

Editorial close: 17 November 2008

No. 22/08

CONTENTS

HOME AFFAIRS

Coalition talks between the SPÖ and the ÖVP suspended
90 years of Republic: ceremony, Council of Ministers, exhibition

HOME AFFAIRS ■ EUROPE ■ INTERNATIONAL

Parliament commemorates November pogroms 70 years ago
Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer pays official visit to Bulgaria
Federal President Fischer pays state visit to Jordan

ECONOMY

Minister of Infrastructure Faymann stops closure of post offices
AUA: sale to Lufthansa looks certain
Bank package: Banking ÖIAG and Clearing Bank founded

CULTURE ■ MEDIA ■ SCIENCE

Federal President Heinz Fischer pays homage to US soprano Jessye Norman
Igor Stravinsky's opera "The Rake's Progress" at Theater an der Wien
Vienna: Council of Europe and Holocaust Task Force will cooperate
Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer received "Dialogue of Civilizations" Prize
Ukraine at "Literature in Autumn" festival
Campaign of the City of Vienna: free copies of book by Ruth Klüger
Jewish people remember their Vienna in the 20th century
Vienna: Wittgenstein Prize to quantum physicist Markus Arndt
EU Ministerial Conference in Vienna on "digital integration"

SPORTS POLICY

100 years of ÖOC – a red-white-red success story
Swimming coach Zeljko Jukic is BSO-"Trainer of the Year"
Intensified doping prevention at federal and Länder level

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Coalition talks between the SPÖ and the ÖVP suspended

The coalition talks between the current governing parties – the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – were suspended in the evening of 16 November 2008. After face-to-face talks between SPÖ party leader Werner Faymann and ÖVP Chairman Josef Pröll, the next large round of negotiations is to take place on 20 November 2008 at the earliest. Pröll had cancelled the meeting arranged for 16 November 2008 and submitted a list of ten open key questions to Faymann. The SPÖ Chairman expressed his willingness to provide the answers in time.

In the ten-item list of questions to the SPÖ the ÖVP requests proposals for compliance with the budget plan, for securing pensions, cutting administrative expenses as well as a pledge to substantially reduce the burden on families with children. Furthermore, the ÖVP demanded a clear commitment to the EU as well as to developing companies close to the state based on a market-economy approach. The main point of contention has been Faymann's attitude towards the closure of post office (see "Economy").

Faymann stressed in the meantime that he wanted to stick to the original plan of forming a government by Christmas. More contacts between the leadership of the two large parties have been scheduled for the next days.

The ten questions of the ÖVP read as follows:

1. What are the concrete proposals of the SPÖ to ensure compliance with the budget plan jointly agreed on?
2. Where does the SPÖ think that the money should come from – without incurring additional debts – that we need to help the people during the crisis?
3. Is the SPÖ committed to the plan that every taxpayer should benefit substantially from a decrease of wage and income taxes?
4. Is the SPÖ committed to a sizable reduction of the burden on families with children?
5. Does the SPÖ adhere to the principle that tax money should not be used for funding the health insurance system unless restructuring and efficiency-boosting measures are taken?
6. How do we secure pensions? – To ensure that the people working today and paying into pension funds can expect fair pensions tomorrow?
7. How are potential savings in the administration taken advantage of?

8. Is the SPÖ committed to the fact that also companies close to the state have to be further developed based on a market-economy approach to ensure competitiveness at national and international level?

9. How do we safeguard Austria's role as a reliable and calculable partner in further developing the European Union?

10. Is the SPÖ ready to support the clear strategy, which has been adopted jointly regarding internal and external security issues in the last years? ■

90 years of Republic: ceremony, Council of Ministers, exhibition

On 12 November 2008 the Republic of Austria did not only celebrate its 90th birthday but also commemorated the beginnings of democracy in Austria.

