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## Outrage about Third President of the National Council Martin Graf

Chancellor Werner Faymann (Social Democratic Party / SPÖ) has repeatedly called on the Third President of the National Council Martin Graf, a member of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), to step down. In an article published in the right-wing weekly "Neue Freie Zeitung" Graf had referred to the President of the Jewish Community, Ariel Muzicant, as the "foster father of anti-Fascist leftist terrorism". The Greens presented this article to the National Council on 27 May 2009. In his most recent reaction after the Council of Ministers on 2 June 2009, Faymann emphasised that he considered Graf unacceptable as Third President of the National Council. Vice Chancellor and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll of the People's Party (ÖVP) stressed in a joint press conference that there was "absolutely no excuse" for Graf's statements. Together with President of the National Council Barbara Prammer (SPÖ) and his entire party, Faymann did not only call for Graf's resignation but also for a new law to vote the President out of office with the support of a two-thirds majority. Coalition partner Pröll expressed his hope that Graf would resign voluntarily and stated that the irreproachability of the presidents must continue to be "beyond doubt". After being informed about the article, the government leaders, ministers, parties and MPs had distanced themselves from the Graf's defamatory statements. "I expect that somebody who goes off the rails in such an unacceptable way also has to bear the consequences and step down", said the Chancellor after his visit to the European Commission in Brussels on 27 May 2009. A similar argument was used by Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger (ÖVP): "I can only support this. From my point of view, this is an in-excusable misdemeanour." Pröll said it was a "targeted and disrespectful provocation" he rejected totally. Those making anti-Semitism a subject in the election campaign had "no business in Austria's senior political circles", stated Pröll. Still in the afternoon of 27 May 2009, the MPs of the SPÖ, ÖVP and the Greens condemned Graf's statements in a joint communication. Rejecting a change of law ("legislation motivated by a specific case"), the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) proposed an alternative text, the FPÖ denied cooperation. Graf himself refused to resign arguing that he was the elected Third President of the National Council. ■

## Labour market: EU approves transition periods for Austria

At the Employment and Social Policy Council in Luxemburg on 8 June 2009, the European Commission gave the green light for Austria's decision to extend the transition periods restricting the freedom of movement of workers by two years, up to the end of April 2011. This affects jobseekers from the new Central and Eastern European EU Member States. Besides Austria, only Germany decided to keep the restrictions in place for two more years. Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer was very satisfied about the approval. Chancellor Werner Faymann and Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger had already rallied support for Austria's position in Brussels in May. ■

## Minister Berlakovich pleased about Climate Protection Report

Minister of Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich perceived "a favourable tendency" in the latest Climate Protection Report, as the greenhouse gas emissions had dropped from the prior-year level. However, the goal had not yet been reached. The Climate Protection Act had been drafted under his predecessor Josef Pröll but has not yet been adopted. According to Berlakovich, the draft is being revised, negotiations about details are underway with the Länder. The Minister of the Environment plans to make public transport more attractive and promote "electric mobility". ■

## EU social protection expenditure declining: Austria ranked 7<sup>th</sup>

The social protection expenditure in the EU is decreasing slightly – but Austria's social expenditure continues above the EU average. Based on calculations of the EU's statistical office Eurostat, the EU's social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 26.9% in 2006 (2005: 27.1%). With a share of 28.5% (2005: 28.8 %), Austria is placed 7<sup>th</sup> in the EU ranking. The highest percentages are registered by France, Sweden and Belgium. Luxembourg records the highest expenditure based on per-capita purchasing power. In the EU the main sources of funding social protection are social contributions (59%) and government contributions from taxes (38%). In Austria the ratio is 65.3 : 33.3%. ■

## EU election in Austria: results

In Austria the EU election on 7 June 2009 ended with some surprises. Despite a loss of three percentage points (compared to 2004), the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) received almost 30% of the valid votes cast, becoming the clear winner. The Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) suffered a minus of nearly 10%; with less than 24% of the votes, it came in second. Getting almost 18% of the ballots cast, the independent Hans-Peter Martin was ranked third, before the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), which did not meet expectations despite almost doubling its share in the votes (13.1%). Suffering a drastic loss, the Greens are down to 9.5%. The Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) did not make it into the European Parliament (4.7%). The election turnout was similar as in 2004, i.e. about 42.4% (2,699,240 votes cast).

