

# **Improve Efficiency of the ESI Funds Absorption Processes in Slovenia (TSI ref. 23SI05 – ESIFunds-SI)**

## **D2.2 Findings from the study visit**

10.07.2024

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## 1. List of abbreviations

BJA	Austrian Federal Chancellery
BMEIA	Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community Led Local Development
CLRAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
DAO	Direct Approval of Operations
DIIP	Document Identifying the Investment
DNSH	Do No Significant Harm Principle
DOC	Direct Operation Confirmation
DPP/ NRP	Development Programme Plan/Načrt razvojnih programov
EC	European Commission
e-CA	IT system for certification of expenditure
ECP	European Cohesion Policy
eMA	e-Managing Authority Information System
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
FAG	Fiscal Equalisation Act
IB	Intermediate Body
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
IULA	The International Union of Local Authorities
JTF	Just Transition Fond
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
MA27	Magistratsabteilung 27/Municipal Department 27 of the City of Vienna
MKRR	Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development
MNSSP	Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning
MESP	Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy
ÖGZ	Österreichische Gemeinde-Zeitung/Austrian Magazine of Municipalities
ÖREK 2030	Austrian Spatial Development Concept

ÖROK	Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz/Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UTO	United Towns Organization/World Federation of United Cities
ZMOS	Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia

## 2. Summary

The 2-day study visit to Vienna, Austria, was aimed at exchanging experiences and mutual learning among Slovenia and Austria. It provided an insight into how processes are organised in Austria as a decentralised and federal republic, as well as information on processes of communicating EU issues and their impact on municipalities. The Slovenian delegation was also able to observe how other municipalities deal with EU Funds (although Austria does not use ITI), learn about best practices and gain insights into new techniques and methods.

During the 2 days (23-24 April 2024) the Slovenian participants were accompanied and supported by IRE (Institute of European Regions) and aed.

In consultation with the Ministry of Environment Climate and Energy (MESP), the local experts drew up a list of topics that were discussed in Vienna, focusing on three areas: organisational structure of the urban/regional development system in Austria, urban development in Austria, and implementation of urban development projects (management and control system) at national/municipal level.

In accordance with the jointly agreed Programme of the 2-day visit, the following institutions/organisations were visited for interesting presentations and lectures, followed by ample opportunity for discussion: *Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)*, *Austrian Association of Cities and Towns*, *Austrian Association of Municipalities*, *Slovenian embassy in Vienna*, *Austrian Federal Chancellery (European Municipal Councillors)*.

In order to develop the findings, the Slovenian participants were asked to provide feedback on the study visit by means of a structured, multi-page questionnaire. This feedback was analysed and, in consultation with the Austrian experts, recommendations were formulated, and follow-up activities proposed.

The analysis of the feedback received from the participants of the study visit includes the relevance of the visited institutions, the topics discussed and the findings applicable to ITI in Slovenia in the current and upcoming funding period.

It was also agreed to organise online Q&A sessions within the next months with the visited institutions to further explore open questions from the discussions during the study visit as well as other related topics. This also includes the exchange of documents, methods and sketches in order to better understand and explore the possibilities arising from the examples from Austria.

Summarising the overall impression of the participants it can be concluded that the study visit met the expectations, as the relevance of the visited institutions was rated positively, the overall Programme was appropriate and well balanced, the contents of the presentations given was rated as very useful, more or less all questions were answered, useful contacts have been established – going also in the direction of possible follow-up requests for clarifications and further exchange opportunities, especially in the fields or topics relevant for the Slovenian experts which they have in common with Austria.

### 3. Introduction

By visiting other countries, ZMOS/Slovenian Urban municipalities staff will observe how other municipalities deal with the topic of EU Funds, learn about best practices, and gain insights into new techniques and methodologies. The study-visit in Austria (another study visit is planned in Brussels in the last phase of this project) is intended to exchange experiences and learn from each other. Insights will be given on how the processes in Austria are organised as a decentralised and federal republic, information on processes in the communication of EU issues and impacts on urban municipalities.

In consultation with the ITI Core Group (ITI experts from the urban municipalities/ZMOS), the selection of participants from Slovenia included representatives of institutions and ministries relevant to the ITI: Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development (MKRR) - Managing Authority (MA), Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy (MESP) - Intermediate Body (IB), the Municipality of Koper, Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia (ZMOS) and one local expert.

During the 2 days (23-24 April 2024) the Slovenian participants were accompanied and supported by IRE and aed.

## 4. Preparatory works

An initial concept note for the 2-day study visit to Vienna was drawn up, involving all the organisations and institutions listed in the application. This concept note formed the basis for discussion at the workshop in Ljubljana on 16 April 2024, including:

- *Priorities and content of the study visit.*
- *Topics concerning the organisation and experiences of MAs, IBs, multi-funding, etc.*
- *A list of questions to be asked in Vienna will be drawn up as a result of the discussion.*
- *Clarification of the participants or institutions to be represented.*
- *Clarification of the administrative procedure according to the rules of DG REFORM/TSI.*

As a result of the workshop, the local experts, in consultation with the Ministry (MESP) formulated a list of topics to be discussed in Vienna, which was used as input in the preparation of the visit dates:

### 1. *Organisational set up of the system for urban/regional development in Austria:*

*Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK):*

- *Partnership between the national, federal/regional, and municipal level (top down and bottom-up approach)*
- *MA for Cohesion Policy funding*
- *Definition of Development Priorities (green and digital transition)*
- *Selection of Projects*
- *Use of financing not linked to cost*

### 2. *Urban development in Austria:*

- *Strategic framework for urban development (sustainable urban development plans and other relevant strategies like sustainable mobility plans)*
- *Use of territorial tools, instruments for urban development*
- *Combination of various EU and national funds in calls for proposals/projects*

### 3. *Implementation of urban development projects (management and control system):*

*(national level/municipal level/ÖROK)*

- *System of financing from the national/municipal/other budgets (procedures, prepayment possibilities for beneficiaries, overbooking possibilities for 100% absorption of EU funds etc.)*
- *Awarding support procedure from national/EU funds*
- *Verifications done at the application for funding/project/claim for payment level (presentation of a case, including checking possible conflict of interest), risk-based approach, public procurement verifications etc.*
- *IT management and monitoring system and link to other IT systems*
- *Performance framework/setting development objectives/ indicators*
- *Implementation of DNSH principle (taxonomy regulation)*



Taking into account the points discussed during the workshop, the list drawn up by the local experts and the contacts and discussions with the organisations/institutions to be visited, a final agenda was drawn up (see Annex 1):

**TUESDAY, 23.4.2024**

*10:00 – 13:00 Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)*

*13:15 – 14:45 Meeting with Austrian Association of Cities and City of Vienna, Department of European Affairs*

*17:15 Meeting at the Slovenian Embassy in Vienna, Envoy Duska Jerman-Male*

**WEDNESDAY, 24.4.2024**

*09:30 - 11:45 Meeting with Austrian Association of Municipalities (Österreichischer Gemeindebund)*

*14:00 - 16:00 Austrian Federal Chancellery (BKA) “European Municipal Councillors” - Abteilung IV/10*

In consultation with the ITI Core Group, the selection of participants from Slovenia includes representatives of institutions and ministries relevant to the ITI:

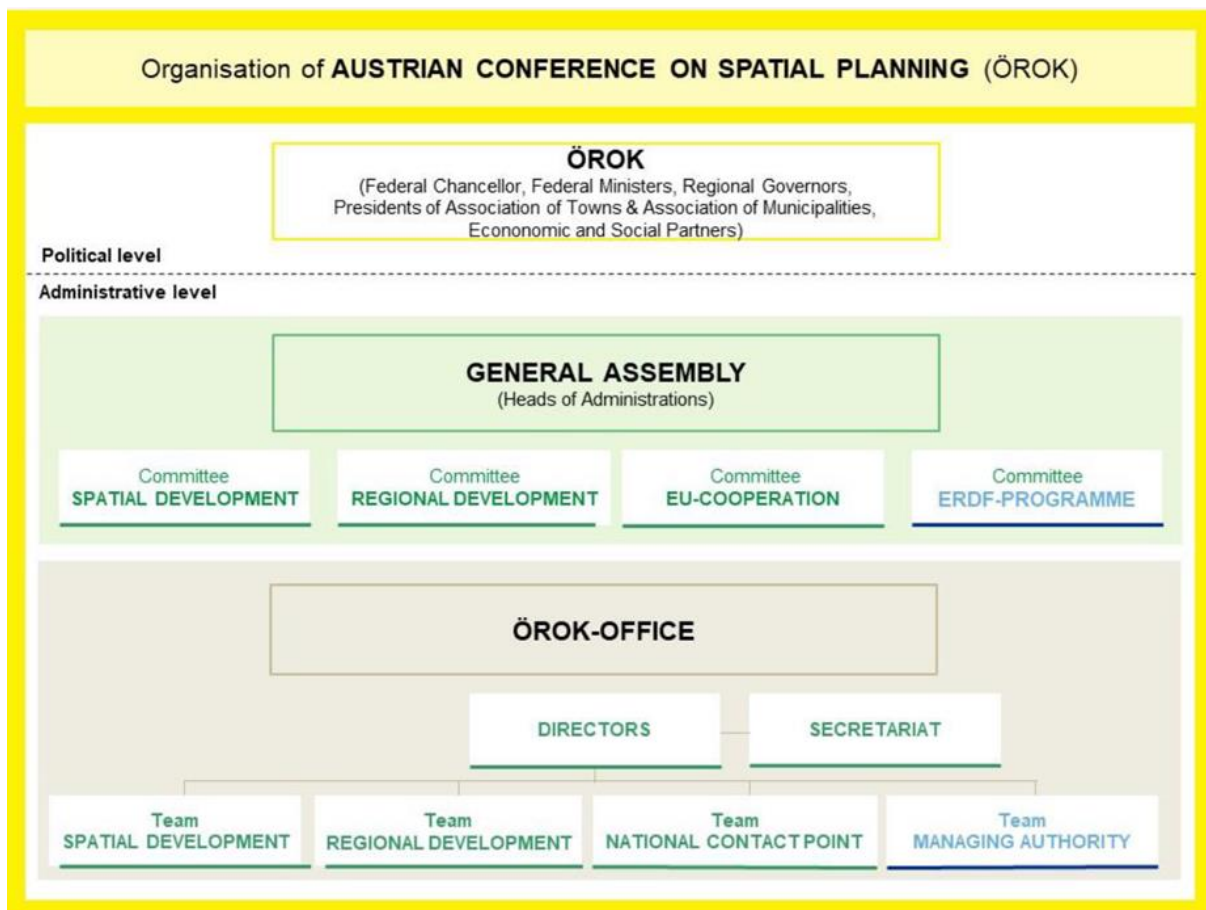
- *Alenka Pograjc, ZMOS (Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia)*
- *Ivana Štrkalj, Municipality of Koper*
- *Matjaž Dragar, MKRR (Managing Authority)*
- *Jernej Saksida, MKRR (Managing Authority)*
- *Klemen Košir, MESP (Intermediate Body)*
- *Saša Heath-Drugovič, local expert*

## 5. Institutions visited

### 5.1 Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)

The Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK), established in 1971 by the federal government, the Länder, and municipalities, coordinates national spatial development. Chaired by the Federal Chancellor, its political decision-making body includes federal ministers, heads of the Länder, presidents of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, the Austrian Association of Municipalities, and the heads of social and economic partners who have a consulting vote.

The presentation by the Head of the MA of the ERDF/IGJ Programme consisted of two parts. The first part focused on the history, tasks, and organisational structure of the Austrian Spatial Planning Conference. The main function, i.e. to provide a platform (conference) for the discussion of spatial and regional planning issues, was emphasised. The members of ÖROK are all line ministries, regional governments, associations of cities, associations of municipalities, chambers of commerce, chambers of employees, industrial associations.



*Figure 1: Organisation of ÖROK*

The second part of the presentation dealt with the new function of ÖROK, which was introduced in 2013, becoming the MA of the national ERDF/ IGJ Programme as of the 2014-2020 funding period. Until then, Austria maintained a system of nine regional ERDF/IGJ Programmes. The former Regional MAs of the regional Programme were transformed into IBs (and Co-financing Bodies), which are responsible for planning, launching calls for proposals, assessing applications, providing assistance and

information, selecting and approving projects, and awarding contracts. For the funding period 2021-2027, ÖROK is the MA for the multi-fund Programme: ERDF/IGJ and Just Transition Fund (JTF). For the full presentation delivered, see Annex 2.



*Figure 2: Tasks regarding European Structural and Investment*

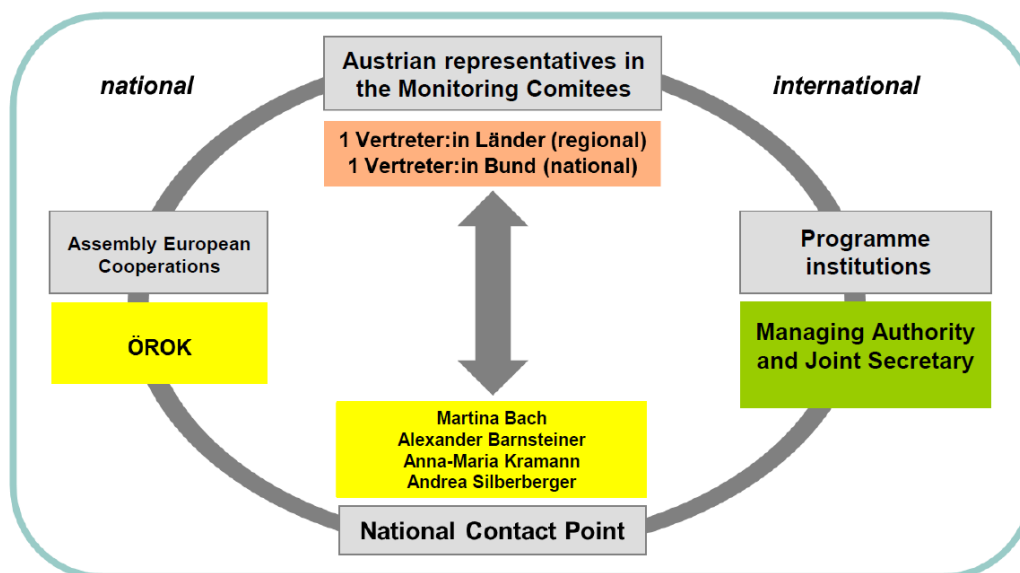
The structure of the Programme consists of 14 IBs, three at national level and 11 at regional level. The MA does not launch calls for proposals or issue contracts/financing agreements, these tasks are fully carried out by the IBs. The MA is responsible for the overall management, implementation, evaluation and accounting functions of the Programme. The tasks of actual funding implementation are delegated to 14 IBs, the MA also assumes a control function for these delegated tasks. The current Programme has a separate thematic priority for territorial development, consisting of two sub-priorities: sustainable urban development and integrated rural development. There are no financial instruments used directly in the Programme, although some IBs (which are also co-financing bodies) use financial instruments as part of the national co-financing (i.e. national funding scheme). The Programme has not introduced any rules/regulations on over-commitment or over-booking.

## Involved bodies in programme implementation



*Figure 3: Involved bodies in Programme implementation*

The presentation by the National Contact Point for the European Urban Initiative focused on the activities in Austria to attract and support interested applicants and beneficiaries for funding under the European Urban Initiative. So far, no applicant has been successful in applying for funding under this instrument. The main reason, based on the feedback received from potential applicants, was that Austrian cities and municipalities use other instruments to finance their activities (mainly Interreg funding was mentioned).



*Figure 4: National service and information point for the transnational and interregional Programmes*

The discussion with the participants from Slovenia focused mainly on the organisational structure of the national Programme (responsibilities of the MA and IBs), financial instruments that may be used, overbooking, and non-cost-related funding (although this last topic could not be discussed in detail due to time constraints).

An online Q&A session with ÖROK was offered to take place in the next months to explore open questions from discussions during the study visit, as well as other related topics. Similarly, the exchange of documents, methodologies, outlines to better understand and explore the possibilities offered by the Austrian examples (e.g. description of the management and control system of the Austrian ERDF Programmes -including description of the different Programme bodies, their roles and responsibilities and their interactions-, methodology for non-cost-based funding, description/manual of the monitoring system, etc.).



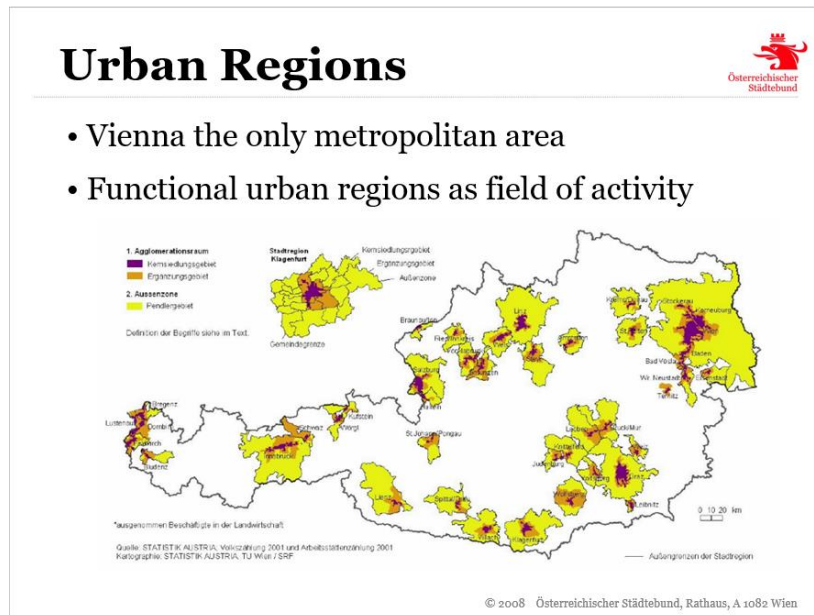
*Figure 5: Presentation at ÖROK*

## 5.2 Association of Cities and Towns

The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is involved in the preparation of legislation and, among other things, comments from the point of view of local government on some 100 federal regulations every year as the cities and municipalities see it. Representatives of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns are moreover active in a number of advisory bodies in such fields as the environment or welfare. This organisation represents the **municipal interests of a total of 258 cities and larger municipalities**. Around 65% of the population and 71% of jobs are located in Austria's metropolitan areas.

Membership is voluntary. In addition to the Austrian Association of Municipalities, which represents the smaller municipalities, the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is a discussion partner for the government at federal and state level and is explicitly mentioned in the Austrian Federal Constitution.

The Head of European and International Affairs of the Association of Cities and Towns presentation focused on the structure and functions, activities, membership, and funding of the Association (for the full presentation, see Annex 3).



