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## Government adopted Amendment to University Act and ÖBB reform

Austria's government gave the go-ahead for a number of laws, amendments and reforms at the Council of Ministers on 16 June 2009. It adopted the Amendment to the 2002 University Act, the Austrian Rail (ÖBB) Restructuring Act as well as the government guarantees for company credits (see Economy). Parliament could approve the respective resolutions still before the summer break. A law preparing the inclusion of aviation into the EU's new emissions trading system was also passed. The new Postal Market Act (for liberalising the postal market) was postponed until autumn. According to Minister of Science Johannes Hahn, the financing for the universities has been secured by amending the University Act. As demanded by Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, a note for the minutes was added that the two coalition partners committed themselves to introducing "harmonised A levels" (with a standardised written exam section). The exam content is expected to be agreed on and ready for adoption by the federal government by 30 June 2009.

The Amendment to the University Act entails changes in the appointment of members delegated by the government to the university councils and the Science Council. The competence for appointing members continues to lie with the government and is not transferred to the Minister of Science, as requested by Hahn. The 2009 Amendment to the University Act introduces entrance phases in all study programmes (which are not subject to statutory admission requirements) as from 2011/2012. After concluding this phase successfully, students may continue their studies. Universities will be allowed to define "qualitative access criteria" for MA and PhD studies. Moreover, the minimum duration of BA programmes will be extended from three to four years. All studies will be available as bachelor's and master's degree programmes. Other key issues are a 40% women's share in all university bodies, a greater say of the University Council in the election of rectors and the new composition of the Senates (no majority requirement for appointing professors, increase in academic staff without chair).

The new ÖBB Act for streamlining the Austrian railways has also been adopted by the Council of Ministers. ÖBB-Holding AG will hold only three (previously five) companies (passenger transport, goods transport/rail cargo, infrastructure). ■

## Agreement on EIA Act

On 18 June 2009, Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich and Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner reached an agreement on the Amendment to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act. The "public interest" in the security of supply criticised by environmentalists will be eliminated, but reference will be made to "laws governing special subjects" (forestry law, water law). In addition, the EIA procedure will be simplified as expert opinions dealing with specific matters may be re-used, e.g. no EIA procedures will be required for exchanging turbines. Chancellor Faymann highlighted that a balance between ecology and economy was needed. Necessary reductions in the duration of the procedure should not be to the detriment of the environment. ■

## National Council: green light for "free" nursery year

On 17 June 2009, the National Council approved an agreement between the Federal Republic and the Länder under which the Länder commit themselves to providing free nursery places (20 hours/week) to five-year-olds as from autumn 2009 onwards. But parents will become legally required to send their children to nursery at least one year before school only in 2010. The Republic will transfer 70 million euros annually to the Länder up to 2013 to cover the additional expenditure. ■

## New family law strengthens "patchwork" families

The new revised family law will give step-parents more rights and duties of child-raising, married couples will have more scope for agreements to share their assets after a divorce. An apartment contributed by one spouse may be excluded from the division of assets in divorce proceedings based on a notarial deed. Another key element of the amendment: step-parents may support their spouse in "every-day childcare obligations", e.g. by signing notes of excuse for school. Advance maintenance payments by the state will be accelerated. The National Council is likely to adopt the amendment before the summer break. The registered partnership for homosexuals, which has not been incorporated in the amendment, will follow in the course of this year. ■

## Federal Chancellor Faymann at EU summit in Brussels

The EU heads of state and government unanimously nominated Commission President José Manuel Barroso for a second term at the two-day summit in Brussels (18/19 June 2009). However, the Commission President must be endorsed by the European Parliament, which will vote on him only in autumn, while the EU leaders hope that Barroso will be re-appointed still before the summer break. Chancellor Werner Faymann welcomed the unanimous decision to re-elect Barroso. He had put forward “convincing arguments” at the presentation of his programme. Faymann highlighted Barroso’s “clear commitment to social balance“, more financial market supervision and climate protection.

At the EU summit Ireland’s sovereignty was reinforced to make the Lisbon Treaty more attractive to the population who voted against it last year. Guarantees in matters of tax sovereignty, military neutrality and the abortion prohibition were granted. The second Irish referendum on the Treaty has been scheduled for October. The concessions for Ireland will be laid down in a special protocol to the Treaty, enshrining them in EU law. The Commission informed that the other EU Member States would not be forced to re-ratify the Lisbon Treaty.

