

AUSTRIA¹ - Horizontal action plan for sustainable procurement (naBe-Aktionsplan)

Context

In July 2010 the Austrian federal government adopted a horizontal action plan for sustainable procurement (“naBe-Aktionsplan”) and started its implementation. The plan:

- points out the importance of changing production and consumption schemes towards sustainable activities
- shows the public sector’s opportunities to influence this process
- offers practical orientation for public purchasers to design their procurement procedures in this respect.

Objectives

Given that Austria’s annual procurement expenditure covers approximately 17% of GDP, the public sector can contribute to sustainable economic development by the strategic use of public procurement. In this context, the efficient and economical use of natural resources is one of the most important conditions.

Implementation process

The action plan contains ecological criteria for 16 specific procurement categories. They must be used by the Federal Procurement Agency (Bundesbeschaffung GmbH, BBG), the public sector’s largest central purchasing body in Austria, per instruction of the Ministry of Finance.

The BBG tries to actively contribute to the target to reduce greenhouse emissions (GHG), which are generated by the public sector’s energy consumption, by purchasing electricity from renewable resources. The share of renewable energy sources in the demanded product mix increased from 40% in 2005 to 100% in 2010; the share of certified green electricity increased from 0% in 2005 to 3% in 2010.

Impact and monitoring

In this context, monitoring plays an essential role. The Federal Ministry for the Environment in co-operation with the BBG mandated the Austrian Environment Agency to analyse the impact of using ecologically sound procurement criteria for energy on GHG emissions during 2005 and 2010. The study was focused on energy procurement based on the action plan of the Austrian federal ministries and their services by using a computer assisted model (GEMIS-Austria).

The calculation of GHG emissions on the basis of the mentioned product mix shows that GHG emissions caused by the electricity consumption of the respective public services decreased although electricity consumption generally rose by 92% between 2005 and 2010.

1. Case study submitted by the Austrian Federal Chancellery.

Challenges and risks

The project serves as a model for purchasing electricity, which is verified by the calculation methodology applied in the mentioned study of the Austrian Environment Agency.

There is potential for the future, e.g. in building facilities, which are able to provide certified green electricity. Based on research a specific scenario “*Zertifizierter Ökostrom bis 2015*” (certified electricity until 2015) estimates the available potential as continuously increasing.

The BBG has the option to increase the procurement of green electricity from 3% in 2010 to 11% in 2015. To enforce this potential, the Ministry for Environment has to make the benefits visible to the other federal ministries.

Increasing the procurement of certified (with eco-labels) green electricity can lead to the development of facilities for renewable energy sources in the long run, because new or modernised facilities are a requirement for green electricity. This should lead to further reduction of greenhouse emissions.

Key lessons learnt

The consumption of electricity is forecasted to increase in the short term. The transposition of measures to stabilise and reduce electricity consumption should therefore be a priority in addition to increasing electricity from renewable sources. Legal and economic conditions are essential factors for developing facilities for green electricity able to provide sufficient quantities.

The BBG’s initiatives in the field of sustainable procurement in co-operation with the Ministry for Environment have contributed to raising awareness in the federal ministries and their services for efficient and economical use of resources. The first important steps were taken through the procurement of electricity, which were analysed in a study.

Increased demand of certified green electricity can be promoted by the Ministry for Environment. The stabilisation and reduction of electricity consumption of the public sector is the most effective measure to sustainably reduce greenhouse gas emissions and can therefore be seen as a common task.

For further information, see: www.nachhaltigebeschaffung.at.