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Austria eases banking secrecy

In a special session on 1 September 2009, the National Council adopted the Judicial Assistance Implementing Act to ease the banking secrecy for persons liable to pay taxes abroad and to comply with the ultimate demand of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). According to Minister of Finance Josef Pröll, the prerequisite for removing Austria from the “grey” OECD list of tax havens has been met, especially since the necessary 12 double-taxation agreements with other countries were approved and two of them have already been signed. Pröll highlighted this fact also at an informal meeting of EU ministers of finance in Brussels on 2 September 2009. After the meeting with his 26 EU counterparts, Pröll stated optimistically that the OECD would probably remove Austria from the list of tax havens still before the G20 summit in Pittsburgh (24/25 September 2009).

The main aim of relaxing the rules on banking secrecy is to grant foreign authorities facilitated access to the data of Austrian banks if there is a substantiated suspicion of tax evasion. This is subject to the proviso that the suspects are not liable to pay taxes in Austria. Banking secrecy for Austrian citizens is upheld.

Austria is currently the only EU Member State on the “grey list” of countries having made a commitment to cooperation in the combat against tax evasion but not yet implementing the OECD standards.

It is vital to Austria to be removed from this list as the European Investment Bank (EIB) will stop co-financing projects from listed countries in April 2010. This would have serious adverse effects on Austria as a business location and its investment activities in Eastern Europe. ■

Increase in unemployment – new measures for more jobs

According to Minister for Social Affairs Rudolf Hundstorfer, the increase in unemployment could be “slightly curbed” in August but in general the conditions of the domestic labour market are not expected to relax. In late August the number of persons registered as unemployed (excluding participants in training programmes) was 238,803, corresponding to a year-on-year plus of 29.8%. However, in July and June the number of unemployed persons had grown even more drastically, i.e. by 30.1% and 33%.

In August 2009 57,694 persons attended training courses of the Public Employment Service – this is a significant 42.8-percent-increase from the level of the previous month. Hence, almost 300,000 people were without a job in Austria.

This is still 50,000 jobseekers above the target, but the “curve shows a downward trend“, said Hundstorfer. Active labour market policy measures but also the economic stimulus packages were effective. In August the number of persons being placed in jobs by the Public Employment Service rose by 19.2% (or 5,082 persons) from the prior-month level. 31,545 unemployed persons found jobs. A below-average increase in youth unemployment had been registered and fewer young people were seeking apprenticeship places. Hence, the labour market was showing first signs of stabilisation, stated the Minister for Social Affairs. Austria was still well off by European comparison. The unemployment rate (based on Eurostat) was 4.4% - this the second-lowest level in Europe. The EU average was 8.9%.

Additional measures to safeguard and create thousands of jobs, e.g. facilitated access to part-time working schemes for older workers as well as support for one-person enterprises (EPEs) – took effect on 1 September 2009. The Public Employment Service now pays the employer’s social insurance contributions for one year if EPEs recruit employees for the first time. This measure could create up to 6,500 new jobs, explained Hundstorfer. Moreover, the municipal employment package created jobs for about 4,800 long-term unemployed persons in 2009 and 2010. This group would be employed by the municipality or related sectors for one year. ■

Minister Fekter rejects EU refugee resettlement strategy

Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter ruled out the possibility that Austria would participate in the Joint EU Resettlement Programme for the most vulnerable groups of refugees from third countries – at least in the near future. She argued that with 13,000 asylum applications in 2008 Austria continued to be one of the EU Member States facing the “strongest burden”.

Based on the proposal of the European Commission, the EU Member States are to admit more vulnerable refugees, show more solidarity with third countries and participate in the respective programmes on a voluntary basis. ■

70th anniversary of WWII –
Chancellor Faymann: “Never forget!”

On 1 September 2009 – the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of WWII. – Austrian politicians commemorated the victims and resistance fighters. On this occasion they also appealed to stay alert and further develop the basic values of democracy. Federal President Heinz Fischer stressed in the order of the day to the Federal Army that there had also been “brave soldiers and officers recognising the dimension of injustice and the criminal character of the National Socialist regime and who followed their conscience by trying to put up resistance or at least to refuse to serve in Hitler’s army“. Many had paid with their lives. The Austrian Federal Army had learned the lesson of the past, it “is a defence and peace army”, emphasised the head of state in his capacity as the commander-in-chief.

Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, who participated in an international commemoration in Gdansk in the afternoon of 1 September 2009 (1939: German attack on Poland), reminded in a press release of the indescribable horrors of this “aggressive war contemptuous of human life“, which took a terrible toll of considerably more than 50 million people.

The internal decay of democracy was continued in the most brutish way “in the concentration and annihilation camps of the Third Reich. The war and industrialised killing machine in the Third Reich have remained unparalleled despite many horrible incidents in history“. Faymann promised the descendants of victims and persecuted persons “not to forget and to resist the beginnings“. It was not only a political goal but “also our duty to safeguard and further develop the peace project Europe“, stressed Faymann.

Minister of Defence Norbert Darabos underlined that the military had to confront history, also its dark side. A lot had been achieved in this context, but there were some things that still had to be dealt with, stated Darabos. ■

Landmines: “Geneva conference”
chaired by Austria

The report on the victims of landmines “Voices from the Ground“ was presented on 2 September 2009 at the Geneva conference, chaired for the first time by Austria. Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger stated that it was a “global moral

duty to help wherever we can“. Nobody could “remain indifferent“ to this report about the fate of landmine survivors.

The study presented has for the first time made it possible to listen to the voices of the victims, stated Judith Majlath, Director of the Austrian section of the “International Campaign to Ban Landmines“ (ICBL). 1,600 victims of mines got a chance to speak, giving a sobering account of the local aid to the victims. Many beneficiary countries suffer from corruption and a lack of political will to provide effective care to the victims. Landmine survivors should above all get jobs to ensure their socio-economic reintegration and social acceptance, stressed Majlath. Women with amputations faced particularly strong discrimination, in many cases they were left by their husbands and suicidal.

Austria is considered one of the leading countries in preparing and implementing the ban on landmines, the so-called Ottawa Treaty, which entered into force in 1999 and was ratified by almost 160 countries.

Spindelegger also plans to focus attention on the protection of civilian persons in armed conflicts, especially under Austria’s chairmanship of the UN Security Council in November.

In 2008 the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) supported different aid projects for landmine victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Mozambique, Sudan, Ethiopia, Georgia and Afghanistan with about 1.9 million euro. A total of 1.2 million euro has been earmarked for the year 2009. ■

30 years of Vienna’s “UNO City”:
ceremony with Ban Ki-moon

At the ceremony staged in Vienna on 28 August 2009 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Vienna International Center (VIC), also called “UNO City“ by the Viennese, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed how important it was for the people and the earth that the World Climate Conference in Copenhagen in December would become a success. Austria was an important UN member supporting the realisation of the objectives of the United Nations. Ban thanked Austria for the “resources, ideas and the labour supply“ that was being made available to the UN. Austria reaps indirect economic benefits from the UN seat in Vienna amounting to about 400 million euro annually. ■

AUA finally under the wings of Lufthansa – contract signed

Austrian Airlines (AUA; 1957-2009) have finally become part of the German Lufthansa group. After Brussels had given the green light for the deal on 28 August 2009, Lufthansa and the state-owned holding company Österreichische Industrieholding AG (ÖIAG) – the previous main shareholder of AUA – finalised the take-over on 3 September 2009. In the presence of the two AUA executive board members Peter Malanik and Andreas Bierwirth, Lufthansa CEO Wolfgang Mayrhuber and ÖIAG boss Peter Michaelis, a ceremony was staged at Vienna Airport, in which the AUA shares were symbolically handed over to Lufthansa. The German airline now holds more than 90% of the AUA shares.

This deal makes the “crane airline” Europe’s largest air carrier. AUA will continue as an independent company with its own special profile and brand name. The aim is to make AUA “cash positive” next year and to achieve a positive operational result within two to three years, stressed Lufthansa CEO Mayrhuber: “We want red uniforms but we do not want to be in the red.” However, the company would still have to face some challenges before achieving a turnaround, said Mayrhuber, without going into more detail. In the first six months of 2009 the operational loss amounted to 161.6 million euro.

AUA executive board members Malanik and Bierwirth reiterated that additional cost-cutting measures were “a permanent task”, especially in the current situation. Both of them remain on board after the closing of the deal. (The new supervisory board will be chaired by Lufthansa executive board member Stefan Lauer.) Details about the integration of AUA into the Lufthansa group will be provided in October. The route network will become more selective but its expansion will be retained. Restructuring has already started. Several austerity packages have been launched. Costs are to be reduced sustainably by 200 million euro by 2011. The cost-cutting policy will also affect the staffing level, which is to decrease from currently 7,500 to 6,500 employees in 2010.

