

News from Austria

No. 07/08

HOME AFFAIRS

Chancellor Gusenbauer: good progress with work plan 2008

EUROPE | INTERNATIONAL

Czech President Václav Klaus pays official visit to Vienna

ECONOMY

Chancellor Gusenbauer: small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a stable backbone of the economy

CULTURE | MEDIA | SCIENCE

Amendment to restitution law to be adopted before summer

SPORTS POLICY

Economy and football at the Austrian Cultural Forum in Rome

Our service to our readers: quicker and even more up-to-date information by e-mail. Now available free of charge:
www.bundeskanzleramt.at/aktuell

Chancellor Gusenbauer: good progress with work plan 2008

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "The work programme for 2008 expresses economic common sense and social understanding.

"The capital gains tax used as an additional source for financing the reform of the health system implies that the same tax rates are applied to interest income from savings bank books and other capital gains such as earnings on shareholdings."

The full text of the SPÖ/OVP agreement, including the work programme and timetable, is available at: www.austria.gv.at (News Archives, 26 March 2008).

After the Council of Ministers on 26 March 2008, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer presented a joint policy statement on the work programme for 2008. Top priority is given to an anti-inflationary strategy. Besides controversial issues, such as the reduction of the incidental wage costs for low income earners, an earlier pension increase as well as confidence-building measures, the compromise package also provides for the possible introduction of a capital gains tax as a new source for financing the health system and a timetable for the 2010 tax reform.

"The work programme for 2008 expresses economic common sense and social understanding", the Chancellor explained. Implementation of the first joint anti-inflationary package starts right now. The main goals were to control "home-made inflation" and to provide quick help to those in need. Therefore, the federal government had already agreed at the turn of the year to introduce a cap on medical prescription fees of 2% of the net income, to increase family allowances and to raise the flat allowance for commuters twice.

To cut housing costs, the estate agents' commission is to be decreased from three to two monthly rents. Other items on the agenda are to introduce an energy and food price monitoring system as well as to implement the Services Directive. The anti-inflationary package with a "ban on fee increases" (also affecting motorway tolls) is to enter into force on 1 July 2008. On the same date the second most important anti-inflationary measure – a decrease of incidental wage costs of lower incomes – will be introduced, which consists in abolishing the 3% employee's contribution to the unemployment insurance for gross wages of less than 1,100 euros. The contributions are reduced to 2% for wages up to 1,350 euros and to 1% for incomes of 1,200 euros. According to Gusenbauer, this will benefit about 1 million people. Thirdly, the pension increase originally scheduled for 2009 will be advanced to 1 November 2008.

Another key element of the joint work programme for 2008 are new cooperation rules for the government and Parliament. Controversial issues are to be discussed before the

Council of Ministers on Wednesdays. During its sessions the government will only pass resolutions and discuss future projects. Moreover, it will become impossible to outvote legislative initiatives in Parliament.

The press conference traditionally held after the Council of Ministers is abolished. Instead, the public will be informed before the session. With these measures, the work of the government has been made transparent and understandable. "This new style is very important to me", explained Gusenbauer. Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Finance Molterer "explicitly" welcomed the new form of cooperation.

As far as the reform of the health system is concerned, "structural and financial issues" are to be resolved by the end of 2008. Among the measures envisaged are the exhaustion of the existing savings potential and measures to boost efficiency. A further increase of health insurance contributions is explicitly excluded. The planned capital gains tax is to provide additional financial resources. Equal tax rates are to be applied to the interest income from savings bank books and other asset gains. "It is our aim that profits from selling shares are treated in the same way as the interest income from savings bank books", Gusenbauer said. This tax is to apply also to other earnings, while exemptions will be granted for the income from selling condominiums in which the owners actually lived and family-owned farmland.

