

Summary

16th Spatial Planning Report 2018 to 2020

The Austrian Spatial Planning Report (“Österreichischer Raumordnungsbericht”) is published by the ÖROK in regular three-year intervals and includes comprehensive analyses of developments in the field of spatial planning in Austria. The current 16th Spatial Planning Report for the period 2018 to 2020 contains an overview about the framework conditions and trends in spatial development in Austria. In addition, it examines regional policy and development in Austria and provides a first insight into the preparation of the Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK) 2030. The focus of the report centres on the presentation of spatial trends and developments within the overall Austrian context. Therefore, it uses the current instruments of the Austrian Regional Monitoring System – the “ÖROK-Atlas” and the “ÖROK-Rechtssammlung”. Examples – including photos, graphics and web links – aim to illustrate the diversity of planning instruments in the planning processes of Austria.

Framework conditions and trends in spatial development

On the basis of facts and maps, the chapter „Framework conditions and trends in spatial development“ highlights and analyses specific topics related to spatial development. The authors Erich Dallhammer and Wolfgang Neugebauer used current data of the Austrian Regional Monitoring System. Indicators from the “ÖROK Atlas”, the “ÖROK Forecasts” or from ÖROK accessibility analyses are presented in a comprehensive picture and in relation to each other. Based on the region-specific Austrian developments, the authors derive challenges for the future spatial development policy in Austria.

Following the analysis of the effects of the economic upswing after the economic and financial crisis on spatial development in the

15th Spatial Planning Report 2015–2017, the current report raises the question on how the economy, which is experiencing a Europe-wide decline due to the Corona pandemic, is affecting the individual Austrian regions. In addition to the priority of overcoming the health policy challenges, the aim is to revive the economy – especially in those sectors particularly affected by the pandemic, such as the leisure and tourism industry, gastronomy, retail trade, etc. The analysis shows that not all regions were hit equally strongly by the economic effects and the increase of unemployment. Furthermore, the structural change in rural areas, which has been ongoing for decades, is still ongoing in the reporting period 2018 to 2020.

Climate change is the second global challenge that Austria has to face. The climate analyses for the past decades and the climate scenarios for Austria until 2100 (ÖKS15) show how great the challenges are to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Tackling the climate crisis is a transformation task that affects all political and administrative levels, all sectors and all spatial areas. Climate protection policy in Austria has set itself specific goals: In the Climate and Energy Strategy #mission 2030 of May 2018, the goal of a „resource-efficient, decarbonised energy supply by 2050“ is set. The goal of climate neutrality in Austria by 2040 at the latest, which is anchored in the government programme (2020-2024), requires an even more ambitious greenhouse gas reduction path. This increases the urgency of implementing concrete measures. The ÖREK 2030 derives the commitment to consider climate mitigation and climate change adaptation as a priority for spatial development and spatial planning in the upcoming years.

Considering the experiences gained through the challenges of the climate crisis and the Corona pandemic, it will be increasingly

important for regions to establish the concept of resilience in their planning and development strategies. Resilience in this context represents the strengthening of the regions' ability to cope and adapt to future challenges. For example, in tourism, sustainable tourism concepts will become increasingly important.

Beyond the global challenges of the Corona pandemic and climate change, structural change in rural areas continues to be a key topic in the current spatial planning report. Population decline and migration towards urban agglomerations confront rural regions with major challenges. These include the migration of particularly young people, the reduction of employment opportunities in rural areas and the relocation of business locations to urban areas. Growth in the number of employed people and jobs is almost exclusively taking place in urban agglomerations and cities.

The ÖROK regional forecasts expect fewer large households in rural regions, where currently single-family homes are common. The issue of the efficient use of loosely developed areas of single-family houses, where in future one or two (older) persons will more often inhabit and maintain a house, will become even more of an issue in spatial planning. Since detached single-family houses in particular take up an above-average amount of land and infrastructure, a disparity will be created in these regions in favour of a high land use per person if no countermeasures are taken. In cities, there is an increasing demand for housing, especially for multi-person households. Therefore, affordable housing for families will remain an important issue in the future.

On the other hand, municipalities in the extended surroundings of larger cities recorded a considerably higher demand for houses in the „green countryside“ during the Corona pandemic. It is difficult to assess from today's perspective to what extent the demands of people in the extraordinary situation of a pandemic will have an impact on the real housing situation in the medium to long term.

Key activities of ÖROK 2018 to 2020 with spatial reference

In this chapter, the authors of the ÖROK Office illustrate a wide range of topics, from the preparation process of ÖREK 2030, the ÖREK partnerships (going back to ÖREK 2011), the innovations in the Austrian Regional Monitoring System such as ÖROK Atlas and ÖROK forecasts, the ÖROK publications and the "ÖROK-Rechtsammlung". Additionally, activities within the scope of EU regional policy – such as the implementation of the „Partnership Agreement STRAT.AT 2020“ or the transnational ETC programs and macro-regional EU strategies in Austria are presented.

The main focus in spatial planning during the reporting period was on the preparation of the new Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK) 2030. ÖREK 2030 is guided by three overarching principles: climate-friendly and sustainable, public welfare-oriented and justice-oriented spatial development. The action programme of the ÖREK is based on four pillars: using spatial resources sparingly and carefully, strengthening spatial and social cohesion, developing economic areas and systems in a climate-friendly and sustainable way, and further developing vertical and horizontal governance.

