stated: "I want even more people to become enthusiastic about architecture, the visual arts and music". The federal government subsidised the stone house with 750,000 euros.

Lawyer Hannes Pflaum, business consultant Adolf Rausch and Peter Noever, artistic head of the Austrian Museum of Applied Art (MAK) addressed the audience on behalf of the Executive Board of the Foundation. The latter stated that the building was "not a cathedral and not a monument but a manifesto". In a film documentary by Christa Fleischmann Günther Domenig himself described his work as an "architectural sculpture". It consists of four levels, which have not been conceived as storeys in the traditional sense. The centre of the building is the so-called "spiral room" reaching into the groundwater. As in many other works by the architect, floating components protrude horizontally from the building. The western part of the building houses exhibition rooms; the upper floors are used as work areas for students of architecture.

Other personalities participating in the opening party moderated by Gerfried Sperl, columnist of the daily "Der Standard", were Domenig's colleagues Sir Peter Cook, Hans Hollein, Thom Mayne, Wolfgang D. Prix, the painters Giselbert Hocke and Hans Staudacher as well as art collector Herbert Liaunig.

Verbund headquarters in Vienna: Olafur Eliassons "The Yellow Fog"

Since 9 October 2008, yellow fog has risen along the façade of the Verbund headquarters (Am Hof, 1st district of Vienna) in the twilight, when darkness falls on the city. "Yellow Fog" is an artistic project of Danish artist Olafur Eliasson (aged 41), who earned himself an international reputation with interventions in the public space. For "Green River" he coloured the water of several rivers. At present in New York four artificial waterfalls plunge down from a bridge.

Eliasson presented his "Yellow Fog" for the first time in New York in 1998. In Vienna the misty yellow clouds are rising for about 40 seconds every night; the process is repeated at regular intervals within an hour. Eliasson's "fog art" creates an ethereal body and spatial awareness, a peculiar melancholic magic. "Air becomes visible", the artist says. And he adds: "I am not interested in light per se but rather what light does to us, to our ideas about identity and how it makes us reflect on our relations with one another and with our environment".

Late homage: Nobel Prize winner Eric Kandel becomes honorary citizen of Vienna

On 7 October 2008 the Municipal Council Committee on Culture and Science adopted a unanimous decision to appoint 79-year-old neuroscientist and Nobel Prize winner Eric Kandel "honorary citizen of the City of Vienna". He was born into a Jewish family in this city in 1929, who was driven out by the Nazis to the USA in 1939. He spent his remaining elementary school years at the Yeshiva in New York's neighbourhood Flatbush, until he changed to Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn in 1944, where he became interested in history and literature – the subjects he later studied at Harvard University. In 1952 he started to study psychiatry at New York University. He became increasingly interested in the biological processes of the brain and started to work in the lab of neurobiologist Harry Grundfest at Columbia University. Kandel became a pioneering brain researcher, after gaining fundamental insights in tests with the Califonia sea slug, a marine mollusk, in Paris in 1962. Later he became active at the Department of Physiology and Psychiatry of the New York Medical School, where he helped to establish the Department of Neurobiology and Behavioural Sciences. He conducted epoch-making research on the short and long-term memory. Evidence was finally provided for Eric Kandel's assumption that specific learning mechanisms may be observed in all living beings.

In 2000 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine together with the Swede Arvid Carlsson and the American Paul Greengard for pioneering "discoveries concerning the signal transmission in the nervous system".

Vice-Mayor and Research City Councillor Renate Brauner stated on the occasion of the homage in Vienna: "The title awarded is a tribute to the lifetime achievements of Eric Kandel. Despite the irremediable and painful expulsion from Vienna, his activities have been and are being influenced

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by the idea of understanding and the things in common. For this we pay him the deepest respect in his native city". In the past years many steps have been taken to strengthen the ties between Eric Kandel and Vienna. He participates regularly in Vienna's academic life; since 2007 he has been a member of the board of trustees of the newly founded Institute of Science and Technology Austria. The German-Austrian TV documentary "Auf der Suche nach dem Gedächtnis – Der Hirnforscher Eric Kandel" ("Searching for the Memory – Brain Researcher Erich Kandel") had been subsidised substantially by the Vienna Film Fund and was premiered in Vienna.

Kunsthalle Wien: Edward Hopper and contemporary art

Kunsthalle Wien presents the show "Western Motel. Edward Hopper and Contemporary Art" (until 15 February 2008). The style of the American painter (1882-1967) has been captured wonderfully by German poet Wolf Wondratschek (aged 65), who lives in Vienna: "It is night, and the city is deserted. The lucky ones are at home, or more likely, none are left. On Hopper's painting, four people remain, the usual cast, so-tospeak, the man behind the counter, two men and a woman. Art lovers, you can stone me, but I know this situation pretty well". The beginning of "Nighthawks – After Edward Hopper's Painting" - published in his latest lyric poetry volume "Lied von der Liebe" ("Song about Love") – reproduces scenes painted by Hopper, showing people in hotel rooms, waiting rooms or in front of building facades, people who are self-absorbed or lost in thought, looking out of the window at a point outside the picture or reading a book. Often the persons shown, e.g. in an office, do not look at one another, distance can be felt despite physical proximity and tension. Miles Davis' and Chet Baker's Cool Jazz would be the adequate Edward Hopper's background music. fascinated film directors like Jim Jarmusch, Wim Wenders, Ari Kaurismäki, but also Austrian writer Peter Handke, e.g. in "Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied" ("Short Letter, Long Farewell"). A feeling of vastness, individual loneliness in the big city is also conveyed by the other artists selected by curator Gerald Matt, Director of Kunsthalle, e.g. Gustav Deutsch, Rachel Khedoori, Ed Ruscha, Jeff Wall or Rachel Whiteread. The show stirring enthusiasm and creating anxiety at the same time was opened by US Ambassador

to Austria David F. Girard-diCarlo and Vienna's Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny.

