

Summary

13. Spatial Planning Report 2008 to 2011

The “Austrian Spatial Planning Report” informs periodically on the themes of spatial development and spatial planning, giving readers a deep insight into the activities of the ÖROK^I bodies and ÖROK members (federal government, Länder, cities and municipalities, economic and social partners) in the context of spatial planning and spatial development.

The 13th Spatial Planning Report focuses on the last Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK^{II} 2011 – “Raum für Alle” (Space for All): This report, written near the time of publication of ÖREK 2011, is dedicated not only to the traditional reporting of relevant activities relating to spatial planning and spatial development, but also addresses the contents and recommendations for action of this “...strategic steering instrument for overall spatial planning and development at the national and Länder level...” (ÖREK 2011, Mission Statement, p. 13). In order to ensure contextual continuity, the Spatial Planning Report was published in 2012 – and not in 2011 following the traditional cycle.

Spatial Planning Report – Part of the ÖREK Implementation Process

The ÖREK 2011 was adopted in October 2011 following a broad participatory development process. Continuing the thematic strands defined, a number of so-called “ÖREK Partnerships” were created for the specific themes (see part A, Chapter II, p. 66). This is not the only feature that reveals the strong emphasis on implementation of the new Austrian Spatial Development Concept: in the spirit of this results-based approach, a monitoring method was developed with the aim of supporting both the implementation process as well as the establishment of a spatial observation system. The Spatial Planning Report plays an important role here, because it can be further developed and used jointly with the ÖROK Atlas as an instrument for spatial monitoring.

The introductory chapter of the Spatial Planning Report “Framework Conditions and Spatial Development Trends in Austria” makes a reference to the structure and content of ÖREK 2011. Not only the analysis and description of the general economic and social trends follow the four thematic strands of ÖREK 2011, but Helmut Hiess also asks up to what extent the ÖREK objectives address past and anticipated developments.

In the Chapter “The European Dimension of Spatial and Regional Development”, Markus Gruber discusses the trend lines of spatial and regional development in Central Europe. He describes the basic principles of European cohesion policy and its implementation in Austria, and closes the article with an initial assessment of the relation of cohesion policy to the themes of ÖREK 2011.

Activities of ÖROK Members in the Light of ÖREK 2011 – A Brief Outlook

ÖROK members have taken advantage of their reports for this 13th Spatial Planning Report to address the thematic strands of the ÖREK and the implementation structures. Starting out from the broad understanding of the concept of “spatial development” as defined by ÖROK, the reports also offer a solid overview of members’ activities with a spatial reference and impact.

ÖREK Strand: “Social Diversity and Solidarity”

Population growth and population decreases follow large and small-scale territorial patterns, with the regions, municipalities and cities being affected to varying degrees. Demographic change is one of the main factors of influence of spatial development processes.

During the reporting period, regionalised population forecasts, studies and analyses on migration and

I ÖROK = Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz, Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning

II ÖREK = Österreichisches Raumentwicklungskonzept, Austrian Spatial Development Concept

cross-border commuting were conducted as well as projects, for example, with a focus on the theme of “aging society” and the problems of older workers. In line with the significance of the theme, a ÖREK partnership was set up with the title “Diversity & Integration in Space” to deepen knowledge and improve coordination of spatial and integration policy.

The theme of demographic change is the common thread throughout all reports. The reports reveal a focus on the issue of integration of non-Austrian migrants and strategies to master a shrinking population, while the consequences of dynamic population growth on residential space and infrastructure development, mobility etc. are addressed only in specific cases. The thematic complex of an “aging society” and the consequences on and for spatial development processes are discussed by contrast only briefly: The number of over-65-year-olds is increasing steadily, the requirements of this population group with respect to residential housing, mobility and accessibility, security in public spaces as well as care are creating enormous challenges to municipalities and cities. However, the matter of how to secure regional business locations (catchword regional labour force potential) will give this issue a special dynamic in the future.

ÖREK Strand “Regional and National Competitiveness”

The development of (technical) infrastructure and measures to secure accessibility, research and development as the key ingredients of innovation policy as well as investments in education and qualification are named in ÖREK 2011 as the three main elements of an economy-oriented spatial development strategy to increase regional competitiveness.

In the Spatial Planning Report, the themes are discussed very intensely by the competent Ministries (Ministry of Science and Research; Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology); the Länder make a reference to specific activities carried out during the reporting period such as the redefinition of the development concepts of the Länder, the creation and updating of transport concepts as well as the development of method guidelines for planning processes when defining routes. There is also a report on voting platforms for (public) regional transport.

The themes of the ÖREK partnerships, “Ensuring Space Availability for Line Infrastructure” and “Spatial Planning and Transport” are ultimately also based on the guidelines for action designed to improve regional

and national competitiveness, with the former being at the core of the implementation efforts of cohesion policy in Austria, of course.

ÖREK Strand “Climate Change, Adaptation and Resource Efficiency”

The general objectives of ÖREK 2011 under the heading “Climate Change, Adaptation and Resource Efficiency” include achieving a sustainable settlement and transportation development, lowering energy consumption, increasing production from renewable energy sources, and greater resource efficiency. The activities of ÖROK and its members span a wide range of areas in this context: The reports cover activities in the area of spatial planning for energy, measures to identify preferential locations for wind farms and other renewable energy plants, development programmes for wind energy, the development and use of models to determine how much energy is consumed by settlements, measures to promote sustainable mobility, etc. The creation of the ÖREK partnerships “Energy and Spatial Planning” and “Risk Management for Gravitational Hazards in Spatial Planning” are intended to encourage more detailed discussions.

