



Past - Present - Future



# PREPERATION OF REGIONAL INDUSTRY-RELATED CULTURAL EVENTS

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Concept for an industry-related cultural  
festival in the region Styrian Iron Route

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## 0. Abstract

Industrial cultural provides chances for old-industrial and mining regions to promote their heritage as well as existing industry. For this reason a festival of industrial culture shall take place in the region Leoben/Steirische Eisenstraße (Styrian Iron Route) for the first time in 2018. The aim of the festival is to positively influence regional identity, to shape the region's image, to raise awareness of the region's industrial culture and its assets and to interpret industrial culture in new ways. The festival shall utilize industrial-related sites (living industry, abandoned industrial buildings, heritage sites, museums etc.) and is supposed to become an annual project. The first year will focus on people from the region, whose lives are/were shaped by industry as well as industrial space, with all its shaping effects in the cityscape and landscape. All in all the festival shall provide/show/stage about 20 different contributions - from theatre to music to visual arts.

## 1. Project Context

The Central Europe Project InduCult2.0 addresses Central European regions mono-focused on industrial production. Through InduCult regions utilise their tangible and intangible cultural assets of their industrial past, present and future in a synergetic way for positioning their regions as attractive places for working, living and recreation ([www.inducult.eu](http://www.inducult.eu)). Together with local stakeholders, they rediscover and develop the positive elements of industrial communities. Specifically, the partnership intends to:

- promote and establish the idea of Industrial Culture in Central Europe;
- strengthen the distinct culture of industrial regions and utilise it as location factor;
- empower industrial regions by re-activating their pioneer spirit.

Involved are eight representative regions from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia and Poland. They are supported by two scientific partners from Germany and Austria.

Actions are to be developed by the regions in three fields: Actions on ...

... cultural measures for fostering regional identity (T2)

... cultural initiatives influencing industrial labour market and company commitment (T3)

... cultural measures promoting creativity and pioneer spirit (T4).

In work package T2 public Industrial Culture events are seen as a successful way to promote the regions' industrial heritage and interpret it in contemporary ways. Six concepts for such events in six different Central European regions are prepared, and they shall be linked by a transnational touring feature (the so-called "InduCube").

## 2. Introduction & objectives

Industrial Culture is a young member of the European culture family. Its roots can be found in many European regions, which 200 years ago were not only cradles of industrialisation, but have been up to now sites of industrial production. A typical representative is the region “Styrian Iron Route” and the adjoining Mur-Mürz-valley. Over the centuries the hegemony of industrial production and mining has created a specific cultural climate, which - apart from visible monuments and artefacts - can be experienced in specific values, traditions, skills and a distinctive way of living.

Local players and stakeholders are not always aware of the strengths and potentials of their existing industrial culture. In an innovative way of interpreting industrial culture and beyond restricting it to cultural heritage, it can be linked with recent developments; it can be used as a location and image factor and for building a strong regional identity.

In quite a few European regions, Industrial Culture events such as the “Industriada” in Silesia/Poland have proved to become valuable ambassadors for this topic. For this reason the Styrian Iron Route wants to establish an Industrial Culture festival in the region. It is foreseen to become a yearly event. The aim is to make visible the cultural heritage of the region, to convey it and subsequently to use it as an opportunity for further development and as a source of inspiration, for example in urban development or tourism.

## 3. Applied Approach

The conceptual approach for the festival was created by Werner Schwaiger, a regional artist well-known for the regional aspects of his work for many years. He used his networks with artists and persons engaged in the cultural sector inside as well as outside the region. Additional inspiration was gathered within the meetings of the regional Industrial Culture focus group, which worked on creating new Industrial Culture measures during a design thinking process in summer 2017. Other important contributions came from a “market research” on similar festivals - especially in Germany and Poland - and from the InduCult partners working on the same topic.

He chose to use the personal stories of people of all ages in the region as the starting point for the henceforth artistic realization of the festival programme. Thus, numerous conversations were held with industry-related local people. Photographs, objects and other documents concerning the theme “Life in the region Leoben/Steirische Eisenstraße” were collected as well. Because of a planned film project, a special focus was set on young industrial workers. Already in advance, a broad network was created, which on the one hand guarantees a smooth handling of the individual events and on the other hand, through various cooperations, ensures the utilization of industrial areas for cultural activities.

## 4. Results

The overall concept was drawn up on the basis of material collected over six months in the region. The interviews with local people with industrial background form the starting point for interactive exhibitions and special plays that tell the story of the development of the “industrial” city Leoben.

