

## Why Austria's Companies Cooperate With Each Other on Social and Environmental Issues

**New study by researchers at FH Wien der WKW examines motivations and success factors of corporate partnerships and shows what opportunities such cooperation opens up.**

*Vienna, January 28, 2021* – The Institute for Business Ethics and Sustainable Strategy (IBES) of FH Wien der WKW will publish a new study on the topic of “Corporate Responsibility through Cooperation: Motivations and Success Factors of Corporate Partnerships with Social or Ecological Goals” on January 29, 2021 as part of the online event “Strategy Morning”.

### **Benefits for the company, differentiation from the competition and social added value**

The results of the study show, among other things, that

- the companies surveyed cooperate with other companies in order to generate a direct benefit for their own company, e.g. through cost savings or access to networks, to differentiate themselves from the competition or to create social added value that could not be achieved in this form alone, e.g. through emissions savings
- the employees of the own company represent an important target group of partnerships with social goals, while partnerships with environmental topics can be assigned to the goals of emission reduction, waste reduction and resource conservation.
- the legal form of the cooperation strongly depends on the industry, the target market of the partner, external subsidies and the type of association (e.g. as a club).

The practical study is based on a qualitative survey of companies in Austria. In the period from June to September 2020, 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted for this purpose. The companies were selected according to the following criteria:

- The company is a partner in a cooperation with at least one other company.
- The cooperation offers a social or ecological added value. The cooperation partners thus assume corporate responsibility.

The industry and company size were not selection criteria. The sample surveyed includes companies from all seven sectors defined by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, namely crafts, industry, trade, banking and insurance, transport and traffic, tourism and consulting. The number of employees ranges from four to over 20,000.

### **Partnerships offer companies a variety of opportunities**

Partnerships in the context of corporate responsibility offer individual companies a variety of opportunities that go beyond the goals of the respective cooperation:

1. **Implementation of fast and high-quality solutions:** By pooling financial and human resources in a corporate cooperation, overarching programs such as the promotion of sustainable mobility solutions in traffic-stressed regions become possible in the first place in a reasonable amount of time and quality.
2. **Efficient development of knowledge:** The exchange of knowledge on corporate responsibility creates the opportunity to learn from each other and to further develop one's own company in a targeted and efficient manner with regard to sustainability issues.

3. **Generation of new orders:** Cooperation with other companies can significantly increase the impact and visibility of the measures taken, which is often appreciated by customers and can lead to new orders.
4. **Increasing attractiveness as a cooperation partner:** Successful inter-company cooperation offers the opportunity to build up a reputation as a capable cooperation partner, even outside of sustainability issues.
5. **Fast and unbureaucratic implementation of projects:** Together with other companies, framework conditions can be created much more quickly than with political regulations, e.g. by setting up a health program tailored to the specific challenges in a region for employees of the partner companies.
6. **Improving positioning as an employer:** Cross-company projects in the context of corporate responsibility enable companies to position themselves as attractive employers.

## **Austrian companies still make insufficient use of the opportunities offered by corporate partnerships**

Although cooperation between Austrian companies has already contributed in many cases to meeting challenges in the context of corporate responsibility, the survey conducted as part of the study shows that the opportunities listed here are still being insufficiently exploited. The study therefore offers concrete recommendations for companies interested in cooperation in the following three categories:

- Establish a roadmap with clear priorities for the own company (this includes the definition of values and goals in the field of corporate responsibility in the own company).
- Promote and encourage interpersonal collaboration (e.g., by creating space for company representatives to interact informally within the collaboration).
- Determine accompanying measures at an early stage (such as defining coordination rules for decisions).

“The study would like to encourage Austrian companies to get involved in assuming entrepreneurial responsibility in partnerships and to use the recommendations mentioned above in order to successfully implement partnerships,” explains FH-Prof. Dr. Markus Scholz, MSc, Head of IBES, on the occasion of the presentation of the study.

“The great interest of the business community in the topic of sustainability shows that companies are definitely willing to take on far-reaching social responsibility. This must be promoted and strengthened,” emphasizes Ing. Mag. (FH) Michael Heritsch, MSc, CEO of FHWien der WKW.

## **Researchers at FHWien der WKW carried out analysis**

The study was conducted as part of the activities of the endowed professorship “Microeconomics of Competitiveness” in cooperation with the team of the Josef Ressel Center for Collective Action and Responsible Partnerships (JR Center CARE). The endowed professorship “Microeconomics of Competitiveness”, which is financially supported by the Vienna Chamber of Commerce (WKW), is intended to strengthen and expand application-oriented research in the field of competitiveness of locations at FHWien der WKW. The JR Center CARE researches the emergence, management, success measurement and legitimacy of so-called collective action initiatives and is funded by the Christian Doppler Research Association and the corporate partners Josef Manner & Comp AG, Kap-sch TrafficCom AG and SIMACEK Facility Management Group GmbH.

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## Photos:

“The study would like to encourage Austrian companies to engage in corporate partnerships to assume corporate responsibility,” explains Markus Scholz, Head of the Institute for Business Ethics and Sustainable Strategy (IBES) at FHWien der WKW.

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## **FHWien der WKW University of Applied Sciences for Management & Communication**

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