Summary

12. Spatial Planning Report 2005 to 2007

The Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK) publishes a Report on Spatial Planning every three years. The aim of this report is to analyse and document the status and current development of spatial planning and regional development in Austria. This periodic representation of the activities of ÖROK members shows not only the breadth and intensity of spatial planning efforts but also offers interested members of the public extensive insights and overviews of current problems and issues as well as approaches to their management and resolution.

This 12th Report on Spatial Planning covers the period from 2005 to 2007 and is structured along similar lines as its predecessor for the 2002 to 2004 period. Again, the reports of ÖROK members are preceded by background analyses.

- The Report on Spatial Planning starts out with an analysis of recent trends in spatial development as well as a summary of general framework conditions set by EU structural and regional policies. Heinz Fassmann investigated subjects such as demographics, regional economic structures and changes as well as the development of traffic flows and land use and arrived at the following result: Austria continues to be a system that is growing in demographic as well as economic terms, with evidence clearly indicating differences in the geographic distribution of growth. The west-east divide no longer applies. Growth is seen in the cities and their surrounding areas while other regions lag behind, except where competitive industries contribute to a positive regional development. The topic of "energy and spatial development" was included for the first time in the light of intensive efforts undertaken in Austria in recent years to generate environmentally friendly energy and raise energy efficiency.
- In the second part of the basic analysis, Sybilla Zech investigates the status of implementation and application of the Austrian Spatial Development Concept named ÖREK 2001. Based on reports received from ÖROK-members as well as interviews and informational talks held, activities were evaluated against the six fields of action defined in ÖREK 2001. The author concludes that the key themes, objectives and activities defined in ÖREK 2001 are reflected, in different degrees, at the various levels of activity of the regional actors. In her conclusion, she even claims that a large part of the development processes highlighted in this report would not even have been possible without this framework.
- The reporting period covered by the 12th Report on Spatial Planning witnessed the transition from the EU period of Structural Funds programmes 2000–2006 to the 2007–2013 period. In his article on "The Implementation of EU Regional Policies in a Spirit of Partnership", Markus Gruber provides an overview of the implementation of EU Structural Funds programmes up to 2006 and explains the reorientation of Structural Funds policies for 2007 to 2013. The evaluation of ERDF monitoring shows that ERDF interventions were focused mainly on material investments, RTD, and the stimulation of innovation. Tourism and environmental measures also constituted a significant part of many programmes (Objective 1, Objective 2). Based on the Lisbon strategy for competitiveness, growth and employment, the Commission's strategic guidelines and the national strategic framework plan for Austria (STRAT.AT 07/13), Austria's new Structural Funds programmes were developed, submitted and approved in the reporting period, including "Convergence/ Phasing out" (Burgenland), "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" (all other states), as well as the ESF programme "Employment in Austria 2007–2013". The new programmes are guided by the three priorities of STRAT.AT, namely the "broad regional establishment of an innovation- and knowledge-based economy", the "development of attractive regions and competitive locations", and "raising employee adaptability and qualifications".
- Because of its geographical situation, Austria has a relatively high proportion of border regions. Therefore, both cross-border and transnational co-operation is of great importance for spatial deve-

lopment in Austria. In his article "Cross-border and Transnational Co-operation", Richard Hummelbrunner describes the mechanisms of various co-operation programmes and provides an outlook on the newly launched Structural Funds period 2007-2013. Four out of seven cross-border programmes are carried out with neighbour states that joined the European Union only in 2004. The reporting period thus saw the transition of the INTERREG III – PHARE CBC programmes to standard INTERREG III A programmes. Overall, Austria took a very active part in the implementation of the co-operation programmes. Programme implementation was successful at both the regional and the transnational levels as networks and co-operation structures were created and strengthened that permitted the initiation of cross-border administrative structures, the development of a basis for both regional and transnational long-termplanning and the preparation of investments, and the joint identification and discussion of topics and challenges.

The introduction to Part B – reports on activities of ÖROK and its members with a spatial impact – is provided by ÖROK with a summary of its activities. In the reporting period, the work of ÖROK was marked, on the one hand, by its support of the programming process for the Structural Funds period 2007–2013. Austria's national strategic framework plan STRAT.AT 07/13 was drawn up within the framework of ÖROK and adopted by ÖROK's Commission of Deputies and the Political Conference. This was followed by the start-up of the STRAT.AT process, which aims at facilitating the exchange of experiences, reflection, and the generation of practical impulses.

Implementation of the medium-term working programme of the ÖROK included the development of "scenarios of spatial development 2030", pro-active promotion of the topics of energy and spatial development, and confronting the challenge of developing urban regions and peripheral spaces. The ÖROK on-line atlas is an important ÖROK project that was completed in the reporting period. Since January 2007, the traditional atlas on spatial development in Austria can also be accessed online at *www.oerok-atlas.at*. A host of publications and events rounds off the portfolio of activities.

The article contributed by the ÖROK-office is followed by highly extensive and detailed reports contributed by individual ÖROK members.

The Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) reports about current developments in connection with business development and labour market policies as well as on activities relating to the Austrian Natural Resources Plan. The article contributed by the Federal Ministry of Life (BMLFUW – Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment, and Water Management) focuses on three themes: activities and programmes to promote the rural area and LEADER activities, environmental policy with a special focus on NATURE 2000 areas, and Austrian water management policies. The Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation, and Technology reports especially on infrastructure planning, sustainable transportpolicies, and promotional activities. The current situation in research and development is discussed in an article contributed by the Federal Ministry for Science and Research.

