

# **Regional policy of Lower Austria: Fostering innovation & successful experiences developed**



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**Member of the Niederösterreichischen Landtag**

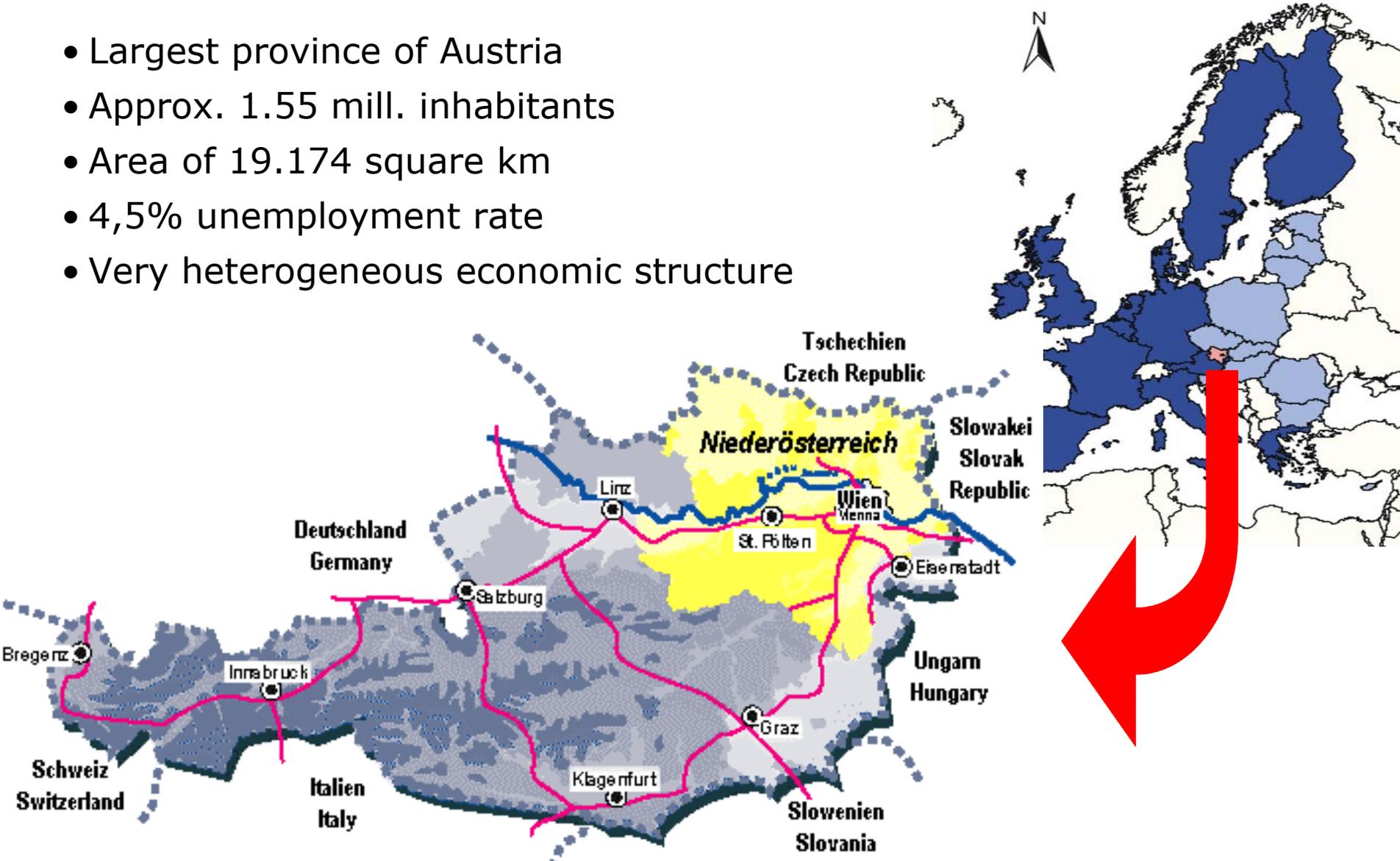
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**NÖ Wirtschaftsförderung, Amt der NÖ Landesregierung**

**Krakow, April 2005**

# Niederösterreich – some geographical & structural data



- Largest province of Austria
- Approx. 1.55 mill. inhabitants
- Area of 19.174 square km
- 4,5% unemployment rate
- Very heterogeneous economic structure



- Mechanisms of the regional innovation policy Lower Austria
  - Instruments
  - Board of trustees
  - Strategy
  - Coordination platform
  - Continuous improvement process
- Good practice cases:  
Innovative Actions of Lower Austria:
  - Fachdialog (Expert Dialogue)
  - Innovationsassistent (innovation assistant)
- Outlook on future activities



## NÖ Wirtschaftsförderung, Amt der NÖ Landesregierung

(Economic department, office of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria)