On 12 November 1918 Austria's legendary State Chancellor Karl Renner had proclaimed the democratic Republic "German Austria". The momentous birth of the new Austria had, however, been preceded by a long and laborious process of political peace efforts. After the armistice agreement between Austria-Hungary and the Allied Forces of 3 November, one week later, on 11 November 1918, Germany and the Entente Powers signed an armistice agreement. This marked the official end of WWI. Still on the same day, Hapsburg Emperor Charles I. renounced all participation in affairs of the state. On 12 November 1918 Renner proclaimed the Republic in front of the Houses of Parliament.

The official anniversary celebrations included a wreath-laying ceremony at the monument of the Republic and at the memorial to State Chancellor Renner, a ceremony at Hofburg, a Special Council of Ministers of the federal government, the inauguration of the "Exhibition on the Republic" in the Houses of Parliament as well as the "Concert for Austria" at Musikverein in the evening. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra performed Jean Sibelius and Robert Schumann, Daniel Harding conducted.

The entire leadership of the state and government participated in the main ceremony at Hofburg. In his address President Heinz Fischer wished the Republic a "peaceful future" and warned of "growing nationalism and radicalisms" if the economic crisis was not tackled soon. Fischer described the birth of the Republic as "difficult".

At the special session of the Council of Ministers

of the federal government, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer praised the achievements of the European Union and of European integration. With regard to the economic crisis, the Federal Chancellor called for optimism. Gusenbauer stated that the challenges would be faced and that the utmost would be done to weather the storm of the current financial crisis. The Chancellor also highlighted the recently adopted bank assistance package.

The peace settlement reached after 1945 has shaped the EU to the present day, Gusenbauer explained. The privilege of living in freedom and peace had to be redeveloped and defended on a continuous basis. 90 years after founding the Republic, Austria was one of the richest and safest countries in the world and a reliable partner in the international community of states as well as in the EU, the Federal Chancellor stressed.

In the afternoon the “Exhibition on the Republic 1918/2008“ was opened to the public in the Hall of Pillars in the Houses of Parliament. The subjects covered range from the traumatic events of the two world wars and the foundation years of the First and Second Republic, the NS dictatorship, Nazi terror and the Holocaust to the post-war reconstruction period, the State Treaty as well as European integration (see News from Austria, No. 18 and www.republiksausstellung.at). ■

Parliament commemorates November pogroms 70 years ago

On 9 November 2008 the Austrian Parliament commemorated the November pogroms 70 years ago in a ceremony held at Palais Epstein. The events of the “Reichskristallnacht“ – the “Night of Broken Glass” – on 9 November 1938 had marked the climax of a year of anti-Semitic riots. In her speech Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer vehemently called for an end of further debates about the abolishment of the “Prohibition Act”. “More than ever” this Act was to be considered a constitutional reaction to Austria’s role during the NS period, and as a clear no to the belittlement of the Nazi atrocities it was of a high symbolic value. “This should not and must not be called into question in Austria“, Prammer underlined.

In 1938 the hostility towards Jews in Austria had clearly exceeded that in Germany. “Even if many Austrians do not like to hear that“, Prammer stated in the presence of more than 100 guests, among them Israeli Ambassador to Austria, Dan Ashbel, Secretary of State Andreas Schieder and

the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court, Brigitte Bierlein. Prammer emphasised that the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism would not be “dismantled“.

The President of the Jewish Religious Community (IKG), Ariel Muzicant, demanded that a “clear line“ had to be drawn from right-wing extremism. Muzicant thanked the “official Austria that young people could learn about the past in more than 1000 events commemorating the November pogroms throughout Austria.

