

# Summary

## ÖROK PUBLICATION NO 194 – ÖREK PARTNERSHIP „CREATE REGIONAL GOVERNANCE MODELS“

The ÖREK-Partnership “Create regional governance models” was initiated in the year 2011 by the *Land Styria* together with the Federal Chancellery and finalized its work in the autumn of 2014. The basis of the Partnership was the area of activity 4.1. “Strengthen regional planning” defined in the “Austrian Spatial Development Concept” (ÖREK). Apart from the key areas defined there, the current challenges confronting regional policy and its actors were the starting point. More specifically, the need to consolidate budgets of public entities is creating pressure at all spatial levels along with increasing demands for more efficient administration. Parallel to this development, the regional level has been gaining significance as field of action ever since Austria joined the European Union in 1995, also because of the new organizational forms of implementation created for the financial assistance schemes of the European Structural Funds. These include Regional Management, Leader Groups, Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) and Eu-regions which initiate and coordinate projects at the regional level. Additionally, there are many active regional planning associations, tourism associations and similar organisations which sometimes have overlapping functions as regards regional and content aspects that need to be better coordinated.

Before this backdrop, the objective of the Partnership was to show how well-organized regional actions can contribute to improving the quality of life, employment and competitiveness in the different regions, which roles they play in the political context and which steps are necessary to establish “*Regional Governance*”. Ultimately, a regional perspective should be developed with a scope beyond the horizon of the EU Structural Funds and the individual sectoral policies.

This publication summarizes the compiled results of the various work steps.

The **conclusions** drawn by the members of the ÖREK Partnership include the following **fundamental principles**:

→ **Regional governance** is a challenge for the **entire territory of Austria** that also requires a sustainable organisation to guarantee the governance benefits over the long term.

- In order to guarantee **organizational sustainability**, regional support structures need to be developed that are independent of the **EU programmes**. If possible and reasonable, funding should come from EU programmes, and in those cases in which this does not apply, financing should be provided from national funds.
- In the **steering of regional development**, a clear **focus** should be placed on **impact and strategic action**. In the spirit of these fundamental principles, a system of objectives needs to be established under an agreement reached by the various actors at the federal, Land and regional levels as well as regarding the relevant monitoring formats (indicators, monitoring).
- The appropriate formats need to be established at **all administrative levels and between these levels in order to achieve harmonization and coordination across sectors**. Within these formats, it is necessary to regularly coordinate activities with the regional actors.
- **Supportive activities** are required to establish **professional and impact-oriented regional actions in Austria**. These include: raising the level of competence by further training and education measures for the actors; joint analytical observation, evaluations, forecasts and research on the interaction of the effects; evaluation and monitoring to establish impact orientation in regional development.
- Furthermore, **ongoing support and expert reflection processes for the impulses and innovation created by EU Programmes as well as strategic reflection processes** should be assured at all levels.

The fundamental principles stated above are the quintessence of the findings of the three working papers commissioned by the Partnership during the period 2012 to 2014. These are available for downloading from the ÖROK website (only in German).

This publication covers the following four parts:

### Part 1: Agenda *Regional Governance* – Outcome of the Partnership: An Orientation Framework

The “Agenda *Regional Governance*” published in the autumn of 2014 addresses the results arrived within

the Partnership and concisely summarizes the main points as guidance for all actors. The perspectives and measures reveal how the regional fields of action can be strengthened and which steps are necessary to establish “Regional Governance” in Austria as a form of cooperation and interaction.

The following fields of action are described:

- The improvement of institutional framework conditions especially regarding cooperation at the federal and Land levels that covers several thematic fields.
- Formulation of the key points for a new regional policy, among others, the specialization of individual regions based on defined themes (e.g. space management, integration, mobility management), agreements between the federal government and Land governments, and between the Land and regional levels of action.
- Supportive activities to assure quality, e.g., to coordinate the further education and training of the actors, evaluations, monitoring to implement the principle of impact orientation in regional development.

## **Part 2: “Regional Governance” in Austria – Current Developments and Recommendations**

In the first project phase (2012), a comparison of existing “Regional Governance” systems in Austria in the area of regional development were discussed as well as the future options for action to improve collaboration among the actors at the regional level – also from the perspective of possible changes in the new Structural Funds period from 2014 to 2020. Stefan Bauer-Wolf and Michael Fischer from ÖAR Regionalberatung GmbH were commissioned to prepare the content for this first project phase. Concrete projects from different Austrian Länder serve as examples of the successful creation of a regional action level with the involvement of the various actors. Starting out from these “lessons learnt”, recommendations were drafted for the implementation of the EU programmes 2014 to 2020 and also for the general further development of *Regional Governance*. Among other things, a proposal is made to make basic funding available for the regional fields of action that is independent of EU programmes. Furthermore, the regional strategies should serve as a basis for the implementation of projects in all cases. These and other issues will be addressed again in the “Agenda *Regional Governance*”.

## **Part 3: Impact Orientation in Regional Development**

In the year 2013, Stefan Bauer-Wolf and Michael Fischer from ÖAR Regionalberatung GmbH analysed the issue of “Impact Orientation” as a key pillar of mo-

dern regional policy on behalf of the Partnership. The starting points of the study are the increasingly scarcer public resources, demands for transparency and the pressure for more legitimacy in the programmes and projects by proving that they use resources efficiently and effectively.

After clarifying the key concepts, three different rationales for impact orientation are presented, each one entailing different expectations.

- Rationale of regional self-management for better decision-making in the regions,
- Legitimacy rationale to improve verifiability of the use of public funds, and
- Planning rationale to better monitor the interaction of the different regional policy measures.

The differentiation and mutual recognition of these three rationales makes it possible to arrive at pragmatic solutions, e.g. the selection of indicators and monitoring systems.

The final section develops a model for impact orientation with recommendations for regional development. The model proposed contains advice on the practical implementation of impact orientation in regional development. The conclusion drawn is that the successful orientation of regional development measures on specific goals requires professional organisation, clear framework conditions and the strong will to cooperate by all partners.

## **Part 4: Vision Region: New Ideas for the Regional Action Levels**

Under the title “Vision Region: New Ideas for the Regional Action Levels”, Herta Tödtling-Schönhofer and Christine Hamza of metis GmbH were commissioned to look at the outlook for the regional levels of action. As an introduction, the authors present two different perspectives to paint a picture of the future:

- One, in which creative solutions for current problems are found and regions develop different ways to achieve a high quality of life, working conditions and natural spaces.
- In the contrasting perspective (“no regions”), the regional level, and therefore, also developments in the regions are left to random and unguided development trends.

Based on these two perspectives, the factors of influence for future development are identified and proposals made for the development of the regional fields of action. These proposals are addressed again in the “Agenda *Regional Governance*” and are explained in detail in the document.