

Evaluation of the PPPI-cooperation between BMDW, BMK and BBG

„Evaluation of the PPPI-cooperation“

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Vienna, 2022

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Media owner, publisher and editor:

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Vienna, 2022. Last updated: June 2022

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1 Introduction and applied methods

The annual volume of goods and services procured by Austrian public administration is equal of up to 14 % of the country's GDP¹. This bears the potential to pro-actively drive domestic innovation processes with the procurement of particularly innovative products. One major demand-side innovation policy instrument for achieving this objective is public procurement promoting innovation (PPPI). With the launch of the PPPI initiative as part of the „Austrian Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation“ (RTI Strategy) in 2011 and the elaboration of an “Austrian Action Plan on Public Procurement Promoting Innovation” in 2012, PPPI has been systematically implemented on political and operational level in Austria. PPPI has also been granted additional importance by being strategically embedded in the current government program, the „RTI Strategy 2030“, the “RTI Pact 2021-2023” and other government strategies. Austria is thus proving to be a pioneer in the field of PPPI.

Another milestone has been reached in 2013 with a PPPI Service Center being set up within the Federal Procurement Agency (Bundesbeschaffung GmbH – BBG), based on service contracts. In 2019, this contractual relationship was replaced by a new basis of cooperation in the form of a public-public cooperation between BMK, BMDW as well as BBG, whose tasks are mainly fulfilled by the service portfolio of the PPPI Service Center.

The public-public cooperation is intended to facilitate a new quality of cooperation by leveraging synergies and close cooperation based on the division of tasks between the PPPI activities of BMDW² and BMK³ at the political-strategic level and the implementation strength of the BBG as the Federal procurement Agency of Austria in the operational area.

In order to fulfill the tasks and achieve the objectives set out in the cooperation agreement, it is necessary to reflect on and make visible the progress of the cooperation in order to

¹ EC (2016) Single market scoreboard: Public procurement. Brussels: European Commission. | OECD (2017) Public procurement for innovation: Good practices and strategies. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

² Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs

³ Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology⁴ This evaluation neither provides a legal assessment of the cooperation, nor an audit of its financial operations. Only a selected subset of the activities of the PPPI Service Center is assessed, which is why this evaluation must not be interpreted as a comprehensive analysis of all impacts of the cooperation.

ensure the optimization of existing activities and services. Therefore, the focus of the present evaluation lies in particular on the activities of all cooperation partners and the operational management of the cooperation in the observation period from April 2019 to January 2022.⁴ This includes:

- an assessment of the task fulfillment of the cooperation partners and their collaboration
- an assessment of the administrative workflows of the cooperation (incl. reporting, budgeting, controlling, risk management, KPIs, etc.)
- an assessment of the relevance and efficiency of the governance mechanisms in use
- an assessment of the impact of selected services provided by the PPPI Service Center

Based on the results, short-term (implementable by the end of 2023) as well as medium- and long-term (beyond the year 2023) recommendations for future measures are formulated.

The evaluation was carried out applying a set of quantitative as well as qualitative **methods**:

- *Relevant documents* were systematically analyzed in order to assess the theoretical and strategic basis of the PPPI-cooperation. A coherence-analysis, comparing the cooperation agreement with the practical realisation of the cooperation (as portrayed in the progress reports), was conducted, as well as an analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of established governance mechanisms and organizational structures within the network. Findings of preceding evaluation on the PPPI-cooperation were also taken into account.
- Between 21/04 and 09/05/2022 an *empirical survey* was conducted online, addressing selected services of the PPPI Service Center. N=564 customers of the PPPI Service Center were contacted, amongst them users of the innovation platform, sponsors and winners of PPPI challenges⁵ as well as participants in PPPI seminars. 154 statistically

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⁵ Within a PPPI challenge, public-sector clients (sponsors) initiate a market survey in search of innovative solutions and suppliers on specific topics. The solutions submitted that are most interesting for the sponsors are awarded as PPPI challenge winners.

valuable responses could be obtained (response rate: 27 %).