In the early morning hours of 10 November 1938 in Austria alone 30 Jews were killed, 7,800 were arrested and 4,000 were immediately deported from Vienna to the Dachau concentration camp. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer pays official visit to Bulgaria

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer paid an official visit to Bulgaria on 14 November 2008. In Sofia he held talks with Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev. Items on the agenda were EU issues, the global financial crisis and bilateral economic relations. Gusenbauer gave a lecture on “European integration“ at the University of Sofia, after which he participated in a panel discussion. ■

Federal President Fischer pays state visit to Jordan

Federal President Heinz Fischer paid a state visit to Jordan from 10 to 12 November 2008. He was accompanied by his wife Margit, Minister of Justice Maria Berger as well as large trade and academic delegations. The programme of his visit included meetings with King Abdullah II. and Queen Rania as well as Prime Minister Nader al-Dahabi. The key subjects discussed were the current situation in the Middle East and the trouble spots in the region. Abdullah called for a quick solution of the Middle East conflict. In this context, Fischer underlined the important role played by Jordan and Austria’s support for the country’s rapprochement to the EU. Both sides stressed the friendly bilateral relations and their wish to intensify bilateral contacts, above all economic cooperation. Jordan showed great interest in Austrian environmental technology. Fischer also promoted the short-listed Austrian opera house project in Amman. ■

Minister of Infrastructure Faymann stops closure of post offices

In the conflict about the planned radical financial consolidation of the Austrian mail company, SPÖ leader and Minister of Infrastructure Werner Faymann took emergency measures enshrined in an ordinance. He informed the Managing Board and Supervisory Board of Österreichische Post AG on 11 November 2008 that no post offices would be shut before the end of June 2009. "During the next six months – as from the beginning of 2009 – no post office may be closed", Faymann stated. In the meantime it was necessary to "seriously search for an alternative to the mere downsizing concept".

According to recent information based on a strategy paper of the Managing Board of Post AG, about 9,000 jobs were to be cut and 1,000 out of 1,300 post offices were to be closed by 2015. The background is the EU-wide full liberalisation of the postal market in 2011 (including letters of less than 50 grams). The Managing Board explained that the drastic austerity plans were necessary to prepare for competition with rivals. The listed mail company was partially privatised in 2006, the government still holds 51%.

Faymann submitted a draft amendment to the Universal Postal Services Ordinance for review to Parliament, stating explicitly: "The post office network may not be downsized between 1 January 2009 and 30 June 2009." The closure plans are expected to be abandoned by the end of the review period. Furthermore, the Minister of Transport announced that the amended Universal Postal Services Ordinance would also impose conditions on the competitors of Post AG and ensure that they shared the burden. It was unacceptable that they would only "cherry-pick" urban areas, Faymann stated. He also criticised the management of the state holding company ÖIAG responsible for privatisation. Regardless of their party affiliations, the Länder governors also opposed the plans resolutely. The Union of Post Office Workers did not rule out further action. Post AG recorded a 13% decline in the earnings before interest and taxes (Ebit) to 103 million euros in the first nine months of this year, while sales climbed by 7% to 1.785 billion euros.

The partially state-owned Telekom Austria (TA) is also in trouble. By 2011 about 2,500 employees are to be dismissed. The loss of 600,000 fixed-line telephone connections since 2004 has been given as a reason. ■

AUA: sale to Lufthansa looks certain

The sale of Austrian Airlines (AUA) to German Lufthansa looks certain. The Privatisation Committee of the ÖIAG decided on 13 November 2008 that the final talks would be held "exclusively with Lufthansa". The potential rivals Air France/KLM and the Russian S7 "do no longer participate in the bidding process". However, the approval of the European Commission of the announced federal government aid amounting to 500 million euros, which could be regarded as a forbidden state subsidy, has not yet been obtained. ■

Bank package: Banking ÖIAG and Clearing Bank founded

The government's protective system for the domestic banking sector has been kicked off. On 11 November 2008 a stock corporation for financial market investments of the Federal Republic – "Finanzmarkteteiligung Aktiengesellschaft des Bundes" (FIMBAG) – was founded as a new subsidiary of the state holding company ÖIAG. The new Clearing Bank (OeCAG) for interbank transactions started operations on 14 November 2008.

The so-called "Banking ÖIAG" may provide support in recapitalisation not only to banks but also to domestic insurance companies. Financial institutions may obtain fresh equity from it. 15 billion euro, or even more if required, are available for state capital subsidies and investments.