With regard to the tax reform/biennial budget, the coalition partners – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – agreed to decrease taxes by 3 billion euros (without counter-financing) with effect 1 January 2010. A tax reform committee headed by Molterer and Secretary of State for Finance Christoph Matznetter will be set up in the next weeks. The biennial budget 2009/2010 is to be fixed by September 2008. The tax reform is to be adopted by the Council of Ministers in February 2009 and by Parliament in April/May 2009.

The work programme comprises a total of 95 subjects with deadlines, reaching from the pension package in April to the amendment to the Tenancy Act in December. Despite the European Football Championship, it will be business as usual in June. The schedule for June contains a reform of the family law, including a legal basis for same-sex partnerships. ■

Czech President Václav Klaus pays official visit to Vienna

On 25 March 2008, Czech President Václav Klaus came for an official one-day visit to Vienna. He was accompanied by his wife Livia. The political talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer focused on the EU Reform Treaty of Lisbon, the further development in the EU as well as bilateral issues.

Klaus explained that he rejected the EU Reform Treaty as a citizen but as a head of state he respected the Treaty and did not want to “complicate and obstruct” the ratification process in the Czech Republic.

Federal President Fischer reaffirmed that he expected the Austrian Parliament to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon still before the summer.

Klaus stated that good neighbourly relations were a priority. Federal President Fischer underlined that maximum safety of the Temelin NPP was a major concern of Austria. At the same time Fischer pled for a matter-of-fact approach in the discussion.

The cultural highlight of his trip to Vienna was a visit to the exhibition “Tutankhamen and the World of the Pharaohs” at the Museum of Ethnology. In the evening Klaus lectured on his book “Blue, Not Green Planet” at the “Alpbach Talks” held at Albertina in Vienna. ■

Foreign Minister Plassnik at EU meeting in Slovenian Brdo

At their informal meeting in Brdo (Slovenia) held from 28 to 29 March 2008, the EU foreign ministers deliberated on the Tibet crises, the Balkans, Russia and the situation in the Middle East. Austria was represented by Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik.

The EU called on China to enter into a “substantial and constructive dialogue” with the Tibetans. A joint statement reads as follows: “The EU condemns all violence and pays respect to the victims.” The foreign ministers reiterated “their strong concern over the events in the autonomous Chinese region of Tibet” and called for an end to the violence and a free access by the press to Tibet.

Foreign Minister Plassnik pled that the EU should not rule out the possibility of a “strong signal” to the Chinese leadership. The Austrian

federal government would leave the question of participating in the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing undecided in the next four months, said the Foreign Minister.

With regard to the Kosovo issue, no new positions had been reached between the EU and Serbia, Plassnik explained. As far as concrete EU perspectives for the Balkan states were concerned, the principle applied that basically every European country had a European perspective. ■

Minister of Defence Darabos meets with UN Secretary-General in New York

In a meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 26 March 2008 Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos pointed out that Austria’s participation in the framework of the European Chad mission was temporary. An extension of the mission for six months was possible, while a permanent deployment of Austrian soldiers in the crisis region was rejected.

The EU mission to protect refugees from the Sudanese civil-war region Dafur and relief organisations was only an interim measure. Austria could not make available its 160 soldiers “for decades”, Darabos stressed.

With regard to Kosovo, Darabos announced an increase of the contingent of the Federal Army to 700 soldiers still in the course of this year. With 570 soldiers, Austria had in any case been the non-NATO country represented most strongly in the NATO Force (Kfor). The Minister of Defence also proposed Ban Ki-moon to make greater use of Austria’s know how in questions concerning the Balkans. Austria could, for example, provide assistance in the tension-ridden Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Darabos said. ■

Croatia's Foreign Minister Gordan Jandrokovic in Vienna

Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Jandrokovic met with his counterpart Ursula Plassnik in Vienna on 25 March 2008. 2008 was a decisive year for the EU candidate Croatia, Plassnik said. Although there was still “homework to be done”, the “clearly positive reform dynamics” should not be belittled, Plassnik stated. ■

Minister of Defence Darabos: “I consider Austria’s participation in the EU Chad mission based on an UN mandate crucial as the aim of the mission is to ensure stability, and as a consequence crises from Africa will not spill over to Europe.”

