

## **GENERAL DATA AND CRITERIA FOR THE PRIZE AWARDING**

The Jury's decision is definitive and cannot be appealed.

The criteria listed below will be used by the candidate in the auto-evaluation process and then by the Jury in its evaluation. During the self-evaluation process, the institution should assign points for each criterion.

In addition to the self-evaluation criteria, the filling in of some general data is required. In this way, evaluators can have a general idea of the organizational size and activities of the regional institution concerned.

The Jury will not evaluate the general information; it will use it as a context in the pre-selection process. A technical Committee will be set up to support the jury by selecting applications.

The general information and the self-evaluation criteria are listed below.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE REGIONAL INSTITUTION AND THE PROJECT:**

Name: Government of Lower Austria, department for economic affairs, tourism and technology (Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Wirtschaft, Tourismus und Technologie)

Type of the institution: public administration & government

Number of employees in 2007:  
54 in the department, thereof 21 in the non-tourism area

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Project name: RIS NÖ – Continuous improvement of the Regional Innovation System Lower Austria

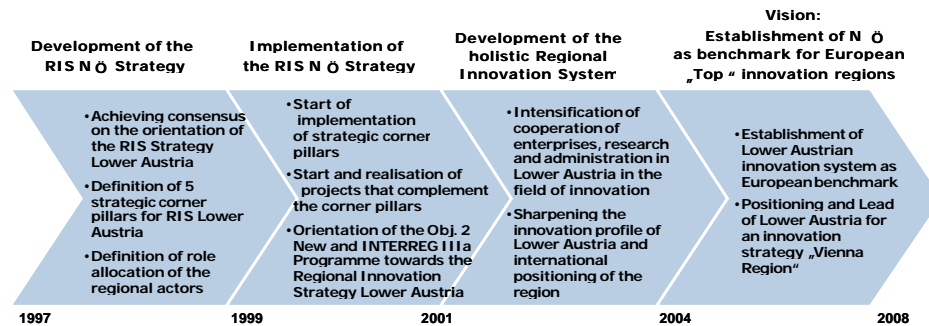
Person in charge: Irma Priedl, head of area for innovation & technology

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

## 1. Innovative nature and quality of the proposal (originality and creativity)

What has made this project innovative and why?

In order to use the public funds more effectively and efficiently as to strengthen the innovation activities of the regional companies, the economic development of the Amt der NÖ Landesregierung started a continuous and structured improvement process by developing the Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria in 1997; this process is strictly oriented towards the needs of the regional companies and the increase of the competitiveness of the individual Lower Austrian enterprises, and thus contributes to enhance the economic power of the whole region as well as to secure and create jobs.



The holistic process accounts for the regional innovation system as well as the geographical location of Lower Austria: the special position of Lower Austria in the heart of Europe with a border to the Czech Republic and Slovakia which is more than 400 km long as well as the direct proximity to other new EU member countries such as Hungary offers immense opportunities for the Lower Austrian companies in terms of increased internationalisation; however, this also requires clear innovation strategies on Lower Austrian business and regional level in order to remain competitive despite the considerable wage differential beyond the borders. At the same time, Vienna is the traditional economic, scientific and academic centre of Lower Austria. But Lower Austria and Vienna are politically independent from each other, which highlights the necessity of closely cooperating in the innovation policy of both regions. The continuous improvement process also includes to permanently follow up the companies' needs for innovation support as well as with the strengths and weaknesses of the regional companies, but also with their potential. This knowledge enables all actors of the regional innovation system Lower Austria to improve their customer orientation and to purposefully update their own innovation supporting services, which, of course, includes the innovation policy and the corresponding support programmes of Lower Austria as well.

Particular attention is also given to the information and experience exchange between the actors and their cooperation and coordination of the innovation supporting service offers. In the end, cooperation among publicly (co-)financed providers and the avoidance of offer redundancies also lead to a more efficient use of public funds.

The continuous improvement process requires corresponding measurement methods so that the

Amt der NÖ Landesregierung is in a position to assess improvements and to adopt well-proven instruments of innovation policy in the mainstream and to further develop them, but also to make the necessary adjustments in the case of less successful innovation supporting measures. Therefore, the continuous improvement process of the Regional Innovation System Lower Austria is accompanied by the extension of the monitoring and evaluation methods in innovation promotion. The Lower Austrian economic development continues to work on the establishment of a regional innovation profile as to obtain conclusions on the effects of the regional innovation policy on the innovative and economic power of Lower Austria.

