

Strong Partners Powerful Regions

NetWorkShop 14.-15.9.2010
Graz – Steiermark – Austria



Opening Speech

Landeshauptmann Franz Voves, Governor

14.09.2010

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you all as representatives of fourteen different regions out of eight European states here in Graz. You have come here as our friends and partners, but today you also represent the network that Styria has established in the past by its external relations.

In this respect, I am also glad that many high-ranking experts are taking this opportunity to exchange their knowledge. This, no doubt, will enrich our mutual international relationships.

The very composition of this forum stands for the organization of Styria's policy in external relations. We work together, in particular, with three types of regions:

- These are, first of all, numerous regions from the Alps-Adriatic-Pannonia-Region, such as Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. We are especially promoting the integration of the Western Balkan states in the course of a reorganization of the Alps-Adriatic Working Community.
- Secondly, we focus on further European regions, such as the French Departement de la Vienne and the Polish voivodships, where we have already organized many gainful projects together. Since I had the chance to get a closer insight into some of these projects during my visits to your countries, I would like to thank you for contributing to their success.
- And last but not least, I would like to mention our cooperation with important partner regions around the world. I am particularly happy about the great interest of Russian regions.

The aim of our workshop is to pave the way for new projects in order to further cooperation within the European Union. In this respect, I would like to mention something else. I've just come across a headline which perfectly matches the topic of our NetWorkShop "Good Food".

At this very moment, the international exhibition "World Food Moscow" is being opened, where the European Union will host a series of promotional activities under the slogan "Tasty Europe". So obviously, the EU is doing the same as we do - and this, ladies and gentlemen, is a very good sign. In fact, "Good Food" is a precondition for a "Tasty Europe" – "Good Food" means food grown in fields and gardens that must fulfill high quality standards before we get them on our dishes.

But let us come back to our conference now: Our network of regional partnerships has proved of high value. We can benefit from these relations in various ways indeed.

They give us, for example, the opportunity to enforce common aims on the European level. A current example is the European transport policy from 2014 – we have recently lobbied the extension of the

⇒ www.europa.steiermark.at/networkshop



Das Land
Steiermark

Strong Partners Powerful Regions

NetWorkShop 14.-15.9.2010
Graz – Steiermark – Austria



Baltic-Adriatic-Corridor with other European regions. This has been successful: In two weeks time, a delegation of members of the European Parliament will come to Styria to join an on-site inspection.

It is of the utmost importance that European regions join together in a well-functioning co-operation - this is what European citizens want! Let us just take a look at the Euro-Barometer published in August this year: 86 % of Europeans are convinced that we need a stronger cooperation between EU-member states to overcome the financial crisis.

Furthermore, we have to reach our major goals listed in the “Europe 2020”-strategy for “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. European regions are invited to take part in this effort and this NetWorkShop shall be seen as one of our first contributions!

Styria, which has a research rate of 4,3 % and is on top of Austria’s research statistics, has already excelled the 3-percent-goal of the European Union, mentioned in the “Europe 2020” strategy. This is, however, no reason for us to lean back. We rather have to keep on developing our cooperation, and this can only be done together.

Due to my personal contacts with representatives of other regions, I could always get an impression of the broad spectrum of projects.

Ludwig Rader, the head of the department for European and international relations, will elaborate on the relevance of the “European Territorial Cooperation” and provide you with further information.

Moreover, Richard Hummelbrunner, one of our experts, will give an additional insight into European funds.

Styria is already on the right way – yet, it is our aim not only to get to the top, but also to stay there. In order to reach this goal, we have to work together with our partner regions. We therefore need your commitment, ladies and gentlemen – your support and contacts will keep us going!

I am convinced that these two days will hold great chances for all of us and bring a fruitful exchange of experience. We are aware that we have to develop our strengths in common in order to make sure that we will not be overrun by the impact of globalization. At the same time, we have to face and solve global issues together, such as the change of our climate.

The two central issues of this conference, “Energy Efficiency” and “Good Food” will be presented in more detail by two of our experts Wolfgang Jilek, Regional Energy Commissioner, and Gerhard Wlodkowski, President of the regional chamber of Agriculture. The European Territorial Cooperation and similar programs can help to realize projects that are related to these two topics.

I am deeply sorry that due to other duties I cannot take part in the conference for the whole two days. I wish each and every one of you, however, interesting discussions and good impressions so that you can leave this NetWorkShop with many innovative ideas.

Now I shall leave the experts to their business. I am certain that Ms Heidi Körbler, who has run the department for international relations since one and a half years, can together with all the participants end this conference tomorrow with great results!

⇒ www.europa.steiermark.at/networkshop



Das Land
Steiermark