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An Initiative of the Austrian Sustainability Strategy







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Social Production – appreciating Man and Environment!

In Lower Austria, there has traditionally been a strong relation to nature. Especially in times of global economic crises, it is obvious that clean environment only is not sufficient. Sensible work and regional value creation is needed for life that is worth living in the long run. Sustainable action means to consider the needs of the currently living generations, and at the same time to preserve the basis of life and freedom of actions for the coming generations.

The project idea of “social production”, which stems from the field of environmental and soil protection, is a good opportunity to achieve advantages for all participants.

I kindly invite you to make use of the offers of this project and of the website “sozialproduziert.at”. May sustainable products and services with a social background arise from the continuous cooperation with social projects. This is an advantage for all parties participating!

Dr. Stephan Pernkopf, Landesrat of Environmental Affairs



Social Production – a Sustainable Asset for the Business Location

The Lower Austrian economy has been developing well. Together, we are on the way to a sustainable positioning as an attractive business location, in which it is worth living. It shows the strongest growth of economy in East Austria. It is mainly the small and medium-sized enterprises, which assist in achieving these aims. Many enterprises are active with “FAIR responsibility”! They have been living values and traditions, and they have been setting as much value on the positive relation to their regions and on the relations to their employees as on economic success. Also the cooperation with social institutions is not new for many economic enterprises. What is new, however, is the approach of “social production”, which was developed in common, in the fields of “Environment” and “Social Affairs”. In a model project, we want to elaborate sensible practice examples of the cooperation between economy, public institutions, and “enterprises with social production”. It is the aim to reach creative, innovative, and sustainable products and services of high quality and with fair terms. I wish all the participating parties much success with sensible, sustainable products, and with services having a social background!

Dr. Petra Bohuslav, Landesrat of Economic Affairs



Social Production – a Contribution on the Way to a Social Model Region

Lower Austria wants to achieve the aim of becoming a social model region in Europe. This requires various measures. Inter alia, this requires also institutions, which accept and care for people, if these do no longer correspond to the constantly increasing demands of regular work due to bodily or social deficiencies. In the long run, sensible occupation, qualification, and using one’s own faculties contribute to a life worth living.

Through procurement of suitable orders, social occupation enterprises can be practically supported in their task to integrate disadvantaged people into the employment market, or to facilitate their participation in working life. This is exactly, what the project idea of “social production” wants to achieve, which stems from the field of environmental protection, and which is now being implemented together with the Department of Economy and Social Affairs. In this context, it is the aim to achieve essential advantages for the participants and users of this offer.

I may invite you to make the best use of the opportunities, which lie behind the idea of “social production” and this unique cooperation of economic enterprises, public institutions, and social projects, so that further sustainable products and services with a social background will arise.

Mag. Barbara Schwarz, Landesrat of Social Affairs

Project of Social Production

Furthering Cooperation with Social Enterprises and developing Sustainable Products and Services

Social production is a project idea of the Komunitas OG, which is implemented in cooperation with the Province of Lower Austria. It is the aim to expand cooperation between enterprises and public contracting authorities and social enterprises, and to find, to develop and further sustainable products and services of high quality in their suitability for the market, so that they become well-established for the general public.

sopro intends to throw light upon performances of social enterprises, i.e. enterprises and projects on the second and third employment markets, with a view to sustainability, because their work constitutes a type of regional economic activities with a social background.

Development of the Project

Social production is based on knowledge about the strengths, advantages and “sustainability” of employment projects on the extended employment market. Social production stems from positive practical experience with qualification enterprises in the production of ecologically sustainable and innovative products. The fundamental idea of the project is the reinforced marketing campaign and use of social enterprises by the public sector and the private sector.

Based on these experiences, a cooperation between the Province of Lower Austria (Department of Rural Development – LF6) and the Komunitas OG came into existence in 2009, in order to test possibilities of a broader cooperation between public institutions (Province of Lower Austria) and occupational projects under the aspect of sustainability and regional promotion and rural development, respectively.