*Figure 6: Structure of Urban Regions in Austria*

### Organisation - Executive Bodies of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns

- The supreme body of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is the Austrian Conference of Cities (Österreichischer Städtetag) which is the General Assembly of the Cities, in which each member has seats and votes according to its size. The Austrian Conference of Cities is held every year.
- The Policy Committee (Hauptausschuss) is in charge of all work (in particular, it is responsible for carrying out the tasks assigned to it by the Association of Towns and Cities, approving the formation of committees and deciding on the conclusion of agreements etc.). The Committee is composed of 60 representatives from 39 towns and cities.
- All important business is conducted in accordance with the decisions of the 20 Members of the Management Board (in any case, this group of persons includes the President, the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Secretary, and the mayors of the provincial capitals).
- The Mayor of Vienna has traditionally been the President of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns. S/he is the representative of the association for external affairs. The Secretary General, who is chosen by the municipality of Vienna, is in charge of the Secretariat, which includes 20 staff members, one of them at the Brussels office. The Secretary General prepares and/or implements decisions in conjunction with the President. In the provinces, regional work of the provincial level groups is usually handled by staff of the capitals of the provinces.

### Tasks:

#### **Fiscal equalisation**

At the centre is the Fiscal Equalisation Act (FAG), which (mainly) regulates the distribution of common federal taxes (revenue shares).

The financing system of Austrian Municipalities is divided in:

- Financial equalisation:



- FAG divides the tax revenues collected by the federal government between the federal government, the federal provinces, and the municipalities.
- Fiscal equalisation is an agreement that must be negotiated and decided by consensus between the federal government, the federal provinces, and the municipalities. This happens every 4 to 6 years.
- Negotiations on financial equalisation are currently in progress.
- **Municipal Taxes**
  - The rest of the budget is collected by the municipalities from their own taxes (municipal tax, property tax) and from fees, charges and services.
  - In addition, of course, there are also economic activities.

### ***Representation of interests***

The Austrian Association of Towns and Municipalities is involved in the preparation of legislation and comments on about 100 federal regulations each year from the perspective of towns and municipalities. Member municipalities are invited, through the regional groups, to participate in the preparation of comments on draft laws and regulations as well as on new regulatory proposals. Representatives of the Association of Towns and Municipalities are also active in a number of advisory bodies, mainly at federal level, in areas such as the environment and social affairs.

### ***Exchange of experience***

Around 30 expert committees discuss innovative measures in cities, draft opinions on new legislation and discuss the implementation of new policies.

### ***Austrian Municipal Newspaper (ÖGZ)***

The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns publishes a journal (ÖGZ) 10 times a year for its members. It focuses on issues of municipal law and financial policy in theory and practice, and reports on current topics discussed in the Association's committees as well as on European policy issues.

- General Assembly
- Circular Letters
- Magazine ÖGZ
- Homepage
- ... and a lot of formal and informal meetings and events



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*Figure 7: Other platforms of exchange*

## International activities

### ***Cooperation with Eastern Europe***

Since the opening of the Eastern borders in 1989-1990, cooperation with Eastern Europe has been another focus of the work of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns. Since then, more than 3 000 mayors and municipal decision-makers from the Eastern European countries have been able to study in various cities and municipalities in order to familiarise themselves with Austrian municipal policy in theory and practice. The LOGON (Local Governments Network) project is passing on the experience gained from EU accession Member States to the candidate countries.

### ***Committee of the Regions and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe***

The Association of Austrian Cities and Towns is represented by three people in both the Committee of the Regions of the EU (CoR) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE). The CoR is an advisory body of the EU to which representatives from local and regional authorities of the EU Member States are delegated. It currently has 315 members and 315 alternates from 47 countries. Delegates of the Austrian Association of Towns and Municipalities take part in the deliberations of both the CoR and the CLRAE at the Council of Europe.

### ***CEMR - UCLG***

The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). The Austrian Association of Municipalities and the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns are jointly responsible for political representation in the bodies of international organisations. Mayor of Vienna, Dr Michael Häupl, has been President of the CEMR since 2004 until 2010.

### ***Office in Brussels***

The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is the first association of local authorities in Europe to have set up an office in Brussels (August 1994), which is connected, physically and organisationally, at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union. The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is therefore in a position, on the basis of a constitutional regulation to take part in the information and decision-making process both on the domestic and the European level.

## Tasks:

- Management of the office of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns in Brussels
- Monitoring, supporting and influencing the legislative processes in EU legislative projects and EU initiatives that are important for municipalities;
- Establishing and maintaining formal/informal contacts with colleagues in the EU institutions (in particular the European Parliament, European Commission, the Committee of Local and Regional Authorities), other municipal liaison offices and umbrella organisations (CEMR, UCLG).



### ***Organisation and financing***

One individual is employed at the Representation and is formally a staff member of the Association, though her employment is funded by the City of Vienna. The Association reimburses the City of Vienna for these costs, utilizing funds from membership fees. This person collaborates closely with the CEMR.



*Figure 8: Presentation at the Association of Cities and Towns*

### **5.3 City of Vienna, Department for European Affairs**

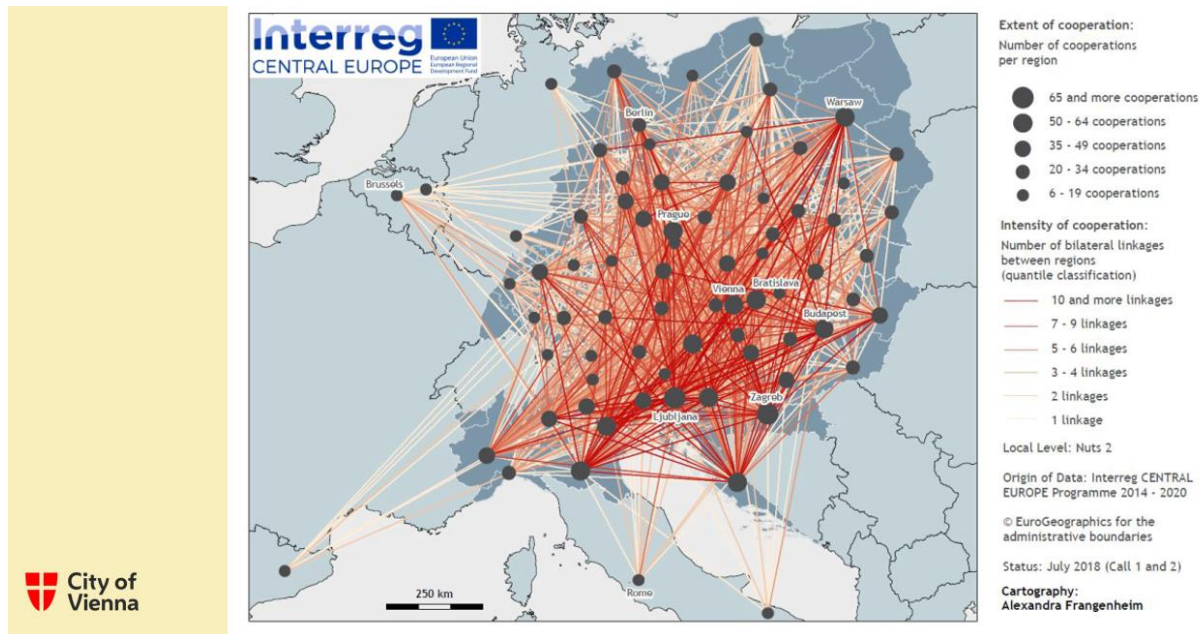
The visit to the Association of Towns and Municipalities was also attended by representatives of the City of Vienna, Municipal Department 27 (MA 27). A representative of the MA of the transnational Interreg Programme Central Europe, presented the Central Europe Programme and pointed out the successful participation of Slovenia in this Programme in recent years (for the full presentation, see Annex 4).

- MA 27 is the European department of the City of Vienna. Organisationally, it is answerable to the Administrative Group – Finance, Business, Digital Innovation and International Affairs. It also comprises the Vienna Liaison Office in Brussels, international activities including Viennese balls, International Liaison Offices in eight cities of Central and South-eastern Europe, as well as development co-operation and humanitarian aid extended by the City of Vienna.
- Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE
  - Programme management – MA and Joint Secretariat – is implemented by the City of Vienna, Department for European Affairs

Brief outline of the Programme:

- Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE as one of 11 transnational Programmes in the EU and part of the EU Cohesion Policy
- Funding of cooperation between institutions of different member states is predominantly given from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – system of national co-financing

- Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 represents the third generation of transnational cooperation in central Europe (1st generation: 2007-2013, 2nd generation: 2014-2020)
- Assistance to the implementation of the Programme in the involved member states is provided by the National Contact Points in every member state (for Slovenia: Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development/Ljubljana)



*Figure 9: Patterns of networking within the Programme area of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020*

Further points concerned:

- Objectives of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027
- Overview Funding provisions in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027
- Status Quo of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027
  - Implementation of two standard calls for applications (open for the nine specific objectives; see Annex 4, p.5)
  - Approval of 100 projects – Call 1: 53 projects, Call 2: 47 projects - with 1.016 beneficiaries from all nine participating EU member states in the Programme and from Belgium, The Netherlands and Romania
  - 84% of available ERDF Programme budget has been already committed and contracted
  - High participation of beneficiaries from Slovenia in approved projects of both calls
- Outlook on further calls for applications in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027



*Figure 10: Presentation at the City of Vienna*

#### 5.4 Slovenian Embassy in Austria

The visit to the Slovenian Embassy in Vienna served on the one hand to present the TSI project (the Envoy Duska Jerman-Male also participated in the workshop on the occasion of the 19th European Summit in Salzburg in September 2023) and on the other hand to present the Embassy's EU agendas. Reference was also made to the 20th European Summit in October 2024, where a separate workshop for this TSI project has already been announced in the preliminary Programme. The Slovenian Embassy remains interested in this project and is likely to participate in Salzburg in October.



*Figure 11: Meeting at the Slovenian Embassy*

#### 5.5 Austrian Association of Municipalities

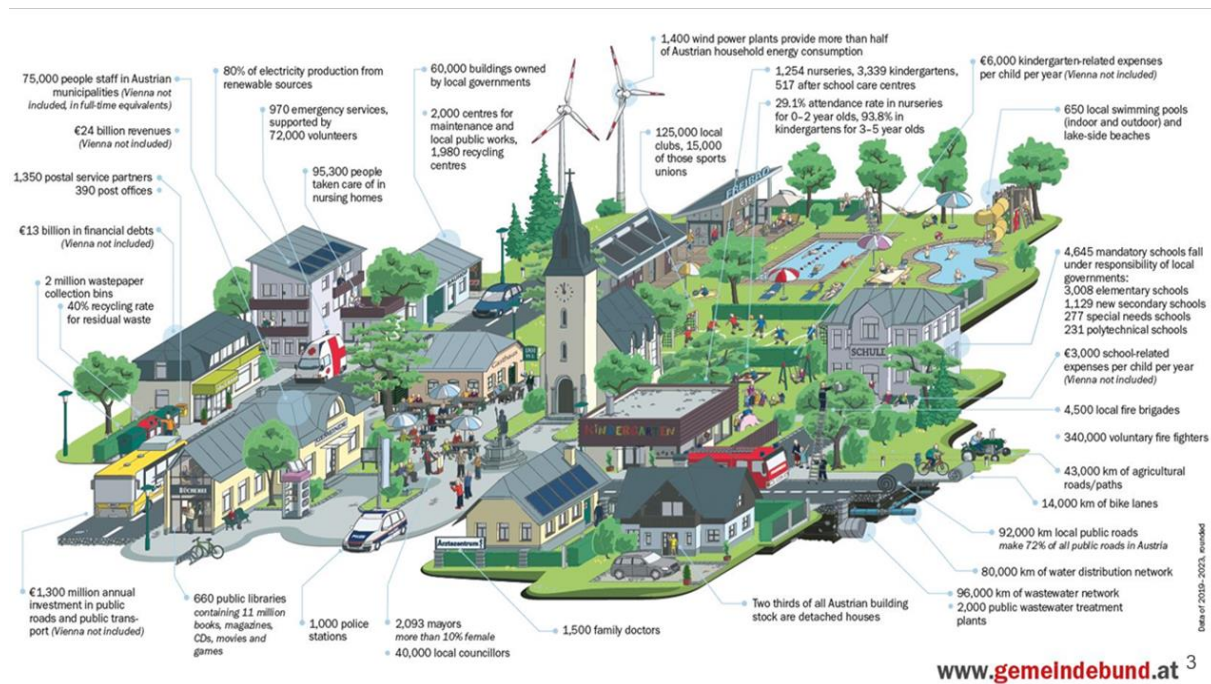
The presentation by a special advisor of the Austrian Association of Municipalities pointed out the tasks and the financing of Austrian municipalities (for the full presentation, see Annex 5). The Austrian



Association of Municipalities is the umbrella organisation representing the interests of municipalities at the federal level. Like its 10 regional associations, it is organised under the law of associations and is based in Vienna, the seat of the federal government. Since 1996, the Austrian Association of Municipalities has maintained a permanent office in Brussels to fulfil its international agenda.

The Austrian Association of Municipalities is represented externally by the President. The Secretary General manages the day-to-day business of the Austrian Association of Municipalities.

**2,082 of the 2,093** Austrian municipalities are members of the regional associations. This means that the Austrian Association of Municipalities represents about **70% of the Austrian population**.



*Figure 12: Responsibilities of the Association of Municipalities*

## Tasks of the municipalities and the Association of Municipalities in Europe

### ***The Office of the Austrian Association of Municipalities in Brussels***

Austria became a member of the EU in 1995. With the amendment of the Federal Constitutional Law in 1994, the Austrian Association of Municipalities was granted extensive information and participation rights at EU level. The Brussels office of the Association has been in place since October 1996, it is a one-person operation. The office is located in the building of the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU. The main objective of the Brussels office is lobbying – collecting, distributing, evaluating European legal acts in cooperation and coordination with employees of the Association in Austria and providing feedback on EU level. The person working in the Brussels office is employee of the Association, funded by membership fees.

According to Art. 23d of the Federal Constitution, the Association of Towns and Municipalities is called upon to submit comments when federal projects within the framework of the EU affect the municipalities' own sphere of influence or other important interests. Examples in this context are environmental and public procurement law, where about 80% of all regulations implemented in Austria are decided in Brussels.

### ***Representing the interests of municipalities***

Together with Austrian and European partners, the Association of Municipalities in Brussels lobbies for the interests of local authorities, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the preservation of local self-determination.

### ***Services of the Association of Municipalities***

In addition to monitoring the legislative process, the main tasks of the Representation in Brussels include the preparation and dissemination of information, the support of the Association of Municipalities in international committees and the organisation of visitor groups

PROs:

- Knowing in advance which legal acts will be applied at national level.
- A close network at European level
- Not only useful for European, but also for national affairs (e.g. legal comparison)

### **Other tasks within the EU**

#### ***Global umbrella organisation - UCLG***

The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), created in May 2004, is the result of a merger between The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and United Towns Organization (UTO). UCLG's mission is to represent the interests of local authorities, cities and metropolitan areas, particularly at the United Nations, and to draw attention to their needs through global campaigns.

With members on five continents, UCLG represents around half of the world's population.

#### ***Council of European Municipalities and Regions - CEMR (CCRE)***

Founded in Geneva in 1951 by a group of mayors, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is today the largest organisation representing local and regional interests at European level. Through its member organisations in more than 30 European countries, the CEMR represents some 100,000 local and regional authorities.

The CEMR is committed to defending local and regional interests in the European legislative process, and its committees and working groups develop common positions on these issues. It focuses on environmental policy, public procurement, regional policy, transport, energy and social policy. The CEMR is the European section of the International Council of Local Governments (UCLG).

#### ***Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe - CLRAE***

The Austrian Association of Municipalities is also member of CLRAE, just like the Association of Cities and Towns. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), based in Strasbourg, has been the body representing local and regional authorities in the Council of Europe since 1994. Alongside the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress is the third political body of the Council of Europe. Founded in 1949, the international organisation has 47 member states that work together in the fields of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. The European Court of Human Rights is also a Council of Europe institution.

### ***Municipal partnerships***

Cross-border partnerships between municipalities have existed for decades. Their main purpose is to get to know partners from other countries with similar interests

In the discussion the organisation and activities of the Brussels office were discussed in more detail, which will be a useful knowledge foundation for the second study visit in Brussels. The recommendation by the special advisor of the Association for the Slovene colleagues was, if being part of Slovene Permanent Representation was not an option, would be to think about the possibility of joining the premises of CEMR – as some associations use this option successfully already.



*Figure 13: Austrian Association of Municipalities*

### **5.6 Austrian Federal Chancellery**

The Austrian Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt) is the executive office of the Federal Chancellor of Austria, responsible for coordinating the work of the Austrian government. This institution plays a central role in shaping national policy, overseeing the implementation of government decisions, and ensuring the efficient functioning of Austria's federal administration. It also serves as a hub for various government agencies and departments, providing administrative support and strategic direction under the leadership of the Chancellor, who is the head of government.

The visit to the Federal Chancellery, Department IV/10: European Communication, focused on the presentation of the European Local Councils initiative. The aim of this non-partisan initiative is to build a bridge between the concerns of people in the regions and the European institutions.

European Local Councils are the first point of contact for questions and concerns about the EU at local and regional level. They inform citizens about current European developments, organise events in their communities and bring EU-relevant suggestions and ideas from the community to the federal government.

European Councillors support the implementation of EU decisions at local level or provide information on EU funding and implement important European-related projects in the region.

In return, they will receive tailor-made information materials, training opportunities and networking opportunities. Exclusive trips to the European institutions in Brussels and a direct exchange with the Austrian Minister for Europe - online and offline - round off the Programme.

The initiative now has more than 1 600 committed European councillors in all Austrian provinces and is growing steadily.

The initiative was launched in 2010 under the motto "Europe starts in the community" by the then Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and the Representation of the European Commission in Austria.

Today, the initiative is led by the Federal Chancellery, which continues to develop it together with other partner institutions, including the Liaison Office of the European Parliament in Austria and various Austrian Organisations (e.g. Austrian Association of Municipalities).

The discussion focused on the feedback on this initiative (which is very positive), but also on the impact on Austria (increased commitment, especially at municipal level). The importance of raising awareness about the present and future of the EU was also raised, as well as the interest in further partnerships.



*Figure 14: Meeting at the Austrian Federal Chancellery*



## 6. Findings

In order to develop the findings, the Slovenian participants were asked to provide feedback on the study visit by means of a structured, multi-page questionnaire. This feedback was analysed and, in consultation with the Austrian experts, recommendations were formulated, and follow-up activities proposed.

