

Recommendation regarding the setting up of an Office of Science and Technology (OST) for China and other Asian regions

Background

The Asian countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan etc. are becoming a promising science and technology market, with increasing importance as a major business and science partner for all member states of the EU. The levels of economic growth enjoyed by these countries go far beyond those of Europe, and ranged between five and over ten percent in 2009 and 2010. A rapidly increasing role in the economic growth of these newly industrialising countries is played here by various high-technology sectors. These developments have prompted European countries such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland to intensify their science and technology links with China, India and other states, particularly those in (Southeast) Asia. And in recent years Austrian institutions have also significantly stepped up scientific and economic cooperation with this part of the world where science and technology are concerned.

Agreements governing scientific and technical cooperation were concluded with China in 1985 and with India in 2008. Special mention here should also go to the Joint Declaration with Korea (extended in 2010), cooperation on infrastructure and low-carbon urban planning (China, 2010) and university and economic cooperation projects in the form of joint research centres, joint study programmes and international research programmes under the aegis of the OeAD/EPU (Eurasia-Pacific Uninet), the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG), at the initiative of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO), the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research (BMWF) and the Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) and other ministerial departments engaged in R&D. A powerful statement about the links in science and technology existing between Austria and China was also made by Austria Tec Week China in the EXPO fair held in October 2010.

As highlighted by the Austrian Government's RTI strategy awaiting adoption, it will in future be vital for Austria, in its role as a scientific and economic centre, to establish technological cooperation projects with Asian countries in order to market its technology and manage the transfer of

technology. Above all, it is important to obtain access to technology and research institutes and to develop contact with leading researchers.

Recommendation

To consolidate the numerous national efforts and strengthen the country's presence in Asia the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development recommends setting up an "Office of Science and Technology (OST) for China and (Southeast) Asia similar to the institutions based in Brussels and Washington in order to represent Austria's scientific and economic interests. The development of such outposts can help to cultivate links involving scientific expertise and economic trade and encourage the exchange of researchers between different countries on a long-term basis. Implementation should make optimum usage of the structures and instruments already in existence here.

The task of these outposts is to deal with cooperation projects relevant to science, research and technology between Austria, China and (Southeast) Asia, specifically:

- to initiate and support research collaboration between scientific institutions based in Austria and Asia, in particular cooperation on applied research with industry, both bilaterally and in the context of EU research and technology initiatives under the Framework Programme
- to ensure the networking of researchers at university and non university-based top-level research institutions and centres of excellence from Austria with regions in Asia
- to actively help Austria's university institutes and research centres to establish contact with China and countries in (Southeast) Asia
- to preselect and supervise students who wish to continue their studies at an Austrian university and to undertake a PhD to so allow qualitative assessment to be made at the relevant universities and institutes
- to cultivate lasting contact with persons representing research and technology policy.

In addition, the OST supports the work carried out by the ministerial departments and Advantage Austria – WKO in relation to the following activities:

- to actively help Austrian companies in establishing contact with industry, submitting funding applications and conducting contract negotiations
- to market Austria as a centre of R&D and to offer support with the task of initiating or handling attendance at trade fairs.