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Special session of the Council of Ministers on Europe Day

On 9 May 2009 a special session of the Council of Ministers was held at the Federal Chancellery to celebrate Europe Day. Vice Chancellor and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll warned emphatically against the “radicalisation of words and anti-European populism“ in the campaign for the European elections (on 7 June 2009). “Those agitating against Europe act against the interests of Austria“, said Pröll. Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger presented an initiative for more dialogue“. Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer pointed out that the global economic crisis posed a real threat to security, social cohesion and democracy. Europe was of increasing importance amidst the crisis, Hundstorfer said. ■

Commemorating Mauthausen

The focus of this year’s memorial events (10 May) marking the liberation of the Mauthausen concentration camp (Upper Austria) 64 years ago was on religiously motivated resistance against the NS regime. In the presence of President Fischer and members of government, the representatives of the Churches and religious communities, Österreichische Lagergemeinschaft Mauthausen (Austrian Mauthausen Camp Community), the Austrian Mauthausen Committee, the social partners and delegations from 42 countries called for combating right-wing extremism, racism, intolerance and discrimination.

An incident occurred during another commemoration at the former Ebensee concentration camp. Several neo-Nazis disturbed the commemorative ceremony shouting “Sieg Heil“. Chairman of the Mauthausen Committee Willi Mernyi expressed his disgust, describing the incident as an unbelievable violation of a taboo. He also reminded of the profanation of the Mauthausen memorial with Nazi slogans some weeks ago. Chairwoman of the Federal Youth Representative Council Rodaina El Batnigi referred to “incredible scenes“ and called on politics to take harsh counter-measures. ■

Budget hearing in Parliament: praise for the biennial budget 2009/2010

The Budget Committee of the National Council started its deliberations on the biennial budget of the Minister of Finance with an expert hearing on

6 May 2009. The economic stimulus measures of the federal government were praised unanimously. Criticism was, however, voiced about the fact that no post-crisis consolidation concept was available. The biennial budget for 2009/2010 met with the wide approval of the experts. In the short run there was no alternative to the strategy of reviving the economy by increasing the public debt, especially through economic stimulus packages, the tax reform and higher expenditure for jobless persons. The budget is expected to have an economic effect of 1.5 percentage points. The absence of a concept for reducing the drastically growing debt burden was criticised, especially since all experts nominated by the five parties represented in Parliament expect a budget deficit of up to 6%. Minister of Finance Pröll had projected a minus of 3.5% of the GDP (gross domestic product) for 2009 and a maximum of 4.7% for 2010, but considered a higher deficit possible during the hearing. Pröll pointed out that economic forecasts were revised every month and expected the experts preparing the administrative reform to submit budget consolidation concepts. ■

Opening event for national action plan on equality in the labour market

Following an invitation of Minister for Women’s Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek, the first round table on gender equality with the social partners and the Federation of Austrian Industrialists took place on 4 May 2009, giving the go-ahead for the national action plan on women’s equality in the labour market. Concrete measures should be presented by year-end, said Heinisch-Hosek. Major goals were the elimination of the wage gap (up to 15%), early career counselling and an Austria-wide supply with childcare facilities. ■

Jehovah’s Witnesses – a recognised religious community in Austria

Jehovah’s Witnesses are now an officially recognised religious community in Austria, as the ministry responsible for religious affairs informed on 7 May 2009. There are now 14 official religious communities in Austria. Jehovah’s Witnesses have more than 20,000 members in Austria. Recognition gives them a clear legal status in public life and the right to religious instruction at school. Jehovah’s Witnesses have, however, no plans to claim the latter. ■

Japanese Prince and Princess pay visit to Austria

Prince Akishino of Japan, the younger son of Japan's imperial couple, and his wife Princess Kiko arrived in Austria on 10 May 2009 for a four-day visit motivated by the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Austria. The celebrations for the "Austria-Japan Year" are under the aegis of Prince Akishino.

The Japanese guests were received by Federal President Heinz Fischer and his wife Margit. Their official programme includes talks with Fischer and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger. Visits to the Japanese School in Vienna, the Museum of Natural History, Vienna Musikverein as well as of the Abbey of Klosterneuburg (near Wien) and the Haydn House in Eisenstadt (Burgenland) are also planned.