The questionnaire was developed by the Austrian experts and then sent to all Slovenian participants. It can be found as Annex 6.

### 6.1 Analysis of feedback

The analysis of feedback received from the participants of the study visit includes the relevance of institutions visited, topics discussed as well as findings applicable to ITI in Slovenia in the current and upcoming funding period. Feedback is structured according to the visited institutions as follows: individual analysis for ÖROK, grouped analysis for the Association of Cities and Towns and the Association of Municipalities, and grouped for the Slovenian Embassy in Vienna and the Austrian Federal Chancellery (European Municipal Councillors).

#### **Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)**

*The most relevant questions in relation to the organisational structure of the system of urban/regional development in Austria, urban development as such and the implementation of urban development projects (management and control system) were:*

The relationship between administrative units (regions/Bundesländer, cities, municipalities) and the balance between urban and rural development, including any financial quotas for balanced regional growth. The level at which urban development is discussed and coordinated, particularly in terms of green and digital transitions, whether at ÖROK or regional and city levels. Insights into Austria's non-cost-linked financing system under the national ERDF/JTF Programme 2021-2027. Areas where ÖROK might seek to improve its organizational structure. ÖROK's role in monitoring project implementation within the ERDF/JTF Programme and the methods used. A comparison of ÖROK's organizational structure as the MA of the ERDF/JTF Programme with Slovenia's implementation system, especially in project selection. Understanding Austria's development priorities and the differences in urban development realities, exemplified by Vienna's scale. The relevance of ÖROK 2030 for Slovenia, both as a concept and in terms of partnership structures. The impressive partnership between national, federal/regional, and municipal levels, operating both top-down and bottom-up. *Open questions from the discussion. Are these questions suitable to be discussed online with representatives of the visited institution?*

- The methodology of simplification of procedures (financing not linked to costs) could not be discussed in detail and would be worth further discussion, as this might be crucial for ITI implementation. Online discussion would be welcomed.
- Topics and questions discussed during the study visit as well open questions would be more than suitable to be further elaborated. It would be crucial to have an online meeting for such a discussion that would include a wider group of stakeholders from Slovenia.



- In the national ERDF/JTF Programme Austria is not using the instrument of overcommitment. The responsibility of 100 % absorption of funds is transferred to the IBs. It would be useful to receive a document with the description of the management and control system, to enable a further exploration of the organisational structure and set-up of the Programme and the MA.

*Which findings are directly applicable for the current ITI period (2021-2027)?*

- What is the role of ÖROK and how does it work as a coordinating body between the national and European level? How does the coordination of stakeholders in Austria work?
- The system of urban development projects in Cohesion Policy is a relevant example for Slovenia, even though Austria does not use the instrument of ITI itself.
- Strategic urban development – ÖROK as coordination and exchange platform.
- Management and control system in the framework of Austrian Structural Fund Programmes. How does the management of the Programmes work in Austria?
- What is the coordination mechanism when it comes to distribution of EU structural funds?
- Which instruments are used for the evaluation of the ERDF/JTF Programme?
- Establishment procedure and methodology for financing not linked to costs.

*Which findings can be used by ITI for the next funding period (2028+)?*

- ÖROK as a unique example of an institution with a set-up consisting of representatives of all line ministries, regional government, cities and municipalities and further economic and social partners, an institution commonly managed, owned and financed by national and sub-national level.
- Establishment procedure, methodology, but more importantly experiences made, and lessons learned with the instrument of financing not linked to costs.
- How does ÖROK as an organisation coordinate people, tasks, and specific objectives at the national level with the local level?
- Strategic planning in relation to urban development is handled by one central organisation and not dispersed among various bodies. Interesting learning for Slovenia. Applicability should be elaborated.
- Example of the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling resources to achieve joint steering instrument for all Austrian government levels for the urban development of the country.
- Implementation of global goals, guidelines, and European objectives + guidelines in national strategies to establish a framework for the definition and selection of development projects to be followed.
- It was interesting to see the organisational structure of ÖROK as MA of the Austrian ERDF/JTS Programme and compare the implementation system to the one in Slovenia. For Slovenia it would be interesting to introduce a similar system (or parts of it), for example regarding separate MA of ERDF and ESF, or in focusing the implementation at the level of IBs.

**Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, Austrian Association of Municipalities**

*Questions and topics relevant for further work in Slovenia:*

- The organisational structure of the system of cities, municipalities, and regions in Austria – in comparison to Slovenia.
- Role of the Associations in the overall national structure, especially regarding the development of regional and local level.
- Involvement of both Associations in the decision-making process (national, EU level).
- What are the main priorities regarding green transition (energy and mobility)?
- Urban agenda on EU level, cooperation in EU projects?
- Confirmation or rejection of the idea of ZMOS representation in Brussels.

*Questions and further aspects to be considered regarding possible representation of ZMOS in Brussels:*

- It was relevant to see the importance and good experiences Austria has made and is making with having a representation in Brussels
- It was obvious that having a very qualified and communicative person as a representative of these Associations in Brussels is crucial.
- Financing of the representation in Brussels.
- The advantage of such a structure is in getting direct access to relevant information from EU level that can be and is then transferred to municipalities. Further advantages are: representation of municipalities' interests in Brussels, involvement in the decision-making process, important role of lobbying, timely acquisition of information, networking, last missing link in the vertical line between urban municipalities and European Commission – in the sense of multilevel governance. Last but not least, the location at the permanent representation of Austria is very helpful, enabling having direct access to relevant information.
- As disadvantage the financing was mentioned several times (as the financing is secured by the Associations and their members). How can the long-term funding for the representation be secured? It cannot be financed by the 12 urban municipalities (members of ZMOS).
- Networking of a possible Slovenian representative office in Brussels.
- Strong support for the idea of ZMOS representation in Brussels.
- Closer cooperation with CEMR and other networks in Brussels.
- Where does the representation fit in the Slovene network?
- How to convey the understanding to the political level that the representative is only a contact point to gather information in Brussels, working with teams at home in Slovenia.
- Results of the representation cannot be directly measured. How to achieve the understanding of the importance of its establishment?
- Is the representation achieving its goals? Is this measurable? If so, how and by which means?

*Useful findings for ZMOS:*

- Details about the representation in Brussels – especially the organisation, location, financing.

- Importance of representation.

### **Slovenian embassy in Vienna, Austrian Federal Chancellery (European Municipal Councillors)**

Awareness of the TSI project, achievements of the initiatives presented by Austrian side:

- Opportunity to present the TSI project at the Embassy was seen as very useful and successful, especially in view of supporting and fostering the dissemination of the project from the Embassy side.
- The importance of projects such as TSI, the exchange of experiences and the importance of establishing networks for even better cooperation in the future was highlighted.
- European Municipal Councillors:
  - The success of the project European Municipal Councillors was very impressive, as it shows the impact of disseminating information about the EU, with a strong emphasis on the possibilities of obtaining European funds.
  - Publication of monthly newsletters, organising annual conference and study trips to Brussels with the aim of making the councillors more familiar with EU activities, offering a good basis for forwarding this information to the general public.

*Useful findings for ZMOS:*

- Importance of awareness raising.
- Promotion of the EU ideal to all corners of the country.
- Challenges in communicating the benefits of Europe.
- Examples of good practices in informing citizens about the importance of EU as well as about the possibility of financing from EU Funds.
- Maintaining good contacts to both institutions.
- Participation at the Salzburg Summit, including the participation of the Minister for Cohesion and Regional Development from Slovenia.
- Organisation of conferences for all EU Councillors.

## **6.2 Overall impression of the study visit**

Summarising the overall impression of the participants, it can be concluded that the study visit met the expectations, as the relevance of the visited institutions was rated positively, the overall Programme was appropriate and well balanced, the contents of the presentations given was rated as very useful, with almost all questions were answered, useful contacts have been established – going also in the direction of possible follow-up requests for clarifications and further exchange opportunities, especially in the fields or topics relevant for the Slovenian experts in common with Austria. In addition, positive responses were given in the sense of well scheduled and well organised Programme and visits, good duration of presentations and time planned for discussion after the presentation, as well as high level performance of the speakers. Although the Programme was quite intense, it was rated as maximum productive. The only aspect missing mentioned by the participants was the possibility of project visits.

### 6.3 Recommendations

From the perspective of the Austrian experts, the following recommendations and discussion points can be derived from the questionnaires:

- Urban development is part of the discussion and agreement in the framework of establishing the Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK), taking place every 10 years. This concept is discussed based on partnership between the line ministries, regions, Associations of Cities and Towns, Association of Municipalities, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Employees, and further economic and social partners, all being members of ÖROK. The result of these agreements forms the Concept and are the basis for further work as well as focused activities of all participating partners. The further work is organised on the one hand by establishing annual, bi-annual work Programmes, agreeing on the relevant topics to be elaborated. This work is implemented in the form of so-called Partnerships around specific topics, resulting in different outputs such as expert analysis or recommendations. In the last years, a number of topics relevant to urban – rural development was elaborated: One prominent example of such a partnership is the one on Urban Regions/Stadtregionen<sup>1</sup>. Other examples would be Strengthening the regions/the regional level or Strengthening town and city centres in Austria<sup>2</sup>.

Another platform for discussing regional development (incl. urban) in relation to Structural Funds is the elaboration of the Partnership Agreement, being an integral part of programming a new funding period and the respective thematic priorities, thematic concentration, distribution of funding, etc. The implementation of this Agreement is closely monitored and reported towards the European Commission during the respective funding period.

In overall terms, a deeper look into the working structure and products developed by ÖROK should be taken (work on national and EU level), establishing contacts also with the other departments.

- Deeper exploration on the administrative and organisational set-up of regional development in general and in relation to Structural Funds (on the example of a platform for cooperation and coordination such as Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning and the working structure around Austrian Spatial Development Concept, financing structure) might be of crucial importance for Slovenia, not only in terms of ITI implementation. Especially in view of the upcoming funding period 2028+ a discussion on national level in Slovenia should be envisaged, it could be kicked off in the framework of the TSI project and further follow upon with the support of experts and colleagues from the Austrian administration, institutions in the form of workshops or permanent cooperation structures.
- It was pointed out that in regard to urban development in Austria it seems to be clear that this is a completely different reality with such differences like Vienna – being larger than Slovenia. Nevertheless it should be considered that Vienna has a double role considering the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oerok.gv.at/raum/themen/stadtregionen>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oerok.gv.at/fileadmin/bestellservice/publikationen\\_pdf/205\\_kurzfassungEN.pdf](https://www.oerok.gv.at/fileadmin/bestellservice/publikationen_pdf/205_kurzfassungEN.pdf)

administrative functions in Austria: Vienna is not only a city, but at the same time also a region (in administrative and all other terms!). This might be further explored when it comes to discussions about administrative units, possibly introducing the definition and meaning of regions, metropolitan units, functional urban areas, or similar concepts within the Slovenian administration.

- Used instruments for the monitoring and evaluation of the ERDF/JTF Programme: As the topic of monitoring was not discussed during the study visit – due to time restraints – this might be another issue for further debate and exploration as Austria uses a monitoring system with several Programme bodies as users, different roles, at the same time the set-up of the system is commonly agreed upon. Deeper look into the mechanism, roles, authorisations, administration would be helpful to understand the cooperation structures while keeping functions separately.

Monitoring systems are also widely used in a unified and commonly agreed form in Interreg Programmes, managed and subcontracted by the Interact Programme. A large number of Interreg Programmes is using the electronic monitoring system developed by Interact since the funding period 2014-2020, newly adapted for the funding period 2021-2027. As the number of Programmes and Programme bodies is relatively high, the system is used for the overall Programme implementation cycle, including the project application and reporting phases with applicants/beneficiaries as direct users of the system, also this system should be taken into consideration and explored in more depth. An online session with the responsible project manager at the Interact Programme (office Vienna) would be useful.

Also, the topic evaluation was not discussed, it might be useful to have a closer look at the instruments used in Austria – beside the classic evaluation exercises given by the EU regulations. One extra example is an external study named 'Quantitative effects of EU structural and cohesion policy in Austria – a contribution to 25 years of Austria in the EU'<sup>3</sup>.

#### 6.4 Follow-up activities

- Q&A online sessions with visited institutions to further elaborate on open questions from the discussions during the study visit as well as on further related topics.
- An online session with the representatives of the Association of Cities and Towns and Association of Municipalities in Brussels would be beneficial, also involving decision makers from the national level in Slovenia.
- Exchange of documents, methodologies, outlines to better understand and investigate the opportunities given by examples from Austria. Examples of documents: description of management and control system of the Austrian ERDF Programmes (including the description of the different Programme bodies, their tasks and responsibilities and interactions), methodology for financing not linked to costs, description/manual of the monitoring system, etc.
- Based on the document description of the management and control system a further debate and exploration of the organisational structure and set-up of the Programme and the MA

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.oerok.gv.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/publikationen/Schriftenreihe/207/207\\_kurzfassungEN.pdf](https://www.oerok.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/publikationen/Schriftenreihe/207/207_kurzfassungEN.pdf)

should be envisaged. As this document is currently in the finalisation stage, the contact should be kept as to receive the final version and enable an exchange between Austria and Slovenia.

- Stay in contact with the respective institutions visited and seek for further possibilities of exchange of experiences.
- Possibly invite some of the visited institutions and experts to participate at the Europe Summit Salzburg 2024 to foster further cooperation and exchange of experiences.

## **7. Annexes**

Annex 1: Final agenda

Annex 2: Presentation ÖROK

Annex 3: Presentation Austrian Association of Cities and Towns

Annex 4: Presentation Austrian Association of Municipalities

Annex 5: Presentation City of Vienna, Department of European Affairs

Annex 6: Questionnaire

# Annex 1:

Final Agenda



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TSI ref. 23SI05

## T2.8 Two-days Study Visit Vienna

Tuesday, 23. April - Wednesday, 24. April 2024

### Programme

#### **TUESDAY, 23.4.2024:**

10:00 – 13:00 Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz (ÖROK)

**Location:** Fleischmarkt 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 1010 Vienna

13:15 – 14:45 Meeting with Austrian Association of Cities

**Location:** Vienna City Hall, Rathausplatz 1, 1010 Wien

15:00 – 16:45 Lunch break Viennese Cafe

**Location:** Cafe Sluka, Rathausplatz, 1010 Wien

17:15 – 18:00 Meeting at the Slovenian Embassy in Vienna

**Location:** Kolingasse 12/3, 1090 Wien

18:30

Dinner invitation from aed

**Location:** Restaurant Leupold, 1010 Wien

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TSI ref.23SI05

**WEDNESDAY, 24.4.2024:**

09:30 – 11:45 Meeting with Austrian Association of Municipalities (Österreichischer Gemeindebund)

**Location:** Löwelstraße 6, 1010 Wien

12:00 – 13:45 Joint Lunch at Rathauskeller

**Location:** Rathausplatz 1, 1010 Wien

14:00 – 16:00 Austrian Federal Chancellery (BKA) "European Municipal Councillors" - Abteilung IV/10

**Location:** Ballhausplatz 1, 1010 Wien, BKA (Abteilung IV/10 Europakommunikation und Strategie): +43 1 531 15 - 20 2108

Around 16:00 Departure from Vienna

# Annex 2:

Presentation ÖROK

# **Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning - ÖROK**

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

[www.oerok.gv.at](http://www.oerok.gv.at)



# Planning in a Federal multi-level System

## National Level

- Parliament:  
National Assembly  
and Federal  
Assembly
- Federal Government
- Federal Chancellery  
and Ministries

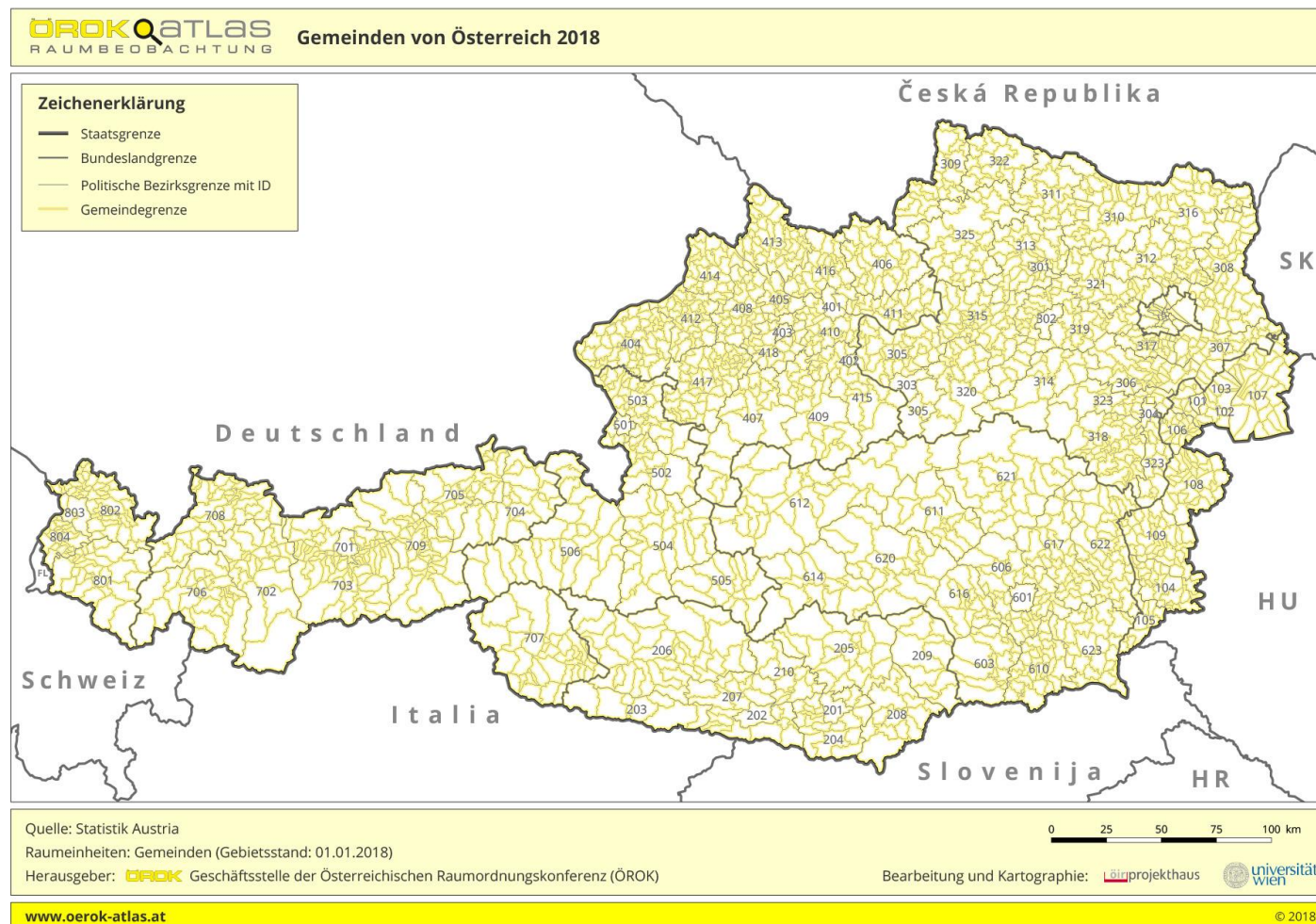
## 9 Federal States (Bundesländer)

