

News from Austria

No. 13/08

HOME AFFAIRS | EUROPE

Change in SPÖ leadership

EUROPE | INTERNATIONAL

EU summit: Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer in Brussels

ECONOMY

Continuing boom of company start-ups in Austria

CULTURE | MEDIA | SCIENCE

Büchner Prize goes to Josef Winkler

SPORTS POLICY

EURO: Austria is the European champion ...

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

Change in SPÖ leadership

According to the decision of the party's executive committee of 16 June 2008, the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) will receive a new leadership. Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer was replaced as party chairman by Minister of Infrastructure Werner Faymann (48). Faymann has been appointed "acting" SPÖ chairman and will be elected as regular party chief at the party congress on 9/10 October 2008. Gusenbauer continues to hold the Chancellor's office. Ex-Minister for Women's Affairs Doris Bures becomes the new federal whip, succeeding to Josef Kalina and Reinhard Winterauer.

On 23 June 2008 Chancellor Gusenbauer announced that Secretary of State Heidrun Silhavy (52) would become the new Women's Minister. Silhavy has been responsible for administrative reform, e-government and regional policy in the Chancellery. This function will be taken over by the SPÖ's previous foreign affairs spokesman in Parliament Andreas Schieder (39). The competence for the public civil service is transferred from the Ministry for Women's Affairs to the Secretariat of State.

Some days after the SPÖ restructuring, the Chancellor stressed that despite the change in the party leadership "nothing had changed" with regard to the government's work. Acting SPÖ chief Faymann also emphasised his firm commitment to the government agreement but pointed out that he "was not afraid of new elections". One of the issues arousing controversy has been the "dynamic pension adjustment" (as from 2010). As a response to higher life expectancy (6 months) and lower income from insurance contributions, this system will – based on decrees – allow increases of the standard retirement age and pension contributions, while reducing pension benefits and pension adjustments. Unlike the coalition partner, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), the SPÖ demands a final political decision subject to the consent of the 183 MEPs in the plenary session of Parliament. ■

Heidrun Silhavy is new Women's Minister

Heidrun Silhavy is the new Minister for Women's Affairs, taking over from Doris Bures, who returned to the party headquarters as the

new federal whip of the SPÖ. As a Secretary of State in the Chancellery Silhavy has been in charge of the administrative reform (e.g. e-government), regional policy and the Bioethics Commission. Gender mainstreaming and barrier-free access were priorities of her e-government projects. Silhavy was born in Graz on 20 May 1956. Her professional career took her from the Chamber of Labour (AK) of Styria (Chamber Councillor and executive board member) to the Styrian branch of the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB) (e.g. Regional Women's Secretary). In 1994 Silhavy became the SPÖ social affairs spokeswoman in Parliament in Vienna. In 2007 she moved on to the Chancellery. As the Minister for Women's Affairs, Silhavy will be responsible for women and media. She takes with her the competence for e-government from the Secretariat of State. ■

Bures drew favourable conclusion

The new federal whip of the SPÖ and parting Women's Minister Doris Bures drew a favourable conclusion about her one-and-a-half-year term of office. "I enjoyed it a lot", she explained to journalists on 19 June 2008. She had "accomplished a few things" for women, e.g. flexible childcare allowance with a short-time option, a 60% increase in the budget for the combat against domestic violence or the creation of 6,000 new childcare facilities per year. ■

Elections in Tyrol: coalition talks between ÖVP and SPÖ started

The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) started collation talks to form a new regional government in Innsbruck on 19 June 2008. The previous government partners hold 21 out of 36 seats and faced severe losses in the regional elections on 8 June 2008. The constituent session of the regional parliament will take place on 1 July 2008. ■

Passports with fingerprints in 2009

The new Passport Act was presented in the Council of Ministers on 11 June 2008. New passports issued as from summer 2009 will show two fingerprints. The new law is to be adopted by the National Council in autumn. ■

Doris Bures: "As a Minister for Women's Affairs, I have set myself three goals from the very beginning: to improve the reconciliation of working and family lives, to strengthen women in the labour market and to combat violence against women."