The preliminary result (without voting cards and postal votes) is: ÖVP 29.7% (2004: -3.0%), SPÖ 23.8% (-9.5%), Martin 17.9% (+3.9%), FPÖ 13.1% (+6.8%), Greens 9.5% (-3.4%), BZÖ 4.7% (did not participate in previous elections in 2004), Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) 0.7% (+0.7%), JuLis 0.6% (did not participate in 2004). Austria has 17 seats in the European Parliament (or 19 if the Lisbon Treaty entered into force). After counting the postal votes, one seat is expected to move from the SPÖ to the Greens. Currently the seats are distributed as follows: ÖVP: 6 (2004 +/-0); SPÖ: 5/4 (-2/3); Martin: 3 (+1); FPÖ: 2 (+1); Greens: 1/2 (-1/0).

*(For more information and detailed results see <http://www.bmi.gv.at> ■*

## Fischer and Türk paid visit to Loibl Pass sub-camps

On 5 June 2009 President Heinz Fischer and his Slovenian counterpart Danilo Türk commemorated the victims of the two satellite camps of Mauthausen near Loibl Pass (Carinthia). The two heads of state laid wreaths at the south entrance in Slovenia and on the northern side of the camp in Carinthia. "It is our duty to deal with these things in an honest way and not to conceal anything", stressed Fischer in an address. Slovenian President Türk described the joint visit as the "beginning of something new". Today the issue at stake was not "to speak about misunderstandings but about common projects", said Türk.

Up to 1945 hundreds of concentration camp prisoners were forced to drive the strategically important tunnel into the mountain, 1566 meters above sea level. Many of the prisoners coming from 16 European countries died from the inhumane working conditions or were killed for other reasons. The memorial site on the Slovenian side dates back to 1950, while a memorial tablet in Carinthia was put up only in 1995. Recently, some foundations of the northern camp were excavated. "We have not found the right way to deal with these things correctly right from the beginning", Fischer stated self-critically. In the next years a memorial site will be established also on the Austrian side of the border. ■

## Chancellor Faymann pleads for EU measures against "criminal tourism"

After a closed-door meeting of the National Security Council with representatives of all parliamentary parties in the Federal Chancellery on 3 June 2009, Chancellor Werner Faymann presented general views on security. He considered the citizens' "subjective feeling of safety" very important and reaffirmed that in Austria's opinion the security of the external borders of the Schengen area had to be "improved". Faymann clearly rejected the reintroduction of border controls as demanded by the FPÖ and BZÖ. According to him, the "key issue" was to increase police personnel. With regard to the border issue, Faymann called for securing the borders through random checks and border stops. But this was being done. Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter had the government's support for all her projects to intensify border surveillance, stated Faymann. Fekter announced that in July 400 additional police members (2360 in total) would become active in an enlarged border zone. The aim was to combat illegal migration and crime.

In his meeting with European Commission President José Manuel Barroso on 27 May 2009, Faymann had already pled for stepping up security along the external borders of the Schengen area and for intensifying police co-operation. Barroso announced that the Commission would submit proposals on 10 June 2009. Austria stressed above all the need to combat "criminal tourism". Some regions, in particular Burgenland and Lower Austria, register an increase in crime by up to 50%. The decision to extend the border mission of the Federal Army up to the end of 2010 has already been adopted. ■

## National Council gave green light for biennial budget 2009/2010

On 29 May 2009 the National Council approved the biennial budget (Federal Finance Act) for 2009 and 2010, giving the green light for the first budget of Minister of Finance Josef Pröll. In absolute figures, the budget for this year provides for an expenditure of about 77 billion euros. The expenditure earmarked for 2010 (after implementing the bank rescue package) is slightly lower, nearly 71 billion euros. Deficits will widen substantially as the government revenue of about 64 and 57.5 billion euros will remain significantly below the expenditure. The total government deficit (based on the Maastricht criteria applicable in the EU) is likely to amount to 3.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 and 4.7% in 2010. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann reiterated that the biennial budget marked the beginning of the combat against the financial and economic crisis.

