

ECONOMIC STRATEGY

LOWER AUSTRIA

2030+

STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY.
SECURING THE FUTURE.





Photo: NLK Pfeiffer

FOREWORD

Lower Austria's economy is built on a solid foundation and has evolved into a strong economic region defined by excellent research, innovation, new technologies, and sustainable projects. Challenging conditions such as geopolitical uncertainties, and demographic and climatic developments, require us not only to accept change but to actively shape it – decisively, reliably, and with a clear focus on the future. This strategy is intended to serve that purpose.

The Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ sets the framework for new initiatives, instruments, and measures to sustainably strengthen Lower Austria as a business location. At its heart are three complementary goals designed to achieve a collective impact: **Increasing competitiveness** through productivity gains – particularly via digitalisation – and by reducing bureaucratic hurdles. **Strengthening the economic foundation** with a specific focus on the industrial core, as well as the manufacturing sector and skilled trades. **Expanding innovation and research** by supporting excellence in corporate performance and promoting close networking between science and industry in key technologies.

Our aim is to create a framework that rewards entrepreneurship, attracts talent, facilitates investment, and accelerates the transfer of knowledge into value creation. In doing so, we are strengthening the future viability of the region for established leading companies, business relocations, and startups alike. This strategy is our mandate to secure the framework for well-paid jobs, and thus prosperity and quality of life for the people of Lower Austria – and our promise to position our state as a strong and competitive economic hub in Europe.

Johanna Mikl-Leitner

GOVERNOR

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IMPRINT

Publisher: State of Lower Austria
Office of the Lower Austrian State Government
Department of Economy, Tourism and Technology

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Editorial: Department of Economy, Tourism and Technology

Design: Studio Ideenladen GmbH, 3500 Krems;

Proofreading: online-lektorat.at - Language Services

Print: Office of the Lower Austrian State Government, State Administration Directorate,
Department of Building and Property Management, State Printing Office

Cover photo: AdobeStock/iamchamp; Status: January 2026



PROCESS

The Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ was based on a broad-based survey and development process. The goal was to create a future-oriented and sustainable foundation for the state's economic policy measures.

The content was based on the Lower Austrian state strategy „**Mein Land denkt an Morgen**“. Promoting digitalisation, strengthening the export economy, and deregulation, as well as fostering entrepreneurship and regional innovation, are essential aspects of the state strategy. This strategy also clarifies that to strengthen the business location, regions must be developed according to their specific challenges and opportunities (e.g. expansion of technology centres and development hubs).

In this context, "smart specialisation" is to be continued, excellence developed, digital infrastructure expanded, and flagship projects secured. Furthermore, relevant strategies at the federal level (e.g. Industrial Strategy, Location Strategy) were taken into account.

Additionally, the Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ aligns with the **Strategic Agenda of the European Union 2024-2029**. Its objectives - particularly strengthening Europe's long-term competitiveness, the simultaneous green and digital transformation, resilient supply chains and key technologies, as well as investment in innovation, decarbonisation, and security - are incorporated into Lower Austria's regional priorities. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are equally relevant in this context.

The Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ combines all these guidelines with findings from the development process, forming the framework for the intended objectives, action areas, and resulting measures.



Photo: Andreas Hofer

A central starting point for the strategy was the so-called "entrepreneurial discovery process". This method was intentionally chosen to ensure the broadest possible participation of various stakeholders (e.g. companies, researchers, students) through numerous dialogues. The concerns and assessments of various interest groups - specifically the Lower Austrian Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Austrian Industries (Lower Austria) - as well as all organizational units of the Lower Austrian Department of Economy, such as ecoplus (Lower Austria's Business Agency) and N.vest (StateBusiness Financing), were also incorporated into the strategy. The Lower Austria **Economic Strategy 2030+** was formed from all these contributions.