- Qualitative interviews on the internal organization of the PPPI-cooperation and the collaboration within the network as well as the impact it has on different levels were held. Reflective discussions were held with representatives of the partners of the public-public cooperation (BMK, BMDW, BBG and PPPI Service Center) as well as with 15 selected network partners and customers.
- A half-day *workshop* with employees of the PPPI Service Center had been organized, where different future scenarios and their implications on the PPPI-initiative in Austria were discussed. The obtained knowledge could be used to gain ideas and impulses for the future elaboration of the PPPI-cooperation.

2 Characterization of the PPPI-cooperation

In April 2019 the cooperation between the ministries BMDW and BMK, which are responsible for implementing the Austrian PPPI Action Plan, as well as the BBG and its PPPI Service Center was placed on a new ground: With one of the first public-public cooperations (according to article 12 of the directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement) in the Republic of Austria, the basis was laid for a long-term strategic-operational cooperation.

The objective of the cooperation is to push forward public procurement promoting innovation (PPPI) in Austria and to increase the share of public procurement volume attributable to goods and service of innovative character. The details of the cooperation are defined in the cooperation agreement between the BMDW, the BMK and the BBG and include the tasks and measures of the involved partners, the financing and budget provision, the reporting system as well as the governance mechanisms, the duration of the cooperation and termination options etc.

The tasks of the partners are defined as follows:

- Joint tasks of the BMDW and BMK: These include the further development of the PPPI strategy and the governance structure (PPPI service network), the exchange of experience at European level, the promotion of the PPPI initiative, the identification of “game changer” partners etc.
- Tasks of the BMDW and the BMK, such as the implementation of PPPI measures in the direct sphere of action of the ministries, the consideration of PPPI in research and technology funding programs, the survey of potentials for PPPI in subordinate departments and state-owned companies, or the introduction of PPPI-relevant topics in the user advisory board of the BBG.
- Tasks of the BBG respectively the PPPI Service Center: These focus on the effective and efficient operation of the PPPI Service Center and address objectives on three levels:
 - PPPI objective level 1: Raise awareness of PPPI (e.g. events, workshops, newsletter, good practice database, PPPI-website, PPPI seminars etc.)

- PPPI objective level 2: Increase PPPI matchings (e.g. PPPI online platform, challenges and marketplace innovation, advising public clients on the implementation of challenges etc.)
- PPPI objective level 3: Increase PPPI volume (e.g. strategic PPPI consulting, PPPI project development and support, PPPI game changer program etc.)
- Support the responsible ministries BMDW and BMK in strategic management of the PPPI initiative (e.g. lessons learned reporting, opportunity and risk management, annual work programs etc.)

While implementing the public-public cooperation, the cooperation partners have carried out a wide range of activities to promote the PPPI initiative in Austria. The ministries mainly took strategically oriented measures to further develop and implement the PPPI strategy, to systematically leverage innovation procurement in the public sector by establishing contacts, building partnerships and networks, and developing funding formats, and to act as “door openers” for the PPPI Service Center in many ways. The BBG with the PPPI Service Center has implemented a wide range of services that serve to raise awareness and qualification (e.g. newsletters, events, trainings, contacts to multipliers, stakeholders and potential customers, best practices) and which directly enable and support the establishment of PPPI matchings – i.e. bringing together demanders and suppliers of innovations (e.g. PPPI innovation platform, PPPI challenges, innovation marketplace). In addition, the BBG has taken measures to anchor PPPI in the core processes of the organisation and has established partnerships with strategic key customers (“game changers”).

Reflection of the development of the PPPI-cooperation

As the analysis of the various activities during the evaluation has shown, the cooperation partners have fulfilled their tasks with a great deal of commitment and dedication for PPPI in Austria in accordance with the cooperation agreement and have also taken measures over and above that. The cooperation between the partners is based on trust as well as equality and is greatly appreciated by all of them. The public-public cooperation has put the collaboration, which exists since 2013, on a new, high-quality basis that is characterized by equality, an open culture of exchange and longevity.