At the beginning of the Anniversary Year, Foreign Minister Spindelegger and Speaker of Parliament Barbara Prammer had met with Akishino during their visits to Tokyo. To conclude the "Austria-Japan Year", Federal President Fischer will pay a state visit to Japan in September. ■

EU Reform Treaty: Austria praises approval of Czech Senate

Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger was relieved that the Czech Senate had approved the EU Reform Treaty of Lisbon on 6 May 2009. "The vote in favour of the Treaty is encouraging", Spindelegger told APA (Austrian Press Agency). He hoped that the Treaty ratification could be finalised by the end of the year.

In this context, the Foreign Minister also drew attention to the second referendum in Ireland. As the island state reported, public sentiment had undergone a positive change, and this was above all due to the current economic and financial crisis, explained Spindelegger. ■

Federal Chancellor Faymann visited Slovakia

On 30 April 2009, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann held talks with his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico in Bratislava (former German name: Pressburg). The heads of government discussed strategies against the impact of the global economic crisis and energy supply issues. The two countries had many things in common, e.g.

regarding the tax policy and the no to social expenditure cuts. They concentrated on reducing public expenditure, stated Faymann und Fico.

Bilateral relations were described as very good. Faymann underlined that a very open exchange of information took place, including issues on which opinions diverged. This was in particular nuclear power, which was advocated by Bratislava and rejected by Vienna. Austria was critical of the nuclear safety standards of the two nuclear reactors of Mochovce and Jaslovské Bohunice. Federal President Heinz Fischer travels to Prague for a two-day visit on 14 May 2009. ■

Foreign Minister Spindelegger at UN Middle East debate in New York

Austria is represented by Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger at the Middle East debate of the UN Security Council in New York on 11 May 2009. The foreign ministers of Great Britain and France also participate in the high-level meeting, which is chaired by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. It had been called due to a critical report considering Israel responsible for targeted attacks on UN institutions in the Gaza Strip during the military campaign at the turn of the year 2008/09. Furthermore, the Israeli army was alleged to have shot deliberately at Palestinian civilians. This was, however, vehemently rejected by Israel. So far the World Security Council has not issued a respective statement.

In the preliminaries of the forthcoming deliberations Spindelegger stated (according to the radio news show "ORF/Ö1-Mittagsjournal" on 8 May 2009) that it was necessary to respond to international law and human rights violations. He also called for the resumption of the peace talks. ■

EU election: eight parties compete in Austria

In Austria eight parties run in the election to the European Parliament on 7 June 2009. Besides the parties represented in the National Council – Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Freedom Party (FPÖ), Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) and the Greens – the list of Hans-Peter Martin, the Communist Party (KPÖ) and the Young Liberals will participate. About 6.36 million Austrians are eligible to vote in the election held in all 27 Member States. ■

Record current account surplus in 2008 thanks to tourism

Austria's current account for the year 2008 shows a record surplus of 9.8 billion euros or 3.5% of the GDP (gross domestic product). While foreign trade registered a minus of 0.2 billion euros at the end of the last year due to the global financial and economic crisis, Austria performed successfully in tourism and the export of services. While the expenditure of domestic holiday-makers abroad stagnated, the income from foreign tourists in Austria rose by 1 billion euro. This resulted in a surplus of 7.1 billion euros in tourism. At the presentation of these data, the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) was confident that a positive current account balance of 1.3 to 1.5% of the GDP would again be achieved in 2009.

The current account of the euro-zone dropped to minus 94 billion euros or 1% of the GDP due to the economic slump. "The domestic economy does not need funding from abroad but can act as an investor in foreign countries", explained OeNB Director Andreas Ittner.

Austria's economic strengths – high productivity, a well trained labour force and social stability – were unbroken, stressed also OeNB Governor Ewald Nowotny. The head of the National Bank defended once more the strong ties between the Austrian economy and Central and Eastern Europe. Unfortunately foreign media failed to differentiate adequately between the emerging markets. Three quarters of Austria's investments in the Central and Eastern European banking sector (200 billion euros as of 31 Dec. 2008) had been directed to the new EU Member States, only just slightly above 50 billion euros of the domestic bank assets had been invested outside the EU, explained Nowotny. ■

Government partners agree on European transaction tax

An effort is made to calm down the heated debates between the government partners as well as within the coalition parties themselves about introducing new taxes to relief the burden on the factor "labour" and taxing capital. There is a unanimous call for a Europe-wide transaction tax, while there-introduction of inheritance and gift taxes – at least in times of crisis – is being rejected. ■