The horizon of the festival within the concept is a three years perspective. It shall take place in three one-year-steps. Through the greatest possible participation of the population and regional artists as well as regional topics, the first step is to create acceptance for the new festival.

Following this approach contemporary ways of conveying culture mustn't be unpopular, elitist and difficult. The willingness and joy of the local people to actively participate in the festival has also been recognizable in the preparations of the planned theatre productions. About 30 potential actors could be found; therefore all plays can be performed by regional amateur actors. Being personally involved they are also important multipliers for the content of the festival.

Sites and objects of Industrial Culture will be strengthened in their function as important places of identity; in the centre is always man formed by industrial space. Among others, the following events are planned for the year 2018:

### 4.1 Opening part(y)

The opening party is intended to take place at the terrain in the pre-area of voestalpine Stahl Donawitz GmbH. Aside from short appearances of regional music groups of all genres; there will a focus on the preview of the following events. Particular attention is paid to interactive implementation.

### 4.2. “Konzerte im Werk” (concerts in the factory)

Apart from the opening party, three concerts (Rock, Blues, alternative folk music) and a clubbing event shall take place. Regional artists shall perform with artists from outside. These events are thought to be “ice-breakers” for the festival programme's other items.

### 4.3. City conversations (“Werkstücke”)

Based on the held „city conversations“, three one-person plays (genre theatre/satirical revue) are going to be written. The premieres of “WerkStücke” (= WorkPieces „Steel Stone Stream“) will take place at three different sites, which will reflect the respective “industrial” topic as well as industrial locations. For example, “electricity” will be premiered at a former transformer station in Trofaiach.

### 4.4. Musical Performance (“Styrical”)

“Styrical” is a musical performance (“Singspiel”) based on regional themes. The libretto shall be written by the famous Austrian writer Franzobel. The music shall be performed by the music school of the city of Leoben.

#### 4.5. “WerkStadt”

„WerkStadt“ is the lead project for the artistic examination of the topic of industrial culture in public space. Artistic statements leave their familiar environment and interact with the public. Installations and sculptures from local artists are planned as permanent landmarks.

#### 4.6. “Werkzeugen”

Tools and materials of industrial use are staged in a special context and storytelling, providing a thoughtful link between past and future. Presented as a public art event. - In addition workshops for schools shall be offered - e.g. producing iron in old Celtic techniques.

#### 4.7. Film project and closure of festival

The whole festival - implementation and „making-of“ - shall be accompanied by a film team. A group of young industrial workers shall be involved in all actions, the shoots shall not only show the festival itself but also their living and work environment. The film shall be presented at the end of the festival 2018.

#### 4.8. Outlook for Industrial Culture festivals beyond 2018

2019 a priority of the “line-up” shall be “folk culture” in connection with industrial context. Based on the experiences of the pilot festival 2018, the connection of traditions with new visionary approaches - in the artistic as well in the technical meaning shall - shall be tried out. Suggestions for the “design” of the future in industrial space shall thus be created.

Responsible for carrying out the festival will be a team formed by the City of Leoben, the museum association Styrian Iron Route and the association Styrian Iron Route. The “creative head” (curator) of the festival will be Werner Schwaiger, who was also responsible for the artistic input of this concept.

### 5. Evaluation/transnational added value

The festival concept relied strongly on best practise examples in other Central European regions (“Days of industrial culture” and “Long night of industry” in Germany, Industriada in Poland, Rostfest etc.). The topic “Industrial Culture event” was also one of the main topics in the several work group meetings of work package T2. There was a fruitful knowledge exchange among the six involved regions. As all events will take place during 2018, visits to the festivals of the partner regions are planned.

## 6. Outlook and sustainability

Starting in February 2018, the implementation of the festival programme - e.g. writing and rehearsing the plays - will start. The festival itself will take place from May until August with about 20 different contributions.

The first year will focus on raising acceptance within the region. The festivals planned beyond 2018 will increasingly focus on supra-regional effects. It is supposed to trigger discussions and to set processes in motion, and it is supposed to become part of the regional development efforts. The region's identity in the range of contemporary art shall be thus shaped in a sustainable manner. In public space, timeless and self-confident statements will emerge, which will be permanently affixed to prominent places, preferably to industrial sites.

## 7. Annexes incl. picture documentation (if applicable)

Annex: Concept of "Industriekulturfestival" (German, 16 pages)