



Past - Present - Future



ABOUT CHANGE AND GROWTH – CORPORATE STORIES IN THE DISTRICT OF ZWICKAU

Brochure on innovation and location
history of endogenous companies

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PP1, District of Zwickau



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0. Abstract

This document summarizes the development of the brochure “ABOUT CHANGE AND GROWTH - CORPORATE STORIES IN THE DISTRICT OF ZWICKAU” which realized in the frame of the EU-project InduCult2.0. Using the approach of a living industrial culture and methods like story telling, the district of Zwickau created a brochure that presents companies and universities in the district of Zwickau. The stories are told by founders or employees and they all have something in common: Entrepreneurship in the District of Zwickau is innovative with a solutions oriented mind setting with a deep attachment to the region. The document explains how the cooperation with the companies was realized and how the approach of IndCult2.0 to a living industrial culture was implemented.

1. Project Context

Since June 2016 the district of Zwickau has been leading the EU project InduCult2.0: "Industrial heritage, cultural resources of industry and creative pioneers - Living industrial culture away from the metropolises in Central Europe".

While in the past decades the term "industrial culture" was primarily used for the protection of historical monuments and the conversion of buildings, there are now innovative approaches that include contemporary cultural and creative resources. In this new understanding, industrial culture is a dynamic concept that also focuses the change of the industrial economy and society.

This cultural approach is particularly suitable for regions that are still strongly oriented towards industrial production today. InduCult2.0 brings together such regions from Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy. The InduCult2.0 partners use the qualities of their industrial past, present and future to position their regions as attractive places to work, live and grow. In detail, the partnership is intended:

- to establish the concept "Living Industrial Culture" in Central Europe;
- to strengthen the specific culture in industrial regions and to use it as a location factor;
- to revive the pioneering spirit in industrial regions.

2. Introduction and Objective

In order to be able to use industrial culture as a location factor to secure workforce and to bind companies to the region, the economic development department of the Zwickau district is developing and testing various measures within the framework of InduCult2.0. The brochure "About Growth and Change - Corporate Stories in the District of Zwickau" that presents industrial companies that have been in Zwickau for many years and are still developing innovative products today (some of them are market leaders in their niche), is one of the measures being taken.

The idea to tell stories of success and change suits PP1 because the district of Zwickau has a long tradition as an industrial area and is still an innovative production location today. Furthermore the region gained hundreds of years of knowledge on technical issues and engineering which makes the district also competitive in the future. This aspects should also be presented in the brochure by not only focussing on industrial companies but also presenting universities and companies that specialize in industry4.0. The brochure is intended to convey this in an appealing way. However, the aim is not to produce a classic glossy brochure that presents the companies with advertising photos. Rather, storytelling is to be used to work out the history of the companies journalistically with interviews. The people stand in the foreground, not the company nor numbers such as turnover and profit.

3. Applied Approach

Initially, the department of economic promotion of PP1 compiled a list of 12 companies to be presented in the brochure. In summer 2017 PP1 sent out an official appeal to all companies to share their stories and become part of the brochure. The brochure should present the companies that best meet the following criteria:

- Industrial companies
- Local loyalty (preferably business headquarters in the district of Zwickau)
- Longevity (founded before 1989)
- Innovative strength in the past and present, possibly niche market leader
- Commitment to the region, socially committed etc.

Each company should be presented on a double page. An interview should be conducted with at least one representative. It does not have to be necessarily only the management to be interviewed. The focus is on an interesting story that reflects the company's ties to the region and illustrates the district as a traditional innovation location. It should be about interesting aspects, facts and background information. The contents of the brochure should have a progressive and innovative style and arouse feelings in the reader. And finally the stories should be framed by an introduction that emphasizes the meaning of regional industrial culture. To reach a wider address circle the brochure should not only be a printing product but also a digital brochure that could be uploaded at the websites of PP1 and of the companies.

To create such an innovative and appealing brochure PP1 worked together with the department of economic promotion that decided which stories would be presented in the brochure. A journalist and a photographer were hired to visit the companies, take pictures and conduct interviews. A creative agency developed layout of the document.

4. Results

After a long process of 1.5 years the brochure with 27 pages was printed in distributed right before the final conference of InduCult2.0 took place in the district of Zwickau. The brochure presents the following companies and universities:

- Werdauer Holzspielzeug: A family business with more than 60 years experience in production of wooden toys
- DAW Aerocit Schmierungstechnik: The company produces chemical-technical products as lubricating oil for machine construction and textile industry in an old-industrial building in the city center of Werdau
- Sternberg: Sternberg is a screw production company that was close to bankruptcy in 2001 but it was saved by its employees. The employees bought the company and now it is a growing business again
- Walther-Technik: The family business with 100 years of experience has 70 employees in steel construction. The brochure presents the ability of the business to master challenges and transformation.
- Strumpfwerk Lindner: The family business has a long tradition and focuses on the development of niche products as socks that prevent tick bites.
- WEMA Glauchau: The machine construction factory was founded in 1883 and the CEO tells stories about how the management and the employees were able to keep up with economic and social changes over the past 140 years.
- Zwickauer Kammgarn: Based in an old-industrial building the textile company has more than 100 years experience and today has around 170 employees. It is an example of the long tradition in developing highly innovative textiles in the region.

- VEM motors Thurm: The company is a regional star and produces special engines with more than 1500 employees.