The purchase price for AUA amounts to about 166 million euro. The independent shareholders (about 40 million shares) were offered 4.49 euro per share by Lufthansa. A majority accepted the offer. The original term was extended to 9 September 2009. Vienna Stock Exchange was re-

moved from the ATX as its free float is now too small. The state-owned holding company ÖIAG, which has been in charge of privatising AUA, is paid a symbolic amount of 366,268.75 euro for its 41.56-percent stake (one cent per share). Lufthansa assumes the major part of AUA’s debt burden totalling 1.5 billion euro but receives the 500-million-euro subsidy of the Republic of Austria approved by Brussels as a dowry. AUA concluded its last year as an independent airline with heavy losses. This was due to the economic and financial crisis, high fuel costs and impairment losses on airplanes. The net loss amounted to 429.5 million euro in 2008. The loss per share stood at 5.19 euro. ■

Upward revision of OeNB forecast: minor economic growth in 2010

The domestic economy shrinks less drastically than expected. Therefore the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) revised its economic forecast and predicts the end of the recession. The data were presented at the European Forum Alpbach on 1 September 2009. According to OeNB Governor Ewald Nowotny, this year the economy would shrink by 3.5 to 3.8% of the GDP, while a minus of 4.2% had been forecast still in June. For 2010 the OeNB expects a positive growth rate between 0 and 1%. This was the first upward revision of a forecast in two years, stressed Nowotny. There were major uncertainties, and – despite the improvement – the fact should not be overlooked that this was still a “massive slump”. If the forecast was right, Austria’s economy would merely reach the level of 2006 at year-end 2009. Issues of concern mentioned by Nowotny were the labour market and the budget deficit. A significant increase in unemployment was likely. The deficit caused by economic stimulus packages would decline only after a lasting upswing. Structural reforms of pension systems and in administration had to be launched immediately. ■

voestalpine ends short-time working

The voestalpine steel group ended the short-time working arrangement at its largest site in Linz earlier than planned. On 1 September 2009 3,470 employees started to work full-time again. The enterprise informed that demand for high-quality flat steel products has been increasing substantially in Europe since summer. ■

Minister Bures plans strong support for small and mid-sized enterprises

At the opening of the Alpbach Technology Symposium on 27 August 2009, Infrastructure Minister Doris Bures announced that funding of up to 45 percent of the costs of research projects of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would be provided. In the past, the average funding rate was about 25 percent. 25 million euro have been earmarked for the “Quick Aid Programme” up to the end of 2009. According to the Minister, this was a signal to SMEs that they should not cut their expenditure on research and development. Stressing the need for “anti-cyclical” funding, Bures stated: “We cannot afford an ‘innovation stop’ in Austria”. As an incentive to SMEs, almost half of the expenditure on innovative research projects realised in the framework of the basic programmes of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) would be funded under the “Quick Start” initiative. The target group were about 3,000 SMEs with 60,000 employees.

Bures thinks that “green and environmental technologies” will be future research fields. Austria should not miss the “green train”. The question should be addressed what mobility would be like in the future and how we could shape it. The Ministry of Infrastructure considers electric mobility a priority. A “master plan for intensifying research” in this area will become available by year-end. Besides the development of engines, it will also “take into account all the necessary infrastructure”, e.g. a network of filling stations for e-vehicles. ■

Minister Hahn promotes binding law on research financing

At a joint press conference with Infrastructure Minister Bures, Minister of Science Johannes Hahn described the “Research Financing Act” proposed by him as “a highly ambitious, almost visionary approach“. If this budget path for the research expenditure of the Federal Republic could be enshrined in the law by 2020, this would lend “unique basic attractiveness” to Austria as a research location.

Hahn stressed that he agreed with Bures that such a Research Financing Act would be an “important first step”. However, there have been some minor differences of opinion regarding the schedule.

Bures thinks the necessary amount should be laid down only after defining objectives in the framework of the planned Austrian Research Strategy. “First we have to know where we want to go and then we have to clarify which amount we need to spend for this purpose”, she stated. In the Ministry of Science the development of the Austrian Research Strategy and the Research Financing Act are considered parallel processes; the law was the financial backbone of the strategy, which would collapse without it. According to Bures, the go-ahead for developing the research strategy was to be given in one of the next sessions of the Council of Ministers, this was “an issue to be dealt with at high level“.

