

# 1 SPATIAL CONDITIONS AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

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## 1.1 Austria in Europe

The Republic of Austria is located in Central Europe and borders on the states of Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. Over the centuries, Austria has played a strategically important role due to its location. Austria's topography features parts of it in the **Alps**, to the East in the **Pannonian Plain**, and also in the **Danube Region**. After Austria joined the EU (1 January 1995), it became embedded in the common economic and mobility region of Europe. In comparison, it is the tenth largest economy and with **8.8 million inhabitants**, it is the 15th most populous country in the EU 28. However, due to its central location in Central Europe it plays a key role with respect to the free movement of persons and goods. For example, Austria has major transportation routes across the Alps with its roads and railways (e.g. Brenner, Tauern, Karawanks). At **144 million overnight stays** (in 2017), Austria is also an important desti-

nation for culture, sports and recreational tourism. Austria has many diverse landscapes and natural resources due to its topography.

Austria accounts for a share of around **29% of the total area of the Alpine arc** and thus also the larger part of the Eastern Alps. The rugged norther limestone plateau of the Northern and Southern Limestone Alps, the central crystalline ridge and the forest-covered Eastern foothills of the Alpine arc cover almost two thirds of the country thus defining the central spatial characteristics that define structure and development of the settled areas. For this reason, living, work and mobility concentrate in the valleys in the western parts of Austria that is dominated by the Alps. The development requirements for these regions with **limited settlement space** are increasing - albeit at varying paces - and this is creating overlaps in use which may result in conflicts of interest.

Fig. 01: Topographic map of Austria

