

# GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

**ProPellets Austria: networking and cluster building, certification and public relations**



**pro»pellets**  
Austria

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## 1. General

proPellets Austria (PPA) is an association of the Austrian pellets industry. It was founded in 2005 and currently contains around 60 member organisations. Members of proPellets are primary pellet producers, pellet traders and manufacturers of pellet heating systems. Furthermore, companies which are otherwise active in the pellet industry, such as manufacturers of pellet plants and components, producers of accessories for heating systems and also consulting and research institutions, as well as companies that are otherwise involved in the industry, are members of proPellets Austria.

The aim of PPA is to make a contribution to the energy transition in heating by promoting the use of wood pellet heating systems. Wood pellets are a promising possibility to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and to make an important contribution to climate protection. Through its public relation activities, the association makes an important contribution to the penetration of the Austrian pellet market. Also, proPellets provides an important interface between different actors in the pellet supply chain through its networking activities – from pellet producers and traders to heating system manufacturers and end consumers – and therefore makes a positive contribution to the development of the Austrian pellet market.

By its function as market observer, the association contributes significantly to the market transparency in the Austrian pellet market. Furthermore, PPA offers a broad range of information and consulting services. The activities regarding the market introduction of the quality certificate ENplus lead to the certification of the majority of Austrian pellet producers as well as some traders. Therefore, a uniform pellet quality standard has established in Austria.

## 2. Tasks

The main task of the association is the spreading of pellet heating systems and PPA practices public relations and lobbying for this reason. Moreover, PPA contributes to the communication within the pellet industry and practices international networking. In addition, the association also acts as a market observer.

The main means of communication are the website [www.propellets.at](http://www.propellets.at), the monthly newsletter, press releases, press conferences and publications in different specialized media. In addition, proPellets also makes use of social media.

## 3. Service for members

An important task of proPellets Austria is the permanent internal discussion and improvement of the interface between production, storage and transport and the requirements of heating systems. Differences in pellet quality often lead to problems with heating systems in the past.

The internal communication of the association takes place quarterly in the association forum, in which the members discuss interests of the industry and elaborate solutions for recent questions and problems.

As an interest group, PPA also stands up for favorable framework conditions for the pellet industry on a political level and informs stakeholders of the economic benefits of the transition from imported fossil fuels to domestic energy from renewable sources.

## 4. Service for end consumers

Since 2006, proPellets Austria is active as market observer and collects pellet prices on a monthly basis and calculates average prices for loose and bagged pellets for private and commercial customers and also for bagged pellets and publishes these data on the proPellets website. Based on the price data, a pellet price index is calculated and the pellet price is also compared to prices of other energy carriers. In addition, long-term and as seasonal price developments are published.

Besides price data, a broad range of information for end consumers can be found on the proPellets website, which reaches from general data about wood pellets to more specific information. For example, all pellet traders that are member of proPellets, sorted by region, can be found on the website as well as manufacturers of heating systems and the related accessories. All pellet producers, which are member of proPellets Austria, are listed as well.

In addition, a broad range of information about different consulting services as well as subsidies is provided on the homepage. In regard of subsidies, detailed information about the different situations on national and provincial levels can be found. Also, local subsidies on community level are mentioned, with reference to the relevant authorities.

Concerning consulting, all provincial helpdesks as well as all certified installers of biomass heating systems and specialized chimney sweepers are listed. Certified installers usually offer a broad advisory service, besides installation and maintenance of pellet heating systems. Also, the advisory service of pellet boiler manufacturers is mentioned on the website.

## 5. Certification

proPellets Austria is actively working on the market introduction of the pellet quality certificate ENplus, which is based on the standard EN 14961-2 and represents the first uniform quality standard for wood pellets within Europe. The standard specifies the three quality classes ENplus A1, ENplus A2 and EN-B and specifies values for different pellet properties such as size, density, water and ash content or fines and durability for each class. Class A1 stands for the highest pellet quality suitable for small-scale heating systems in private households while class B represents the first defined quality standard for pellets for industrial use.