- ✓ Responsible for
  - continuous improvement of the Regional Innovation System NÖ
  - development and implementation of Regional Innovation Strategy
- ✓ Development of specific topics and focuses of the regional innovation / technology policy
- ✓ Management and improvement of regional funding schemes: Development of directives for new funding programmes and amendment of existing funding schemes
- ✓ Management of the “NÖ Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Strukturverbesserungsfonds”



## NÖ Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Strukturverbesserungsfonds

(Fund for economic development and structural improvement Lower Austria)

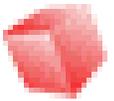
- ✓ Focus on
  - Inward investment, foundation of new companies
  - Research and development, innovation
  - Opening up new markets
  - Collaboration
  - Local supply
- ✓ Independent funds with asset of more than 85 Mio €, used for rolling over loans
- ✓ Additional regional grants for reduction of interest rates
- ✓ Managed by the  
NÖ Wirtschaftsförderung, Amt der NÖ Landesregierung



## Kuratorium des NÖ Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Strukturverbesserungsfonds

(Board of trustees for the fund for economic development and structural improvement Lower Austria)

- ✓ Reflects the social partnership in Austria with in total 12 members from the
  - NÖ Landtag (provincial parliament),
  - Wirtschaftskammer (Chamber of Commerce),
  - Arbeiterkammer (Chamber of Labour)
- ✓ Headed by the provincial minister of economic policy and deputy governor
- ✓ 4 meetings annually together with the NÖ Wirtschaftsförderung
- ✓ Recommendation of
  - budget allocation for NÖ Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Strukturverbesserungsfonds
  - directives for regional innovation policy



## Regionale Innovationsstrategie Niederösterreich

(Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria)

- ✓ Developed from 1997 and to 1999
- ✓ with 5 specified pillars as „blueprint“ for the improvement of the Regional Innovation System NÖ
- ✓ Clearer knowledge of firms' needs for innovation support
- ✓ Technology and innovation service providers with
  - Increased customer orientation
  - Stronger communication and networking among each other
  - clearer defined roles and tasks
- ✓ Broad regional commitment on regional innovation measures
- ✓ Establishment of the RIS NÖ Steering Committee



## Technology

- Fostering of NÖ technology core competencies
- Improving the technology image of Lower Austria

**NÖ TECHNOL-  
PROGRAMM**



**Foresight**



## Innovation

- Positioning of Lower Austria as innovative location
- Establishment of a top regional innovation supporting network

**INFINÖ**



**Vienna Region**  
The Award of Excellence  
for Innovative Regions  
by the European Commission

## Cooperation

- Creation of cooperation culture among NÖ firms
- Fostering operational and strategic collaborations among firms



## Internationalisation

- Strengthening the position of NÖ firms in international markets
- Positioning of NÖ as turntable for Central Europe