Government adopted improvements for care-giving family members

On 28 April 2009, the Council of Ministers approved significant improvements for persons providing care services to family members. The Federal Republic will not only pay for the employer's contribution to the voluntary pension insurance of care-givers but also the 25% employee's contribution (now eligibility from care level 3; previously care level 5). The new provisions will enter into force on 1 July 2009 for an unlimited period. 7 million euros been made earmarked for this measure up to 2013. ■

EU spring forecast: economy shrinks by 4.0 percent

According to the latest forecast of the European Commission, Austria's economic performance will shrink by 4% of the GDP. This is in line with the average GDP decline in the entire euro-zone and the remaining EU. The Commission expects the economy to recover only in 2010, with a minor GDP decline of 0.1%.

Despite the gloomy forecasts, Minister of Finance Josef Pröll was optimistic that the economic stimulus measures taken so far by the EU Member States will show effects. Many measures and tax cuts adopted would become effective only in the next weeks and months, emphasised Pröll at a meeting of the ministers of finance of the euro-zone in Brussels on 4 May 2009. ■

Government continues to be majority owner of Austrian Mail

The Austrian government will continue to be the majority owner of Österreichische Post AG, stressed Supervisory Board Director Peter Michaelis at the annual general meeting of the Austrian Mail on 6 May 2009. At present the Federal Government holds 52% of the listed enterprise.

Minister of Infrastructure Doris Bures submitted the amendment of the Austrian Rail Restructuring Act for review. The aim is to restructure the group, reducing the number of strategic lead companies from five to three stock companies: passenger transport, goods transport/rail cargo and infrastructure. ■

Anniversary of Republic: Faymann stresses cooperation in crisis

On the 64th anniversary of the foundation of the Second Republic celebrated on 27 April 2009, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann stressed the importance of joining forces across party lines in times of crisis. In his address to the Special Council of Ministers, he emphatically stressed the “need for a social balance” and that education and culture should not be neglected. Before the traditional wreath-laying ceremony had taken place on Heldenplatz. The government commemorated the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence from Nazi Germany on 27 April 1945. Faymann referred to a “act of political courage“ and reminded of the beginnings of the tragedy and the “helplessness of national politics in view of the economic crisis“. Pressing needs had to be recognised also today and in difficult times decisive action had to be taken. 64 years ago the “unanimity” of political antagonists had help to rebuild the state. In his speech the Federal Chancellor also turned the spotlight on Europe: “Bearing this in mind, we must not be indifferent to the course of the EU in the next years“. ■

Deep mourning for Fritz Muliar

Austria’s world of politics and theatre deeply mourns the loss of Fritz Muliar, the celebrated Viennese “Volksschauspieler” (an actor becoming a national icon, often for performing in plays rooted in the local culture). He died aged 89 in Vienna’s General Hospital during the night from Sunday to Monday 4 May 2009 after having been on the stage of Theater in der Josefstadt in Peter Turrini’s “Die Wirtin“ (“The Innkeeper”) and receiving the thunderous ovation of the audience in the afternoon.

Fritz Muliar was born in the 7th district of Vienna in 1919 as an illegitimate child. His biological father was a Tyrolian officer of the Royal & Imperial Army, who did not care for his son and later became a National Socialist. Muliar’s mother, Leopoldine Stand, was a committed Social Democrat and married the Russian-Jewish jeweller Mischa Muliar. The legendary grande dame of Vienna cabaret, Stella Kadmon, helped the only 17-year-old Muliar with a natural talent for acting to make his debut in the cabaret show “Der liebe Augustin“. After playing for some time an operetta buffo at Innsbrucker Landestheater,

Muliar worked with Karl Farkas at the “Simple“ cabaret in Vienna. His promising career was interrupted abruptly by WWII. During service in the field, an Austrian “comrade” denounced him for “statements corrupting the military power“. Muliar faced a death sentence, which was finally converted into a five-year prison sentence.

After 1945 he started an unparalleled career. From 1951 to 1963 he was engaged by Vienna’s Volkstheater; in parallel he worked for the “Simple“ cabaret for thirteen years. Between 1964 and 1977 Theater in der Josefstadt was his artistic home, in 1974 he became a member of Burgtheater, which he remained for 20 years up to his retirement. He was a Freemason never afraid to deal with conflicts and also a confessing Social Democrat (“I am a convinced Social Democratic monarchist“) and a member of the Audience and Foundation Council of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) for many years. In 1990 he clashed with Burgtheater Director Claus Peymann when he condemned the renewal of Peymann’s contract and threatened to retire. He finally launched a “series of anti-Peymann articles“ in “Kronen Zeitung“. The conflict with Peymann, now heading Berliner Ensemble, had entailed an action for defamation only in October 2008.

