

Minutes of the 3rd ACENET meeting Styria / Austria – Maribor / Slovenia

2nd – 4th October 2002

ACENET 3rd event

Date:	2002.10.02 – 2002.10.04
Location:	Styria (Austria) and Maribor (Slovenia)
Participants:	See Attachment 1
Agenda:	See Attachment 2

This was the third meeting of the thematic network ACENET. Meeting activities included study visits and presentations by regional policy makers and cluster representatives. The aim of the event was to communicate the experience of the industrial districts of the regions, esp. the Material-, Wood and Automotive Cluster. On the last day trips to Slovenia, Pesnica and Maribor were made, in order to learn about the cluster activities of the Podravje-Region.

The main focus of the meeting was cluster activities in Styria, esp. Upper Styria. The trip was organised by the SFG (Styrian Development Agency), Mr. P. Perkonigg and the Ausseninstitut of the University Leoben, Mr. W. Schabereiter. The visit to Slovenia was arranged by Maribor development Agency in co-operation with SFG, A study visit and a presentation was also conducted at the Technology Park in Pesnica and at the Chamber of Commerce in Maribor, Slovenia.

Key words

- Day 1** Graz (State government of Styria and Styrian Development Agency SFG), Upper Styria: Steel Concern Böhler Kapfenberg (Kapfenberg, Upper Styria) – R&D networks from a view of a firm; Material cluster – partners, services, organisation, financial and future aspects of the cluster – the university as a motor of a cluster (University of Leoben); Technology Transfer of the University of Leoben – tools, methods, target group. (University of Leoben)
- Day 2** Grambach – The cluster philosophy of Styria; Automobile Cluster Styria – history, partners, services, organisation, financial aspects, future aspects of the cluster
- Graz: AVL – Acoustic Centre – company in the AC Styria
- Day 3** Graz: Wood Cluster, Know-Centre – knowledge managements in networks
- Slovenia: Technology Park in Pesnica;
- Maribor: Cluster building activities in Maribor/Podravje Region - potential branches, cross-border, company needs analysis, activities

Day 1 – the Material cluster

Overview of the regional policy for the Styrian development

Mr. Herber Paiarl (State government of Styria – economic development) accounted for the special economic conditions in Styria and the development of the policies concerning history and cluster building in the region.

In short, his presentation can be summarised as follows:

In the 1990^s, when the fences to the east went down, Styria had to face a lot of challenges in changing the structures, in the network and cluster policy and also in the so-called “border-land”-policy. The region of Upper Styria has been the centre for these changes for the last years and still will be in the future.

In Styria, there has been a big concentration on cluster-policy. The efforts focused on changing the business climate but also the mentality. The international and national thinking in Styria was quite traditional, so it has been a difficult process. Today Styria can be very proud of having well-running clusters (e.g. Automotive Cluster, Wood-Cluster, Materialcluster) but also economic and technology-parks (e.g. Economic Park Upper Styria, technology-park Graz) fulfilled by competence, impulse-centres and other regional and national institutions.

A leading principle for the Styrian development policy, which very well illustrates the change in thinking, can be made clear by the following words of Mr. Paiarl:

We have changed our strategy from helping the weak to survive to boosting the strong; our motto is “Strengthen the strong”.

Böhler Uddeholm, Steel concern, Kapfenberg in Upper Styria

Mr. Peter Spannring spoke about the long history and tradition of Böhler-Uddeholm. Böhler was founded in 1446 by Arnold Taubenbrunner. Since 1870 there has been a sales department in Vienna and Böhler has subsidiaries all over in the world. Mr. Spannring also told us about the turnover (352 Mio. € in 2001) and about the products (Hot steels, special materials, high speed steel, complementary programme, hot rolled bar,). An example of a product is the Euro-coins that are made by Böhler-steel in Austria. On a visit-tour through the plant the Acenet-participants were able to see the whole production-line: e.g. melting – secondary metallurgy – casting – special melting and re-melting – hot forming – heat treat – machining and testing.