The summit in Brussels also delivered results concerning the reorganisation of Europe’s financial market supervision. For example, a “European Systemic Risk Council” will be set up within the European Central Bank (ECB). It will act as an early warning system for highlighting possible turbulences in the financial market. Concrete legislative proposals for the new financial market supervisory architecture and common basic rules are to be presented by the EU Commission in early autumn 2009. Chancellor Faymann described the decision in favour of tightening financial market supervision as “substantial progress”. Austria had also achieved that national borders would be covered by the improved protection of the EU’s external borders by the EU agency Frontex. ■

## Federal President Fischer at Central European summit in Novi Sad

Besides Federal President Heinz Fischer, 13 heads of state participated in the 16<sup>th</sup> Central European

Presidents’ Summit in Novi Sad, the capital of the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina (19 June 2009). The top item on the agenda was the border conflict between Croatia and Slovenia. Serbian President Boris Tadic explained that the participants had come to the conclusion that border disputes between individual countries should be treated as bilateral conflicts and not as an obstacle to EU integration. The EU’s efforts to mediate in the conflict between Croatia and Slovenia had failed only one day earlier. Slovenia currently blocks Croatia’s EU accession talks.

As far as Serbia itself was concerned, Tadic underlined that Serbia’s “full integration into the European Union had highest strategic priority“. In this context, Federal President Fischer highlighted that Austria advocated strongly that the trade transition agreement signed between Belgrade and the EU last year should enter into force as soon as possible.

Fischer also expressed his hope that progress would be made in the EU accession talks with Croatia. ■

## Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov pays visit to Austria

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov arrived in Vienna on 22 June 2009 for a two-day working meeting. His official programme includes talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger. Key topics are the establishment of a new European security architecture, the relations between Russia and the EU as well as bilateral issues. ■

## Federal President Fischer met European heads of state in Naples

At an informal multilateral meeting of European heads of state in Naples (12/13 June 2009), Federal President Heinz Fischer deliberated on topics touching on European integration, security policy and the economic crisis. Besides host Giorgio Napolitano, the talks were attended by the Presidents of Germany, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Latvia.

Fischer stressed the need to address the problem of “euroscepticism” and to boost confidence in EU policy. The Austrian President turned the spotlight on the combat against the economic crisis and on social aspects. ■

## Labour market package II: short-time working prolonged

Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll agreed on the labour market package II on 17 June 2009 after lengthy negotiations. A key measure is the extension of the short-time working arrangement from currently 18 to 24 months (2010 to 2012). Moreover, as from the 7<sup>th</sup> month of short-time working, the employers' social insurance contributions (unemployment, health, pension and accident insurance) will be financed by the Public Employment Service. On 23 June 2009, the entire package will be discussed by the Parliamentary Committee. The measures affected 322,500 persons, and 34,500 jobs could be created or safeguarded, underlined Minister for Social Affairs Hundstorfer at the presentation of the package. The retention periods (currently up to four months) criticised by the economic sector remain unchanged. In a press release Minister of Finance Pröll stressed the improved framework for Austria as a job location.

The package also provides for improvements of the part-time working scheme for older workers, educational leave, the establishment of a youth foundation as well as the solidarity premium model. At the same time the assessment base of unemployment benefits will be revalued. As a consequence, unemployment benefits would be adjusted for inflation. About 250,000 people would profit from this measure, emphasised Hundstorfer. The federal government will make available more than 400 million euros by 2013 for the labour market package II. The Public Employment Service estimated that 58,000 people will work short time as from July.

The scheme for reducing the working hours of older workers ("Alterteilzeit") will be simplified. Companies will no longer be required to hire substitutes. The option of a working phase followed by leave is to be abolished. The cost reimbursement rate for this option will be 55 %, but 90% for continuous part-time work. Due to the economic crisis, the earliest eligibility age was fixed at 53 years for women and 58 years for men. An annual increase by half a year is envisaged. Part-time workers should also become eligible.