- 9 State Parliaments
- 9 State  
Governments
- 9 Office of the State  
Governments

## 2.093\* Municipalities

- Municipal Council
- Municipal Office

\* as of January 2022



## Planning Competencies acc. to Federal Constitutional Law

Federal States „Länder“	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence for Spatial Planning</li> <li>• Comprehensive planning competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation</li> <li>• State- and municipal planning</li> </ul>
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...</li> </ul>
Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local development concept</li> <li>• Land use planning</li> <li>• Zoning plans</li> </ul>
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic- and Regional development</li> <li>• Location policy</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>

**Need for coordination!**



# Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz (ÖROK)

## Founded in 1971

- Informal standing conference
- Political agreement
- Rules of procedures for political branch
- Unanimity for decisions

## Since 1. 1. 2024:

- for organisation & management: not profit association
- Statutes as legal basis
- Principles:
  - Unanimity
  - Equal cooperation of members
  - Functional spatial development



## Members

- Federal Chancellor
- Federal Ministers
- Regional Governors
- President of Ass. of Towns
- President of Ass. of Municipalities
- Presidents of Economic and Social Partners

## ÖROK-office:

- Operational work

# Organisation of **AUSTRIAN CONFERENCE ON SPATIAL PLANNING** (ÖROK)

## **ÖROK**

(Federal Chancellor, Federal Ministers, Regional Governors,  
Presidents of Association of Towns & Association of Municipalities,  
Economic and Social Partners)

### Political level

### Administrative level

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

(Heads of Administrations)

Committee  
**SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Committee  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Committee  
**EU-COOPERATION**

Committee  
**ERDF-PROGRAMME**

## **ÖROK-OFFICE**

**DIRECTORS**

**SECRETARIAT**

Team  
**SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT**

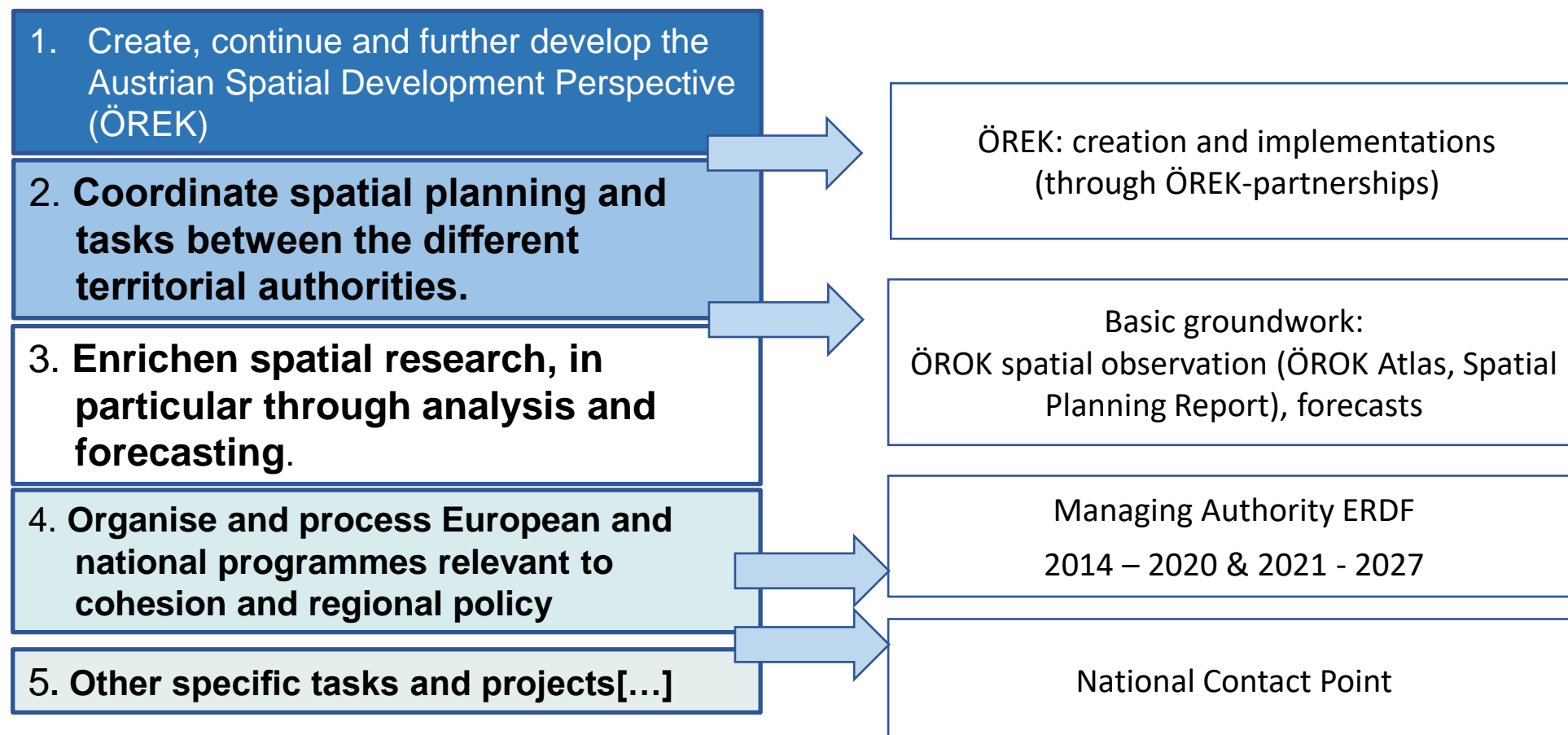
Team  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Team  
**NATIONAL CONTACT POINT**

Team  
**MANAGING AUTHORITY**



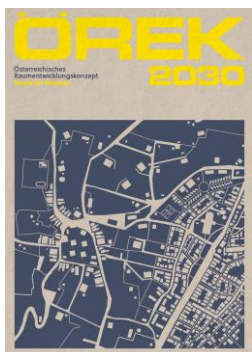
# Tasks



# Tasks regarding European Structural and Investment



# Tasks & Products



Austrian Spatial  
Development  
Perspective



Transfer of  
knowledge and  
information,  
networking



Foundations for  
planning



Recommendations

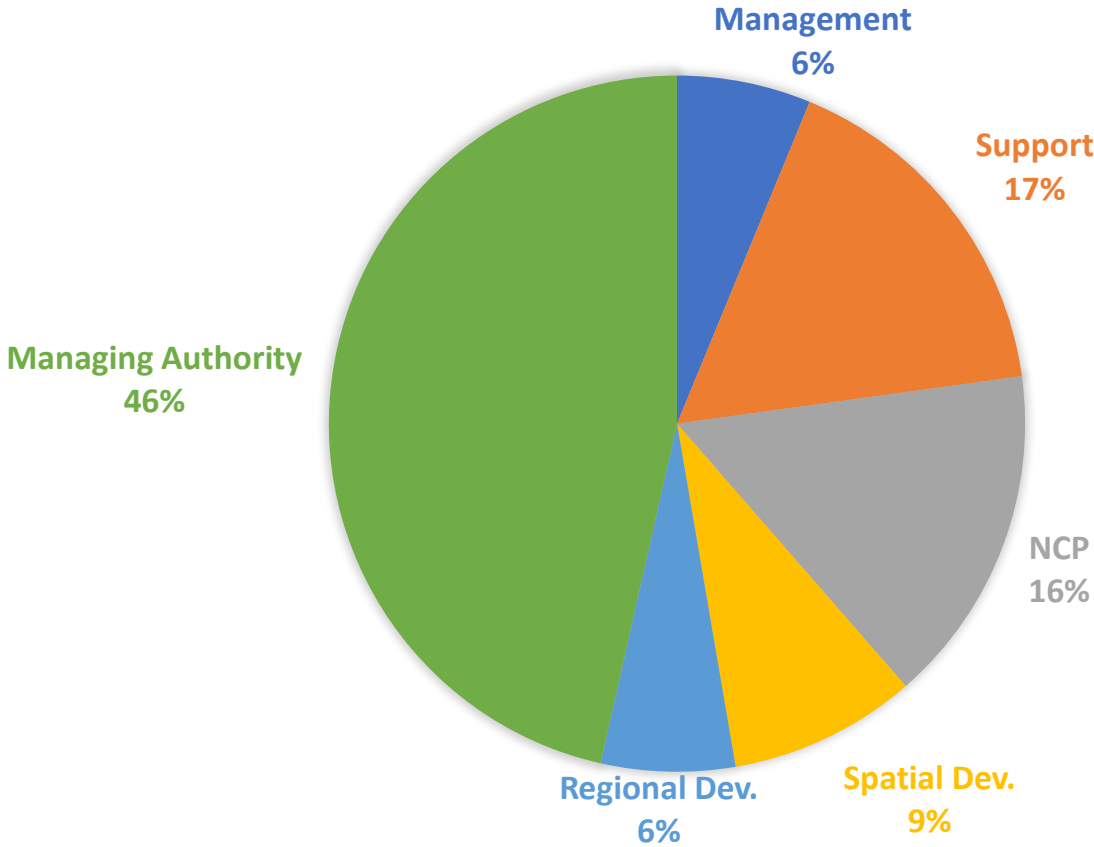


Educational  
work



Spatial observation

# Staff Resources (Full-time equivalents): 26,5





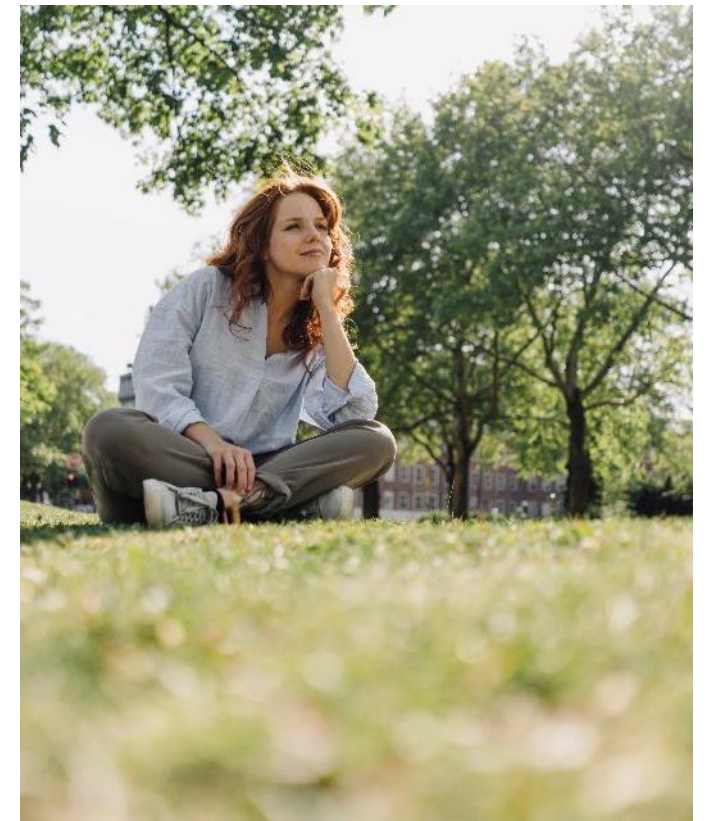
Kofinanziert von der  
Europäischen Union

**IBW/EFRE & JTF Österreich 2021-2027**

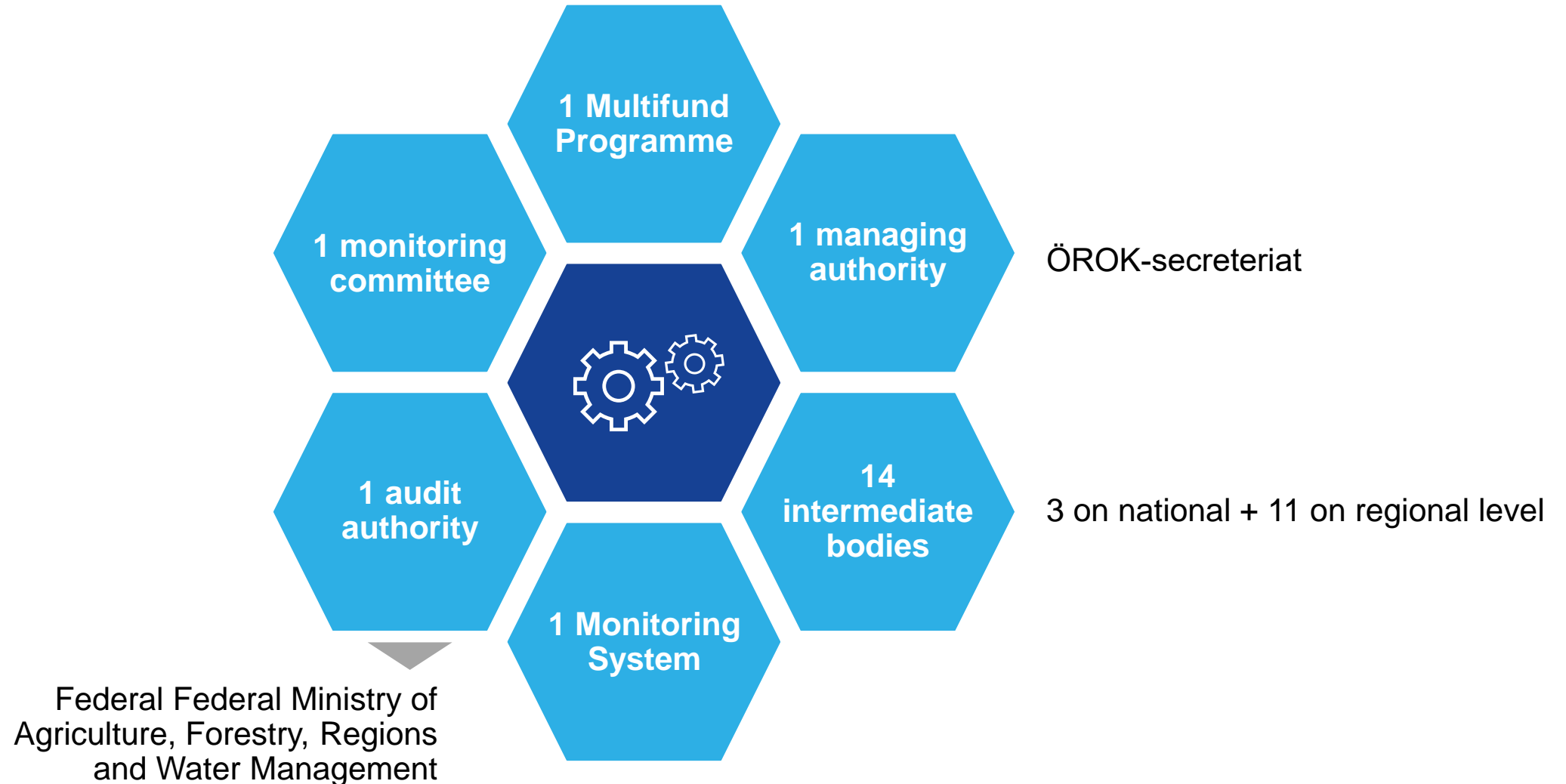
**EU-Förderung für regionale Entwicklung  
Für Innovation, Wohlstand und Klimaschutz**

# ERDF-Managing Authority

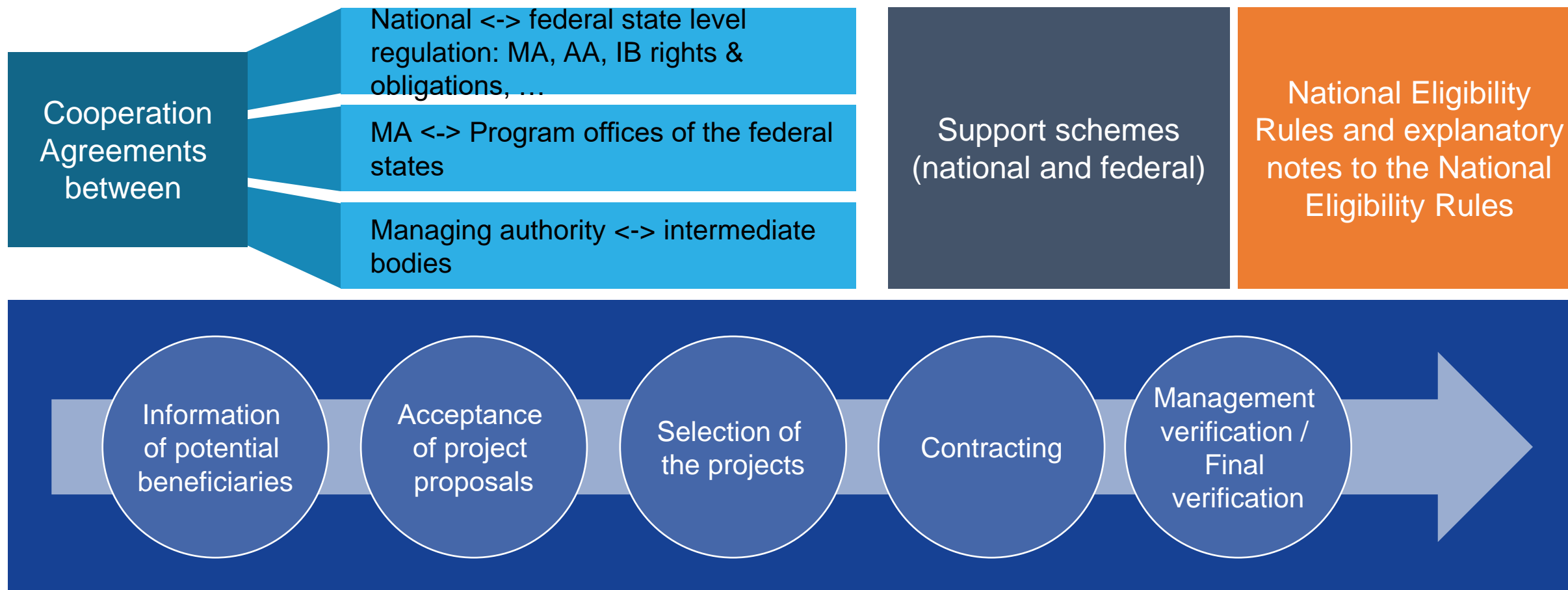
[www.efre.gv.at](http://www.efre.gv.at)