Until 2008, Lower Austria will establish itself as top innovation region in Europe and the Innovation System Lower Austria as European benchmark. Current international benchmark projects with several European regions demonstrate that Lower Austria is on the right way. On this way, the Lower Austrian government integrates numerous European projects and partner regions in order to learn from successful, exemplary implementations and to jointly develop novel instruments of innovation policy.

What are the important novel elements of the project?

Process facilitated by a consensus oriented approach:

In the framework of the Regional Innovation Strategy, the RIS NÖ Steering Committee as accompanying board was installed, composed of companies' representatives and relevant actors in the field of innovation. This Steering Committee has created the broad consensus for the Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria and remains until today the most important regional platform for information exchange and for communication and coordination of the current innovation supporting activities as well as to create consensus regarding innovation policy and actual measures to further develop the regional innovation system.

Continuous improvement process driven by the needs of the Lower Austrian firms:

Since the beginning of the development of the Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria the culture of the need driven process is installed and applied: revolving postalquestionnaire surveys, personal interviews and workshops with regional companies are carried out by the regional government with support from regional and international experts in order to gather the required knowledge about the companies' needs for innovation support in order to be able to match these needs with the improvement of the regional innovation supporting infrastructure and to avoid redundancies on the offer side.

Clear Structure of the regional innovation strategy with clear responsibilities:

The developed strategy with its five corner pillars has a clear structure:

- Innovation: establishment of a comprehensive innovation supporting network in Lower Austria that offers the Lower Austrian companies an easier access to a complete innovation supporting offer; Positioning of Lower Austria as innovation location;
- Technology: Extension of technological core-competencies of Lower Austria in coordination with leading NÖ companies and research institutions;
- Cooperation: Stimulation of the cooperation between companies and establishment of strategic company partnerships;
- Internationalisation: Enforcing the internationalisation activities of the regional companies and profiling Lower Austria as „Turntable for Central Europe“;
- Mobilisation of Business Start-Ups: Increase the number and quality of innovation-oriented business foundations.

For the single corner pillars there are clear responsibilities dedicated to single actors of the regional innovation system which allows competitions among the actors and fosters the focus of

the actors and its services on the regional firms.

Monitoring of the continuous improvement process

Step by step a holistic monitoring system for the overall continuous improvement process is being introduced: revolving postal questionnaire surveys are measuring whether the transparency of the offered public innovation support for the regional companies is increasing and the support services are used by a larger share of the regional firms. The surveys carried out are documenting an increasing transparency and a broader use of the offered innovation support services.

Furthermore clear quantitative objectives (e.g. number of academic start-ups per year or number of new created jobs) and further qualitative monitoring indicators (which innovation enablers have to be addressed by a service) are elaborated for the single services in order to have a clear agreement with the service providers about the amount of the offered services as well as to get a deeper insight into the impact of the respective services on the regional firms benefiting from these services. This monitoring system is already established for the regional innovation funding schemes and major innovation programmes and will be completed for all innovation support services until 2008.

Did you gain or develop new knowledge, useful for the creation of new products, services or business processes?

Due to the above mentioned surveys about the firms' needs and the installed monitoring systems as well as the intensive international exchange activities (see chapter 3) the government is gathering the necessary knowledge about the firms' needs and the impact of established services in order to assure the continuous improvement of the effectiveness of the regional innovation supporting infrastructure.

EVALUATION: from 0 to 20

SELF-EVALUATION: points \_19\_\_\_

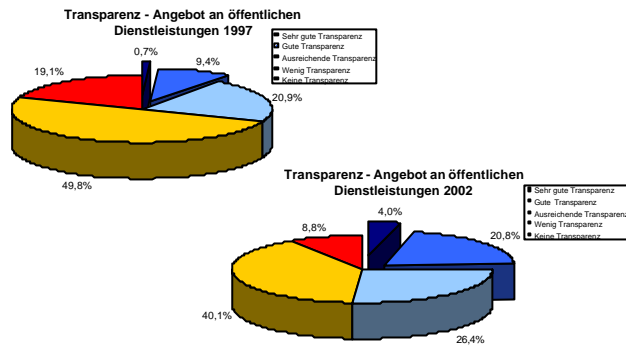
## **2. Impact on results**

What is the project's impact on institution's results? Take into account improved productivity and costs, more products and services offered.

Describe the contents.

