



Introducing Austria's Sustainable Public Procurement Platform

Gerhard Weiner, Head of the Austrian Sustainable Procurement Platform, has been working at [Federal Public Procurement Agency \(BBG\)](#) for over one year and was initially responsible for the creation of the concept papers and logic model of Austria's Sustainable Public Procurement Platform ([naBe Platform](#)). Before his employment at BBG, he worked for almost eight years as deputy managing director in an umbrella organisation for applied research organizations with focus on SMEs and with technical directions to sustainable building, renewable energy and environmental technology as well as smart materials. He holds an engineering title in computer sciences and a PhD in social and economic sciences.

What is Austria's Sustainable Public Procurement Platform (naBe), and why was it created?

The naBe (naBe is the German acronym for Sustainable Public Procurement) Platform is the current result of an ongoing process to foster sustainable public procurement in Austria. In 2010, the Austrian Government released the Austrian Action Plan for Sustainable Public Procurement. This was the starting point for sustainable public procurement for the national level. The plan comprises a list of sustainable procurement criteria for 16 different product groups and is the minimum standard for sustainable public procurement in Austria and mandatory for the federal level. The new government programme for the years 2020-2024 includes the intention to update and actualise the plan as well as to evaluate it.

In the last years, it became clearer that it needs more than good criteria for the establishment of sustainable procurement practices. Finally, in spring 2019, BBG and the Ministry

of Sustainability and Tourism (BMNT) decided to intensify their cooperation and to invest resources in the creation of the naBe Platform, which was launched as a department in the BBG in September 2019.

The naBe Platform has the task to further develop SPP in Austria and establish sustainability as a core principle for public procurement. We therefore engage with procurers to include sustainability criteria in public tenders. We also organise events and workshops to raise awareness and train people about the benefits of SPP. More than that, the Platform shall function as a multi-stakeholder platform and bring together innovators, suppliers, public institutions and relevant interest groups. We know that many best practices for public procurement in Europe and all over the world exist. Therefore, we try to internationalise and exchange with other countries.

Important to mention is that the naBe Platform is in its development phase, and that our young team consists of three members. I think it was a very good decision to locate

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the naBe platform office inside the BBG, as this physical proximity allows direct contact and cooperation with the strategic and operative purchasers in the BBG. Firstly, this gives us the chance to learn and understand the mechanisms behind the core business of public procurement and the problems people face in their everyday work. Secondly, the direct contact allows us to be directly involved in the development of tenders and advocate for the inclusion of sustainability dimensions.

What kind of services does the platform offer to public procurers?

Our Platform represents a one-stop-shop for all questions related to SPP. In practice, colleagues often approach us with questions about possible sustainability dimensions for different product groups before they start working on preparing a tender. Our [helpdesk](#) is not restricted, however, to BBG internal employees, but open to all people in the public services in Austria, from federal to regional and municipal level. For example, our most recent requests came from the environment officer of a municipality near Vienna, and now we will organise two workshops on SPP for their employees. We also got invited by an alliance of sustainable universities in Austria to develop together a guideline for sustainable procurement for universities.

Apart from strategic workshops and trainings, we also organise different discussion formats to bring together stakeholders relevant for a specific tender. This year, for example, in preparation for an ICT tender in 2021, we will bring together public procurers of IT hardware with sustainability experts from different hardware suppliers to discuss possible sustainability criteria.

Further, our naBe Platform invites stakeholders once a year to the so called naBe Action Day. Our first action day happened on November 7th, 2019. Its focus was on sustainable food in communal catering. It was an open event with lectures and open workshops. Lastly, we also support sustainability projects for public institutions. Currently we support the EMAS certification of the Austrian Parliament, which would be the first national Parliament in Europe to hold this certificate.

What environmental impacts do you hope to achieve as a result of naBe?

Practically, we decided to focus on the product groups where the BBG has the biggest leverage. These groups are energy, mobility, IT and facility services. Experiences show that the market power of the BBG in the cleaning services market and the use of strict environmental criteria pushed firms towards the implementation of environmental management systems e.g. EMAS certification and the use of certified cleaning products. A future challenge is to focus on the purchasing of electricity by public institutions. Estimations show that if all federal facilities in Austria would buy certified electricity according

“We hope to contribute to the fight against climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, naBe also focuses on stopping biodiversity loss and increasing human well-being through the restriction of possible hazardous substances used in the production of goods and services. Further, we promote circular economy as a responsible approach with natural resources.”

to the [Austrian Ecolabel for Green Energy](#), 98.625t CO₂eq/year could be saved.

Lastly, we also focus on social sustainability, where we would like to see the public sector take more responsibility, particularly in the IT sector. Future work will include exploring how we can implement existing certifications, for example [TCO](#), as tender criteria to ensure better social as well as environmental outcomes in the IT supply chain.