The target group of the planned youth foundation are mainly young temporary agency workers. The foundation – designed for about 2,000 persons – costs 10 million euros. 2 million euros come from enterprises, 3 million euros from the Insolvency

Compensation Fund; the Public Employment Service and the Länder contribute 2.5 million euros each. As far as educational leave is concerned, employees wishing to benefit from it will be required to have worked for at least six months (previously one year).

The solidarity premium model will be promoted. Several employees will reduce their working time to create a job for an unemployed person. This model will also be introduced for apprentices undergoing institutional apprenticeship training. ■

## Law adopted for granting state guarantees for company credits

On 16 June 2009 the federal government laid the groundwork for the planned public guarantees for company loans. Under the "Act Strengthening Enterprise Liquidity" companies with more than 250 employees may receive government guarantees up to 300 million euros. According to Chancellor Werner Faymann, the government did incur some risk of default but only sound companies with full order books would receive support. In response to the argument that only large enterprises would benefit from government guarantees under the Act Strengthening Enterprise Liquidity, Faymann said that smaller companies could apply for aid through the state-owned funding bank Austria Wirtschaftsservice (aws). ■

## Banking secrecy rules eased for foreign account holders

A new law will pave the way for easing the banking secrecy rules for foreign account holders in Austria. On 16 June 2009, the respective motion was proposed to the National Council by Minister of Finance Josef Pröll. The opposition was informed that the leading twenty industrialised and emerging countries (G20) could impose sanctions if the necessary two-thirds majority was not achieved in the Austrian Parliament. In mid March Austria had recognised the OECD Tax Information Exchange Standards applicable in the OECD countries. ■

## Pözl new CEO of mail company

The boss of the German mobile service provider T-Mobile, Austrian Georg Pözl (52), will become the new CEO of Österreichische Post AG on 1 October 2009. ■

## Viennese Actionism in Sofia

“Viennese Actionism. From Painting to Action. Works from the MUMOK Collection” is the title of an exhibition opened on 11 June 2009 by Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied and her Bulgarian counterpart Stefan Danailov at the National Art Gallery Sofia. The show presents 150 key works of Viennese Actionism from the collection of MUMOK (Vienna Museum of Modern Art). It ushers in a series of exhibitions on art after 1945, presenting different phenomena of international art history at the Sofia Art Gallery every year. As Schmied explained, “the conditions for cultural exchange had improved decisively after Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union in 2007. (...) This exhibition shows very clearly that besides the traditional image of Austria, there is also a tradition of avant-garde contributing to the international renown of our country. It demonstrates impressively that new trends emerge and gain ground continuously. Art blends the past, present and future“.

Schmied and Danailov have already taken other concrete steps to intensify cultural networking between the two countries. Young Bulgarian artists will participate in Austrian Artist-in-Residence programmes. The first artist will move into his studio already in autumn. ■

## Permanent Josef Hoffmann exhibition in Brtnice (Pirnitz)

The peaceful town of Brtnice (former German name: Pirnitz) in the southern Czech Republic was the destination of a group of selected Austrian art connoisseurs on 14 June 2009. The permanent exhibition “Josef Hoffmann – Inspirations“ was opened by the Speaker of the Austrian Parliament, Barbara Prammer. It is held in the house (renovated in 2003) where architect and designer Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) – a co-founder of the Vienna Secession movement and Wiener Werkstätte – was born. The cross-border project is realised by the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) in Vienna (Austria) and the Moravian Gallery (MG) in Brno (Czech Republic). Since 2005 the two museums have organised joint annual exhibitions in the baroque building – now called Josef Hoffmann Museum – the architect had renovated around 1910.

The exhibits of the current show, which is likely to run until the end of 2010, come from MAK and

the MG as well as private collections. The show presents early water colours, glasses, bowls, chairs and architectural designs Hoffmann realised on the territory of the present-day Czech Republic. In addition, pieces from Hoffmann’s own collection are showcased – his “inspirations“: folk textiles, furniture, Biedermeier portraits and travel stories from Capri, where he studied the functional architecture of residential buildings during his professional training. The disciple of Otto Wagner was certainly also inspired by the landscape surrounding this house, where he later used to spend his summer holidays.