# Involved bodies in programme implementation



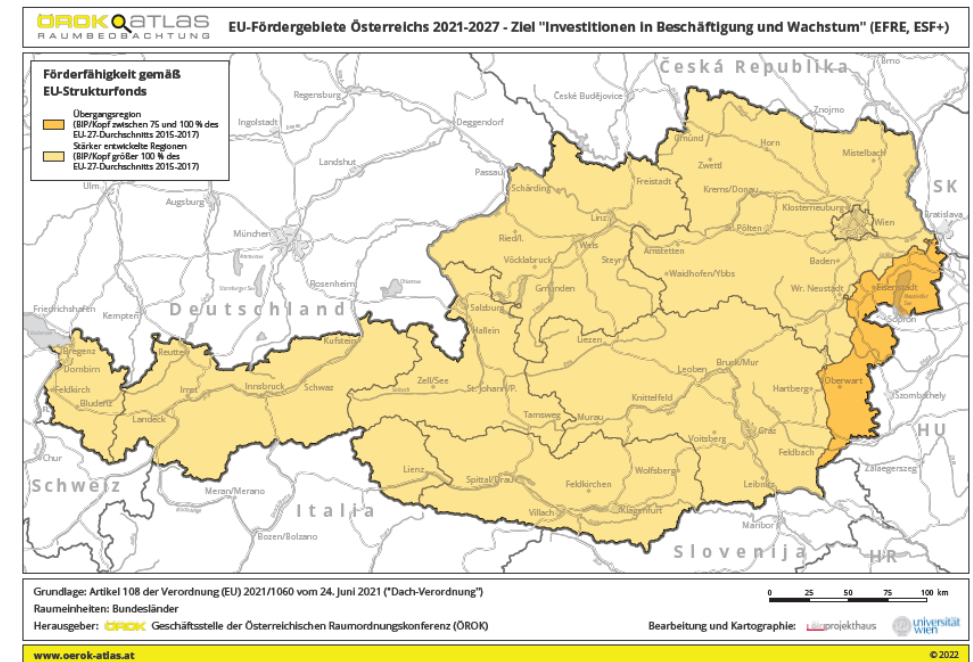
# Intermediate Bodies



# Budget

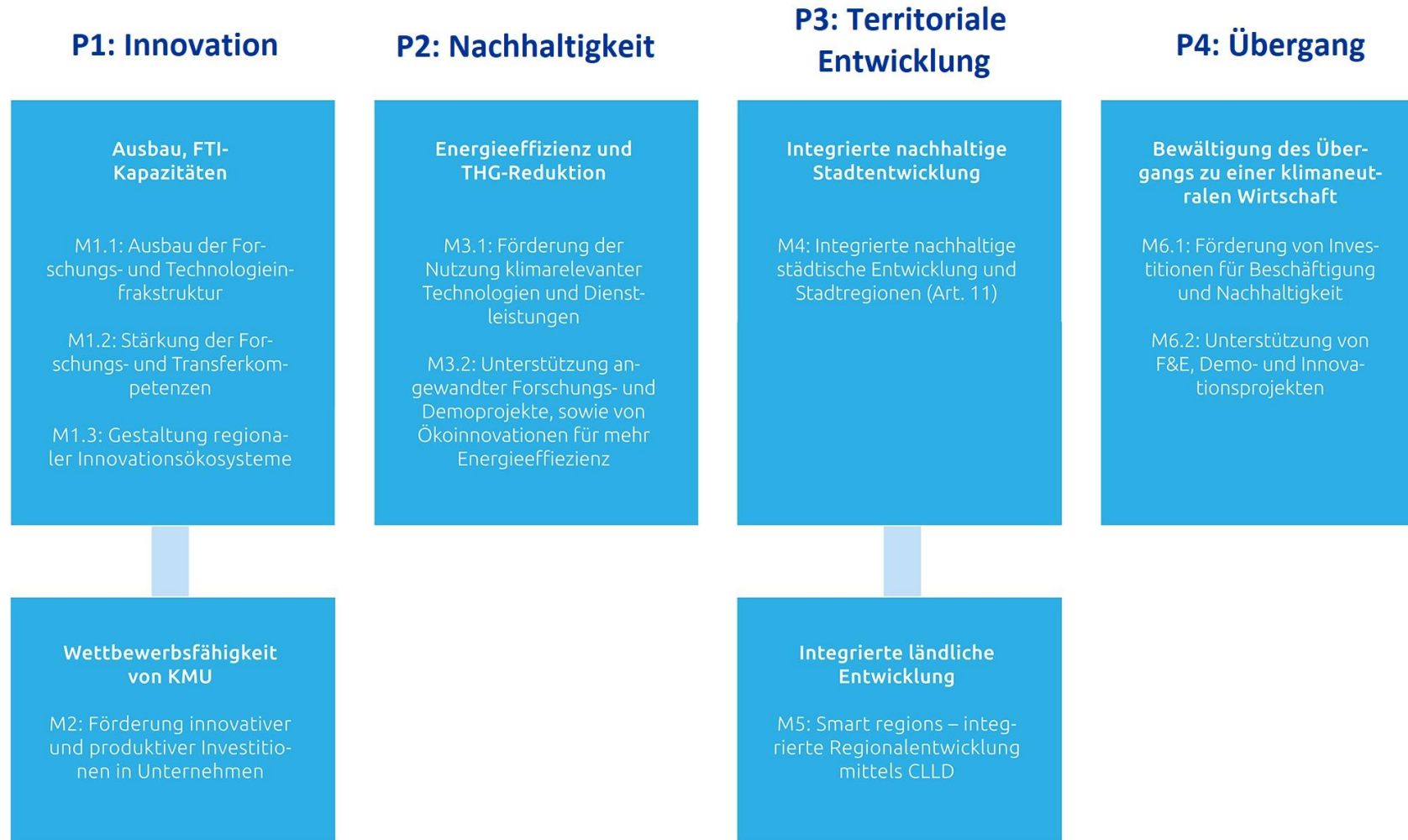
	Union contribution	Nat. public contribution	Private contribution	Total
ERDF	521.395.768	266.873.137	843.446.078	1.631.714.983
JTF	76.030.790	10.820.581	78.128.663	164.980.034
Total	597.426.558	277.693.718	921.574.741	1.796.695.017

**More developed region : € 493.505.391 ERDF**  
**Transition region: € 27.890.377 ERDF**





# IGJ/ERDF & JTF programme Austria





**ÖROK**

## The National Contact Points

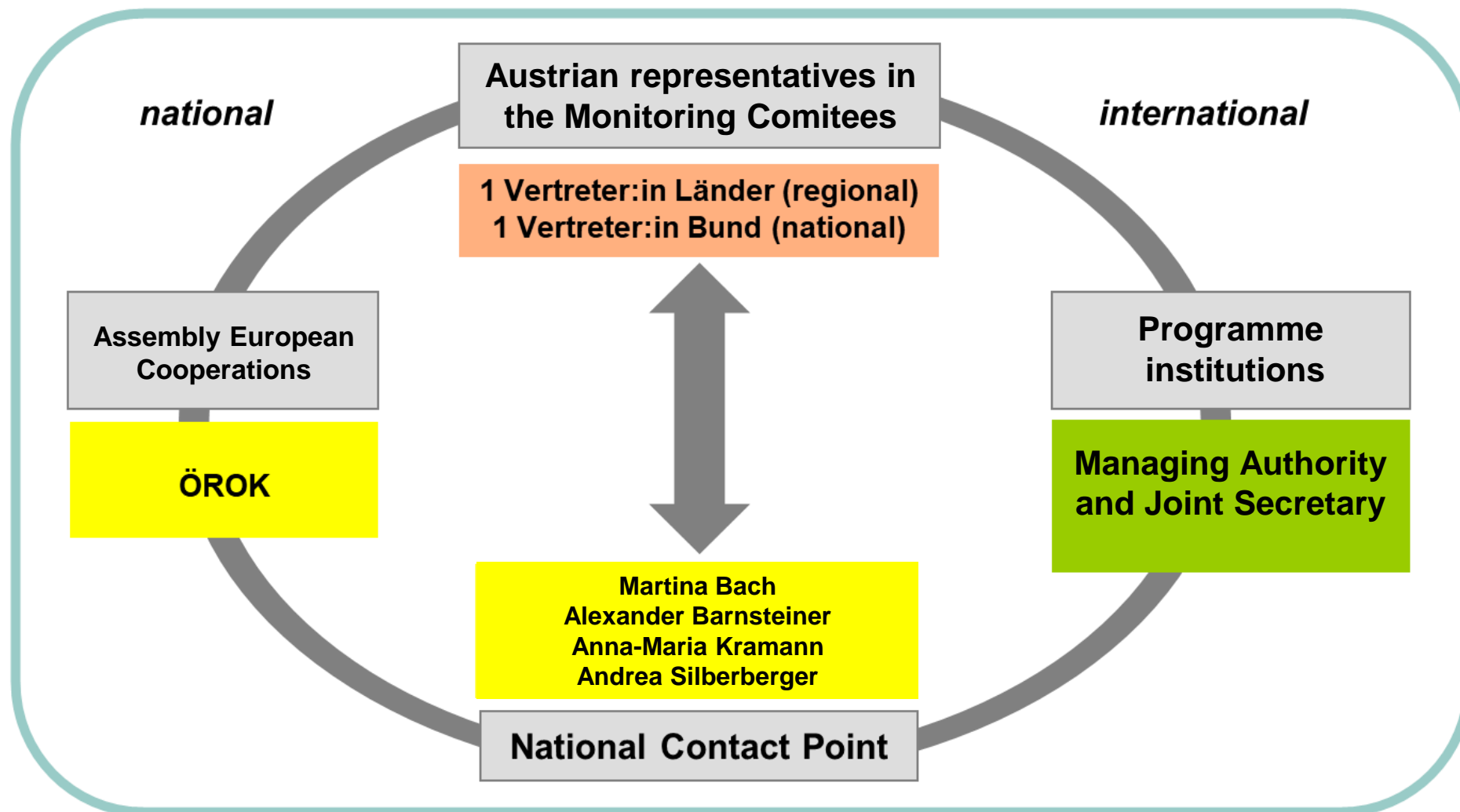


## **Who we are**

**National service and information point for the transnational and interregional programmes for European territorial cohesion and the macroregional strategies with Austrian involvement.**

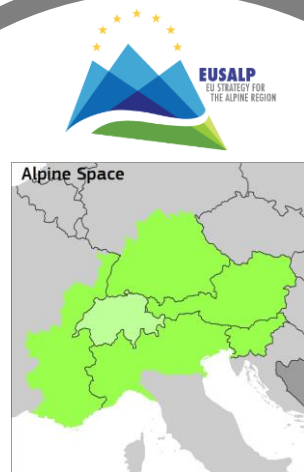
- **Disseminating information, networking**
- **Support and consultation of projects partners in Austria**
- **Informs ÖROK (assembly European cooperations) on Austrias performance and coordinates overall goals**
- **Coordination with relevant stakeholders and program institutions**
- **Informs on the Macroregional Strategies EUSALP and EUSDR**

**Financed through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management and in case of the Urban Contact Point co financed by the European Union.**





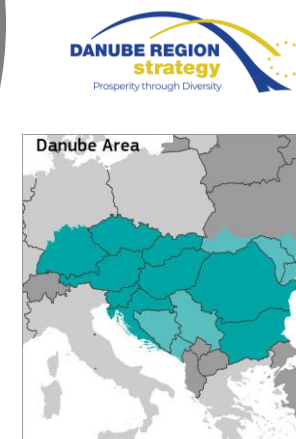
<b>Martina Bach</b>	<b>Anna Maria Kramann</b>	<b>Andrea Silberberger</b>	<b>Alexander Barnsteiner</b>
<b>ASP, EUSALP, URBACT</b>	<b>Danube Transnational / Danube Region, EUSDR, Interreg Europe</b>	<b>Central Europe</b>	<b>European Urban Initiative (EUI)</b>
<a href="mailto:bach@oerok.gv.at">bach@oerok.gv.at</a> Tel: +43 1 53 53 444-22	<a href="mailto:kramann@oerok.gv.at">kramann@oerok.gv.at</a> Tel: +43 1 53 53 444-21	<a href="mailto:silberberger@oerok.gv.at">silberberger@oerok.gv.at</a> Tel: +43 1 53 53 444-16	<a href="mailto:barnsteiner@oerok.gv.at">barnsteiner@oerok.gv.at</a> Tel: +431 53 53 444-42



**Interreg**  Co-funded by the European Union  
Alpine Space



**Interreg**  Co-funded by the European Union  
CENTRAL EUROPE

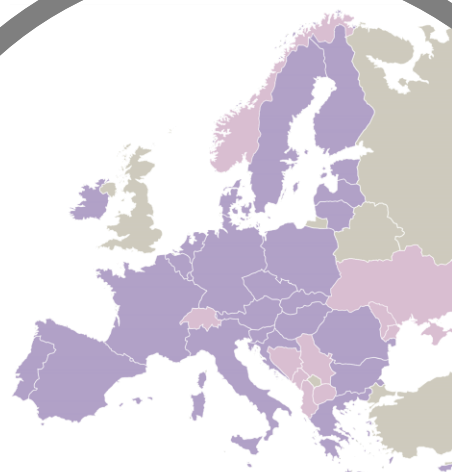
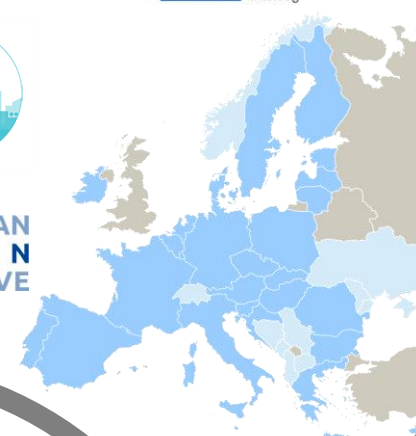


**Interreg Programme**  Co-funded by the European Union  
Danube Region



**EUROPEAN  
URBAN  
INITIATIVE**

**URBACT**  Co-funded by the European Union  
Interreg



**Interreg Europe**  Co-funded by the European Union

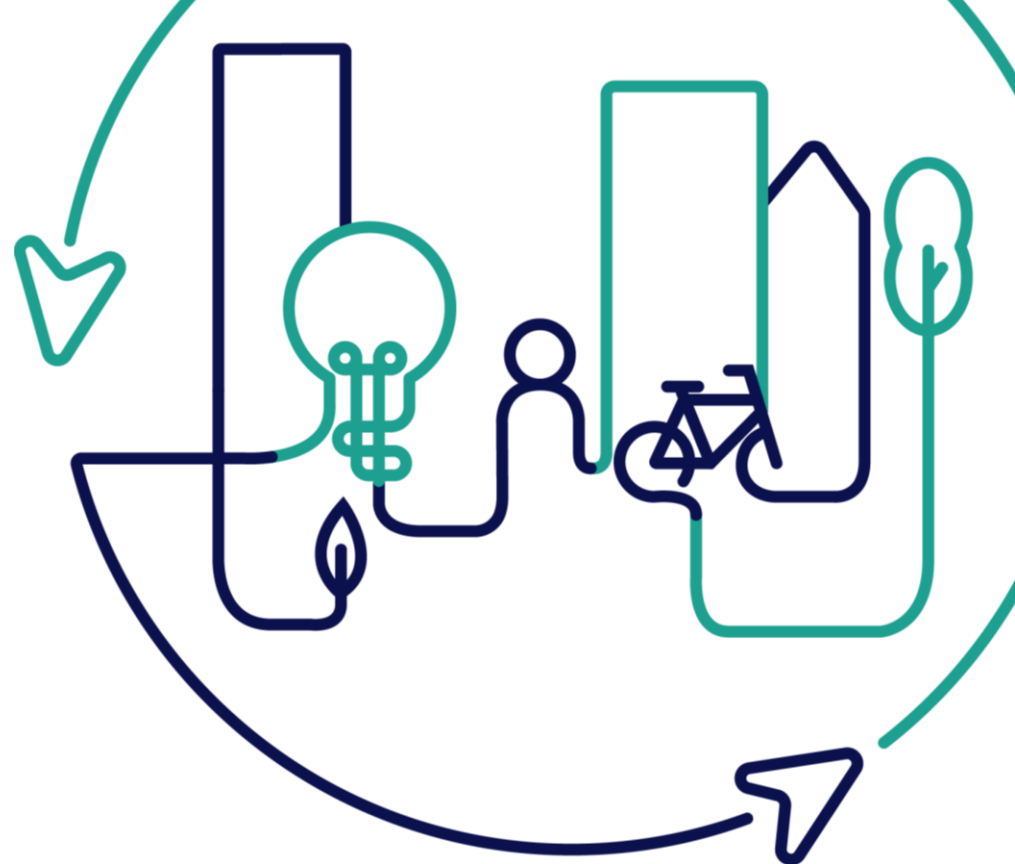
Not included:  
**CBC, ESPON + Territorial Agenda**

Quelle Karten:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/trans-national/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/trans-national/)

EuroGeographics Association for the administrative boundaries, RegioGIS

# EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE



Co-funded by  
the European Union

ÖROK



# EUROPEAN U R B A N INITIATIVE

**Policy Objective 5: a Europe closer to its citizens**, as basis

**Budget: 450 Mio. EUR**

**Cities of all sizes** are addressed

## **2 Goals:**

- Strengthen integrated and participatory sustainable urban development
- Show value of European cohesion policy for cities

