



## 1. General information on the project

### ➤ Short name

Meisterstrasse Austria (Master Craftsmen Route Salzkammergut)

### ➤ Title of the project

Cluster of high quality handcraft– Meisterstrasse Austria

### ➤ Themes

- Regional value added
- Governance capacity
- Protected areas
- Mobility
- New forms of decision-making
- Policies and instruments

### ➤ Region

At present Inneres Salzkammergut. In October 2005 geographical extension of the project: 7 new Austrian regions join the project.

### ➤ Are there one or several centres in the region?

The selected project regions as a whole represent the centres. They are the places of production at which regional value added is generated.

The current centre is the region Inneres Salzkammergut in which the project Meisterstrasse has already been implemented. A geographical extension is planned in October 2005:

- Upper Austria: Regatta: Attersee / Attergau
- Upper Austria: Mondseeland
- Lower Austria: Traisental –Donauland (including St.Pölten – Krems – Tulln)
- Styria: Steirisches Vulkanland
- Styria: Steirisches Salzkammergut - Ausseerland
- Styria: Mariazellerland – Mürztal (including Steirische Eisenstraße)
- Styria: Holzwelt Austria

In addition, Meisterstrasse Austria intends to implement the project in the town Salzburg too: Meisterstadt Salzburg.

### ➤ Country

Austria

### ➤ Alpine Perimeter

The project is located within the alpine perimeter.

### ➤ Duration of the project

10 / 2001 – 10 / 2007 (phase of building up the network)

### ➤ Short description of the project

Meisterstrasse Austria is a network of the best Austrian handicraft enterprises concerning quality and regional cultural heritage. It aims at a cross sectoral cooperation of selected handicraft enterprises according to the particular characteristics of each region. It comprises, for example, the following branches:



- building craft,
- boat-builder and –restorer,
- producer of spectacles,
- tailors,
- turneries,
- carpenters,
- bakers,
- glaziers,
- goldsmiths,
- hatters,
- forgers,
- confectionery,
- kiln engineering, etc.

The small handicraft enterprises benefit from a professional marketing, new chances for cooperation and a fair prices due to their high quality image.

The project helps to preserve the regional cultural heritage and represents a counter movement to the current throw-away society. It connects handicraft and design, functionality and aesthetics, tradition and innovation within handicraft.

➤ **Project executive**

Project executive for the cross regional implementation:

„Meisterstrasse Marketing“ CN Rath OEG  
Nicola und Christoph Rath  
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1130 Wien  
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Email: [office@meisterstrasse.at](mailto:office@meisterstrasse.at)  
Homepage: [www.meisterstrasse.at](http://www.meisterstrasse.at)

Main responsibilities:

- Development and implementation of the concept Meisterstrasse
- Public relations activities concerning the brand Meisterstrasse Austria
- Selection of adequate handicraft enterprises
- Establishing a network of handicraft enterprises
- Providing a basic offer for its members (advertising media, etc.) and offering additional features, e.g. events, workshops, etc.
- Organisation of national and international presentations (a regional organiser is responsible for regional events and presentations)
- Intensification of the connections to the tourism sector (networking)
- Foster cooperations of handicraft enterprises
- Internal evaluation

Project executive in the sense of the European Community Initiative Leader+ is the particular Local Action Group:

Association REGIS (Verein Regionalentwicklung Inneres Salzkammergut = LAG Kulturerbe Salzkammergut, welche die Regionen Inneres Salzkammergut, Bad Ischl und Wolfgangsee umfasst)  
CEO Erni Kals  
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Main responsibilities:

- The project executive Association Regis has put the Meisterstrasse Marketing CN Rath OEG exclusively in charge of the regional implementation of the project.



- Administration of subsidies
- Official evaluation for the Leader+ Programme

The project executives for the 7 accessory regions are too the respective Local Action Groups. Furthermore, a leading LAG is announced in each Austrian:

- Styria: Steirisches Vulkanland
- Upper Austria: Mondseeland

➤ **Contact person**

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➤ **Participants and external cooperations**

- 37 handicraft enterprises (currently) of various branches in the region Inneres Salzkammergut and 12 partner businesses in the regions Mondsee and Attersee.
- Local Action Groups of the regions as project executive (Inneres Salzkammergut: Association Regis)
- Regional organisers acting as contact persons for the handicraft enterprises and being responsible for regional events and presentations (Inneres Salzkammergut: consultancy agency GoisernConsult).

