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Federal Government Agrees on Health Care Reform

The coalition partners Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) reached agreement, among other things, on a concept for a reform of the health care system at their closed-door meeting on 4 June. Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Vice Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer then announced the main pillars of the plan.

"A series of changes have been made to the original plans." These are a "clear signal that we are responding to the public debate and the objections that have been raised in the course of the review process", explained Chancellor Gusenbauer. The main priority is to preserve the excellent quality of the Austrian health care system and at the same time to ensure its financial sustainability. Hence while more money will be made available for the health care sector in future, essential measures to reduce costs will also be implemented. "We need to improve the organisation and efficiency of the system as a whole," said Gusenbauer. This, he added, will include structural changes at both the Federation of Social Insurance Institutions and the insurance institutions. Following the resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers (after the closed door meeting) it was now up to Parliament, which had the necessary scope for action, to make any necessary amendments, he said. "We want to jointly adopt a democratic and integrative approach that will preserve our health care system for the future," the Chancellor emphasised.

The main pillars of the plan have made two concessions to doctors: If negotiations between the Austrian Medical Chamber and the insurance institutions fail, an arbitration panel comprising Supreme Court judges as well as representatives of the Austrian Medical Chamber and the insurance institutions will step in to mediate. The possibility of individual contracts with doctors is being retained. Instead of the planned five-year contracts to be followed by "re-certification", the plan now provides for regular quality assessments.

In the case of the aut-idem regulation (the doctor prescribes the active ingredient, the pharmacist selects the most inexpensive pharmaceutical product), it will still be possible to prescribe patients suffering from chronic illnesses with a specific medicine. The decision regarding the patient's receipt has been postponed.

The plan to convert the Federation of Social Insurance Institutions into a holding company with a right of intervention at the individual insurance institutions will be retained in the proposed reform of the social insurance institutions.

Pensioners and the social insurance institutions are also to be represented on the administrative board. ■

Consensus was also reached on Foundations, Commuters and Non-Smoker Protection

The two governing parties also reached agreement on the new foundation tax, the commuter tax allowance and protection of non-smokers. The package was approved by the National Council on 6 June. A decision regarding pension reform, including the special retirement scheme for manual workers ("Hackler-Regelung") and automatic increases in the retirement age, was postponed.

Under the new arrangements for taxing foundations, any basic tax which has already been paid will not be refunded. Instead, the starting tax rate will be reduced from 5 to 2.5%. In future, the purpose of sub-foundations must correspond to that of the parent foundation.

As of 1 July the commuter tax allowance will be increased by 15% and mileage from 38 to 42 cents.

The new legislation to protect non-smokers makes it mandatory to partition restaurants, bars and cafes into smoking and non-smoking zones as of 2009. Only those restaurants, bars and cafes which are smaller than 50 square metres, or between 50 and 80 square metres and where it would be impossible to divide the premises have the freedom to choose. Marquee parties and club houses are exempt from the ban.

Agreement was also reached on the planned minimum income. Individuals covered by the scheme will be given social insurance coverage and an E-card. An amendment to the Vocational Matriculation Examination Act will allow apprentices to take the High School Leaving Examination free of charge parallel to their apprenticeship as of 2009. ■

Regional Elections 2008 in Tyrol: Losses for ÖVP and SPÖ

The preliminary results of the 8 June election are as follows: Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) 40.5% (-9.4%), the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ): 15.6% (-10.2%), the Freedom Party (FPÖ): 12.7% (+4.7%), the Greens: 10.4% (-5.2%). Standing for the very first time, ÖVP rebel Fritz Dinkhauser and his list Bürgerforum Tirol gained 18.3% of the votes. The distribution of seats in the Landtag: ÖVP: 16 (-4), Liste Dinkhauser: 7, SPÖ: 5 (-4), FPÖ: 4 (+2), The Greens: 4 (-1).

The Tyrolean ÖVP under Governor Herwig van Staa failed to gain the absolute majority for the second time in its history. ■

The commuter tax allowance will be increased by 15 %, mileage from 38 to 42 cents.

EURO 2008: Prominent Political Leaders from all over the World in Austria

The 13 European Football Championship EURO 2008, which is being held in Austria and Switzerland for the first time, has turned the country into a hive of not only sporting, but also political activity. The third largest sporting event in the world after the Olympic Games and the World Cup, and the biggest sporting event ever to be held in Austria (7 to 29 June), is attracting large numbers of prominent political leaders to the country. Working meetings are also being held with the heads of state and government in the run-up to the respective matches.

