



Koordination Aussenbeziehungen

**Begrüssung beim Mittagessen mit dem Gemischten
Ausschuss CH-EU zum öffentlichen Beschaffungswesen**

29. Juni 2023, 12 Uhr, Gaststuben zum Schlössli, Rokokostube

ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT - ENGLISCH

Excellency (Ambassador Markus Schlagenhof),

Dear representatives of the European Commission,

Dear representatives of the Swiss government and the Cantons,

Dear colleagues,

You may be surprised, but you have just changed from one dining room to another.

You held the meeting in the former dining room of the bishop, built in 1752. It was the room where he welcomed his high-ranking visitors. Today it is one of our most popular meeting rooms, where the government receives its guests.

Now, you are in the restaurant where the government welcomes high-ranking guests today.



But the history of the building, where you have just held your meeting, goes way back. The building has a 1'200 yearlong history:

- It was – and still – is the residency of the bishop.
- It was an arsenal for the military.
- And it was a prison.
- Today it is the government building of the Canton where part of the administration is located, where the Cantonal court resides and where the parliament convenes. All three powers are still under one roof. But of course, they strictly separate their work.

[Pause]

St.Gallen is a Canton with many international relations. It is certainly due to our position, bordering Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein – and therefore, being the Canton with the most international borders. Historically, our internationality has also developed due to our textile industry.

Nowadays, we have many relations through the University of St.Gallen. We have a "hight tech valley" in the Rhine valley, where many leading high-tech and precision companies are located. And moreover, the Canton takes part in many cross-border programs such as the EU-program «Interreg», where we directly work together with the EU and the EU Commission. This year, the Swiss



Cantons are proudly presiding the «European strategy for the alpine region».

Following in this tradition of internationality, we are honored to welcome you in Saint Gallen, to deepen our ties and have an exchange in the field of the public procurement market.

The public procurement regulates an important segment of the Swiss economy. The cantons and communes procure construction work, supplies and services. In 2021 government agencies of the canton of St.Gallen placed orders worth 315 million Swiss Francs in accordance with the rules of the WTO agreement on public procurement.

However, the border location of our Canton does not automatically implicate that a striking number of providers from Austria or Germany would apply for public contracts. For example, we have heard from construction companies in the region that the competition from the Zurich region is greater than from the neighboring countries. The field, where we have more orders is the field of highly specialized services, for which there are sometimes no providers in Switzerland.

An important contract on the cantonal level is the «intercantonal contract on public procurement». It has just been newly adopted in



St.Gallen on June 1st 2023. For Switzerland and the Canton, the importance of the revision of this contract lies in four claims:

- Firstly and most importantly, it is about improving the ecological, social and economic sustainability of public contracts. This is the biggest innovation because before this, it was the most economically favorable offer, which won the contract.¹
- Secondly, we wanted to strengthen the quality of the competition compared to price competition.
- Thirdly, we wanted to make the procurement process more flexible and to adapt it to future challenges.
- Fourthly, public tenders must be designed in a way that innovations are promoted and rewarded. The public sector must see itself as an innovation driver. Because our workplace can only survive and continue to grow with **innovation**.

And with this spirit of growth, I want to end my speech. And I hope that the EU and Switzerland soon find a pragmatic solution to place

¹ [Die wichtigsten Neuerungen und Grundsätze \(bpuk.ch\)](https://www.bpuk.ch/de/wichtigste-neuerungen-und-grundsätze)



our relations on a stable legal ground, so we can tackle problems together and continue to grow together. Thank you.