

Editorial close: 5 October 2009

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CONTENTS

HOME AFFAIRS ■ EUROPE

Chancellor Faymann: Austria on the right path to leave the crisis behind
Regional parliamentary elections 2009: gains for the conservatives
New childcare allowance

HOME AFFAIRS ■ EUROPE ■ INTERNATIONAL

Labour market: more apprenticeships and money for training
Federal President Fischer pays official visit to Japan
Relief about Irish vote

ECONOMY

Wifo/IHS: back to one-percent growth in 2010
OECD: Austria removed from the “grey list” of tax havens
Austria’s contribution to EU budget decreased

CULTURE ■ MEDIA ■ SCIENCE

Linz09: poetic production of Brecht’s “The Good Person of Setzuan“
steirischer herbst: What is valid if all is the same and valid?
First European Union Prize for Literature to Paulus Hochgatterer
Jewish Museum Vienna: Marcel Proust and his correspondence
Museum of Folk Life and folk Art: Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present
Arnulf Rainer Museum in Baden

SPORTS POLICY

400,000 sports fans at Heldenplatz: new visitor record on Day of Sport
Pia Haschke is new officer for anti-doping affairs
Wolfgang Loitzl and Elisabeth Osl are the Army Athletes of the Year

Chancellor Faymann: Austria on right path to leave the crisis behind

Since the last parliamentary elections one year ago, the federal government had taken a number of drastic measures to strengthen the economy and to protect the people, stated Chancellor Werner Faymann after the Council of Ministers on 29 September 2009. The anticipated tax reform, the family package as well as the comprehensive labour market and economic stimulus packages were mentioned by the Chancellor as examples. In this way the government had also strengthened the purchasing power and helped to ensure that Austria reported Europe's lowest increase in unemployment, said Faymann.

Projections of the Economic Research Institute (Wifo) confirm that – thanks to the tax reform and economic packages (of the federal and regional governments) – the effects of the cyclical growth slump are reduced by 2.1% (accumulated) of the real GDP in 2009 and 2010 (from 2008).

But the crisis had not yet come to an end, underlined Faymann. Therefore, it was still necessary to continue strengthening the economy and to help the people. In Austria this had been accomplished more effectively than in other European countries but it was too early to give the all-clear signal. There is an interaction between economic growth and declining unemployment figures, this was a prerequisite for reaping profits and consolidating the budget, explained Faymann. In the joint press conference after the Council of Ministers, Minister of Finance Josef Pröll pled for global strategies to reduce government debt without jeopardising the slight recovery. Due to its dependence on export markets, Austria needed a solution at international level. In this context, Chancellor Faymann drew attention to Austria's initiative for the introduction of a financial transactions tax, which had won the support of some important countries. "Basically, we should not go back to supporting a system that failed, i.e. a financial market architecture that deprived many people of their savings", warned Faymann. ■

Regional parliamentary elections 2009: gains for the conservatives

The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) suffered a dramatic loss in the elections to the regional parliament (Landtag) of Upper Austria on 27 September 2009. After the SPÖ had been

inflicted a crushing defeat in the regional elections of Vorarlberg one week earlier (20 September 2009), it lost 13.39% (compared to 2003) in Upper Austria, plummeting to an all-time low of 24.94% of the valid votes. The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) became number one, making significant gains (+3.34 %) and reaching a share of the vote of 46.76%. The Freedom Party (FPÖ) almost doubled its result of 2003: 15.29% (+6.89 %); the Greens remained on a stable level: 9.18% (+0.12%). The Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) participated for the first time in Upper Austrian elections, with Ursula Haubner, the sister of the deceased Carinthian Governor Jörg Haider, as their top candidate. Winning only 2.83% of the vote, the BZÖ did not make it into the regional parliament. 1,019,608 persons were eligible to vote, voter turnout was around 80.35% (+1.70%). The ÖVP led by Governor Josef Pühringer now holds an absolute majority in the regional government (5 out of 9 members of the regional government) and more than half (28) of all seats (56). The distribution of seats in the regional parliament (Landtag) is as follows: ÖVP 28 (+3), SPÖ 14 (-8), FPÖ 9 (+5), Greens 5 (+/-0). The Upper Austrian government is for the first time composed by four parties. The ÖVP could embark on a one-party government. A continuation of the conservative-green coalition is rather unlikely. Exploratory talks have been started.

