

Early Bird 18 – 24 February, 2012

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**81 people died on the roads in Lower Franconia – accident statistics 2011: Eleven more people died than in 2010 (24 Feb, 2012)** According to the Police Headquarters 37,122 traffic accidents occurred on Lower Franconian roads in 2011 which means a decrease of 3.22%; however; there was an increase in fatal accidents with a result of eleven more people getting killed.

**Semco glass – State-of-the-art insulating glass production plant completed (24 Feb, 2012).** Company Semco glass opens new plant for production of safety and insulating glass in Sennfeld. During the last two years the company spent 3.5 million Euros for the new production plant in Sennfeld. The new insulation glass plant has a new method which replaces the metal strip between the two glass panes by a thermoplastic compound which has considerable better insulating quality. The executive manager, Markus Förster states: “Our new plant is absolutely state-of-the-art”.

**Ice Skating Rink: 10 people suffered minor injuries (18 Sep, 2012)** An incident occurred on Saturday at the ice skating rink in Bad Kissingen when ammoniac gas, used as a cooling agent, escaped from the machine room into the ice skating rink, injuring 10 people. The fire department quickly had the situation under control. According to the police there was no danger for the population at any time.

## **LEADERS & POLITICS**

**Community is getting down to the nitty-gritty – Big expenses in the 2012 Budget – already getting ready for the drawdown of the U.S. Army (23 Feb, 2012)** During a budget meeting in Niederwerrn one of the themes was the conversion of military properties after the drawdown of the U.S. Army within the next two to three years. After preliminary talks with other mayors the community steels itself with approximately 50,000 Euros originating from the program for village development “social town”. Details will be discussed in the next community council meeting.

**Nothing belongs to the Community – after the drawdown of the U.S. Army. (23 Feb, 2012)** In a recently held community council meeting Ruth Hanna Gube, Mayor of Geldersheim stated “The community owns nothing” in regards to the announced drawdown of the U.S. Army: Even if the former “Luftwaffen” airport is vacated. Some people were fantasizing about a civilian airport in Geldersheim. One thing is for certain, said Gube first of all the “Federal Real Estate Agency (BiMA) will hold a hand over the properties. Even though the communities have the planning sovereignty for the area. In Geldersheim they are hoping for assistance from the Office for Rural Development in agreement with the city, the county and the neighbor communities.

**A minute of silence for Nazi victims (23 Feb, 2012)** The German Association of Labor Unions and the Federal Association of German employers jointly ask to observe a minute of silence on

Thu, Feb. 23, at noon to remember the victims of right extremist violence. Also in the plants, companies and city administration in Schweinfurt and Würzburg employees are encouraged to participate. The minute of silence will take place simultaneously with the central act of state of the constitutional body of the Federal Republic of Germany. Frank Firsching, Region Chairman of the DGB (German Association of Labor Units) stated: “We are deeply concerned that those terrible crimes could happen in Germany, after the experience with the Nazi dictatorship”.

**President Candidate Joachim Gauck’s personal relationship causes criticism. (23 Feb, 2012) Can the President of Germany be in a relationship without being married?** Joachim Gauck is married, however; he has been separated from his wife since 1990 and has been living with a journalist from Nürnberg for 12 years. Therefore Norbert Geis, a Catholic member of the Federal Parliament demanded that Gauck has to get his personal circumstances in order as quickly as possible to not provide a target for anybody. This statement drew a lot of criticism. , Klaus Ernst, Chairman of the left wing party, from Schweinfurt stated: “What a medieval debate! There are many things that speak against Gauck becoming president, but his personal circumstances are not one of them. Norbert Geis told this newspaper that he has not said anything out of the ordinary. “I think Gauck is a great candidate but the personal circumstances of a person in the highest position of our country should commensurate this important office – especially since marriage and family play such a great role in our constitution.

**Strike at Frankfurt airport is over – negotiations have started (23 Feb, 2012)** On Wednesday, the labor union (GdF) received a written offer by operator company “Fraport”. Since then the strikes were ended. On Thursday both parties will meet to continue negotiations. However; many flights will still be cancelled on Thursday.

**Strike at Frankfurt airport continues at least until Friday (22 Feb, 2012)** Passengers and air lines must expect delays and flight cancellations until Friday, 11p.m. On the fourth day of the strike only every 5<sup>th</sup> flight had to be cancelled. Since beginning of the strike last Thursday, a total of 750 flights were cancelled. Mainly inland and short and medium distance flights were cancelled. Intercontinental flights were not affected.