Conceiving Ideas and networking Partners

An essential finding which stems from previous experiences is that between an idea of a potential contractor and its implementation in a social enterprise, an interface is required, which the Komunitas OG intends to provide for. Time and again, a creative participation in the development of product ideas is required, as well as networking, in order to find the proper partner in social economy.

The Komunitas OG therefore assumes the role to mediate between clients and social enterprises, according to demand, and between ideas and their implementation (development of products).



What does “Sustainability“ mean?

Sustainability means the formation of a system in such a way that it is able to exist in the long run. The most common definition of sustainability was formulated in 1987 by the so-called Brundtland Commission: **“Sustainable development is development which satisfies the needs of the generation of today, without limiting the opportunities of future generations to satisfy their own needs and to chose their way of life.”** (Brundtland Report, 1987).

The UN Commission emphasizes the intra-generation and the inter-generation fairness in this definition, which is linked to the concept of sustainability: on the one hand, the distribution between the generations living now, as a balance between the people, mainly relating to the distribution between the global North and the global South; on the other hand, the balance between the generations living now, and the future generations, i.e. the obligation to stand for the preservation of the environment and the stability of society on behalf of the children and of the children’s children.

“Consuming such that it can be replaced“

The contemplation of the word „sustainability“ and its interpretation in different languages provides for interesting findings: “Sustainability”, in German, in its true sense means to “consume as much as can be replaced”, whilst in other languages, for instance in French or Slovenian, a stronger emphasis is set on “permanence” or “capacity”. The English term of “sustainability” finally means “to support from the bottom” or “to sustain the development”.

The History of Sustainability

Already at the beginning of the 18th Century, the idea of sustainability was for the first time expressed for the field of forestry. Hans Carl von Carlowitz wrote in 1713 about the “sustainable use” of forests, from which only as much is withdrawn as is able to grow.

Broader popularity and political attention was only contained in the term at the start of the environmental movement in the 70ies. Successively, ministries of environmental affairs have been established in Europe (for instance, since 1971 in Austria), and large environmental NGOs (for instance Global 2000 in August 1982) have been founded. In 1972, the first World Environmental Conference took place in Stockholm, and in 1992 the extremely successful UN Conference on “Environment and Development” took place in Rio de Janeiro.

In Europe, in 2001 the European sustainability strategy was adopted in Goeteborg, and it was revised in 2006. In Austria, since 2002 there has been an Austrian sustainability strategy.

The three Dimensions of Sustainability

Sustainability is expressed on three levels: in its economic dimension (environment), in its ecological dimension (economy), and in its social dimension (society). Often sustainability is shown by means of a column model. This model, however, suggests that these columns are closed spheres, which usually does not correspond to reality like this. The “sustainability triangle” solves this problem, because it becomes clear that the dimensions of sustainability are connected to one another.

Ecology

Ecological sustainability is the dimension, which is given utmost attention in political discussions. The crucial point in the center of ecological sustainability is climate change, which designates the global warming of the Earth caused by man. Sustainability in relation to ecology means choosing an interaction with nature, which safeguards an intact (clean) environment for all people on Earth.

The social Metabolism

Starting point of the evaluation of ecological sustainability is the so-called „social metabolism“, which comprehends the Earth as a limited system of a substantially closed global ecosystem. On account of increasing exploitation of resources by man, increasingly environmental problems occur, such as climate change, hole in the ozone layer, decrease of diversity of species, erosion, and desertification, as well as contamination of soil, water, and air

The ecological Footprint

The most familiar indicator of consumption of natural resources is the so-called “ecological footprint”. It quantifies the question, how much renewable resources are required by the human consumption of products and services. This means, the consumption of material, land, and energy is calculated in terms of space. In this context, the consumption of fossil energy sources is calculated in terms of the required “CO2-absorption space”, i.e. in the required space of forests and oceans. In the meantime, man consumes almost 1.5 planets a year, with a strong tendency toward increase. For further information on this topic: <http://www.mein-fussabdruck.at>

Other indicators suitable for measuring consumption of resources are, for instance, the water backpack, which indicates in relation to products, how much water is consumed in their production. Or the material backpack, also called ecological backpack, which calculates the consumption of renewable and non-renewable raw materials for products or even for states.