EU summit: Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer in Brussels

The summit meeting of the EU heads of state and government in Brussels on 19/20 June was under the impact of Ireland's rejection of the EU Reform Treaty. Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik.

Decisions regarding the Ireland crisis were postponed, and possible solutions will be discussed at the next summit in October. However, at the same time a commitment was made to the continuation of the ratification process. Chancellor Gusenbauer also explicitly excluded renegotiation of the Lisbon Treaty. The Chancellor referred to an "extremely difficult compromise", renegotiation would "be futile". 18 of the 27 EU Member States, most recently Great Britain, had ratified the Treaty. The Chancellor warned against exerting pressure on Ireland.

The dispute about further enlargement of the EU was stirred up again. While France, Germany and Luxembourg called for an EU enlargement stop in the wake of the Irish 'no' ("no enlargement without Reform Treaty"), Austria advocated that the enlargement process should be continued, especially in the interest of the Western Balkan states.

No consensus was reached on suitable measures against the high fuel and food prices. France insisted on value-added tax reductions for petrol products, Gusenbauer pled for a European tax on speculative profits.

A decision was, however, made on Slovakia. The country may join the euro-zone (with now 16 members) on 1 January 2009. The formal decision is to be taken at the EU Council of Ministers on 8 July 2008. The green light was also given for a future Mediterranean Union and plans of an "Eastern Partnership" with the neighbouring countries in Eastern and South Eastern Europe. ■

Vienna: international donor conference for Palestinian camp

On 23 June 2008 an international donor conference for a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon takes place at Vienna's Hofburg. The meeting is to contribute to the reconstruction of

the Palestinian refugee camp Nar el-Bared (near Tripoli) in northern Lebanon, which was destroyed almost completely in fights between Lebanese government troops and the radical organisation Fatah al-Islam in summer 2007. More than 30,000 refugees have been affected.

Among the attendees are Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. Both are received for talks by Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer. Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, EU Commissioner for External Relations Ferrero-Waldner as well as Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) Karen Koning AbuZayd are also expected.

The conference in Vienna takes place upon request of the Lebanese government, which will present a reconstruction plan. With this initiative Austria wants to make a "concrete contribution" to improving the situation in the Middle East, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik explained in the preliminaries of the conference. ■

EURO 2008: politics and games

High-ranking fan support for spectacular football art – the ongoing European Football Championship is not only an arena for the ultimate battle for the victory and the cup but also a platform for football-enthusiastic prominent politicians visiting Austria these days.

The Spanish football team received royal support in the EURO quarter-finals against world champion Italy (4:2 in the penalty shoot-out). King Juan Carlos I. and Queen Sofia attended the match at Vienna's Ernst Happel stadium in the company of Federal President Heinz Fischer.

The quarter-finals match Turkey - Croatia (3:1, in the penalty shoot-out) taking place in the same stadium on 20 June 2008 was also honoured with the presence of political eminences: Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Before the match, Erdogan had held talks with Gusenbauer and Fischer. On the sidelines of the EURO match Sweden-Russia (1:2) in Innsbruck on 18 June 2008, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and Gusenbauer discussed Ireland's rejection of the EU Reform Treaty. Both pled for respecting the Irish vote, while continuing the ratification process. ■

All about EURO 2008:

www.em-08.info

Continuing boom of company start-ups in Austria

“Company start-ups are booming in Austria, WKÖ President Christoph Leitl emphasised on the Start-up Day organised by the Economic Chamber Austria (WKÖ), the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Austria Wirtschaftsservice (AWS) on 16 June 2008. In 2007 more than 30,500 young entrepreneurs had ventured into self-employment, founding their own companies. This confirms the trend of the past three years with annually about 30,000 start-ups. 70% of them were still active after one year. Hence, we significantly exceed the EU average of 50%“, Leitl was pleased to inform.

Minister for Economics and Labour Martin Bartenstein highlighted an OECD study, stating that Austria recorded a plus of 20% of self-employed people between 2000 and 2005; this is the highest growth rate of the 30 OECD states. A major increase was registered especially in companies run by one person, i.e. sole proprietorships. The Minister announced to improve social security schemes for the self-employed. In the framework of the tax reform, the tax privilege for one sixth of the income (13th and 14th monthly salary) could be strengthened also for entrepreneurs.

