

Summary

ÖROK SERIES NO 205 - STRENGTHENING TOWN AND CITY CENTRES IN AUSTRIA

In 2018, the “Expert Recommendations for Strengthening Town and City Centres” were prepared at the ÖROK level under the leadership of the Federal Chancellery, Department III/4 – Secretariat of the Advisory Council for Building Culture and Salzburg Land within the framework of the ÖREK Partnership for Strengthening Town and City Centres. These ten recommendations were prepared on the basis of two working papers, which are also presented in this document.

Strengthening town and city centres is a key issue in the endeavour to ensure sustainable spatial development, basic services, social cohesion and local economic prosperity in Austria. What is called for in this context is a concept of development that prioritizes the interrelatedness of housing, local services, economy, social facilities and public spaces in order to preserve or revive the centres. The methods and efforts applied up to now have not sufficed to achieve these goals. The federal government, the Länder, the cities and the municipalities in collaboration with this ÖREK Partnership aim to introduce a new quality to their efforts on the basis of the results and recommendations and also the accompanying materials with the aim of sustainably developing and ensuring the vitality and multifunctionality of town and city centres. Therefore, this is a contribution to Sustainable Goal No 11 of the UN 2030 Agenda.

At the heart of the recommendation is a “**three-pronged strategy for strengthening town and cities centres**”: ensuring consideration of the interrelatedness of “**integrated urban development schemes**”, a “**standardized demarcation of boundaries for town centres**” and new “**funding schemes for urban development**”. The integrated urban development schemes define transparent goals that are to serve as guidance for any measures taken. The boundaries of town centres are to be defined by the municipalities in collaboration with experts and the participation of citizens. The boundaries defined will, for example, also serve as basis for financial assistance, reliefs and tax incentives to attract investment in centres.

The ÖROK partners furthermore recommend adding the goal of strengthening town and city centres to relevant legislation at the federal and Land levels, and to consider suitable structures for promoting the topic within the federal government, Länder, cities and municipalities. Another important aspect is to make the information, knowledge and success stories easily accessible to the relevant actors. Regional cooperation projects, the participation of the population and private partners as well as of enterprises are additional success factors for maintaining the quality of life for people who live and work in the town and city centres.

Two working papers have been drafted within the Partnership as a basis for the concrete formulation and content of the recommendations:

1. Working paper “Demarcation of town and city centres: definition, criteria, process” (preparation by the ÖREK Partnership; editing: Hanna Posch and Wolfgang Gerlich, Büro PlanSinn)

2. Working paper “Legal measures at the federal and Land levels”

Part 1 on federal legislation: prepared by Verena Madner, University of Economics of Vienna with the collaboration of Lisa-Maria Grob, University of Economics of Vienna

Part 2 on legislation by the Länder: prepared by Arthur Kanonier, Technical University of Vienna

The ten expert recommendations listed below were adopted:

1. Establishing the goal of strengthening town and cities centres in legislation

Federal and Land laws as well as the relevant instruments of spatial planning should include suitable objectives for strengthening town and city centres to secure the existence of long-term initiatives that work to achieve this goal.

2. Creation and expansion of suitable organizational structures to strengthen town and city centres

Suitable structures to strengthen town and city centres should be established both at the federal level and also at the Land and municipal levels.

3. Definition of demarcation lines for town and city centres

The definition of demarcation lines for town and city centres to serve as guidance for the municipalities when taking further steps to strengthen town and city centres.

4. Preparation of integrated urban development or similar schemes

Integrated urban development schemes or similar schemes are to be defined as a requirement for obtaining funding.

5. Viewing town and city centres from the perspective of a regional context

Regional cooperation projects between municipalities and also existing regional schemes and structures should be used to support efforts to strengthen of town and city centres.

6. Informing the population and involving citizens to strengthen town and city centres

Transparent information policies and the participation of specific target groups should help to raise awareness of the significance of town and city centres in the communities.

7. Raising awareness and mobilization of private actors as partners for strengthening town and city centres

The involvement of private actors in relevant measures should be promoted to strengthen town and city centres.

8. Goal of higher funding to create housing in town and city centres

Consideration should be given to higher funding for schemes to promote the creation of housing in town and city centres.

9. Securing the existence and expansion of enterprises and facilities in town and city centres

To secure support for strengthening town and city centres over the long term, efforts need to be made to encourage enterprises and facilities to locate there.

10. Support for experts in matters relating to building culture in town and city centres

The support of experts for issues relating to building culture should be enabled to promote high quality.

The expert recommendations were adopted by the ÖROK "Commission of Deputies" in July 2019 and are available to all ÖROK partners – federal government, Länder, cities and municipalities – for implementation in their areas of activity.