In 1994 the actor returned to Theater an der Josefstadt. With Felix Mitterer’s one-man play “Sibirien“ (“Siberia“) he achieved one of his most important artistic triumphs in 1992. In November 2007 he celebrated his 70th stage anniversary at Wiener Kammerspiele in a play Mitterer wrote especially for him, i.e. “Der Panther“ (“The Panther”). The actor also became popular in about 90 films, such as “Wien, du Stadt meiner Träume“ (“Vienna, City of My Dreams“) directed by Willi Forst, “Der veruntreute Himmel“ (director: Ernst Marischka), “Der Bockerer“ (director: Franz Antel) or the film adaptation of Jaroslav Hašek’s novel “Der brave Soldat Schwejk“ (“The Brave Soldier Svejk”).

In 1955 Fritz Muliar married Franziska Kalmar, the first (very beautiful) ORF TV announcer. He lived with her in Großenzersdorf (Lower Austria) and had two sons, Alexander and Martin. His much-loved son of the first marriage, Hans, died in 1990. Once he said to his friend, “News“ reporter Heinz Sichrovsky: “Hansi is still alive. For a bit. As long as I live. Then he’ll die. I will not see him again. I don’t believe in an afterworld. And I don’t want to be reborn as a forest bug“.

President Heinz Fischer was deeply shocked about the death of Fritz Muliar: "He was a lovable person, a "People's Actor" and an Austrian in the best sense of the word". He had always been "a very political person". "He was pro-Austrian and pro-Democratic throughout his life". Chancellor Werner Faymann praised the "fearless courage and social commitment" of the deceased. "Tolerance and solidarity were an integral part of his life". Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied described Muliar as a symbol of "Central Europe in all its diversity" and stressed his "commitment to democracy, anti-fascism and social justice". Lower Austria's Governor Erwin Pröll hailed above all the "great human qualities and firmness" of the actor. Fritz Muliar had received several awards, was granted the title of professor and honorary memberships of Burgtheater and Josefstadt. He also held Austria's Grand Silver Badge of Honour. ■

Fascinating work: Lutz Musner's "The Taste of Vienna"

In the last ten years, Lutz Musner (born in Eastern Tyrol), Director Deputy of the International Research Centre for Cultural Studies (IFK) in Vienna, published a number of sensational books together with the Managing Director of the Association of the History of the Labour Movement (Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung), Wolfgang Maderthaner. To mention but a few: "Die Anarchie der Vorstadt", "Der Aufstand der Massen" and "Im Schatten des Fordismus".

Recently his work "Der Geschmack von Wien" ("The Taste of Vienna") appeared in Campus Verlag, which is based on Musner's "Habilitation" (academic paper qualifying for lecturing at university) approved in 2007/08 by the Department for Humanities of Humboldt University in Berlin. The book of about 280 pages was not written in a cobwebby academic language but impresses with its elegant culinary style. It focuses on the "character" of Vienna, its special flair in lifestyle, aesthetics and every-day culture. The author draws for example on city guides, advertising campaigns, architectural controversies, unique literary texts and a trademark in international city tourism – "Viennese Gemütlichkeit", the easy-going and relaxed atmosphere disclosed by Helmut Qualtinger in "Herr Karl" – to show how traditions and esthetical codes shaped the development of highly resistant auto-

and hetero-stereotypes. The Viennese were for long periods in history masters of repression. For example, they reduced their role in WWII. to completely passive victims of the NS regime – a fact Musner denounces relentlessly in his book. His brilliant text is often subliminally ironic but otherwise one could hardly endure the countless lies and concoctions, which – in parallel to the outstanding achievements (often of displaced persons!) in the arts, science, politics, etc. – have led to the internationally excellent image of this European cultural metropolis.

"Der Geschmack von Wien" ("The Taste of Vienna") is a must for all those interested in Vienna, who want to probe deeper into the context of the Prater, the Vienna Woods or St. Stephen's Cathedral, Empress "Sisi" Elisabeth, the wine and music (from Mozart to New Viennese Electronic Music).

