

# SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



# 2012

Award-winning  
Projects



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Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung

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Federal Ministry of Science and Research  
Teinfaltstraße 8  
A-1014 Wien

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment  
and Water Management  
Stubenbastei 5  
A-1010 Wien

### **Contact persons**

Dr. Evi Frei, Federal Ministry of Science and Re-  
search  
Tel.: (+43 1) 531 20-6030  
e-mail: [evi.frei@bmf.gv.at](mailto:evi.frei@bmf.gv.at)

Dr. Peter Iwaniewicz, Federal Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry, Environment and Water Management  
Tel.: +43 1 51522 1610  
e-mail: [peter.iwaniewicz@lebensministerium.at](mailto:peter.iwaniewicz@lebensministerium.at)

### **Editorial office**

FORUM Umweltbildung  
Dr.<sup>in</sup> Anna Streissler

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The Austrian Sustainability Award is an integral part of the Austrian Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and puts sustainability on the agenda of all Austrian universities. The Award helps to make sustainability not only part of the mission statement but more importantly, of everyday university life. It adds visibility to already existing projects by ambitious and committed pioneers, it fosters internal networking and coordination of these projects by the university as a whole, thus embedding sustainability more strongly in the overall university culture. Furthermore, it encourages systematic exchange of good practice between the institutions of higher education and makes them aware that sustainability is a core dimension of university development all over the world.



Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry,  
Environment and Water Management  
**DI Nikolaus Berlakovich**



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## ■ *Sustainable development needs first class education*

A country which is committed to sustainable development needs the corresponding skilled experts for its implementation. In Austria these experts are educated and trained in increasing numbers. This is becoming apparent in the fact that Austria with its 210.000 green jobs is among the international pioneers in several different sectors of environmental business and industry.

Especially in the last couple of years characterised by economic instability, green jobs have proven to be pretty crisis resistant and future-proof. Their number and the turnover they are achieving are growing above average. They are also contributing to the fact that Austria has a relatively low rate of youth unemployment compared to the rest of Europe.

Universities and other institutions of higher education play a decisive role in the development of the environmental economic sector. They have become indispensable drivers of change towards a sustainable economy and society.

During the current UN decade "Education for sustainable development" this role is especially evident. This does not go only for research and education regarding environmentally specific knowledge and technologies but also for the transfer of social norms and values related to sustainability.

One proof of the important role that institutions of higher education are playing are the submissions to the Austrian Sustainability Award 2012, an internationally unique activity within the UN Decade. Both in their depth and breadth the submissions have surpassed the expectations of the organisers. The winning projects take account of environmental aspects, social concerns as well as economic developments in exemplary fashion.

This holistic approach is necessary to make sustainable development become the constitutive principle in our everyday life as well as in our economy. In that case, innovation and professional training can continue to be translated into job opportunities for graduates.

DI Nikolaus Berlakovich  
Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry,  
Environment and Water Management



Federal Minister for  
Science and Research  
**o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Karlheinz Töchterle**

**BM.W.F<sup>a</sup>**

Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung

With their accomplishments in teaching and research, Austrian universities make a substantial contribution to confronting the major challenges in our society. In particular, one of the questions we face regarding our future is the issue of sustainability in all its facets. Not only the careful use of existing resources, but also responsible action concerning social justice and economic development can contribute significantly to more conscious and efficient processes. To this effect, our universities have already developed areas of strength beyond Austria's borders and have made a name for themselves as prominent centres of knowledge. In their position as intellectual centres with profound, specialist knowledge in a wide range of disciplines relevant to sustainability, universities not only take on a considerable role in terms of acquiring knowledge but also play a significant part in bringing this knowledge to the outside world and implementing it in practice and in the creation of living space and a sense of community. This excellence is reflected by the Sustainability Award, which brings numerous projects and initiatives both to the stage and to the public's attention as a "Showcase of Sustainability". This year, a prominent, six-person jury, consisting of members from both the scientific community and wider society, examined a remarkable 77 initiatives and projects, which had been submitted by 22 universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education, and selected winners in eight categories. 77 submitted projects represented a huge increase in submissions on previous years (2010: 44, 2008: 41) and exceeded all of the organisers' expectations. These 77 submissions clearly show that Aus-

tria's universities and institutions of higher education are becoming important contributors to sustainability efforts in this country.

