

Foreword from the Director of the Geological Survey of Austria

Geology turned out to be a moderating factor in Central Europe during the time of cold war. This was proven during the second half of the 20th century by the excellent co-operation between our three surveys.

The gasfield Zwerndorf-Vysoka, straddling the boundary between Austria and the Slovak part of former ČSSR was the trigger for signing the cooperation agreement in 1960. Sharing data and building a combined geological model across borders has been a topic from the beginning and continued until today. Basic geological research, which included stratigraphy, sedimentology, tectonics as well as geological mapping, were the main tasks of our cooperation between 1960 and 1990. I myself was member of the Austrian delegation and attended several annual exchange meetings during the 1980s and remember them well. The sharp contrast between the spirit of understanding and cooperation between us, the geoscientists, and the official political climate of divergence and opposition between our countries, left a deep impression on me, which I will never forget. We believed that our work is important for society. We dealt with local subjects like facies developments, tectonics and on a bigger scale with the gravity field in Central Europe, the generation of hydrocarbons in the Vienna Basin and the Molasse, and age dating of granitic bodies in the Variscian realm and others. I want to express our deep gratitude to Dr. Harald Lobitzer, who managed the Austrian part of the scientific program in an excellent and efficient manner for decades.

The political changes in Europe in 1989 we regard today as positive developments. The impact on sciences and especially geosciences we did not foresee at all. The acceptance of governments in Europe, regarding Geological Institutes and their work as very important for society, was still there during the 1990s. In recent years this understanding diminished and nearly disappeared, mainly under the pressure of commercialisation of sciences in general and budget constraints. The reduced governmental share of our budgets forces us to search for so-called third party funds. This is reshaping our geological surveys just now.

The cooperation between our surveys turned from bilateral basic research issues into multiparty research subjects funded by EU money. Still, a few bilateral basic research projects are possible, pursued by specialists, some of them already retired. We want to continue with this and support this as good as we can. In the future we will definitely participate in bigger European projects as partners together with others.

We believe, that in the framework of those big projects, there is still room for good understanding, scientific exchange and discussion of bilateral and trilateral questions of common interest. Together, as a group of friends and experts with excellent knowledge and skills, we will have a strong voice in Europe and the geoscientific community.

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