

Request for official acceptance within the UN Network of Regional Centres of Expertise – Education for Sustainable Development



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Management and Governance Structure

The Regional Center of Expertise – Education for Sustainable Development Graz-Styria is located at the Institute of Geography and Regional Science at the University of Graz, Austria. The RCE is funded by the City of Graz for its first term from November 2006 until October 2007.

The RCE is led by Prof. Dr. Friedrich M. Zimmermann, Dean of the Institute of Geography and Regional Science and Vice Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer of the University of Graz.



Clemens Mader, is PhD Student and Research Associate at the Institute. He is responsible for the management, internal as well as external communication of the RCE.



Core elements of an RCE
Element 1. Governance - addressing issues of RCE management and leadership

Collaborative Structure

Partners of the RCE Graz-Styria are involved in projects or built strategic co-operations to promote education for sustainable development. By December 2006, partners of the RCE Graz-Styria are:

Element 2: Collaboration - addressing the engagement of actors from all levels of formal, non-formal and informal education in RCE activities

Within the University:

- ✚ Institute of Geography and Regional Science
- ✚ Institute of Innovation and Environmental Management
- ✚ oikos Graz – Students for Sustainable Economics and Management

Regional Level:

- ✚ Federal Government of Styria (Rural Development Resort)
- ✚ Land Development Styria (Consulting in Local and Regional Agenda 21 Processes)
- ✚ Global Marshall Plan Initiative – Local Committee Graz/Styria

National Level:

- ✚ Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour of the Republic of Austria
- ✚ Forum for Environmental Education (Institution by the Environmental as well as the Educational Federal Ministries of the Republic of Austria)
- ✚ Austrian UNESCO Commission

International Level:

- ✚ International Network on Transdisciplinary Case Studies for Sustainable Development
- ✚ United Nations University – Institute of Advanced Sciences, Yokohama, Japan
- ✚ RCE Global Network

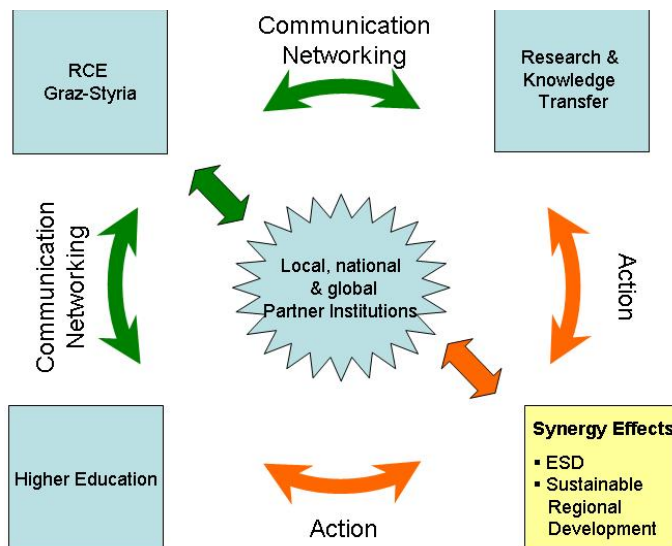


Figure 1: Communication and Networking Function of RCE Graz-Styria to enable ESD and Sustainable Regional Development Activities

Planned and On-going Research and Development Activities

The University of Graz and its facilitators of the RCE Graz-Styria have been involved in sustainability research in various fields for many years. The foundation of an RCE has been the logical further step to deepen and promote ongoing sustainability research and development activities on a local and global level.

The RCE strengthens and fosters regional, national and global co-operations and empowers strategies to implement research and education for sustainable development into the region of Graz-Styria.

Element 3. Research and development - addressing the role of research and its inclusion in RCE activities, as well as contributing to the design of strategies for collaborative activities, including those with other RCEs.

Research

- ✚ PhD: Change Management in Regions; a special focus will be given on effects of RCEs in regions (Mader: on-going – Oct. 2008)
- ✚ Sustainable Tourism (Zimmermann: on-going)
- ✚ Sustainable Urban Development (Zimmermann: on-going)
- ✚ Transdisciplinary Change Processes (Mader, Risopoulos, Steiner, Zimmermann: planned)
- ✚ Methods & Tools for Sustainable Development (Steiner/ Mader: on-going)

Development

- ✚ Opening Conference with OECD Workshop, 2007 March 27th-28th
- ✚ Sustainability Task Force – University of Graz (on-going)
- ✚ Sustainability Report 05 – University of Graz (finished)
- ✚ ESD Projects in regions in cooperation with RCE partner institutions and society
- ✚ Promotion to establish further RCEs in Austria

Planned and On-going Transformative Education Activities

By transformative education activities, awareness for sustainable development should be raised among university employees, students as well as the regional society.

