

AUSTRIA¹ - Vienna ÖkoKauf programme

Context

Public procurement expenditure of the city of Vienna amounts to EUR 5 billion annually, of which approximately 50% is spent on supplies and 50% on works and services. The Vienna ÖkoKauf programme was set up in 1998 to use this large purchasing volume to support the procurement of ecologically sound products and services and contribute to climate protection.

ÖkoKauf is a leading programme within the framework of the first climate protection strategy of the city of Vienna (“*KliPWien*”). It aims at focusing Vienna city administration procurement towards climate protection aspects while respecting legal requirements and achieving value for money. In 2009, the programme was extended until 2020 to enforce the reduction of emissions of the administration of the city of Vienna.

Objectives

The main target of ÖkoKauf is to identify potential ecological performance aspects of products and services purchased by the city of Vienna and its services and develop eco-friendly procurement requirements, to feed into the technical specifications of such products and services. Apart from the ecological assessment, economic efficiency (value for money) as well as maintenance and improvement of the usability of the goods and services are taken into account.

High priority is given to immediate feasibility and legal compliance. ÖkoKauf focuses more on standards for defining the subject matter of the contract (“what is purchased”) and less on award criteria or contract performance clauses. The key tools of ÖkoKauf are tender documents, catalogues of criteria and other procurement-related requirements.

Apart from achieving technically measurable results, ÖkoKauf also aims at raising the awareness of the city’s employees, private households and businesses towards buying ecologically sound goods and services. It publishes its results on a publicly accessible website.

Implementation

Within the administration of the city of Vienna, ÖkoKauf is an organisation-wide programme encompassing all the services of the city. It is operated in the city construction directorate by a programme leader and two deputies with the support of a steering team, which takes all the relevant decisions. The work is organised in 26 thematically different working groups attended by 200 employees from all divisions of the city’s administration. Additionally, two committees were established for legal aspects and public relations and two assistant units for budgetary advice and international activities. Each working group and the leaders of the committees and units are members of the steering team. In addition to existing organisational resources (staff and facilities), ÖkoKauf receives an annual budget of EUR 300 000, which is mainly spent on external support, e.g. studies, research and experiments. ÖkoKauf regularly organises and participates in relevant conferences.

Work is carried out in the aforementioned working groups. They develop, evaluate and update ecological criteria that describe the goods and services to be purchased in the following categories: paper and printing, electric and electronic devices, construction and facility management, vehicles, food, events, disinfection and cleaning agents, textiles, furniture, lighting, etc. The results are cross-

1. Case study submitted by the Austrian Federal Chancellery.

checked with the legal compliance committee and then published. The publication is accompanied by public relation activities to promote the use of the criteria on a broad basis inside and outside of the city's administration.

Since 2003, all services of the city of Vienna are obliged, per ordinance of the director general of the administrative services, to take the results of ÖkoKauf into account. Thus, the responsible procurement officer integrates the relevant texts from ÖkoKauf into the tender documents and makes sure that the ecological requirements become part of the contract.

Impact and monitoring

Since its establishment in 1998, ÖkoKauf has developed around 130 successful results for the goods and services under it. Estimates show that the city of Vienna achieves annual savings of EUR 17 million and 30 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions with the support of ÖkoKauf.

So far, only few of the results have been subject to individual evaluation, due to their technical complexity and lack of resources. The following examples show concrete results:

- Use of recycled office and hygienic paper preserves resources and reduces environmental impact in terms of waste water and energy consumption.
- The production of organic food emits less CO₂ in comparison to products from conventional agriculture. Through the procurement of organic food using ÖkoKauf criteria, the city of Vienna avoids up to 20 000 tons of CO₂ emissions annually.
- Switching to energy-efficient office and household devices, lighting, electronic equipment, etc. saves energy and reduces CO₂ emissions.
- Simple changes of processes can considerably influence environmental impact. For example, cleaning staff received a special training on the use of microfiber, which resulted in an essential decrease in the consumption of cleaning agents.
- In the construction area there is a variety of methods and materials that can reduce harmful emissions, energy consumption and increase the life of the buildings. "Wiener Wohnen", a city-owned undertaking for housing manages and maintains around 220 000 flats using such methods.

Another impact can be observed in the market: in some areas, products and services which did not comply with ÖkoKauf requirements have completely disappeared from the market.

So far, ÖkoKauf does not have a full-fledged monitoring system. It is a self-regulated process through the continuous work of the 26 different working groups, using feedback from practice for self-improvement.

Challenges and risks

When ÖkoKauf was set up in 1998, the main challenge was to raise awareness of the importance and feasibility of ecologically sound procurement at the level of policy and decision makers, who can influence the availability of resources for the project, in terms of staff and budget, and its continuity. The political support of the City Councillor for Environment helped to initiate the project and overcome the belief that ecologically sound, or organic, products and services are more expensive than

conventional offers. It was possible to refute this prejudice in many areas, with the exception of the procurement of organic food, which led to an increase in costs.

One of the challenges is the professionalisation of the current system in terms of monitoring, verifying and mainstreaming results. ÖkoKauf functions as a self-regulated system through feedback to the working groups and the continuity of their work. As the respective employees do not work full-time for the project, horizontal administration of the results (monitoring application, measuring impacts, etc.) is not strong. To maintain and enhance high standards, ÖkoKauf would benefit from establishing a permanent evaluation and administration system, which improves the monitoring of the results in terms of environmental impact and economic efficiency.

Key lessons learnt

In addition to the high-level political support, two of the initial decisions were key factors for successfully implementing the ÖkoKauf project:

- focusing the work on the development of standards to define and describe ecologically sound products and services instead of defining qualification and award criteria and contract clauses helped to achieve buy-in by procurement staff and the uptake of solutions
- the establishment of the legal committee boosted the acceptance of the results of the project, as legal compliance plays an important role in procurement practice.

Tangible results, in particular economically measurable advantages, sell by themselves. It is also important to constantly consolidate results and professionalise the project in terms of expertise and organisational adaptation to avoid outdated standards and blockages.

For further information see: www.oekokauf.wien.at.