The first bank in Austria which will really become government-owned is the provider of financial services to municipalities "Kommunalkredit". After serious problems, the state has to rescue the previously eighth largest bank of the country by acquiring 99.78% against a symbolic payment of 2 euros. A three-digit million amount is required to improve the equity ratio and to ensure adequate liquidity through state guarantees. The previous owners Volksbank AG and Dexia assign their holdings to Kommunalkredit. The closing of the deal is however still awaited.

It has been decided that Erste Group will receive a participation capital of 2.7 billion euros from the government. Raiffeisen Zentralbank will probably take a decision on issuing participation capital on 25 November 2008. Volksbank, BAWAG and Bank Austria as well as Wüstenrot are also considering this step. ■

President Fischer pays homage to US soprano Jessye Norman

On 7 November 2008 Federal President Heinz Fischer awarded US soprano Jessye Norman, 63, the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, First Class. "We are very grateful for what you have done in your life and for what you are still doing", Fischer said. The President presented the award in the presence of select invitees, among them Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer and universal artist André Heller. In 2005 Heller and filmmaker Othmar Schmiderer had produced an impressive film about the singer. Deeply touched, Jessye Norman thanked the Federal President: "I hope I can meet your expectations". She was very honoured by receiving this award at the place where she had sung during her studies. Fischer explained that the children of Empress Maria Theresa had received music lessons there. Norman had "set new standards in important opera houses of this world". Performances such as at the opening of the Olympic Games in Atlanta or of the "Marseillaise" at the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution were unforgettable.

Jessye Norman was born in Augusta (Georgia) in 1945 as the daughter of a teacher and an insurance agent. The parents were not only active in the former US civil rights movement but were also amateur musicians. She studied music at Howard University. Since her debut in 1969 as Elisabeth in Richard Wagner's "Tannhäuser", she has made a meteoric career by performing in operas of Mozart, Verdi, Berlioz or Meyerbeer. Among her special highlights are Wagner's "Wesendonck Songs", Arnold Schönberg's "Gurrelieder" and Alban Berg's "Altenberg Songs". The singer who is also active as an Honorary Ambassador to the UN received a Grammy award for her recording "Songs of Maurice Ravel" in 1986. In 2006 she won the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. ■

Igor Stravinsky's opera "The Rake's Progress" at Theater an der Wien

The expectations were high: stage director Martin Kusej and conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt, whose cooperation after "Don Giovanni" in Salzburg in 2002 has been spectacularly successful, produced Igor Stravinsky's "The Rake's Progress" at Theater an der Wien. The

composer had been inspired for "The Rake's Progress" (1951) by the satirical and socio-critical copperplate engravings of the English artist William Hogarth. Kusej/Harnoncourt wanted to transfer Stravinsky's work "absolutely to the present", the director opted for "relatively realistic aesthetics", as he explained in an interview with the weekly "profil". The breathless interpretation of political topicality also addressed the swing to the right in Austria. Populism and the seductive illusory world of the media come under attack in the music and the mise en scène.

Due to a rather explicit brothel scene, only persons older than 18 years are admitted to the six performances (until 28 November 2008), based on the recommendation of a school psychologist.

The astounding production boasts excellent singers – Toby Spence (Tom Rakewell), Alastair Miles (Nick Shadow), Adriana Kucerova (Anne Trulove) and Anne Sofie von Otter (Baba the Turk). Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Arnold Schoenberg Choir.

www.theater-wien.at ■

Vienna: Council of Europe and Holocaust Task Force will cooperate

The Council of Europe and the International Holocaust Task Force (ITF) signed a declaration of intent to team up in the combat against anti-Semitism at European level on 10 November 2008. Terry Davis, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, and Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff, ITF Chairman, signed the agreement that is to become a model for Europe.

According to Trauttmansdorff, the negotiations would start still this year as Austria was holding the ITF chair. First concrete results were expected by 2010. Davis mentioned a planned campaign against racism in key media at European level, which was to be more focused than the campaigns of the past years. As Hans Winkler, Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry, explained, there was a "moral duty to ensure that future generations understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect on the consequences".