**Opening up  
new markets**



## New Business

- Mobilisation of start-ups and spin-offs
- With focus on academic start-ups

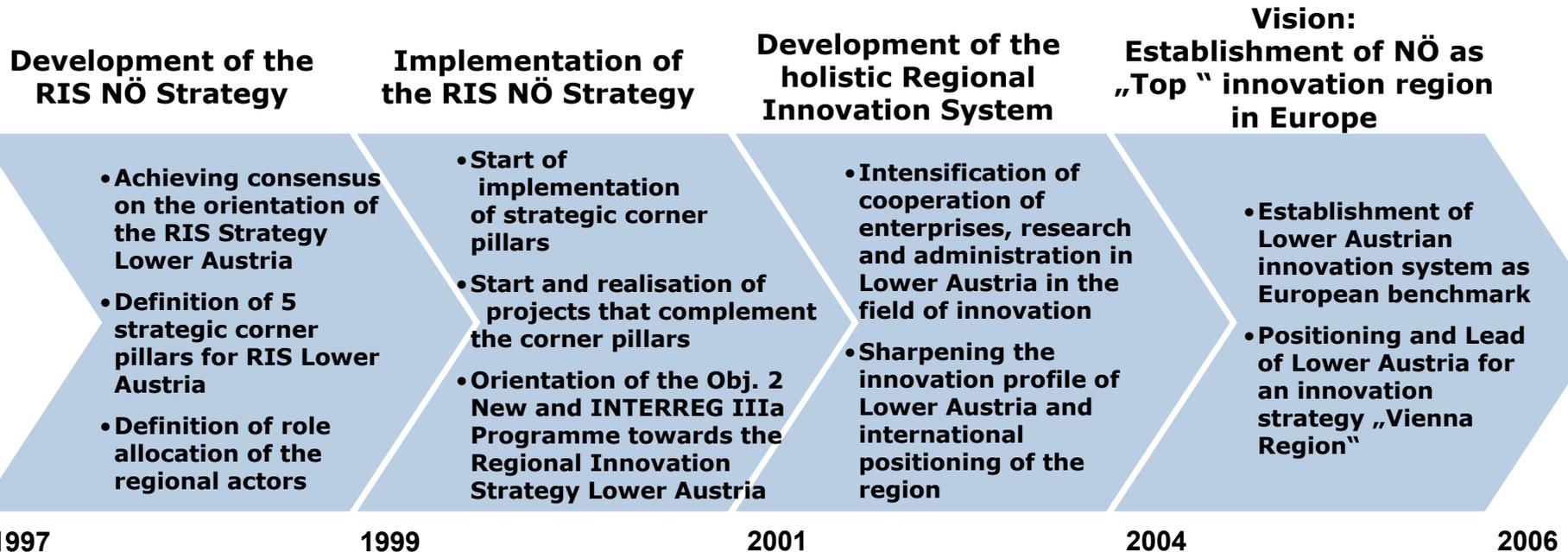




## Lenkungskreis RIS NÖ

(Steering Committee RIS NÖ)

- ✓ Established in 1997 at the beginning of the development of the Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria,
- ✓ Comprises all relevant technology and innovation service providers,
- ✓ Today the most important platform
  - for information exchange on and coordination of current regional innovation (supporting) activities and
  - for consensus building on required measures to improve the Regional Innovation System Lower Austria,
- ✓ Headed by Ernest Gabmann,  
minister for economic affairs and deputy governor,
- ✓ Coordinated by the Wirtschaftsförderung,  
Amt der NÖ Landesregierung,



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- Basic information
- Action "Innovation Assistant"
- Action "Expert Dialogue"



- Regional Program of Innovative Actions (RPIA) Lower Austria with run time from 2002 to 2004
- Total Budget: 6.000.000 Euro
- Strategic themes:
  - Regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation
  - the information society at the service of regional development
- Actions:
  - Strategic User Value Orientation
  - Pre-Seed Acceleration for Technology Based Firms
  - Dialogue Science – Economy – Policy & Administration
    - Innovation Assistant, Innovation Assistant – Internationalisation
    - Experts dialogue ("Fachdialog")
  - IT Pilot-Projects for B-to-B Solutions



Budget: approx. 1.093.000 Euro

Point of departure:

- The majority of SMEs is suffering from lack of higher qualified staff due to
  - larger distances from educational organisations,
  - fear of contact R&D institutions
  - pretended less attractive location of the SME
  - underdeveloped strategically orientation/professional project management

## Innovation assistant (2) – Objectives / Frame conditions:



- Fostering the innovation capability and culture within SMEs
- Stimulation of SMEs, especially with no or little experience with graduated employees,
- Innovation assistant must be newly employed and recently graduated (university or university of applied sciences).
- Innovation assistant has to be employed for a concrete innovation project (earmarked assignment)
  - Implementation of a specific innovation project within the SME (R&D, internal management and organisation, communication and information).
  - Entering new geographic markets (market research, export strategies, setting up sales channels etc)
- Funding for a maximum of 15 months
- open for SMEs of all sectors of industry and industry related services

## Innovation assistant (3) – kind of support

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- Grant of the labor costs of the innovation assistant (50% for the first 8 months of employment, 35% for further max. 7 months) with a maximum amount of € 18.385,-;
- Mandatory training of the innovation assistant by a specially designed post graduated training program established at the Danube University Krems (Lower Austria) (100% funded); the training program is structured in modules (18 days in total)
- Grant of max. 50% of costs for project related, accompanying trainings up to € 3.000,-;
- Funding of project and innovation assistant coaching and monitoring (100%, max. € 5.240,- ) by an external consultants.

## Innovation assistant (4) – Aims and Results

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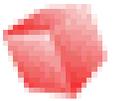
- 10 innovation assistants planned
- 17 innovation assistants and further 21 innovation assistants for internationalisation realised
- Approx. 70% of these projects were performed by companies within objective 2 or phasing out areas.



Budget: approx. 350.000 Euro

Point of departure:

- Weak collaboration culture between enterprises, especially SMEs and research centres due to
  - larger distances from educational organisations,
  - fear of SMEs to contact R&D institutions,
  - lack of personal contacts
  - Prejudice of SMEs that R&D institutions are only oriented towards science without any impact on business
- Economic exploitation of public research results insufficient



- The “Fachdialog” is a platform with the aim
  - to intensify the dialogue between SMEs, science and politics
  - to set up networks for continuous exchange on new technological trends
  - to foster the transfer of research results into exploitable products.
- One-day event with
  - presentations,
  - Workshops
  - exhibitions (of firms, R&D centres, universities)
- Organisation of 5 Experts Dialogues for specific topics
  - Microsystems and Nanotechnology
  - Future Vehicle Concepts
  - New Composites and innovative Materials
  - Health Supporting Technologies and modern Health Care
  - Environment + Bio + Technologies



- Organisation of the “Fachdialog” by professionals
  - Meeting venue with strong linkages to topic of the “Fachdialog” (e.g. competence centre, key enterprise)
  - Invitation of additional experts for specific topic
- Participation in the “Fachdialog” free of charge
- Exhibition area free of charge for exhibitors
- Follow-up of the event:
  - Dissemination of presentation and workshops findings
  - Coaching of companies on request in setting up technology transfer projects and joint R&D projects
- Organisation of “Unternehmenszirkel” (enterprises’ circles) in order to identify and involve leading enterprises in the respective technology fields.