Trade, small business and consulting firms accounted each for 30% of the start-ups, while tourism contributed 10%. 40% of the new companies are owned by women. To motivate young entrepreneurs, WKÖ boss Leitl called for a “light“ version of the limited liability company, with a minimum stock capital of 10,000 euros and an investment allowance of 50,000 euros.

To make more risk capital available, AWS, a bank specialised in financing start-ups, plans to launch a “Venture Capital Initiative“ in 2009. The Republic of Austria is to acquire a minority interest in the risk capital fund for seed money. ■

Upward adjustment of IMF forecast

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) revised its growth forecast for Austria for 2008 from 1.9% to 2.1%, without adjusting the 1.7% growth predicted for 2009. The “sound“ domestic economic policy was praised in the latest IMF report on Austria, stressing also the structural reforms, moderate wages and thriving exports. ■

Global demand for environmental technology from Austria

“Ecological objectives and economic development are not contradictory“, Minister for the Environment Josef Pröll and WKÖ President Christoph Leitl explained at a press conference on 18 June 2008. Therefore, the common goal was to make Austria the European champ in environmental technology. The newly founded competence centre – Austrian Clean Technology (ACT) – is to serve as a hub and point of contact for domestic companies, institutions and interest groups active in the sector of environmental technology.

Great international demand for environmental technology from Austria is registered already now. “Energy and environmental technology are among the industries with the fastest growth“, Pröll stressed. The annual growth amounted to about 7.7%, exports grew by roughly 9%.

By 2020 the share of environmental technologies in the GDP is to climb from 4% to 8%; the number of employees in this sector is likely to increase from currently 17,200 to 40,000. The sales of this industry are expected to rise from 3.8 billion to 8 billion euros. ■

Expo 2008 in Saragossa: water technologies “made in Austria“

More than 100 participating nations, an investment volume of 6 billion euros and 6 million expected visitors – this are the key figures of the EXPO 2008, which opened in Saragossa (Spain) on 14 June 2008. The theme of the world exposition (ending on 14 September 2008) is “Water and Sustainable Development“. Under the motto “Pura Austria“ (Clean Austria), Austria concentrates on environmental technologies and water industry. About 400,000 visitors are expected in the Austrian pavilion (512 m²). Austria’s participation is financed and coordinated by the Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Economic Chamber Austria (WKÖ). The Austrian Tourist Board (ÖW) acts as an ambassador for tourism. At present about 60 domestic water companies are active in Spain. EXPO is to lead to an intensification of business contacts. On 19 July 2008 EXPO will focus on Austria. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra will inter alia perform at the Austrian pavilion. ■

In 2007 more than 30,500 young entrepreneurs started up their own companies.

For more details about the Start-up Day see:

www.bmwa.gv.at

www.wko.at

www.awsg.at

In Austria the environmental technology sector is growing annually by about 7.7%, exports rise by approximately 9% per year. The number of employed is expected to increase from currently 17,200 to 40,000 by 2020.

EXPO 2008/Pura Austria see: www.expoaustria.at

Büchner Prize goes to Josef Winkler

On 1 November 2008 author Josef Winkler – born in Kamering (Carinthia) in 1953 and living in Klagenfurt – will receive the Georg Büchner Prize, the most prestigious award for German-language literature granted by the German Academy for Language and Poetry. Since 1951 it has been awarded annually in Darmstadt. Among the Austrian prize winners were Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard, H. C. Artmann, Elfriede Jelinek and Friederike Mayröcker.

The jury explained that it selected Winkler for he had “reacted to the disasters of his Catholic village childhood with books characterised by a unique obsessive urge“. And the jury added another reason: “What Winkler has again and again complained about in a Baroque-expressive language since his first novel “Menschenkind” (1979) is at the same time the productive element of a love-hate relationship, in which blasphemy and piety, longing for death and fear of death are fused into a moving farewell song to a world coming to its end“.