Moreover, Terry Davis was awarded the Grand Golden Medal of Honour with Ribbon for Meritorious Service to the Republic of Austria in Vienna on 10 November 2008 by Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer. "He has contributed decisively to the success of the

Council of Europe in promoting its goals on our continent". The Council of Europe provided an all-European institutional framework for the further development of democracy and the rule of law as well as the protection of human rights.

In the night from 9 to 10 November 1938 pogroms against Jewish citizens had taken place in all regions occupied by the Nazis. In Austria alone 30 Jews were killed, 7,800 were arrested and about 4,000 were deported immediately from Vienna to the Dachau concentration camp. The pogroms are considered by many historians as the beginning of the Shoa, the systematic annihilation of the Jewish population. ■

Chancellor Gusenbauer received "Dialogue of Civilizations" Prize

In the framework of the summit "Dialogue of Civilizations" organised by the World Public Forum (WPF), Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer received the international prize "Dialogue of Civilizations" in recognition of his efforts "to promote dialogue among different cultures and to treat them with understanding, respect and openness" on 10 November 2008. The Prize was conferred on him by WPF President Vladimir Yakunin, Director-General of the Russian Railways: "Alfred Gusenbauer is a personality of great European and international potential. His approach and his experience are contributing to the establishment of a European project of the 21st century". Yakunin also praised the Chancellor for his readiness of entering into dialogue with representatives of public organisations, NGOs, researchers and artists. At the press conference held after the event at Vienna's Hofburg Gusenbauer stated: "This is a prize for Austria as a mediator in the world". Poverty was the reason for the worldwide instability. Not only a dialogue of states but also of religions was required. At present there were about sixty conflicts and trouble spots in the world, and their number was increasing. These conflicts were "re-imported" through terrorism. The international financial market crisis should be countered by creating a world financial organisation, which should also have the power to sanction. A new financial structure was necessary that was "not based on exploitation and quick profit", the Chancellor reiterated.

The WPF was founded in 2002 by Yakunin, the Indian industrialist Jagdish Kapur and the Greek-American banker, Nicholas Papanikolaou. The

head of the International Coordinating Committee is Walter Schwimmer, former Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.

Among the previous laureates of the "Dialogue of Civilizations" Prize are Jordanian King Abdullah II., Iranian ex-President Mohammad Khatami, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, former Indian Prime Minister Kumar Gujral as well as UNESCO Secretary-General Koichiro Matsuura. www.dialogueofcivilizations.org ■

Ukraine at "Literature in Autumn" festival

Alte Schmiede dedicates this year's three-day festival "Literature in Autumn" at Odeon in Vienna to contemporary Ukrainian literature, whose centres are the cities Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kiev and Kharkov. Besides the internationally renowned Ukrainian writers Yuri Andrukhovych and Andrej Kurkov other, still less known authors were invited to Vienna. Romanian writer Mircea Cartarescu was the special guest. Together with his Austrian colleague and translator Martin Pollack he participated in a panel discussion on the subject "Ukraine – Centre of Europe?".

The festival "Literature in Autumn" covered a wide range in geographical and historical terms – from Claudia Erdheim's family saga "Längst nicht mehr koscher" about her ancestors from Galicia and the presentation of Doreen Daume's new translation of "Zimtläden" by Bruno Schulz to a conversation with Erich Klein, the organiser of the event, with translator Elisabeth Markstein about Vassily Grossmann's "Life and Fate". www.alte-schmiede.at ■

Campaign of the City of Vienna: free copies of book by Ruth Klüger

As from 19 November 2008, 100,000 free copies of Ruth Klüger's memories "weiter leben. Eine Jugend" ("Continue Living: My Youth") are distributed to avid readers in Vienna. The author born in Vienna in 1931 was ostracised as a child during the Nazi dictatorship and later deported to concentration camps. Klüger read from her work at a book presentation on the premises of Vienna's district-heating company ("Fernwärme Wien") on 20 November 2008. This is already the seventh year that the free-book campaign has been organised by Echo-Medienhaus.