The National Council also adopted a wage freeze for politicians, who will not benefit from the automatic 3.2% wage increase as at 1 July 2009. The government expects cost savings of 2.86 million euros. The wages of politicians will be adjusted only from 1 January 2011 onwards. ■

## OeNB forecast: Austria's economy shrinks by 4.2 percent

The Austrian National Bank (Oesterreichische Nationalbank / OeNB) made a downward adjustment to its forecast for the domestic economy. Due to the global economic slump, a major recession is expected for 2009. The real gross domestic product (GDP) will decline by 4.2% and is likely to show a slight minus of 0.4% also in 2010. For 2011 the National Bank forecasts a positive real growth of 1.2%.

“The situation of the Austrian economy is still unsatisfactory but there are early signs of a recovery. The OeNB expects the development to stabilise towards the end of the year 2009“, explained OeNB Governor Ewald Nowotny in a press release on 4 June 2009. The growth projections for the years 2009 and 2010 were subject to a downward revision by 3.9 and 1.2 percentage points, respectively, compared to the OeNB forecasts of December 2008. According to the European Central Bank (ECB), a GDP decline

between 4.1 and 5.1% is expected for the 16 countries of the euro-zone this year. ■

## Winter tourism with second-best result

Thanks to the favourable snow conditions, the domestic tourist sector achieved partly favourable results in the past winter season 2008/09. As the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) informed, the number of hotel nights declined slightly by 0.7% between November and April. Nevertheless, a total of 62.89 million hotel nights was the second-best result the Austrian tourist enterprises registered since the beginning of statistical records in 1875. The number of arrivals also decreased insignificantly by 0.5% to 15.1 million guests. The number of foreign guests – above all from Great Britain – dropped, while an increasing number of Austrians took advantage of the good snow conditions. The number of hotel nights of domestic guests reached a new record, climbing by 1.9% to 14.52 million. The number of overnight stays of foreigners declined by 1.5% to 48.35 million. ■

## Eco-premium: plus 4.6 percent of new car registrations

The eco-premium (a premium for scrapping old cars) introduced in April 2009 boosted car purchases. For the second time in a row, the number of new car registrations increased in Austria, even though at a slower pace. While the increase from the prior-month level had been 12.8% in April, the plus registered in May was 4.6%, based on Eurotax. In May 29,799 cars were registered for the first time. ■

## New media giant: Styria takes over majority of Moser Holding

The planned joint venture of Styria Medien AG (“Kleine Zeitung“) and Moser Holding (“Tiroler Tageszeitung“) will result in Austria's by far largest media/print company. Mediaprint (“Krone“, “Kurier“) will rank second. If the cartel authority approves the deal, the activities of Moser and all regional media of Styria will be bundled into a new stock corporation. Styria will control 68% of this stock corporation, while Moser Holding will own about 27%. Raiffeisenbank Oberösterreich will hold 5%. ■

## Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST) inaugurated

The Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST) in Maria Gugging near Klosterneuburg (Lower Austria) was inaugurated on 2 June 2009. At the opening ceremony Federal President Heinz Fischer asked the research and educational facility for basic research at the highest level to be patient. The significance of the respective research findings would be fully recognised only after some time. Fischer also reminded of the time “when for the well-known tragic reasons many of our most talented researchers were driven abroad, had to flee or were killed and when mediocrity and dullness were gaining ground”.

Lower Austria’s Governor Erwin Pröll thanked Vienna’s Mayor Michael Häupl for attending the event, which he described as a “very beautiful gesture and important signal” of cooperation beyond party lines and regional borders. After all, Vienna had lost against Maria Gugging when the controversial decision about the location of IST was taken. Lower Austria was to be developed into a pioneering research location in the next years.

Minister of Science Hahn pointed out that the Institute had been realised “almost at world-record pace”. By granting IST the right of offering doctoral programmes, the portfolio of tertiary education had been rounded off in Lower Austria, the IST was the first educational centre in this Land enjoying this privilege.

The IST Austria was founded by virtue of a law in 2006. The financial resources were provided by the federal government and the regional government of Lower Austria. Between 40 and 50 research teams composed of about 400 to 500 researchers are to become active at IST by 2016. Designate President of IST Austria is computer scientist Thomas Henzinger (born in Linz), who held professorial chairs at the University of Berkeley (USA) and the ETH Lausanne (Switzerland), presented three new professors at the opening: computer scientist Krishnendu Chatterjee from India, mathematician and informatics researcher Herbert Edelsbrunner from Austria and German experimental biologist Carl-Philipp Heisenberg. Together with British evolution biologist Nick Barton appointed some months ago and Henzinger himself, the Institute has currently five professors.

