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Europe

European information offices in Niederösterreich The Liaison Office of Niederösterreich in Brussels Regional management offices

Austria has been a member of the European Union since 1995 and is an important net contributor (2003: 336,2 million €).

The political upheavals in Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War, coupled with Austria's EU membership, have brought countless changes for Niederösterreich. Not only did it shift the country's "geo-strategical" position from Western Europe's periphery into the centre of Europe, but it has also become much more attractive for economic investments due to its function as a bridgehead to Central and Eastern Europe (see also [Economy](#)).

As a result of EU-membership, Niederösterreich is entitled to have funding from the EU Structural Funds. The EU's regional policy is designed to support areas with structural problems and to encourage economic cohesion. In Niederösterreich, these EU funds therefore go primarily to those areas in the north and east of the province that have bordered the Iron Curtain for decades and are thus coping with major economic problems. However, the financial resources from the Structural Funds also have to be used to help easing the challenges in the border areas associated with the last EU-enlargement to the east, and to enable the region to act as a powerful partner for the neighbouring regions in Central and Eastern Europe.

In Niederösterreich, the current programme planning period (2000-2006) is anticipating that 32.5% of the province's population and 53% of its surface area will be supported by Objective 2 aid funding. Over this period, the transitional areas account for 19.6% of the population and 20% of the surface area of Niederösterreich. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is making EU resources worth 177 million € available to Niederösterreich over the period 2000-2006 (Objective 2: 149 million €, transitional areas: 28 million €). This figure is increased by federal, provincial and municipal resources, totalling 153 million € and private funding to the tune of 546 million €.

[Austrian Conference of Spatial Planning](#) (Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz)

Inforegio (European Commission)

The European Commission has approved maximum funding of 20% of the net grant equivalent for the Wald- and Weinviertel and for southern Niederösterreich within the framework of assisted area status under state aid rule Article 87/3/c.

NÖ Economic Support/state aid

The EU programme for regional funding for the period 2000 - 2006 has been successfully implemented in Lower Austria: 1.766 projects have been realised within the scope of the Objective 2 Programme Funding to the tune of 390 million € (185 million EFRE, 205 million € national), which created an investment of 1,2 billion € in infrastructure and enterprises, as well as soft-measures (Research & Development, creation of clusters and networks, consulting, etc..) in Lower Austrian areas with structural problems.


Furthermore, 234 projects have been implemented by means of INTERREG IIIA (29 million € EFRE). The cooperation with neighbouring regions in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in important fields (such as economy, tourism, culture, languages, nature and environment, land use planning and transport) has been enforced. In the context of LEADER+programme (17million € EAGFL-A), 403 projects have provided integrated development in 15 small rural regions.

In the new EU programme period (2007 - 2013), the EU intends to provide an amount of financial assistance for the region's disposal quite similar to the previous period (2000 - 2006). The programme that targets the "Promotion of Lower Austrian regional competition 2007 - 2013", is equipped with 146 million € (EFRE). 102 million € will be allocated by the Lower Austrian government, 40 million € by the national government and four million € by the Austrian federal economic chamber. Its focus on innovation, research, and technological development is even more intense than in the previous Objective 2 Programme and therefore entirely adjusted to the EU Lisbon-strategy. The three cross-border programmes in the scope of "European Territorial

Cooperation" (39 million € EFRE) and LEADER - being part of the programme for rural development (<44 million € ELER) - will be allocated more money than previously. Insofar, the room of manoeuvre of these programmes is diversified.

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However, Niederösterreich is not solely benefiting solely in economic terms from Austria's accession to the EU. Through the  **Committee of the Regions**, in which the Landeshauptmann (governor) represents the interests of Niederösterreich, the province also has a political voice in Brussels. Niederösterreich participates in Committee 3 (spatial planning, environment) and in Committee 7 (education, culture, youth).

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Austrian Conference of Spatial Planning

 http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/interreg3/index_en.htm
INTERREG

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 <http://www.biowaste.at/>
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 http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/interreg3/index_en.htm
INTERREG III

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