

Forward-looking project secured Fresh water for the Oststeiermark region



Transport pipeline centenary project for the Oststeiermark region (Austria)

Although the wealth of water enjoyed by Austria is regarded by its population as almost part of its national identity, there are nevertheless significant regional differences with regard to the reliability of the local water supply. When the economy in low-moisture areas grows strongly, the water supply is faced with severe challenges.

According to scientists at Joanneum Research (JR), parts of the Oststeiermark, Lower Austria and Burgenland are characterised by crystalline rocks which break down into a very fine structure in the course of the weathering process, and are therefore not very efficient as aquifers. The Oststeiermark districts of Weiz, Hartberg, Fürstenfeld, Feldbach and Bad Radkersburg have been analysed in the book “Wasser & Wirtschaft im Klimawandel” (“Water & Economy in the Climate Change”). With a population of approximately 300,000 inhabitants, booming thermal spa tourism and a rapidly developing economy, the region can be seen as a prime example of the economic significance of the climate change.

According to the study, extensive water transport pipelines would be the most sensible investment. Water conserva-

tion measures and a revised price policy have also been examined: “To ensure good development in the future, however, the region needs water from outside. The pipeline costs significantly less than production stoppages over a period of only one week”, confirms the author, Franz Pretenthaler. The establishment of the “Wasserverbandes Transportleitung

Oststeiermark” (“Oststeiermark Water Transport Pipeline Association”) on 8th March 2005 in Graz heralded the start of the largest-ever Oststeiermark water project: the construction of a transport pipeline from Graz to Hartberg, via Gleisdorf.

In July 2007, the Grazer Stadtwerke AZ municipal utility company and the “Wasserverband Transportleitung Oststeiermark” signed the water supply agreement, and on 12th September 2007, the first ground was finally broken for this ambitious project.



“TLO” water pipeline

The Transportleitung Oststeiermark (TLO) (Oststeiermark Transport Pipeline) will run from Feldkirchen via Gleisdorf to Hartberg and, thanks to this centenary project, will be capable of carrying 200 litres of water per second over a distance of approx. 60 km from Graz to the Oststeiermark region, thereby maximising supply reliability in the area. The objective in a nutshell: a continuously ensured fresh water supply for the population.

As part of the Südoststeiermark water supply network, this major project has been preceded by a number of other smaller and larger measures.

This networking of individual water suppliers will largely ensure the water supply during hot and dry periods or in emergency and disaster situations.

In the tender for the first contract section for the pipeline extending over 15 km, the proven, excellent quality and technical laying advantages offered by the ductile cast iron pipes from Tiroler Röhren- und Metallwerke AG won out over tough competition from other pipe materials. Since the ground-breaking for the project, 15 km of ductile cast iron pipes (dimensions: DN 400 and DN 500) will have been laid by spring 2008.

The tender process is currently taking place for the second contract section comprising 25 km of piping (dimensions: DN 300 to DN 500), and the Tiroler Röhren- und Metallwerke AG naturally feels that it has an excellent chance of being awarded this contract as well.

Unknown does not mean uninteresting

The Austrian Oststeiermark region
Still a secret tip

Where exactly is the Oststeiermark region? To be precise: In Southeast Austria as part of the federal state of Steiermark, to the east of the Mur River and south of the Wechsel and the Fischbacher Alps. Or in other words: a little out of the way. The main tourist routes run past it to Vienna/Hungary on one side, and to Tyrol/Italy on the other. The landscape is, therefore, still shaped today by the people who live there, and not by tourism. Rugged mountains, wide plains and gently rolling hills all lie close together within a small area. Due to the proximity of Slovenia, the local inhabitants are said to have a certain Mediterranean flair about them, friendly and jovial, a blend of Central and South-east European. Tourism naturally plays a certain role in the Oststeiermark region, although there are no real major attractions to be found. Large, palatial hotels are rare. Instead, there are many private lodgings and farms situated amongst the relatively intact nature, together with a host of opportunities and facilities for sports. The tourism region of Oststeiermark encompasses the Teichalm-Sommeralm Alpine pasture area, which boasts the largest Alpine pasture area in Europe; Joglland, a traditional summer vacation destination; Wechselland with its “Naturbiotischen Zentrum” („Natural Biotic Centre”); the Hartbergerland area around the district capital; Apfelland region around Stubenbergsee lake (the largest fruit-growing region in Austria); the Pöllauer Tal Nature Park; the Weiz/Gleisdorf region, and the thermal spa resort at Bad Waltersdorf. In



Oststeiermark

particular, there is a broad and varied range of thermal spas in the region. The hot, curative waters come from depths of up to 10,000 ft. below the ground.

The Oststeiermark region, dotted with castles and fortresses, is an ancient land on the former eastern border of the Christian West. In addition to Catholicism, many pagan customs have also survived. From the 1700 metre (5,500 ft.) high alpine mountains down to the Pannonian Plain, the Oststeiermark offers a wealth of varied landscapes. The land has been formed by centuries of history and culture, as well as by its people, who cultivate and manage the orchards, forests and vineyards largely in harmony with the landscape. Peaches also flourish in the mild local climate. From this understanding of nature, it is only a small step to the modern side of the Oststeiermark: It is in the process of becoming a model region for renewable energies and energy efficiency. Pioneering and development work in this field has been going on here for years amongst the 192 local Oststeiermark communities. The region now intends to improve the way it presents itself publicly on the subject and combine economic added value with an ecologically and socially sustainable attitude. The people of Oststeiermark want to utilise the energy generation options offered by the country itself – which can also be seen as a form of commitment to their homeland.