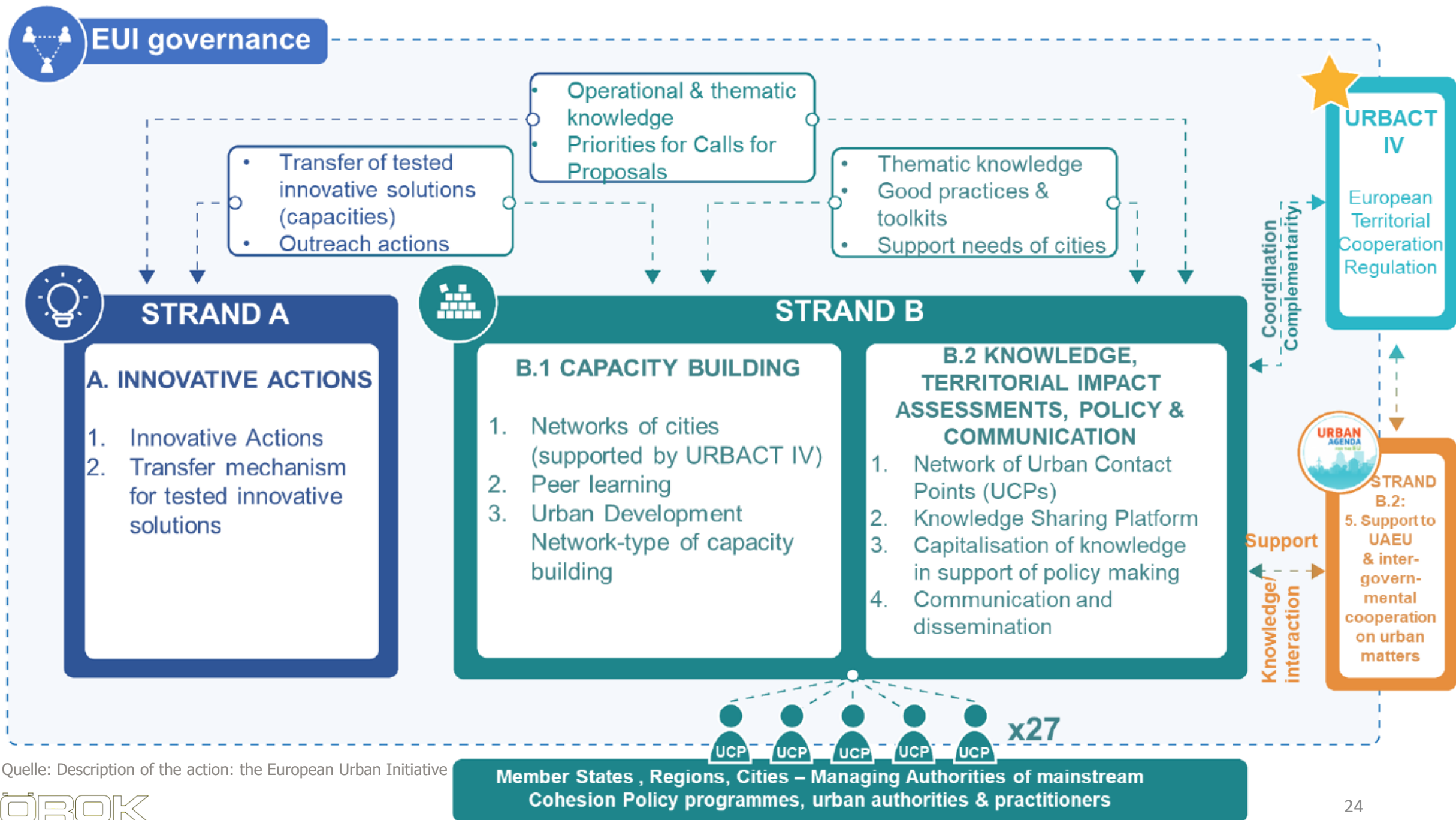
## **2 Strands:**

- Innovative actions in cities
- Building capacity and knowledge



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**





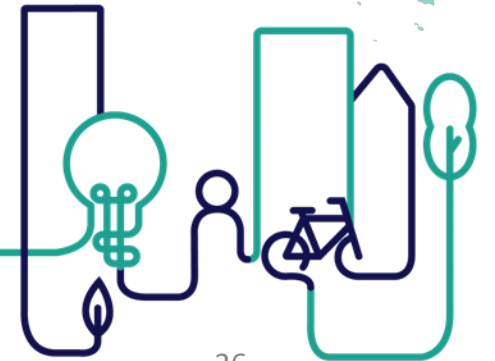
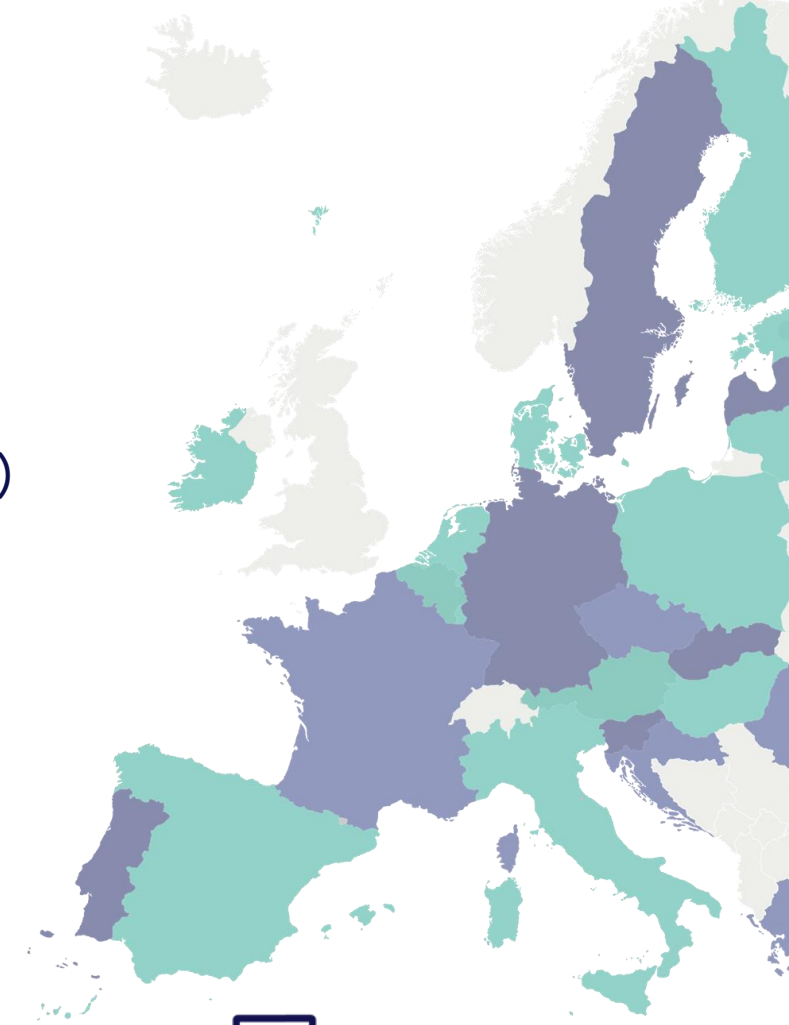
Quelle: Description of the action: the European Urban Initiative



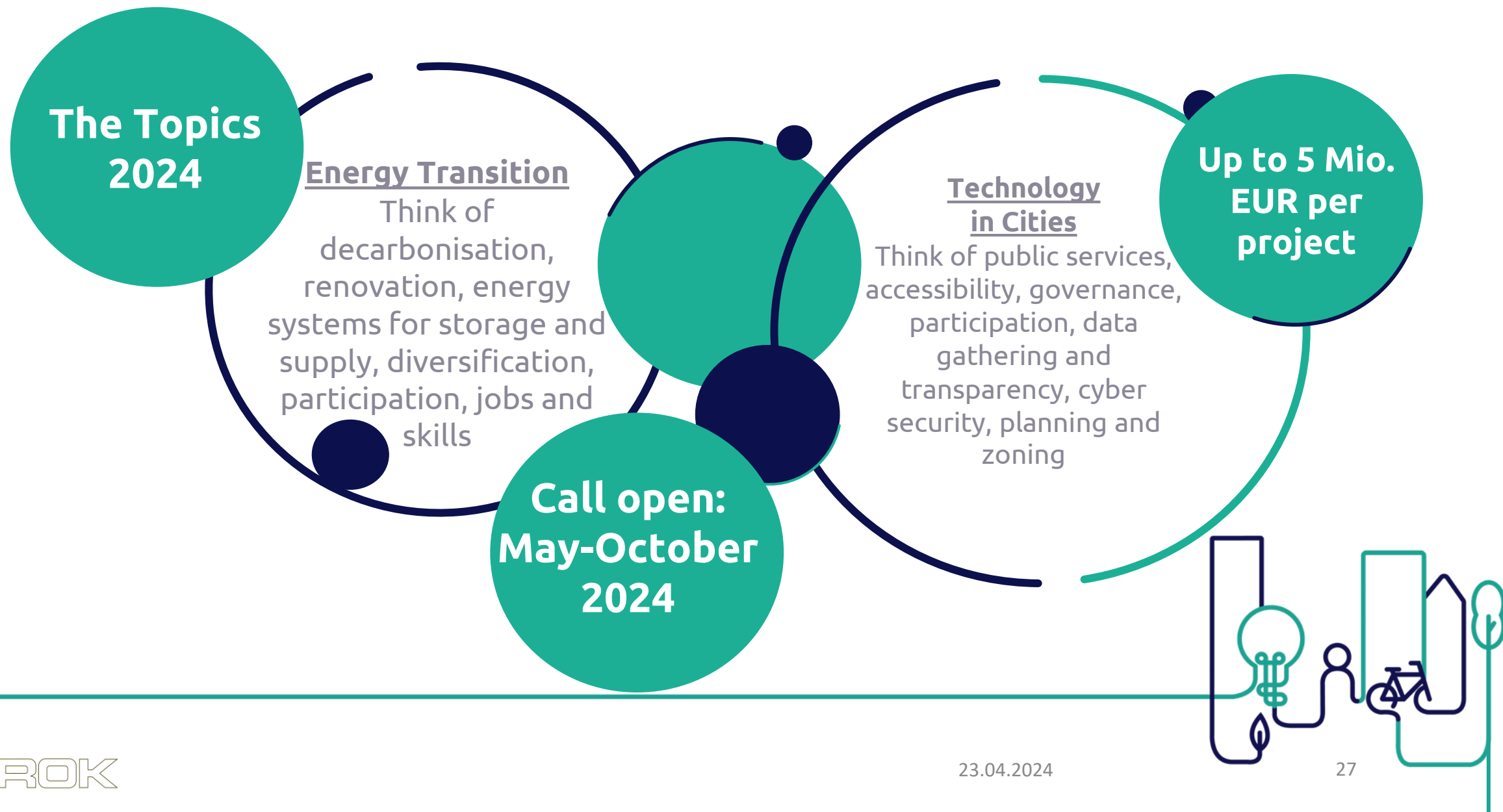
Innovative  
Actions

## Innovative Actions

- **Up to 5 Mio. EUR cofinancing** per project
- **80% cofinancing**, 20% own contribution (in kind possible)
- **Advance payments** after project starts and first financial claim (50-30-20)
- **Lump sums for** project preparation, initiation und closure: 120.000 EUR corresponding to 96.000 EUR ERDF
- **3,5 years** plus preparation and closure phases
- Usually **Between 3 and 5 Mio. EUR** ERDF

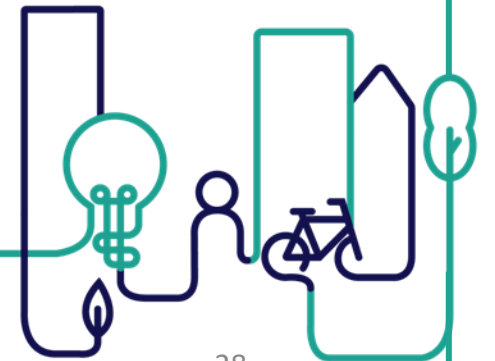


## Call III: Energy Transition and Technology in Cities



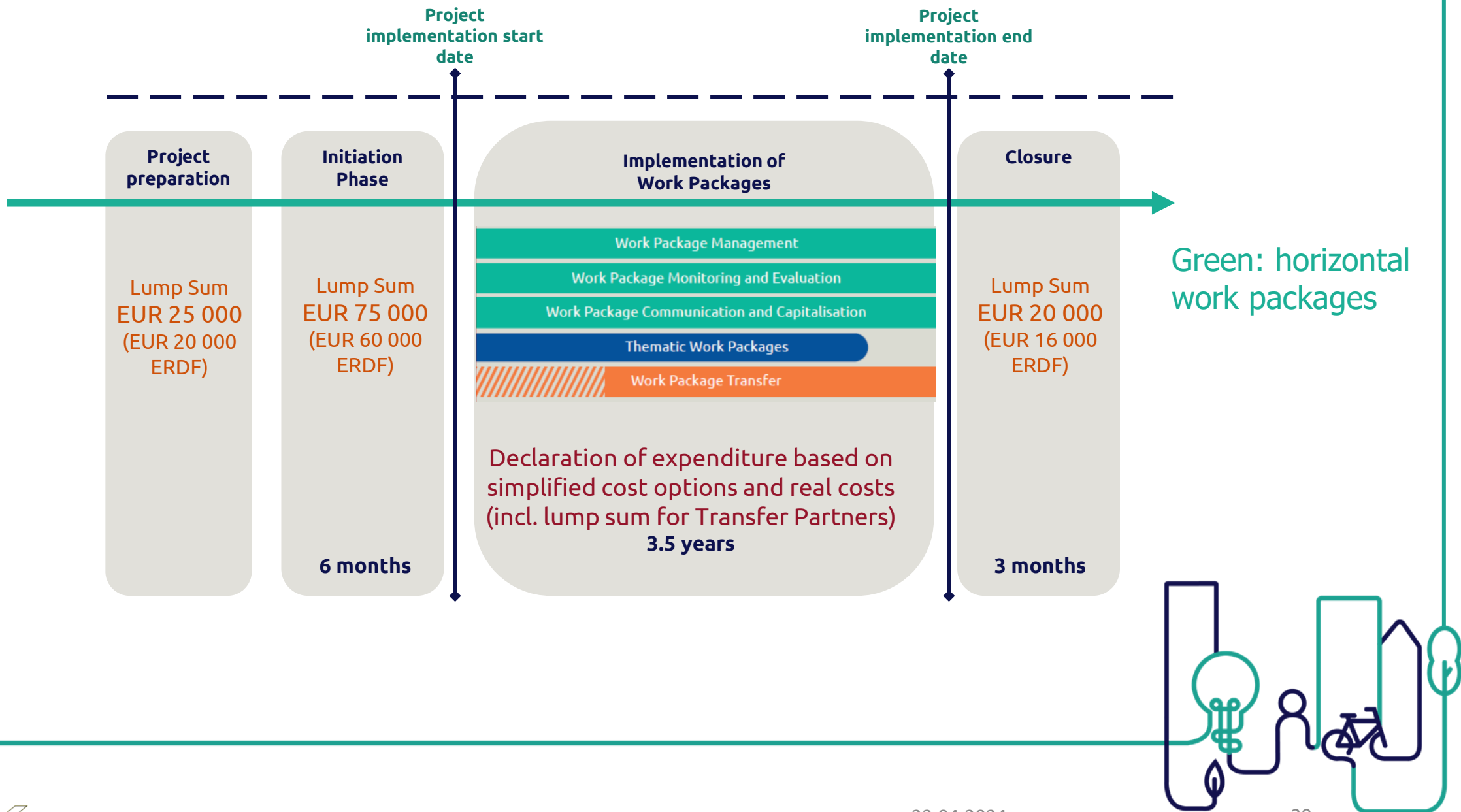
# Innovative Actions

- **Indicative budget: 90 Mio. EUR**
- **Connect with relevant strategies:** EU und national level
- **Last innovative actions call in this form:** Call 4 will look differently
- **Towns, small towns and suburbs** that alone or in a partnership will reach 50.000 inhabitants can apply. See [Correspondence Table](#)
- **Organised agglomerations** can also apply when meeting certain criteria
- [More information](#)





# PROJECT PHASES





Building  
Capacities and  
Knowledge



## Building Capacities and Knowledge

### 1 Goal

- Involve cities of all sizes in **sustainable urban development**

### 2 Approaches

- **Help cities of all sizes** with their sustainability strategies and **strengthen their capacities**
- **Improve design and implementation** of sustainable urban development strategies, programmes and actions

### 3 Activities



Cities get the opportunity to tackle a specific challenge together with one or two peer cities. Easy to implement, low profile call.

**Call continuously open**

**City-to-city exchange**

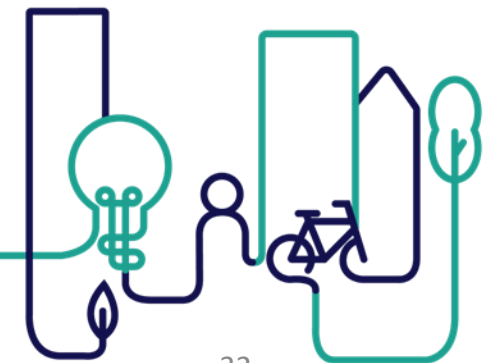
Cities of all Sizes can apply

5 Events in 2024: Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Sweden, Croatia-Greece

**Event**

**Peer review**

Art. 11 Cities evaluate their sustainable urban development strategies and get recommendations from peers. Highlight is a two day event. Experts support the process.



**ÖSTERREICHISCHE  
RAUMORDNUNGSKONFERENZ**  
GESCHÄFTSSTELLE

**ÖROK**

Fleischmarkt 1, 1010 Wien  
Tel.: +43 1 53 53 444  
Fax: +43 1 53 53 444-54  
oerok@oerok.gv.at  
[www.oerok.gv.at](http://www.oerok.gv.at)

Thank you!