„Austria as a Living Space“

In the Austrian Sustainability Strategy, the essential ecological aims are described in the Chapter „Austria as a Living Space“. It comprises the field of topics of environmental and climate protection, preservation of species and landscapes, use of space and regional development, as well as mobility and traffic systems.

Social Production and Ecological Sustainability

Social production systematically promotes sustainable products made of raw materials which grow again or of recycled material, and thus contributes to active environmental protection. On account of procurement of regional partners of cooperation, transport distances are reduced, and regional development is strengthened, especially due to the fact that a large number of occupational projects are resident in structurally weak and rural regions. A number of social enterprises are explicitly dedicated to ecological social agriculture. Finally, the footprint of regionally produced products is clearly better than the one of globally imported products.

Economics

A sustainable manner of economic activity is closely related to the other two dimensions. Economic sustainability is linked to the ecological dimension, for instance in relation to a more economical use of resources and energy, as well as to the social dimension, for instance by creating and safeguarding employment. Two crucial terms, which describe the essence of sustainable economic activity, are therefore efficiency and stability.

Economic Sustainability and Enterprises

Enterprises form organizational units on a micro-economic level for the implementation of sustainable strategies. Sustainable economic activity is connected with:

- **Mobility:** transport of goods, business trips, sustainable naval management, etc.
- **Consumption of resources:** sustainable products, technical innovation, quality
- **Work:** new models of work hours, CSR, integration of disadvantaged persons
- **Products:** quality prevails over quantity, long lifespan of products, regional products, environment-friendly raw material or raw material growing again.

Enterprises are able to make essential contributions to a more sustainable society through their orientation and activities. They are, however, strongly dependent on the preferences of their customers, who often prefer “cheaper” products to “sustainable” products. The market itself cannot lead to sustainability, because CSR measures may yield advantages for single enterprises, most of them, however, produce in the most cost-reducing

manner. As the market does not place sufficient attention on external factors, such as destruction of the environment, political controlling systems are required, which regulate these requests in the interest of society by law (environmental obligations, taxes, fines, benefits, etc.) For tips concerning this topic: The Story of Stuff - www.storyofstuff.com

“Austria as a dynamic Business Location“

In the Austrian sustainability strategy, the following topics are mentioned under the aspect of economic sustainability: Furthering innovative structures of competitiveness, correct prices for resources and energy, successful economic activity through eco-efficiency, furthering sustainable products and services. Crucial aims are, inter alia, the strengthening of responsibility of the entrepreneur, and the reinforced separation of consumption of energy and resources from economic growth.

Economic Sustainability and Social Production

Social production is understood as a comprehensive method of sustainable economic activity. Through well-directed promotion of sustainable high-quality products and services, the project contributes to saving resources. The furthering of regional cooperation helps cut down on transport distances, the production in occupational projects qualifies and integrates disadvantaged persons, and it supports the safeguarding of employment.

Social production strengthens regional value creation, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises, and it is able to contribute to a better capacity utilization and an increase in efficiency of social enterprises, which are (largely or) in part financed by the public sector. Finally, it is an incentive for private enterprises to actively assume social responsibility.



Social Affairs

The social dimension of sustainability is most difficult to comprehend, and therefore little light is thrown on it quite often in the discussion about a sustainable future. The reasons for this are inter alia that different (scientific) disciplines are connected with the social dimension, and that the social dimension can hardly be quantified. Therefore, even today there is no clear concept of social sustainability, and it lacks broad acceptance.

Humane Life, Distribution, and Equality of Opportunities

Social sustainability aims at a life worth living, i.e. with a view to the distribution of social burdens, to role patterns, to the distribution of work / countermeasures against unemployment, and to equality of opportunities. The focus centers on humane existence, where material and immaterial basic needs can be satisfied. The topic of “work” plays a crucial role in this context: Remunerated employment facilitates the material participation and safeguarding of existence by means of earnings, it has, however, also an essential influence on social and cultural participation.

Social sustainability means protection of human health, safeguarding social stability, and safeguarding the capacity of development and organization of society.