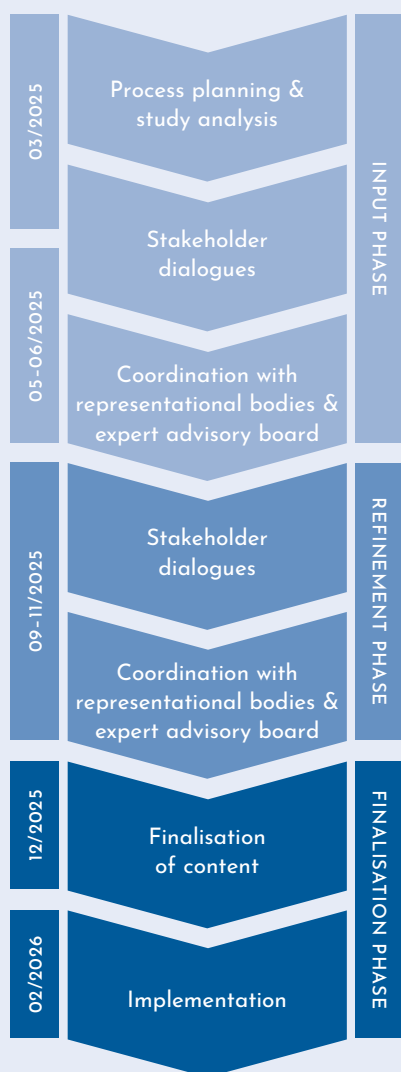
This open process allowed practical requirements to be merged with strategic considerations within the strategy.

The findings and considerations were reviewed, evaluated, and finally confirmed by the **"Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich"** expert advisory board (comprising experts from various disciplines).

This strategy forms the basis for the measures and activities of all organizational units of the Lower Austrian Department of Economy and is accompanied by other theme-specific strategies, e.g. on digitalisation, spin-offs, and tourism. To ensure holistic, future-proof location development, close cross-departmental cooperation and joint coordination of operational measures are planned within the state government.

Key results and themes from the process:

- Qualification for new technologies
- Stronger networking between companies and institutions
- Supporting innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Reducing bureaucratic hurdles
- More attractive framework conditions for startups



STATUS QUO & GUIDING VISION

Lower Austria's economy is built on a solid foundation. In recent decades, the state has successfully managed the structural shift from a regional economy dominated by primary production to a technology-intensive, export-oriented economic region.

Building on this, eco-digital transformation and the promotion of innovation have become the central focus of economic policy. Today, a multipolar development approach - featuring excellent research, new technologies, sustainable projects, and a vibrant startup landscape - defines the profile of the region. The "Zukunft. Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich" concept initiated the expansion of the Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2025 in 2023 to respond to interim developments.

Additionally, work began on the Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ to ensure a clear guideline for the years ahead.

Defined by excellent research, innovation, new technologies, and sustainable projects, the Lower Austrian economy possesses excellent prerequisites for a strategic realignment: a broad base of successful companies, an

active startup scene, technology parks and research facilities, diverse educational institutions, and innovative digitalisation initiatives. All these businesses, institutions, and facilities act as engines for innovation and growth, incubators for new businesses, and bridges to new markets - in urban centres and rural regions alike.

This starting position gives rise to the ambition of positioning Lower Austria as a **premium region** in an "age of upheaval": with innovative ideas, outstanding quality, and strong implementation. A high-performance, competitive, and resilient economy remains the backbone of **prosperity, quality of life, security, and social cohesion**. It creates jobs, secures incomes, and provides the basis for sustainable investment in infrastructure, education, and innovation - for the benefit of both current and future generations.



Photo: Andreas Hofer

"Lower Austria's strength lies in its diversity: a broad sectoral structure and innovative companies of all sizes. This foundation makes our region resilient and future-proof, and our companies secure jobs, prosperity, and quality of life throughout the regions."

WOLFGANG ECKER

President of the Lower Austrian Chamber of Commerce



Photo: Rita Newmar

"Lower Austria relies on an international, competitive industrial sector. The Economic Strategy 2030+ focuses on industrial needs and must foster the right framework conditions for a successful future, which can only be achieved through decisive reforms."

KARI OCHSNER

President of the Federation of Austrian Industries
(Lower Austria)



Photo: IV NO/Marius Hofinger



The Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ is therefore based on a clear design mandate:

It focuses on innovative solutions, increasing competitiveness, and the sustainable profiling of the region.

It thus provides the strategic framework not just to react to changes, but to actively shape them – with clear goals, bold measures, and a commitment to further developing Lower Austria as a strong, innovative, and resilient business location in the heart of Europe. This understanding forms the basis of the guiding vision and aspirations for the coming years.

