

Summary

11. Spatial Planning Report 2002 to 2004

This Spatial Planning Report is the 11th volume of a long series of similar reports. It is the only expert publication of its kind that summarizes and documents major spatial trends in Austria, the implementation of EU regional policy as well as on major spatial planning measures of the federal government, Länder, cities and municipalities, and of the economic and social partners. This summary report is necessary, on the one hand, for documenting the numerous activities of the territorial authorities and institutions that deal with spatial planning, and on the other hand, for pointing out new trends and challenges.

The 11th Spatial Planning Report covers the period 2001 to 2004 and breaks down into six large chapters: Framework conditions and trends in spatial development, the Austrian Regional Development Concept 2001 (ÖREK), partnerships for the implementation of EU regional policy 2000 to 2006, cross-border and transnational cooperation, other reports on ÖROK activities of relevance for spatial development, and reports by ÖROK members. The report closes with a summary, annex and indices.

The summary follows the sequence of the chapters of the report. The principal statements and general characteristics are highlighted, without going into detail. The details are presented in the individual chapters.

Framework Conditions and Trends in Spatial Development

Part A presents the most important demographic and economic trends based current data, and differentiated spatially at the level of districts, and depending on the availability of the data at the level of NUTS 3 units. This part illustrates quite clearly how the growing integration of Austria into Europe is changing the spatial structure of the country. In this context, European integration plays a role as well as changing social structures, the internationalization of the economy and progress in transport and communication technology, with these changes interacting with the integration mentioned above.

The picture of the republic divided into two parts, which had been valid for many decades, with a demographically younger and economically more successful Western region, on the one hand, and a demographically and economically stagnating Eastern region is no longer valid in this form. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the accession of Austria to the EU and the EU enlargement, a new picture emerged with respect to the spatial context. The regions along the former Iron Curtain have new neighbours and today are no longer located at dead-end roads, but rather form a central part of the new regions that are emerging. The Western and Eastern Länder equally benefit from the growing economic integration into the European central area, and formerly peripheral regions are the beneficiaries of targeted European regional policy and have achieved great progress.

It is especially the urban regions that have also seen demographic and economic growth. Only a few years and decades ago, the crisis of the core city was topical and belief was widespread of the exchangeability of locations, but meanwhile it has become clear that urban regions are now the pillars of the internationalization of the economy. The important central area of Vienna that extends functionally beyond states boundaries, the capitals of the Länder and the connecting axes have become the hubs and edges of the new spatial structure of Austria. Today, the conceptualization of spatial development does not use the category of core city any more, but rather of urban region. The large cities in Austria, especially Vienna, have expanded further during the reporting period and have long since spread beyond the city's borders with respect to function and morphology. It has meanwhile become quite clear that the suburbanization of the residential population and the shift of the tertiary sector to the urban hinterlands (shopping centres) is creating new challenges for spatial planning and calls for a regional approach and working in partnerships.

The challenges for spatial planning result from the growing traffic volumes and the use of land that is increasingly being determined by social factors. These two aspects in turn are affected by changing spatial

structures. When cities expand and urban regions become the locations of the growing international division of labour, the use of land increases and transport interaction grows. The basic existential functions that comprise where people work, live, purchase goods and engage in leisure time activities are no longer confined to one location; the increase in traffic volumes due to the spatial segregation of functional locations is inevitable. Therefore, it is not a surprise that during the reporting period, traffic volumes rose by 1.8% per year, which is much more than accounted for structurally by economic growth. Part of this growth may be attributed to growing freight transport, but the rest is due, above all, to commuting. The suburbanization of the residential population and the concentration of jobs in agglomerations have increased the number of persons commuting to work. A growing number of commuters do not use public passenger transport, but their own vehicles. The automatic counting station at the entry points to cities computed an annual increase in average daily traffic of between 5% and 10%. Capacity bottlenecks are inevitable and planning and construction measures are just as necessary as a new orientation for transport policy.

The suburbanization processes have not only increased transport volumes, but also land use for residential purposes. A growing number of persons have the capacity to build, buy or rent their own homes. Despite relatively low population and household growth rates, land use in Austria for transport infrastructure and settlements has increased steadily. This development now accounts for almost 20 hectares of land use daily. The rise in the use of land for building and transport was disproportionately high in the reporting period in the two largest Länder of Lower Austria and Styria. It almost seems as if the availability of land encourages the liberal use of land. Those Länder that have little space for permanent settlements —Vorarlberg, Tyrol and Salzburg —are more economic in their land use. In any case, spatial planning needs to gain a stronger position that goes beyond the borders of municipalities and cities with respect to its concepts and actions in order to meet growing demand for residential space and to steer the development of traffic to minimize conflicts.