The guest lists of Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, Vice Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer and other leading federal and regional politicians include the presidents of Austria's group opponents Croatia and Poland, Stjepan Mesic and Lech Kaczynski, the Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, the Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis and the German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, the German Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble and the head of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) Kurt Beck. Others who are planning to visit Austria during the EURO include UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso, EU Council President Janez Jansa, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan and Prince Albert of Monaco. Two Nobel peace prize winners have also promised to come: the former Polish president and trade union leader Lech Walesa and legendary former US foreign secretary Henry Kissinger.

Austrian state leaders were out in force at the opening match between Switzerland and the Czech Republic in Basel on 7 June, with President Fischer, Chancellor Gusenbauer and Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka in attendance.

Of course, the home eleven also received support from their highest ranking fans on 8 June at Vienna's Ernst Happel Stadium at the first EURO dual in Austria against Croatia. The game ended 1:0 for Croatia (see the sports page). ■

Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet in Austria

On 2 June the Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet arrived in Vienna for a three-day state visit. This was the first time that a Vietnamese head of state had come on an official

visit to Austria. The president was accompanied by his wife Tran Thi Kim Chi and a large trade delegation. The itinerary included talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, the President of the National Council Barbara Prammer and the Mayor of Vienna, Michael Häupl.

Discussions focused on bilateral issues, relations between the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and economic affairs. Nguyen Minh Triet also attended an Austrian-Vietnamese Economic Forum with the President of the Austrian Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl. In 2007 Austrian exports to Vietnam rose by 21%, imports by 16.5%.

Vienna wants to increase cooperation with Hanoi especially in the energy and transport sectors (energy and environmental technology, machine building, infrastructure). Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer received an invitation to visit Vietnam.

Vietnam will support Austria's bid for a seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Vietnamese President said following a meeting with President Fischer. Two bilateral agreements were signed on the mutual recognition of qualifications from the higher education sector and the avoidance of double taxation. ■

Transit: French President Sarkozy Supports Austria

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has promised to support Austria in connection with the EU Road Pricing Directive. During a brief visit to Vienna on 30 May he explained that he was on Austria's side. Vienna has for a long time been pushing for the environmental costs of heavy goods traffic to be factored into toll fees. The two countries are also in agreement regarding uniform EU measures to combat illegal immigration. ■

EURO 2008: Border Controls Reimposed

Border controls have been reimposed at Austria's borders until 1 July. However, security forces will not just be trying to intercept hooligans; they will also be keeping an eye out for illegal immigrants. The controls will be for a temporary period only and will be carried out in a manner appropriate to the respective situation. ■

President Nguyen Minh Triet: "Vietnam wants to act as Austria's bridge to the ASEAN states."

For information on the EURO 2008 see

www.em-08.info

Wifo: Global Economy Poised for Growth Again in 2009

According to the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (Wifo) the global economy is once again poised for growth in 2009, despite the record price of oil and the crisis on the international financial markets. While the global economy grew by 4.7 % in 2007, this pace of expansion is set to slow to 3.4 % by 2009. However, growth should reach an average of 4.1% for the period up to 2012.

The reasons for these robust global economic conditions include the continued fast pace of growth in East Asia, Russia and the new EU states. According to Wifo the economic outlook for the latter will remain positive: The economies of the EU states in Eastern Europe are projected to expand by an average annual rate of 4.7% in the period up to 2012. In contrast, the EU-15 will notch up growth of only 1.9 %, according to the report released on 2 June. The experts base their scenarios on the assumption that the price of oil will only have risen slightly by 2012, that the price of property and shares will recover by 2009 and that the euro will stabilise at roughly 1.60 against the dollar.

Due to the international economic downturn, Austria's economy is expected to expand more slowly than anticipated at an average of 2.3% p.a from 2008 to 2012. Recently, Wifo had predicted that gross domestic product (GDP) would grow by an annual average of 2.5%. However, economic growth in Austria will continue to outpace the average GDP growth rate for the euro zone as a whole. In 2010 private consumption will be boosted by the tax reform of the federal government.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had good news for the 15 countries of the eurozone in its report released on 2 June, predicting that the economies of these countries would grow by around 1.75% in 2008. In its previous report the institution had forecast growth of only 1.4 %. According to the IMD director for Europe Alessandro Leipold, this was due to the robust activity in the first quarter. At the same time, however, he warned against excessive optimism, saying that the eurozone economy was "resilient, but not immune." In 2009 growth would slow to 1.25 %, but inflation would also fall below the 2 % mark again.