Lower Austria is becoming an economic premium region under the central theme:

Lower Austria: A Hub for Business

**Strengthening the
Economy.**

**Securing the
Future.**

Quality is the priority, meaning: high standards in products and services, excellent education and training for entrepreneurs and specialists, reliable processes, and collaborative partnership between industry, science, and administration. Digitalisation and sustainability are cross-cutting principles at every stage of value creation. This strategy strengthens the industrial backbone as well as the manufacturing sector and skilled trades, promotes innovation – particularly in SMEs and startups – and consistently translates research into market-ready applications. The goal is to increase productivity and resilience, open up new markets, and create future opportunities for companies.

THE STRATEGY

Central Theme - Goals - Action Areas

STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY. SECURING THE FUTURE.

Increasing competitiveness

Strengthening the economic foundation

Expanding innovation and research

Digitalisation, productivity growth & smart regulation

Sustainable location profiling

Research, innovation, startups & market implementation



Photo: Andreas Hofer



OBJECTIVES & ACTION AREAS

Three goals were derived from the broad participation process:

Competitiveness is to be driven by consistent productivity increases, supported by effective digitalisation measures along the value chain and the reduction of bureaucratic hurdles as a foundation for stable growth.

The **economic foundation** and entrepreneurial base – specifically the industrial core, manufacturing, and skilled trades – are to be further strengthened to secure high regional value creation and qualified jobs, while increasing economic resilience across all regions of the state.

Furthermore, **innovation and research** are to be expanded by specifically supporting excellence in companies – especially SMEs and startups – and further

intensifying the close networking of science and industry in key technologies.

Based on these three goals, **three action areas** were defined, which encapsulate the planned instruments, activities, and measures. These are:

- 1 Digitalisation, productivity growth & smart regulation
- 2 Sustainable location profiling
- 3 Research, innovation, startups & market implementation



DIGITALISATION, PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH & SMART REGULATION

In the "Digitalisation, Productivity Growth & Smart Regulation" action area, the enhancement of digitalisation activities in companies is enabled and specifically promoted. Through automation and the use of artificial intelligence, processes are to be accelerated and new business models and innovations unlocked, leading to measurable productivity gains and further increasing the competitiveness of Lower Austrian companies in the medium term. Implementation involves providing offerings in the areas of awareness-raising, consulting, and subsidies, as well as suitable financing instruments. Qualification and networking projects within existing cooperation programmes - such as through the "House

of Digitalisation" and various clusters - form central building blocks.

Necessary new regulations will be analysed and tested for their suitability. Smart regulation is anchored as a fundamental principle in procedures, permits, and regulations. Planned measures aim to improve and/or accelerate processes, including through the "Verfahrens-express plus" (Fast-Track Procedure Plus). The goal is to allow entrepreneurs to focus on their core business and the innovative development of their products and services.



"The industrialisation of AI represents a major opportunity for companies to make their processes more efficient and thus increase their productivity. Startups focusing on AI, in particular, play a vital role in this process."

SEPP HOCHREITER

is a Professor at Johannes Kepler University Linz, where he heads the Institute for Machine Learning and the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. Prof. Hochreiter is a pioneer in artificial intelligence research and a member of the "Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich" expert advisory board.

Photo: JKU

"If we want to reduce bureaucracy, we must digitalise processes and utilise AI effectively. This reduces the effort and costs for companies, and thus the price for consumers. Furthermore, it increases competitiveness and allows companies to focus once again on their core business: value creation."

DANIEL VARRO

is Vice-Rector and Professor at the University for Continuing Education Krems, and a renowned expert in the field of tax law and sustainable tax policy. Prof. Varro is a member of the "Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich" expert advisory board.



ECONOMIC STRATEGY
LOWER AUSTRIA 2030+



SUSTAINABLE LOCATION PROFILING

Lower Austrian companies represent high quality – a central stability and competitiveness factor, particularly in challenging times. This action area aims to systematically strengthen the use of new methods in testing, certification, and servicing, while simultaneously developing innovative technologies so that new products and solutions reach market maturity more easily and quickly. Supporting this, qualification measures directly within companies will be strengthened, and networking between companies intensified to initiate collaborations and accelerate knowledge transfer.

The topic of security is becoming increasingly important in light of geopolitical crises. European initiatives in this area create new opportunities for Lower Austrian companies to contribute their expertise and quality to security-relevant value chains, in accordance with the applicable legal framework.