The SPÖ suffered massive losses in Upper Austria in the municipal and mayoral elections held in parallel, voter support declined in all 444 municipalities. In contrast, the FPÖ reported gains in almost all municipalities.

After the regional parliamentary elections in Vorarlberg, where the ÖVP forms a one-party government for the first time, the significant upswing of conservative and right-wing parties could be observed also in Upper Austria – a Europe-wide trend. According to voter transition analyses, the SPÖ lost votes mainly to the FPÖ and ÖVP but also to the group of non-voters – other than in the parliamentary elections in Germany, where many voters of the German Social Democratic Party moved to the left. ■

New childcare allowance

The new means-tested childcare allowance takes effect one month earlier, i.e. on 1 October 2009. Applications may be filed for all children born on/after 1 October 2009. (For more details see: <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at> priority: family) ■

Labour market: more apprenticeships and money for training

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer presented new strategies in the combat against the labour market crisis on 30 September 2009. Although Austria's position was very good by European comparison, e.g. with the lowest increase in youth unemployment, it was still "unsatisfactory as the measures taken have not yet shown the expected effect", stressed Faymann. Economic and socio-political actions had to complement one another.

Young people were affected particularly strong. Therefore active counter-measures were taken, e.g. guaranteed training for young people, special youth packages, more support for qualification programmes during unemployment and short-time working, underlined the Chancellor. Places in apprentice training facilities would be increased from 8,000 to 12,300. At present 5,414 apprenticeship places in companies and 7,404 places in training facilities were available for 8,645 people seeking apprenticeships.

Under the motto "Campaign Future Youth", young people aged between 19 and 25 years would be offered a job, a specific training or subsidised employment within six months. Up to now, 50,200 young people had started a training programme and 90,600 a job after registering with the Public Employment Service, said Faymann. The Youth Foundation would give 2,000 young people who had worked for temporary work agencies an opportunity for further training in autumn.

Another measure of the government focuses on support for one-person enterprises. If an employee is recruited, the Public Employment Service will cover the incidental wage costs for one year. "Continuing training and qualification are key measures for people who work short-time or are unemployed"; therefore incentives are to be increased. As from 1 January 2010 onwards, more funds will be made available for this purpose.

The net replacement rate for a family father would be increased from 61% to 73%, a single mother could expect to receive 91% of her active salary, added Minister for Social Affairs Hundstorfer. Similar incentives would also be provided for about 45,000 people working short time. To date 263,000 persons had participated in qualification measures. Up to now labour market policy and economic stimulus packages saved or secured 97,000 jobs, emphasised Hundstorfer. Without

these measures, the number of unemployed persons would have risen by one third. Since the beginning of this year, 455,000 people had been integrated successfully into the labour market by the Public Employment Service.

Unemployment in Austria rose by 28% in September compared to the same month of the previous year, but dropped slightly from the level of August 2009. Based on preliminary data of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Labour, a total of 300,000 persons were jobless at the end of September (including persons participating in training programmes). ■

Federal President Fischer pays official visit to Japan

From 30 September to 3 October 2009, Federal President Heinz Fischer paid an official visit to Japan which was marked by the 140th anniversary celebration of bilateral relations between Austria and Japan. He was accompanied by his wife Margit, four ministers (for education, infrastructure, economy, science) and a large trade delegation. His programme included visits to Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto as well as a bilateral economic forum and the opening of a special exhibition of the Museum for Art History on "Treasures of the Hapsburgs". The diplomatic highlight was a reception of emperor Akihito and empress Michiko.