Afterwards Mr. Lenger (Head of the research department of Böhler Uddeholm) presented the cooperation and networking activities of Böhler. Böhler runs around 60 – 70 R&D projects, about 35 people are employed in the R&D-department. Almost 1.9 % of the turnover is spent on R&D. The following illustrates, in bullet-points, two examples of cooperation-partners:

1. CDL Christian Doppler Laboratories

The CDL was founded in 1989 as a research tool of state-run enterprises. In 1995 the initiative was opened up for all enterprises with R&D activities in Austria. Today the CDL have 20 Member Companies, and seven cooperating Universities.

The Board of Directors (Kuratorium) and Scientific Advisory Board (Senat) is formed by representatives of the Academia-, Industry- and Public Sector. Key financiers are ministry of economy and labour and the Austrian National Bank. The physical infrastructure for CDL is provided by University Institutes

Currently there are 20 CDL in operation: materials science (7); modelling, simulation and automation (9); automotive (3); biomedicine (1). The annual budget of one CDL is between € 110.000--400.000. In one CDL there are usually 3-4 researchers.

The starting point for a CDL is the industry. There must be an interest and capabilities to take up and implement the new knowledge (no product development in a CDL).

2. MCL Material Cluster Leoben

See next topic

MCL – Material Cluster Leoben, Upper Styria

Mrs. Martha Mühlburger (head of the industrial liaison department of the University of Leoben) gave a presentation about partners, services of the cluster, organisation of the cluster, financial aspects, future aspects of the cluster and the university as a motor of a cluster. In short, the presentation can be summarised as follows:

The Styrian Material Cluster is an initiative founded and organized by the Styrian Business Development Agency (Steirische Wirtschaftsförderung, SFG) and the University of Leoben, in cooperation with the following associated members:

- University of Leoben
- Material Center Leoben
- Polymer Competence Center Leoben
- Joanneum Research
- Christian Doppler Laboratories
- Laser Center
- Austrian Foundry Institute

Its aim is the sustained safeguarding and establishment of Styria as the location for the material industry. With its members forming a competence base for materials and material technology the Material Cluster's main task is interlacing all the relevant actors by forming networks. This brings competitive advantages through innovative products and a qualification network for bundling measures of further education.

Styria has a long tradition in the iron & steel industry, being the location for a number of successful high tech SMEs and local players with international reputation. The Material Cluster cooperates with leading actors on the industrial material sector like AT&S, Böhler, RHI or Voest Alpine Steel.

The material branches of interest fostered in Styria, which already are being well pursued by the regional competence forces, are the fields

- Plastics
- Metals
- Ceramics
- Semiconductors

For these fields, the research of new materials and trends is an important issue, as well as surface technology, prototyping and functionality. The Material Cluster aims at the development of the organization for these activities and the management of innovation. It also supports training of qualified workforce and engages itself in the development of new products and an overall efficiency increase in production.

The services of the Material Cluster Leoben comprise:

- Training of qualified manpower
- R&D support in material technologies
- Development of an image and marketing
- Advising for public support and financing
- Providing the necessary infrastructure
- Supporting internationalisation
- Fostering the further development of Styria as a material technology location through networking

Technology Transfer of the University of Leoben

Mr. Jürgen Jantschgi (technology transfer expert of the University of Leoben) spoke about the tools, methods, and target group concerning technology transfer. In short, the presentation can be summarised as follows:

The Montanistic University Leoben was founded in the middle of the 19th century in a region of Styria mainly depending on mining and the economic branches connected with the iron industry. Over the decades it developed itself from a sheer technical school for mining engineers to a modern academy covering various branches of material sciences and technology. The Montanistic University today has:

- 33 institutes
- 40 professors
- 150 scientists
- 200 not scientific employees
- approx. 2500 students
- approx. 220 graduates per year
- a public budget of 25 mio. Euro per year
- an income from own resources of 7,5 mio. Euro per year

The core competences of the University are the “3 M”s: Mining, Metallurgy and Materials

The most important educational programs are plastic engineering, materials science, metallurgy and ceramics.

