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Commemorating 20th anniversary on Austrian-Hungarian border

The 20th anniversary of the “Pan-European Picnic” was commemorated on the Austrian-Hungarian border on 19 August 2009. Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Imre Pozsgay and the President of the International Pan-European Union, Otto Habsburg, had initiated a “symbolic border opening” near Sopron (former German name: Ödenburg), which suddenly became real. On 19 August 1989 more than 660 citizens of the German Democratic Republic fled to the West through Austria. Watching Western TV, they knew that in May Hungary had started to dismantle the Iron Curtain, and they were familiar with the famous photo of the smiling Foreign Ministers Alois Mock and Gyula Horn, who cut through the Iron Curtain on 27 June 1989.

German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, born in the former GDR, Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom as well as Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai and Austria’s Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger participated in the recent commemorative event near Sopron. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt attended as the official representative of the EU Presidency.

Angela Merkel praised the courage of the GDR citizens flooding across the border: “History consists in the little, brave steps of individual people“. The people who had surprisingly broken through a border gate and fled to Austria had demonstrated their “wish for freedom” to the GDR regime. “This border gate could never be closed again”, she underlined. Hungarian citizens had already been allowed to travel freely to Austria for some time. Then Foreign Minister Horn had presented the decision to allow GDR citizens to leave the country on TV on 10 September 1989, immediately prompting a mass exodus to Austria. On 9 November the Berlin Wall collapsed. Based on data of the Austrian security authorities, about 51,900 GDR citizens arrived in Austria before the end of November 1989. The events of 1989 on the Austrian-Hungarian border causing an international stir had dramatic consequences for their entire Soviet system.

Carl Bildt reminded of the fact that the collapse of Communism in 1989 and the following EU accession of the former Communist countries was probably the first “free decision of free nations” – not brought about by weapons and wars – in European history. ■

Chancellor Werner Faymann meets with Czech PM Jan Fischer

“The relations between Austria and the Czech Republic have traditionally been very close and characterised by mutual trust“, said Faymann after an official meeting with Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer on 24 August 2009. A sound basis for talks between neighbours was important, especially in times of crisis. Faymann stressed the good economic relations between the two countries, resulting in trade deals amounting to nine billion euros in 2008.

Besides economic issues, energy, transport and infrastructure policy were discussed. “For a positive exchange of information between neighbours is vital for an economic upswing, in particular during a recession“, said Fischer, who described himself as a fan of Austria, spending parts of his summer holidays in Eastern Tyrol.

With regard to an important issue for both sides, i.e. the improvement of the motorway between Vienna and Brno (former German name: Brünn), Faymann stressed that it was necessary to stick to the originally planned route. Any changes would lead to significant delays as new environmental impact assessment procedures would be required. As far as energy policy issues were concerned (e.g. NPP Temelin), both countries wished to strengthen cooperation at expert level and to intensify the exchange of information. ■

Chancellor Faymann: more prudent investing of tax money

After the Court of Auditors had expressed severe criticism due to the heavy losses incurred by the Austrian Federal Financing Agency (ÖBFA) in investing tax revenue, Chancellor Werner Faymann invited to a “speculation summit” at the Federal Chancellery in late July. Besides the Chancellor, Minister of Finance Josef Pröll, President of the Court of Auditors Josef Moser and experts participated in the meeting.

An advisory board will be set up to monitor financial management and investments in predefined products. The Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FMA) and the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) will advise the ÖBFA. In the medium term, all rules are to be applied also by the Länder, municipalities and state-owned companies, e.g. Austrian Rail (ÖBB) and the Motorway and Speedway Financing Agency (Asfinag). ■

European Forum Alpbach

The special guest star of the Political Symposium at the European Forum Alpbach (Tyrol) starting on 30 August 2009 will be UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, opening the round of discussions on "Trust between states and individuals". The focus is on Transatlantic cooperation under US President Barack Obama and the future of the European security and defence policy; trust between neighbouring states and cultures is another subject for debate.

Other guests invited to the Political Symposium are EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Vice Chancellor Josef Pröll, Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger and Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos. Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak, Latvian ex-President Vaira Vike-Freiberga as well as former EU Commissioner Franz Fischler will be among the attendees. Former Finnish President and Nobel Prize Laureate Martti Ahtisaari give lectures. Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, Czech Minister for European Affairs Stefan Füle and Kosovar Minister of Education Enver Hoxhaj have also been invited.