It seems essential that, of their own accord and aware of the importance of sustainability, universities should adapt their processes accordingly and put the best possible structures for this into place. This way, they do not only serve as places of research, but also make an invaluable contribution toward this major issue of the future as responsible organisations. The Sustainability Award makes these efforts visible and demonstrates the wealth of ideas which contribute so greatly toward the future of a sustainable Austria. In this sense, I would like to thank everyone who is involved in this worthwhile goal and has made efforts to achieve it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Töchterle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Karlheinz Töchterle  
Federal Minister for Science and Research

# The Austrian Sustainability Award for Universities

## History and Background

The Austrian Sustainability Award is a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research and was established in 2007 as a means of promoting and increasing awareness for sustainability processes within Austrian universities. After a starting phase of networking and communication with the relevant stakeholders, the project supports pioneers in this field by organizing a nationwide "Sustainability Award" for higher education institutions as an incentive for sustainable higher education every two years.

For Austria, the innovation was to link a publicity related approach with an internal learning process and benchmarking. The award was also the first approach to connect different (and separated) sustainability initiatives among various universities. The award is coordinated by "Environmental education FORUM", an agency specialising in Education for Sustainable Development.

## Characteristics

The Austrian Sustainability Award exhibits a whole-institution approach. Thus, it is addressed to a large target group consisting of students, teachers, staff, administration and regional stakeholders. University-wide sustainability is understood as a process of participatory and reflective learning characterized by several alternative routes.

It does not target individual or one-time projects, but instead recognizes long-term processes and

improvements that mirror the internal learning and formation processes of the institution as a whole, concerning eight very different aspects of university organisation. A project in each of the eight categories receives an Austrian Sustainability Award. The categories are:

1. Administration and Management,
2. Curriculum and Instruction,
3. Research,
4. Structural Implementation,
5. Communication and Decision-making,
6. Student Initiatives,
7. Regional Cooperation,
8. International Cooperation.

For each of these categories, a series of guiding questions was developed to help applicants locate their initiatives within these different aspects. Participation, learning and innovation should be at the very heart of these initiatives.

An interdisciplinary jury of sustainability experts (from science and research, business, culture and media) decides on the winner in each of the eight categories. The first award ceremony took place in March 2008, the second in March 2010 and the third in April 2012.

## 2012: A Significant Rise in Applications

Until 2007, many Austrian university initiatives for sustainable development were isolated and did not get the necessary support from their administration. Inviting the whole university (from the vice-chancellor

and pro-vice-chancellors downwards) to take part in the award competition led to 42 applications by 13 universities in 2008. In 2010, 17 universities submitted projects. Interestingly enough, the number of submissions stayed roughly the same (45), because of much more internal coordination within the universities. Due to the explicit wish of both ministries that as many projects as possible from each university apply for the award and thanks to a big publicity campaign on the part of Forum Umweltbildung, the number of applications increased dramatically in 2012: 77 projects from 22 Austrian universities were eligible, making the jury's decision especially tough.

The Future of the Austrian Sustainability Award  
The examples presented on the following pages show that sustainability has become an important topic in many Austrian universities and can be implemented in a wide variety of ways. The award will be organised again in 2014, at the end of the UN Decade "Education for Sustainable Development" with the hope of further increasing awareness of the need for sustainability in Austrian higher education. Alternating with the award, a more systematic networking of sustainability pioneers is envisaged to increase communication about sustainability and the exchange of good practice models within Austrian universities and beyond.