The Minister of Economic Affairs Martin Bartenstein is also expecting a slowdown in economic activity. However, this has not yet had an impact on the labour market. At the end of May 2008 the number of unemployed registered at the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice/AMS) had fallen by 6.6% compared to the previous year. Hence (besides the 51,985 workers attending AMS training

courses) there are 184,810 registered job seekers. According to Eurostat, unemployment at the end of April was 4.1 %, up from 4.2 % in March. The main reason for the renewed decline in unemployment is the high level of activity in the construction sector and in industry, Bartenstein explained. ■

EU Reaches Agreement on a Reform of the Energy Market - Success for Austria

After tough negotiations the EU energy ministers reached agreement on the key elements of the legislative proposals to open up gas and electricity markets at their meeting in Luxembourg on 6 June. At the same time, Austria, Germany and France prevailed over Brussels and other advocates of increased competition who had hoped to lower prices by breaking up utilities. Under the new agreement, gas and electricity companies will be allowed to keep their distribution networks. However, strict conditions will be imposed. There are to be changes not only to ensure a strict personnel and structural separation of the network provider companies under the umbrella of their respective parent company, but also a strengthening of the regulatory authority (in the Austrian case, 'E-Controll'). The Industry Committee of the European Parliament still has to give the agreement the green light. ■

OeNB Generates Substantial Profit in 2007

The Austrian National Bank (OeNB) reported higher profits in 2007 than in 2006. On 27 May, at his final General Meeting before retirement, OeNB Governor Klaus Liebscher announced an operating profit of EUR 247 million, an increase of well over 25% compared with the previous year (EUR 193 million). The Federal Government will receive EUR 211 million; in 2006 the figure was EUR 178 million. ■

voestalpine 2007/08 Posts Fourth Record Result in a Row

The listed steel-making group voestalpine has increased both revenues and profit in the financial year 2007/08 (as per 31 March). Operating profit rose significantly for the sixth year in a row, the group announced on 5 June. Operating income rose by 14 % to EUR 1.153 (1.011) billion. Revenue grew by 50.9 % to EUR 10.481 billion. ■

The global economy will grow by an average of 4.1 % p.a. until 2012.

At 2.3 % economic growth in Austria will remain above the eurozone average.

Minister of Economic Affairs Bartenstein on the EU energy compromise: "This is a rejection of the arbitrary breaking up of the European energy groups and I see that as a clear advantage."

Eisenstadt: Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer Strikes Opening Note for the Haydn Year 2009

2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the death of the founder of the First Vienna School, Joseph Haydn (1732-1809). Austria will commemorate this great musician with countless events celebrating his life and extraordinary works, which include 107 symphonies, 24 operas, 14 masses and oratorios such as "Die Schöpfung". Haydn left behind a total of 1,200 works. He is regarded as the "father" of the classical symphony and the string quartet as well as an innovator in the composition of piano sonatas. Together with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, Joseph Haydn is one of the great masters of the Viennese Classical style. Most of the anniversary events will be held in Vienna and Burgenland, which played key roles in his life's work. At a press conference in Eisenstadt the Federal Chancellor announced that the Government would provide Burgenland with EUR 2 million to support activities in the Haydn Year 2009 with the aim of positioning Burgenland more strongly in international cultural tourism. The Haydn Year offered a great opportunity to establish an economically sustainable cultural tourist industry and create additional employment in the region, the Chancellor said. The exceptional programme would surely attract greater numbers of tourists and music lovers from abroad, tapping new target groups and promising markets. Moreover, the year also offered an opportunity to deepen cooperation with the neighbouring regions and Hungary, he added.

In terms of cultural policy, he said, there was a wish to do more to "showcase" Haydn as one of the most important composers of the Viennese Classical style who had an "incredibly wide repertoire and a purism that is otherwise only rarely found". Gusenbauer said that Haydn was "one of the greatest revolutionaries in the history of music." He developed the symphony from the concerti grossi and composed the first virtuoso trumpet concerto, and without him there would perhaps be no classical piano sonatas today. "Haydn's music is an incredible combination of subtle refinement and pure simplicity which speaks to the soul of the listener," Gusenbauer said. ■

Haydn Year: "My Language is Understood Throughout the World"

One of the humorous and cheerful composer's most famous sayings: "My language is understood throughout the world," is providing the motto for the complete programme of the Haydn Year 2009. The highlights of the year were presented on 29 May at the Haydn House in Vienna. The celebrations will start and finish with performances conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt. In between, the "events surrounding Haydn's extensive oeuvre will extend over the year like islands," said the artistic director Wolfgang Reicher.

