

## **Opening speech by president Marian Wakounig on the occasion of the opening of the international financial sports tournament in Carinthia, Austria, 17 June 2024**

Dear President of the Carinthian State Parliament Mr Rohr, dear guests of honour from politics, business, culture and public life.

Dear presidents, officials, athletes from Germany, France, Luxembourg, Hungary and Austria! Dear colleagues from the Austrian finance administration!

To understand the significance of this international tournament we have to look back over 70 years. It is in the year 1951. Six states, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands laid the foundation stone for the founding of today's European Union

Three of these six founding states are represented here today.

Exactly at this time a high official from the French Finance ministry, his name was Bedenne, realised, how important it was for tax officials to meet in the context of a sports competition, not only to compete in sport, but also to form friendships across the border.

This memorable meeting, over 70 years ago, was the begin of today's traditional international financial sports tournament.

This year we are celebrating this tournament for the 67th time.

It is a unique sports tournament of European tax and customs administrations, a symbol of sport competitions, but also a symbol of friendship between European tax and customs officials.

However, this tournament is also the ideal place to exchange experiences in the professional life.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Austrian ministry of finance, in particular the **federal minister Magnus Brunner**, for supporting us to organise this tournament. Dear minister, thank you so much for your support.

This year, the tournament is taking place in my home region of Carinthia.

Carinthia borders on two EU member states, Slovenia and Italy. This border has also influenced this region. You can feel this neighbourhood everywhere here.

Here in Carinthia, which is called **Koroška in Slovenian language** and **Carinzia in Italian language**, we say goodbye with the words **Servus, Srečno and Ciao** - in the hope of seeing each other again.

These beautiful words in three languages stands for friendship and openness to other cultures.

Therefore, this region is comparable to our International Financial Sports Tournament, which connects people from different countries.

So let us never forget, that sport has great power to bring people together and to build bridges between the people.

With this in mind, I wish everyone a fair and injury-free sports tournament. But the tournament should also deepen the friendship between you all.

A big thank to my colleagues in our sports association SV Finanz, who are today unnamed, but who have invested a huge amount of free time for months to make this tournament possible. Thank you so much, it comes from my heard.

I wish you all the best for an unforgettable tournament here in Carinthia/Koroška/Kärnten.

As the president of the tournament I declare open the **67th International Financial Sports Tournament** here in Carinthia, Faak am See, in Koroška/ Bače/Baško jezero.