Lower Austria as a business location is further enhanced through the targeted expansion of infrastructure, the relocation of new companies, and support for startups and existing businesses. Climate-proof location development, focusing on the careful use of natural resources, is a key component – as is the demand-oriented provision of optimal spaces, such as laboratory and development environments. Matching financing and subsidy options complement this offer. The exploration of new export markets will be continued in close cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, allowing companies to position their quality effectively on the international stage. At the same time, it is important to strengthen the resilience of the domestic economy to reduce dependence on critical raw materials and goods from abroad.

“Made and tested in Lower Austria’ is more than a geographical indication of origin. It reflects the ambition to integrate innovation, production, and quality assurance across the entire value chain, grounded in excellence in qualification, certification, and servicing.”

CHRISTIAN HELMENSTEIN

is the Head of the Economica Institute, Chief Economist of the Federation of Austrian Industries, Professor of Economics at the Private University Schloss Seeburg, and Chairman of the “Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich” expert advisory board.



Photo: Tom Matanovic

“Those who do business responsibly create the basis for sustainable innovation. In Lower Austria, many companies demonstrate how climate protection, progress, and economic success can succeed together.”

DANIELA KNIELING

is the Managing Director of respACT (Austrian Business Council for Sustainable Development) and a CSR expert with many years of national and international experience in the field of responsible business management. Ms Knieling is a member of the “Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich” expert advisory board.



Photo: Daniel Willinger

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RESEARCH, INNOVATION, STARTUPS & MARKET IMPLEMENTATION

Lower Austria possesses excellent conditions to sustainably drive research, innovation, and knowledge-based business startups. The goal is to systematically utilise existing potential and translate scientific findings more effectively into economic and social value creation. A key focus is on leveraging existing location factors, particularly Lower Austria's strong position in the fields of environmental, resource, and circular economy, as well as health, materials, and production technologies. Educational institutions such as universities of applied sciences and universities, as well as research facilities (e.g. ISTA), play a central role as catalysts for innovation and qualification, providing the foundation for transfer-

ring knowledge into marketable solutions. Research and innovation projects - for example, in the strength areas of rail and space technology - and their commercialisation are a central building block for the development and competitiveness of the economy. They will continue to be professionally supported by a suite of instruments, ranging from subsidies and consulting to cooperation projects, management services, and infrastructure. The focus is on promoting excellent research and the rapid market implementation of new products, solutions, and services, including through targeted support for prototype development.

