eSchwechat.at –
Schwechat's Information Society Programme for Building the Future

Helmut PAUGGER

Innovation Consultancy GmbH, Schwechat, Austria; h.paugger@innocon.at

GENERAL

eSchwechat.at is a five years Information Society programme for the Municipality of Schwechat, Austria (2005 – 2009).

Within eSchwechat.at an ICT location Schwechat with an internationally known Center of Excellence in eHealthcare/eHomecare shall be established and a Schwechat Information Society created.

1   WHY eSchwechat.AT?

The Municipality of Schwechat lying directly on the outskirts of Vienna is an old industry and modern services town (OMV, Borealis, Brau Union, HTM, Vienna International Airport, Austrian Airlines etc.) with 16.000 inhabitants. About 20.000 jobs within the city borders make Schwechat to one of Austria's top 3 richest municipalities.

Concerning these figures Schwechat just could go on with business as usual. But – next to industry and (airport) services – Schwechat has decided to become a future oriented HighTech location within Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

2   HOW DID IT START?

In 2002 the Municipality of Schwechat planned to establish a Fachhochschule (FH, University of Applied Sciences) for technology. Parallel Innovation Consultancy GmbH (with its brands "innocon" for regional development within HighTech and "danubetec.net" for technology center systems) and STRABAG Project Development were looking for a well fitting site to establish a technology center for ICT in or around Vienna. Due to the planned Fachhochschule the Municipality of Schwechat, Innovation Consultancy and STRABAG Project Development decided to combine both projects and locate them in Schwechat.

After the Council of University of Applied Sciences' decision against a new Fachhochschule in Schwechat Innovation Consultancy proposed to locate an ICT institute of Vienna University of Technology instead of FH. And the Municipality of Schwechat agreed.

Further the decision was made to establish the technology center in an existing but very new and still empty building within Schwechat's Concorde Business Park and to run it within a cooperation between the Municipality of Schwechat, Innovation Consultancy and the landlord Raiffeisen Evolution.

After the R&D group RISE (Research Industrial Software Engineering) of Vienna University of Technology moved in, "concorde technology center schwechat – concorde.tcs" was opened at 12 November 2003. Within the opening party Innovation Consultancy presented Schwechat's new mayor the idea of a Schwechat Information Society programme to create an outer system around the inner one of concorde.tcs.

In 2004 and the first half of 2005 a lot of different preparation tasks were performed to run a future Schwechat Information Society programme: A new municipal business promotion system focussing on ICT firms was developed – the heart of them: eSchwechat.at. Further location marketing activities were started by the event series "match.IT!" (IT matchmaking events on international level) and "talk.IT!" (information events for IT topics) to position Schwechat as an ICT meeting point in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). And last but not least planning tasks to establish a municipal Early Stage investment company to finance ICT start ups were begun.

3   AIMS OF eSchwechat.AT

The following items are the main aims of eSchwechat.at:
- Establishment of an ICT location Schwechat with an internationally known Center of Excellence in eHealthcare/eHomecare
- Establishment of a Schwechat Information Society (integration of ICT where ever useful): citizens, economy, administration etc.
- Moving in of ICT firms, founding new companies, growth of existing enterprises
- Creation of new and well-paid jobs
- Influx of new citizens
- Improved education of Schwechat's citizens: vocational training, schools, academic: under-graduate, post-graduate
- Integration of disadvantaged people (seniors, handicapped etc.)
- Democratisation of ICT

4   METHOD AND BEST PRACTISES

Concerning well-working best practise projects, e.g. "Ronneby 2003", Sweden (1993-2003), "TelecomCity Karlskrona", Sweden (90s), "eTampere", Finland (2003-2007) and "Vantaa HiTech Programmes", Finland (since 2004), the following win-win-strategy was chosen to implement eSchwechat.at: First municipal investments will lead to first ICT projects, one project will stimulate the next one by creating new interest (mass media, companies, citizens). Companies will move in, will be founded, will grow, all leading to additional municipal taxes enabling further municipal investments. This will result in an "upswing coil"...

5   MEASURES (STARTING 2006)

5.1   schwechatNET

The project's goal is to establish a broadband WLAN cover over the whole municipality of Schwechat using 2,4 and 5GHz WiFi technology. Next to the offer of cheap Internet and voIP telephony the project generates need for applications and thus enables new projects within the fields of eHealthcare/eHomecare, eGovernment/eVoting/eAdministration, eTraffic, eLearning etc.

5.2   Early Stage investment company

Idea of the project is to support Schwechat based ICT start ups, mainly within eHomecare/eHealthcare by investing into the companies' Early Stage phase. With a starting fund volume of EUR 2,000.000.- average investments of EUR 100.000.- per start up shall be placed for a time span of about four years. The Early Stage investment firm will be organised as a private company with guarantees of the Municipality of Schwechat and will be combined with an incubator for the start ups offering housing, coaching, networking, first clients etc.

5.3   Central European Institute of Technology

A high level R&D organisation, starting with three R&D institutes for ICT will be established. Around the existing RISE institute (nowadays mainly dealing with eHealthcare) an institute for eHomecare as well as one for urban, spatial planning and environmental Information Technologies shall be located in Schwechat. Next to R&D high-level education (under-graduate and post-graduate) will be offered. The Central European Institute of Technology will be CEE-oriented and create spin-off companies.

Within the project also a technical high school with eHealthcare/eHomecare focus operated in evening classes and – after graduation – offering a Fachhochschul education by distance learning will be established.

5.4   International projects of Schwechat's schools

To increase internationalisation as well as the use of ICT international projects are performed by Schwechat's secondary schools. Recently a cooperation between Europahauptschule Schwechat and Martinlaakso secondary school of Vantaa, Finland was started.

5.5   Vocational training

eSchwechat.at focuses on R&D and education within all levels. Also for adults tailor-made training content will be offered, mainly for ICT, management & entrepreneurship and Eastern European languages.

5.6   LivingLab / First Client – Function

The whole town of Schwechat, mainly the facilities of the municipality act as a LivingLab (testbed) for new ICT developments of Schwechat based companies. First projects were already started between the RISE institute and the city administration within the field of eAdministration. A new project now was created between the municipal senior's residence and a consortia of the future eHomecare institute and some ICT companies including the operator of schwechatNET.

The Municipality of Schwechat also acts as a first client for new ICT companies to make things starting. Interesting projects and products pushing eSchwechat.at's goals are supported.

5.7   Twin City Partnerships

To increase the internationalisation of Schwechat as well as to run interesting ICT developments the city administration has started a cooperation with the Finnish Municipality of Vantaa which shall also lead into a twin city partnership. Further cooperation with other cities are planned.

5.8   Programme Management, Steering Group and Location Marketing

The programme management of eSchwechat.at is done by the initiator Innovation Consultancy. Important part within this task is the internal (for Schwechat's citizens) and external location and programme marketing. The programme management is supported by a steering group representing the important players for municipal development in Schwechat.

Next to the "match.IT!" and "talk.IT!" event series for location marketing the "IT Forum Schwechat", a think tank for the future ICT development and branch marketing in Austria will start in February 2006.

5.9   Budget

There is an annually municipal budget of about EUR 1,000.000.- for the diverse measures. Next to this sponsor money and private investment will increase the budget of eSchwechat.at for the programme time till 2009.

6   SUMMARY AND VISION

eSchwechat.at already nowadays has created a lot of interest in Austria's and CEE's ICT branch. Until 2009 the programme will make Schwechat to Austria's leading ICT location – embedded into leading international ICT communities.