Important partners:

- Economic Chamber of Upper Austria (support in events, fairs, pilot project “Meisterstrasse – cooperation consultancy”, uses the project as opportunity to present itself)
- Tourism sector because it acquires potential customers and includes the theme handicraft in its cultural offers (cooperation in the marketing of the “Meisterstrasse Tours”). The marketing of the packages is conducted in cooperation with an incoming partner on site.
- Austrian Ministry of Economics and Labour, the Province of Upper Austria and the European Union via Leader+ act as financial backers.

➤ **Key person**

Nicola and Christoph Rath represent the driving forces of the project. The regional handicraft enterprises regard them as external persons all the same. This enables them to implement and market the project in a professional way.

They instigate constant learning processes in order to boost the project and adapt it to regional characteristics and requests.

➤ **Identification**

Raising awareness and supporting the population’s identification with their region is part of the project. Addressing the target groups of the handicraft enterprises (mainly outside the region, urban regions, etc.) is only one side of the project. As the region represents the social environment of the craftsmen, it is important to develop a certain consciousness within the regional population in order to preserve technical know how and the regional cultural heritage for future generations.

➤ **Objectives**

- Broaching the issue of handicraft and presenting it to the general public.
- Raising awareness for handicraft and its high quality products within and beyond the region in order to address new customers and to increase the population’s identification with the region.
- Creating a new quality image of handicraft by connecting tradition and innovation.



- Increasing the competitiveness of the region Salzkammergut and its handicraft enterprises outside the region.
- Safeguarding the existence of the handicraft by generating regional value added.
- Fostering cooperations, networking and the exchange of know how of the handicraft enterprises.
- Integrating a sufficient number of handicraft enterprises (30 – 40 at average) in order to ensure that the cooperation Meisterstrasse Austria can pay for itself in future.
- Getting fair prices for high quality products in order to guarantee a adequate payment for the craftsmen.
- Entering new markets (urban regions, international markets, etc.).

➤ **Activities:**

- Conceptual design, strategy and documentation
- Selecting adequate handicraft enterprises according to different criterions (product criterions, criterions referring to the enterprise) and establishing a network of partner enterprises.
- Raising awareness of the craftsmen themselves, the regional population and the customers by marketing and participating in events, fairs, etc. E.g. Meisteradvent in Vienna, Handicraft Fair in Munich, Meistertage at a the local hotel Weißes Rössl am Wolfgangsee etc.
- Marketing: producing advertising media (information brochures, folders, Homepage, press releases, etc.), branding “Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut” and “Meisterstrasse Austria”, participation in different events inside and outside the region (fairs, exhibitions, etc.), classical public relation activities (TV reports, newspapers, etc.)
- Fostering cooperation and networking between the handicraft enterprises: e.g. a regional platform came into existence (Verein Trachten- und Handwerksstrasse Salzkammergut), temporary cooperations in certain projects (construction or renovation of a house, etc.).
- Cooperation with the tourism sector: marketing of Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut Tours on different topics (handicraft and traditional costume, culinary art, the emperor’s handicraft – Bad Ischl, living and lifestyle) as tourism attraction.
- Subproject „Meisterstrasse – cooperation consultancy“: the Economic Chamber of Upper Austria promotes the consultancy handicraft enterprises in order to strengthen their competitiveness, detect potentials for cooperations, improve the customer contact of the handicraft enterprises. The subproject is conducted by the consultancy agency GoisernConsult in cooperation with CN Rath OEG.
- Geographical extension of the concept Meisterstrasse: 7 – 8 further Austrian regions, consideration of an international implementation (South Tyrol, Bavaria).

➤ **Process**

1. Phase (10 / 2001 – 8 / 2002) – pilot project Meisterstrasse Bad Goisern: The project aimed at testing the concept in one single municipality: is it possible to implement a cross-sectoral high quality handicraft cluster, are the craftsmen willing to cooperate among each other and can they maintain a high level of quality? The project in Bad Goisern comprised 9 handicraft enterprises of different branches which supported participated in the improvement of the concept Meisterstrasse.
2. Phase (1 / 2002 – 12 / 2005) – geographical extension: the Meisterstrasse Inneres Salzkammergut was established: searching for new handicraft enterprises, raising awareness within the region and addressing the target markets, creating an internet portal for the project Meisterstrasse, public relation activities.  
In addition, the Economic Chamber of Upper Austria started the project “Meisterstrasse – cooperation consultancy” to support handicraft enterprises and improve the competitiveness of the cluster.
3. Phase (10 / 2005 – 10 / 2008) – planned geographical extension of the concept Meisterstrasse: 7 – 8 further Austrian regions (Upper Austria, Lower Austria and Styria). Here too, Meisterstrasse has to search adequate handicraft enterprises, establish a network between these and raise the awareness for handicraft.  
Furthermore Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut has to continue without receiving subsidies, The existing number of members, however, ought to ensure that the project can pay for itself. The



member fees cover the basic offer for the handicraft enterprises. Additional features may be financed by national subsidies and sponsors.