The current financial and economic crisis will be a top priority of the Banking Seminar from 31 August to 2 September 2009. The participants will for example discuss the consequences and lessons learned of the financial crisis. Answers to these and other questions may be expected from Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics Myron Samuel Scholes, but also Governor of the Austrian National Bank Ewald Nowotny and the Head of the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) Bernhard Felderer. "Europe as a global power?" is the motto of the Economic Symposium from 1 to 3 September 2009. A special event with Turkish Minister for European Affairs Egemen Bagis is devoted to the question: "Where is Turkey going?". Participants will include Chancellor Faymann, Secretary of State for Financial Affairs Andreas Schieder, EU Commissioner for Information Society Viviane Reding, Head of the Economic Research Centre (Wifo) Karl Aiginger, President of the Federation of Industrialists Veit Sorger, Managing Director of the Public Employment Service Johannes Kopf and Siemens Austria CEO Brigitte Ederer.

There will be ample opportunity to discuss the health reform at the Health Symposium from 3 to 5 September 2009. Health Minister Alois Stöger, President of the Federation of the Pharmaceutical

Industry Hubert Dressler, President of the Court of Auditors Josef Moser and President of the Federation of Social Insurance Institutions Hans-Jörg Schelling will attend, besides health experts like David L. Katz, professor at the Yale School of Public Health. This year the European Forum Alpbach will close with the Built Environment Symposium on 4 and 5 September 2009, with invitees including futurologist Dennis Meadows. Under the motto "Green Meeting Alpbach", the Forum is the first meeting organised on an ecologically responsible basis. www.alpbach.org/ ■

EU gave the green light for take-over of AUA by Lufthansa

The take-over of Austrian Airlines (AUA) facing severe turbulence by German Lufthansa was conditionally approved. On 31 July 2009, the last day of the ultimatum for the merger, EU Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes gave the green light for the deal, after struggling about the terms with Lufthansa CEO Wolfgang Mayrhuber until the very last moment. This makes the German "crane" Europe's largest airline. The approval of the EU competition authority still requires formal endorsement by the expert committee of the Member States. The final OK will be given by the European Commission "as soon as possible".

The deadline for the AUA take-over has been extended by Lufthansa until 31 August 2009. If the formal approval of Brussels and the 500-billion-euro subsidy of the Republic of Austria are made available under "acceptable conditions" until then, Lufthansa chief Mayrhuber will consider "all merger requirements to have been met". Lufthansa made concessions, especially with regard to the hotly contested, lucrative slots on the routes Germany/Vienna and Vienna/Zurich. The take-off and landing rights becoming available were acquired by competitors, e.g. Niki Lauda (Fly-Niki).

The merger would not only guarantee customers access to a densely knit network but also safeguard Vienna's international locational importance in the long term. Eastern Europe would continue to benefit from important flight connections via the Vienna hub. AUA shareholders would get a "very good price" for their shares, and safe jobs offered realistic prospects for the future to the staff, stressed Mayrhuber. The shareholders should get 4.49 euros per share no later than ten trading days after the final approval of the deal. ■

Women's Minister Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek demands wage transparency

Minister for Women's Affairs Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek reiterated her demand to make salary structures in companies transparent and to impose sanctions (e.g. fines) in cases of significant wage gaps. The respective amendment to the Equal Treatment Act is expected to be submitted in autumn; entry into force in mid-2010 "would be a nice success", said the Minister in an interview with the Austrian Press Agency (APA). However, Minister for Economic Affairs Reinhold Mitterlehner and Social Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer still need to be convinced. In concrete terms, Heinisch-Hosek envisages a system similar to the Swedish model of wage transparency requiring enterprises with more than 25 employees to disclose their salary structures at three-year intervals. She did not want to make individual salaries transparent but the salary structure. Parameters would for example include the same remuneration group and service period in an enterprise.