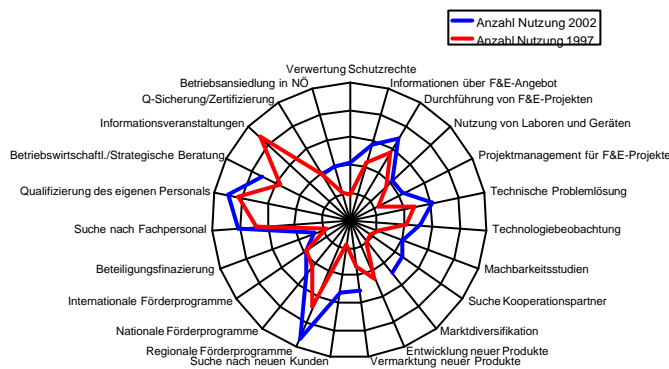
With respect to the regional programme level with full portfolio of innovation supporting services the regional firms confirm an improved transparency of the offered services which leads also to higher share of usage of these offered services (see comparison of the postal questionnaire survey 2002 – 1997, each with approx. 700 responding firms). The same survey also documents an increase openness of the regional firms for external collaboration with firms and public R&D institutions due to intensified activities for awareness raising, networking and clustering within the first years of the RIS NÖ process.

### Transparency of offered services 2002 - 1997



Increased Transparency of offered services (see above) and higher number of used services (see below):

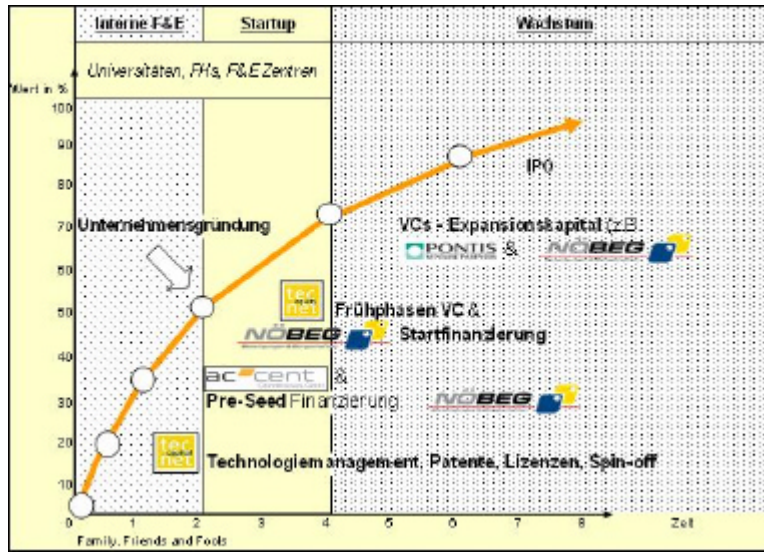
### Used services in 2002 - 1997



With the defined responsibilities of all involved intermediaries and positioning within the regional innovation strategy the intermediaries are able now to focus on their core tasks and develop the respective competencies instead of disputing among each other about their tasks and services. The improved quality of the service is also documented by a recently performed survey with a sample of 70 (beginning of 2007) about the importance of the individual services and their impact on the benefiting firms.

During the performed SWOT Analysis taking the demand as well as offer side into account the regional government was very quickly able to identify the main gaps in the regional innovation support portfolio and to implement new services which have closed these gaps in the mean time like the Technopol Program to overcome the Lower Austrian weaknesses in the public R&D with

relevance for innovation or in addition as a second approach the integrated support chain for academic and technology oriented start-up support (see process below).



Integrated support chain for academic and technology oriented start-ups in Lower Austria

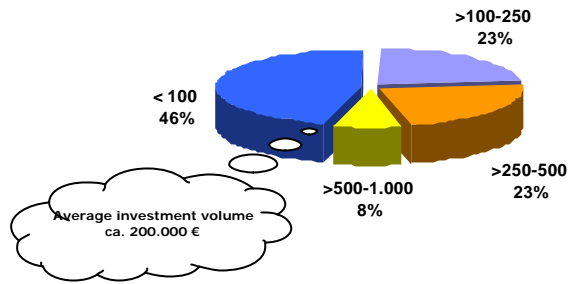
There are some research activities under way aiming at estimating the regional effect of the impact of the regional innovation policy. Based on some field test there is a current (but still invalidated) estimation of approx. 10.000 to 15.000 jobs are created/safeguarded, 15.000 to 20.000 new products/services created and 3 to 4 billions additional turnover created.

