

“Ökokauf Wien” – Vienna’s Sustainable Procurement Programme

Background

With a population of almost 1.8 million, Vienna is the capital and largest city in Austria. It is also one of Austria’s nine states. In terms of public procurement, the City’s public administration has an average annual spend of €5 billion on goods and services, making it one of the country’s most significant purchasers.

The City of Vienna’s Sustainable Procurement Programme (SPP), *Ökokauf Wien*, began as a project in 1998 involving the cooperation of various departments and services of the City administration. It is headed by a Programme Director and Steering Group and it continues to be one of the main drivers of Vienna’s Climate Protection Programme (*KliP Wien*), which was enacted in 1999 and updated at the end of 2009.

KliP Wien has concrete targets for reducing CO₂ emissions, which were met in 2006 (avoiding 2.6 million tones of CO₂ emissions). New targets were set (to be met by 2020) when the programme was updated in 2009.

The need for GPP was recognised during the course of preparing the first Vienna Climate Protection Programme. The main goal was to develop ecological requirements for products and services. These requirements then formed an essential part of the specifications of the goods and services to be procured, thus emphasis was also placed on the environmental evaluation, maintenance and even improvement of the usability and efficiency of the goods or services.

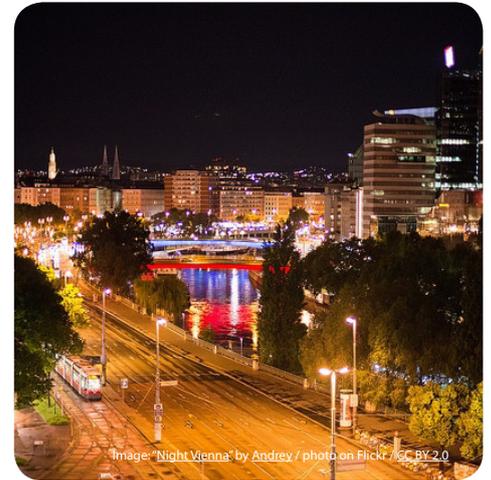
Development of Policy

At the beginning of the Programme, it was essential to raise the awareness for the need to address SPP at a central level among the City’s decision makers. Along with these efforts, it took substantial persuasion to ensure the provision of human resources from the various council departments. At the time, there was a growing sense of responsibility for climate protection actions, on the one hand, and the compulsory EU guidelines for public procurers, on the other. These two issues were the main arguments for obtaining political support for *Ökokauf Wien* – support considered essential for overcoming obstacles in implementation. Internal political support, coupled with its cross-cutting implementation basis and collaboration from entities outside the City administration, are the Programme’s supporting foundations.

Supplies, construction and other services regularly procured by Vienna were grouped by themes and the individual themes were evaluated for their ecological relevance, their greening potential and the practical feasibility of determining ecological requirements. The main topics or issues resulting from this process have come to be known as the Programme’s working groups. Specialised working groups are in charge of drawing up procurement criteria lists, and consultative committees have been set up on legal matters, organisational affairs and public relations. Staff from relevant council departments are involved in the working groups along with experts from affiliated bodies and external organisations.

The Steering Group is composed of experts from the Chief Executive Office of the City Council, Office of the Administrative Group for Environmental Affairs, Vienna Press and Information Services, the relevant municipal departments, Vienna Co-ordination Office for Climate Protection, Vienna Ombudsman’s Office for Environmental Protection, Vienna Hospital Association, Vienna Housing Association, and relevant public utilities.

Extra personnel have not been employed for the Programme. *Ökokauf Wien* is organised across various municipal departments and makes use of the existing structure and resources of the City of Vienna, thereby avoiding separate (or additional) personnel and office expenses. Most of those involved in the Programme are employed by the City and perform their Programme tasks in addition to their actual functions.



Suppliers have been involved in Ökokauf Wien in an ad-hoc manner, through conferences and workshops.

Implementation of policy

In addition to reducing emissions and taking other environmentally friendly measures, the City of Vienna endeavours to be a role model and a pioneer in environmental protection and sustainable development through its Ökokauf Wien Programme and its policies and actions on climate protection, such as Vienna's Energy Efficiency Programme. For that reason, public relations is an integral part of the Programme, such as:

- among the business community and the (local) public via media conferences, press releases and news articles;
- by making films, brochures, information folders and posters available on specific topics; and
- by producing working materials and games for kindergartens and schools.

One of Ökokauf Wien's main aims is to inform as many people as possible of the importance of buying green, both as an individual consumer and as a bulk purchaser for the City of Vienna.

