



Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research
DG II - Strategy unit for regional & location policy

Connecting Universities to Regional Growth in Austria

Armin Mahr, Kraków, September 2013

Identifying the regional value of universities

Universities create persistent values within a region due to their typical inherent property as long lasting institutions not directly affected by changing economic rationales or business cycle fluctuations. **Universities do not move!**

- ▶ (Regional-)Specific regional knowledge output, higher education, key partners for enterprises and business sector => enhancing regional innovation potential, high-profile developers of skills and talents, positive image of the region etc.
- ▶ Social and demographic effects: access to higher education, social mix, attractiveness of the region for young people, anchors of social innovation
- ▶ Direct and indirect economic effects: Employment, income, (inter)national investments and spillovers, employees' and student's expenses

The need for **Lead Institutions** in new place-based policies

In a Regional Innovation System (RIS) as conceptual framework for a new knowledge based economic policy, the focus is no longer solely put on certain branches or industry sectors but on existing knowledge and technology fields and synergies. *Entrepreneurial discovery* needs to be enriched by *intellectual discovery*, to fully unleash a region's potential to cope with social, economic and ecological opportunities and challenges in a smart and sustainable way.

Universities need to engage proactively, representing the regional knowledge capacity and realising their role as regional **Lead Institutions**. On equal terms with *regional policy makers* and the *leading companies*, universities should be recognised partners in a region's *Smart Specialisation Strategy*. Universities are indispensable players in a process that enhances sustainable, **knowledge and innovation-driven structural change** in a region.

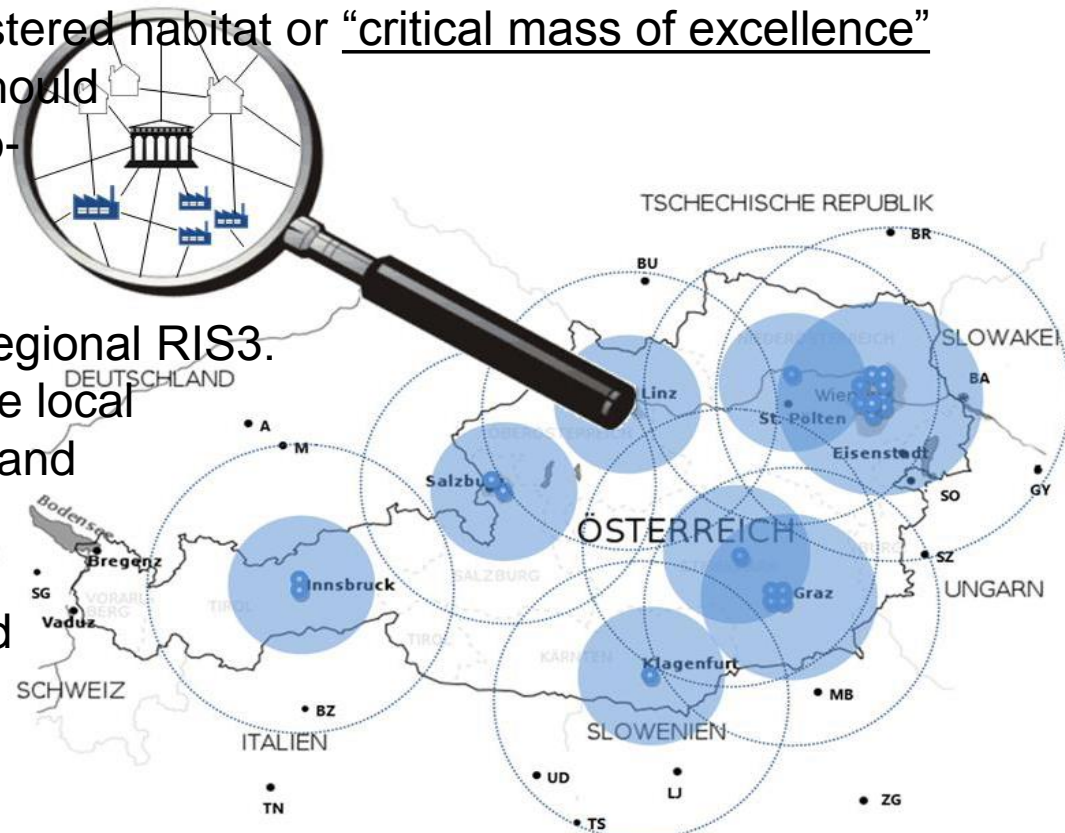
- ▶ No further *Silicon Valleys Strategies* => stakeholder-led empowerment of place-based networks, regional skills, research fields, PPPs etc.
- ▶ HEIs could play a key role in the rigorous self-assessment of regional specific assets contributing to an unique, international competitive regional profile!
- ▶ Holistic mobilisation of universities and research institutions as knowledge leaders, providing skills, research infrastructure and creativity helping to push a region's intellectual and technological frontier
- ▶ The coordination of research priorities with local potential and needs helps to avoid wasteful activities through misguided investments and allows for creative solutions to regional challenges in the future!

What is in for universities?

A location concept (“Standortkonzept”) as a university’s bridge from local engagement to global competitiveness:

In a location concept universities highlight their position within a network of strategic partners in academia, industry and business in a self-chosen *area of close collaboration* and its strategic use in the future.

- ▶ Presenting themselves as a clustered habitat or “critical mass of excellence” rather than a single institution should support them to attract global co-operations and investments
- ▶ A location concept underpins a university’s participation in the regional RIS3. It helps to raise awareness of the local authorities for its regional value and impact, attracting private and public funding including participation in EU structural and investment funds 2014-20.



The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research supports RIS3

- ▶ In their three-year performance contracts with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research all 22 public universities are invited to position themselves in their region with a location concept as part of their internationalisation strategy for research => 15 out of 22 are actively participating in this process
- ▶ For the process, a time frame was proposed (mid 2014), from self-assessment and identification of partners and networks over defining strategic aims and related indicators and measures to implementation and monitoring of the strategy
- ▶ The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research negotiates, discusses and monitors the implementation of the strategies, gives feedback on the strategic output and acts as networker between the several relevant units in the higher education and research sector, both on a regional and national level.

Some TASKS:

- ▶ Raising awareness of universities of arts for the advantages of participating in RIS3 => EC recommends to associate *innovation* no longer solely with *technology*
- ▶ First round of monitoring the raw versions of location concepts in the implementation dialogue (“Begleitgespräche”) in October and November 2013

Useful documents

Key Document for Universities “Connecting Universities to Regional Growth“ for Download at the European Commission’s **S3 platform** at the Joint Research Centre, Sevilla, Spain:

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu>



Download your **RIS3 KEY** from the Austrian ERA portal: www.era.gv.at and get started with Smart Specialisation.



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Thank you for your interest.

Contact me:

Armin Mahr

Head, Strategy Unit for Regional & Location Policy

Federal Ministry of Science and Research

Minoritenplatz 5, 1014 Vienna, Austria

T (+43 1) 53120 9120

armin.mahr@bmf.gv.at