Future priorities for action of IST Austria will in any case be brain research, materials sciences,

quantitative biology and computer sciences. [www.ist-austria.ac.at](http://www.ist-austria.ac.at) ■

## Georg Büchner Prize to author Walter Kappacher from Salzburg

This year’s Georg Büchner Prize – the most renowned award for literature in German language – goes to Walter Kappacher. The 70-year-old author from Salzburg had built a highly remarkable, but for a long time unknown, oeuvre based on the solitary and consistent work of many decades. Only with his novel “Selina oder das andere Leben“ (“Selina or the Other Life”), published in 2005, did he step into the limelight, informed the official award statement of the German Academy of Language and Poetry (Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung) in Darmstadt, where the award ceremony will be held on 31 October 2009. Walter Kappacher is the second Austrian in a row – after Josef Winkler – to win the Büchner Prize.

He was born in the city of Salzburg in 1938. After jobbing as a mechanical engineer, milkman and travel agent, he published his first short stories in “Stuttgarter Zeitung” in 1967. In 1975 his book “Morgen“ was published. Since 1978 he has been working as an “independent” author, publishing the novels “Rosina“, “Silberpfeile“, the stories “Die irdische Liebe“, “Wer zuerst lacht“ and the essay “Hellseher sind oft Schwarzseher“. This year his novel “Der Fliegenpalast“ (“The Fly Palace”) followed, in which he devoted himself to Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

Kappacher has received several top awards, e.g. the Hermann Lenz Prize (2004), the Grand Art Prize for Literature of the Land of Salzburg (2006), and a honorary doctorate of the University of Salzburg (2008).

The Prize named after Georg Büchner (1813-1837) has been granted since 1951. Among the prize winners are literary eminencies like Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Heinrich Böll, Erich Kästner, Günter Grass or Elfriede Jelinek. In a first reaction Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied described the new prize winner as one of those “silent writers in the German-speaking area placing the art of narration above demagoguery, using language for the sole purpose of narration and refusing to be abused for other purposes”. Carinthian author Josef Winkler stated succinctly: “...in the past years I wondered on several occasions, when I came across his books, why his literature has not received more attention. ■

## Mülheim: Elfriede Jelinek named Dramatist of the Year

In Mülheim (Germany) an independent jury appointed Elfriede Jelinek Dramatist of the Year 2009. The Austrian Nobel Prize laureate in literature 2004 won the prize for playwrights with her play "Rechnitz. Der Würgeengel" ("Rechnitz. The Death Angel"). The panel had selected seven from 130 plays premiered in the German-speaking area in 2008 and invited them to Mülheim/Ruhr. Jelinek received the Dramatists' Prize for the third time, thirteen of her plays had been invited in the past.

"Rechnitz" (produced by Jossi Wieler) was premiered at Münchner Kammerspiele in autumn 2008. The play is named after the village Rechnitz in Burgenland, close to the Hungarian border, where the Countess of Batthyany allegedly hosted a party with NS officials shortly before the end of WWII. in 1945. Some of the guests were said to have received weapons, with which Jewish-Hungarian forced labourers were killed. The crime was concealed, the clearing up was obstructed and the guilty persons were never held responsible. In her play Jelinek does not describe the crime itself but the way of concealing it and the secret-macabre joy of killing.

According to the Social Democratic culture spokeswoman Christine Muttonen, the fact that Elfriede Jelinek received the prize for the third time showed that "she has continued writing plays of high quality that are quite rightly among those most successful on stage". In "Rechnitz" Jelinek devoted herself again to "the theme of her life, namely to write in protest against irregularities and abuse in public and political life". In this play "against the belittlement and the denial of National Socialist crimes", Jelinek had once more proven to be a "committed and unrelenting warning voice against the dangers of right-wing extremism". ■

## Faymann and Schmied: set of measures for political education

In view of the recent neo-Nazi activities of some young people, Chancellor Werner Faymann and Minister of Education Claudia Schmied presented a set of measures to improve political education at school on 29 May 2009. "We have to convey values such as tolerance, humanity and respect for the other to the pupils", stressed the Chancellor.

We must not keep silent in the face of fascism and the disrespectful treatment of others. "Watching carefully instead of looking away" is also Schmied's motto, as she emphasised. The fact that the new set of measures was presented to the public at the Documentary Archives of the Austrian Resistance (Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes/DÖW) was described by her as a "political statement".