Chancellor Gusenbauer: SMEs are a stable backbone of the economy

On 26 March 2008, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer praised the achievements of the domestic entrepreneurs in the framework of the appointment of the new members of the economic panel set up with the federal statistical office "Statistik Austria". Thanks to their firm commitment, they made a substantial contribution to the country's economic performance.

The Austrian economy had registered a record growth of 3.4% in 2007, and despite the difficulties in international financial markets Austria boasted an excellent position by European comparison, Gusenbauer said. The domestic companies had succeeded in taking advantage of the opportunities of EU enlargement. The strong economic dynamism had been sustained mainly by the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). "Without the stable backbone of the small and medium-sized enterprises, this successful performance would have been impossible." This had also been reflected in an enormous employment growth and a low unemployment rate. "For the period February 2007 to 2008 we can claim the highest employment growth since 1955. This increase in employment above all led to the creation of full-time jobs", Gusenbauer was pleased to inform.

Further efforts of the economic sector and the policy-makers were required to respond to new challenges and to survive in international competition. Investments in research and development as well as education and training were of crucial importance. Small and mid-sized enterprises were "increasingly stronger innovation engines in our country", the Chancellor emphasised. ■

Financial crisis: Wifo/IHS reduce GDP forecast 2008/09

The international financial crisis also dampens economic growth in Austria. On 28 March 2008, the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) presented a downward revision of their 2008 growth forecasts of the gross domestic product (GDP) from a previously assumed growth rate between 2.2 and 2.4% to 2.1%. For 2009 they predict a

plus of only 1.7/2.2%, after previously assuming growth rates of 2.0 and 2.5%, respectively.

The turbulences in the credit and financial markets triggered by the crisis in the US real estate sector, the weak dollar obstructing exports as well as the high inflation have negative effects on the economic development. The dimension and duration of the crisis of the international financial system cannot yet be assessed, the experts stress. Therefore the revised lower GDP growth rate was "highly insecure". Underlying assumptions were a stabilisation of the domestic economy in late 2008 and "a cautious recovery" in 2009. The slight reduction of the unemployment insurance contributions planned by the federal government for mid-2008 could have favourable effects on net real incomes. ■

Booming Vienna Airport

After the "record year 2007", the listed Vienna Airport group expects further growth in the current year. This year the number of passengers is likely to increase by 8% to about 20 million. In 2015 no less than 30 million travellers are expected. Vienna Airport is "to grow at least one percentage point above the European average" in the long run, CEO Herbert Kaufmann announced at the balance sheet press conference in Vienna on 27 March 2008. According to more long-term Europe-wide forecasts, the number of passengers is expected to grow between 4 and 5%.

In 2007 the number of passengers rose by 11.3% to 18.8 million. Without the discount airlines, growth would have been only half as high, Kaufmann was convinced. Sales climbed by 12.4% to 521.4 million euros. The earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) increased by 12.6% to 191.0 million euros; the operating result (EBIT) went up by 16.1% to 120.3 million euros. The investment volume for the years 2008 to 2012 totals almost 800 million euros. ■

Städtische/Erste: several-billion-euro deal

After the takeover of the Insurance Division of Erste Bank in Austria, Central and Eastern Europe, Wiener Städtische Versicherung has become Austria's largest insurance group and the market leader in Eastern Europe. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "The strong economic dynamism in Austria is mainly sustained by the small and medium-sized enterprises."

Vienna Airport expects 30 million passengers in 2015.