The industrial liaison department at the University of Leoben can be regarded as a technology transfer department, a service institution both for companies (mainly SMEs) and for the departments of the University.

A big barrier for cooperation of research facilities and universities with industrial and economic actors is always a lack of communication channels between the parties involved. The disadvantages for both parts are clear: Missing opportunities for commercialisation of research results and new technologies on one side and missing access to knowledge about new and more efficient production methods and materials on the other.

The industrial liaison department works as an interface between the academic and the industrial/economic sphere. Its technology transfer approaches banks on Activity and Experience as well as the fostering of various technology transfer and academic spin-off projects.

The services provided or organized by the industrial liaison department of the University of Leoben comprise activities such as:

- Recherche for funding opportunities
- Assistance in filing proposals for funding
- Providing a project initiation budget
- Patent research
- Establishment of contacts between project partners
- Technology and Innovation counselling

Some important projects of the industrial liaison department, which are currently pursued, are:

- Centre for Applied Technologies (Zentrum für angewandte Technologie, ZAT): The academic spin-off support centre of the University of Leoben
- Nanotechnology: an initiative together with the government of Styria
- Environmental Measuring Bus: supported by the Austrian Ministry for Environment
- Technology Academy: for further training and knowledge development of technicians
- Product finding and product development in the framework of various EU- and national projects
- Presentation of the University of Leoben and its competences at national and international events and conferences

Day 2 – the Automotive Cluster Styria (AC-Styria) - Grambach

The cluster philosophy of Styria

Mr. Gerd Holzschlag (cluster expert of the Styrian development agency - SFG) presented the cluster philosophy of Styria. In short, the presentation can be summarised as follows:

The SFG is an economically oriented service-enterprise aiming at providing a substantial contribution to the fortification and growth of the Styrian economy. This contribution shall consist of economic growth, provision and safeguarding of jobs, and the enhancement of attractiveness of Styria as an economic location.

Styria is the second largest Austrian province, with an area of 16,387 square kilometres and the capital city Graz. The added gross values are 7.5 billion Euros in industry, 12.5 billion Euros in the service centre and 537 million Euros in agriculture. Styria's major exports are cars, rails, high-tech products, timber, paper and white wine.

Looking back into the 1980's Styria's situation was rather bad. It was structurally weak, with a high unemployment rate resulting in an atmosphere of demotivation and resignation. The relying on basic industry blocked the paths to development.

The SFG is giving impulses for a positive development. New structures in organisation (ISO 9001 certified) and business areas help the process. Consistent focus is placed on:

- High tech
- Innovation
- Founders
- Regions

Incentive instruments are both monetary and non-monetary. The SFG is active in founding and supporting impulse centres (technology- and business parks), founder centres, and competence centres for R&D and is actively involved in key projects like the Automobile

cluster Styria or the Wood Cluster. Technology transfer and networking play a major role in the SFG's activities.

The SFG's vision of Styria is

Styria being a region marked by high knowledge, competence and qualification of its inhabitants. The SFG makes these qualities visible inwardly and outwardly.

The people in Styria bring top performance through high motivation. The SFG carries part of the responsibility to make this strong wish become true and known as Styrian trait

The SFG contributes significantly to making Styria one of the top 25 European regions in the future.

The AC – Automobile Cluster Styria

Mr. Uwe Galler (managing director of AC-Styria, Grambach) talks about the history, partners, services, organisation, financial and future aspects of the AC-Styria. In short, the presentation can be summarised as follows:

The automotive sector is the most dynamic sector in Styria. The AC Styria Autocluster was founded in 1996 to support the focusing of all regional actors in the automotive sector and thereby contribute to the fortification of innovative forces and international competitiveness.