For more information, visit the homepage (partly in English, partly in German):

[www.nachhaltige-uni.at](http://www.nachhaltige-uni.at) or  
[www.umweltbildung.at/english/initiatives/sustainability-award.html](http://www.umweltbildung.at/english/initiatives/sustainability-award.html)

## University course „Sustainable Construction“



Applicant:

### **Vienna University of Technology and Graz University of Technology**

The university course “Sustainable Construction” offered by Vienna University of Technology and Graz University of Technology aims to generate an awareness of holistic lifecycle-oriented approaches to construction based on the three-pillar model of sustainability. This means that graduates will be in a position to implement the principles of ecological, economic and socio-cultural sustainability in project development and design and realization, as well as in the operation and demolition of building structures. Graduates of the two semesters part-time program (40 ECTS) are granted a joint certificate by TU Vienna and TU Graz. In partnership with

the Austrian Association for Sustainable Property Management (ÖGNI), this course provides an opportunity to qualify as an auditor in this field.

#### ■ Contact

**Mag.<sup>a</sup> Monika Lassmann**

Operngasse 11/017  
1040 Wien

Tel.: 0043 1 58801 41780  
E-Mail: lassmann@cec.tuwien.ac.at  
Web: [www.nachhaltigesbauen.eu](http://www.nachhaltigesbauen.eu)

## Doctoral school of sustainable development



Applicant:

### **University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna**

The doctoral school of sustainable development (dokNE) encompasses an interdisciplinary and international team of PhD-students, Post-Doc, Master students and supervising professors of several departments of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna and other international universities. dokNE focuses on an excellent academic training for PhD-students that qualifies for inter- and transdisciplinary research. The young researchers are exploring sustainable development options bringing together social and natural scientific knowledge as well as practical expertise in the fields of water governance, eco-tourism, rural development, sustainable farm management

and farmers’ behavior, science-policy interaction, sustainable universities and human-nature-relation.

#### ■ Contact

**Ao.Univ.-Prof. Dr. nat. techn.  
Dipl.-Ing. Andreas Muhar**

Peter-Jordan-Straße 65,  
3. Stock, Tür 8.1  
1180 Wien

Tel.: 0043 1 47654 7202  
E-Mail: [andreas.muhar@boku.ac.at](mailto:andreas.muhar@boku.ac.at)  
Web: [www.dokne.boku.ac.at](http://www.dokne.boku.ac.at)

### Sustainable stakeholder initiatives



Applicant:  
**MODUL University Vienna**

Ever since MODUL University Vienna opened its doors sustainability has been one of the fundamental credos for all its stakeholders. One initiative to embrace this principle is the *Scholarship of Hope*, which is meant to encourage students to promote sustainability by presenting innovative and creative ideas that could be implemented at MU. Parallel to the student scholarship, MU has also initiated an *Employee Sustainability Award* to recognize MU employees who submit ideas to improve the overall sustainability of the university. Winners of both awards receive attractive prizes and their ideas are published on the university homepage. Moreover, MU is also actively involved in providing students

opportunities for extracurricular activities, a commitment which led to the launch of the *MU Cares* community program. Students and staff are engaged in several external charity initiatives and volunteer work, thereby creating ambassadors of responsible living.

#### Contact

**Dr.<sup>in</sup> Sabine Sedlacek**

Am Kahlenberg 1  
1190 Wien

Tel.: 0043 1 320 3555 601  
E-Mail: [sabine.sedlacek@modul.ac.at](mailto:sabine.sedlacek@modul.ac.at)  
Web: <http://modul.ac.at>

### BASEhabitat, a students' project on sustainable architecture



Applicant:  
**University of Arts in Linz**

Since 2005 BASEhabitat has been realising several projects in South Africa and Bangladesh. It reconciles what can sometimes be seen as antitheses: basic needs and aesthetics, ecology and economy, prosperity and poverty, usefulness and poetry. Today we can construct buildings in which no outside energy is needed to provide a pleasant internal climate, buildings that make use of local resources rather than destroying them, that enrich the environment and offer people new challenges and new work. To achieve this all we need is intelligence, teamwork, sensuality, joy and beauty. In cooperation with international organisations, BASEhabitat has been offering workshops on climatically

appropriate building that conserves resources, earth building techniques, solar architecture and cultural integration.

