

European Union Grants Advisor Austria

Austrian ISV Receives Funds for Research and Development Project in Objective 2 Region

Until the 1980s employment levels in Austria were high. But since then a growing public debt and increasing structural problems in the economy, has resulted in a rapid increase in unemployment. Today many areas in Austria are still plagued with high levels of unemployment and face structural difficulties.

The Austrian government recognises that information technology (IT) is the heart of its operations for future growth. It considers small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to be integral players in its economic and social development plans.

In March 2000, the member states of the European Union (EU) made a commitment to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. This initiative known as the 'Lisbon Agenda' encourages economic growth, fosters competitiveness and job creation, and advances structural and regulatory reform by giving small businesses greater access to innovation intelligence.

As part of the Lisbon Agenda, between 2000 and 2006 the EU has given an estimated €117 billion (U.S. \$141 billion) to SMEs across Europe for technology-related investment. This figure is expected to double between 2007 and 2013. The funds are divided into a number of objective areas as identified by the EU.

Objective 2, is regionalised and focuses on areas defined according to specific statistical and socio-economic criteria. Regions included are similar to those in Austria, facing structural difficulties. It concerns four types of areas. These include areas facing or threatened by serious organisational problems and a high level of unemployment, in the industry and services

sectors. Grants made available to these communities are to support regional economic and social conversion.

Independent Software Vendor (ISV) and Microsoft® Certified Partner, eworx®, is located an Objective 2 area. As a small enterprise with 13 employees, it wanted to expand its business, offer new and improved software solutions to local SMEs, and help its region make the transition to a thriving, knowledge-based economy.

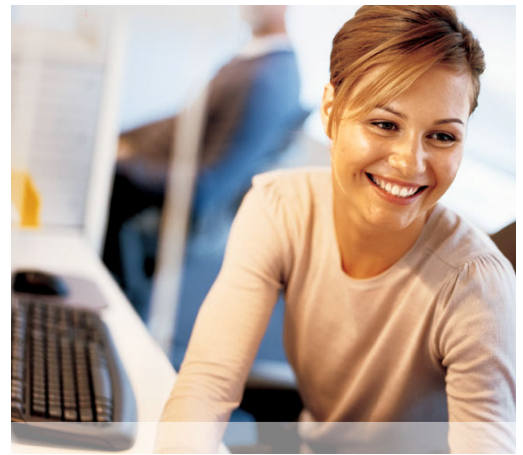
It decided to create an intelligent e-mail marketing solution "mailworx®" to improve its own business functionality—and also place on the market to help local SMEs be more competitive. But, its old infrastructure was lagging behind and hindering business expansion opportunities. Working in partnership with Microsoft, eworx designed new infrastructure that co-ordinated its mailing processes giving it greater control over the business. Its new e-mail system included full campaign management, lead management and a broad range of measurement statistics.

The newly developed e-mail marketing solution mailworx® was designed so that it could be integrated with existing eworx products to complete the service range. The product extends its cross-selling and up-selling features in IT areas and Internet services. Using its new e-mail marketing solution, eworx could target new consumers and offer a larger product range to its users. This project enabled eworx to broaden its services to other businesses in its area so that they could also improve business functionality.



“THE LOCAL CONSULTANTS WERE VERY GOOD. I WAS ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF THE REST OF MY BUSINESS WHILE THEY TOOK CARE OF ALL OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS. THEY INVESTIGATED THE MOST APPROPRIATE GRANT TO APPLY FOR AND WORKED VERY HARD TO MAKE SURE WE WERE AWARDED THE FUNDS...MICROSOFT AND ITS CONSORTIUM PARTNERS HAD THE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE AND BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE WE NEEDED TO FACILITATE THIS APPLICATION.”

Martin Öller, CEO, eworx



As with any business developing a new product, eworx wanted to minimise its risks as much as possible. It appealed to the government for funding, but with little time and resources, eworx were unable to successfully manage the application process.