In 1996, the Styrian government and the automotive sector agreed upon that the AC Styria Autocluster should be privatised within three years. Five companies and two public institutions formed the centre of the cluster. Within three years, the autocluster developed into an irreplaceable instrument in the automotive business.

The AC Styria regards it as its mission to; foster the Public-Private-Partnership (collaboration of public, political and economical actors to secure the economic chain of value added), to supply a communication and information platform for all partners of AC Styria, to enhance networking, to foster technology- and knowledge-transfer and to initiate future-oriented education and further training programs. Among the leading partner firms in the AC Styria are

- Magna (supplier)
- AVL (technology services)
- Krenhof Industrieprodukte (supplier)
- TCM (industrial near services)
- Agiplan (consultant)
- Lear Corporation (supplier)
- Austria Mikro Systeme (supplier)
- SFG (publicity)

The AC Styria has 185 partner firms (with « value impulse package ») and is in contact with further 250 interested companies. The so-called value impulse package for partners of the AC Styria offers the associated companies a wide range of services and advantages to benefit from. Among these advantages are:

- A partner of the AC Styria is represented on the homepage of the cluster under www.acstyria.com by a company portrait and profile with links to individual homepages. Also, one can retrieve news, cooperation offers, job exchange information, an event calendar and an overview over international automotive fairs from the webpage.
- Cost advantages when participating in impulse events, seminars or workshops organized by the cluster for its members.
- The AC Styria brand name, which is already well reputed nationally and internationally, may be used by a partner for promoting his products as well as the AC Styria logo.
- Receipt of insider information through the newsletter “Members Only”, through EU news-development tendencies, subsidy programs and round-table-discussions and information about current trends by the cluster.
- Furthermore, the AC Styria cluster actively supports training measures and workforce enhancement through the development of the automotive training platform www.qualification.at and through price-reduced training sessions and seminars.

Short visits of two companies located in Grambach

Dewetron

Dewetron produces data acquisition systems from 1 Hz to 500 MHz, video+data acquisition, dynamic signal analyzers, and portable industrial PC's and power quality analyzers.

The product palette includes products from signal conditioning front-ends to stand-alone, portable data recording systems for applications in aerospace, automotive, manufacturing, energy etc. The products are also available as rugged, portable computers built on their open-architecture platform.

VTU Engineering

VTU Engineering GmbH carries out design and planning in Pharmaceutical, Chemical & Environmental Engineering. Services include providing advice during the development of new processes and optimisation of operating plants, to planning large scale process plants.

VTU has offices in Austria and Germany. Since founded in 1990, VTU has grown into an enterprise of more than 50 highly engineers.

Company in the AC Styria: AVL – Acoustic Center

AVL is the world's largest privately owned provider and independent company for the development of power train systems with internal combustion engines as well as instrumentation and test systems.

AVL is running a competence centre called micro-cluster, together with the Technical University of Graz in the field of acoustics.

ACC Graz is the heart of a competence network, which encompasses research and development in an international context, especially in the field of vehicle acoustics, where the aim is to significantly reduce noise emission.

The four network founders (see below) own it and therefore direct its actions. The centre itself works with several measuring and testing tools, modern IT equipment etc. Additionally, it subsidises research efforts by students in the area of acoustics.

The network is formed by the University of Technology in Graz, its Institute for Internal Combustion Engines and Thermodynamics, AVL List and Magna Steyr. It is supported by the Federal Ministry for Economy and Labour, the Province of Styria, the city of Graz and the SFG. The Catholic University of Louvain, the University of Technology in Berlin and the University of Southampton are knowledge partners.