- M.O.P: The company develops software solutions for industrial companies and stands for the innovative and future-oriented character of the economy in the District of Zwickau.

- Berufsakademie Glauchau: The university offers a practically oriented education and focuses on the education of future employees for the region and whole Saxony.

- Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau: The university has a long tradition in the District of Zwickau and is worldwide known for the good quality of technical studies.

The stories are told in different formats by different people: The reader could learn about the history of the company told by CEO or even founders of the companies. Some stories focus more on the experience and life of employees or trainees told in interview format. The employees give interesting insights in the culture of the business. The pictures show the people behind the story to strengthen the connection between reader and company.

All participating companies ordered brochures to share them with business partners. Furthermore the brochure will be distributed at fairs. The digital version of the brochure will be presented at the homepage of the district of Zwickau. The document does not only present the stories of the companies but also emphasizes the value of a living industrial culture for economic stability and growth.

The brochure was financed with the InduCult2.0 T3.4.7 budget of PP1, the District of Zwickau. The overall costs incl. printing of 200 copies totaled 10.580,89 Euros.

5. Evaluation and transnational added value

As journalists and experts know: It is not easy to tell a good story. Although every company in the District of Zwickau could tell an interesting story about change, growth, challenges, community and even failure it was a challenge to combine the requirements of the method story-telling and the requirements of PP1 with the standards of the companies on how to present their business. In the beginning of the activities it was the goal to only focus on people behind the company and tell strong, personal stories. In the end the brochure also shows standard interviews about growth and market position of the businesses. Only some of the companies allowed the journalist to concentrate on the stories of employees and trainees. Meeting the requirements of all involved stakeholders and moreover working together with a design agency and two freelancers not based in the District of Zwickau slowed down the project implementation and caused the delay of activities.

Nevertheless PP1 was able to develop an interesting magazine that presents the variety of branches and companies located in the district. The brochure contains stories of the textile, machine construction, supplier and metal industries from small family-business to big factories with more than 1500 employees. The stories emphasize the connection between industrial past and presence. How knowledge grows over hundreds of years and how industrial future could look like is shown with the stories of a software company as well as the stories of the two biggest universities of the region. Last but not least the messages of InduCult2.0 and the concept of a living industrial culture is presented in frame texts - an editorial and two pages at the end of the brochure about industrial culture and InduCult2.0 that especially addresses companies because somehow the cooperation with companies during InduCult2.0 was not always easy for PP1. Compared with the experience of other InduCult2.0 partner regions and regional stakeholders this is an issue to focus on: The commitment of companies to be part of regional culture and regional identity.

All in all, the brochure fulfills the objectives of the measure: As written in the InduCult2.0 application form it focuses on location-loyalty of selected enterprises alongside with their innovativeness and their current/future activities. The regional, cultural and social relevance of the companies is highlighted.

Above all, it has to be mentioned that the project could only be realized because of the EU-project InduCult2.0. Especially, the six-monthly transnational meetings were necessary to gain knowledge about business-stakeholder involvement and story telling. Other partner regions like PP3 already gained experience in business cooperation and shared knowledge with other partners during the transnational T3 workshops. PP1 was able to share challenges and opportunities on the way of creating the brochure. Furthermore, best practice examples were a good inspiration on how to design such a brochure and how to transport the InduCult2.0 message of a living industrial culture. The results of the work were shared during the transnational workshops and with this paper. Exchanging of brochures with other partner regions did not happen yet because the documents are only published in national language. Nevertheless, PP1 gained several lessons on how to involve industrial companies in cross-sectoral projects and shared this with the project partners.

6. Outlook and Sustainability

The feedback of the participating companies about the brochure is positive. The department of economic promotion of the district of Zwickau is going to distribute the brochure at fairs and other regional and national events. Furthermore the digital version of the brochure is available at the InduCult2.0 website (<https://www.landkreis-zwickau.de/projekt-inducult2-0>). Additionally, the department of economic promotion will share some of the stories together with the E-Newsletter that is published four times a year. Exchange of brochures with neighboring regions is planned for 2019. The different ways of distribution will secure sustainability of the measure.

At the same time the tourism agency Zwickau produced another story-telling brochure about living industrial culture. Moreover neighboring regions as the ore mountains or the city of Chemnitz produced story-telling brochures as well. All products transport the same message: West Saxony has a strong, interesting and innovative industrial past, presence and future - industrial culture includes the daily life of the population and it makes the region somehow unique and special with its inhabitants and the stories they tell.

The development of the products show that the topic of regional industrial culture is important to the people and the institutions and should be fostered during the next years. This process will be supported by the Saxon exhibition of industrial culture “Boom 2020” which allows PP1 to implement various follow-up marketing activities based on the results of InduCult2.0 measures.

As already explained the cooperation with companies was one of the challenges during InduCult2.0. But as the companies are very satisfied with the results, story-telling methods should be used in the future again to raise awareness for the topic and moreover raise corporate commitment and responsibility when it comes to cultural activities and fostering of regional identity.

Other results of InduCult2.0 measures (especially T2-measures) show that the population is interested in regional factories and how they produce but the public is also skeptical when it comes to issues like environmental pollution and working conditions. To bind workforce to the region story-telling is a suitable method to connect the population with the regional companies and strengthen awareness of the special industrial culture the region offers.

7. Annex

- Brochure “Von Wachstum und Wandel - Unternehmensgeschichten aus dem Landkreis Zwickau” (German language)