The Haydn Year will open in Burgenland on Haydn's birthday (31 March) at the Esterházy Palace, where the Concentus Musicus conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt will perform four Haydn symphonies. During the course of the year, all 107 of Haydn's symphonies will be performed in Eisenstadt. Numerous other concerts with differing areas of emphasis (including Haydn's sacred works, 100&7 Haydn symphonies) will be performed over the year.

Vienna will open the OsterKlang Festival on 4 April 2009 with Haydn's oratorio "Die sieben letzten Worte", performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Riccardo Muti. The Haydn Year will end on 7 December in the Theater an der Wien with a performance of the opera "Il mondo della luna" conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt and directed by Tobias Moretti. ■

Oskar Kokoschka Exhibition at the Lentos Museum of Modern Art in Linz

After two exhibitions in Vienna (Belvedere and Albertina) works by Oskar Kokoschka are now on display at the Lentos Museum of Modern Art in Linz. The extensive show traces Kokoschka's personal contacts to Linz, where his first exhibition after World War II in Austria was shown in 1951. "A Vagabond in Linz. Wild, Denigrated, Celebrated" will run until 5 October. The exhibition was organised in cooperation with the Belvedere and provides an overview of more than sixty years of the most important Austrian expressionist's creative production. Some of the works on loan have been lent by the Tate Gallery or the Kunsthaus Zürich. Exhibits include early works from the artist's Dresden period and the years he spent travelling, as well as from his time in exile in Britain. ■

Haydn Year 2009:
For further information, including concert programmes, exhibitions and ticket services:

www.haydn2009.at

www.haydnfestival.at

www.burgenland.at/termine/festspiele

www.wien.info

www.austria.info/haydn2009

"Oskar Kokoschka – A Vagabond in Linz. Wild, Denigrated, Celebrated".
Lentos Museum of Modern Art in Linz.
Until 5 October
<http://www.lentos.at>

A "Summer Night's Concert at Schönbrunn" with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

On 3 June the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra gave the fifth of their much acclaimed open air concerts in the unique baroque setting of the gardens of Schönbrunn Palace. Despite rain, approximately 60,000 visitors came to enjoy an exceptional summer night's feast for the ears against a magnificent backdrop and with free admission. Under the brilliant and subtle direction of star French conductor Georges Pretre (83), the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra once again gave a superb performance. The programme offered a successful mixture of light-hearted Viennese charm and French esprit, encompassing works by composers such as Johann Strauß ("Wiener Blut"), Richard Strauss ("Rosenkavalier Suite"), Jacques Offenbach ("Barcarole"), Emmanuel Chabrier ("España") and Maurice Ravel ("La Valse").

This year, the open air spectacle also had a new name: The "Concert for Europe" (held for the first time in 2004) has now been renamed "Summer Night's Concert at Schönbrunn." The event is organised by the Philharmonic Orchestra itself. The event was broadcast live by the Austrian Broadcasting Company (ORF). ■

EURO 2008: Cultural "Donauwellen" in celebration of football

The Austrian Parliament and the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs invited two-time Biennale participant Waltraut Cooper to project light installations onto their two buildings during the European Football Championships. Since the opening whistle was blown for the European Championships, her "Donauwellen" have flowed across the façade of parliament like a waterfall, just as they did when Linz was presented as the Cultural Capital Linz09. The waves symbolise international understanding.

A light installation with the words EURO 2008 in the blue of the European Union and complemented by a green light symbolising the "green continent" of Europe has been mounted on the glass bridge connecting the two buildings of the foreign ministry (Herrengasse 11 and 13). The upward movement of the letters expressing optimism is intended to communicate the unifying force of this international sports event. ■

"Pulse of the City" – Wien Museum Pays Tribute to Karlsplatz

"Karlsplatz is not a square, but an area." This legendary quote is attributed to Otto Wagner and is arguably correct even today. The fact that Karlsplatz (surface area: approx. 45,000 m²) has no clear boundaries and is for ever changing, presents an opportunity for a historical reflection. As one of the institutions abutting the square, the Wien Museum is now devoting one of its most extensive exhibitions in recent years to it. However, the show "Pulse of the City – 2000 Year History of Karlsplatz" not only stands for its genesis, it also provides a sweeping panorama of the city's history.