After talks with Japan's new Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, Fischer praised the ambitious climate goals of the new government, with a planned reduction of CO₂ emissions by 25% (from the level of 1990).

The key objective of the President's trip to Japan was to strengthen economic contacts. Austria plans to increase the export share to Japan from currently 0.1% to 1%. Opportunities could open up in tourism, environmental technologies and renewable energies. ■

Relief about Irish vote

President Heinz Fischer referred to an "important and valuable support" for Europe. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann described the "yes" of the Irish population as an "important step" towards the Lisbon Treaty. Minister of Finance Josef Pröll sees an "unequivocal commitment to a stronger Europe", Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger referred to a "clear vote of confidence for the EU". ■

Wifo/IHS: back to one-percent growth in 2010

The experts expect a clear economic revival in Austria in the second half of 2009. Economic performance is expected to improve already in the current third quarter. Wifo (Economic Research Institute) and IHS (Institute for Advanced Studies) are more optimistic, revising their growth forecast from ½ % to 1% also for 2010. According to the recent autumn forecast (25 September 2009), the institutes expect a decline of the real GDP (gross domestic product) of 3.4% (Wifo) and 3.8% (IHS) – after 1.8% last year. In the euro-zone the GDP is likely to shrink by 3.9% this year and to grow by 1% in 2010 – just like in Austria.

There were growing signs that the “deepest recession of the post-war period is coming to an end”, informed the IHS. After the spectacular downturn since autumn 2008, the global economy had stabilised in the second quarter of this year. According to Wifo, economic policy is the determining power. The buoyant forces of the economy are still too weak for a self-sustaining upswing. If the government’s economic stimulus packages are withdrawn prematurely, this could lead to a relapse into recession. Consequently, Minister of Finance Josef Pröll assured at the autumn meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Istanbul on 4 October 2009 that 2010 would neither see an austerity package nor the end of the government’s aid packages. The IHS stressed that the necessary consolidation of the public budget as well as more stringent financing conditions could also dampen the growth potential.

Economic development in Austria is supported by private consumption. The high wage level in collective agreements of the previous year, low inflation and notably the tax reform had boosted the real income of households, explained the IHS and Wifo. In 2009 private consumption could go up by a 0.25% in real terms, in 2010 even by half a percent. The severely ailing export sector would also “recover significantly” during the year 2009 thanks to foreign demand and international stimulus measures. This year there could still be a downturn to the level of 2005, but in 2010 a plus by 2.0% (Wifo), or even 4.5% (IHS), would follow. The inflation rate stagnating at between 0.5% and 0.6% in 2009 could climb to 1.3% or 1.4% in 2010. No improvement is in sight in the labour market. Economic analysts expect a total

increase of 90,000 unemployed persons in 2009 and 2010. This means that the threshold of 300,000 jobseekers would be exceeded on annual average in 2010. The unemployment rate (Eurostat) would increase to almost 5½% in 2009 and to about 6% in 2010. The economic experts project a general government deficit (based on the Maastricht criteria) of 4½% of the GDP for 2009 and of about 5½% next year. ■

OECD: Austria removed from the “grey list” of tax havens

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) officially removed Austria from the “grey list” of tax havens, placing it on the “white list”. The Ministry of Finance confirmed that Austria had signed even more than the 12 double taxation and tax information exchange agreements required by the OECD.

Some inadequacies highlighted in the money laundering report recently presented by the OECD would be tackled “proactively”, explained Minister of Finance Josef Pröll to reporters on 29 September 2009. For the time being, his “transparency package” comprised ten items and could be supplemented anytime if required. For example, banks should be required to notify transactions if there is a suspicion of a criminal or terrorist background – even if there is no direct hint about money laundering or the financing of terrorism.