The son of farmers tried different jobs but finally “came to the Suhrkamp publishing house practically directly from the dunghill“. Martin Walser stood up for the author of “Menschenkind“ with Siegfried Unseld. In his subsequent books “Der Ackermann aus Kärnten“ and “Muttersprache“ (as a trilogy referred to as “Das wilde Kärnten“) – Winkler succeeded in creating a profound literary analysis of his childhood horrors still haunting his most recent book “Roppongi. Requiem für einen Vater“.

In addition, the jury also hailed the novel “Der Leibeigene“ published in 1987 (English translation: “The Serf“) and the late novella “Natura morta“ (2001). In 1992 Winkler published his probably most beautiful book “Das Zöglingsheft des Jean Genet“ (“Flowers for Jean Genet“). The book is the result of his study of his French colleague over decades, outshining the analytical profundity and linguistic beauty of Sartre’s work about Genet.

Winkler’s Austrian colleagues are highly pleased about the recent decision of the jury from Darmstadt. Nobel Prize laureate in literature Elfriede Jelinek: “I do not know anyone more suitable“. Elfriede Mayröcker congratulated “her brother in poetry from the bottom of her heart“. ■

Prize Acknowledging Literary Achievements of Michael Köhlmeier

Author Michael Köhlmeier – born in Hard (Vorarlberg) in 1949 – was awarded the Prize Acknowledging Literary Achievements by Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied on 13 June 2008. The award ceremony took place at the Palais of Lower Austria in Herrengasse (Vienna). The presentation speech was held by rock-poet Reinhold Bilgeri from Vorarlberg.

Michael Köhlmeier studied German language and literature as well as political science in Marburg, mathematics and philosophy in Gießen and Frankfurt am Main. He authored numerous novels, essays, radio plays and songs. Among the many prizes he received are the Manès Sperber Prize for Literature. In 2007 he was granted the Golden Badge of Honour for Meritorious Service of Vienna. Köhlmeier won high acclaim as a narrative writer of antique legends (“Telemach“, “Kalypso“) and Bible stories (“Moses“) as well as with his epoch-making novel “Abendland“ (2007), one of the sensations of the latest Frankfurt Book Fair: At the age of 95 Carl Jacob Candoris – a mathematician, cosmopolitan, dandy and jazz fan – wants to take stock of his life. He asks writer Sebastian Lukasser, son of the guitarist Georg Lukasser, whom Candoris met in the jazz bars in Vienna in the after-war period, to write down his memories. Candoris tells the story of his grandfather running a legendary grocer’s shop in Vienna, of his peculiar relatives with whom he lived during his studies in Göttingen and who introduced him to eminences of the natural sciences; last but not least it is a story about after-war Vienna, where Sebastian’s story begins, and a story about self-discovery covering the second half of the century. Mirrored in two very different families, a wise, exuberant, witty and vibrant multi-generational novel is created. It does not only stand out for its brilliant language but also reflects the important historical events of the 20th century. The Prize Acknowledging Literary Achievements has been awarded annually since 1972 for the literary oeuvre of an Austrian author. Previous prize winners are Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch, Heimrad Bäcker, Reinhard Peter Gruber, Inge Merkel, Dominik Steiger, Christoph Ransmayr, Florjan Lipuš and Christoph Wilhelm Aigner. ■

Recommendable books by Michael Köhlmeier:

“Das große Sagenbuch des klassischen Altertums“. Piper. Munich 1999. ISBN 3-492-04169-8

“Abendland“. Hanser. Munich 2007. ISBN 978-3-446-20913-8

Recommendable books by Josef Winkler:

“Natura morta. Eine römische Novelle“. suhrkamp taschenbuch 3575. ISBN 3-518-45575-3

“Das Zöglingsheft des Jean Genet“. suhrkamp taschenbuch 2320. ISBN 978-3-518-38820-4 (English translation: “Flowers for Jean Genet“)

Memorial tablet for Matthias Sindelar in Vienna's city centre

Austria's young and eager team did not make it beyond the first round of EURO 2008 after suffering a narrow defeat by Germany.