Every pellet producer which is member of PPA, produces high-quality pellets according to EN 14961-2. Most producers are additionally certified according to ENplus themselves, which means that not only the produced pellets, but also the production process is subject to a standard. By the end of 2011, 72 % of the Austrian pellet production capacity was certified in accordance to ENplus (Rakos und Schlagitweit 2011).



ENplus-Logo © DEPI



ENplus-Logo as sticker on a pellet heating system ©PPA; The sticker reads: "It is recommended to operate the heating system with ENplus-certified pellets"

Similar to pellet producers, all pellet traders who are member of proPellets are pledged to deliver only high-quality pellets according to EN 14961-2 to end customers. Analogical to pellet producers, pellet traders can be certified according to ENplus as well. Due to the fact that the quality of pellets which are produced according to the EN standard can suffer from inappropriate handling, only certified traders are allowed to sell Pellets with ENplus designation. Contrary to producers, only a few pellet traders are EN-plus certified to this date. By the end of 2011, traders representing 33 % of market share were certified.



ENplus-certified pellet trader

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If a customer buys pellets from an EN-plus certified trader, he has the guarantee that not only the product itself is in accordance with the standard, but also the whole production process, storage and delivery are carried out properly and the pellets are in the actual condition specified by the standard when they arrive at the customer.

## 6. International activities

PPA is also actively working together with pellet associations from other countries, the managing director of proPellets is also president of the European Pellet Council (EPC), which is the umbrella organization of European pellet association. The EPC is actively working on the spreading the ENplus quality certificate across Europe to create a uniform and universal European quality standard for wood pellets.

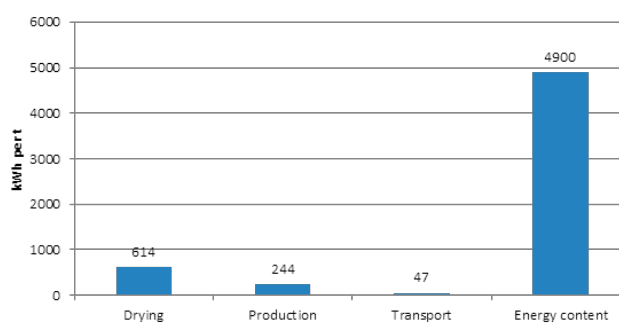
In addition to its membership in the EPC, proPellets Austria is also member in Renewable Energy Austria (EEÖ), the European Biomass Association (AEBIOM) and the World Biomass Association (WBA).

## 7. Economic data

The Austrian pellet industry achieved a turnover of almost 420 mio. € in 2012, whereas almost 200 mio. € were achieved by pellet producers and traders. In this year, 890 000 t of pellets were produced in 30 Austrian production plants. Also a lot of workplaces were created through the pellet sector: around 25 000 people are currently employed in the pellet industry.

## 8. Environmental data

In Austria, only around 30 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> are emitted by the production and distribution of one t of pellets on average. This is due to the fact that the majority of the energy used for the production process originates from renewable sources. On the other hand, pellets only emit the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that the tree which they were made of, absorbed during its growth. In comparison to heating oil, the CO<sub>2</sub>-emission can be reduced by about 97 %. The primary energy requirement for the production and distribution of pellets amounts to about 900 kWh per t, which equals 18,5 % of the energy content of 1 t of pellets.



Primary energy consumption of the supply and energy content in kWh per t of pellets

Source: proPellets Austria

## 9. Socio-economic data

The Austrian pellet sector created a multitude of jobs. Currently, around 25 000 people are employed in the pellet industry.

## 10. References

proPellets Austria (2013): Holzpellets – Wärme die Nachwächst [online]. Wolfsgraben: proPellets Austria – Network to Advance the Spreading of Wood Pellet Heating Systems. Available at: <http://www.propellets.at/> [Accessed 1.7.2013]

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