http://www.kunsthallewien.at/ ■

At Theater an der Wien: Christoph Willibald Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice"

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) – who was born in Oberpfalz (today: Germany) but descended from a Bohemian-Austrian family – initiated a great aesthetic transformation of the opera. He developed a touching music drama, which was in stark contrast to the opera style of the day under the impact of the formalism of baroque and the virtuosity of the castrati. "Truth" and "nature" were his aspirations. The tight construction of the plot, the emphasis on the text, the great scene (also the recitative is accompanied by the orchestra), song-like arioso instead of pointless coloratura characterised his new style. One of Gluck's great reform operas is "Orfeo ed Euridice".

The opera is performed in the framework of the "Baroque Festival Days" (running 23 October 2008) at Theater an der Wien under the directorship of Steven Lawless. René Jacobs conducts the Freiburger Barockorchester and the Arnold Schönberg Choir. The singers' trio with countertenor Bejun Mehta (Orfeo), Miah Persson (Euridice) and Sunhae Im (Amore) is outstanding. While the mythological story of Orpheus and Eurydice has a fatal end as the singer – who after the death of wife touched the hearts of the gods with his art – turned round on his way from the Underworld to look at Euridice who did not understand her husband turning his back on her and while also all musical versions, including that of Philip Glass, have a tragic ending, Gluck presents a happy end thanks to the mercy of God Amor. www.theater-wien.at ■

Vienna's MuseumsQuartier wins European design prize

MuseumsQuartier Errichtungs- und Betriebsgesellschaft, the company which is responsible for positioning the MQ and for marketing it as an event location, was granted together with other European enterprises, e.g. the Austrian companies Vöslauer und KTM, the DME Award for design management in Cardiff (Wales) on 13 October 2008. ■

SPORTS POLICY

Football: EURO 2008 moved people around the world

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EURO 2008 was a success in every respect. Austria presented itself as an excellent host to the world. A total of 620,000 fans visited the European Football Championship in Austria, in the host cities and the public viewing zones three million people were counted. It can be assumed that every match was watched worldwide by about 150 million people.

These figures demonstrate the advertising effect and the degree to which public awareness of Austria was raised. At the presentation of the final report of the EURO Coordination Unit of the federal government, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer stressed: "The economic investments have been worthwhile for Austria. The Federal Republic invested 133 million euros in adapting the venues and infrastructure but recorded a plus of 145 million in tax revenue. As far as the "value-added in infrastructure" is concerned, our country will continue to benefit from EURO for many years." Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka praised the excellent cooperation with Switzerland. "What has been unique about EURO is that we got so much for so little." Other participants in the press conference were Heinz Palme, the federal government's Coordinator of UEFA EURO 2008, Andreas Schaer, overall project coordinator of the Swiss public sector, Alfred Ludwig, Secretary-General of the Austrian Football Federation (ÖFB) and Christian Schmölzer, UEFA EURO Tournament Director in Austria. Andreas Schaer stated that economic record data were achieved also in Switzerland. "In addition, EURO was a wonderful football party uniting the nations." Tournament Director Christoph Schmölzer described EURO as a success story and that one had the privilege of experiencing "the best EURO of all times".

In organisational terms, EURO has not yet come to an end. On 8 November 2008 the giant statue specially made for the European champion and studded with 11,000 Swarowski crystals will be transported to Madrid, where it will put up on the university campus.

The complete final report can be downloaded from:

http://www.oesterreich-amball.at/site/5778/default.aspx ■

World Food Day: sport sends out the right signals to combat hunger

Sport is important in the combat against worldwide hunger. Sport moves, creates emotions and fills millions of fans around the globe with enthusiasm week by week. Therefore it is a positive signal when the football professionals in Austria and 26 other European professional football leagues (EPFL) participate actively in the international solidarity campaign launched by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to help the 923 million people suffering from hunger worldwide (based on UN statistics). This campaign takes advantage of the popularity of Europe's elite football players to raise funds for the struggle against the food crisis. It is a unique and vital initiative. Together with FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf and Emanuel Macedo de Medeiros, Chief Executive Officer of the European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), as well as the Secretaries of State for Sport of Italy, Spain and Austria, Rocco Crimi, Don Jaime Lissavetzky Diez and Reinhold Lopatka, the project "Professional football against hunger" was kicked off on the World Food Day. The 27 European member organisations and their referees, football players and fans will participate in a large-scale Campaign Day in March 2009 to raise the awareness of "hunger". Together with EPFL CEO Medeiros and representatives of the Austrian Federal League, Secretary of State for Sport Lopatka will present the campaign and the Campaign Day in Vienna in November.

Austrian medal record at European **Table Tennis Championships**

The Austrian table tennis team continued its success story at the European Table Tennis Championships in St. Petersburg. The team of the Austrian Table Tennis Association (ÖTTV) performed convincingly in the single, double as well as team events at the European Championships. Winning five medals, it impressively confirmed its leading position among Europe's table tennis elite. Werner Schlager (silver/double, bronze/single, bronze/team), Robert Gardos (bronze/single, bronze/ team), Chen Weixing (bronze/team) and Liu Jia (silver/single) pushed the medal count of the ÖTTV at the European Championships to 23 medals. This is the third largest success Austria achieved in its history of the European Championships.