The weakish performance of Austrian forwards lends even more weight to the myth of Sindelar, nicknamed "paper man". On 19 June 2008 a memorial tablet in honour of the team captain and centre-forward of Austria's legendary "Wunderteam" ("miracle team") of the 1930s, Matthias Sindelar, was unveiled in Annagasse (Vienna). The memorial tablet was funded by the football club "Austria Wien", whose leading officials participated in the ceremony. Among the attendees were Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl, chairman of the club's executive board, as well as Vienna's Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny.

Matthias Sindelar, Austria's most legendary football player, was born in Kozlau near Iglau in Moravia (today Kzlov near Jihlava, Czech Republic) in 1903. After his family moved to Vienna and the death of his father in WWI, Sindelar grew up in modest circumstances in Vienna's 10th district (Favoriten). He acquired the fundamentals of his football art in a "Gstett" (meaning "ungroomed meadow" in Viennese dialect) of this industrial area, where the "Ziegl-Behm-Buam" (immigrant boys whose fathers worked in brickworks) chased after a "Fetzenlaberl" (a ball made of fabric scrapes). With an incalculable dribbling technique, little "Motzl", as he was nicknamed, had his surprised fellow players run into the void. This talent did not remain undiscovered. His football career took him to the club "Austria Wien". After a risky meniscus operation, he further developed his famous "bodiless" technique, earning international fame as the centre of the miracle team. After May 1931, the Austrians defeated all world-class teams in twelve matches, often scoring runaway victories like the 5:0 win over Germany (1931) or the 8:2 win over Hungary (1932). Austria suffered a narrow defeat (3:4) in December 1932 in a legendary match against England at London's Stamford Bridge. Nevertheless, even decades later Belgian referee John Langenus enthusiastically praised the Viennese dream dancer's solo run of unparalleled elegance across half the pitch, including a goal.

The Nazis would have liked to see the "Ostmark" (NS name for Austria) lose the "annexation match" in Vienna's Prater stadium on 3 April 1938. But the Austrians won effortlessly, once more thanks to a goal by Sindelar. He managed to avoid inclusion in the "overall German" team, certainly also for political reasons, as the records of then "trainer of the Reich" Sepp Herberger prove. After the end of his career, Sindelar bought an Aryanised café in Laxenburger Straße – a problematic issue in his biography. On 23 January 1939 he was found dead in a flat in Annagasse 3 together with his Italian girlfriend Camilla Castagnola, who was also of Jewish origin. A defective chimney has always been given as the official cause of their death – but to the present day many believe that it was suicide. In his US exile the Jewish-Viennese author Friedrich Torberg wrote his famous sports poem "Ballade on the Death of a Footballer", suggesting that Sindelar had faced a dead-end situation due to political circumstances. The poem made a major contribution to the myth around the hollow-cheeked, blond, charismatic and exceptional player. ■

20 years of Jura Soyfer Society

Jura Soyfer was born in Kharkov (Ukraine) in 1912 and died in the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1939. He is one of Austria's most important political writers and one of the few whose work was translated into more than 30 languages. In 1921 the family fled from the Bolshevik revolution to Austria. Jura Soyfer passed his school-leaving exam in Vienna. He became a member of the "Association of Socialist Grammar School Students" in 1927 and later joined the "Political Cabaret" of the Social Democrats. In 1931 he started writing political articles, e.g. for "Arbeiter-Zeitung". His goal was not mere entertainment but political drama in the style of the epic theatre of Bert Brecht. After the civil-war-like turmoil in February 1934, Soyfer turned his back to the Austrian Social Democracy, whose policy he considered one of the causes of the defeat. He became a member of the illegal Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ) and started working on his novel "Thus Died a Party". In 1935 he was introduced by Hans Weigel to Leon Askin (Leo Aschkenasy), who worked as an actor-director at the "ABC"

Sepp Herberger was impressed by Matthias Sindelar's attitude. See: "Jürgen Leinemann. Sepp Herberger. Ein Leben, eine Legende." Rowohlt: Berlin 1997, S.162. ISBN 3 87134 285 8

in his "Ballade on the Death of a Footballer" Friedrich Torberg: described Sindelar: "He played football like no other, he was strong, full of wit and fantasy. His kicking style was easy-going, light and serene. He played but never fought".