On project level with respect to individual funding schemes, service programmes or comprehensive services there is also a monitoring installed for most of the services which will be spread over all innovation support services in the next future as part of the continuous improvement process.

The monitoring provides information like the new created jobs, stimulated additional investment by the supported firms, additional turnover, new external innovation relevant cooperations initiated.

**Innovation Assistant**

**Companies' investments stimulated by the funding programme**



In 1000 €

January 2007: The NÖ Innovation System / Strategy - study visit of the Biscay Region

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Example for the quantitative impact on additional investment by the Funding scheme "Innovation Assistant" established during the RIS NÖ process

In addition to gathered data about the quantitative impact there is monitoring of qualitative impact of single services / funding schemes on several innovation parameters of the firms playing a key role for the innovativeness of the firms.

**Innovationsassistent – Impact profile**



Basis: 17 Firmenbewertungen



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What is the project's impact on internal aspects, such as activities management and organization within your institution?  
Describe the contents.

The continuous improvement process RIS NÖ with the integrated monitoring activities has initiated a continuous learning process within the regional government and its employees as well as within the service providers that is leading to a better understanding of the "customers" (= firms') needs and performance and is fostering the proximity to the customers. This knowledge facilitates the decision process regarding establishment of further innovation support services. It has been turned out that the direct contact with the customers is of crucial importance for the regional government within the RIS NÖ process.

EVALUATION: from 0 to 20  
SELF-EVALUATION: points \_\_18\_\_

### **3. Management of the institution's innovation**

Does the institution have a business process or a management system devoted to innovation?

The holistic continuous improvement process can be seen as a management system according the balanced scorecard methodology:  
the customers: the comprehensive knowledge about the firms' needs and their current competencies, deduction of the regional innovation strategy with its corner pillars,  
the process with identification of required service to be set up or to be continued, negotiation of objective indicators for single services with the respective monitoring,  
the organisation: clear responsibilities described within the organigram of the regional innovation supporting infrastructure with description of required resources (in Full time Equivalent) and the required skills (incl. HR development schedule),  
the finance: the regional budget dedicated to the 5 corner pillars of the regional innovation strategy and the respective services behind these pillars.

In the last years, did the institution make any benchmarking visit, to study the best innovation management practices, adopted by other organizations (belonging or not to the same field)?

Since the development of the Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria in 1997 the regional government is putting special emphasis on the in-depth exchange and collaboration with other regional authorities in Europe responsible for the development and implementation of regional innovation strategies and systems. This interregional exchange and also the transfer of in other regions approved and for Lower Austria also appropriate methodologies in innovation support with the adaptation according the Lower Austrian particularities is a inherent component of the implementation and continuous improvement of the Regional Innovation System Lower Austria.

With beginning of this century and belonging to the steps 3 (Development of the holistic Regional Innovation System) and steps 4 (Establishment of NÖ as benchmark for European „Top“ innovation regions) the Lower Austrian government is also carrying out intensive benchmarking activities on national and European level by using statistical data (like the Regional European Innovation Scoreboard, break down of CIS Community innovation survey to regional level) by contracting statistical institutions for data gathering and comparison as well as by joint benchmarking activities with other European regions in form of interregional projects and

networks.

A selection of the joint interregional projects of the government of Lower Austria dealing with regional innovation policy:

- PEP (Partners Ensuring Progress) with partner regions Kent (UK), Schleswig-Holstein (DE), South-Sweden: implementation and transfer of methodologies /tools for innovation support between the partner regions
- CLUES – KEY TO INNOVATION (Competence Landscapes Unfolding Europe's Strengths with partner regions Karlsruhe (DE), Stockholm (S), Lyon (F)
- STRINNOP (Strengthening the Regional Innovation Profile) with partner regions Bremen (DE), Bretagne (F), Danzig (PL), Flanders (B), Funen (DEN), Kaunas (Lt), Norte (POR), Pest Bács-Kiskun (HU), Schleswig-Holstein (DE), Ringkøbing (DEN), Western Sweden: development of a indicator set for regional innovation profiles and interregional comparison
- PAXIS START with partner regions Vienna (Lower Austria and Vienna are forming the Vienna Region), Copenhagen (DEN), Edinburgh (UK), Hamburg (DE) and Veneto Region (I)
- "FOR-RIS Blueprint" - Foresight Actions in the Regions with partner regions Latvia, Ljubljana (SLO), Lodz (PL), Lower Silesia (PL), Malopolskie (PL), Mantova (I), Prague (CZ) Sofia (BUL), South Transdanubia (HUN) and Uusimaa (FIN): how to link regional innovation strategies with foresight actions.
- ERIK and ERIK+ (European Regions Knowledge based Innovation Network) with partner regions like Tuscany (I), Emilia-Romagna (I), Alentejo (POR), Algarve (POR), Bremen (DE), Extremadura (ESP), Flanders (B), Hamburg (DE), Småland med öarna (SWE), Veneto (I), Western Macedonia (GR), West Midlands (UK), Western Sweden. In total approx. 50 official partner regions in Europe: exchange about Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions with implementation of an internet-based Good Practice Database, development of an indicator set for regional start-up profiles and interregional comparison,
- NBG (Next Business Generation) with partner regions Baden-Württemberg (DE), Lombardy Region (I), West Midlands (UK), Zurich (CH), Thessaly (GR): facilitating business succession
- IMPACTSCAN (Innovation Policy Impact Assessment at Regional Level: Benchmarking for Dissemination of Differing Performances to Raise Awareness of Policy-Makers to Stimulate Successful Measures and Good Practice) with partner regions Bretagne (F), Flanders (B), Madrid (ESP), Limburg (NL), Lower Silesia (PL), Slovenia: benchmarking of regional innovation policy and measuring the impact of regional innovation policy
- ARISE (Accelerating Regional Innovation Strategy Exchanges) with partner regions Kent (UK), Lithuania, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur (F), Stockholm (SWE), Tuscany (I): benchmarking of regional innovation policy and measuring the impact of regional innovation policy
- ZIP (Zilina Innovation Policy) with partner regions Zilina (SK), Bratislava (SK), County of Södermanland (SWE): development of a regional innovation strategy for the Zilina region
- LORIS PLUS with partner regions Łódź region (PL), Puglia (I): development of a regional innovation strategy for the Łódź region
- ...

Since 2003 Ms. Irma Priedl is member of the steering committee of the IRE (Innovating Region in Europe) network and active in subgroups.

EVALUATION: from 0 to 15 SELF-

EVALUATION: points \_15\_\_

#### **4. Participation of outside actors in the innovative process**

Do the stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, partners, communities, take part in the innovative process regularly?

Describe the systematic approaches adopted to guarantee this participation.

All relevant stakeholders are continuously involved in the process as member of the regional steering committee "Lenkungskreis RIS NÖ". The steering committee takes part approx. 3 times per year.

The customers (= regional firms) are involved by postal questionnaire surveys, face to face interviews, regular meetings like Innovation Circle, Experts Dialogue (Fachdialog), workshops about monitoring results etc.

Regarding the development, implementation and monitoring of specific services there is strong day-to-day communication and collaboration between the regional government and the respective service providers and communities.

In the last years, how many agreements for research and innovation activities did the institution conclude with public or private research centres, Universities and so on...?

The regional government has contracts with all regional intermediaries and research institutions / higher education institutions dealing with innovation issues and innovation services. The department is having influence on an innovation policy budget of approx. 45 million Euros which is assuring the required influence on the regional innovation support system and thus is also assuring the successful RIS NÖ progress. The current benchmarking projects with other European regions are underpinning that a strong regional public government is a important success factor for the development and especially the successful implementation of an effective regional innovation strategy.

Are there innovation-oriented active partner relations with other actors of your territory, country, or foreign countries?

As responsible authority for the regional innovation strategy and the development of the regional innovation system the Lower Austrian government has active relations with all relevant partners within the region: regional firms, all actors of the regional innovation supporting infrastructure (all (partly) financed by the government), R&D institutions, competence centres and higher education institutions. Furthermore the Austrian specific social partnerships with the regional chamber of commerce, regional chamber of labour, regional trade union and regional business association are facilitating the consensus oriented approach of the RIS NÖ process.

Also the national level is involved in the RIS NÖ steering committee and there is a intensive exchange with the other Austrian federal states. On national level – and this a considerable advantage of the Austrian innovation policy and funding scheme structure in comparison to other countries – there are very intensive relation ships with the relevant federal Ministries of

the national government and with the national agencies providing additional or co-funding schemes for individual Lower Austrian firms. Continuous "finance round table" between the regional Lower Austrian government/other service providers and the national institutions facilitates the coordination of regional/national innovation support activities and thus the effective and efficient use of public money.

Does the institution take part in projects of economic development, financed by the European Union?  
Describe the contents of the agreements and relations.