Tools including lists of comprehensive [procurement criteria](#), product databases, position papers and guidelines, all of which are provided online through Ökokauf Wien. The tools, particularly the procurement criteria, are developed within 25 inter-departmental working groups which meet four to six times a year. The working groups cover topics ranging from building construction to food and catering.

Compliance with the procurement criteria for procurement and contracting has been made compulsory since 2003 by decree of Vienna's Chief Executive Director. The mandatory nature of the Programme – namely, the use of the procurement criteria – also enables monitoring of quantifiable impacts.

One of the main issues the Programme has had to deal with since it commenced is the preconception that greener products cost more than conventional alternatives. Due to the concrete nature of GPP, this preconception was proved wrong in virtually every case. Only increases in the share of organic food bought for the Vienna Hospital Association, schools, nurseries and old age homes generates quantifiable additional costs.

Outcomes

A number of detailed assessments have been undertaken to determine the achievements of Ökokauf Wien, the most recent one in April 2014 – see [Green Public Procurement in the City of Vienna: Impact Analysis](#). A selection of the programme's achievements from the mentioned report are as follows:

- 15,000 tonnes of CO₂ savings annually, through efficient lighting, water saving sanitary devices, environmentally sound construction works and organic food, to name a few
- €1.5 million saved per year by using modern building technology and energy efficient appliances
- Protecting employees and reducing damage to human health by using environmentally friendly disinfection and cleaning agents – achieving a 40% reduction in the amount of cleaning agents with the same cleaning effect
- More than 4,000 kg of harmful solvents are avoided each year through the use of environmentally friendly building products
- Reduced air pollutants and particulate matter through the use of low-emission municipal vehicles and lessening construction site traffic generates €300,000 in savings per year
- More than half the food purchased in school catering originates from certified organic agriculture
- Pioneering role at the national and the international level regarding the harmonising of ecological building standards in German speaking countries
- Several media campaigns (for example, on nanotechnological coatings or disinfectants in households) made the results of the ÖkoKauf Wien programme public outside the City administration
- Programme results, such as the [Viennese Database for Disinfectants](#) (WIDES database), has received national and international recognition; results were largely fed into the drafting of Austria's National Action Plan for GPP.

"...one of the significant strengths of the ÖkoKauf Wien Programme lies in its broad scale of impacts and the interaction between the defined focuses and working groups;" [Green Public Procurement in the City of Vienna: Impact Analysis](#).

The business sector (suppliers/service providers) continues to respond positively to the ecological requirements for prod-

ucts and services and has adjusted its production conditions, product qualities and service performance accordingly. Thus, in many fields, products and services which do not meet Ökokauf Wien's requirements virtually disappeared from the market, particularly for the paper and construction sectors.

Ökokauf Wien has received international recognition for their Programme work and achievements. In 2011, it was one of the winners of the [European Public Sector Award](#), it also won the Dubai International Award for Best Practices in 2010 and has been widely promoted by the European Commission as a best practice case for sustainability.

Lessons learned

The presumption that greener products/services would entail **higher costs** was proved wrong by means of calculating costs over life cycles. Financial sustainability is primarily taken into account by including life-cycle costs when making cost considerations, for example, when procuring cleaning products and services. Further examples include energy consuming devices (computers, washing machines, etc), and thermal insulation for construction works, which can entail higher purchase prices – however initial costs are amortised in short time frames.

The reservations of the **business sector** about the efforts to enhance the environmental compatibility of products and services, which could be felt in some cases, were lessened by establishing closer contacts, providing sound arguments and by consistent and coherent implementation of the Programme's results in the City's procurement activities. The plan is therefore to follow the same path, from an organisational and thematic perspective, to expand on the range of issues addressed, and to continually update sustainability requirements.

Important points to note for replicating the Ökokauf Wien approach:

- ÖkoKauf Wien had political buy-in from policy makers who gave them the task of developing a comprehensive SPP programme. Despite the importance of securing high level political commitment, the Programme's main drivers and executors were at the departmental level (procurement and environment). So a bottom-up approach, coupled with top level support, have been key to success.
- The Programme involved numerous stakeholders from the City's administration right from its initiation. They made sure that those who would be using the GPP requirements were also involved in its development. The approach has ensured that the requirements are realistically applicable and has increased the commitment of everyone involved.

More information:

<https://www.wien.gv.at/english/environment/protection/oekokauf/>

<https://www.wien.gv.at/umweltschutz/oekokauf/>

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