Amendment to restitution law to be adopted before summer

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied and Chairman of the Advisory Board on Restitution Clemens Jabloner presented the planned measures to improve restitution by the Federal Republic on 26 March 2008. "The restitution of seized assets is a historic obligation which is met by the Republic of Austria", stated the Minister. "My aim are clear rules for the restitution affairs of the Leopold Foundation". As a first step, the Foundation is to be covered by the provenance research of the Federal Republic. By the end of April, two restitution researchers financed by the Federal Republic are to start investigations at the Leopold Museum. There is "already a clear majority in the Managing Board in favour of this opening up", said Schmied, who also interpreted statements by collector Rudolf Leopold as a "highly positive and constructive signal". In an interview with the daily "Die Presse" the head of museum stated: "We will have independent experts examine the facts. I will certainly not ignore the origin of paintings against my better judgment". However, in this interview Leopold also explained that he felt to have come in for unfair criticism.

The plan of action presented by Schmied and Jabloner included concrete measures. For example, the law should not refer explicitly to the restitution of "works of art" but rather to the restitution of "movable objects". The future law should not only apply to "federal museums and collections" but the entire "federal assets" should come under its scope. The Act on the Restitution of Works of Art should also cover assets which had previously been subject to a formal restitution procedure. The period in respect of which restitution claims can be filed will be extended, covering the years from 1933 to 1945 (previously 1938 to 1945). Assets that were not confiscated in Austria but in regions controlled by the Third Reich will also have to be returned in the future. To speed up restitution procedures, the recognition of heirs will be based on the Austrian law of succession. Thus time-consuming expert opinions under international private law usually not leading to new findings will become superfluous. The exception for restitution assets from the Monumental Protection Act, which requires permits for the

export of specific assets, will be effective for a period of 25 years as from the handing-over the object and also apply to the restitution by the Länder and municipalities. The term of office of the members of the Advisory Board on Restitution will be extended to three years so as to ensure their independence.

The cooperation between the Ministry, the Advisory Board on Restitution and the Provenance Research Committee is re-structured. The Committee is afforded a legal status and has legal capacity in specific areas. A special statute clearly defines the independence of the provenance researchers. A member – or deputy member – of the Advisory Board on Restitution will be entrusted with developing a triennial programme for the Provenance Research Committee and its scientific realisation. This task was assigned to Eva Blimlinger in the Advisory Board meeting on 7 March 2008.

All these steps form part of a process initiated by Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied already in 2007. By appointing President of the Administrative Court Clemens Jabloner chairman of the Advisory Board on Restitution and by creating a special department for restitution affairs within the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture, decisive steps have been taken to improve the restitution procedures of the Federal Republic. ■

Bruno Kreisky Prize 2007 goes to historian Saul Friedländer

Historian Saul Friedländer was awarded the Bruno Kreisky Prize for the Political Book 2007 for his literary and journalistic body of work at the National Library in Vienna on 28 March 2008.

Saul Friedländer was born in Prague in 1932 as the child of German-speaking Jews. His parents were deported by the Nazis from France in 1942 and killed in Auschwitz. Having taken on the name Paul-Henri Ferland, he survived the Shoa in a Catholic boarding school in France.

After World War II., Friedländer devoted himself to Judaism and emigrated to Israel in 1948. He studied in Tel Aviv, Paris and Geneva, completing his doctoral studies at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva in 1963, where he taught during summer terms until 1988.

He has held a professorship in modern European history at the University of Tel Aviv since 1976. In 1987 he also accepted an appointment of the University of California in Los Angeles. Saul Friedländer lives predominantly in Los Angeles and is one of the internationally most important Holocaust researchers. In the winter term 2006/07 Friedländer was a guest professor at the “Jena Center – History of the 20th Century” of the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena.