Heinisch-Hosek informed that she would travel to Sweden in September for an exchange of information. Besides, the wage transparency demanded was only the "first step" to improve equal treatment. More childcare facilities had to be created to allow women to work full time as soon as possible after pregnancy. This topic and other equality-related subjects should also be addressed in a national action plan. A first package of relevant measures will be presented at the end of this year. ■

International Youth Day: an initiative of the Minister for Economic Affairs

The General Assembly of the United Nations declared 12th August "International Youth Day". Awareness of challenges facing young people has been raised through this initiative since 2000. This year the theme of the International Youth Day was "Sustainability: Our Challenge. Our Future." Minister for Economic Affairs and Youth Reinhold Mitterlehner as well as Christine Marek, Secretary of State of the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth presented their latest youth policy initiatives. The aim was to improve the opportunities of young people in the labour market and the vocational training system. "Thanks to the 'training guarantee' no young

person will drop out. Each young woman or man actively seeking an apprenticeship place will get one in autumn", said Mitterlehner. The 'Pact for Apprentices' will be further developed up to autumn. The Minister for Economic Affairs affirmed the need for his initiative: "This Pact with Austria's largest companies training apprentices shows young people that they are needed by the enterprises". In parallel, Mitterlehner works on the demand-oriented modernisation of apprenticeship training and develops a quality assurance system for it. One of his goals is to enhance flexibility between apprenticeships. As Secretary of State Marek added, the participation and co-determination of young people in all social matters was a key objective of the Youth Ministry. The respective associations, campaigns and projects receive support – financial aid totalling 6.3 million euros will be distributed just in 2009. ■

Climate and Energy Fund: support for photovoltaic facilities

Subsidies promoting the use of solar energy totalling 18 million euros are granted by the Climate and Energy Fund for erecting private photovoltaic facilities. "Solar energy is an important pillar of our strategy towards energy independence and sustainable energy affordability for our households. As far as our environment is concerned, solar electricity is the right answer to the significant emissions caused by room heating and a crucial contribution to reduce CO2 emissions in Austria", explained Minister of the Environment Nikolaus Berlakovich against the background of the launch of the photovoltaic programme of the Climate and Energy Fund.

The application form has been available online since 4 August 2009. A binding offer is a prerequisite for a positive reply to the application, which may be filed only online: For information see: www.klimafonds.gv.at/photovoltaik

Berlakovic stated that "the further development of photovoltaics was the most important future-oriented technology project for a climate-friendly electricity production. The support programme made an important contribution towards achieving the goal of a '34-percent share of renewable energy' and helped creating green jobs especially in economically difficult times".

Under the 2008 support programme, 10.8 million euros were granted to subsidise a total of 820 facilities with a total output of 3700 kilowatt. ■

Joseph Haydn in the spotlight of Innsbrucker Festwochen

The ceremonious opening of the 33rd Innsbruck Festival (Innsbrucker Festwochen) took place in the Spanish Hall of Ambras Palace on 12 August 2009 in the presence of Federal President Heinz Fischer. In his opening statement Fischer underlined the friendly atmosphere and artistic attractiveness of the Early Music Festival. The head of state thanked outgoing Artistic Director René Jacobs and wished his successor, Alessandro De Marchi, a lot of courage in taking artistic decisions. In line with the motto of the Innsbruck Festival "Last Heroes", Fischer reminded of those people who lend meaning to the term "hero" today by working for charities or risking their lives.

Governor Günther Platter then stressed the significance of Tyrol as a cultural region and of its musical history throughout the centuries – from Minnesang (troubadour songs) to the present day. Mayor Hilde Zach underlined the great importance of the Innsbruck Festival for the regional economy, which should not be underrated, especially in difficult times. Under the management of René Jacobs, the Festival had achieved a decisive qualitative leap.

About 400 invited guests gathered for the opening ceremony in the gardens of the Renaissance palace on a wonderful summer day.

This year's Innsbrucker Festwochen also turned the spotlight on Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), marking the bicentenary of his death and paying homage to the great master with two opera productions – "L'isola disabitata" and "Orlando Paladino", with which René Jacobs' bade farewell to the festival. Jacobs also conducted Bach's "Magnificat", the first of a series of high-class concerts at the Abbey Church of Stams. Numerous churches in and around Innsbruck as well as the finest historic venues provide the ideal setting for concerts with prominent ensembles and soloists playing historical instruments (until 29 August 2009). For information and remaining tickets see: www.alemusik.at ■

Allegro Vivo Chamber Music Festival opened at Altenburg Abbey

In 2009 the Allegro Vivo Chamber Music Festival takes the theme "Pulsating – In the Heart of Europe" as its inspiration. With concerts and

master courses, it will provide a musical impetus to the Waldviertel region up to 20 September 2009. At the opening concert in the baroque library of the Abbey of Altenburg on 16 August 2009, Academia Allegro Vivo presented works by Janáček, Mahler, Haydn and Bartók led by Festival Director Bijan Khadem-Missagh. In his welcome statement Abbot Christian Haidinger pointed out parallels between the motto of this year's festival and the Benedictine identity of the monks of Altenburg Abbey.