Verheugen, EU Commissioner, Enterprise and Industry says: “The new growth and employment initiative known as the Lisbon Agenda can only work if it is a partnership project. We particularly need to rely on the involvement of the private sector.”

Microsoft supports the goals of Austria, and other European countries, in its belief that IT research and development will improve the social and economic infrastructure of European economies. For this reason, Microsoft Austria is working in partnership with Hewlett-Packard Austria, Intel, and the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO), through its European Union Grants Advisor (EUGA) programme. The programme is designed to raise awareness and provide guidance and assistance to SMEs seeking EU funding. Microsoft and its consortium partners are committed to supporting businesses by empowering them through greater technology.

After several failed attempts to apply for government funds, eworx contacted the EUGA consortium for help. Microsoft and its consortium partners provide more than 200 consultants from independent consulting agencies who specialise in each type of grant to help companies navigate the application process.

Martin Öller, CEO, eworx says: “The local consultants investigated the most appropriate grant to apply for, and worked very hard to make sure we were awarded the funds. Microsoft and its consortium partners had the hands-on experience and business knowledge we needed to facilitate this application.”

“Without the EUGA initiative we would not have got the funds. We had tried several times and

failed—but they helped us get them straight away.”

Drawing on the advice given by the experienced consultants, eworx decided to apply for a mix of regional and national grants. The funding was granted by two awarding bodies, Austria Wirtschaftsservice, and the Federal State of Upper Austria. The total amount awarded covers around 5 per cent of the total cost of the project. Öller says: “Technology is developing so fast and we are constantly trying to keep up with it. These funds minimise the risk of building and implementing a new solution that will efficiently deal with our changing business demands.”

eworx is just one of the many projects that help European SMEs to boost competitiveness, and raise employability levels in Objective two areas. Öller says: “In every member state it is important to utilise the funds available from the EU. In our region we are one of two companies who offer jobs with programming—that is important for our region—each company that joins with EUGA help improve regional and local economic improvement.”

The EUGA consortium continues to help funding and industry players to improve the use of regional development grants. It strongly believes that by stimulating and facilitating research and development by SMEs, they will become even more competitive, thus opening new opportunities for EU growth and innovation.

Contact:

For more information please contact Microsoft Corporate Affairs, or visit the Web site: www.microsoft.com/emea/euga

Fast Facts

URL

www.microsoft.com/austria/kmu/euga

www.eworx.info

www.mailworx.info

Country

Austria

Profile

Located in Central Europe, Austria is home to more than eight million people. It was once the centre of power for the large Austro-Hungarian Empire, but was reduced to a small republic after its defeat in World War I. As a flourishing economy, Austria entered the Economic and Monetary Union in 1999.

Situation

Independent Software Vendor (ISV) and Microsoft partner, eworx, is located in an area identified by the EU as an Objective 2 area. It is a very small enterprise of 13 employees. It wanted to expand its business and offer new software solutions to local SMEs—and help its region make the transition to a thriving knowledge-based economy.

Solution

Working in partnership with Microsoft, eworx designed new infrastructure that co-ordinated its mailing processes giving it greater control over the business. Its new e-mail system included full campaign management, lead management and a broad range of measurement statistics. The newly developed e-mail marketing solution mailworx® was designed so that it could be integrated with existing eworx products to complete the service range. It successfully applied for government funding to cover around 15 per cent of the total cost of the project. Using the new e-mail marketing solution, eworx was able to target new consumers and offer a larger product range to its users. This project allowed eworx to grow its business and extend its services to other businesses in its area, thereby improving its local economy.

Benefits

- Research and development of ICT facilitates jobs, productivity and innovation in Austria.
- Local ISV grows its business and secures 13 jobs in an area with high unemployment rate and structural problems.
- Local SMEs can integrate e-mail marketing solution mailworx® with other eworx solutions to improve business functionality.