Ruth Klüger was lucky and survived the Holocaust. Later she studied in the USA and became a recognised literary scholar. She lives in Irvine (California). Recently, she became a guest professor in Tel Aviv. Klüger has received numerous prizes and awards, in Austria the Austrian State Prize for Literary Criticism (1997) and the Bruno Kreisky Prize for the Political Book (2002).

On 24 November 2008, homage will be paid to the author at a gala at Vienna's City Hall hosted by Mayor Michael Häupl.

www.einestadteinbuch.at ■

Jewish people remember their Vienna in the 20th century

About 200 Jewish citizens were invited to the presentation of the book "Wie wir gelebt haben. Wiener Juden erinnern sich an ihr 20. Jahrhundert" ("How we lived. Viennese Jews remember their 20th century"), edited by Tanja Eckstein and Julia Kaldori and published by Mandelbaum-Verlag, in Vienna's City Hall on 11 November 2008. About 70 guests contributed as witnesses of the time numerous photos and the pertinent memories to the wonderful book enshrining unique short stories, "from the little comedies of daily life in the 1920s and the horror of the late 1930s and 1940s, which they escaped only narrowly, to their settling down in post-war Vienna and founding their own families", as Edward Serotta, Head of Centropa (Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation) stated in his preface. Centropa was founded in 1999. One of its goals is to preserve the memories of older Jewish people – to whom we owe today's flourishing Jewish life in Vienna – for future generations. Other texts in the book were authored by superb writers such as Joachim Riedl, Barbara Tóth or Doron Rabinovici.

Minister of Education Claudia Schmid and Vienna's Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny contributed to the success of the memorable evening moderated by actress Konstanze Breitebner and excellently organised by Milli Segal's PR agency by delivering speeches in which they highlighted the great achievements of Vienna's Jewish community benefiting the city and Austria as a whole. Last but not least, they clearly rejected all forms of xenophobia.

www.centropa.org ■

Vienna: Wittgenstein Prize to quantum physicist Markus Arndt

On 10 November 2008, quantum physicist Markus Arndt (aged 43), was awarded the Ludwig Wittgenstein Prize, the most important and most lucrative Austrian science award. Arndt was born in Germany, is a disciple of Anton Zeilinger and has been ordinary professor at the Faculty of Physics at Vienna University since 2008. At the same time eight fledgling researchers – all of them natural scientists – received the "Start Prizes". Arndt's research focuses on the matter wave physics of nano-materials, i.e. on tests to furnish proof of quantum world phenomena in increasingly larger complexes such as atoms and molecules. As Arndt explained, the prize allowed him to expand his team. Minister of Science Johannes Hahn stated in response that actually this was the purpose of the prize money – to support young scientists cooperating in the Wittgenstein project. Research had to be promoted, especially in economically difficult times. Arndt also plans to use some part of the prize money to embark on "something completely new", e.g. to do research on the connection between quantum physics and biology. ■

EU Ministerial Conference in Vienna on "digital integration"

From 30 November to 2 December 2008 an EU Ministerial Conference will be held on the topic "e-Inclusion" ("digital integration") on the Reed exhibition grounds in Vienna. The event, which had been initiated in 2006 during the Austrian EU Council Presidency in Riga (Latvia), will be staged under the French EU Council Presidency in cooperation with the European Commission, Directorate-General for Information Society and Media, and the Austrian Federal Chancellery. Information and communications technologies (ICT) play a crucial role in modern life. They pave the way for substantial improvements in the social, health and educational systems and make a major contribution to achieving productivity gains. Nevertheless, up to 40% of the citizens face a risk of being excluded from the information society. The aim of the campaign "e-Inclusion" is to counter this trend.

www.ec.europa.eu/einclusion-event ■

100 years of ÖOC – a red-white-red success story

The Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC) celebrated the 100th anniversary of its foundation at a gala night at Hofburg in Vienna on 7 November 2008. Besides Federal President Heinz Fischer, IOC President Jacques Rogge (International Olympic Committee), EOC President Patrick Hickey (European Olympic Committee) and ÖOC President Leo Wallner, 70 Austrian medallists and 30 Olympic winners were among the about 350 guests. President Fischer conferred the "Golden Medal of Honour with Star for Meritorious Service to the Republic of Austria" to IOC chief Rogge.