Notification of suspicion should not automatically lead to the opening of criminal proceedings as criminals and terrorists would be given advance warning, stated Pröll. In the future it should become possible to freeze assets even if the suspect was not associated with a foreign background. The names of owners or beneficiaries of corporations not listed on the stock exchange and private foundations should be made public. Moreover, the adoption of new rules for Internet casinos was envisaged. ■

Austria’s contribution to EU budget decreased

Austria’s net contribution to the EU budget decreased significantly in 2008. According to the EU report, the “operational budget balance“ of payments to Brussels and reflows to Austria totalled about 356 million euro in 2008 – after 563 million euro in 2007. ■

Linz09: poetic production of Brecht's "The Good Person of Setzuan"

For many years Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) struggled with his "parable play" "The Good Person of Setzuan", completing it only in January 1941. After receiving its world premiere at Schauspielhaus Zurich in 1943, the play became one his most successful works. The plot: Three gods descend into the city of Setzuan in China. The world is to be allowed to remain as it is if they find enough good people who manage to live decent lives. Only the prostitute Shen Teh, the only good person far and wide, offers them shelter. The gods give her money for buying a tobacco shop. Freeloaders take advantage of her proverbial kindness. Blinded by love, she becomes the victim of a jobless mail pilot. She survives only by disguising herself as Shui Ta, a ruthless cousin who deals with people brutally. The barber Shu Fu wants to get her in his clutches, smelling the money. She cannot get away from the pilot Yang Sun and becomes pregnant. Finally, Shen Teh's duplicity is uncovered. She cannot work in her former job because of her pregnancy, and the deceived society has no mercy for her. The gods give the only good person they could find permission to continue showing her bad side so as to be able to survive. Half-heartedly, they justify a barbarian world order and disappear quickly. Shen Teh remains behind, helpless. With the famous words "We feel deflated too, we too are nettled, to see the curtain down and nothing settled", the epilogue leaves it to the audience to find a happy end.

Ong Keng Sen from Singapore created a magic and poetic production of this bitter parable of brutal social conditions and of human existence, stressing Brecht's playful side. In 2005 his adaption of the "Caucasian Chalk Circle" for Vienna's Schauspielhaus had been celebrated as a new Brechtian style.

Ong Keng Sen takes Brecht literally and sees the "good woman" as a "good person". Hence, Shen Teh/Shui Ta is a hybrid being, a hermaphrodite, played in a scintillating, fascinating way and with immense sex appeal by Karl M. Sibelius. This completely new interpretation of the work by a stage director illustrates Brecht's so-called "making-strange effect" ("Verfremdungseffekt"), making the "known strange", as Ong Keng Sen put it. The author had been fascinated with Chinese theatre performances, in which men

played women – but were not trying to imitate them.

The head of the theatre group "Theatre Works" in Singapore and a member of the Asian-Europe Network, promoting the exchange between Asia and Europe, highlights Brecht's special role in China, "as his parables often allude to core conflicts in Asia and China. Generally speaking, they are about the tension between the individual and society; this is even more important than his ideological positions. Last but not least, the play is the encrypted journey of Chinese elements to Europe, initiated by a German author who saw an opportunity of using 'China' to express his views. But to complete this journey we have to examine how contemporary Asian and Chinese artists use Brecht to communicate with their own countries, but also Europe – a kind of revived dialogue, 60 years later. And this communication between the cultures goes on, influencing one another beyond geography and time".

The premiere of the Brecht play at Landestheater Linz on 26 September 2008, applauded by the audience, impressed also with the light design by the US-American Scott Zielinski and the breathtaking stage setting by Myung Hee Cho, who was born in South Korea and now lives in Los Angeles. The fantastic and colourful costumes of Mitsushi Yanaihara from Japan perfectly visualise the contemporary Brechtian style.

Besides Karl M. Sibelius, the entire cast is wonderful – for example Katharina Hofmann as the water seller Wang, Sebastian Hufschmidt as the pilot Yang Sun, Stefan Matousch as the filthy barber Shu Fu, Erich Josef Langwiesner as the unemployed/grandfather, Sabrina Tannen as Mi Tzu, the usurious landlady/old woman.