Thanks to Matthias Sindelar, Austria won the European Cup (the equivalent of today's European Championship) in 1932, before Italy and Hungary.

In the framework of the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Jury Soyfer Society at Volkshochschule Brigittenau, Raffaelgasse 11, 1200 Vienna, the volume "Die Lebendigkeit Jura Soyfers" (edited by Herbert Arit) is presented, with high-calibre international contributions, e.g. by Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl.

www.soyfer.at

theatre, where most of Soyfer's plays (five in total) have been performed. Today "Journey to Paradise", "Astoria" and "Vineta" enjoy the status of classics.

In 1937 Soyfer was arrested as he was confused with a leading Communist party functionary. After being released for a short time, he soon again got caught up in a machinery from which there was no escape. On 13 March 1938 – one day after the annexation of Austria to Hitler Germany – he was arrested in Gargellen (Vorarlberg) when he tried to flee by skiing to the safe Switzerland. In June 1938 he was transported to the Dachau concentration camp. In autumn he was transferred to Buchenwald, where he died from typhus in February 1939. Together with composer Herbert Zipper, he wrote one of his most famous works in the concentration camp – the "Dachau song".

A collection of Soyfer's plays was published only in 1974. In the GDR, for example, they were performed as works of timeless social criticism, disregarding their context.

In 1988 the Jura Soyfer Society was founded in Vienna, among others, by the editor-in-chief of "Sozialistische Korrespondenz" and later staff member of the Federal Press Service, Hans Vašek. Even if the activities of the Soyfer Society, which also take place in cooperation with the Documentary Archives of the Austrian Resistance, focus on remembrance and commemoration, its present work is determined by the lively confrontation with Soyfers biography, his body of work and the documentation of its international reception. Today the Jura Soyfer Society has members in more than 40 countries. It reaches a several-million audience in about 100 countries. On 30 June 2008 the Society will celebrate its 20th anniversary. Festive speeches will be given by Minister of Social Affairs Erwin Buchinger and Vienna's Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny. ■

MAK: Julian Opie. Recent Works

The Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) presents a great solo exhibition of British artist Julian Opie (ending on 21 September 2008). Consisting in three sections – "portraits", "nudes" and "landscapes", the show at MAK gathers new works of the artist, some of which have not been put before the public previously. Julian Opie,

born in London in 1958, is one of the internationally most famed contemporary artists. He searches for a constantly changing idiom by resorting to minimalism. His overall objective – to overcome classical forms and genres – has resulted in the artistic intention of separating the image from its medium and then have it resurrect as a wall painting, sculpture, light case, video film, vinyl picture or C-print. His portraits are fascinating, e.g. "Monique, businesswoman – housewife" (2004). The impressive face is depicted without lashes, eyebrows or any adornment and consists merely in a few lines. Nevertheless, it can immediately be recognised as by Julian Opie. His portrait of the Brit pop band "Blur" on their "Best of" album has also become famous. Opie's works of art are represented in many renowned international collections. ■

Chamber music at the Castle of Laudon: music from Theresienstadt

From 11 to 17 August 2008 the aron quartet invites to a concert series of "great and partly very deliberately forgotten music" – as initiator university professor Peter Weinberger put it – at the moated Castle of Laudon in western Vienna. Chamber music by composers displaced or killed by the Nazi regime is performed in juxtaposition with classics of concert literature. Hanns Eisler, Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Wolfgang Amadè Mozart will usher in the festival. Finnish pianist Henri Sigfridsson also performs with the aron quartet. Under the title "America" (13 August 2008) the spotlight will be turned on Austrian composers who found a new home in Los Angeles. Music by Eric Zeisl and Korngold is played alongside with works by Arnold Schönberg and Antonin Dvořák. The highlight of the programme is an evening devoted to "Theresienstadt". Together with pianist Manfred Wagner-Artzt and tenor Alexander Kaimbacher, the aron quartet will present works by Viktor Ullmann, Hans Krasa, Gideon Klein and Pavel Haas, all of which were created in this concentration camp. The festival is concluded by the New Helsinki String Quartet with works by Dvořák, Leoš Janáček and Béla Bartók, who will also be performed at the closing matinee – together with Johannes Brahms und Joseph Haydn, whose 200th death anniversary will be commemorated in 2009. ■