According to Wolfgang Kos, the director of the Wien Museum, there are "a lot more Karlsplätze than one might think." This was even true in the recent past. Only a few years ago a notorious location for drug trafficking and a traffic nightmare, Karlsplatz (which has only borne this name for approximately 100 years), is now, following rebuilding work and landscaping measures, increasingly becoming more of a leisure area. Restricted zones have helped displace the drugs scene in the Karlsplatz subway.

In twelve snapshots, the exhibition shows the various changes the square has undergone: mainly flood meadows before human settlement, during the Roman period a traffic junction at the crossroads of two highways, in the late Middle Ages the site of what were then the two largest hospitals in Vienna. During the first Turkish siege of Vienna (1529) a theatre of war, Karlsplatz then became part of the protective zone between the city and the suburbs (the "Glacis" belt of bastions) for the next 300 years. This was followed by intensive construction work: The baroque Karlskirche was followed by 19th century monuments such as the Musikverein or the Lutheran School and the vaulting in of the Wien River around 1900. In the 1970s, the square became the "largest construction site in Europe" when the underground railway was built.

The show features exhibits from the last 2000 years. An impressive animated film visualises the square's previous appearances. A crane in front of the museum also offers a live experience of a very special kind, taking visitors up 35 metres in a small gondola. The exhibition is curated by Elke Doppler and Christian Rapp. ■

"Pulse of the City – 2000 Year History of Karlsplatz". Wien Museum Karlsplatz. Until 26 October

Catalogue: Czernin Verlag, 530 pages, 34 euros.
<http://www.wien-museum.at>

Art in Exile: Jewish Museum shows "Moderne auf der Flucht"

With the exhibition "Moderne auf der Flucht. Österreichische KünstlerInnen in Frankreich 1938-1945" curator Andrea Winkelbauer has succeeded in putting together an excellently researched exhibition at the Jewish Museum Vienna, which once again shows the enormous artistic void left by the expulsion or emigration of the mainly Jewish representatives of Viennese Modernity. Sensitively portrayed biographies bring back to life a number of artists who have been forgotten. Thus largely unknown treasures by John H. Popper, Lilly Reich and Kurt Husnik are found next to such well-known names as Wolfgang Paalen, Dora Kallmus and Josef Floch.

In three acts – prologue, drama, and epilogue – the exhibition "Moderne auf der Flucht/Les modernes s'enfuient" describes the paths of Austrian artists and their fates in France as well as their relationship to the artistic scene there and the influence of this French exile on their artistic work. The exhibition runs until 7 September. ■

Wiener Festwochen: Alfred Brendel's Final Piano Recital

Alfred Brendel (77) gave his final solo recital in Vienna on 4 June at the Wiener Festwochen. The legendary Austrian pianist once again delivered a brilliant performance of works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein. On 18 December he will give his final performance with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra with a piano concerto by Mozart. ■

Tate Liverpool Stages First Major Klimt Exhibition in the UK

As part of the European Capital of Culture 2008 celebrations, the Tate Gallery Liverpool is presenting the first comprehensive exhibition of Gustav Klimt's work and Viennese Modernity ever staged in the UK: "Gustav Klimt: Painting, Design & Modern Life in Vienna 1900" will run until 31 August.

The exhibition not only shows the life and work of the painter, it also explores his role as the founder and president of the Viennese Secession. Institutions which have contributed to the show by lending more than 24 paintings and drawings

by Klimt include the Belvedere (reconstruction of the Beethoven Frieze in the Secession and the painting "Adam und Eva"), the Wien Museum ("Portrait of a Lady–Frau Heymann"), the National Gallery in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The more than 200 exhibits also include furniture and other items designed by Josef Hoffmann, one of the founders of the Wiener Werkstätte. ■

Bregenz Festival with Giacomo Puccini and Ernst Krenek

The theme "Power and Music" runs like a red thread through this year's Bregenz Festival, artistic director David Pountney announced at a press conference in Vienna on 5 June. As well as a revival of the successful production of Tosca on the floating stage which will open the Festival on 23 July, the Festival will also feature guest performances by the Theater in der Josefstadt ("Die Buddenbrooks") and the Thalia Theater from Hamburg. Tribute is also paid to the Austrian composer Ernst Krenek: His opera "Karl V" is to have its premiere on 24 July in the Festival Theatre. ■