His work “Nazi Germany and the Jews” is considered the climax of his academic career. Friedländer examines the question how it became possible that one of the severest crimes of world history was committed in a highly developed nation. The historian used a method which made him famous. He mixed descriptions of the events with documents such as letters or diaries to present a picture of the epoch as comprehensive as possible. The fact that he lent a voice to the victims has led to often very fierce controversies with other historians. Martin Broszat for example stated that Friedländer offered a mythical memory that constituted an obstacle to the rational historiography of German historians. Broszat obviously suggested that Jews were in general subjective with regard to this question, Friedländer stated. He pointed out that a “general history” could not be written without the views of the victims. One of the main questions addressed by Friedländer was: “What did the people know?” In late 1942, early 1943 many Germans as well as the authorities knew that the deported Jews were killed. As far as the Jews themselves were concerned, they did not want to understand, Friedländer said. Friedländer offers an explanation for the passive attitude of the victims. On the one hand, they were weakened by hunger, disease and bad treatment, on the other hand they wanted to gain time and hoped for an improvement of their situation by changing to another ghetto or camp: “Because one hopes to make it in the end”.

The generation of time witnesses will be dead in the foreseeable future. According to Friedländer, the continuing vivid interest in the Holocaust showed “that the memory remained even if the generation is no longer here”.

Beside Hannes Swoboda, Chairman of the Award Jury, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer was among those presenting laudatory statements. ■

Architecture Biennale: Austria presents housing construction and outsiders

“Out There. Architecture Beyond Building“ is the motto of the Architecture Biennale in Venice from 14 September to 23 November 2008. The title is to remind of the fact that architecture does not simply mean “building”. The Austrian pavilion, whose programme was presented by architect and commissioner Bettina Götz in Vienna on 26 March 2008, responds with the title “Before Architecture“. With the positions of two Austrian outsiders – architect Josef Lackner (1931-2000) from Innsbruck and the group PAUHOF Architects – as well as a special programme section devoted to housing construction, Götz wants to show “that every theme can be turned into architecture“. Housing construction, which has long been a stepchild of architecture, is to become the centre of attention – throughout Austria. Architecture sociologist Werner Sewing was assigned the task of providing the “necessary perspective from the outside“. By interviewing renowned architect’s offices, he explored the question how housing construction could again be made architecturally interesting. “There are great potentials which have not yet been exhausted”, Sewing stated, “above all in Austria, where strong public funding still makes it possible to really link housing construction and urban planning“. The architect’s offices interviewed are the firms Flöckner & Schnöll (Salzburg), Jabornegg & Palffy (Vienna), Marte & Marte (Vorarlberg), Wolfgang Pöschl (Tyrol), Riegler & Riewe (Styria), Gerhard Steixner (Vienna) and Schreieck & Henke (Vienna). All of them often developed their ideas by planning one-family houses of the luxury class “but everything they experimented with and spelt out can be applied to housing construction in general“, Sewing stressed. The interviews are presented in video installations, the outsiders’ positions in presentations of their body of work. Above all, Josef Lackner had demonstrated with his projects how architecture can be created on the basis of the most banal requirements. Lackner’s consistent realisation of logical concepts will be illustrated with five selected projects. His dictum: “Ideas should determine our action”. With the PAUHOF architects Michael Hofstätter

Saul Friedländer:
Das Dritte Reich
und die Juden. 1.
Die Jahre der Ver-
folgung 1933-1939.
Munich 2000. ISBN
342330765X.
(English title: Nazi
Germany and the
Jews: The Years of
Persecution 1933-
1939)
2. Die Jahre der
Vernichtung 1939-
1945. Munich
2006. ISBN
3406549667.
(English title: Nazi
Germany and the
Jews: The Years of
Extermination
1933-1939)

www.labiennale.org

and Wolfgang Pauzenberger, Bettina Götz wishes to present a position which “even questions the requirements”. “When PAUHOF participate in a competition for a school building project, it could happen that they end up building something completely different“. The aim of the exhibition – which is still to be conceived by the architects – is to illustrate their programmatic approach according to which architecture is not a service but had to have a “long-term value-added for society“. Hence, that it conforms to the motto of the Architecture Biennale and goes beyond building. ■

40th anniversary of Ensemble Theater with Bertolt Brecht's "Baal"