Catalogue on the Julian Opie exhibition, ed. by Peter Noever, German/English, MAK Vienna/Hatje Cantz Ostfildern, 2008, 35 €. www.mak.at

"Chamber Music Festival at Laudon Castle", 11 to 17 August 2008. Laudon Castle, Mauerbachstraße 43, 1140 Vienna. Tickets per concert 35 €. Order from: www.wien-ticket.at or www.schlosslaudonfestival.at

The festival is under the aegis of Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer.

EURO: Austria is the European champion

...of hospitality! Before the forthcoming semi-finals, a total of about 2 million fans from Austria and above all from abroad have turned the whole country into a fan zone. In the stadiums, fan and public viewing zones they celebrate a unique and notably peaceful football party. On Sunday the number of visitors exceeded 750,000 in the fan zone in Vienna; the threshold of a total of one million visitors could be exceeded up to the final tournament on 29 June 2008. 2.4 million watched the duel Germany - Austria on TV. Never before did a football match have more TV viewers. Vienna, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck and Salzburg have proven to be absolutely respectable EURO hosts. These cities and their surrounding regions offered stadiums conforming to UEFA standards with all the required amenities and an exciting atmosphere, fan zones and optimally sized public viewing sections, excellent security and transport solutions, perfect tourist services and, last but not least, hospitality. ■

Fans with disabilities enthusiastic after visiting the stadiums

The federal government has done its utmost to ensure that the European Football Championship becomes a football party everybody can join in. As the four stadiums show, EURO 2008 sets new standards in barrier-free access. Based on the total stadium spaces, we have more places for wheelchair users at EURO than at the World Cup in Germany. Optimal conditions for wheelchair users were created even in Vienna's Ernst Happel stadium, whose basic structure dates back to 1931, by retrofitting with temporary facilities. In the "youngest" stadiums of the European Championship in Klagenfurt, Salzburg and Innsbruck, quality and convenience for wheelchair users were taken into account already in planning. After the first EURO matches in Austria, blind and visually impaired fans and wheelchair users gave a positive feedback. Barrier-free access had been a major concern already during the World Cup in Germany in 2006. There was an average of 70 spaces for fans in wheelchairs per match, in Austria the average per game is more than 80. Thus Austria over-

fulfils the high standards of the UEFA recommendations for barrier-free access of two spaces for people with disabilities per 1000 spectators in stadiums and fan zones. Besides, before each quarter final athletes with disabilities contributed to the programme before the matches in the stadiums under the motto "Football for all". In Vienna two Austrian teams of mentally handicapped people played a match. On Sunday Ireland meets the Netherlands, with cerebrally paralysed people playing. The project is organised by "Plusport" (the umbrella organisation of disabled sports in Switzerland) in cooperation with the Austrian Disabled Sports Association (ÖBSV) and financed by the European Football Union (UEFA). ■

Schoolgirls' Football League: girls on the ball even after EURO

The Federal Chancellery, the Ministry of Education, the Austrian Football Federation and Post AG presented "Schülerinnen Postliga Fußball", the Schoolgirls' Football League sponsored by the mail company, on 17 June 2008. Benefiting from the positive energy of the UEFA EURO 2008, this aim of this initiative is to take concrete measures for girls and women's football in Austria. Schools are considered the key to success. Hence, the Schoolgirls' Football League will be kicked off at the beginning of the school year 2008/09. Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, Secretary of State for Sport Lopatka and Director-General of the Mail Company Anton Wais, the main sponsor, want to further increase the by international comparison inadequate women's share in Austrian football and to kindle the interest of girls in exercise and sports. The Austrian Football Federation (ÖFB) supports this milestone in girls' and women's football. PUMA Austria (the equipper of the ÖFB national team) provides the equipment. From 15 to 18 June 2009 the nine winners of the regional tournaments will compete for the title of the national champion. ■

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.