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Salzburg prepares for European Football Championship

TOWN OF MOZART AND FOOTBALL

Whoever saw the cult director, Milos Forman's film “Amadeus”, about the famous composer and restless, yet warm soul of musical genius, can easily recall an (or another) unusual scene. Had he been our contemporary by any chance, Mozart (such as we remember him, among others, by the film legend) would probably have found today at the forthcoming European Football Championship in his birthplace Salzburg, which he did so nicely in Forman's film, when he was chasing after his wife-to-be Constanze around and under the table, laughing loudly and carelessly, while the whole palace suite was waiting for him at the other side of the palace. His Salzburg is in the finishing phase for the UEFA Euro 2008. However, while the stadium at the exit of the town is growing, on the other side, in the heart of Salzburg, one is still queuing in the traditional January “Week of Mozart” for a ticket for his “Don Giovanni”, violin concerto or *Missa in C Mol.*

This year the EC, one of the greatest tournaments in the world, takes place in Austria and Switzerland in the period 7-29 June. The participants in this year's football festival in Europe are 16 national teams, who will meet in four groups. The host for Group D, gathering Greece, Sweden, Russia and Spain, is the town of Salzburg, where three football matches will be held in three days' time, on 10, 14 and 18 June. Apart from Mozart's town, the matches will be held in three other Austrian towns – Innsbruck, Klagenfurt and Vienna, where the finale is to be held. The championship is so important for the Austrian hosts that a football also found its place in the traditional New Year's concert in Vienna, which is broadcasted live on TV each year for millions of spectators from that city.

Works on the reconstruction of the town's stadium in Salzburg, which is about a ten-minute drive away from the town centre, are entering into the finishing phase these days. When everything is completed in April, it will not be a stadium like “the glass wonder in Munich – Allianz-Arena”, however, the “Alpine” company, which erected that football arena, is now informing about the finish of the impressive construction feat of the Salzburg stadium by means of which the number of seats for the spectators will be doubled. The General Manager of the “Alpina” construction company, seated in Salzburg, Mr. Hans-Jürgen Miko says that the recent capacity of the stadium has been increased from about 16,000 seats to 30,500. He explains how this construction feat was done: the roof of the stadium, with the surface of 17,000 squares and weight of more than 2,000 tons, was lifted ten meters upward. What this feat really means says the fact that this weight equals the weight of 270 grown-up elephants. 900 seats have been allocated for the journalists who will be reporting on EC, and special 200 seats have been reserved for disabled persons, says the engineer, Mr. Wolfgang Weitgasser, leading us through the inside of the stadium and describing each detail of the growing edifice with the enthusiasm of a professional and someone who is in love with their

job. The reconstructed stadium will not only be a football arena, but according to Mr. Hans Jürgen Miko, a true humane center with cafés, shops, fitness facilities etc. That job, along with the reconstruction of the stadium in Innsbruck, and the construction of a new one in Klagenfurt, costs over €100 million in total.

The EC will not take place only at the stadium, but in the heart of Salzburg as well. The so called fan zone in the old part, lulled along the stretch of the River Salzach flowing through, and fortress dating from 11th century on the mount towering the town, will be open from 2 pm to 11 pm, and will have two big video beams, food stalls, a stage and VIP room on Residenz Square and Mozart Square – one of the town's symbols. Today there is a statue of the famous composer, unveiled in 1842 in the presence of his sons, on Mozart Square. Not far away from there is the house-museum where the composer was born, as well as the home where he lived with Constanze and his sons.

Within the circle of the old town, 150 catering establishments and about 600 shops will be available for the EC spectators. Those who are better-off can find accommodation in one of the numerous high category hotels. One of the most luxurious ones is the Sacher, a hotel with a famous name, situated on the coast, where today an overnight stay, in a deluxe single-bedded room with a view of the baroque town, costs €345. Much more favorable overnight stay, for about €30-40 can be found in one of the many hostels today.

The EC will provide Austria with work for 11,000 people, mainly in the security and catering sectors, which was published on the official UEFA website. It is estimated that during the EC the country's national economy will increase by €380 million in the sector of commerce, transport and entertainment. To compare with, that amount approximately equals the amount that flows annually into the till of the town of Salzburg, which has a population of approximately 150,000 people, and which according to the data by the editor-in-chief of the *Salzburger Volkszeitung*, has an annual budget of €400 million. By comparison, the budget of the Province of Vojvodina, with the population of about 2 million inhabitants, was € 700 million in 2007.

The trade between Serbia, which will not participate in this year's EC, and Austria is approximately \$30 million per annum. It is interesting that Austrian companies are not interested in investing in Serbia, and that there are only 220 such companies in our country, yet only 20 of them come from the western part of Austria, where the Regions of Salzburg is. That region is one of the nine ones in Austria, which similarly to Serbia has a population of 8 million inhabitants in total. Those informed explain that inequality with that fact that there is a lack of knowledge about the situation in this part of the Balkans. In order to alleviate to some extent and open up the way to new investments and greater trade, Vojvodina, via the Office for European Affairs of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, became a member a member of the Institute of the Regions of Europe, seated in Salzburg, in 2006. According to the Director of the Office for European Affairs, Mr. Predrag Novikov, regional networking creates a possibility for the implementation of rural policy, by means of which European institutions try to prevent the exodus of inhabitants from villages. 40% of EU budget, which was €126 billion last year, is allocated for such purposes. Mr. Novikov says that each EU inhabitant sets aside €2 from thier pocket every week as donation to rural policy. Mr. Novikov adds that it is also a less-known fact that two-third of the total income of EU trade remains within that block, having a population of more than 480 million inhabitants. To compare with, Russia has 150 million, USA 300 million, whereas 1,3 billion people live in China, and 1,1 billion in India. And then it is questioned whether Europe is good, says the Director of the Office for European Affairs. Well, if nothing else – that is the reason why it is good, concludes he.

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