The small, exquisite Allegro Vivo Festival in northern Lower Austria is highly recommended. The mystic landscape of Waldviertel reminding of Sweden or Canada and the magnificent concert halls provide a grand setting. The Waldviertel offers a wealth of sights – the abbeys of Geras, Zwettl, Göttweig, Melk and Pernegg Monastery, the palaces of Ottenstein, Rosenberg, Waldreichs, Weitra and Harmannsdorf, the Raabs and Rappottenstein castles as well as the towns of Horn, Altpölla, Eggenburg, Gars, Gmünd, Groß-Siegharts, Pulkau, Schönberg/Kamp and Waidhofen/Thaya. www.allegro-vivo.at ■

Paul Hindemith Prize to Tyrolean composer Johannes Maria Staud

Johannes Maria Staud, 34, who was born in Tyrol and lives in Vienna, has been awarded the Paul Hindemith Prize. The world premieres of his works were performed by Ensemble Modern or the Berlin Philharmonics, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle. Staud studied at the Vienna Music University with Michael Jarrell (composition) and Ivan Eröd (music theory) as well as at the Hanns Eisler University of Music, Berlin, with Hanspeter Kyburz. The manager of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Rolf Beck, presented the award at a concert in Hamburg on 14 August 2009.

Staud will act as the "composer-in-residence" at this year's Klangspuren Festival in Schwaz (Tyrol). He wrote pieces for small and large ensembles and also composed the opera "Berenice" (libretto by Durs Grünbein based on E. A. Poe), which received its world premiere at the Music Biennale Munich in 2004.

Contemporary young composers such as Olga Neuwirth, Jörg Widmann, Marton Illes and Rebecca Saunders have benefited from the Hindemith Prize awarded at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival since 1990. The prize is funded by the Swiss Paul Hindemith Foundation and three private donors from Hamburg. ■

Vienna and Capital of Culture Linz: European Poetry Festival

To date 17 poets from 12 European countries have registered for the “European Poetry Festival“, which will be staged in Vienna, but also in Linz – this year’s “Capital of Culture” – in October. Poetry readings are held at Literaturhaus (“House of Literature) in Vienna on 5 and 6 October 2009 and in Linz on 7 October 2009. The aim of the festival is to create opportunities for the public to learn more about European culture and its diverse traditions through the verses of the poets.

Renowned as well as young poets, e.g. from Austria, Italy, Estonia, Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Turkey, announced their participation. The festival is organised under the aegis of the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs and the Italian Cultural Institute in Vienna in cooperation with Literaturhaus as well as the embassies and cultural institutes of the European countries in Vienna. A 250-page anthology of all the works presented in live readings in the original languages and the German translation will be published in the framework of the festival. ■

MAK: Young Austrian Designers

From 9 September to 26 October 2009, the group presentation “Cute Puppies. Young Austrian Designers“ at MAK DESIGN SPACE will showcase exemplary works by fourteen designers/design collectives from Austria or active in Austria. The works exhibited revolve around the unexpected, the breaking with conventions as well as creative communication strategies in the widest sense. The spectrum of media spans from interactive tools to applied crafts.

The exhibition is the second of the series “START_UP: Designers’ New Projects“, which is held in the framework of the joint project “design new strategies“ of MAK (Museum of Applied Arts) and departure, the creative agency of the City of Vienna. The aim of this concept is to promote design ambitions and the new generation’s natural attitude towards exploring limits and integrating unconventional media. The new show is curated by Omar Vulpinari, who was also responsible for “Fabrica. For the People, From the People“ previously presented at MAK DESIGN SPACE. Vulpinari is the Head of Visual

