

## **Styrian Women's Business Centre & Business Incubator Graz**



The *Styrian Women's Business Centre* (*Gründerinnenzentrum Steiermark*) and the *Business Incubator Graz* are two projects aimed at helping new entrepreneurs to start their businesses and to succeed. The two centres provide counselling services and training coupled with affordable, fully equipped office space in a modern building in a prime location in the centre of Graz.

### **Styrian Women's Business Centre - Gründerinnenzentrum Steiermark**

In 2000, the *Styrian Women's Business Centre* was established in order to increase the proportion of women entrepreneurs. Female entrepreneurs often differ from their male counterparts in their profile of abilities and expertise, their levels of confidence and awareness of particular business-related issues, and their actual life circumstances. They, therefore, need a different spectrum of advice and support.

Since the world of business is still strongly male-dominated, the encouraging example of other businesswomen, as both peers and mentors, is of particular importance. The *Styrian Women's Business Centre* represents a thus stimulating environment by offering women entrepreneurs office space at affordable rates, in a centre where they have access to detailed advice and coaching, and where they are surrounded by other women at various stages of the business creation process.



Women can move their businesses into the centre when they begin trading, or afterwards, subject to agreement. The rental costs for the offices are subsidised by the City of Graz during the first three years. The centre has an excellent track record: so far about 50 businesses have established their head offices there, creating, thus, about 180 jobs.

### **Business Incubator Graz**

The *Business Incubator Graz* is a more recent project, which was launched in 2002. This centre's services are similar to those of the *Styrian Women's Business Centre* by providing subsidised office space and counselling services to new entrepreneurs. The main difference, however, is its target group as it is open to both men and women. Moreover, it mainly approaches new businesses that work in the fields of design, information, consulting and communication. The centre aims at improving the quality of the conception and development of business ideas and, thereby, the mid-term survival rate of new enterprises. Up to now, 42 entrepreneurs have made use of the start-up services provided by the *Business Incubator Graz*, creating, thus, about 190 jobs.

## **Deeds not Words - Taten statt Worte**

*Deeds not Words* is the non-profit association behind the *Styrian Women's Business Centre* and the *Business Incubator Graz*. It was set up in 1997 by Ridi M. Steibl, a member of the Austrian Parliament, who has been chairing the association since then. The improvement of equality of opportunity for women in employment and business has been her main concern ever since. Other important projects of the association are the competitions "Austria's Most Women- and Family-friendly Enterprises" ("Frauen- und familienfreundlichste Betriebe Österreichs") and "Female Start-up of the Year" ("Gründerin des Jahres"). These yearly alternating competitions draw attention to and reward companies that promote professional opportunities for women and the compatibility of work and family life ("Austria's Most Women- and Family-friendly Enterprises") as well as female entrepreneurs running successful businesses on the basis of remarkable business ideas and corporate policies ("Female Start-up of the Year"). These competitions have been important measures of foregrounding and rewarding best practices in this field so far.



### **How we support new businesses:**

#### **1. First contacts**

The initial phase of counselling aims at establishing (1) whether potential entrepreneurs have plausible and well-developed business ideas, (2) whether they have the basic abilities needed to start a business and (3) whether potential entrepreneurs have realistic expectations about self-employment.

#### **2. Business plan for start-ups**

The second phase involves more specific planning focusing on means of developing realistic business ideas and the preparation of a business plan that covers necessary investments, choice of a legal form for the enterprise and a plan of action to organise the different aspects of the business. We can also help with the various bureaucratic instances that have to be dealt with.

#### **3. Moving in!**



We provide affordable office space in a modern building in the city centre of Graz, with all the relevant facilities for general business operations. The *Styrian Women's Business Centre* offers 14 offices with floor areas from 14 - 36 m<sup>2</sup>, while 11 offices ranging from 11 - 42 m<sup>2</sup> are available in the *Business Incubator Graz*. The offices are complemented by attractive meeting rooms, spaces for more informal encounters (including a rooftop patio) and a representative reception area.

All offices have telephone and broadband Internet lines; the centre operates an intranet; fax machines and copiers are available; and the building is equipped with an electronic access control system. Underground parking spaces are available in the immediate vicinity.

The rents are subsidised by the City of Graz during the first three years (year 1: 50%; year 2: 35%, year 3: 15%) and/or other agencies, subject to application.

#### 4. Centre management

Our management team

- takes care of the administration and maintenance of the building,
- is always available to help with problems, give advice, etc.,
- organises business trainings
- and does PR work to keep up the centre's image as a home of innovative young businesses

so that our entrepreneurs can concentrate on the most important thing – running their businesses.

#### 5. Training, coaching, networking,...

For the entrepreneurs who operate their offices in the centre, we offer a regular programme of training seminars and coaching sessions at no extra charge. The association *Deeds not Words* and the *Styrian Women's Business Centre* run a variety of special projects that can be relevant to our entrepreneurs. We also help in terms of establishing contacts and getting in touch with national and international networks and introduce them to possible external mentors.

#### **Need for more Information?**

For more information, please contact the centre management's office, where Elisabeth Pirstinger and Sandra Gessl will be happy to answer any queries.

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