The Austrian Regional Development Concept 2001 (ÖREK 2001) Implementation and Application

These were some of the issues that were already dealt with in the Austrian Regional Development Concept 2001 (ÖREK). ÖREK is probably the most important

strategic document for supra-regional spatial planning. It not only concentrates the focus of attention on a few important themes and challenges, but also presents fundamental strategies and outlines the principles for putting spatial planning into practice. It was adopted in 2002 by the Political Conference of ÖROK and published as Volume 163 of the ÖROK publication series. The concept declares a commitment to the prudent and benign use of space and the environment, to strengthening a competitive economy, to a balanced social development across space, and to the principle of participation in planning processes. The priority themes are explicitly mentioned: The location of Austria in Europe, sustainable use of resources, spatial equalization and social integration, mobility and transport, urban regions and rural regions.

The implementation and application of ÖREK was the main activity during the reporting period. Efforts to make the spatial development concept itself more popular were one of the most important measures taken. It is recognized —and has been in the past — that the principles of spatial planning are meaningful and effective only if they are “lived” in the daily practice of local and supra-regional spatial planning. To this end, it seemed sensible to develop new products to transport the concerns of ÖREK to the target groups.

In this context the publications should be mentioned, “Raumentwicklung in Österreich” (Spatial Development in Austria) from the series “Segmente” (Segments) (published by Ed. Hölzel) for the target groups of teachers, students and young people, and the “Good-Practice-Sammlung ÖREK 2001” (Good Practice Collection ÖREK 2001), which explains to a wider readership examples from Austrian planning practice in the six priority themes in an easy-to-understand manner.

Partnership in the Implementation of EU regional policy 2000 to 2006

The third chapter of Part A of the 11th Spatial Planning Report deals with the implementation of EU regional policy in the form of partnerships. This explicit mention of EU regional policy is necessary, because it has developed into one of the most important pillars of regional and spatial planning policy action. The high volumes of funding as well as the principles of EU regional assistance (such as target oriented, long-term, additionality, partnership and performance monitoring) are definitely the driver of the growing significance of regional policy.

EU co-financed regional policy in Austria, the Austrian Structural Fund Programme 2000 to 2006 comprises the priority Objective Programmes Objective 1, 2 and 3 and the Community Initiatives INTERREG III, URBAN II, LEADER+ and EQUAL. Together with the Austrian Programme for the Development of the Rural Region, a total of EUR 5,039mn (at 1999 prices) are available in EU funds for regional policy measures in Austria to achieve structural improvement.

Regional policy is the competence of the Länder, which are independently responsible for the implementation. Despite the differences between the concrete projects in the Länder, the assistance provided has six fundamental and divergent approaches.

The first approach comprises investments to improve structures in industry and commerce. Most Länder have investment incentive programmes that are highly sought after. Above all smaller and medium-sized companies receive assistance to help them cope with structural change easier and regain competitiveness.

Apart from investments for the improvement of structures in existing companies, for structural policy to be effective it is indispensable to increase the number of firms in modern and competitive industries. On the one hand, this can be achieved by increasing the innovation capacity of existing firms, and on the other, by establishing or attracting the location of new and innovative firms. The assistance provided for innovation and start-up activities — such as incubator centres, financial and organizational assistance in implementing innovation or special start-up programmes — is a second important approach to active structural policy.

A third approach of the structural programmes of the Länder is dedicated to tourism, and considering the great significance of this sector for their regional economies, it is quite understandable. Quality improvement measures (quality campaigns) and use of cultural offerings are a widely used strategy for promoting tourism. Sports, and in this context bicycling, horseback riding and hiking, as well as winter sports in some cases, are being promoted under the EU regional programmes in most Länder, but of great significance is also the area of wellness and health.

The themes of environment and sustainability have become more important in general and constitute the fourth approach. The environment is explicitly addressed in the programme to develop the rural region, and in the area of agriculture and forestry (EAGFL) as well as within the scope of environmental infrastructure

measures in the Objective 1, and Objective 2 Programmes and Community Initiatives. The concrete projects comprise measures relating to communal wastewater and energy projects as well as projects for ecology consulting for enterprises.

The explicit assistance for employment enjoys priority in structural policy in the projects that are being funded under Objective 3. Objective 3 projects are aimed directly at the qualification of employed persons, the reduction of discrimination and unemployment as well as the reintegration of persons belonging to the problem groups of the labour market. Employment policy measures are the fifth approach within the programmes of relevance for regional policy.

Finally, the sixth approach is the advancement of regional development. To mobilize a region's own potentials, further intermediary structures are promoted in addition to traditional regional management to encourage inter-communal cooperation (associations of municipalities). A few projects may serve as an example: the strengthening of regional and local collaboration, and the promotion of the development potentials of integrated regional development.