The governance mechanisms for handling the cooperation (PPPI steering group, PPPI jour fixe, progress reports, target and performance indicators, risk management, monitoring

systems) are implemented very effectively, efficiently and in an exemplary manner to ensure that the cooperation runs smoothly. For example, in addition to the financial report and the liquidity requirement, the concise semi-annual progress reports contain a detailed presentation of staff deployment, a description of selected services provided by the PPPI Service Center during the reporting period as well as an outlook on the following six months and information on strategic developments. Based on the numerous target and performance indicators, the risk management report and the qualitative comments, the semi-annual progress reports provide a good insight into the performance of the PPPI Service Center.

Also, the budget and the financial management of the PPPI cooperation is presented in a transparent and comprehensible manner and expresses the trust- and goal-oriented interaction of the partners.

There are several future perspectives for the promotion of the PPPI in Austria and the continuation of the PPPI initiative, such as the further development of instruments and services, the increased involvement of other ministries and large public procurers as well as the creation of a high-quality data basis for innovation procurement.

3 Impact of selected services on customer groups and system partners

The PPPI Service Center provides a broad range of services to achieve the three objective levels of 1) raising awareness of PPPI, 2) increasing PPPI matchings and 3) increasing PPPI volume. For selected services (the PPPI challenges, the PPPI marketplace innovation, the (seminar) offer of the Federal Academy of Public Administration (VAB) on the topic of PPPI, and the game changer program), the central results regarding their **impacts on selected customer groups and system partners** are presented in more detail below. The target indicators established by the cooperation partners proved to be well suited for monitoring the effects identified in the course of the evaluation and assigning them to the objective levels.

PPPI challenge sponsors: are public clients who initiate a PPPI challenge and invite innovative companies to submit their proposed solutions via the PPPI innovation platform. The initiated challenges are created by the challenge sponsors under several aspects but first and foremost with the aim of obtaining a broad overview of the market, technical feasibility and current technological developments. Overall, there is a high level of satisfaction with the degree to which these up-front expectations are met. There is also a very high level of satisfaction among challenge sponsors with regard to the entire process of initiating a PPPI challenge, for instance the process support and support by the PPPI Service Center, the process flow, the efficiency of the "innovation dialogue" and the quality of its moderators or the promotion of the challenge via the PPPI communication channels. There is just little room for improvement with regard to the required administrative effort and clarity about the required content.

The platform design of the PPPI challenge is also rated very positively by the challenge sponsors across all aspects. In particular, the content concept and the user interface along with usability show high levels of satisfaction.

The submitted solutions of the PPPI challenges are attested to their high thematic relevance, and the number of submissions is also positively emphasized. Almost half of the PPPI

challenges surveyed subsequently led to a procurement project or the solution was fully implemented, partially implemented or is currently being implemented. A further 40% state that implementation is at least being planned. Hence, the measure often shows an effect beyond the character of market research and, with the transition into concrete procurement projects, makes a positive contribution to the long-term goal of an increased PPPI volume. For around three quarters of the companies, the procurement project resulting from the PPPI challenge differs from an average procurement project of their company/institution. The procurement projects initiated as a result of a PPPI challenge therefore help a large number of the sponsors to drive forward their own transformation processes through the rapid realization of complex projects with a high level of innovation.

Supplementary qualitative interviews with selected challenge sponsors showed that the PPPI challenges carried out provided them with a good market overview of available new innovative solutions and their technical feasibility, and that the importance of PPPI in the respective companies had changed in a positive way.

In addition, PPPI challenges provide further advantage: a high visibility as an innovator in the public which is an important side effect for the sponsors. The cooperation with the PPPI Service Center as well as the "hands-on" mentality of its team were exceptionally positively highlighted. Development prospects are seen in particular in the necessity of subsequent public tendering, which is usually the case under public procurement law.

The public clients see the PPPI challenges as an important instrument for supporting innovative domestic companies and strengthening the domestic innovation landscape. There is broad and strong support for the statement that process guidance by the PPPI Service Center helps at implementing PPPI topics in the company and institution, with the PPPI challenge being a simple and straightforward instrument for networking with innovative companies and receiving an overview on innovative solutions. The products and services presented on the PPPI innovation platform are perceived as being of very high quality overall.