- 5 “Fachdialoge” organised with
- More than 500 participants in total
- Increasing collaboration culture among SMEs and R&D institutions
- technology transfer projects and formal agreements on joint R&D initiated



beatmap

NET X P E R I E N C E

Content Management System per ERIKNETWORK

## Main Menu

RPIA  
Country Austria  
Region Niederoesterreich  
Official name of your RPIA (100 chars max) Regional programme of innovative Actions in Lower Austria  
Acronym of your RPIA (50 chars max) RIS++  
Official Web site address of your RPIA (60 chars max) <http://im.ris-noe.at>

### 1 Indicate the RPIA's strategic theme(s) \*

- theme 1 - Regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation
- theme 2 - e-EuropeRegio: the information society at the service of regional development
- theme 3 - Regional identity and sustainable development

### 2 Priority order of each theme according to the budget \*

- theme 1 - Regional economies based on knowledge and technological innovation 5
- theme 2 - e-EuropeRegio: the information society at the service of regional development 3
- theme 3 - Regional identity and sustainable development 0

#### Edit Good Practice

##### GP Name

Innovation Assistant

Experts dialogue (Fachdialog)

- Further information on the Regional Programme of Innovative Actions (RPIA) Lower Austria will be published soon via the ERIK database
- ERIK database is already applied by ERIK members

20 Give a brief description of the Good Practice (2500 chars max) \*

experience with graduated employees, to employ recently graduated staff in order to overcome the above mentioned barriers. The innovation assistant has to be employed for a concrete innovation project of the firm (earmarked assignment) and is funded for a maximum of 15 months. The action is open for SMEs of all sectors of industry and industry related services.

The support consists of 4 pillars:

- grant of the labour costs of the innovation assistant (50% for the first 8 months of employment, 35% for further max. 7 months) with a maximum amount of € 18.385;
- mandatory training of the innovation assistant by a specially designed post graduated training programme established at the Donau University Krems (Lower Austria) (100% funded); the training program is structured in modules (18 days in total)
- grant of max. 50% of costs for project related, accompanying trainings;
- funding of project and innovation assistant coaching (100%). This accompanying coaching is done by an external consultant.

The action is based on experiences from other regions (e.g. Upper Austria, Vienna, Carinthia, Schleswig-Holstein) and was tailored to the Lower Austrian requirements according the gathered needs and demands of the regional SMEs. The action was designed by the department of economic development in cooperation with partners of the innovation supporting network and external consultants. During the course of RIS++ the action was adapted to the results of the latest SME innovation survey carried out and to the findings of the in-process monitoring of the action. Finally the action has improved the competitiveness of the participating SMEs by increasing their own innovation competence, by implementing of successful innovation activities and by fostering the exchange/cooperation with other SMEs and education/research organisations.

21 Assess the innovativeness of the GP (1- 5 scale) \*

4

22 What are the key innovative features of the GP ? (3500 chars max) \*

Strengthening the SMEs competencies in the field of business strategy and management: Training on the innovation project instead of training on the job with earmarked assignment of the newly employed innovation assistant for a well defined innovation project ensures that the innovation assistant can focus on strategic technological and innovation aspects and is not hampered by operative day-to-day problems. Target-oriented development of key qualification and key competencies in SMEs.

Design and application of a holistic approach in order to strengthen the technological and innovation competence of regional SMEs, especially for smaller firms and SMEs in rural areas: basic and project specific postgraduate training for newly employed graduates in combination with coaching by an external consultant and with systematic approach of identification of appropriate SMEs with respective innovation projects.



- Development and application of a monitoring system in order to measure the continuous of the Regional Innovation System Lower Austria
- Further development of the collaboration culture among NÖ firms
- Raising the NÖ firms' awareness for long term business strategies and strengthening their own competencies in strategic management by application of Foresight Tools
- Further Improvement of alternative financing tools with improved risk sharing opportunities
- Innovation as core topic of next Objective2-program period
- Vienna Region: strengthening the collaboration between Vienna and Lower Austria in order to create a powerful region with critical mass



**Thank you for your attention !**

**Any Questions ?**

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and <http://im.ris-noe.at>