

Press handout for **Deputy Mayor Klaus Luger's** press conference on August 26, 2011 at 11 AM in the Sky Loft of the Ars Electronica Center on the **Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben. project** produced by Unternehmensgruppe Stadt Linz (UGL) and **IMPORT/EXPORT**

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*Additional speakers:*

*Ernst Schmiederer, Import/Export*

*Diethard Schwarzmaier, CFO of Ars Electronica Linz GmbH*

## **Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben (Linz.Together.Living)**

Whether the process of integrating foreigners is working well and sustainably is especially evident in cities and communities. Upper Austria's capital Linz has therefore made it its goal to be a city in which people find the best possible opportunities in life and coexist in a way that is free of conflicts.

Approximately 15% of the city's inhabitants are not Austrian citizens. When you add the naturalized citizens who have made Linz their new homeland, it turns out that immigrants make up about a quarter of the city's population.

Many of them are long-time members of the local workforce and are well integrated in their employer's staff. In many instances, these people have lived here for so long that it's hard to guess where they're originally from. Nevertheless, many actively maintain close relationships with family members in their former homeland, which is precisely what broadens their experiential horizons and can be beneficial in the workplace in lots of ways.

There are also many men and women on the payroll of the municipal agencies and enterprises subsumed under the name UGL who have immigrated to this city from other countries.

## The Project

“Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben” produced in cooperation with IMPORT/EXPORT lets people get a glimpse of the faces and stories of our immigrant employees as a sign of integration lived out in real life. It’s also meant to make it clear that immigrants make a substantial contribution to Linz’s smoothly functioning infrastructure. 45 immigrants who work for UGL have participated in the project. In video interviews, they give an account of their life and their relationship to Linz.

These videos are meant to represent a city in which diversity, openness and mutual understanding are practiced and where racism and exclusion have no place—especially on the part of the employees and management of municipal agencies and enterprises.

Deputy Mayor Klaus Luger, who is also the city’s commissioner of integration affairs, is strongly committed to this initiative: “The personal interviews with UGL employees provide solid impetus to thinking about integration in the City of Linz, since familiarity with immigrants’ backgrounds is the basis for doing away with prejudices. I sincerely hope that as many Linzers as possible will view these very well-made videos at the Ars Electronica Festival, online or at one of UGL facilities.”

The members of UGL are participating in this integration project and will support and promote it with images and videos on their websites, posters and video installations on their premises, and advertisements in their brochures and magazines.

All video interviews with and montages of staff members can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/importundexport](http://www.youtube.com/importundexport) and [www.vimeo.com/blinklicht](http://www.vimeo.com/blinklicht).

Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben will continue to run at the Urfahrner Market until the “Linz Changes” exhibition opens.

## **Vernissage at Ars Electronica**

The opening of “Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben” in conjunction with the Ars Electronica Festival is set for Thursday, September 1, 2011 at 6 PM in the Ars Electronica Center. The IMPORT/EXPORT staff will be on hand to screen the videos in a container converted into a studio.

A special camera is being used to take a panorama group portrait of the UGL employees, whereby their presence is meant as a statement that they stand for a society worth living in and are open to ONE world.

## **Create Your World**

The decision to set up the IMPORT/EXPORT container in the Ars Electronica Quarter was an intentional one, since the spirit of the Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben initiative goes along nicely with the program of the Create Your World young people’s festival that is premiering this year. It’s meant to inspire youngsters, to get them interconnected, and simply to encourage them to give some thought to the world of tomorrow, to come up with new patterns of existence and to realize them experimentally. Key elements of the festival’s mission are cultural education, cooperation among educational and cultural institutions, as well as ways of getting across scientific knowledge and ways of thinking to young people.

A tent city of black yurts and a ring of wagons and containers provide a setting for workshops and gatherings as well as an extraordinary food court—creative and regional, just as colorful and diversified as the ideas and the program are.

## **IMPORT/EXPORT – Stories from the Container**

Import/Export is a cross-media project. It aims to confront the general public with the life stories of people who have immigrated to Linz from foreign countries.

IMPORT/EXPORT: - is highly mobile.

- brings what's strange closer to home.
- solves foreigner problems.
- turns statistics into human beings.
- documents intercultural potential.
- develops and produces cross-media stories.

To accomplish this, a freight container was converted into a film production studio that can easily be moved and set up at a new location if need be. At the Ars Electronica Festival from August 31 to September 6, this colorfully painted, four-ton container is the go-to place for festivalgoers to find out more about the IMPORT/EXPORT project. Video interviews with UGL employees will also be screened here, and anyone who wants to tell their own story can do so right on the spot. The biographies produced and collected in this container can also be accessed online.