**Drawdown also offers chances – U.S. Army Garrison Schweinfurt will close (18 Feb, 2012)**  
**Now it is official:** Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta has announced that the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade will drawdown no later than September 2014. As a consequence of the Army’s restructuring the garrisons in Bamberg and Schweinfurt will close. According to the Head of the Bavarian State Chancellery, Thomas Kreuzer, this will be a great challenge for the cities, counties and the State of Bavaria. However; the conversion also offers big chances as can be seen in the examples of Würzburg and Erlangen. Bamberg and Schweinfurt can count on the fact that the Bavarian government will not betray the communities and the people there but will help and support them to realize the chances offered.

**President of Germany resigns amid controversy (18 Feb, 2012)** Prosecutors had sought removal of immunity over allegations of favors. Ending a scandal that has become a major embarrassment to Germany’s political leadership, President Christian Wulff announced his resignation on Friday after prosecutors asked Parliament to take away his immunity from prosecution over accusations of improper ties to businessmen. President Wulff told reporters that

he was stepping down because Germany needed a president who enjoyed the full trust of the people. “Events of the past days and weeks have shown that this trust, and with it my ability to work effectively, have been persistently impaired” he said. He was therefore resigning quickly, to make way for a successor. He added that he was convinced the legal inquiry into his behavior would lead “to a complete exoneration”.

**Strike at the airport in Frankfurt continues (18 Feb, 2012)** Hundreds of flights had to be cancelled on Friday. But it could get worse, the 200 strikers have announced even more strikes for next week. If the operator company “Fraport” does not give in, the strikes will definitively continue according to GdF (labor union for air traffic control).

## **ECONOMY**

**Drivers boycott gasoline alternatives –Liquefied petroleum gas and natural gas have been competing with gasoline and diesel for many years – but not very successful. (22 Feb, 2012)** Most drivers in Germany drive with gasoline or diesel – in spite of record prices. Of 43 million cars on German roads only less than 600,000 are equipped to run on liquefied petroleum gas, natural gas, electricity or as hybrid cars with an additional driving power. According to the Federal Motor Transport Authority only 1.4% of the cars are equipped with alternative driving power.

**Illegal cigarettes cause damages in the billions. More and more smokers buy illegal cigarettes. (21 Feb, 2012)** More than every 5<sup>th</sup> cigarette smoked in Germany has not been taxed. According to the German cigarette association illegal cigarettes consumed make up 47.6 % in the Eastern States and 14.3% in the Western States. The situation is most problematic in Berlin where 49.9% of the cigarettes consumed are illegal. The ratio in Bavaria is 27.4 %, in Hessen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Baden-Württemberg each 10%. Smuggling and dealing with illegal cigarettes have cost the government and the economy 5.5 billion Euros in 2011 according to Marianne Tritz, Manager, DZV (German cigarette association). The German government had the biggest loss: 4.2 billion Euros in taxes.

**Gasoline prices higher than ever before (18 Feb, 2012)** On Saturday the gas prices of 1.65 Euro per liter were higher than ever before. Consumers cannot hope for price decreases either. According to Rainer Wiek, from Energy Information Service, Hamburg there is a constant high price level for oil. Also the price for heating oil with 94.50 Euros per 100 liter is at the highest level since the summer of 2008. The price is not too much lower than the record price for heating oil in 2008 when 100 liter cost 98 Euros. Causes for the high prices are expensive crude oil and a relatively weak Euro.

## **SPORTS/ATHLETICS**

**Mighty Dogs made semi-finals** – after a 13:0 thrashing victory at home and a 8:0 in Königsbrunn it was determined that the Mighty Dogs made it into the semi-finals. Since both

finalists will move up to the Bavarian “Oberliga” (Upper league) the Mighty Dogs need only two more victories to reach their goal.

**FC 05 Schweinfurt wins game against the TSV Aubstadt at a canter** – with 1:4. Coach Udo Romeis was happy.

## **OTHER**

**Schweinfurt Fasching Parade (22 Feb, 2012)** held Tuesday afternoon, had more than 50 floats and groups, drawing 35,000 spectators downtown Schweinfurt.

### **Würzburg Fasching Parade (20 Feb, 2012)**

A 3 kilometer long fasching parade consisting of more than 170 floats and groups and 3,000 participants marched through downtown Würzburg last Sunday. Approximately 100,000 spectators came to watch the parade.