#### Contact

**Univ.-Ass. Mag. arch.  
Clemens Quirin**

Hauptplatz 8/IV  
4010 Linz

Tel.: 0043 732 7898 242  
(Sekretariat)  
E-Mail: [base@basehabitat.org](mailto:base@basehabitat.org)  
Web: [www.basehabitat.org](http://www.basehabitat.org)



## Mobility programme UniMobility4ALL



Applicant:  
**University of Graz**

Sustainability can be very special: the University of Graz is permanently extending its mobility strategy in an innovative way. The current goal is to integrate “mobility and accessibility for all” step-by-step into the University’s concept and the implementation of sustainable mobility. The development of this approach is originating from studies on alternative mobility by Susanne Janschitz who integrated concepts of accessibility for disabled people with all-inclusive and design-for-all concepts, by applying a Geographic Information System (GIS) and leading to a “mobility for all” model. The application will result in Online-GIS for the University campus with the slogan: “UniMobility4ALL”.

The future challenge though will be to implement this “inclusion approach” into the mindsets of all faculty, students and staff at the university.

### Contact

**Assoz. Univ.-Prof. Mag.<sup>a</sup> Dr.<sup>in</sup>  
Susanne Janschitz**

Heinrichstraße 36  
8010 Graz

Tel.: 0043 316 380 8897  
E-Mail: [susanne.janschitz@uni-graz.at](mailto:susanne.janschitz@uni-graz.at)  
Web: [www.uni-graz.at/geowww](http://www.uni-graz.at/geowww)

## Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure



Applicant:  
**Medical University of Graz**

Human biological samples, such as blood or tissues including associated medical data are a key resource in unravelling genetic and environmental factors causing diseases. The OECD identified biological samples and associated data as key resources for the life sciences and biotechnology. However, the limited access to high quality samples and data hampers integration of resources for joint efforts. To improve this situation, the pan-European Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure (BBMRI) was foreseen to improve interoperability and to provide efficient access to academia and industry. BBMRI started in February 2008 involving 279 institutions or organizations

from 30 countries and should result in the implementation of BBMRI at the end of 2012.

### Contact

**Univ.-Prof. Dr. Kurt Zatloukal**

Auenbruggerplatz 25  
8036 Graz

Tel.: 0043 316 380 4404

E-mail: [kurt.zatloukal@medunigraz.at](mailto:kurt.zatloukal@medunigraz.at)

Web: [www.bbMRI.eu](http://www.bbMRI.eu)  
[www.univie.ac.at/LSG/gatib](http://www.univie.ac.at/LSG/gatib)  
[www.meduni-graz.at/biobank](http://www.meduni-graz.at/biobank)  
<http://gbrcn-human.org/>

### National Education Initiative “Innovations Make Schools Top”



Applicant:

#### Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt

The Regional Networks are an important part of the Austrian National Initiative IMST (“Innovations Make Schools Top”) and form a support system for teachers, which were established in Austria in 2000. IMST involves foremost teachers of the subjects mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics and German language (especially literacy). This nationwide platform of local networks builds a cooperative agreement between mathematics and science teachers, administrative staff, education policy and universities to improve new approaches of IBSME learning in classrooms. Diversity, sustainability and reflection are regarded as principles that are as important as cooperation

and networking among the persons and institutions involved in the regional networks.

#### Contact

##### Ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Franz Rauch

Sterneckstraße 15  
9020 Klagenfurt

Tel.: 0043 463 2700 6137  
E-Mail: franz.rauch@aau.at  
Web: www.imst.ac.at

### Research Institute for Managing Sustainability



Applicant:

#### Vienna University of Economics and Business

The Research Institute for Managing Sustainability (RIMAS) at the Vienna University of Economics and Business is an independent think tank specializing on Sustainable Development and Corporate Sustainability. Since its establishment around 10 years ago it has acquired a Europe-wide recognition, having conducted projects within five different research fields for several EU Directorates General, as well as the EU Committee of Regions, the European Statistical Office, the UN Development Programme and a variety of national ministries. The strength of RIMAS lies in their orientation on practice, sound scholarship, a long track record in interfaces between science, policy, man-

agement and economics, and expertise in organisational and policy learning as well as mediation between various scientific disciplines.