In her opening statement Prammer did not only praise the beauty of the region but also the exhibition, which she considered “a sign of the importance of Austrian-Czech cooperation“. Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, this project showed “how excellently Europe can, will and must develop“.

As MAK Director Peter Noever stated later, it was crucial to study the personality of Josef Hoffmann and his transnational birth place: “Especially since his work covers a wide range – from the modern Sanatorium Purkersdorf to Palais Stoclet in Brussels, a synthesis of the arts“. MAK, the owner of the largest collection of works by Hoffmann, would therefore intensify its activities in the Czech Republic. Additional exhibits would be shown in Brtnice already in autumn, a symposium and a commented new edition of Hoffmann’s “Autobiography“ are planned. Brtnice – about two hours by car from Vienna – should not only be a tourist destination but also a research centre on Josef Hoffmann and his epoch, said the MAK Director.

[www.mak.at/aussenstellen/c\\_hoffmann.htm](http://www.mak.at/aussenstellen/c_hoffmann.htm) ■

## International Liszt Association (ILA)

The International Liszt Association (ILA) was founded in Budapest on 12 June 2009. ILA is a non-profit organisation (NPO) headquartered in Budapest, defining itself as an umbrella organisation of world-wide Liszt societies, cultural institutions as well as personalities excelling in research and art that promote the values of the oeuvre of Franz Liszt.

Among the founding members are Franz Liszt Gesellschaft Weimar, Liszt Ferenc Társaság (Hungary), Stichting Franz Liszt Kring (Netherlands) and the Liszt Society Great Britain, the Istituto Liszt Bologna (Italy), as well as the

Liszt societies in France and Slovakia and Franz-Liszt-Gesellschaft Burgenland.

The renowned Liszt researcher Detlef Altenburg, Director of and professor at the Institute of Musicology (a joint institution of the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar and the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena), was elected ILA President. Vice President is Eduard Kutrowatz, who has managed the Liszt Festival in Raiding (Burgenland), the birth place of the composer, since early 2009 together with his brother Johannes.

ILA pursues a number of goals: to intensify international cooperation between the different Liszt societies in the areas of research, education and professional training, to promote the exchange of knowledge, information and experience between the different Liszt societies and partner institutions, to support the objectives of all affiliated institutions, in particular the International Music Council in Paris, of which ILA is a member, as well as the representation of the Liszt heritage in (inter)national organisations. As Eduard Kutrowatz said, a globally important network had been created through ILA, "allowing us to coordinate in an optimal way all cultural activities of the Liszt Year 2011 – which will be staged in Burgenland under the umbrella brand name "lisztomania".

Membership in ILA will help to optimise the international positioning of the Liszt Festival Raiding, a European chamber music festival of growing fame. [www.lisztfestival.at](http://www.lisztfestival.at) ■

### Vienna's Mayor Häupl presents winning art(s)&sciences projects

In spring 2008, Vienna's Mayor and President of the Vienna Science, Research and Technology Fund (WWTF), Michael Häupl had stated: "The humanities, social and cultural sciences have a long and successful tradition in Vienna, they are not only important for the identity and profile of the city but also for analysis and approaches to the future. Therefore the City of Vienna will promote these areas in a targeted way in parallel to priority areas like biotechnology, life sciences, ICT and creative industries." Häupl had then given the go-ahead for the new "Vienna Stimulus Programme for Humanities, Social and Cultural Sciences", co-initiated by Executive Councillor for Culture and Science Andreas Mailath-Pokorny and managed by the WWTF. The Vienna Stimulus Programme for Humanities, Social and Cultural Sciences is an

initial project of Vienna's Research, Technology and Innovation Strategy (FTI). Its aim is to raise awareness of Vienna as a city of humanities, social and cultural sciences.

The annual funding mentioned at the time was 1.5 million euros; a preliminary programme duration of three years has been fixed. As Executive Councillor for Culture and Science Mailath-Pokorny then stated, the goal was "not to embellish a local tradition but what mattered was inspiration. Through this programme, the City of Vienna supports new, innovative, unexpected developments at high quality levels. We want to provide well-aimed funding for research areas that are not suitable for direct economic exploitation but contribute to a better understanding of social contexts. The humanities, social and cultural sciences are vital for the foundations of tomorrow's society".