➤ **Results**

- Meisterstrasse has developed an quality image within handicraft in the region Inneres Salzkammergut.
- The level of quality is rising continually because of the existing driving power in the network. The craftsmen motivate each other.
- Cooperations between members of the project have established without external intervention.
- The region is aware of handicraft and this awareness contributed to the population's identification with the region Inneres Salzkammergut.
- The brand Meisterstrasse is well-established on the target markets.
- The publicity increases due to the extension of the project on 7 further Austrian regions.
- Preservation of the regional cultural heritage and adapting handicraft on today's requirements: connecting handicraft and innovation.
- Successful events increasing the sales of the craftsmen, e.g. Meisteradvent Vienna, Holiday Fair Vienna 2005, fairs in Munich and Salzburg, Meistertage in St. Wolfgang, etc.
- Establishing media cooperations, e.g. ORF and different print media.
- Integrating the tourism sector (“Meisterstrasse Tour”).
- Awards: 15. Handicraft Award of Upper Austria for 2 members.

➤ **Is there made use of endogenous resources? Which ones?**

Regional handicraft and its production methods using regional resources. The project safeguards the know how of the craftsmen for future generations.

➤ **What is the specific relevance of the results for the Alps?**

An economic project is promoted in a region characterised by tourism. The region obtains new chance based on their potential and may develop a second economic pillar. The population is aware of handicraft and may try to use this potential (interest of young people in handicraft, innovation, reducing migration and creating regional value added).

➤ **Evaluation**

Official Leader + evaluation.

Internal evaluation (every 1 ½ years): inquiry of the members to the following criterions:

- Satisfaction (with events, advertising media, regional organisers, etc.),
- Profit (additional sales due to events, new customers due to marketing activities, etc.),
- Organisational structure (size, sales, kind of advertising media, information on customers, objectives, etc.).

The results show if the handicraft enterprises benefit from their membership, if the concept Meisterstrasse or the basic offer for the members has to be adapted, etc.

Previous evaluations led to the introduction of a regional organiser, the adoption of the basic offer (events were excluded from the basic offer because the events do not fit every member), etc.

An extra evaluation exists for some big subprojects (e.g. fairs) exists: inquiries directly after the fair and after a half year. This evaluation helps to analyse the direct effects of the events on the sales and number of customers.

➤ **Difficulties**

- Geographical extension on the region Inneres Salzkammergut: Bad Goisern identified with the project and had developed a good reputation. Therefore, it was difficult to transfer the project on the region Inneres Salzkammergut too and to find partners.
- Size of Meisterstrasse Austria: on the one hand the project has to guarantee the exclusiveness of the handicraft cluster, on the other hand it is necessary to have a certain number of members to implement the project in a sustainable way. This dilemma may be



solved by an effective structuring in the regions: being exclusive within the regions and having a certain solid number of members altogether.

- The handicraft enterprises' inhibition threshold to address Christoph and Nicola Rath with problems or questions. To overcome these inhibitions a regional organiser was introduced (speaking the same language).
- Convince the regional stakeholders of the project's value: the regional authorities related the question of implementation with the number of participating businesses at project start (Is there a demand among the businesses at all?). As acquisition of partner businesses is oneself one of the central project activities, it required enormous preparatory work to demonstrate the regional demand for the project. Experience shows that the first project participants comprise only the real pioneers among the businesses. The other businesses join after a period of 2 -3 years at average. The acquisition of partner businesses is thereby an important part of the project instead of preparatory work.

➤ **Budget and financial backer**

Pilot project: Meisterstrasse Bad Goisern (10/2001 – 08/2002):

costs:	€ 130.080,-
subsidy (EU - Leader+):	€ 102.764,-

Project Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut (01/2002 – 12/2005):

costs:	€ 587.396,-
subsidy (EU – Leader+):	€ 464.043,-

The project is promoted from EU, national funds and funds of the Province of Upper Austria. The promotion covers the selection of members, the establishment of a network between them and the marketing of the brand Meisterstrasse Austria.