A great surprise is the original music by Paul Dessau (1894-1979) – who had composed the music for numerous (stage) works of Brecht. The orchestra was led by Nebojša Krulanić in the orchestra pit and on the keytar; the instruments included percussion, clarinet, flute and a mostly muted trumpet (excellent: Gerd Rahstorfer), accentuating the songs in a "jazzy" style or adding a narrative power. The delicately woven pattern shows remarkable affinities with the artistic position of the Viennese composer Franz Koglmann, who is currently working on the opera "Spiel der Konzerne" ("Game of the Groups") together with Alfred Zellinger (libretto, based on his play). www.landestheater-linz.at ■

steirischer herbst: What is valid if all is the same and valid?

“What is valid if all is the same and valid?” is the subtitle of the motto “All the Same“ selected by this year’s Styrian autumn festival “steirischer herbst” (ending on 18 October 2009). Based on this motto, people live in societies with Constitutions guaranteeing the equality of people. However, the notion of equal opportunities has to be challenged even in highly industrialised countries. For the lower strata of society it is becoming more and more difficult to overcome social boundaries, not to mention other parts of the world. The principle of equality is becoming a more and more distant objective. The economic development of the last decades has led to a rapidly widening social gap. Specific values are valid for fewer and fewer people.

Under the motto “All the Same“, steirischer herbst in Graz plays with the term “indifferent“ and all its meanings – from indifference in the sense of a lack of interest to equal rights as a utopia and demand voiced in every-day life.

A special highlight of this year’s programme is the two-year exhibition project “Utopia and Monument“ (curated by Sabine Breitwieser), exploring the function of art in an increasingly privatised and controlled public space.

The large stage of the Orpheum in Graz is the central venue of this year’s festival. The festival was opened with the production “Radio Muezzin“ by Stefan Keagi/Rimini Protokoll, who won international acclaim for their “documentary theatre performances”. The play brought people on the stage usually used as clichés in heated debates about Islam: four Egyptian muezzins – protagonists of a reconstruction of their lives, representatives of a religious culture whose manifold faces are often reduced to a simple “image of the enemy” in Europe.

In “Void Story“, the legendary British theatre group Forced Entertainment shows how a couple suddenly loses their flat and ordinary life, having to escape through a disturbingly hostile science-fiction world.

Exhibitions and discussions in the framework of “Real Energy World/ NIGER DELTA“ at Forum Stadtpark illustrate the public representation of disasters, using the concrete example of the ecological, social and humanitarian disaster caused by the oil production in the delta of the Niger river.

Besides the piano project “Seven Last Words“ and the special international performance project “Touch this Sound!“, the programme features concerts with RSO Wien, Klangforum Wien and ensemble recherche as well as world premieres by Olga Neuwirth, Bernhard Gander, Rebecca Saunders and Johannes Maria Staud.

The discussion on values in the festival is also reflected in the inter-disciplinary “Fundamental Rights Day 2009“, an event organised in cooperation with the Association of Austrian Judges on “Body Codes. Modern medicine, individual freedom of action and the fundamental rights“.

For more details see: www.steirischerherbst.at ■

First European Union Prize for Literature to Paulus Hochgatterer

On 28 September 2009 twelve authors from European countries received the EU Prize for Literature granted for the first time, among them also the Austrian writer Paulus Hochgatterer for his thriller set in a small town “Die Süße des Lebens“(2006), which was translated into English (“The Sweetness of Life”). For this work the author had been nominated for the German Book Prize in 2006. Hochgatterer, born in Amstetten (Lower Austria) in 1961, lives as a child psychiatrist in Vienna. He made a name for himself as the author of well-constructed books of psychological insight like “Über die Chirurgie“, “Über Raben“ or “Eine kurze Geschichte vom Fliegenfischen“.