Campus Verlag Frankfurt/New York 2009, ISBN 978-3-593-38897-7,

www.campus.de, www.ifk.ac.at, www.vga.at ■

Information Security Conference 09

On 29 October 2009 the Centre of Practice-Oriented Informatics of Danube University Krems (Lower Austria) holds already its 7th Information Security Conference.

Information technologies are used today to manage financial transactions, to control energy supply and to organise production facilities. But no system has a 100% security guarantee. Incidents like in Estonia in 2007, in Georgia in 2008 and in Kirgizstan this year have shown that targeted attacks can paralyse a state.

The Internet is not yet a completely safe medium. Dangers arise from cyber account robbers and virus infections. Possible terrorist attacks also pose a threat.

The Information Security Conference held every year addresses researchers and persons active in the field of information security both in public authorities and the economy. International experts give lectures on the latest findings. For more information and registration, contact:

www.donau-uni.ac.at/is09. ■

Linz: Festival of Regions

In the year of the European Capital of Culture Linz, the Upper Austrian Festival of Regions (held every second year) lasts 24 days, from 9 May to 1 June 2009. The motto for the outskirts of the city

is “normal state”. This theme is addressed in more than 50 events. In cooperation with Linz09, the festival for contemporary local art and culture chose the urban development areas Auwiesen and solarCity as venues. The festival organisers use squares, streets, parks and gardens but also historical buildings such as Ebelsberg Palace or the premises of the steel plant voestalpine.

In solarCity the installation “Kiesentnahme über der Traun“ (“Gravel extraction on the Traun river”) by Heidi Schatzl provides insights into the building history from 1938 to 1945. The Linz-based cultural institution “Stadtwerkstatt” (“City Workshop”) and Free Radio FRO open outposts in Auwiesen during the festival. www.fdr.at, www.linz09.at, www.fro.at. ■

Franz Schubert: summer concerts at church in Vienna-Lichtental

The Church of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in Vienna-Lichtental (1090 Vienna, Marktgasse 40) is an architectural jewel. It was given a complete overhaul for the Schubert Year 1997, when the 200th birthday of Franz Schubert (1797-1828) was celebrated. In this church – near Schubert’s birth place – a Mass (in F Major) was performed for the first time in 1814, composed by the then 17-year old. He wrote the solo part for the 16-year-old Therese Grob (1798-1875), whom he fancied and who might have also inspired him to the composition of the song “Gretchen am Spinnrade“ (“Gretchen on the Spinning Wheel”), starting with the words: “My peace of mind has fled...“. In this church Franz Schubert used to play the organ.

At this magical Schubert venue, High Masses are held on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. – often Masses by Schubert and in the current “Haydn Year” of course also by Joseph Haydn. Summer concerts are given on Tuesdays at 7.30 p.m. between 23 June and 1 September 2009, with superb interpreters presenting song recitals, chamber music, piano recitals, etc. The music is not only by Schubert, but also Mozart, Brahms, Liszt, Mahler, Debussy, even Prokofiev and Pärt. Tickets have a very modest price of 20 euros (students: 10 euros). www.schubertkirche.at ■

Jewish Museum Vienna: “typical! Clichés about Jews and others”

The Jewish Museum Vienna (JMW) presents the exhibition “typical! Clichés about Jews and

others” (running until 11 October 2009), which was developed jointly with the Jewish Museum Berlin. The visitors are confronted with the different clichés and stereotypes of every-day life. It is an exhibition about seeing, perceiving, classifying and associating images and things pertaining to strangers and oneself. With the help of objects, pictures, photos, audio-visual objects and the like, opportunities for overcoming prejudice-ridden classifications and attributes are to be opened up. As the title of the show suggests, not only anti-Semitic prejudices are addressed. As anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism are only one aspect of racism – as Africa expert Walter Schicho stated – the exhibition shows analogies in other cultures. Stereotypes about native Americans, African Americans, Aborigines, etc. are also explored. The parallels are to sensitize the visitors to issues like stereotypes, the image of strangers and prejudices within a more global meaning. The exhibition demonstrates that clichéd attitudes are a burning issue, particularly by including anti-Islamic stereotypes. This shows once more to what extent we are entangled in prejudices, which have developed throughout history or are due to current political developments. www.jmw.at ■