Bures and Hahn agree that financial resources made available indirectly through tax benefits which have not been used up due to the economic situation should in any case be allocated to research. ■

Vienna’s culture funding system boosts economy and creates jobs

Culture plays a major role as an image factor and helps to create an identity. This is also true for Vienna with its unique reputation as an artistic and cultural metropolis. Besides important non-material and esthetical criteria, art and culture are of increasing importance also as an economic factor. “The culture funding policy of the City of Vienna pays off. Every single euro of a subsidy is multiplied and flows back to the economy and public sector“, Vienna’s Executive Councillor for Culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny and President of the Vienna Economic Chamber Brigitte Jank welcomed the findings of a recent study of the Institute for Advanced Studies (HIS) about the economic effects of Vienna’s funding system for culture, which had been presented recently in Vienna.

The study traces the effect of a large part of the cultural subsidies distributed by the City of Vienna in 2007. 202 million euro of public cultural subsidies granted to municipal facilities created a value-added of 473 million euro, i.e. a value-added of 230 euro is generated by a subsidy of 100 euro. In addition, the culture funding system creates and safeguards 6,700 full-time jobs, including 4,700 in Vienna. 145 million euro flow back to the public sector as taxes and social insurance contributions.

A value-added of 473 million euro is reaped from the wages and contracts of theatres, museums,

music institutions and festivals funded by the City of Vienna, e.g. the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen). 70 percent of the value-added (326 million euro) remain in Vienna, the remaining share goes to the other Länder or abroad. The major part of the value-added is generated through contracts awarded to Vienna-based enterprises, e.g. stage set designers, stage and sound engineering companies, publishing houses, advertising agencies, cinema operators, business consultants, authors, directors but also to the building industry, trade and printers. Other beneficiaries are hotels and restaurants.

“The study findings show that culture and economy are closely linked and that a wide selection of quality craft workshops and service providers, as it exists in Vienna, is a prerequisite for a successful cultural location”, stated President of the Vienna Economic Chamber Jank. Another important economic effect of the funding system for culture is cultural tourism. For Vienna is not only one of the most popular congress cities but also among the world’s leading destinations of cultural tourism. A recent poll conducted among guests to Vienna found that two thirds of all tourists visit the Austrian capital for its art and culture. According to the IHS study, the tourist spending resulted in a value-added of 442 million euro for Vienna; a substantial part of this amount had been generated through cultural facilities and festivals funded by the City of Vienna.

Undoubtedly, the film industry is one of the cultural sectors generating the highest value-added. Based on the IHS study, subsidies totalling 1 million euro granted to filmmakers and cinemas resulted in a value-added of 3.4 million euro, 45 full-time jobs and a public revenue of 640,000 euro. With that, the film industry registered the second-highest value-added factor of all sectors subsidised (after the music industry: 4.1 million euro). This result also reflects the rapid development of the Austrian film industry in the past. An Oscar for Stefan Ružowitzky and a Golden Palm for Michael Haneke in Cannes are among the highlights of this trend. Currently several Austrian films are competing in the Venice Film Festival, e.g. Jessica Hausner’s feature film “*Lourdes*”.

The City of Vienna responds to this remarkable development by continuously increasing the budget for film subsidies. Executive Councillor for Culture Mailath-Pokorny stated in this context: “With the recently created Vienna Film Package we would like to support those

responsible for the Austrian film miracle, namely the filmmakers“. The new funding programme for TV film productions shows a favourable result after only six months. Subsidies totalling 1 million euro for a total of 16 film projects have triggered a 659-percent effect on the Vienna-based film industry.

The Vienna Film Commission (VFC) recently called into life by the City of Vienna with the support of the Vienna Economic Chamber is a vital part of the Vienna Film Package. Acting as a support and information centre, the Commission provides support to (inter)national film production companies during shoots in Vienna and assists them in obtaining filming permissions and subsidies.