Quality of Life as social Sustainability

An approach for measuring and assessment of social sustainability is made by the concept of quality of life in connection with scepticism against the model of growth, according to which an increase in prosperity automatically leads to a better life. Studies show that an increasing salary per capita of a society does not directly correspond to the percentage of “very happy

people". Other research studies show that it is not the material prosperity of individuals, but mainly a just distribution, which leads to an increase in quality of life for everyone.

The Human Development Index (HDI)

The indicators of social sustainability are not yet mature, because they are relatively difficult to calculate. The Human Development Index (HDI), for example, serves as a measuring instrument on an international scale, which considers the real purchasing power per inhabitant, life expectation, and education (measured according to rate of alphabetization and schooling). It shows, however, only average values, and it states little on the distribution within a country.

Social Indicators in Austria

Mainly the chapter of "Quality of Life in Austria" deals with the dimension of social sustainability in the Austrian Sustainability Strategy. The indicators mentioned in this chapter consider the topics of social exclusion (unemployment, poverty), social inequality, education, inequality between men and women, and health in a comprehensive manner.

Social Sustainability and Enterprises

In connection with enterprises and CSR, social sustainability mostly refers to the working conditions of employees. At this point, the working conditions, active care for health, integration of socially disadvantaged groups, or the handling of a reduction of staff, equality of opportunities, participation, and work models are considered. Also aspects of human rights, however, are considered along the entire chain of value creation.

Social Sustainability and Social Production

The social dimension of sustainability, on which only little light is thrown quite often, plays a crucial role in social production; this is true on various levels. Social production makes social occupational enterprises stronger in their task of integration of disadvantaged persons into the employment market and their participation in working life, respectively, on account of procurement and support of adequate orders. Social production intends to help disadvantaged persons to perform appreciated and sensible activities. Thereby, it makes an indirect contribution to social balance and increased equality of opportunities within society.

Social production facilitates economic enterprises at the interface between social and economic sustainability to actively assume social responsibility and to consciously cooperate with social enterprises.

Social Production and Sustainability

Social Additional Value, sustainable Economic Activities, and Environmental Consciousness

Social production is effective in all dimensions of sustainability. One of the focuses, social sustainability, also has strong relations to economic and ecological dimensions. Finally, social production also strikes the political dimension of sustainability through its proximity and conscious influence on politics, which, however, has not yet been in a position to be implemented in the scientific discourse.

Social Production creates Social Additional Value

The social dimension of sustainability, on which quite often very little light is thrown, plays a crucial role in social production on various levels. Social production strengthens social occupational enterprises in their task of integrating disadvantaged persons into the employment market and their participation therein, respectively, through procurement and support of suitable orders. Social production intends to assist disadvantaged persons in finding appreciated and sensible activities. Thereby, it makes an indirect contribution to social balance and better equality of opportunities in society.

Social production facilitates economic enterprises at the interface between social and economic sustainability to actively assume social responsibility, and to consciously cooperate with social enterprises.

Social Production as Sustainable Economic Activities

Social production is understood as a comprehensive type of sustainable economic activity. Through a well-directed furthering of high-quality sustainable products and services, the project contributes to saving of resources. The promotion of regional cooperation helps cut down on transport distances, the production in occupational projects qualifies and integrates disadvantaged persons, and it supports safeguarding employment. Social production strengthens regional value creation, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises, and is able to contribute to a better capacity utilization and increase in efficiency of social enterprises which are (largely or) in part financed by the public sector. Finally, it is an incentive for private enterprises to actively assume social responsibility.

Social Production strengthens Environmental Consciousness and Regional Development

Social production purposefully furthers sustainable products made of raw materials which grow again or of recycling material, and thereby it makes a contribution to active environmental protection. Through procurement of regional cooperation partners, transport distances are cut down on, and regional development is strengthened, especially because a large number of occupational projects is resident in structurally weak and rural regions. A number of social enterprises are explicitly dedicated to ecological social agriculture. Finally, the footprint of regionally produced products is clearly better than the one of globally imported products.