The state reports cover a very broad spectrum of activities, which include issues of local spatial planning (updating of land use plan) as well as supralocal planning, regional development and, increasingly, European collaboration.

As reflected by the reports of Federal Ministries and the states, the 2005 to 2007 reporting period was marked by the following new priorities and debates, some of which have gained extra momentum.

Co-operation

Co-operation is a recurrent theme running through the 12th Report on Spatial Planning. How much co-operation has gained in importance in recent years is borne out by the abundance of actions promoting co-operation directly or indirectly. This includes statutory specifications in the states (e.g. spatial planning acts), the development of a wide variety of regional co-operation structures, such as (cross-border) regional management, co-operation among small regions, the establishment and continuing development of inter-municipal co-operation, the initiation of planning processes including the development and execution of individual projects. Co-operation takes place at the local and small regional level as well as at (trans)state, cross-border and transnational levels. All federal states report in this connection about tried-and-tested as well as new forms of co-operation, experiences, and plans for the future.

Experiences with assessment instruments

One of the ÖREK 2001 recommendations was the introduction and continuing development of assessment instruments for spatial and environmental plan-

ning purposes, including spatial impact assessments (SIAs), environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) at various planning levels. The most important new development with regard to assessment processes in the reporting period is the introduction of SEAs under the EU's Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment. At the federal level, this directive has been implemented in laws pertaining to water, waste management, and transport. At the state level, the SEA has been integrated into the state spatial planning laws and incorporated into a number of sector-specific state laws. Its application as well as the assessment of impacts depends on the special conditions in a state and the projects assessed.

The spatial impact of sector policies

Spatial development is influenced more by sectoral planning, especially transport infrastructure planning, than by nominal spatial planning. To this set of topics, more attention has been devoted than in previous reports. Integration and co-operation in sector planning both within the states and with the federal government and entities operating as private-sector enterprises (such as ÖBB, ASFINAG ...) are repeatedly referred to as a necessity. Where sectoral planning was co-ordinated by the states, good results have already been obtained. What is missing, however, is integration with the federal government's sectoral planning activities. In the reporting period, the trend towards more interdisciplinary co-operation among planning departments and sector-specific departments has continued, particularly in the states. The result of these efforts has been the development of specific sector programmes (tourism, recreational activities, sports, site planning, natural hazards, regional and country-wide transport planning, social infrastructure ...). These concepts, which have been developed through cross-departmental collaboration, create the broad acceptance that is needed for implementation.

EU Structural Funds Policies – the transition to the new generation of programmes

All federal and state bodies reporting have been involved in the implementation of EU programmes, either in the course of programme planning, programme administration, and/or in connection with the development and implementation of specific projects. In the reporting period, the Structural Funds Programmes of the 2000–2006 period were completed and preparatory work was commenced on the current 2007–2013 period. The specifications issued by the EU Commission have been taken into account in designing the new programmes, with entire states being defined as objective areas rather than small regions. Concentration on the Lisbon strategy (competitiveness, growth, employment) and the Gothenburg strategy (sustainability) have resulted in a largely homogeneous design of the new-generation Austrian Structural Funds programmes, with a clear focus on strengthening the regional knowledge base and innovation. As a counterpoint, the development of attractive regions and competitive locations was addressed, including aspects of environmental relevance. Only few programmes anticipate a concrete limitation or focus on areas with structural or other problems.

New themes: Energy & social infrastructure

In view of the debate on climate change, energy and spatial development are themes of major importance at all administrative levels. Last but not least, given Austria's political obligations under international treaties (such as the Kyoto target, Climate Alliance, ...), efforts are made towards an efficient use of energy from renewable energy sources. To this end, ÖROK has included this matter into its medium-term working programme. Likewise, stimulation of relevant (business) investment into the increased use of renewable energy sources is also part of the portfolios of funding institutions at the federal and state levels.

Against the backdrop of an ageing society on the one hand and mounting disparities between the provision of services in peripheral and central urban regions, the challenges inherent in the maintenance and ongoing development of social infrastructure are gaining increased urgency in the context of spatial development processes. This topic received increased attention in all states during the reporting period. A wide variety of actions were implemented, ranging from the development of models (e.g. Außerfern social model) and sectoral programmes (e.g. nursing care in Upper Austria), to special promotional campaigns (such as preserving the local retail trade in Lower Austria) and projects (such as local bus services in Burgenland).

The 12th Report on Spatial Planning is rounded off by articles contributed by the Austrian Association of Municipalities, the City of Salzburg as a member of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, the Federal Chamber of Labour, and a number of state chambers. These articles comprise analyses of spatial conditions from the

perspectives of specific interest groups, describe concrete activities pursued through (regional) committees and working groups, and highlight the objectives pursued by different interest groups. The Austrian Association of Municipalities focuses on the problems of small and medium-sized municipalities in rural areas, the Chamber of Agriculture underlines the significance of the Common European Agricultural Policy for Austrian agriculture and rural regions. The Federal Chamber of Labour and its state chambers present primarily concrete national and regional actions in which they were involved as part of public response and other co-ordination, harmonisation and participation processes.

The volume in hand comes with a service section providing a brief overview of the constitutional basis, a collection of links to relevant contacts, and a list of ÖROK-publications.