The Lower Austrian government is the managing authority of structural funds for the region of Lower Austria, the department for economic affairs, tourism and technology is responsible for the respective budget for innovation and technology. Further European programmes and projects are driven by the department like Regional Programme of Innovative Actions (RPIA, DG Regio), Impact assessment of regional innovation policy (DG Enterprise, see chapter 3.2), Manunet (DG Research), INTERREG, RIS NA C,...

EVALUATION: from 0 to 15  
SELF-EVALUATION: points \_\_15\_\_

### **5. Participation of employees in the innovative process**

Do the employees take an active part in the innovative process of the institution?  
Describe the systematic approaches adopted to guarantee this participation.

The employees of the department are directly involved in the whole process due to their tasks for accompanying companies in the innovation support, giving advice and concrete innovation funding and also dealing with the monitoring of the impact of these funding schemes. The employees are also accompanying the service providers and are negotiating the objectives with the intermediaries. There are further improvement activities on their way in order to overcome existing frame work conditions of the public administration.

Not only the management level of the intermediaries is involved in the RIS NÖ process but also their employees to develop the required services and to qualify their personal staff according their services.

EVALUATION: from 0 to 15 SELF-  
EVALUATION: points \_\_12\_\_

### **6. Innovation diffusion**

Has the institution received any innovation awards from special bodies, associations or experts in the past? Has the institution been mentioned for its innovation in the press or other mass media (please attach photocopies or media transcripts)?

There are plenty of dissemination activities and references like:

- PAXIS award ("Pilot Action of Excellence on Innovative Start-ups") in 2002: The Commission's Enterprise Directorate-General has awarded the Vienna region as region of excellence under the 6th Framework Programme, 'Research & Innovation Programme'. PAXIS promotes the setting-up and development of innovative companies across Europe. Lower Austria and Vienna have jointly won the award of excellence under the label "Vienna Region" [http://cordis.europa.eu/paxis/src/reg\\_ex.htm](http://cordis.europa.eu/paxis/src/reg_ex.htm)
- ERIK Database with description of the Lower Austria's Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions and single Good Practices stemmed from these programmes, the "Pre-Seed" scheme was selected by the ERIK member regions as one out of 8 case studies <http://www.eriknetwork.net/index.php>; the ERIK policy recommendations are including a detailed description of the support system for academic and technology oriented start-ups in Lower Austria <http://www.eriknetwork.net/currentnews.php?archivio=n#Anchor-157>
- The Regional Innovation Strategy Lower Austria and its implementation is described in the "Innovation Guide" as a reference model for development and implementation of regional innovation strategies (published by DG Regio)
- DG Regio is listing the tools "Pre-Seed" and "Innovation Assistant" – established during the RIS NÖ continuous improvement process – as best practices within its publication for "Regio Star" in 2007.
- Furthermore several publications about the RIS NÖ process were published in the last 10 years in the IRE Newsletters, ERIK Newsletters, European Parliament Magazine, regional and national business magazines, daily newspapers, ...
- Several publications on website, e.g. currently presentation of the "Innovation Assistant" on the IRE website [http://www.innovating-regions.org/content\\_db/cddb.cfm?action=article&publication\\_id=4128&is\\_article=1&appld=2](http://www.innovating-regions.org/content_db/cddb.cfm?action=article&publication_id=4128&is_article=1&appld=2), European Business network [http://www.ebn24.com/functions/print\\_b.php?id=740&sprach\\_id=1&link=id-740.page-3](http://www.ebn24.com/functions/print_b.php?id=740&sprach_id=1&link=id-740.page-3).

See also attachments.

Does a social reporting exist in your institution?

Social reporting and gender mainstream plays an important role within the regional government Lower Austria. There are specific activities like the service center "NÖ gender fokus" aiming at initiation, implementation and coaching of gender mainstream projects within the regional government and other (semi) public organisations. These activities are integrating the recommendations of the governmental task force "Chancengleich".

The department for economic affairs, tourism and technology is actively involved in the task force regarding economic and innovation related issues (e.g. the project "Gender Alp!"). The Intermediaries of the regional innovation system are also taking care for an equal treatment of females and males (e.g. acquisition of new staff).

There is a holistic approach for HR management in the Lower Austrian government: not only the technical skills of the individual employees are in the focus of the HR development but also social and other personal competences (health and nutrition, recreational activities etc) are belonging to individual development schedules.

EVALUATION: from 0 to 15

SELF-EVALUATION: points \_15\_