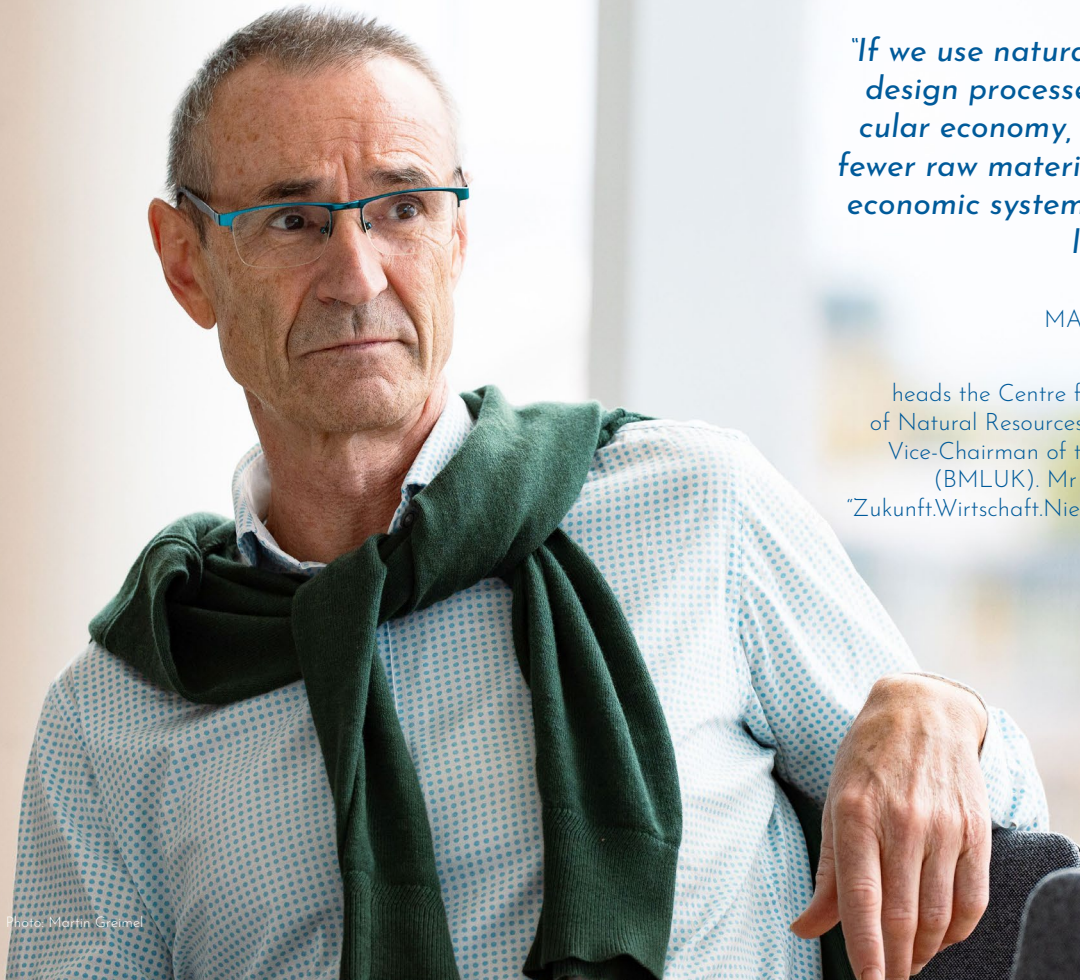


Photo: Martin Greimel

"If we use natural resources sparingly and design processes efficiently within a circular economy, we will need significantly fewer raw materials. This is the basis for an economic system that is sustainable in the long term."

MARTIN GREIMEL

heads the Centre for Bioeconomy at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, and is Vice-Chairman of the Circular Economy Task Force (BMLUK). Mr Greimel is a member of the "Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich" expert advisory board.

"Interdisciplinary networking between science and industry - particularly in key technologies - is a decisive lever for increasing economic innovative power and addressing societal challenges, by translating research results as effectively as possible into value creation."

ALEXANDRA MAZAK-HUEMER

is the Deputy Managing Director of the Austrian Council for Sciences, Technology and Innovation and heads the RTI Monitor.

Her focus areas are evidence-based decision-making, R&D indicators, competitiveness in RTI, digital transformation, and key technologies. Ms Mazak-Huemer is a member of the "Zukunft.Wirtschaft.Niederösterreich" expert advisory board.



Photo: Luiza Puiu



Photo: Andreas Höfer

The Lower Austrian innovation ecosystem connects stakeholders across industry boundaries and structures in an interdisciplinary manner to generate innovations for complex challenges. Active networking of relevant actors, ideal framework conditions, and concrete support for innovation and research projects throughout the entire development process are central aspects. Thematic funding calls support this by picking up on niche topics and future technologies and driving them forward in a targeted way.

A special focus lies on fully exploiting the startup potential in and for Lower Austria. This includes demand-oriented support offerings - such as thematically focused incubators like the "Makerspace" - as well as facilitating financing for startups and spin-offs in cooperation with other investors. Additionally, awareness-raising at universities and universities of applied sciences - also in an international environment - plays an important role in identifying startup opportunities arising from research.

IMPLEMENTATION

Temporary work programmes with clearly defined instruments, measures, and activities are derived from and implemented based on the Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+. Each **work programme** includes a set of support instruments, such as subsidies, financing, and incubator offers, which are adapted to the guidelines of the strategy and overarching strategic requirements (EU, federal, state) to address current challenges. Furthermore, it includes development projects in thematic fields prioritised in the strategy that are now being specifically addressed.

Systematic evaluation is conducted to ensure impact and a steady learning curve.



"The Lower Austria Economic Strategy 2030+ forms the basis for all support services provided by the organizational units of the Lower Austrian Department of Economy. The goal is always to ensure the competitiveness of our companies, to sustainably strengthen the entrepreneurial base, and to accelerate innovation."

KURT HACKL

Chairman of the Supervisory Board, ecoplus.
Lower Austria's Business Agency GmbH

ECONOMIC STRATEGY
LOWER AUSTRIA 2030+

The background of the page features a blurred image of a person sitting at a desk, working on a computer. Overlaid on this image is a semi-transparent financial chart, specifically a candlestick chart, which is positioned on the right side of the page. The chart shows several white candlesticks with black outlines, indicating price movements. The overall color palette is light blue and white, with a prominent yellow border framing the central text area.

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