The actual birthday of the Austrian Olympic Committee founded in 1908 was on 16 March 2008 but the birthday celebrations were postponed to autumn due to the preparations for the Olympic Summer Games in Beijing. The ÖOC earned a total of 292 medals for Austria. The official number is only 271 as the IOC does not recognise interludes and art competitions: 107 (or 86 official) medals at Summer Games, 185 medals at Winter Games, including 51 gold medals.

Most gold medals, i.e. three, were earned by ski legend Toni Sailer. Austria's most successful participant in Olympic Games of all times is Felix Gottwald winning two gold medals, one silver and three bronze medals in Nordic Combined events.

On the occasion of its 100th anniversary, the ÖOC issued two publications. "Olympische Moment-Aufnahmen" ("Olympic Snapshots") is a richly illustrated book presenting the history of Olympics – from the Games in Antiquity to the modern Olympic movement – on more than 200 pages. But also the young generation is being addressed. The brochure "100 Jahre Österreichisches Olympisches Comité – 1908 bis 2008" ("100 years of Austrian Olympic Committee – 1908 to 2008") targets pupils and highlights the combat against doping. ■

Swimming coach Zeljko Jukic is BSO "Trainer of the Year"

Swimming coach Zeljko Jukic is "Top Trainer of the Year". The father of the successfully duo Mirna and Dinko was awarded the desirable prize of the Federal Sports Organisation (BSO) and the Chancellery at the "Sport Crystal Gala" (14.11.). This year Zeljko Jukic guided his two children to

their so far greatest success. Mirna won the Olympic bronze medal in the women's 100m breast, Dinko became European Vice Champion in the 200m Individual Medley. Mirna Jukic had been elected "Austrian Female Athlete of the Year" (for the 2nd time after 2002) only in October 2008. Dinko Jukic had been Austria's "Youth Athlete of the Year" in 2007. The track-and-field club "Sportunion IGLA long life" won the title "Top Sports Association". One of its members is Olympian Günther Weidlinger (track-and-field athlete). Karl Weiß of the Fist Ball Federation and Eva Worisch (synchronised swimming) became "Top Officials". The title "Top Women's Power" went to Rena Eckart of the Badminton Association, "Top Sports Ambassador" 2008 is Bernhard Maier, who was ÖOC priest in the Olympic Games for the 14th time. ■

Intensified doping prevention at federal and Länder level

The combat against doping and violence in football as well as the promotion of performance models in school sport are great challenges in Austrian sports. At the conference of Länder sports officials', the 2009 programme of cooperation between the Länder and Republic was discussed, which envisages intensified cooperation, especially in the anti-doping struggle. Based on an initiative of the State Secretariat for Sport in the Federal Chancellery, a workshop will be held "to prepare an anti-doping strategy for the preventive sector", in which Länder representatives will participate. School sport is another priority of the comprehensive meeting agenda with the leading officials of the Länder competent for sport and representatives of the Federal Republic. A working group consisting of the sports officers of the Länder, a representative of the Sports Department of the Chancellery and a delegate of the Ministry of Education will develop a proposal for the model "School and sport at top performance level" by spring 2009 and submit it for approval to the conference of sports officers of the Länder. The Secretariat of State for Sport proposed measures on behalf of the Republic on the subject "violence in football", which can be implemented jointly with the Länder. A main concern is intensified cooperation with the social workers in the Länder to develop social football projects. Moreover, a working group in the Ministry of the Interior is examining the possibility of tightening legal provisions. ■