By usage of the PPPI challenge the challenge sponsors witness additional positive impacts. Firstly, it motivates them to directly take on innovation topics that have long been considered internally but remained dormant. Secondly, it has led to positive developments in the status of the topic of PPPI in the company or institution. Thirdly, by contact with the PPPI Service Center the topic of innovation is given stronger consideration as part of other pro-

curement and purchasing processes. Two thirds of the PPPI challenge sponsors have deepened their contact and collaboration with the PPPI Service Center beyond the period of the conducted challenges.

Central aspects and effects of the PPPI-cooperation on PPPI challenge sponsors

- Major expectations on outcomes met to a high extent
- Very good market overview of available new innovative solutions as well as their technical feasibility
- Realization of innovative solutions by 47 % of the sponsors surveyed, with realization in the planning stage for a further 40 %
- Overall positive change in the relevance of PPPI in public procuring organizations
- Increased focus on innovation by 87 % of PPPI challenge sponsors
- Increased awareness of innovation procurement processes within 86 % of PPPI challenge sponsoring organizations
- Very good support of the PPPI Service Center for the implementation of the challenges
- Good perception of the PPPI communication channels (esp. newsletter and web offers of the PPPI Service Center)

After public clients (PPPI challenge sponsors) have issued their concerns, companies (innovation providers) can submit innovative solutions. The group of companies that submitted the best and most interesting solutions (**PPPI challenge winners**) were closely reviewed in the subsequent evaluation. For the PPPI challenge winners, increased visibility for the product or service and perception as innovative company as well as a better access to public clients and new customer groups were the main incentive for their participation. These motives were deemed especially important in advance to the challenge and almost 60% of the winners already think of them as well fulfilled.

Over the course of the PPPI challenges a multitude of innovative adaptations and new approaches were developed. Slightly more than half of the participating, winning companies adapted their already existing products or services to the target or requirement of the PPPI challenge. 20 % stated to have even developed or proposed a completely new approach or solution for the challenge. Thus, participation can act as an innovation impulse and, under certain circumstances, trigger development processes among submitting innovators.

The satisfaction with the entire process sequence and the platform design of the PPPI challenge is also high among PPPI challenge winners. The process guidance and assistance by the PPPI Service Center as well as the good clarity and comprehensibility of the required deliverables for the challenge were highlighted in particular. Similar to the PPPI challenge sponsors, some winning companies see room for improvement in the assessment options for visitors (thumbs-up) and the comment function as a tool for communication. The supplemental interviews show that the participation in the PPPI challenges and PPPI calls definitely has a positive effect on the visibility and positioning of the company, notably the award presentation of the PPPI calls are associated with high media perception.

With a few exceptions a majority of the PPPI challenge winners would participate again. Those who ruled out another participation mentioned a lack of positive commercial effects, or the fact that even with a positively assessed solution there is no obligatory call for proposals, as their reason. This was also noted within the additional interviews; the obstacle is specifically seen in the Federal Procurement Act. Thereby potential clients are usually required to launch a call for proposals, after definite ideas and concepts have been published by the participating companies.

At the **PPPI marketplace innovation** – the showcase of the PPPI innovation platform- innovative companies can present innovative products and services, suitable for public administration and reviewed by a jury. The marketplace serves the surveyed companies mainly as a platform to increase their visibility in the public procurement environment. The process over the course of the listing is perceived as efficient and straightforward and the platform design is of good usability and functionality (e.g. evaluation options for visitors, feedback functions, etc.).

The PPPI Label as part of the marketplace listing is considered a relevant award for communication and distribution of the innovative product or service with an enticing cost-benefit ratio. In the context of solutions presented at the PPPI marketplace innovation, 30 % of the companies state, that they have taken advantage of public funding in the course of developing these.