To ensure that the film location Vienna continues to have an edge over fierce competitors like Budapest and Prague, additional measures are required. Jank therefore welcomes the project of the federal government to set up a film fund promoting Austrian film-making. Based on data from Germany, where such a fund has already been established, these subsidies have an economic multiplier effect of 600 percent. “Vienna’s film industry generates a revenue of half a billion euro annually”, stated Jank. “The envisaged film funding system based on the German model would give an important impetus to Vienna’s film industry, which we should not fail to provide“. ■

Linz 2009: “*See this Sound*” – sensational exhibition at Lentos

“*See this Sound*“ at the Linz-based Lentos Art Museum (curated by Cosima Rainer) will be the first comprehensive – and highly fascinating – showcase for the interplay between visual arts and media art (running until 10 January 2010). The gigantic show is certainly a highlight in a series of events staged in Linz – this year’s European Capital of Culture.

Today our world of experience is under the impact of the omnipresent audiovisual products and structures, in which cultural image and sound productions interlock at the level of media technologies, arts and market strategies. The project “*See this Sound*“ – analysing the fusion of image and sound in the arts, the media and in perception – is a response to this development. The show presents and discusses different approaches, positions and forms of contemporary art and art history. The reference fields

highlighted range from pop culture to the theory of perception and media technology. The historical development is traced in different rooms of the museum – from the “eye music” of the 1920s, the “absolute film” based on a fusion of image and music, Viking Eggeling’s “Symphonie Diagonal“ with its new filmic language, John Cage’s “borderline art“ and the beginnings of the Fluxus movement of Yoko Ono and George Brecht to “new forms of perception“ illustrated by Brion Gysin’s rotating “Dream Machine“, which would make those sitting in front of it with their eyes closed fall into a trance. The legendary composer and pianist La Monte Young is represented with his “Dream House“, which creates a hyper-realistic feeling of existence, making you see for example a bright pink Danube. This is just a small selection of the sensational projects presented in the show; they become more tangible in the web archives www.see-this-sound.at as well as the richly illustrated catalogue published in German and English. www.lentos.at ■

Mourning Paul Grosz

Paul Grosz aged 84 died in the early morning hours of 30 August 2009. He was the President of the Jewish Religious Community (IKG) from 1987 to 1998 and then its Honorary President.

Born in Vienna as the son of a furrier in 1925, he escaped deportation by the Nazis together with his father. He survived by hiding until the end of the war. After emigrating to the USA in 1950, he returned to Austria in 1955. When he assumed the office of IKG President, Kurt Waldheim was Austria’s Federal President. “I faced a worried community”, said Paul Grosz. He encouraged its members “to present themselves in a more self-assured way“.

As IKG President, Paul Grosz saw the establishment of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism and the Mauerbach auction in autumn 1996. On behalf of the IKG, the auction house Christie’s auctioned off objects that had been looted by the Nazis and then stored in the Carthusian monastery of Mauerbach for decades.

In 1992 then Minister of Education Rudolf Scholten awarded the President of the Jewish Religious Community the professional title “Hofrat“ (“Privy Councillor“). In 1999 he received the title “Citizen of the City of Vienna“. President Heinz Fischer was shocked when he

was informed of the death of the fine and calm man: “During the twelve years Paul Grosz was the President of the Jewish Religious Community he represented the concerns of the Jewish community with a great sense of responsibility, efficiently and by cooperating on an equal footing with the public institutions of our Republic“. ■

3raum-anatomietheater: fascinating Oscar Wilde play directed by Kramar

Managed by Hubsi Kramar, the 3raum-anatomietheater has been presenting the most spectacular performances in Vienna for quite some time. Oscar Wilde’s play “An Ideal Husband“, which received its world premiere in 1894, is performed in the eerily beautiful rooms of the former University of Veterinary Medicine (provisional end: 17 September 2009). While choosing an inoffensive title, the Irish genius (1854-1900) offered a harsh criticism of the so-called “best society” hiding corruption and bribery under an image of uprightness – in a brittle world, where politics and high finance seem to be hopelessly intermingled. Wilde wrote the play when Benjamin Disraeli was Britain’s Prime Minister, who allegedly reaped profits in 1875 by buying Suez Canal shares with the aid of the fellow party member Baron Rothschild. This is the key theme of the comedy, in which the honourable Sir Robert Chiltern (Markus Kofler convinces as honesty personified) becomes susceptible to blackmail – by Mrs. Cheveley from London (now from Vienna). His wife (Julia Karnel plays the unrelenting Victorian woman) does not notice anything for a long time. After going through all sorts of contortions, Sir Robert recovers his spotless reputation and is considered a future political personality of integrity in the British Empire.