The discussions on the different drafts of the ÖREK 2030 were mainly organised within the ÖROK members and the external discussions took place at the „Raum im Wandel“ expert conference. The progress of the discussions was updated accordingly on the ÖROK website. The preparation process was supported by a Think Tank consisting of international and national experts from various spatially relevant disciplines. The involvement of „Young Experts“ – the stakeholders and decision-makers of the future – was a unique element of the ÖREK 2030. And taking into account the framework theme „Climate“ of the ÖREK 2030, the work was also accompanied by „Climate Observers“ from the Environment Agency Austria (UBA).

The final version of the ÖREK 2030 will be approved at a meeting of the ÖROK Political Conference in October 2021.

Based on the ÖREK 2011, various issues related to spatial planning and spatial development were addressed in ÖREK partnerships, such as strategies for regions with a declining population, strengthening of town and city centres, energy planning or the spatial dimensions of digitalisation.

The ÖROK population forecast with a revised calculation for the period from 2018 to 2040 (including projections up to the year 2060) was published on the ÖROK website at the beginning of 2019. In the period from 2018 to 2020, the ÖROK Atlas was enlarged by a number of illustrations in the sectors mobility and accessibility, building land development, land use and soil sealing, tourism and climate.

Major milestones in the field of EU regional policy were the continued strategic monitoring of Austria's „Partnership Agreement on the Use of ESI Funds 2014–2020 („STRAT.AT 2020“)" and the implementation of several projects in this context. The study „Quantitative effects of EU structural and cohesion policy in Austria – a contribution to 25 years of Austria in the EU" published in the ÖROK Publication Series offers a trans-fund and quantitative impact analysis of how the resources of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are used in Austria – ERDF (European Regional Fund), ESF (European Social Fund), EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) and EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund).

The second „Progress Report" on the implementation of the Partnership Agreement 2014–2020 was submitted to the European Commission in 2019 and published in the ÖROK Publication Series. The preparation process for the Partnership Agreement 2021–2027 started in summer 2020.

Since 2002, the „National Contact Point" (NCP) for the implementation of the transnational and EU-wide programmes of the „European Territorial Cooperation" (ETC) objective has been established at the ÖROK office. The implementation of projects in the period 2014–2020 has already progressed very well in all programmes and represents a central task of the National Contact Point in supporting

the Austrian project carriers. In the 2018–2020 reporting period, three national information days or seminars were held. In addition, the National Contact Point accompanies the preparations for the new programme period 2021–2027.

The ÖROK working group Cross Border Cooperation also produced a brochure on the occasion of 30 years of Interreg. It presents 30 project examples that give an insight into the wide range of topics covered by Interreg projects and successful cross-border cooperation in Austria.

The Managing authority for the IGJ/ERDF funding programme 2014–2020 in Austria is located at the ÖROK office and is responsible for the overall management, implementation and evaluation of the programme. In addition to the administrative tasks of the managing authority, public relations work for the programme also plays an important role. The central medium is the website www.efre.gv.at, which offers information on the programme as well as a funding compass for interested project promoters. A „project map" visualises all projects funded under the IGJ/ERDF programme. „Case studies" supplement the information offered in order to demonstrate the positive effects of EU projects for Austria's regions by means of concrete examples.

The IGJ/ERDF Managing authority also plays a leading role in the implementation of DG REGIO's Europe-wide campaign „Europe in my Region". It aims to bring EU projects in the neighbourhood closer to the local population in order to illustrate the added value of EU funding for the region.

Regional policy and regional economic development

In Chapter 3, Markus Gruber and Renate Handler outline the framework conditions for regional policy and regional economic development in the multi-level system – the European Union, the federal and state governments – and discuss the important developments in the period 2018 bis 2020. They look at long-term developments and illustrate the change of this

policy field in a contextual way and by focusing on milestones.

The reporting period 2018 to 2020 was the main implementation phase of the EU programmes 2014 to 2020 in Austria, which will continue until 2023. At the European level, the framework for the period 2021 to 2027 was established. Now, with the European Green Deal, the focus is on achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Parallel to the negotiations on the EU financial framework and the regulations on the European funds, the planning of the programmes for the new period has begun at the national level.

In addition to „digitalisation“, which is emerging as a cross-sectoral issue in all areas, other topics such as the bioeconomy and the circular economy have also emerged in the context of the ecological transformation process, each of which also has regional and territorial dimensions and is increasingly finding its way into regional development.

Chapter 3 also addresses the reactions of different levels to the COVID 19 pandemic and highlights the measures taken by the EU, the federal government and the federal states.

Current developments in the Austrian spatial planning law

In Chapter 4, Arthur Kanonier and Arthur Schindelegger present current trends and developments in Austrian spatial planning law on the basis of the law chronology of ÖROK, whereby individual legal issues are considered across sectors and levels.

The report focuses on amendments to spatial planning laws and building regulations at the Land level – such as in Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Styria, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Burgenland and Vienna. The main focus was on preventing urban sprawl and climate protection, measures to mobilise building land, urban centres and densification zones, restrictions on shopping centres and large commercial enterprises, improved management of natural hazards under spatial planning law, special zoning for affordable housing, intensified energy planning, as well as restrictions on secondary residences

and holiday homes. In addition, the amendments aim to strengthen trans-regional planning, in particular in the field of spatial planning and development.

Furthermore, Chapter 4 examines changes in the building law, in environmental law, in trans-regional planning instruments as well as in federal matters relevant to planning. In addition, the authors discuss the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court (VfGH) on spatial planning and the requirements of the VfGH on the accuracy of spatial plans.