As from the school year 2009/10 onwards, all teachers of the compulsory school system are to receive special training in political education during their studies. Compulsory in-service training in this field would also be offered. Events involving witnesses of the time and discussions are to be increased in vocational schools. Furthermore, Schmied called on the teachers to ensure that all pupils visit a memorial site at least once. Cooperation with the Mauthausen Committee (MKÖ) would be intensified. Other measures comprised the widening of the range of seminars for teachers and the development of a manual for teachers in cooperation with the platform "erinnern.at". Awards such as the Federal Cross of Honour of the Ministry of Education focusing on tolerance would be granted, starting in autumn 2009, explained Schmied. The measures were no guarantee that incidents such as the recent one in Ebensee, where four local boys aged between 14 and 16 years had verbally abused and insulted the participants in a ceremony held in commemoration of the liberation of the Ebensee concentration camp. But she wanted to support to the teachers optimally in their task. Chancellor Faymann promised to increase the budget of the MKÖ to ensure "that every pupil would go there once". At present, about 60,000 pupils per year visited the memorial site, but a capacity for 100,000 per year was required, said Faymann. ■

## Paulus Manker's "Alma" performed in Vienna, in autumn in Jerusalem

Paulus Manker's "Alma – Show Biz to the End" has been an international box office hit for ten years. The play by the director from Vienna about Alma Mahler-Werfel (1879-1964) caused a furore in Vienna, Venice, Lisbon and Los Angeles. Alma was the daughter of Anna Sofie Bergen, a singer from Hamburg, and the painter Emil Jakob Schindler, who became one of the most important artists of the monarchy when Crown Prince Rudolf commissioned him in the late 1880s to

draw the costal villages of Dalmatia. Alma, who also had an artistic vein, even filled two notebooks with song compositions but became famous for her autobiography of 1960 "Mein Leben" ("My Life"), in which she described above all the relationships with lovers and husbands. The composer Gustav Mahler never got over the separation from her, and nor did the painter Oskar Kokoschka. The architect Walter Gropius obviously was only a toy for her, and the author Franz Werfel said: "She is one of the very few magic women existing in this world!"

Only the young writer and later Nobel Prize winner Elias Canetti described her after a visit cynically as an ageing, vain matron, whose alleged sex appeal remained a mystery to him.

In July Manker's box office about the art groupie will again be performed in Vienna – at Telegrafentamt (Börseplatz, 1<sup>st</sup> district). On 3 October 2009 a series of 20 guest performances in Jerusalem will start – practically as Austria's present to the host for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Israel, supported e.g. by Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger, Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied and Vienna's Mayor Michael Häupl. The production will be staged in three languages, in Hebrew, Yiddish and German. Besides, the real Alma visited Jerusalem twice; the last time in 1929, on a honeymoon with Franz Werfel. [www.alma-mahler.com](http://www.alma-mahler.com). ■

### More money for Television Fund Austria

On its fifth birthday, the Television Fund Austria (Fernsehfonds Austria) gets a hefty cash injection of the federal government. Film promotion resources were increased from 7.5 to 15.5 million euros in the past weeks. Funding focuses on co-productions in German language. Cooperation between Austrian and German producers was a "highly successful model to overcome the smallness of our domestic market", said Alfred Grinschgl, Managing Director of the Broadcasting Division of RTR-GmbH. Television Fund Austria has subsidised a total of 175 projects with 35.5 million euros since its foundation in 2004. Among the projects were 70 TV films and 100 documentaries. The production costs of the 175 projects subsidised totalled 233 million euros. The Chair-man of the Audiovisual and Film Industry Association (Fachverband der Audiovisions- und Filmindustrie), Danny Krausz, concluded: "Currently, Austria is represented all over the

world glamorously through the achievements of the domestic film industry and film-makers. With significantly improved measures or future action we can now give fresh impetus to the country's economy". Secretary of State for Media Josef Ostermayer described the Austrian film as an "important economic factor and an asset to distinguish ourselves as a media location". ■

### Biennale: women's share a key theme in the Austrian Pavilion

In the Austrian Pavilion of the recently opened 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale, the artists Elke Krystufek, Dorit Margreiter and Franziska & Lois Weinberger present critical art in a fresh and humorous way. Krystufek, who usually concentrates on the situation of women, devotes herself in her work "Tabou Tabou" to the man, constructing counter-images; obviously their aim is to critically examine a rigid tradition and to promote a new, more humane value system.

Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied opened the Pavilion by quoting statistics. In the Austrian history of the Venice Biennale there had only been two women curators (versus 29 men), i.e. the curators of the current show, Valie Export and Silvia Eiblmayr. 104 male and only eleven women artists represented Austrian art. "This year we have massively changed the statistics", stated Schmied dryly. Valie Export added that she did not only hope "for more equity for women but also that young artists who are not yet established would be included to a greater extent". ■

### Phenomenal performance of Joseph Haydn's "The Creation"

To mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Joseph Haydn on 31 May, the oratory "The Creation" was performed in 21 cities around the world. In Austria two phenomenal versions were presented – one reproducing the original sound, by Wiener Akademie conducted by Martin Haselböck at the original venue, the assembly hall of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, where the composition had received its world premiere on Haydn's birthday in 1808. The second version was broadcast by 70 TV and radio channels from Eisenstadt. Adam Fischer conducted Österreich-Ungarische Haydn Philharmonie. The singers were Annette Dasch, Thomas Quasthoff and Christoph Strehl. ■

Sporthilfe campaign: Performance. Fair Play. Togetherness.

Österreichische Sporthilfe recently presented an initiative focusing attention on the crucial values of sport: "Performance. Fair Play. Togetherness." – values that are important not only in sport but also in every-day life. Numerous high-ranking personalities – among them high-performance athletes Mirna Jukic, Werner Schlager and Wolfgang Loitzl – support the campaign.

"Successful athletes represent the values of sport and are role models for our youth. As idols they have a decisive influence on the leisure behaviour of our youth. Performance, fair play and togetherness are sustainable principles. It is equally important for sport and society to uphold them, these values strengthen our country", said Sporthilfe President Norbert Darabos, who took office in February.

"Fair play has always been and is an important concern of Sporthilfe and its new President. This is why a "value initiative" like "Performance. Fair Play. Togetherness." is more valuable than ever, the positive values of sport have to remain in the foreground", Darabos stated decisively.

Österreichische Sporthilfe has supported Austria's young talents and elite athletes since 1972. 82 Olympic medals are the impressive result of the organisation's successful mission. ■

Fresh impetus to anti-doping combat also at EU level

Various measures at international level are being taken to improve the technologies used in the combat against doping. Of course, this requires a balancing act between taking decisive action on the one hand and ensuring data protection on the other hand.

But especially the most recent developments at global and at European level show that progress has been made.

On 1 June 2009 the International Data Protection Standard took effect. The Article 29 Data Protection Working Party of the EU had previously examined the draft of the Standard from the perspective of ensuring privacy protection in the context of doping tests. In late April the decisive breakthrough was made in Madrid. WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) and the relevant coordinating organisation of the Council of Europe (CAHAMA) stated to be

highly satisfied about the recent developments. In the forthcoming meetings agreements have to be reached on therapeutic use exemptions and the athletes' formal anti-doping commitment statements.

Based on a Europe-wide consensus, the combat against doping will be stepped up at three levels in the future, i.e. legislation, policymaking and partnerships. Intensified research work and the networking of all bodies involved in the anti-doping struggle are key elements in implementing the respective targets.

In general, the European Commission has focused discussions on trade with forbidden doping substances as well as drug trafficking, at least since the EU's large-scale anti-doping conference in Athens last May. In any case, there is a trend in the Member States to treat trade in doping substances as a criminal offence. ■

Vital step towards the Men's European Volleyball Championship in Austria in 2011

The selection of Austria as the host of the Men's European Volleyball Championship 2011 has given a strong impetus to domestic volleyball. The young national team will certainly try to use the remaining time before the great event to gain as much experience as possible. A vital step in the preparations is the participation in this year's European League, which will be held in June and July in Vienna, Steyr and St. Anton.

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos: "Like in many other team sports, also our national volleyball team acts as an important role model, especially for the young generation. Fascinating games of the European League 2009 and the European Championship 2011 will provide us with an opportunity to arouse the interest of many young people in this attractive sport". ■

Football World Cup out of sight

After the 0:1 defeat of Austria's national football team against Serbia in Belgrade, the chances of participating in the World Cup in South Africa in 2010 are practically nil – despite the new team coach Didi Constantini. ■