Hubsi Kramar’s production is accurate, without any allusions to the current globalised state of affairs, and this makes the text – whose fine nuances are faithfully reproduced by the actors – even more brutal. Chanson singer Lucy McEvel plays the role of Mrs. Cheveley as a femme fatale – fully aware of her sex-appeal, like Ava Gardner. The other actors – even those playing small parts – are congenial, especially Stefano Bernardin playing the intelligent dandy-like Lord Goring, who engages in sparkling dialogues with Mrs. Cheveley and his old-fashioned and firm-principled father, played by Kramar himself. Not to be missed: www.3raum.or.at. Tel. 0650/323 33 77. ■

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos welcomes new generation to ÖOC

According to Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos, the announced resignation of the President of the Austrian Olympic Committee (ÖOC) ushers in a new generation of officials and the restructuring of the Committee. "Leo Wallner's resignation is the right step in this situation that is so difficult for the Olympic movement. Leo Wallner commands our deep respect for taking this decision which was certainly difficult for him personally but in the interest of sport and the ÖOC. He has made it possible that a new generation will take the helm in the Committee and that a fresh start can be made", stated Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos in response to the resignation of ÖOC President Leo Wallner.

"I welcome the current self-cleaning process in the Austrian Olympic Committee", said Darabos. "I have the impression that finally a new approach has been adopted and that unpleasant business of the past is no longer concealed. The allegations and suspicions concerning the ÖOC and Olympia-Förderverein (an association supporting Salzburg's application as a host of the Olympic Games) presented for the first time in August 2008 do not reflect well on Austrian sport. The Olympic movement should be above reproach. To rebuild confidence, both personnel and structural changes were required. Concrete solutions have already been submitted by the Restructuring Committee set up internally", said the Minister. ■

Minister Darabos convenes a meeting on the Klagenfurt Stadium

As proposed by the Austrian Football Federation (Österreichischer Fußballbund/ÖFB), Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos will gather all parties dealing with the Klagenfurt Stadium around the negotiating table. The Minister will convene a meeting on the future of the Klagenfurt Stadium in the Ministry of Sport in Vienna still in September. The "stadium summit" chaired by the Minister of Sport has become necessary as the City of Klagenfurt and the regional government of Carinthia have opposing views and conflicting ideas regarding the future dimension of the stadium. To clarify matters, Darabos wants to act as a mediator. "I am interested in a solution and willing to invite all parties involved to gather around the negotiating table", said the Minister of

Sport, who informed himself comprehensively on the currently confusing situation concerning the Klagenfurt Stadium. "I have a clear vision of the next steps and will present my position to all those affected". However, he was "generally against destroying infrastructure." "It is a fact that the solution has to meet the requirements of the region, respect the wishes of the population and take into account existing infrastructure; last but not least, financing must be affordable", concluded Minister Darabos. ■

In memoriam: Toni Sailer – Minister praises athlete of the century

Minister of Sport Norbert Darabos was deeply moved by the death of Toni Sailer, Austria's athlete of the 20th century. Sailer died aged 73 after a battle with cancer on 24 August 2009. He ended his career as a skier at the age of 23 years in 1958 after winning three Olympic medals and seven world championships. Darabos: "Toni Sailer was one of the really great personalities of Austrian sport. Unlike any other, he embodied the spirit of Austrian skiing— as an athlete, the star of ski films that were popular even in Japan, later as a coach, sports official and organiser." His death left a deep void in the skiing family. "Many people in our country saw him as a model. Without ski aces like him, skiing would not have the importance it has in today's society. I express my condolences to this family and friends. "The black lightning bolt from Kitz" served as a chief coach and technical director for the Austrian Ski Federation (ÖSV) from 1972 to 1976. During this period, Austria's Alpine skiers won back the Nations Cup from the then dominating French team and defended it seven times until 1980. Toni Sailer was laid to rest in his native Kitzbühel (Tyrol) on 29 August 2009. ■

Nice success for our sailors

Once more, our sailors have achieved international success. Thomas Zajac and Thomas Czaka won silver in the Tornado World Championships. Moreover, the duo Nico Delle Karth and Niko Resch earned a bronze medal at the 49er European Championships in Zadar. Minister of Sport Darabos congratulated the medallists very warmly. ■