Element 4: Transformative education - contributing to the transformation of the current education and training systems to satisfy ambitions of the region regarding sustainable living and livelihood.

On-going

- ✚ Monday Academy (University of Graz)
- ✚ MSc of Sustainable Regional Development (University of Graz)
- ✚ Sustainability Library at the University of Graz
- ✚ Activities in co-operation with oikos Graz – Students for Sustainable Economics and Management (Lectures, Workshops, Excursions,...)

Planned

- ✚ Regularly Information Packages for the Styrian Sustainability Website
- ✚ Summer Academy – Attractive Topic on Sustainability & Regional Development
- ✚ Courses and Seminars on Methods for Sustainable Change Processes in Regions
- ✚ Annual International Symposia
- ✚ Educational Projects in regions in cooperation with RCE partner institutions and society
- ✚ Bi-Annual Open Space Workshops (World Cafe) on Topics of Education for Sustainable Development

Process of RCE Mobilisation

The idea of launching an RCE Graz-Styria was already born in April 2005 during the conference on the International Launch in Higher Education of the UN DESD in Graz. During the conference, which was co-organised by the University of Graz, Zinaida Fadeeva, Research Associate of the United Nations University – Institute of Advanced Sciences in Yokohama, Japan, held a workshop, presenting the concept, idea and goals of RCEs. After some discussions with the facilitators, we found out, that this fits perfect into our Vision of integrating sustainability into our university as well as the region of Graz and Styria.

A year long, we had lots of dialogues and interviews with stakeholders from the region and tried to find out, what the needs are. The federal government of Styria invited us, to take part in a participation process, to discuss future scenarios for Styria and concrete steps towards a sustainable development. This participation process ended in summer 2006. At the same time, the city of Graz confirmed to finance a first year of launching the RCE and The Federal Government of Styria agreed on a co-operation to foster education for sustainable development as well as sustainable regional development.

By November 2006, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy and Labour as well as the Forum for Environmental Education, an Institution by the Ministries of Education and Environment also agreed on partnerships with the common goal to promote the idea of RCEs in Austria. The official Conference on the Launch of the RCE Graz-Styria will be organized



together with the partner institutions in March 2007.

Regional Situation & Challenges

By 2001, the province of Styria counts about 1.200.000 inhabitants. Styria is located in the south-east of Austria (about 8.200.000 inhabitants), has 142km borders to Slovenia in the south and is close to Hungary in the east. Provincial capital of Styria is the city of Graz with about 230.000 inhabitants. The Austrian capital Vienna is about 200km away from Graz.

The area of Styria is geographically very diverse, with high mountain regions (alps) in the north and west and flat and hilly lands in the south-eastern part.



Figure 2: Map of Austria; Styria with its capital in the South/East of Austria and bordering to Slovenia. (Source: <http://mstecker.com>)

Challenges

As the geographical situation of Styria is very diverse, so is also the economy. Styria is branded of old industrial, mining and rural areas, affected by migration as well as regions prospering from tourism or effects of central urban areas like the city of Graz.

Facing those regional challenges and resulting effects like migration not only of people but also of local health services, educational institutions, food markets, employment opportunities or recreation possibilities, the federal government of Styria has already made efforts to counteract those developments.

Since 1997, more than 100 villages were certified as Local or Regional Agenda 21. The regions focused on promoting regional supply services, business potentials as well as raising consciousness for the local identity of the people.

The University of Graz is the oldest university in Styria with a long history (founded in 1585). Ever since, the university had strong relations with

central and south eastern European universities. Since Austria entered the European Union in 1995 and its neighbouring countries Slovenia and Hungary joined in 2004, relationships to universities in those countries could be built up even closer. At the same time, the university reflects its position in society and answers to its social responsibility by profiling itself in the fields of sustainability research and education.

During the past years the university has built up contacts to sustainability stakeholders in Styria, Austria and crossing borders. In context with the foundation of the RCE Graz-Styria, those contacts should become partnerships to follow common goals in research and education for sustainable development.