Ensemble Theater in Vienna is celebrating its 40th anniversary. On its premises at Petersplatz director Dieter Haspel presents Bertolt Brecht's anarchic early play “Baal“, which he authored when he was only 20 years old. Since the theatre company's foundation, Brecht's work runs like a thread through its programme. Haspel could have presented a faster, more frantic production of the wild drama around the young poet and singer Baal (very suited for the role: Wolfgang Lampl), who does not bear the name of the god of rain, thunder and fertility of the Canaanite pantheon by accident. Nevertheless, the play is worth seeing. Karin Fenböck, Barbara Kramer and Dana Proetsch are beautiful (and if necessary lascivious). In numerous roles, e.g. as Dr. Piller, carter, artist, peasant or hostel warden, German actor Gunther W. Lämmert gives a brilliant performance, just like in many other productions of Ensemble Theater in the past. ■

International Haydn Days 2008

This year the Haydn Days in Eisenstadt (Burgenland) celebrate their 20th anniversary (from 4 to 14 September 2008), looking back on the past two decades and assigning a historical annual theme to each concert. Among the highlights of this year's festival are the performance of Haydn's oratory “Il ritorno di Tobia“ (with Adam Fischer and his Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic Orchestra, which will also give the gala concert “20th anniversary of Haydn Days“ and the two traditional concluding concerts) as well as a great

number of orchestra concerts with important international conductors and soloists, such as The English Concert under Harry Bicket with Vesselina Kasarova, the Chamber Orchestra Basel conducted by Giovanni Antonini with Viktoria Mullova and Pieter Wispelwey, the L'Orfeo Baroque Orchestra under Michi Gaigg with Nuria Rial, Anima Eterna led by Jos van Immerseel, RSO Wien under Hugh Wolff as well as a song recital with Patricia Petibon. The programme is rounded off by numerous chamber concerts. ■

The road is made by walking

Editor-in-chief of the magazine “Falter“ Armin Thurnher and his colleague, free-lance journalist Katharina Krawagna-Pfeifer, are the interview partners of Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer in “Die Wege entstehen im Gehen“ (“The Road is Made by Walking”). The book illustrated with unique photos by Dieter Brasch was recently published by Czernin Verlag. The title is based on a quote of a poem by Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1875-1939), whom Alfred Gusenbauer holds in high esteem. It reads: “Wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking“. The talks were held at a resort in Carinthia, where the Chancellor spends his holidays, his birth place Ybbs an der Donau, in St. Wolfgang, the Waldviertel and the Federal Chancellery in Vienna. The questions of the journalists allow the Chancellor to present his political views of social equilibrium in a theoretically founded and concise way as well as to describe his love for literature, the theatre and the opera. ■

Summer concerts at Schubert Church

The wonderfully restored Schubert Church in the Viennese Lichtental quarter offers charming and moderately priced concerts on Tuesdays between 24 June and 9 September 2008. They include chamber and church music by Franz Schubert (1797-1828), who was baptised in the “Church of the Fourteen Holy Helpers“ and used to play the organ in this church when he was young. Up to 1816 Schubert wrote 17 church music works, among them four Masses for this church. At its 100th anniversary in 1814, he personally conducted his first great Mass (F major). ■

Tickets can be reserved as from 1 April 2008: www.haydnfestival.at

Die Wege entstehen im Gehen. Alfred Gusenbauer conversing with Katharina Krawagna-Pfeifer and Armin Thurnher, with photos by Dieter Brasch. Czernin Verlag, Vienna 2008, ISBN 978-3-7076-0243-2 www.czernin-verlag.com