The possibility to distribute via the direct contracting platform DVP Innovation could be communicated more effectively, since this option is not known to all interviewees. With regards to additional improvements, a few of the companies participating at the marketplace innovation wish for increased transparency about the interaction with their own digital showcase and more insight into the decision of the PPPI jury evaluation in the context

of being awarded with the PPPI label. In complementary interviews, among other things, companies see potential in raising awareness of the PPPI marketplace innovation as a mediation tool for public clients.

Central aspects and effects of the PPPI-cooperation on suppliers of innovations for public clients

- Increased visibility and positioning as an innovative provider through the services and channels of the PPPI Service Center (challenges, marketplace innovation, newsletter)
- Simple and straightforward option to promote innovative products and services in the public procurement environment
- Improved access to public clients via the services and support of the PPPI Service Center
- Innovation impulse through PPPI challenges: More than half (53 %) of the winners further developed existing products or services specifically for the challenge, 20 % even developed a completely new solution/approach
- Potential for generating contracts, specifically for smaller companies and innovative startups, by participating in PPPI challenges, PPPI calls and the marketplace innovation

The **(seminar) offer of the Federal Academy of Public Administration (VAB) on the topic of PPPI** is rated very positively by the participants - this applies to both face-to-face seminars and webinars. The VAB seminars on the topic of PPPI represent a well-implemented opportunity to better integrate the topic into one's own everyday work and thus to fulfill the desire for further professional education. However, some interviewees witness a lack of options for changing the procurement process in their institution.

Despite these partially existing barriers, PPPI seminars cause a change beyond objective level 1 (raising awareness of PPPI). Almost half of the participants observed the market more comprehensively after their participation, which laid the foundation for an increased awareness of innovative products and services. As a result of attending the seminar, nearly one-third of the participants made their first procurements in line with PPPI objectives or followed them more extensively. In general, participation in a seminar has positive effects among public procurers that go beyond raising the level of qualification and level of awareness for PPPI.

Central aspects and effects of the PPPI-cooperation on PPPI-seminars at the VAB

- Positive perception of VAB offers (face-to-face seminars as well as webinars) on the topic of PPPI
- Increased awareness of PPPI and increased orientation towards innovation among participants of PPPI seminars at the VAB
- Better integration of PPPI processes into the day-to-day work of those responsible for procurement and increased pursuit of innovation topics within the organizations
- Seminar participation leads to more comprehensive market monitoring for 47 % of participants and increased use of other PPPI services for another 35 %
- Further positive effects also at objective level 3 (increase PPPI volume) through (first-time) procurement according to PPPI principles at 30 % of respondents

In terms of quality, the PPPI communication channels used by the employees of the companies/institutions on the client and customer side (preferably the PPPI newsletter and the PPPI website), are predominantly rated as very good. The PPPI-cooperation's range of events, which is also rated well, is used in particular by sponsors and VAB seminar participants, while it is still little known among other user groups. Communication formats that have only recently become available (in the end of 2021) are generally less well known (e.g. video channels such as "30'Innovation") and should also be promoted more actively.

In 2019, the PPPI Service Center developed its own service portfolio for strategic key customers with high PPPI potential called the **game changer program**. So far, game changer agreements have been reached with four companies - ASFINAG, Wiener Linien, Österreichische Bundesforste and AGES - which include an enhanced and structured cooperation in the form of annual plans, workshops in the participating companies, regular exchange formats, etc. The current four game changer companies benefit significantly from this cooperation, which has a positive impact on innovation awareness and behavior in the respective organizations and increases the importance of PPPI. Through the PPPI Challenges, in many cases interesting new solutions have been identified and some have already been implemented. The cooperation with the PPPI Service Center is highly valued because it facilitates a strategic exchange regarding topics of innovation and the expansion of the organization's own innovation networks, as well as providing access to new innovative suppliers.