#### Contact

##### PD Dr. André Martinuzzi

Franz Klein Gasse 1  
1190 Wien

Tel.: 0043 1 313 36 4698  
E-Mail: andre.martinuzzi@wu.ac.at  
Web: www.wu.ac.at/sustainability

## 2<sup>ND</sup> AND 3<sup>RD</sup> PLACES IN THE EIGHT CATEGORIES

### ■ *Category Curriculum and Instruction*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Master degree programme „Management“**  
IMC FH Krems, University of Applied Sciences  
web: [www.fh-krems.ac.at/de/studieren/master/management/uebersicht/](http://www.fh-krems.ac.at/de/studieren/master/management/uebersicht/)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Global Tourism Education Futures Initiatives Course**  
MODUL University Vienna  
web: [www.modul.ac.at/thm](http://www.modul.ac.at/thm)

### ■ *Category Research*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reducing trace contaminants in sewage works using ionized air**  
MCI Management Center Innsbruck  
web: [www.mci.edu](http://www.mci.edu)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainable renovation of the buildings of the architectural and civil engineering faculties**  
University of Innsbruck  
web: [www.uibk.ac.at/fakten/leitung/infrastruktur/](http://www.uibk.ac.at/fakten/leitung/infrastruktur/)

### ■ *Category Structural Implementation*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Gender Equality NOW!**  
Academy of Fine Arts Vienna  
web: [www.akbild.ac.at/Portal/akademie/gleichstellung/netzwerk-fuer-frauenfoerderung](http://www.akbild.ac.at/Portal/akademie/gleichstellung/netzwerk-fuer-frauenfoerderung)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Development and implementation of an interdisciplinary elective Sustainable Development course module**  
Alpen Adria Universität Klagenfurt  
web: [www.uni-klu.ac.at/iff/ikn/inhalt/1.htm](http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/iff/ikn/inhalt/1.htm);  
[www.uni-klu.ac.at/ius/inhalt/1.htm](http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/ius/inhalt/1.htm)

### ■ *Category Student Initiatives*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Culture and Poverty Alleviation. From Social Exclusion to the Intercultural Third Space**  
Paris Lodron University of Salzburg  
web: [www.uni-salzburg.at/zea](http://www.uni-salzburg.at/zea)

**3<sup>rd</sup> INEX Sustainability Challenge**  
inter-university project  
web: <http://inex.org/academic-courses/sustainability-challenge/>

### ■ *Category Administration and Management*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Carbon Dioxide Compensation System**  
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences  
web: [www.boku.ac.at/co2-kompensation.html](http://www.boku.ac.at/co2-kompensation.html)

**3<sup>rd</sup> MoreSpace**  
Technical University Vienna  
web: <http://red.tuwien.ac.at/>

### ■ *Category Communication and Decision-making*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Tackling climate change**  
University of Salzburg  
web: [www.zgis.at/research](http://www.zgis.at/research)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainability report „triple-n“**  
Montanuniversität Leoben  
web: <http://unileoben.ac.at/nachhaltig>

### ■ *Category Regional Cooperation*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Centre of Competence – RCE Vienna**  
Vienna University of Economics and Business  
web: [www.wu.ac.at/ruw](http://www.wu.ac.at/ruw);  
[www.filmtipps.at/rce2/?lang=en](http://www.filmtipps.at/rce2/?lang=en)

**3<sup>rd</sup> „Green Meetings – sustainable conferences at the University of Salzburg“**  
University of Salzburg  
web: [www.uni-salzburg.at/greenmeeting](http://www.uni-salzburg.at/greenmeeting);  
[www.uni-salzburg.at/plusgreencampus](http://www.uni-salzburg.at/plusgreencampus)

### ■ *Category International Cooperation*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Copernicus Alliance**  
inter-university project  
web: [www.copernicus-alliance.org](http://www.copernicus-alliance.org)

**3<sup>rd</sup> series of events „Education for Sustainable Development“**  
University of Linz  
web: [www.iur.jku.at](http://www.iur.jku.at)