Communication of Fabrica, the Communications Research Centre of Benetton in Treviso, which defines itself as a creative lab, where people, artistic activities, languages and different forms of expression mix and are linked through a trans-disciplinary network. “In selecting young designers, I focused on factors that are crucial to me: social consciousness, visual and emotional effect, global understanding, humour and wide thinking“, stated Vulpinari. Some of the artists exhibiting are Fabrica scholarship holders; Dejana Kabiljo and Motmot were supported by departure. Motmot – Anna Breitenberger and Stephen Kwon Reeder – work on a solution-oriented communication design, which is also exuberant, very vivid and groovy. Works from the series “Cheetas Never Win“ are displayed as well: audacious, comic-like drawings, mirroring the spirit of the time and sub-culture accurately and humorously. Dejana Kabiljo creates capricious objects, fantasy artefacts from strange materials. Tabourets (upholstered stools) of the series “PRETTYPRETTY“ are on show. Hair is turned into an eccentric upholstery of mysterious and fetish-like seat tops. They were selected by designer Philippe Starck for the interior of the new SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. The documentary “Emothunk“ by Valerie Gudenus and Sandra Reichl on the youth movements Emo, Goth and Punk is also shown. Katrina Wiedner is specialised in visual literature. She weaves image-like elements into her texts that do not serve as illustrations but form an integral part of narration. www.mak.at ■

Georg Friedrich Haas – world premiere at Mendelssohn Festival

To pay a musical tribute to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847) on his 200th birthday, a work by Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas will receive its world premiere at Gewandhaus in Leipzig. On 28 August 2009 the Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Riccardo Chailly will for the first time perform Haas’ work commissioned by Gewandhaus “Traum in des Sommers Nacht – Homage à Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy“ (“Dream in the Summer Night – Homage to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy”) in the framework of the Mendelssohn Festival.

Haas born in Graz in 1953 (Styria) was awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize in 2006 and is considered one of the most important composers

of the present. In 2008 his opera "Melancholia" received its world premiere at the Paris Opera House. In his oeuvre he has repeatedly addressed the subject "night", e.g. in his chamber opera of the same name based on texts by Friedrich Hölderlin. The title of this latest commissioned work directly refers to the brilliant German composer of the Romantic period, who had created a work inspired by Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" when he was still very young. www.gewandhaus.de ■

Highlight at the Salzburg Festival:
revolutionary opera by Luigi Nono

Luigi Nono's great opera "Al gran sole carico d'amore" ("In the Bright Sunshine Heavy with Love") has been performed only three times. First, at the world premiere in Milano in 1975, then in Frankfurt in 1978 and by Martin Kusej in Stuttgart in 1998. The premiere of this "Azione scenica" ("stage activity") about the female side of a revolutionary hope at the Salzburger Festspiele (Salzburg Festival) in 2009 is only the fourth production (by Katie Mitchell) in the history of opera. On 2 August 2009 the work for large orchestra, choir and soloists was premiered at Felsenreitschule. It was unanimously acclaimed by the Salzburg audience.

"Al gran sole carico d'amore" is not an opera in the traditional sense. There is neither a plot nor any interplay between the performers. The text is based on quotations by authors like Marx, Lenin, Gorki, Brecht, Pavese or Che Guevara. The focus is on five historical or fictitious women, including Louise Michel, a pioneer of the Paris Commune in 1871 or Tania Bunke, fellow guerrilla combatant of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, or a mother from Russia and another one from Torino, waiting for the sons engaged in class struggle, while dyeing scarves red.

Katie Mitchell tries to revive these militant or passively suffering female characters with the aid of actresses and live cameras as well as complex and impressive imagery. Large-size faces and scenes from every-day life dominate, full of drastic images of poverty and rebellion. The outcome is the almost religious summoning up of the atmosphere in the combats. Only little room is left for the people per se – as this is often the case in revolutions. In this production the prayers and the content of social hopes remain abstract, maybe deliberately so, and the personalities of the women have not been defined sharply enough.

Luigi Nono's music defies traditional listening habits. The effect of these sound constructions of the great Venetian, who died in 1990, is shrill, extreme, eruptive and impenetrable. Under this hard shell, listeners will discover the breath-takingly audacious: rich tone qualities, rhythms, fascinating motifs – and all that in an extremely tight atmosphere. This was the result of the intense work of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (masterly led through the highly complicated score by Ingo Metzmacher), the Concert Association of the Vienna State Opera Choir, as well as twelve solo singers. The outstanding, radical opera event has been presented four times up to 14 August 2009.