Social Production **Best Practice Examples**



The “Treasure Chest“ with Sustainable Effect

Emmaus St. Poelten produces Painting Box for Department of Rural Development (LF6)

Since 2007, Emmaus St. Poelten has been producing the „soil colour painting box“ for the Department of Rural Development of the Province of Lower Austria, more precisely for the Special Field of Soil Protection. The Director of the soil campaign, Dr. Erwin Szlezak conceived this project at that time, together with the Komunitas OG, and addressed Emmaus St. Poelten concerning production: “We intended to launch a completely targeted project, and this includes implementation by means of a social enterprise”, says contractor Erwin Szlezak.

Connection between arts and natural sciences

The soil colour painting box was devised with considerable attention towards sustainability. The soil colours mentioned are directly extracted from soils, and thus they are a purely natural product. The box is made of Austrian cottonwood, and the colours are filled into glasses, which are refillable as well. “The exciting feature of this painting box is its connection between natural sciences and arts”, emphasizes Erwin Szlezak. “For my department, it is the central medium in order to convey the topics of soil and soil protection to the general public. We mainly address school boys and girls, who use the painting boxes in competitions and workshops.

Aims

Accompanying people who have encountered difficult situations in their lives, for whatever reasons there may have been. Giving them a job and a home, until they are able to get back on their feet again. The long-term aim is a permanent reintegration into society, as well as their ability to love.



**unser Boden
wir stehen drauf!**

Eine Initiative von Landeshauptmann Dr. Erwin Pröll
und Landesrat Dr. Stephan Pernkopf



Soilart
with the colours of the earth

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Recycling of Waste Containers

Since 2006, employees of various Lower Austrian social enterprises produce useful quality products out of used waste containers. In the beginning, there was the recycled snow shovel in five different sizes. In the meantime, the range of products comprises numerous tools and clever product ideas (shovel, blade, grate, birdhouses, transport boxes, snow removal symbols for road maintenance staff and many more).

Success

Around 13.000 recycled snow shovels (RSS) have been produced up to now. MTR products are sold by an online shop. Numerous activities take place in other provinces. Some long-term unemployed persons were able to find a job on the first employment market on account of the qualification obtained in the project.

For further information: www.mtr-online.at



The FESTI - A Lottery Dispenser for the Lower Austrian Waste Associations

Within the course of the event „(C)l(e)a)nchanting celebrations” of the Lower Austrian waste associations, there was a demand for mobile dispensers in the appearance of the campaign for a lottery game. A research inclusive of a comparison of prices showed that only cardboard installations are available on the market for this purpose. The development of a hand-made construction made of wood, conferences, and a phase of offers for social projects showed that the production of high-quality wooden dispensers by social production is about 20 % cheaper than the purchase of “single-serving” cardboard dispensers.

Success

100 Festis were produced, which can also be reused after their successful use within the framework of the campaign of “(C)l(e)a)nchanting celebrations” by the Lower Austrian waste associations, on account of their high-quality properties, for new purposes by a simple change of subject.

For further information: www.abfallverband.at



Cage Football – Sustainability CUP

Cage Football – 4 by 2 meters of Game, Fun, Action – sustainable!

Cage football was released to the public in 2009/2010 in cooperation with the HLUW (educational school of environment and economy) Ysper, Initiative Future, Lower Austrian village refurbishment and the Department of Rural Development from a private garden. This initiative is further growing at Komunitas OG as an own project.

Outwards: A transportable football pitch, action and exercise on smallest space. A new kind of fun sports, indoor, outdoor, it can be used anywhere – and “inside”? Maximum sustainability: The materials either stem from the region (wood), or they are recycled (plastic from waste containers). The producers stem from the second and third employment markets, part of the project returns flows into selected social projects. Social commitment, fun and sensible activity are mingled in this context, in the right way indeed!

Success

In the year 2010, the first Lower Austrian sustainability cup took place. On more than 30 appointed days, Cage Football! 2010 was in action. Our next aim: We will organize the “Austrian Sustainability Cup“ starting from 2011. Fun, sports, and game complement one another with a view to energy efficiency, saving of resources, and development cooperation. Adults and kids, young and old are invited to participate on all levels of sustainability. It is worth the effort!

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