Cross-border and Transnational Cooperation

Cross-border and transnational cooperation is very important for Austria's spatial development: Due to Austria's size and geography it has a relatively high share of border regions, and for this reason many developments have a cross-border dimension based alone on their spatial vicinity. Moreover, many spatial issues can only be discussed reasonably within a larger context — and thus often across borders. Since the EU accession, a number of assistance programmes specifically for such areas (INTERREG IIIA/B/C) have been instated in which Austria participates.

INTERREG IIIA is by far the most important strand for Austria. On the one hand, due to the funds that flow into border regions, but even more so due to the broad impact and high local visibility. Austria takes part in a total of seven INTERREG IIIA programmes, which are being carried out in the period 2000 to 2006.

IIIA Programmes have a very broad thematic orientation. The Spatial Planning Report contains information in a detailed overview. The assistance options range from economic development (this area is allocated the highest funding of Austrian programmes) to environment and transport as well as spatial and regional planning, thus covering all of the most impor-

tant factors of influence for spatial development. IIIA also assists cooperation between people in the border regions (e.g. cultural and social themes) and in building up cross-border structures and networks. Finally, IIIA programmes address a wide scope of recipients for assistance and create the opportunities for local initiatives and institutions to become active across borders.

Reports on Activities of ÖROK of Spatial Relevance and of its Members

Chapter 1 of Part B of the 11th spatial planning report essentially documents the activities of ÖROK in the reporting period. The Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning was founded in 1971 as a permanent body by the federal government, Länder and municipalities and serves to facilitate cooperation among the territorial authorities in issues relating to spatial planning and spatial development. Its main tasks include the preparation, development and implementation of the Austrian Spatial Development Concept, which is explained in more detail in Chapter 3 of the Spatial Planning Report; the coordination and evaluation of planning and measures by territorial authorities with a spatial impact, and the drafting of papers on spatial research, in particular, analyses and forecasts.

ÖROK worked to accomplish these aims during the reporting period in many ways. ÖROK has initiated a series of projects that deal with the main issues of spatial research and spatial planning. As an example, we would like to mention the project on the re-interpretation and application of the concept of central place, on the functionality of rural areas, on the multi-functionality of the landscape, and the relationship between spatial planning and natural hazards. The ÖROK Atlas was updated and a forecast was prepared in collaboration with Statistik Austria on demographic trends, gainfully employed persons, households and housing needs. Furthermore, it organized many meetings, workshops, symposia and press conferences highlighting the role of ÖROK in the expert community.

Reports of ÖROK Members

Most of Part B documents the spatially relevant planning and measures of the federal government, Länder, cities and municipalities and of the social and economic partners. It contains detailed and comprehensive reports, giving the Spatial Planning Report a documentary character.

The most important activities of the federal government in the reporting period relating to spatial plan-

ning were carried out in the following areas: economic and labour market policy, transport, environment and healthcare policy.

The main actions in the area of economic and labour market policy were the integration of the diverse research institutions into the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft, FFG) and the organizational restructuring of the bodies responsible for subsidies is also an achievement worth mentioning. The integration of Finanzierungsgarantiegesellschaft and BÜR- GES Förderungsbank as well as Innovationsagentur into Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft (aws) and the assignment of identical staff of ERP Fund to aws has contributed to improving efficiency. In accordance with its mandate under law, aws, as the bank of the Republic of Austria responsible for subsidies, intervenes in the market with specific funding to help maximize the effects in the interest of economic progress. A special economic policy concern was to improve the financial starting situation of young companies and to subsidize investments in tourism, especially with a view to optimizing the size of enterprises, to improve quality and to diversify the range of offerings.

The National Action Plan for Employment defines the framework in Austria for the development of human resources, the improvement of employment and for overcoming labour market problems. In this context, the federal government discloses which measures it plans to use to cope with the challenges of the labour market. For the planning period 2000 to 2006, the amount of ESF funding available was around EUR 770mn, which will be channelled into three Objectives programmes and the Community Initiative EQUAL. Projects dedicated to preventing unemployment, promoting equal opportunity for women and men, and projects under the Territorial Employment Pact (TEP) enjoy priority.

The second important task of the federal government in the reporting period was the planning and expansion of high-capacity transport routes. The high-capacity transport routes link the economic regions of the country with those of the European neighbours and the major ports, and in this manner help to secure market access and market opportunities for society as a whole and for the domestic business sector. In 2002, the relevant measures were defined in the Austrian Transportation Policy Scheme, and were ranked into three priority levels in agreement with the countries, operators and interest group representatives by usefulness for location, economy, environment and trans-

port safety. The construction programme of ASFINAG and the ÖBB framework plan, which contain the details and concrete steps for the implementation of the projects over the next few years are based on the Austrian Transportation Policy Scheme. The principal aim of many of the measures defined in the Austrian Transportation Policy Scheme is to reduce the burden on the environment caused by transport as well as to increase traffic safety, especially as regards new construction and the enlargement of high-capacity transport infrastructure.