# Annex 3:

Presentation Austrian Association of Cities and  
Towns





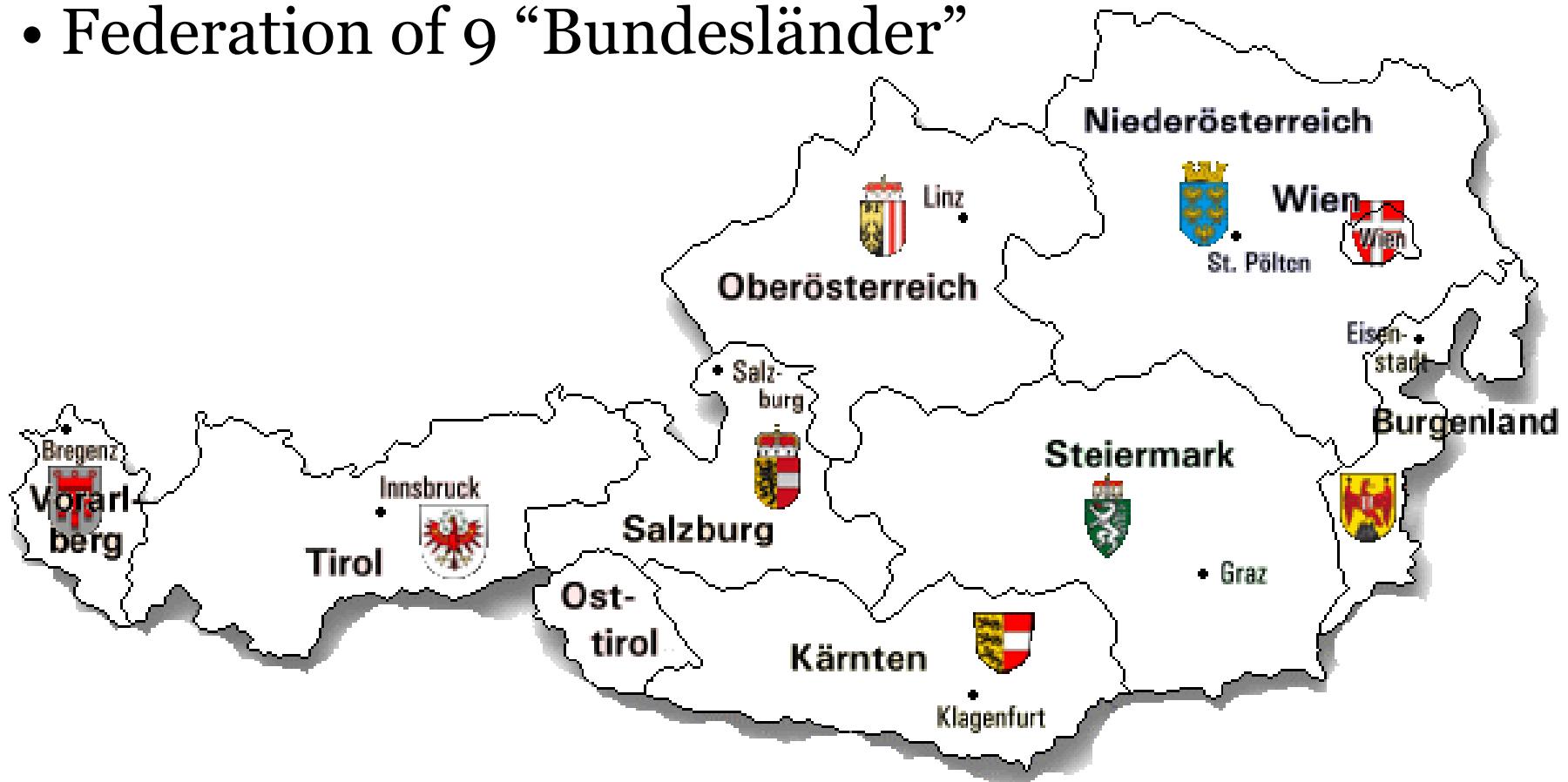
Österreichischer  
Städtebund

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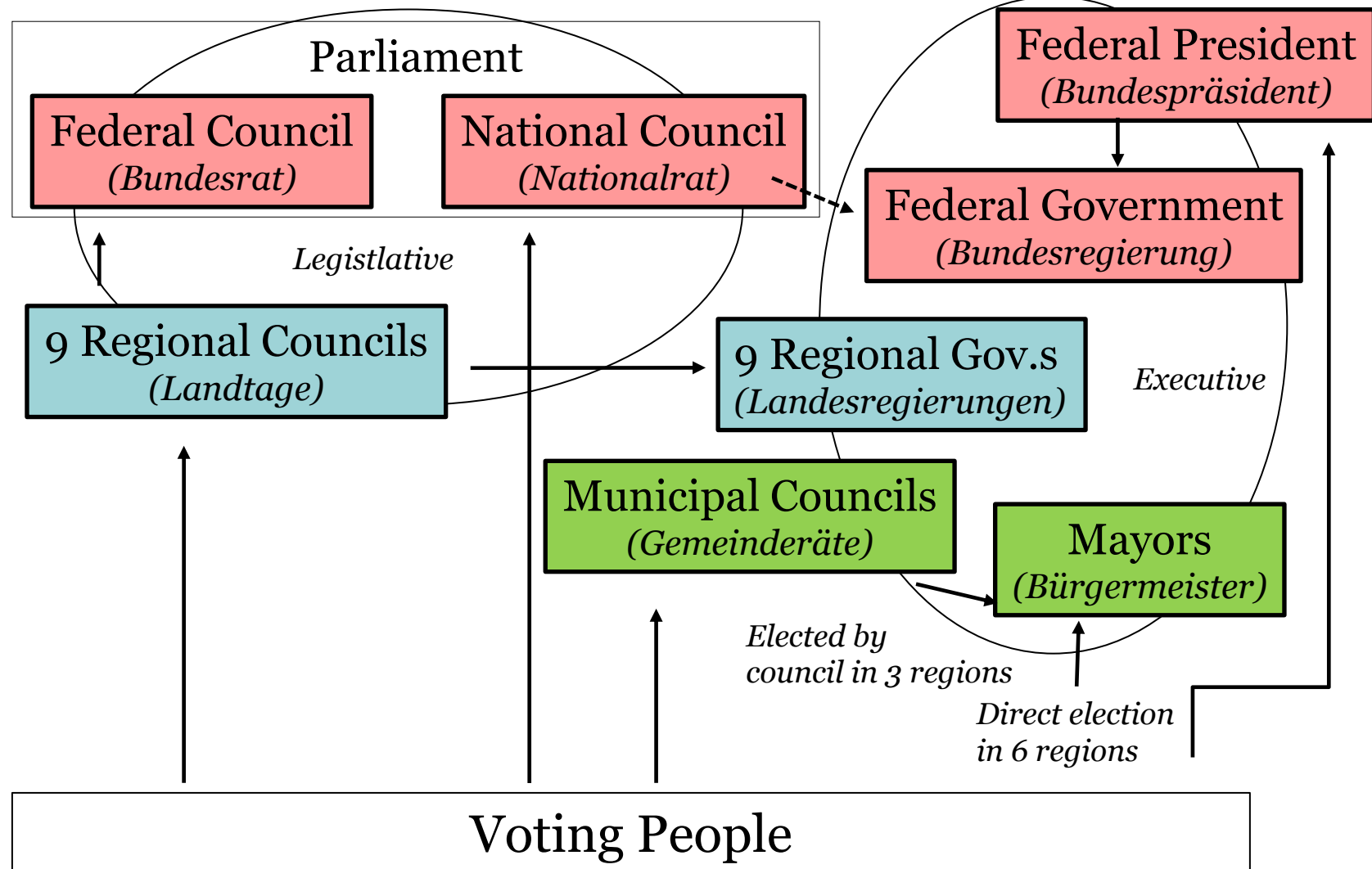
# Austrian Cities and Towns and their Role in the National Structure

# Austria

- 83.871 km<sup>2</sup>; 9 Mill. inhabitants
- Federation of 9 “Bundesländer”



# Political System



# Austrian Cities and Municipalities

- small-scale municipal structure
- 2 Associations as representation of interests

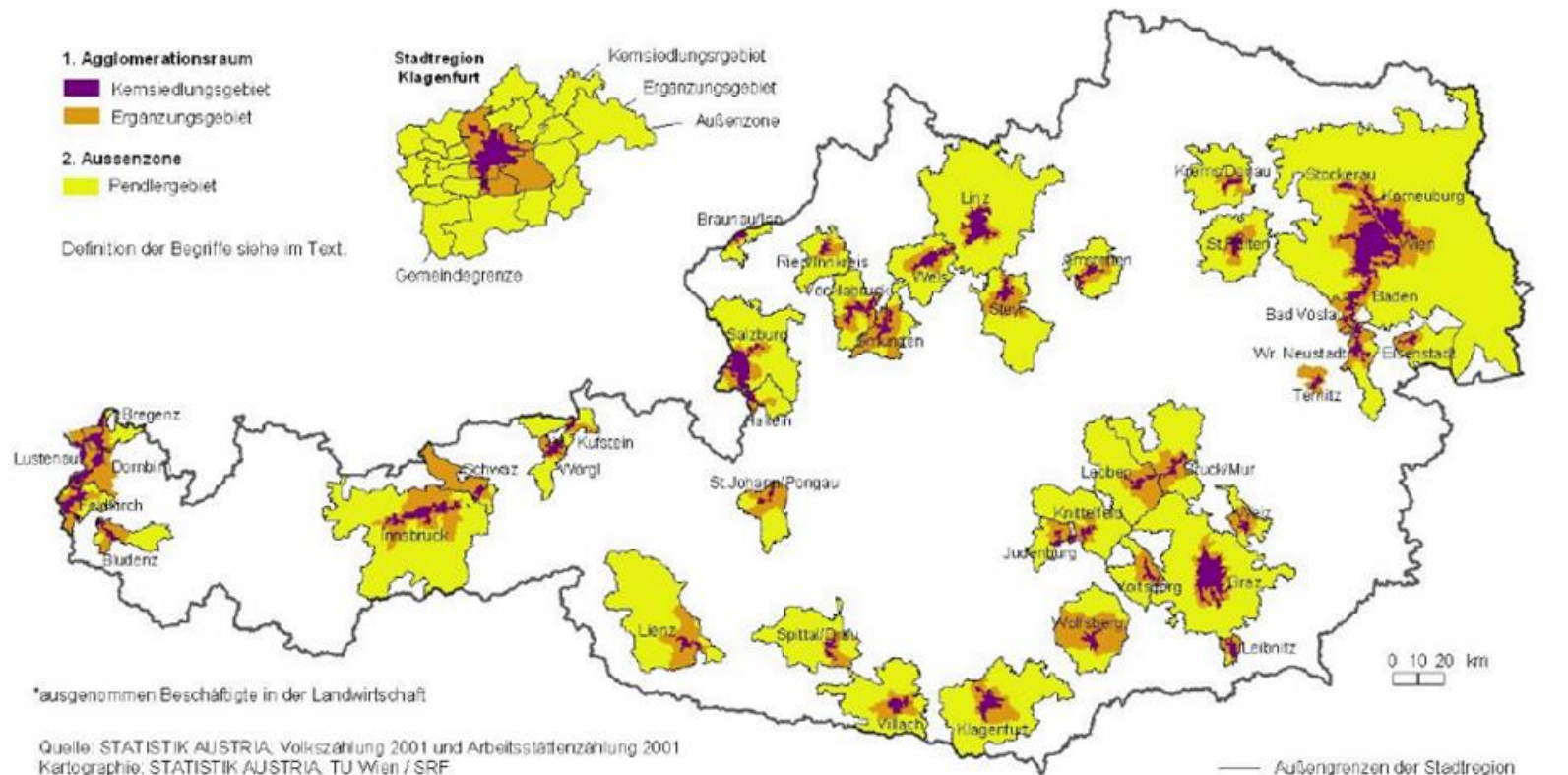
Österreich	
bis 100	7
101 bis 500	104
501 bis 1.000	305
1.001 bis 2.500	949
2.501 bis 5.000	472
5.001 bis 10.000	171
10.001 bis 20.000	60
20.001 bis 50.000	16
über 50.000	9
<b>Gesamt</b>	<b>2.093</b>



*Rathaus Retz / NÖ*

# Urban Regions

- Vienna the only metropolitan area
- Functional urban regions as field of activity



# Local Government Associations

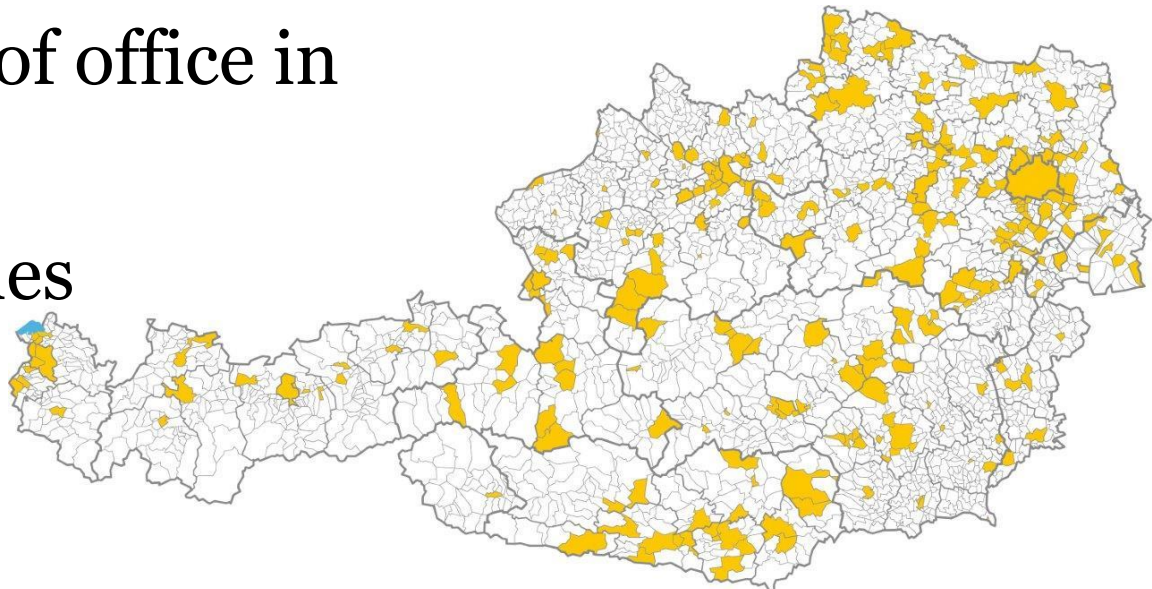
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- **Austrian Association of Cities and Towns**  
(Österreichischer Städtebund) for urban municipalities  
(258 members; approx. 65% of the population)
- **Austrian Association of Municipalities**  
(“Österreichischer Gemeindebund”) for rural municipalities  
(2082 members; approx. 72% of the population)
- Both embodied in federal constitution
- Partners in the negotiations for financial balance
- Representation to international organisations



# Austrian Association of Cities and Towns

- Founded 1915
- 258 member municipalities
- President Dr **Michael Ludwig**, Mayor of Vienna
- Secretary General Dr **Thomas Weninger**, Head of office in Vienna City Hall
- 8 regional branches (Landesgruppen)



# Technical Committees

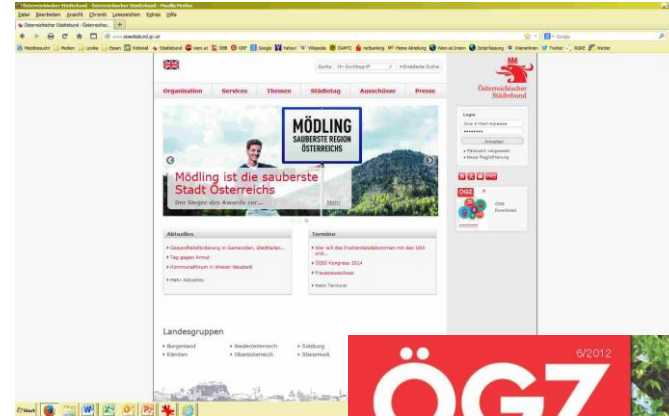
- Discussing actual questions
- Finding common opinions
- Formulating positions and statements
- Exchanging experience
- Presentation of successful projects





# Other Platforms of Exchange

- General Assembly
- Circular Letters
- Magazine ÖGZ
- Homepage
- ... and a lot of formal and informal meetings and events



# Europe

- Committee of Regions (EU)
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Council of Europe)
- Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- Eurocities
- SGI Europe (former CEEP)

EUROPÄISCHE UNION



**Ausschuss der Regionen**



**Thank you for the  
attention!**

# Annex 4:

Presentation City of Vienna, Department of  
European Affairs



# Transnational EU Funding Programme Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027

**Study Visit of Slovenian Delegation in Vienna on 23 and 24 April 2024**

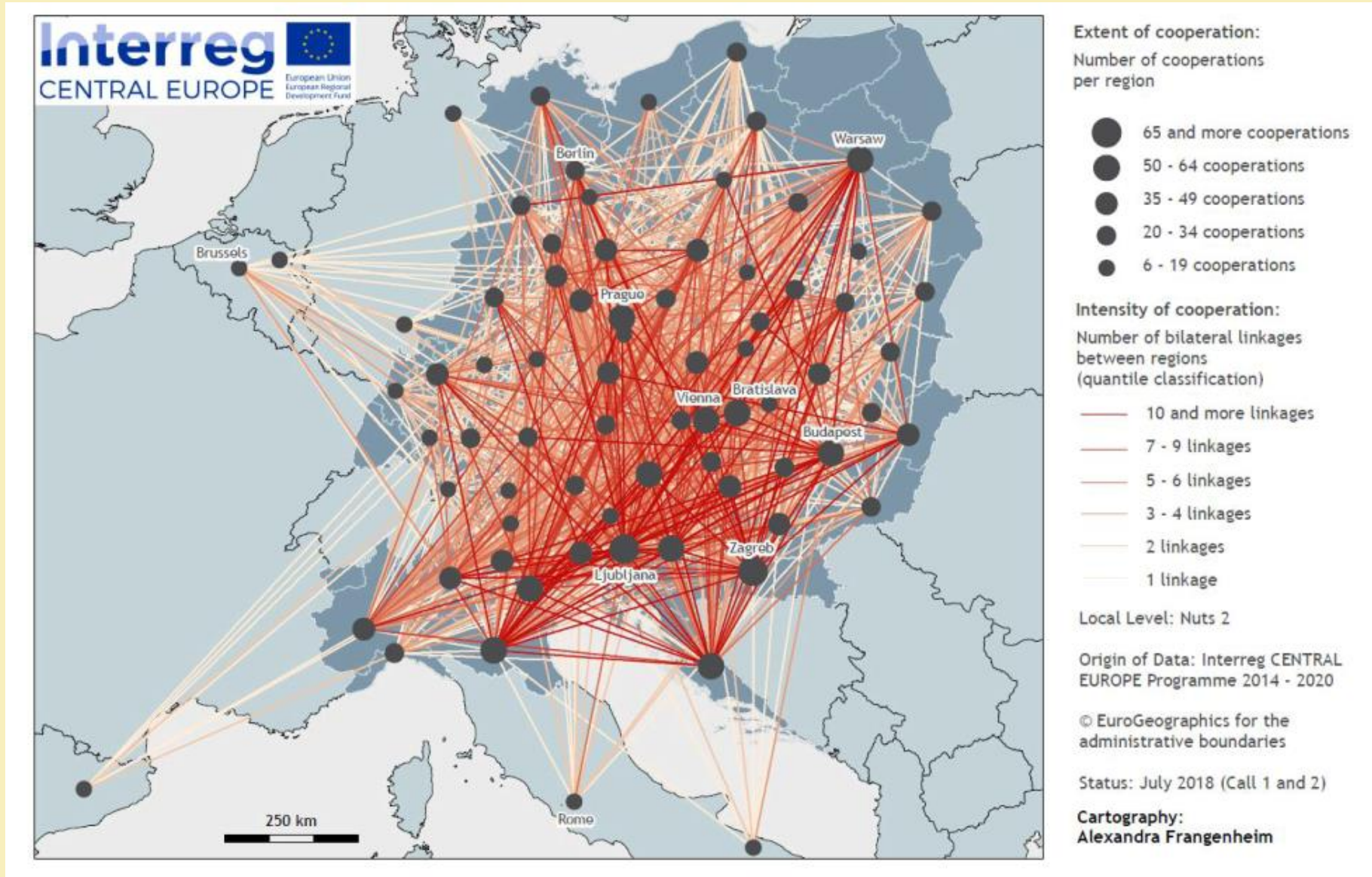
Martin Hutter | City of Vienna, Department for European Affairs