The European Booksellers Federation (EBF), the European Writers Congress (EWC) and the Federation of European Book Publishers are in charge of selecting the prize winners. The national juries are composed of writers, booksellers and publishing houses. As announced by the European Commission, the aim of the prize is to turn the spotlight on the creativity, diversity and wealth of Europe’s contemporary literature and to promote the circulation of literature. The prizewinning works will be presented also at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The award ceremony at the Flagey Arts Centre in Brussels was attended by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, European Commissioner for Education and Culture Ján Figel and the bestselling Swedish author Henning Mankell (“The Dogs of Riga“). He is the patron of this year’s EU Prize for Literature and is to act as “European Ambassador of Literature” as from 2010 onwards. ■

Jewish Museum Vienna: Marcel Proust and his correspondence

French author Marcel Proust (1871-1922) is one of the literary eminencies of the 20th century. He earned himself a reputation with the legendary novel "In Search of Lost Time" – one of the main works of modernism. Besides his literary work, the son of a Catholic father and a Jewish mother was a manic, breathless letter writer. Fortunately his correspondence was not destroyed after his death – as had been his desire. The letters give a vivid image of the author and his densely knit network of friends.

Bibliotheca Proustiana Reiner Speck in Cologne stores more than 80 of these historical documents, many of them have not yet been published and translated. In cooperation with the Munich Literature House and the Marcel Proust Society Cologne, it organised the exhibition "Marcel Proust im Spiegel seiner Korrespondenz" ("Marcel Proust in the Mirror of his Correspondence"), which may be visited at the Jewish Museum Vienna (JMW) up to 22 November 2009. Besides letters, rare Proust autographs, photos, portrait drawings and sketches as well manuscripts and autographed books are on display. Proust's commitment to the case of the Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus sentenced on unjust grounds became a leitmotif of many of his letters. The curators of the show are Jürgen Ritte, literary scholar, translator and professor at Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, and Reiner Speck, physician, collector, publisher, founder and president of the Marcel Proust Society. They also edited the accompanying "catalogue book". The Munich Literature House issued a guidebook with texts and illustrations.

In parallel to the exhibition, the symposium "Marcel Proust and the Music" is held at the Institut Français de Vienne and the Austrian Academy of Sciences from 5 to 11 November 2009. www.jmw.at ■

Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art: Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present

The Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art in Vienna shows the special exhibition "Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present" until 14 March 2010. The marvellous textile works were tracked down in Great Britain,

Germany, Austria, Poland, Switzerland and Australia and brought together for this presentation. The exhibits come from museums and private collectors and have never been presented in this special combination. All objects have been created as inlaid patchwork, are decorated with ornaments and were refined with other textile techniques. They are outstanding examples of textile designs of different centuries, depicting inter alia brave riders, delicate blossoms, wild animals, religious tales. They give insights into European history – royal and aristocratic families – and tell stories about the Old and New Testament as well as historical perceptions of the world. The show is simply sensational. www.volkskundemuseum.at ■

Arnulf Rainer Museum in Baden

On 25 September 2009 a new museum devoted to Arnulf Rainer was opened in the former women's bathhouse in Baden near Vienna. Hence, another museum for a modern visual artist has been established in Lower Austria, which pursues a progressive cultural policy. About 10.5 million euro have so far been earmarked for single-artist institutions. The artists agree to lend works of art for display to these institutions for a period of 40 years and to make generous donations. The Krems Caricature Museum, for example, received exhibits on permanent loan from "Ironimus" Gustav Peichl and Manfred Deix in 2001. Since 2007 the Mistelbach Museum Centre has accommodated a museum for action artist Hermann Nitsch known for his "Schüttbilder" ("spill paintings"). In 2007 the art district "Kunstmeile Krems" devoted a "Forum" to Adolf Frohner. In Hadersdorf/Kamp the "Eat Art/AbArt" centres of the Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri were recently opened, which combine exhibitions with culinary delights.

A definite highlight is the spectacular Egon Schiele Museum in the former prison of Tulln, where Schiele served a sentence in 1912 for his scandalous erotic art and alleged indecent life.