Competitions held at regular intervals, referred to as "calls for proposals", are to promote large-scale inter-disciplinary research projects as well as individual researchers. These bidding procedures are guided by the principle of excellence, i.e. high quality of international standards.

The aim of the call for proposals in 2008 "Art(s)&Sciences" was to fund projects and fellowships in fields at the interface between science and art. In December 2008, a high-ranking international programme board selected the best proposals – five projects and two fellowships – to be funded.

The successful applications were presented at an Art(s)&Sciences party at the City Hall of Vienna on 9 June 2009. Philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann held a brilliant introductory lecture about the interrelations between science and art, jazz musician Christian Muthspiel gave an original solo performance under the motto "I'm My Own I-Pod". Playing the trombone and keyboard, he illustrated that old and new arts as well as technology are tightly interwoven. The party guests also enjoyed music by the band "Café Drechsler" and "DJ ricotico".

At the event – charmingly moderated by Corinna Milborn – Mayor Michael Häupl emphatically stressed that Vienna's achievements in areas like philosophy, psychology, architecture, painting had always been important – and not only in the epoch of "Vienna around 1900" – and that the time was right for a new heyday.

For more details on the projects funded see: [www.wwtf.at](http://www.wwtf.at) ■

## Amendment to Art Restitution Act

Based on an agreement by Vice Chancellor and Minister of Finance Josef Pröll and Minister of Culture Claudia Schmied, the Amendment to the Art Restitution Act is to pass the Council of Ministers on 23 June 2009. According to the draft amendment, the Ministry of Finance will have a voting right in the Advisory Board on Restitution, the Office of the State Attorneys at the Ministry of Finance will act in an advisory capacity.

Apart from works of art, the Federal Republic should also be able to return "other movable cultural assets". In addition to items from the collections of the federal museums or the Federal Furniture Collection, the new law will cover "other federal property".

The term of the Advisory Board on Restitution is to be extended to three years "to ensure independence". Moreover, assets will be covered which the NS regime seized outside Austria as well as before 1938. The tasks of the Provenance Research Commission ("the systematic description of the provenance of the federal collections in connection with possible seizures by the NS regime") are to be stated explicitly in the law.

"Restitution is a historic duty which has to be performed by the Republic of Austria in the best possible way. The Amendment to the Art Restitution Act is another important task in the context of indemnification", said Schmied. Pröll considers this a "clear step towards the comprehensive restitution of works of art of doubtful origin". ■

## National report on education: high public spending on education

Austria's direct public spending on education per pupil / student is among the highest by European comparison, significantly exceeding the EU-25 average at all educational levels. The per-capita spending on education is higher only in Luxembourg and the OECD members Norway and USA.

The average number of pupils per classroom / per teacher declined significantly between 1970 and 1990. Since then "maximally a slight increase" in the number of pupils per classroom has been observed (with the exception of secondary schools). Austria has less pupils per classroom in primary schools than other OECD countries, and the number of pupils per teacher is lower than the OECD average. After primary school, about two

thirds of the children attend secondary school. This is not always a deliberate decision as their choice is also determined by supply. Grammar schools can accommodate only one fourth of the pupils of this age group. The place where children live plays an important role. Vienna has more grammar schools than the rest of Austria and boasts a balanced ratio of secondary schools and grammar schools. Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Salzburg and Upper Austria have the smallest number of pupils attending grammar school. In big cities pupils are on average twice as likely to attend the first four grades of grammar school that those living in the countryside. As far as attendance of the higher grades of the secondary school system are concerned, one third of the pupils opts for vocational school, about 11% attend vocational intermediate schools, almost one third chooses a higher vocational school and about one fifth a grammar school.

At secondary school the share of pupils moving up to the next class is higher than that in the first four grades of the grammar school, i.e. 97.2% vs. 94.2%. The largest share of pupils not moving up can be found in the higher grades of grammar school. More than half of the students (56%) of science universities passed the A levels at grammar school, 36% took this exam at a higher vocational school. Alternative options of university access such as a special exam entitling to university studies hardly play any role. Almost 85% of the new students of specialised universities passed the A levels at grammar school (32%) or a higher vocational school (53%).