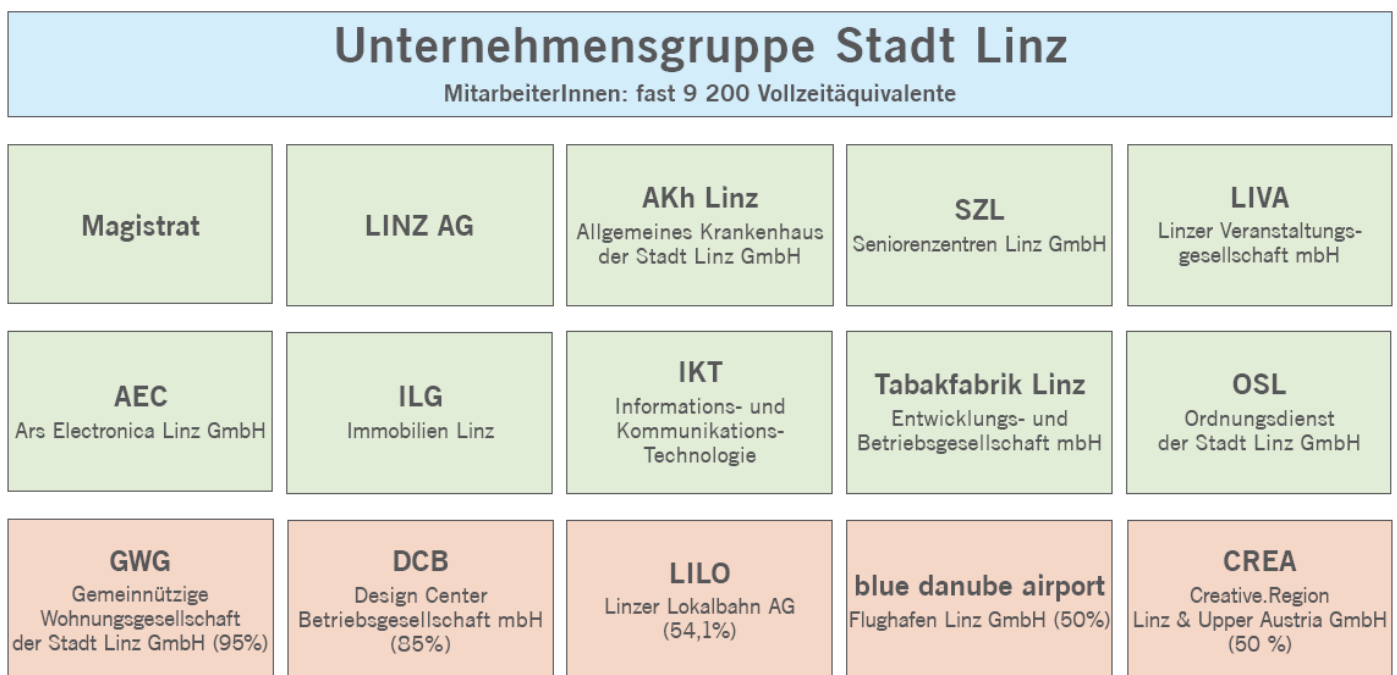
## **Project Initiator and Driving Force**

Providing the impulse to this initiative on behalf of tolerance is Blinklicht Medienlabor operated jointly by journalist Ernst Schmiederer and actor Harald Krassnitzer and headquartered in Vienna. The Blinklicht staff has been working with Patryk Chlastawa, Sulaiman Khawar, Sigrid Pohl and Manuel Steinböck on the Linz.Gemeinsam.Leben project for about six months.

As a correspondent for the Austrian newsweekly Profil, Schmiederer was himself an alien living in New York. Since 2005, he has written a column for the German weekly newspaper Die Zeit portraying Austrians abroad and foreigners in Austria. The interviews he conducted for his column gave him the idea for this project. Produced in cooperation with UGL, the IMPORT/EXPORT project ([importundexport.at](http://importundexport.at)) seeks to change the way locals regard foreigners who live here and are integrated in Austrian society.

## UGL – Unternehmensgruppe Stadt Linz

The consolidation of the Linz municipal government agencies and the city’s wholly- and partly-owned enterprises into a single entity, the UGL, makes it possible to maximize operational efficiency so that Linzers can totally rely on receiving the services that are essential to a high quality of everyday life— water, electricity, public transit, recreational activities, cultural pursuits, and much, much more. A workforce of nearly 10,000 men and women sees to it that the urban infrastructure keeps running smoothly and ensures that Linz remains an extremely attractive place in which to live and do business.



[www.unternehmensgruppelinz.at](http://www.unternehmensgruppelinz.at)

[www.importundexport.at](http://www.importundexport.at)

[www.Aec.at/createyourworld](http://www.Aec.at/createyourworld)

[www.vimeo.com/blinklicht](http://www.vimeo.com/blinklicht)

[www.youtube.com/importundexport](http://www.youtube.com/importundexport)