

First annual report: Network Upper Styria East STVG – Austria

Reporting period: January 2023 – December 2023

OverviewThe first annual report on the Styrian Reality Check network covers the period from January to December 2023. After the official start of the project at the end of 2022, the first months were dedicated to preparation: clarification of the guidelines for the development of the regional networks and coordination of responsibilities in close cooperation with the partner organisations.

In May 2023, the network was launched in Upper Styria East. Coordinated by the STVG in cooperation with regional industrial companies and the BerufsFindungsBegleit, a platform for exchange and cooperation between schools, companies and regional stakeholders was created. The aim is to develop concrete and sustainable approaches for career orientation and to make technical and industrial job profiles more visible and attractive for young people.

Two network meetings took place between May and December 2023. The first meeting in Kapfenberg (FH Joanneum, Smart Production Lab) served to officially establish the network, present existing good practice examples and collect expectations and motivations of the participating companies. The second meeting in Mixnitz (Naturwelten Steiermark) offered space for in-depth discussions on expectations, resources and possible fields of cooperation within the framework of a World Café. The participants reaffirmed their interest in joint implementation and decided to develop a pilot activity to be implemented in the summer semester 2024.

Network and membersThe Styrian network currently comprises **11–13** representatives from industrial companies in Upper Styria East as well as STVG and BerufsFindungsBegleitung. The participating organisations represent a wide range of industries and institutions and contribute expertise from corporate management, training, personnel development as well as educational consulting and regional strategy. The diversity of the members forms the basis for the development of practical RealityChecks and strengthens the school-career transition in the region.

First network meeting

Date & Time: May 9, 2023 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Location: Smart Production Lab, FH Joanneum Kapfenberg

Participants: 11 representatives of industrial companies as well as BFB and STVG

Description / Protocol The first meeting for the founding of the Reality Check Network Upper Styria East took place on May 9, 2023 in Kapfenberg. Regional industrial companies interested in stronger cooperation in the field of career orientation were invited.

After the welcome, the participating companies and organizations briefly introduced themselves. Both expectations and initial motivations for working in the network became visible.

In the next part, the *ur-job model* from Graz was presented, which served as a successful example of cooperation in the acquisition of apprentices. In addition, the European project *Reality Check* was presented, including a short collection of good practice examples from the partner countries (Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria). These gave an insight into how similar networks are already working and which innovative approaches are being tested.

Discussion on the motivation of companies In the discussion, it became clear why the companies want to get involved: They see an increasing need to inspire young people for technical and industrial professions at an early stage. Many companies emphasised the challenge of attracting suitable apprentices and skilled workers, and at the same time the desire to introduce pupils to real job profiles in a practical way. It was emphasized several times that greater visibility can only be achieved through joint action - towards schools, parents and young people alike. In addition, the responsibility towards the region was also emphasised: With a coordinated initiative, the industry could show that it not only offers apprenticeships, but also actively contributes to the development of young people.

At the end, the participants had the opportunity to visit FH Joanneum's Smart Production Lab and get an idea of the technical possibilities and innovative learning environments on site.

Key Decisions & Next Steps

- Agreement on the relevance of a regional network of companies, schools and other partners
- First collection of topics and ideas for further cooperation
- Agreement to deepen the discussion at a next meeting and to prepare concrete steps for joint activities

Second network meeting

Date & Time: October 10, 2023 – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Location: Naturwelten Steiermark, Mixnitz

Participants: 13

Description / Minutes The second company meeting of the Reality Check Network Upper Styria East took place on October 10, 2023 at Naturwelten Steiermark. A total of 13 representatives from industrial companies, the BerufsFindungsBegleit and the STVG took part.

After a short welcome, the meeting began with an interactive outdoor exercise, which made it possible to make the locations of the participating companies visible and at the same time to exchange expectations and motivations of those present.

Afterwards, an overview of the MINT strategy Upper Styria East was given in order to make the regional embedding of the activities clear.

The main part of the meeting was a World Café on three key questions: What are the expectations, how can they be achieved, and what resources and strengths do the companies bring to the table? The results were then summarized and discussed together. The following were particularly highlighted:

- the need for clear planning and coordination,
- the development of a platform for apprenticeship offers and joint advertising measures,
- the bundling of resources while at the same time preserving the individuality of the companies,
- the differentiation from existing offers of career finding support.

In the outlook, all participants reaffirmed their willingness to cooperate and recognized the benefits of a joint approach. It was agreed to start quickly with the development of a joint project and to implement a first pilot action in the summer semester 2024. The STVG will prepare a service description and a cost estimate for this purpose.

Key Decisions & Next Steps

- Start of project development immediately after the meeting
- Pilot action planned for summer semester 2024
- Preparation of a service description and a cost estimate by the STVG