In Austria every fifth pupil attending compulsory school uses at least one additional language besides German in every-day life. The children of immigrants are overrepresented in special needs schools. They are underrepresented in grammar schools (12%), compared with 19% attending secondary schools. There are differences between the two largest migrant groups with non-German-speaking backgrounds. While 40% of the young people whose mother tongue is Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian attend a school leading towards A level, the share of Turkish-speaking pupils is only half as large. As far as the number of pupils repeating a class is concerned, Turkish children are disadvantaged as well; almost every third kid has to repeat a class before moving up to the fifth grade of a secondary school. In the group of pupils speaking Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian this share is 18%. The share of repeaters among pupils without a migration background stands at 13%. ■

Minister Darabos: sport with 10,000 young people in Vienna

On 10 June 2009 the Youth Sports Day was here again. 10,000 young people turned the Ernst Happel Stadium in Vienna into the largest and most versatile sports venue of this type. After opening the sports mega-event, Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos and Executive Councillor for Sport Christian Oxonitsch actively joined the youngsters.

Thanks to 45 different sports and three ball game tournaments, the visitors certainly had a lot of fun after the fitness check-ups. Besides team sports, self-defence and track-and-field sports, the young people could try extreme and new trendy sports such as bungee jumping, high rope climbing or break dance. Since 1966 the Youth Sports Day of the Vienna Trade Union Youth Organisation has been a must for the pupils of vocational schools, apprentices, and of course all young employees. ■

Campaign "Doping – no thanks!" supported with 1,500 signatures

Doping is fraud on all fair athletes. Therefore the Vienna Workers', Gymnastics and Sports Association (Wiener Arbeiter-, Turn-, und Sportverein / WAT) takes a clear stance against all forms of doping. It launched the campaign "Doping – no thanks!" demanding that athletes deliberately using doping substances in professional sports should be prosecuted.

1,500 signatures were collected in the past weeks at different events such as the Vienna Social Democratic Party convention, at Praterfest (a one-day open-air festival) on 1 May 2009 or in the WAT branches. Together with WAT President Christian Pöttler, Tina Riedl (WAT Badminton Hernals) and Mathias Dockner (BasketClubs Vienna) presented the signatures collected to Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos.

"I am very pleased that a change in attitudes is taking place and that the doping issue is taken very seriously by all sports clubs and associations", said the Federal Minister.

Christian Pöttler is convinced that "doping is a severe violation of a basic value of sport, i.e. fairness. Therefore the WAT advocates that cheats should be caught and works hard to eliminate doping in sport. The campaign 'Doping – no thanks' is a step in the right direction". The WAT is the largest mass sports association in

Vienna; it is active also in performance-oriented sport as well as high-performance sport. ■

30 additional competitive sports training places in the Federal Army

Young hopefuls are benefiting – and have indeed done so for many years – from optimal training conditions in the Army Sports Centres. Minister Norbert Darabos increased the quota for conscripts in the Sport Centres of the Austrian Federal Army by 20%.

In the future 150 (before 120) young high-performance athletes will be able to train at professional level while doing basic military service.

"By increasing the quota for conscripts in the Army's competitive sports training programme I would like to support a larger number of young talents in carving out an international career for themselves", said Darabos. With this initiative, the Minister takes full advantage of the synergies between his two spheres of responsibility, i.e. defence and sport. "In economically difficult times less money is allocated to funding sport. I want to counteract this trend by all means. The support of the Federal Army is vital, especially now". 10 athletes more than originally planned will benefit from this support already during the call-up in October 2009. In January and July 2010 another 20 athletes will be sent to the Federal Army's Sports Centres. ■

Most important cycling event for young talents in three Länder

The International ASVÖ Youth Cycling Tour has developed into Europe's most prominent event for young cyclists in the last few years.

This year – from 10 to 16 August 2009 – 20 teams from 16 nations, including three Austrian teams, will participate in the prologue and three stages of the tour. The route through the three Länder is again very attractive, and the race, with the final stage in Bad Tatzmannsdorf, is expected to become an exciting event. Minister of Sport Darabos: "Of course, I do hope that the Austrian teams will again do well. It is desirable that after 2006 an Austrian participant should again seize the pink ASVÖ jersey as the overall winner of the race." ■