The annual member fees (lump sum of € 1.035) cover the basic offer for the handicraft enterprises (advertising media, folder, signposts, etc.).

➤ **Informationsquellen zum Projekt:**

Homepage, Publikationen, Kontakt, Links

Homepage: [www.meisterstrasse.at](http://www.meisterstrasse.at)

Catalogue “Meisterstücke aus dem Salzkammergut“

Folder “Unterwegs auf der Meisterstrasse im Salzkammergut“

➤ **Bewertung der Dokumentation des Projekts**



## **2. Comments on the best practice example**

### **➤ Impact on nature and environment**

Handicraft itself represents a sustainable and environmentally-sound production method due to the usage of regional resources and the small level of mechanisation. The transport routes (concerning the raw materials) and the routes to the working places are shortened. Handicraft produces durable goods.

### **➤ Economic value added**

It is difficult to measure direct economic effects of the project because it focuses the marketing of the handicraft enterprises under an umbrella brand name.

The existing small handicraft enterprises were safeguarded and their competitiveness has risen. They concentrate on high quality products enabling them to address an adequate target group (fair prices). The project helps to maintain the regional economic structure (small sized enterprises), thereby using the regional resources and potential.

The location Inneres Salzkammergut is boosted: this reduces the trend for migration. The population recognises new chances and possibilities within their region.

The project established networks to the tourism sector by marketing Meisterstrassen Tours as tourism attraction and thereby attracting new customers. Furthermore, cooperations between the members of Meisterstrasse Austria come into existence.

The handicraft enterprises entered new markets with their products: especially urban regions (Salzburg, Munich, Vienna, Linz and Graz). The quality of the products increases and new products develop (handicraft and innovation).

### **➤ Socio-cultural value added**

The regional stakeholders are aware of the high quality handicraft and identify again with their region. This acceptance ensures the continuity of regional handicraft.

Furthermore the dusty image of handicraft has changed: art and innovation become part of handicraft.

The project preserves the cultural heritage of the region and gives tourists an understanding of it.

The craftsmen build a community and develop a new self-confidence (club of the best). This encourages and motivates them to increase the quality of their products steadily.

The project attracts young people: they are again interested in handicraft due to its modern image. And young people are important for the handicraft's future continuity.

### **➤ Innovative elements**

- Improving and changing the image of handicraft: the region considers handicraft as strength and potential.
- Handicraft is presented in a modern way: connection of handicraft and innovation.
- A touristic region fosters an economic project and thereby generating new chances for its population.
- Networking and cooperation among craftsmen: awareness to be in a club of the best and commitment to maintain and increase the high quality level in this club. The image of high quality is also presented in the tourism sector (Meisterstrasse Tours).

### **➤ Good Governance**

The project considers the opinions of its participants: the internal evaluations guarantee that opinions, problems and dissatisfaction are taken into account. The project faces a constant learning process and tries to develop an adequate offer for each handicraft enterprise and each region.



The transparency of the cluster and its decisions is ensured by clear structures. The members know what happens with their member fee (provision of the basic offer) and may intervene if they are not satisfied.

The exchange of information between the participants is sufficient: public relations activities, meetings at regular intervals, regional platforms, etc.

➤ **Public Relations**

The project is a marketing and PR project: classic public relation activities (magazines, TV, Internet) and establishment of media cooperations, e.g. ORF reports and print media portraying single handicraft enterprises of Meisterstrasse Austria.

The members are provided with advertising media and may benefit from consultancy (seminars and workshops). They receive training in different areas by external experts, e.g. customer retention, presentation on fairs, etc.

➤ **Multiplier effects and networking**

The regional network due to the project's activities is visible and noticeable: new cooperations emerge between handicraft enterprises, feeling of solidarity and proud has developed. The participating handicraft enterprises recommend each other to customers.

A connection to the tourism sector has been established (handicraft as tourism attraction) in order to address and attract new customers. Therefore, Meisterstrassen Tours on different topics have been developed.

➤ **Transferability**

The idea of the project is transferable but has to consider the particular characteristics of each region being reflected in the selection of the participating handicraft enterprises. Furthermore, the principles of the concept have to be fulfilled: exclusiveness, high quality level, products telling a story).

Furthermore, the population must not be neglected: beside attracting the target markets, the project has to raise awareness within the region and its population in order to transfer the image to its guests and target groups.

The extension beyond the Austrian borders to the Alpine perimeter (establishing leading regions and leading companies area-wide) is desirable in order to strengthen to common European identity of handicraft.

➤ **Further information and uploads**