"Kunstkompass" – the list of top artists – describes Arnulf Rainer (born in Baden in 1929) as one of the globally leading contemporary artists. He works and lives on a farm in Enzenkirchen (Innviertel) and spends the winters in Tenerife. Rainer has created his famous over-paintings since the early 1950s. Due to his radical veiling of often religious symbols he has been the subject of controversy for many years.

www.arnulf-rainer-museum.at ■

400,000 sports fans at Heldenplatz: new visitor record on Day of Sport

Another new visitor record was set on the Day of Sport at Heldenplatz in Vienna, organised for the ninth time. About 400,000 people celebrated Austria's athletes, who were commended for their achievements by Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos. "The Day of Sport is a wonderful opportunity for trying sports and offers a unique chance of getting into contact with Austrian elite athletes. The new record of 400,000 visitors shows that enthusiasm is unbroken", said Darabos.

The list of the most popular sports stars present on the Day of Sport reads like the Who's Who of Austrian sport. The successful winter sports athletes Gregor Schlierenzauer, Thomas Morgenstern, Wolfgang Loitzl, Benjamin Raich and Kathrin Zettel attended and gave autographs, and so did the Austrian swimming stars Mirna and Dinko Jukic or Olympic winner Thomas Geierpichler.

But sports stars were not they only attraction of the varied programme. Austrian sport in all its aspects was presented in more than 120 stalls. The visitors were invited to join in and test numerous sports facilities. ■

Pia Haschke is new officer for anti-doping affairs

University assistant Pia Haschke becomes the new officer for international anti-doping affairs, a position that had been held by Karlheinz Demel for many years. The 34-year old legal expert specialised in sports law was appointed by the Ministry of Sport in agreement with NADA Austria to represent Austria in international anti-doping bodies and at international anti-doping events.

"I have been a competitive athlete myself, I am an enthusiastic sports fan and I am looking forward to the new task. The aim is to harmonise the anti-doping rules at international level", said Haschke. Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos stated: "By appointing Pia Haschke, we succeeded in winning another woman for a leading position in sport. It is important that we intensify and professionalise our engagement at international level. Austria plays a pioneering role in the combat against doping. Our standards have to be implemented at international level to ensure equal opportunities in

sport." NADA Manager Andreas Schwab was also pleased about the appointment of Haschke. "I consider her a major pillar in the struggle against doping, especially in areas like prevention, information and public awareness-raising", said Schwab.

Haschke will represent Austria's interests not only in the Monitoring Group of the Council of Europe, which has been installed under the Convention to examine the observance of the Anti-Doping Convention of the Council of Europe, and the legal sub-group "Advisory Group on Legal Issues" but also in CAHAMA (European Ad Hoc Committee for WADA, the World Anti-Doping Agency). Furthermore, Haschke will be active as an expert in the EU Working Group on Anti-Doping of the European Commission. ■

Wolfgang Loitzl and Elisabeth Osl are the Army Athletes of the Year

Minister of Defence and Sport Norbert Darabos praised the eagle of the Austrian Skiing Federation (ÖSV) and ski jumping world champion Wolfgang Loitzl as a "shining example to the entire nation". On the premises of the Technical Services of the Austrian Federal Rail, a partner of the Army Sports Centre, the Military Sports Award was conferred on Loitzl and other army athletes on 24 September 2009.

Minister Darabos: "Without the Austrian Federal Army, many international careers of Austrian athletes would not have become possible." This was confirmed by the award-winning athlete Loitzl: "I had to wait long for my great victories, but the Army has always believed in me and has always supported me. I am happy that my success permits me to give something back to the Federal Army and the public."

Elisabeth Osl won the title "Army Woman Athlete of the Year". The 23-year-old Tyrolean had become the first Austrian woman to win the overall Mountain Bike World Cup in the cross-country competition only a few days earlier. At the award celebrations for Austria's most successful army team, Minister Darabos was above all pleased to see proof "that wonderful achievements are possible with fair methods". Awards were conferred also on Dominik Landerthinger, Simon Eder, Christoph Sumann and Daniel Mesotisch, who had earned silver in the relay event of the Biathlon World Championships in South Korea. ■