The principal requirements for ensuring resource-efficient spatial development are the economic, prudent and efficient use of land and property, and thus the pursuit of active land policy. The increasing utilization of space in spite of the surplus of land already zoned as building land and the growing cost awareness with respect to the erection and maintenance of infrastructure were the motivation in many cases to create the new instruments defined in the Länder legislation to promote the use of zoned land or to make these provisions more concrete. (For example, “mobilisation contracts” in the sense of spatial planning by contract, private-sector measures to support local spatial planning, the zoning of reserved spaces for subsidized housing construction, regulation of pre-financing of infrastructure costs, construction bans and pre-financing of zoned, still empty building sites, leasing, and similar).

Also the proposal that municipalities can be supported by audited specimen contracts when applying the new instruments of spatial planning by contract in conformity with the law are mentioned here again.

Essential for the application of these instruments is an assessment of needs and the detailed knowledge of the use or non-use of each parcel of land of land zoned for building and land expected to be used for building.

However, it is also necessary to bridge the increasing gaps in the data. The ÖREK partnership “Space Monitoring and Space Management” will address this theme.

ÖREK Strand “Cooperative and Efficient Handling Structures”

The cooperation landscape in spatial and regional development is described in the report as multi-faced, rich and – according to the experts – also exhibiting a lack of clarity.

The objective of ÖREK 2011 is to develop and strengthen an efficient (new) culture of cooperation. The many documented regional, thematic and also cross-border and transnational cooperation projects are not only the visible expression of Austria's long tradition of cooperation, but also show the changes in the approaches taken, the structures selected and in the main theme selected as a consequence of new challenges.

In this context, we would like to draw the reader's attention to a few aspects. Efficiency aspects have become more important in the provision of public services not least due to the budgetary problems of the public sector. The rising tendency of inter-municipal cooperation may be assessed as an indication of this trend. Even though many different forms of collaboration have developed in practice among Austria's municipalities – these range from collaboration without any form of institutionalisation to collaboration based on contracts – there is still great potential for more efficient municipal and regional structures. The certainly largest project to optimize municipal structures is currently under way in Styria with the structural municipal reform being carried out there. The reform aims, among other things, to permanently enable municipalities to, among other things, fulfil their tasks at a high quality level and use their infrastructure efficiently. At the ÖREK level, the theme “regional cooperation” is covered explicitly by the ÖREK partnership “Strengthening Regional Action”.

In line with ÖREK's recommendations for action with respect to the development of an agglomeration policy for all of Austria, the Report does not just merely point out concrete projects (e.g., within the scope of the “Planungsgemeinschaft Ost” (PGO; planning association eastern region) and “Stadt-Umland-Management” (SUM; city-catchment area management) and specific regional programmes (programmes such as “locations in the Salzburg agglomeration that function as central places”); the setup of the ÖREK partnership “Coopera-

tion Platform Urban Regions” additionally shows the close attention being given to the challenges facing cities and urban catchment areas. A dynamic population development, social and cultural segregation tendencies, integration requirements, pressure on residential space and the need to adapt infrastructure, sustainable mobility, inter-communal/regional and also international cooperation are addressed as the future topics.

From the perspective of cities, the Smart City Initiative deserves special attention. Thus, the Report presents the “Smart City Project Graz Mitte” as an example of the schemes already in place in a number of cities which were developed within the scope of urban development activities and have already been implemented in some aspects in model projects.

Spatial Impact of Public Interventions

A large share of the interventions by governments have a direct or indirect effect on space by influencing the nature of space, changing or shaping it or by causing it to be used, thereby changing patterns and levels of use or by influencing spatial developments or the function of an area. The appeal and competitiveness of residential locations, of regional labour markets and economic regions – i.e., the overall spatial structure – is influenced significantly by the provision of technical and social infrastructure as well as through transfer payments and fiscal policy measures.

The different measures and the related preliminary planning in the specific areas – although usually organised by sectors – develop their effects in concrete living spaces and overlap these irrespective of the assignment of responsibilities. Measures in the policy fields of transportation, settlement, environmental protection, innovation and research, labour market, military spatial planning as well as social and healthcare, educational and school policy do not have effects in separate region, but rather in one and the same living space.

The greater awareness of the spatial effects of sectoral measures also finds expression in the description of the task area “Giving sectoral policy a ‘Spatial Dimension’ – Improving Interaction” ÖREK 2011 – with the ÖREK partnerships, the relevant structures and platforms have been created that will bring this to life and augment the effectiveness of ÖREK 2011.

The activities and projects described in the Spatial Planning Report are evidence of how well they are

aligned with the objectives of spatial development such as compact settlements, reduction of the space use, low-resource and energy-efficient mobility, securing accessibility, etc. With ÖREK 2011 and the implementation process initiated, common approaches with respect to content and also politically legitimate points of departure have been formulated – one could even say required/demanded – that create greater awareness among policymakers of the spatial impacts of public interventions:

“Additional measures may be the introduction of the legal obligation for planning bodies of individual sectors to take into consideration the planning activities of others not directly involved bodies and of the spatial planning of the Länder or that the financial assistance schemes of the federal government and of the Länder are mandatorily checked for their spatial impacts.” (Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning, 2011, p. 90)

Thus, the discussion has been opened about establishing the aspect of spatial impact as a principle for the effective execution of policies and in administration. It would also be worth including this aspect in the contexts below in the further implementation and monitoring process of ÖREK 2011:

- Securing social and ecologically sustainable development processes,
- Increasing the efficiency of state interventions
- An economy and society based on social peace, security and social cohesion.

The themes, strategies, measures, projects and processes addressed in this 13th Spatial Planning Report give readers not only a deeper insight into the content and structural diversity of the areas of competence of ÖROK and its members, but also reveals how public interventions and the application of spatial planning instruments can help to shape spatial and social development processes, and thus, the conditions prevailing in living spaces and of business locations.