The adoption of an environmental policy strategy plan for sustainable development in Austria should also be given special mention. The plan was developed in 2002 in collaboration with some 40 representatives from all expert fields, the social partners, cities and association of municipalities, environmental and social NGO platforms as well as the sustainability coordinators of the Länder with the aim of defining an overarching, binding framework to guide and steer ecological and socio-economic areas of action. The strategy was passed into law in April 2002 by the federal government. The activities and projects to date as well as future projects are to be integrated into the framework concept, which is designed as guidance for a sustainable development of Austria in the 21st century.

Finally, the activities of the federal government in the area of healthcare policy must also be mentioned. The supply of healthcare facilities in Austria has traditionally concentrated in hospitals that are primarily the scope of competence of the Länder. However, in the light of rising costs and regionally divergent demographic processes, what was needed for the steering and implementation of the necessary structural changes was a harmonization at the federal level. Therefore, in the 1990s, the Austrian Hospital and Large Apparatus Scheme (Österreichische Krankenanstalten- und Großgeräteplan, ÖKAP/GGP) was developed and in the course of the healthcare reform of 1997 it was defined as a binding basis for planning and measures in emergency facilities. The heart of the Austrian Hospital and Large Apparatus Scheme is the definition of locations for hospitals, the maximum number of beds, the specialization structure of each hospital and the maximum number of beds for each specialty and Land. Moreover, agreement was reached by the federal government and the Länder regarding provision 15a of the Federal Constitutional Act (B-VG) of 1997, which lays down planning at all levels and segments of healthcare including care of the elderly and the long-term ill, the relation between these levels and segments, and compliance with quality standards.

The aim is to achieve integrated and well balanced planning and steering for all areas of healthcare and to improve the management of the interfaces between the healthcare facilities. Thus, planning is integrative planning, with the Austrian Structural Health Plan (Österreichische Strukturplan Gesundheit, ÖSG) serving as basis.

Many different activities were also conducted in the area of spatial planning in the Länder. A study of the descriptions of the projects by the Länder reveals the following tendencies: First, to a certain degree a “renaissance” of overarching concepts and programmes has emerged. Spatial planning is not only perceived as the project-related moderation of diverse interests, but as a duty of the public sector, which defines desirable spatial developments and those to be avoided and the strategic instruments to be used in this context. Lower Austria started by adopting the Land Development Scheme and other Länder (including Tyrol, Burgenland, Upper Austria, Vienna) followed suit. This trend is very gratifying and has helped supra-regional spatial planning (and urban planning) to gain new prestige and has revealed that developments in the Länder and in cities represent a cross-section that must be perceived as an integrated and comprehensive whole, and is of great relevance in general.

In the area of local spatial planning, the local (or spatial) development schemes (or spatial planning programmes) have evolved into an important anchor for land use plans. Spatial planning in the Länder is therefore more focused on these plans, because they place the land use plans on a broad and better-secured foundation. Many of the Länder (e.g. Upper Austria) have evaluated the local development schemes and have prepared proposals for improvement, uniform structuring and a clear separation of normative and analytical statements, and other Länder have reported the almost complete implementation of this instrument.

Natural events are also given greater attention in local planning. The flooding of 2002, the avalanche disaster of Galtür and the numerous cases of heavy rainfalls and the entailing landslips and landslides point out the still existent vulnerability of human settlements. Despite the barriers against torrents, securing of mountainsides and avalanche protection, natural events frequently have disastrous effects. Local spatial planning will have to pay more attention to the risk zone plans and guide their zoning by the risk potential of the hazards.

Finally, the Länder give an account of the basic research conducted in the area of spatial studies, with consumption of space, settlement development and raw materials being important themes. Furthermore, the digitalisation of planning documents is progressing in all Länder, the installation of comprehensive geographic information systems is advancing, and some parts are available on the Internet to a wider public.

The documentary nature of this large chapter of the 11th Spatial Planning Report is supplemented by the statements of the cities of Graz, Innsbruck and Feldkirch. All three cities describe their activities in the area of zoning and building regulation plans, their

supra-regional urban development schemes and selected sectoral plans. The report closes with the statements and activity reports of the Conference of Presidents of the Chambers of Agriculture, the Federal Chamber of Labour and the Chambers of Labour of the nine Länder. It contains not so much specific opinions on regional policy, but rather those measures are described that serve the specific interests of the local population (e.g. transport measures for commuters, tourism development, housing construction, shopping centers vs. traditional shopping streets, development of rural areas).

Part C contains the constitutional basis and a service section.

Teil C

Anhang