Austrian National Library, Papyrus Museum: The Phenomenon Homer

From 20 May 2009 to 15 January 2010 the exhibition “The Phenomenon Homer in Papyri, Manuscripts and Prints“ in the Austrian National Library (ÖNB), Papyrus Museum (Heldenplatz in Vienna, central entrance), shows on which media the famous texts of Homer – “The Iliad“ and “The Odyssee“ – survived over the centuries, using treasures from the Papyrus Collection, the Collection of Manuscripts and Ancient Prints, the Collection of Leaflets, Posters and Ex-Libris of the ÖNB and the Collection of Classical Antiquities of the Museum of Art History as examples. The two epics in the form narrative verses were written down for the first time around 700 B.C. Since then more than 20,000 verses in ancient Greek – the first monumental work of European literature – have been ascribed to Homer. He created his artificial language by mixing different dialects, which not even the Greek in the era of Alexander the Great could understand easily. It has been conserved on different media, from the Papyri to modern books. The earliest copies on Papyri date back to the 3rd century and come from Egypt. www.onb.at ■

Anti-doping information campaign of NADA, BSO and Ministry

In the framework of a joint event of the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), the Federal Sports Organisation (BSO) and the Ministry of Sport, the representatives and anti-doping officers of the Austrian associations for the different sports disciplines were informed about the latest trends and changes in the combat against doping on 28 April 2009.

More than 90 sports officials of the Austrian sports associations participated in the event (chaired by NADA manager Andi Schwab) at the Vienna-based "House of Sport". Information and discussions focused on topics such as preventive measures, special medical authorisations, the current Federal Anti-Doping Act as well as on the envisaged further development of and innovations in the doping control system. ■

Federal government adopts lump-sum tax allowance for athletes

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos welcomed the draft of the 2nd Act Amending Social Law 2009 adopted by the federal government at the 16th meeting of the Council of Ministers on 28 April 2009. It provides for a lump-sum tax-free allowance for transport and travel expenses paid by sports clubs and sport associations to athletes, referees or coaches: up to 30 euros per active day or a maximum of 540 euros per month.

Minister of Sport Darabos was pleased about the amendment: "Volunteer work is a crucial issue in sport, it is indispensable. Thousands of officials work week after week to encourage people to engage in sport and physical activity. I welcome this lump-sum solution. Legal certainty strengthens volunteer work and consequentially the Austrian sport." ■

Minister Darabos commemorates 100th birthday of Karl Schäfer

On 17 May 2009 the 100th anniversary of the birthday of Karl Schäfer, one of the most successful figure skaters of all times, will be celebrated. On this occasion, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos pays homage to the exceptional athlete and pioneer of Austrian figure skating.

Darabos: "Schäfer was not only a world star during his active career, which unfortunately

developed against the background of a very dark period of history, but in many ways he also provided fresh impetus to national and international figure skating after World War II. He set high athletic standards, which later served as a yardstick for many Olympic winners and champions. His importance is highlighted by the fact that every year the 'Karl Schäfer Memorial', an international figure skating and ice dancing competition is held, which is truly a dignified – athletic – memorial", stated Darabos.

Karl Schäfer was born in Hernals, the 17th district of Vienna, in 1909, not far away from an ice rink. Learning to play the violin very easily, it soon became clear that he was not only a gifted athlete but also a musical talent.

Between 1926 and 1937 he also became Austrian swimming champion in breaststroke seven times, but then his love for frozen water prevailed.

Schäfer started a successful figure skating career, won Olympic gold twice (1932 und 1936) and became world champion seven times and European champion eight times.

Soon Schäfer's talent for show was to surface as well. Together with Herta Wächter, he founded the "Karl-Schäfer Eisrevue", from which the world-famous "Wiener Eisrevue" ("Vienna Ice Revue") developed.

After working as a coach in the USA, he became again active in his native Hernals, where he trained mainly promising talents. The most successful ice skater of all times died in April 1976. ■

Darabos: Pupils' League is a major achievement in youth sport

The "Pupils' League" is undoubtedly one of the most important achievements in Austrian youth sport. This competition is a well-established event as it is already three decades old – this is double the age of this year's participants.

The finals of the volleyball tournament take place in Melk from 16 to 20 May 2009.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos stated: "It is one of my most important tasks to strengthen the physical activity of pupils in the curriculum. We pursue the great goal of incorporating a daily lesson of physical education into the curriculum. Initiatives such as the Pupils' League, with its longstanding tradition, are crucial in raising awareness among pupils, teachers and parents." ■