The cooperation between the surveyed **cooperation and system partners** and the PPPI Service Center comes in different forms, including the support of funding specific topics as a competence center, participation of the partners in PPPI workshops and events, and the implementation of awareness-raising measures for PPPI in their own networks. The resulting synergies between the PPPI Service Center and the individual partners are seen as the greatest strength of the cooperation. The interviewees identify challenges and opportunities in the broader approach of relevant target groups, in order to reach those who do not yet have direct access to PPPI through the currently existing communication channels. Further development perspectives include raising the PPPI's profile and, in connection with this, an increased communication of measurable successes, e.g. through an experience exchange on best practices and the communicative preparation of lighthouse projects.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

As has been shown during the evaluation, the activities carried out within the framework of the PPPI-cooperation act as a significant stimulus and catalyst for innovative public procurement in Austria. Through the focused and targeted measures of the PPPI cooperation partners BMDW, BMK and BBG with the PPPI Service Center, on the one hand innovation and innovation culture in the public sector are promoted and made visible, on the other hand broad networks are established in the key target groups. Through the various information, communication and qualification measures, hundreds of procurers in public organizations can be reached every year, which supports the innovation orientation in these institutions and contributes to questioning purchasing practices cultivated over decades as well as taking new innovative paths. By bringing together demanders and suppliers through the PPPI innovation marketplace and the PPPI challenges, innovative solutions and technologies are highlighted, which can be a first step towards a future business relationship for innovative – often young – companies. Based on the evaluation findings, recommendations regarding the continuation and the design of the PPPI-cooperation have been developed, which can still be implemented within the framework of the current cooperation period until the end of 2023 or concern a possible second phase of the cooperation starting from 2024.

- The cooperation of BMDW, BMK and BBG with the PPPI Service Center in the form of a public-public cooperation shall definitely be continued until the end of 2023 and furthermore be pursued in the next phase for the period 2024 – 2028. It has proven to be an effective basis for successful and long-term strategic-operational cooperation.
- The PPPI-cooperation could serve as a “role model” for other action communities in the public sector because it creates trust, motivates, provides security and aligns the focus of the partners involved on the common goal through the equal distribution of roles.
- All cooperation partners have contributed to the cooperation in accordance with the objectives and have fulfilled their tasks in a comprehensive and effective manner. The existing division of tasks between the cooperation partners makes sense and should be continued.

- The achievements of the ministries within the framework of the PPPI- cooperation should be made more visible, for example with features on special topics or highlights.
- The governance mechanisms (steering group, jour fixe) as well as the planning, controlling and monitoring instruments (work programmes, target and performance indicators, progress reports, financial management, risk management, monitoring routines etc.) are very effective and efficient and should be retained in the future. The effective indicator system developed could certainly serve as a model for other public institutions.
- Given the large customer potential for the PPPI initiative and the widely desired strengthening of services, a noticeable and adequate increase in resources for the PPPI Service Center should be foreseen from 2024. The additional resources could be used to expand the PPPI network, increase the number of PPPI challenges and game changer partnerships, and additionally strengthen information, communication and qualification measures.
- The advantages and benefits of PPPI and the leverage effect on the innovative strength of the public sector should be made even more visible. Especially in regard of scarce public funds and expected cost-saving packages, particularly convincing arguments should be developed and disseminated using attractive communication measures (e.g. testimonials, topic ambassadors, awards for various levels administration etc.).
- It is characteristic of the demand-sided innovation policy that the quantitative effects of PPPI are difficult to record and present. Nevertheless, especially in Austria, which is recognized as an international pioneer in innovative public procurement, further efforts should be made in this regard by the BMK and the BMDW within the framework of PPPI-cooperation, for example through cooperation with scientific partners or the creation of high-quality procurement data, including the use of big data technologies.
- The main beneficiaries of the PPPI platform are certainly the public procurers, which receive an overview of technological developments and new innovative solutions on the market for free. For the providers of innovations, the advantage is their visibility and contact with potential (large) public customers, but due to the market exploration character, orders can only be generated in a few cases. In order to reduce the effort for the providers, which are often start-ups, young companies or SME, it is recommended to examine the possibility of a two-stage challenge process.

- The game changer programme should definitely be expanded because it will significantly strengthen the innovation orientation in the procurement process of public organizations (possible targets: 6-7 by the end of 2023, 10-15 by 2028).

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