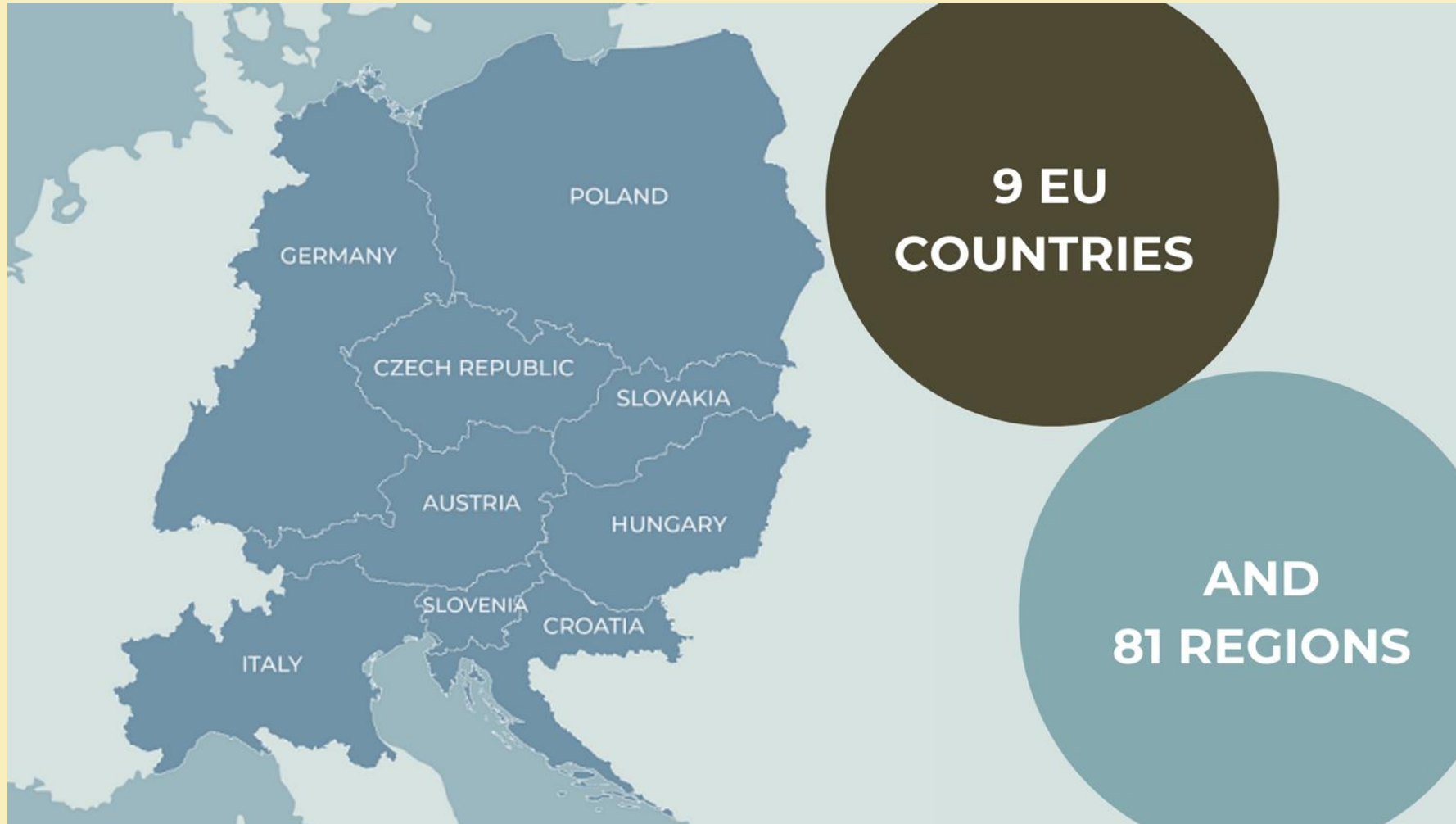
# Brief outline of the programme

- Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE as one of 11 transnational programmes in the EU and part of the EU Cohesion Policy
- Funding of cooperation between institutions of different member states is predominantly given from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – system of national co-financing
- Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 represents the third generation of transnational cooperation in central Europe (1<sup>st</sup> generation: 2007-2013, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation: 2014-2020)
- Programme management – Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat – is implemented by the City of Vienna, Department for European Affairs
- Assistance to the implementation of the programme in the involved member states is provided by the National Contact Points in every member state (for Slovenia: Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development/Ljubljana)

# Patterns of networking within the programme area of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020



# Programme area of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027



Participation of 2 Slovenian NUTS 2-Regions in the programme:

- Vzhodna Slovenija (SI03)
- Zahodna Slovenija (SI04)

# Objectives of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Cooperating for a smarter central Europe	Cooperating for a greener central Europe	Cooperating for a better connected central Europe	Improving governance for cooperation in central Europe
Strengthening innovation capacities	Supporting climate-neutral energy transition	Improving transport connections of rural and peripheral regions	Strengthening governance for integrated territorial development
Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship	Increasing climate change resilience		
	Taking circular economy forward		
	Safeguarding the environment		
	Greening urban mobility		

# Funding provisions in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027

- Participation of both public and private institutions
- Partnership of at least 3 partners from 3 countries
- Standard project consists of 8-12 partners
- Average project size: € 1,9 mn. (total), thereof € 1,6 mn. EU funding
- Standard project duration of fully open calls: 36 months
- EU funding budget (ERDF): € 207 mn.
- EU co-financing rate of 80%
- Selection of projects in form of 4 calls throughout the programme funding period
- Website of the programme

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/apply/newfunding.html>



# Status Quo of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027

- Implementation of 2 standard calls for applications (open for all 9 Specific objectives)
- Approval of 100 projects – Call 1: 53 projects, Call 2: 47 projects - with 1.016 beneficiaries from all 9 participating EU member states in the programme and from Belgium, The Netherlands and Romania
- 84% of available ERDF programme budget has been already committed and contracted
- High participation of beneficiaries from Slovenia in approved projects of both calls

Call	No of projects with participation of Slovenian beneficiaries (in %)	No of beneficiaries from Slovenia (in %)	No of beneficiaries from the public and private sector
Call 1	44 (83 %)	80 (14 %)	60 (public)   20 (private)
Call 2	32 (68 %)	48 (11 %)	36 (public)   12 (private)
<b>Total</b>	<b>76 (76 %)</b>	<b>128 (13 %)</b>	<b>96 (public) <sup>(*)</sup>   32 (private)</b>



# Outlook on further calls for applications in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027

- Call 3 is dedicated to small-scale projects in peripheral and rural areas and is not a thematically fully open call – to be opened in October 2024
- Call 4 is dedicated to the capitalisation of existing project results – probably to be opened end 2025
- Call 3 and Call 4 will commit the remaining EU funds of the programme (16 %)

Martin Hutter

City of Vienna, European Affairs

[martin.hutter@wien.gv.at](mailto:martin.hutter@wien.gv.at)

+43 676 8118 27061



# Annex 5:

Presentation Austrian Association of Municipalities

# The Austrian Association of Municipalities

**We create home. We shape the future.**

## IRE/AED-WORKSHOP 24.04.2024

**Contact:**

**Mag. Kathrin Zuber**

Löwelstraße 6, 1010 Wien

Tel. 01/512 14 80-15

e-Mail: [kathrin.zuber@gemeindebund.gv.at](mailto:kathrin.zuber@gemeindebund.gv.at)

# Overview

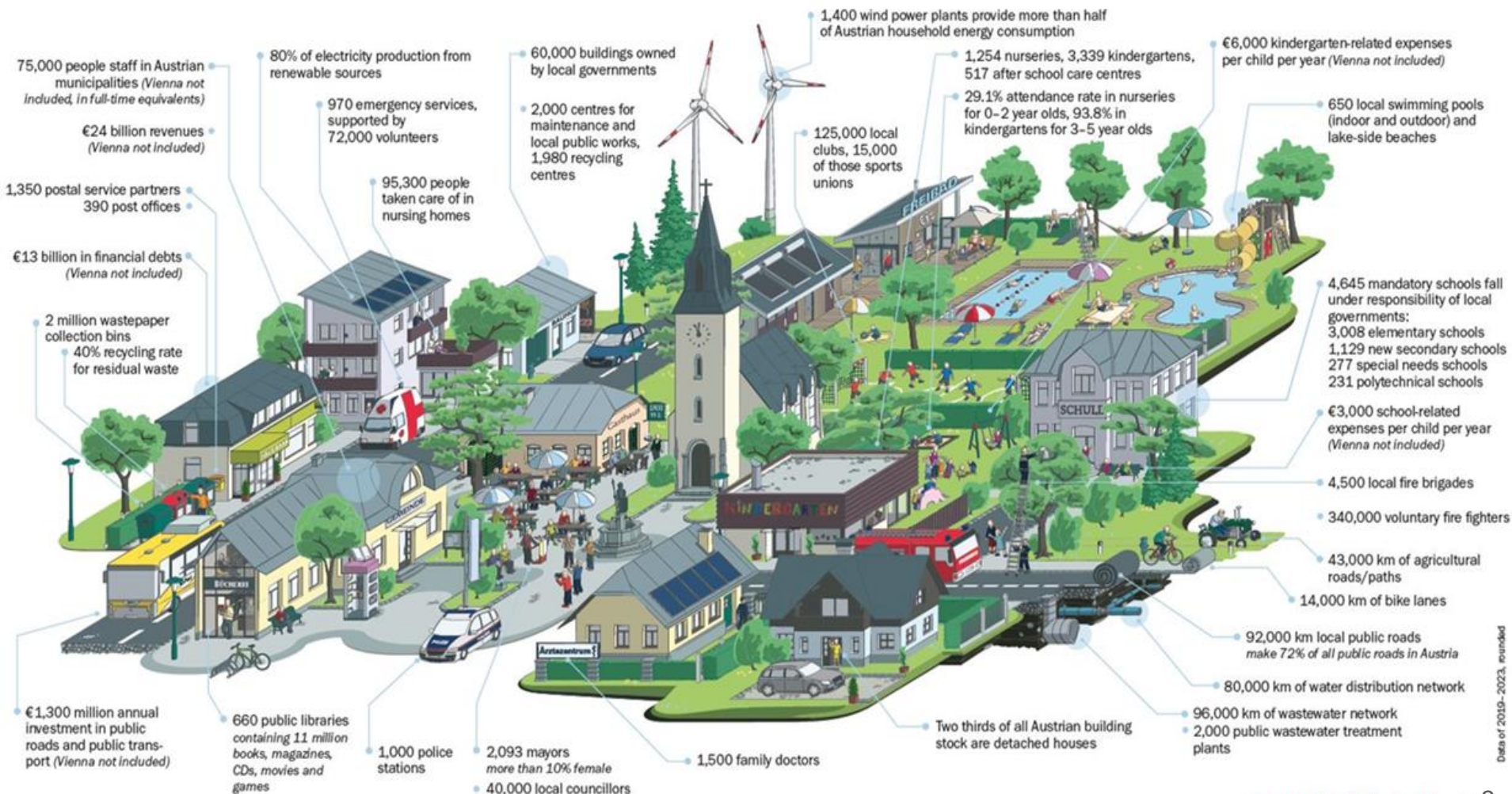
## Three tiers of territorial authority

central government

9 federal provinces  
(including Vienna)

2.093 municipalities

- There is no legal difference to cities-unitary municipality
- Right of self-government; more than just administrative units



# The tasks of Austrian municipalities (2)

- Child-care, kindergarden (age of 2,5 - 6 years)
- Elementary school (age of 6 - 10 years)
- Secondary school level (age of 10 - 14 years)
- Public buildings (schools, kindergarden, town halls, etc. (60.000 buildings)
- Social welfare and housing
- Public streets (90.000 km)
- Public water pipes (80.000 km)
- Sewage disposal (90.000 km)
- Waste disposal
- Broadband
- Zoning (land use planning)
- Elderly care
- Medical care (Rescue services)
- Voluntary Fire Brigades (4.500 organisations, municipalities pay the equipment and the headquarters)

→ Municipalities execute these tasks (inhouse/outsourced) or only co-finance.



# Financing of Austrian Municipalities



## *Financial equalisation*

- The fiscal equalisation system (FAG) divides the tax revenues collected by the federal government between the federal government, the federal provinces and the municipalities.
- Fiscal equalisation is an agreement that must be negotiated and decided by consensus between the federal government, the federal provinces and the municipalities. This happens every four to six years.
- Negotiations on financial equalisation are currently in progress.

## *Municipal Taxes*

- The rest of the budget is collected by the municipalities from their own taxes (municipal tax, property tax) and from fees, charges and services.
- In addition, of course, there are also economic activities.

# Revenue structure 2019 approx:

32 % Revenue share

18 % Own taxes

12 % Services and economic activity

10 % User fees

14 % Current transfers and capital  
transfers

5 % Asset transactions

3 % Withdrawal from reserves

6 % Proceeds from borrowings

1 % Other revenue

# The Austrian Association of Municipalities

## - **STRUCTURE**

- Represents **2082 out of 2093** Austrian municipalities → 70 % of the Austrian population
- **10 Provincial Associations**

### **STRUCTURE:**

**The Federal Executive Committee** is the supreme body of the Association (65 members). 64 seats are allotted to the regional associations and one seat to the General Secretary.

**The Presidium** consists of the President, his four deputies and the other Provincial Presidents.

**Specialist committees** can be set up by the Presidium to advise on individual subject areas.



President Mayor Johannes  
Pressl



Secretary General Dr. Walter  
Leiss

## The Austrian Association of Municipalities

### - **MAIN TASKS**

- Representation of interests at federal and European level
- Financial equalisation negotiations
- Legislative consultations
- Lobbying in Brussels

## The Austrian Association of Municipalities **- Brussels Office(1)**

- Since October 1996
- One-person operation
- Office-partnership with the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns
- Office located at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU
- Main Objective: Lobbying

**Contact:**

The Brussels Office of the  
Austrian Association of Municipalities  
Avenue de Cortenbergh 30,  
B 1040 Brussels  
Tel. : 00322 - 28 20 680  
E-mail: [oegemeindebund@skynet.be](mailto:oegemeindebund@skynet.be)

# The Austrian Association of Municipalities - **BRUSSELS OFFICE(2)**

- Close cooperation between Brussels and Vienna.
- The evaluation of European legal acts is carried out in close coordination with the employees in Austria.
- Our Brussels office does not cover the topic of funding in detail (lack of capacity).



# The Austrian Association of Municipalities - **BRUSSELS OFFICE**(3)

## **PROs:**

- Knowing in advance which legal acts will be applied at national level.
- A close network at European level
- Not only useful for European, but also for national affairs (e.g. legal comparison)

# Thank you for your attention!

# Annex 6:

## Questionnaire

---

TSI ref.23SI05

## **Questionnaire Study Visit**

**23/24.04.2024, Vienna**

### **Institutions visited**

Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)

Austrian Association of Cities

Austrian Association of Municipalities

Slovenian Embassy in Vienna, Envoy Duska Jerman-Male

Austrian Federal Chancellery (BKA) "European Municipal Councillors"

## Questions about the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)

Link: <https://www.oerok.gv.at/>

Which questions are relevant for your institution in relation to the main themes of...
... organisational structure of the system of urban/regional development in Austria
Please fill in
... urban development in Austria
Please fill in
... implementation of urban development projects (management and control system)
Please fill in

Which questions remained unanswered or require further information?
Please fill in
Is it useful to go through these questions online with representatives of the institution afterwards (incl. time period)?
Please fill in
Other important information and hints
Please fill in

## Findings

Which findings are directly applicable <b>for the current ITI period?</b>
Organisational set up of the system
Please fill in
Urban development – strategic
Please fill in

Management and control system
Please fill in
Implementation of urban development projects
Please fill in

Which findings can be used by ITI <b>for the next period?</b>
Organisational set up of the system
Please fill in
Urban development – strategic
Please fill in
Management and control system
Please fill in
Implementation of urban development projects
Please fill in

Link ÖROK publications: <https://www.oerok.gv.at/publikationen>



## Questions about the Austrian Association of Municipalities (Österreichischer Gemeindebund)

Link: <https://gemeindebund.at/>

Which questions are relevant for your organisation on the topics of:
Organisation
Please fill in
Objectives
Please fill in
Tasks national, EU
Please fill in

Questions about the possible ZMOS representation in Brussels
Objectives
Please fill in
Organisation
Please fill in
Effort/costs
Please fill in
Advantages/disadvantages
Please fill in
Further aspects
Please fill in

Which questions remained unanswered or require further information?
Please fill in

Does it make sense to go through these questions online with representatives of the institution afterwards (incl. time period)?
Please fill in
Which findings can be used for ZMOS?
Please fill in

## Questions about the Austrian Association of Cities (Österreichischer Städtebund)

Link: <https://www.staedtebund.gv.at/>

Which questions are relevant for your organisation on the topics of:
Organisation
Please fill in
Objectives
Please fill in
Tasks national, EU
Please fill in

Questions about the possible ZMOS representation in Brussels
Objectives
Please fill in
Organisation
Please fill in
Effort/costs
Please fill in
Advantages/disadvantages
Please fill in
Further aspects
Please fill in

Which questions remained unanswered or require further information?
Please fill in

Does it make sense to go through these questions online with representatives of the institution afterwards (incl. time period)?

Please fill in

Which findings can be used for ZMOS?

Please fill in

**Questions about the visit to the Slovenian Embassy in Vienna, Envoy Duska Jerman-Male**

Awareness of the TSI project
Please fill in
Participation in workshop in October (20th Europe Summit Salzburg 2024)
Please fill in
Further aspects
Please fill in
Which findings can be used for ZMOS?
Please fill in

**Questions about Austrian Federal Chancellery (BKA) 'European Municipal Councillors'  
(EU Municipal Councils/Federal Chancellery)**

Link: <https://www.europagemeinderate.at/>

Tasks
Please fill in
Organisation
Please fill in
What is achieved
Please fill in
Which findings can be used for ZMOS?
Please fill in

## Overall impression of the Study Visit Vienna

Did the institutions you visited fulfil your expectations?
Content of the presentations / presentation of the organisation and areas of responsibility
Please fill in
Answering the questions
Please fill in
Clarify further questions online afterwards and use the contacts
Please fill in

Organisation
Programme schedule
Please fill in
Contacts
Please fill in
Organisational aspects
Please fill in