Film: "Auf der Suche nach dem Gedächtnis" – Eric Kandel in Vienna

Petra Seeger's documentary "Auf der Suche nach dem Gedächtnis" (In Search of Memory) portrays the life and work of the neuro-biologist and winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine, Eric Kandel (78), who was forced to emigrate from Vienna. The film shows Kandel's work as a parable between "practical" memory and those studies with which he explained the most important functions of the brain. The world premiere in Vienna on 26 May was attended by the neuroscientist himself and the Federal President Heinz Fischer. ■

"Long Night of Churches"

The fourth "Long Night of Churches" event took place on 30 May, and for the first time included all Austrian regions and all 14 Christian denominations which are represented on the Ecumenical Council. The event focused on the Commemorative Year 2008 (annexation of Austria) and the EURO. The programme included exhibitions, organ concerts and light installations. ■

"Moderne auf der Flucht – Österreichische KünstlerInnen in Frankreich 1938-1945". Jewish Museum, Palais Eskeles, Dorotheergasse 11.

Until 7 September
<http://www.jmw.at>

Bregenz Festival 2008:

www.bregenzer-festspiele.com

"Gustav Klimt: Painting, Design & Modern Life in Vienna 1900". Tate Gallery Liverpool.

Until 31 August.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool>

EURO 2008 kicks-off in Basel

The 13 European Football Championship kicked off on Saturday evening, 7 June, with a 13-minute opening ceremony in the St. Jakob Park in Basel. The show, during which 976 performers and artists from 13 nations transformed the stadium into Lake Constance, alpine meadows and ski pistes, was played out immediately before the whistle blew for the EURO 2008 opening match between co-host Switzerland and the Czech Republic in Group A. The opening match was attended by Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, National Council President Barbara Prammer, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik and Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka. The big day in Austria finally arrived on 8 June. In Vienna some 150,000 fans celebrated the biggest football festival the city has ever seen. More than 50,000 fans in the stadium, approximately 100,000 in the fan zones and the public viewing areas cheered on their successful football team or kept their fingers crossed for the Austrians who unfortunately lost to Croatia by 1:0. The event passed off largely without incident. In Klagenfurt (Germany – Poland 2:0), however, violence broke out among fans. Police officers from Austria and Germany arrested 140 fans in the city centre for fighting, minor offences and for suspected criminal offences. The police estimate that on the first day of the European Championship there were a total of 270,000 cheering fans throughout Austria. To date, there have been 206 arrests. ■

World Cup 2010 in South Africa: Success with Expertise from Austria

The FIFA World Cup 2010 is looking for success with expertise from Austria. On 28 May, 11 days before the start of the EURO 2008, Secretary of State for Sport Reinhold Lopatka met with the organisers of the FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa. The political head of the World Cup organising committee, Essop Pahad, showed a strong interest in and also praised the preparations for the European Championship in Austria and Switzerland. During the EURO a South Africa day with top South African footballers will be held on 24 June 2008. A 60-strong delegation of the South African World Cup organising committee will travel to Austria

in order to learn from the EURO 2008 in the areas of security, traffic management and organisation. While Austria is still fired up for the EURO, Austrian companies are already guaranteed a place at the 2010 World Cup Final in South Africa. Rieder & Valenta are supplying the wood panelling for the outer skin of the biggest World Cup stadium “Soccer City” in Soweto/Johannesburg, which can seat 94,000 fans, while the Felbermayr group are already at work with their special cranes. ■

Schladming to Host the Alpine World Ski Championships 2013

On 29 May, the 46 Congress of the International Ski Federation (FIS) in Cape Town, South Africa, voted to award the Alpine Ski World Championships in 2013 to Schladming. Schladming was the clear winner in the first round of voting with ten votes, defeating three rivals Beaver Creek/Vail, St. Moritz and Cortina d'Ampezzo.

In the past the Styrian skiing capital had lost bids to host the World Championships in 2009 to Val d'Isere and in 2011 to Garmisch-Partenkirchen. This will be the second time that Schladming has been the venue for an Alpine Ski World Championship, the first time being in 1982. It will also be the 9 Alpine Ski World Championships to be held in Austria (including the Olympic Games in 1964 and 1976 in Innsbruck), the most recent of which was held in 2001 in St. Anton. Schladming is well-known for its “Night Race”, which draws up to 50,000 visitors each year. Now the town has been awarded the Ski World Championships 2013 work must start as quickly as possible on making the necessary preparations. First of all, it will be clarified which infrastructure projects are needed for the Championships. A working group comprising representatives of the town, region and federal government will take up work in the next few weeks. ■

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