

AUSTRIA¹ - Vienna thinks future

Context

In 2006, the city of Vienna started a comprehensive strategic process titled “Vienna thinks future” to support developing a knowledge-based society, as attracting knowledge and intellectual resources were seen as key factors to position Vienna as a competitive business location. The Viennese strategy for research, technology and innovation (RTI Strategy) was published in 2007 and identifies five relevant fields of action, one of which is to make Vienna a “greenhouse” for research and innovation. Given the volume of public purchases in Vienna, procurement was chosen as a strategic tool to stimulate innovation.

The public procurement-related objectives in the context of the RTI Strategy were assigned to “ZIT Zentrum für Innovation und Technologie GmbH” (the Centre for Innovation and Technology, an agency owned by the Business Agency “Wirtschaftsagentur Wien” of the city of Vienna), accompanied by funding guidelines. The ZIT established an expert working group on public procurement and innovation which developed the “WienWin” initiative in 2009.

Objectives

WienWin aims to position Vienna as a business location by using its purchasing power, through promoting the development of innovative products and services and supporting innovative businesses. Procuring authorities are meant to function as pioneer users and create a lead market for innovation.

WienWin sets up a framework for systematic exchange of information between public purchasers in Vienna, innovative companies and the ZIT.

The project provides public purchasers in Vienna with an overview of innovations available in the market. To encourage a public procurement culture which promotes innovation, know-how is built up through continuous dialogue and quality input.

Implementation process

The WienWin initiative consists of four main tools:

1. Internet platform

A website (www.wienwin.at) was set up to collect examples of innovation in Vienna. WienWin.at presents only products and services that were either developed with funds from a regional, national or European funding institution or where the level of innovation has been subject to evaluation by an expert jury. Innovations are presented in a uniform way.

2. City talk and individual dialogue

In individual discussions with members of the administration of the city of Vienna (including enterprises that are owned or managed by the city), the ZIT experts survey innovation in the city and provide information on solutions from Viennese companies. If there is an interest, businesses are invited to present their innovations personally in city talks, where opportunities are offered for both potential users to check the innovative solutions as well as for innovative companies to convince users

1. Case study submitted by the Austrian Federal Chancellery.

of the benefits of their solutions. Procurement procedures after city talks should comply with public procurement legal requirements.

3. Making WienWin situations visible

If an innovation developed by a Viennese undertaking is taken up by the city of Vienna, the ZIT proceeds to science and media communication to show where and how the innovation is used. It issues reports to present the respective businesses so as to motivate others to invest in innovation.

4. Concepts for innovation-oriented procurement

WienWin primarily aims at offering procurement managers a market overview of available innovations, but also focuses on life-cycle costs and their calculation, incentive systems for procurement of innovation, pre-commercial procurement and development of innovative city technologies.

WienWin is handled by the ZIT, which employs 26 people. Since March 2011, WienWin is co-financed by EU regional funds and has an annual budget of approximately EUR 440 000 and 5 employees (3.5 full-time equivalents). They analyse fields of application of innovations, develop standardised presentation models for innovations and organise workshops. WienWin services around 450 purchasers of the Vienna city administration.

Impact and monitoring

WienWin aims to achieve impact in the following areas:

- Public services are tailored to local requirements.
- The public sector helps local SMEs. SMEs are motivated to invest in research, development and innovation, aiming to enter the public sector market.
- The use of technology-based innovations for public services has an impact on the image of a city and attracts innovation.
- Co-operation between the city and local business increases local “ownership”.

So far WienWin has organised 121 dialogues with decision makers of the city administration and businesses to identify areas that require innovative solutions and planned joint follow-up actions. Undertakings presented innovative products and solutions to potential users in 18 city talks.

WienWin.at currently covers more than 200 innovative solutions in 12 different areas (e.g. construction, education, tourism, health, environment, etc.).

In 24 cases, WienWin achieved co-operation between the Vienna city administration and innovative undertakings.

Challenges and risks

There is a gap in innovation policy between research push and market pull and thus it is difficult to market innovative solutions. To bridge this gap, various funding schemes are provided at

international, national and regional level to strengthen research. An increasing number of expert groups recommend complementing public funding for research and innovation by new measures to strengthen the market pull for innovation.

To evaluate the impact of the WienWin measures taken so far, a continuous monitoring process has been set up. Studies are foreseen to check obstacles and good practices for the public procurement of innovation.

Key lessons learnt

WienWin is one of the pioneer activities fostering innovation through public procurement in practice. WienWin helps to bridge the gap between public promotion and the funding of innovative projects on the one side and public procurement on the other. Awareness for cultural differences in these fields of public administration is a key condition for success.

For further information see: www.wienwin.at.