Bertolt Brecht's "Baal". Ensemble Theater am Petersplatz, Vienna. Until 12 April 2008. www.ensemble-theater.at

www.schubert-kirche.at

Economy and football at the Austrian Cultural Forum in Rome

The subject of art and culture is one of the highlights in the preparations and accompanying programmes of the federal government for EURO 2008. In the framework of EURO 2008, the Austrian Cultural Forum (ÖKF) in Rome organises a series of events exploring the links between football, art and culture. Together with the Austrian embassy in Italy as well as the UniCredit Group, the initiatives for an intensive cultural exchange between Austria and Italy are strengthened. High-ranking representatives of the political, economic, cultural and sports arenas of both countries participated in an event staged under the motto “Fresh Impetus“ on 27 March 2008. The first two sculptures of the exhibition “Ball artists – Ragazzi nel pallone“ was presented in the garden of the Cultural Forum in Rome. But also during EURO 2008, the ÖKF Rome will be active in the field of football. On 20 May 2008 the “Eleven Minutes“ Football Short Film Reel is presented internationally. On 16 June 2008 additional football sculptures are shown during the “public viewing“ of the match Austria vs. Germany. On 29 June 2008 the Austrian group “Nim Sofyan“ – winner of the 2004 Austrian World Music Award – gives a concert in the framework of the live transmission of the EURO final tournament from the Ernst Happel Stadium in Vienna. ■

EURO 2008: working group is to assess number of EURO tourists

72 days before the beginning of UEFA EURO 2008™, the organisational preparations of the federal government have been concluded. At a EURO information workshop in Vienna, the competent representatives of UEFA, the partner country Switzerland, politics and administration, the coordination unit of the federal government, the Austrian Football Federation (ÖFB) as well as the host cities showed themselves satisfied with the progress made. Now the focus was on some details. So far the organisers have not provided official estimates of the fans expected to travel to the European Championship finals. A working group with representatives of various areas will collect information and data by the end of April. The Austrian federal government will

present its last progress report on the EURO preparations in April. ■

Ministers of Sport concerned about situation in China

The EU sports ministers expressed their concern about the development in Tibet at the meeting of sports ministers in Brdo (Slovenia) on 17 March 2008. Regarding the observance of human rights, the EU ministers of sport would keep on addressing human rights issues in their contacts with China. A boycott of the Olympic Summer Games 2008 in Beijing by the athletes was not considered an appropriate solution to satisfy the demands of the Tibetans. This could be achieved only by entering into a dialogue with China and by renouncing violence in Tibet. The 27 Presidents of the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) of the EU Member States were also present at the meeting of ministers of sport. ■

<http://www.austria.cult.roma.it/>

<https://www.fussballverband.at/kunstsonderprojekte.html>

Austrian miracle at European Swimming Championships

With a total of seven medals – three gold, two silver and two bronze medals – the European Swimming Championships in Eindhoven (Netherlands) became one of the most successful events in the history of the Austrian Swimming Association (OSV). Winning two gold medals (100m and 200m backstroke) and one bronze medal (4x200m men’s freestyle relay), Markus Rogan became one of the excelling athletes competing for the title. Mirna Jukic earned a whole medal set: gold (100m breaststroke), silver (200m breaststroke) and bronze (50m breaststroke). Her brother Dinko Jukic was also brilliant, winning the European Vice-Champion’s title in the 200m individual medley. One of the greatest sensations of these European Championships was the Austrian 4x200m freestyle relay with Dominik Koll, Markus Rogan, David Brandl and Dinko Jukic, surprisingly winning bronze. ■

IMPRINT

Owner (publisher) and producer: Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service. A-1014 Vienna, Ballhausplatz 1.
Editor: Dr. Franz Putz, tel. ++43/1/53115-2579, fax ++43/1/53115-4274, e-mail: franz.putz@bka.gv.at.
Dispatch: Division VII/2, Ms. Irene Bucher, tel. ++43/1/53115-2958, fax ++43/1/53115-2880, e-mail: irene.bucher@bka.gv.at.
Website: <http://www.bundeskanzleramt.at>. Excerpts from this text may be reprinted. Published by the Federal Press Service – Vienna.