www.salzburgfestival.at ■

European Health Forum in Bad Hofgastein

At the 12th European Health Forum (EHFG) taking place in Bad Hofgastein (Salzburg) from 30 September to 3 October 2009 experts active in health administration, medicine, industry and science will discuss the impact of the global economic crisis on the health sector as well as possible counter-strategies. Discussions will focus on health insurance financing, safeguarding the provision and quality of healthcare services despite drastically growing financial restrictions. The list of participants expected at the Forum includes EU Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, Health Minister Alois Stöger, his Finnish counterpart Liisa Hyssälä, Hungarian Secretary of State Melinda Medgyaszai and Deputy Regional Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Nata Menabde. ■

Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology supports extramural application-oriented research

After Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology Doris Bures signed the subsidy agreement for Joanneum Research and Salzburg Research, about 5 million euros will be made available from the federal government's budget to these research facilities in 2009 and 2010. The 13 institutes of the Styria-based Joanneum Research with more than 400 employees are being restructured based on priority areas such as "water and energy", "human technologies", "economic and technology policy". ■

Comprehensive anti-doping combat: Ordinance on Maximum Quantities

A new Anti-Doping Ordinance on Maximum Quantities entered into force on 1 August 2009. Maximum quantities were laid down in respect of more than 60 doping substances. After all details were clarified at expert level, a common approach was developed by the Ministries of Justice and Health.

In accordance with the 2007 Federal Anti-Doping Act, sanctions are imposed for the possession of anabolic steroids and hormones if the maximum quantities laid down for the respective substances in the Ordinance are exceeded and if the owner has the intention of distributing them in the market or administering them to other persons for the purpose of doping in sport. The Act provides for stricter punishment if the maximum quantities are exceeded when administering anabolic steroids and hormones to under-age athletes or if such substances are used repeatedly and distributed in the market for the purpose of doping in sport. Upon the entry into force of the Anti-Doping Ordinance on Maximum Quantities, the people behind who supply athletes with doping substances will face prison sentences of up to five years.

Minister of Sport Darabos: "The Ordinance is another important step in the struggle against doping. We have to take a tough stance against doping criminality – especially to protect the vast majority of clean athletes in Austria." ■

End of "ORF Sport Plus" would have negative effects on sport in Austria

Minister of Sport Darabos expressed his regret about the announcement of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) that the special-interest channel "Sport Plus" would be eliminated for budget reasons at the end of 2009: "The channel is an important medium for sport in Austria. Many sports associations have already contacted me, demanding that the channel should continue operating. I lend my full support to these efforts. If sponsors are lost due to discontinuing the channel, this will have major adverse effects – above all on sports and athletes that are not in the public limelight."

Darabos himself learned about the planned shutdown of the channel through the media. In a meeting with ORF Director-General Alexander

Wrabetz and Director of Information Elmar Oberhauser, Minister of Sport Darabos wants to examine the possibility of saving the ORF Sport Plus channel. ■

2009 Deaflympics in Taipei

The 21st Summer Deaflympics will be held in Taipei (Taiwan) from 2 to 15 September 2009. This competition will again be the highlight in the lives of top deaf athletes and athletes with limited hearing from all over the world. In Taipei the world's elite from 74 countries will select the best in 19 sports disciplines from among themselves.

But not only the competitions are important. Adequate media coverage is equally important to raise public awareness of the outstanding achievements of deaf people. To this end, an editorial team of the project "Gebärdenwelt" ("World of Signs") (www.gebaerdenwelt.at) will attend the Deaflympics to provide comprehensive information about the event. This project has been made possible especially through the support of the Ministry of Sport. ■

Minister of Sport Darabos praised "Speed Queen" Renate Götschl

One of the most successful and most popular athletes of our country announced that she would retire from active top-performance sport in mid-August. For more than one and a half decades Renate Götschl from Obdach in Styria dominated Alpine skiing. Her success speaks for itself. She won three gold medals in World Championships within a period of ten years and two Olympic medals, clinched a World Cup overall title, earned eight small downhill and Super-G crystal globes and celebrated 46 World Cup victories – it is hardly possible to achieve more!

"Her personality and charisma will be missed in the world of sport!", said Minister of Sport Darabos. When Renate Götschl surprisingly won the World Cup slalom in 1993 Hafjell, nobody could imagine that this young girl would become one of the most successful skiers during many years. Her enormous popularity in Austria can only be measured by the countless awards and titles granted to her, in particular the title "Athlete of the Year" in 1997 and 2005. "Many Austrians were happy about the accomplishments of Renate Götschl. Together with her large fan community, I wish her all the best for the future!" ■