Day 3 – the Wood Cluster, know centre, Slovenia

Wood cluster Styria

Mr. Reitbauer (managing director of the wood cluster Styria) presented the history, the tasks and the future aspects of the wood cluster. In short, the presentation can be summarised as follows:

The wood cluster is a cluster organisation founded by the government of Styria and ProHolz Styria in the year 2000, to achieve synergetic effects between forestry, the wood working industry and the firms coupled with it. The cluster's main goal is to establish co-operations and networks, but also to initiate and organize processes and projects with the background of reaching regional and economic/political goals.

Today the cluster is a private limited company with two associates, the province of Styria represented by the SFG-Innofinanz with 26 % and the association "proHolz Styria" with 74 %.

The wood cluster Styria is basically a service providing and consulting company which initiates, accompanies and organizes projects with the goal of cost reduction and increasing yield. Furthermore, the cluster fulfils an interface function between economy, politics and science.

The initiated projects and ongoing market analysis should result in derived strategies for companies, which ensure sustainable success and eventually create a positive regional and economic effect.

There are approximately 60 companies, external consultants as well as research institutions representing the wood-related industry, joining the cluster. The fields of business activity of the wood cluster are:

- Networking / Cooperation
- Export / Benchmarking / Settling for companies
- Research and Development / Innovation
- Qualification / Education
- Communication / Marketing / Lobbying

The services of the cluster can be structured into three categories:

1. Services for cluster project partners: Individual services are offered as ordered by the companies and these services are financed by the companies and various clients.
2. Services for cluster partner companies: For these, service packages can be purchased, where the amount is depending on the number of employees. The financing is again taken over by the companies and clients.
3. Services for all companies: These are financed by the shareholders Styria and Pro-Holz

Know center – Knowledge management in Styria

Mr. Klaus Tochtermann presented the know-centre in Graz and two examples were elaborated upon in more detail. In short, the presentation can be summarised as follows:

The know-centre is Austria's Competence Centre for knowledge-based Applications and Systems. The core competences are in technology-oriented and human- & organisation-oriented knowledge management and their integration. As a connecting link between science and industry they conduct problem-driven, result-oriented and application-oriented projects in the field of knowledge management. The objective is to stimulate pre-competitive research and development cooperation between research institutions and industry. The close cooperation with research institutions such as Graz University of Technology and Joanneum Research ensures access to the latest research results. Together with partner companies, the transfer of scientific results into innovation for Styria in particular and for Austria in general should be achieved.

Currently 30 knowledge management experts work at the Know-Center. In full operation about 45 experts will be employed. The Know-Center started in January 2001 as an applied research institution within the Austrian Kplus Competence Center Program (www.kplus.at).

The competence Areas are:

- Area Knowledge Management and Organizational Memories
- Area Knowledge Organisation and Knowledge Transfer
- Area Knowledge Retrieval and Knowledge Visualisation

The partners of the know-centre are:

- Company Partners: e.g. Leykam Medien AG, Hyperwave Software Forschungs- und Entwicklungs GmbH, Magna Steyr.
- Scientific Partners: e.g. Graz University of Technology, Joanneum Research, Department of Psychology at Graz University.
- Other Partners: e.g. City of Graz, sfg, TIG (Technologie Impulse Gesellschaft mbH).

Technology Park in Pesnica, Slovenia

The first visit in Slovenia (except for lunch) was at the Technology Park in Pesnica. Mr. Knez (Managing Director of the technology park) gave a short presentation of the companies of the park and of future development strategies.

Cluster building activities in Maribor / Podravje Region, Slovenia

The second and last stop in Slovenia and the last business stop of the entire event was at the Maribor Chamber of Commerce and Industry where Mrs. Dubravka Breznik (the Managing Director of the Chamber) received the ACENET members.

Mrs. Breznik presented the activities of the Chamber including potential branches, cross-border, company need analyses as well as on-going projects and project ideas. Mrs. Breznik was keen on developing new networks and to launch development projects with interested network regions. ACENET members with interest in the region are encouraged to contact Mrs. Breznik.