

# Energy with Responsibility

## Sustainable solutions for the future





Water is our most valuable resource.  
It also provides a virtually inexhaustible source  
of energy. VERBUND protects this essential  
natural resource and uses it responsibly.

Sustainability is the core element of VERBUND’s vision. Our focus is on customised, sustainable electricity products and energy-related services that enable our environmentally aware customers to make efficient use of energy. We are also working to shape the future of energy by offering innovative solutions – from the expansion of electromobility to developing new technologies for flexible storage.

As Austria’s leading utility, we support the United Nation’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs aim to end poverty and hunger, achieve gender equality, ensure access to clean energy and combat climate change, all by 2030.

We are especially committed to those goals where our activities can make a real difference. In this brochure, we introduce you to the contributions we are making to the Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN, which are as follows:



# Our commitment to climate and nature

## LIFE+ TRAISEN PROJECT

The LIFE+ TRAISEN project involved reintegrating the Traisen River into the surrounding alluvial waters. What has ensued is a diverse landscape consisting of meanders, riverbank structures and pools.

This has created a natural habitat for numerous species of fish, bats, birds, insects and amphibians. A fish pass was also constructed to permit aquatic life to once again bypass the Altenwörth power plant.

## YBBS 2020 PROJECT

Austria's oldest Danube power plant at Ybbs-Persenbeug in Lower Austria, which incorporates seven high-performance Kaplan turbines, has been in operation since 1959. Since 2012, VERBUND has been carrying out extensive modernisation measures at the plant. New gravel beds and islands are being created in the reservoir of the Melk plant downstream of the Ybbs-Persenbeug power plant, which will establish a habitat for fish and other living organisms.

VERBUND generates electricity from renewable energy sources at more than 120 hydropower plants in Austria and Bavaria as well as several wind farms. This makes us one of the biggest producers of hydroelectricity in Europe. Our hydropower production operations have been certified by TÜV SÜD since 1999, which guarantees that 100% of the electricity we produce is generated from renewable hydropower and confirms our adherence to sustainability criteria. VERBUND customers can thus rest assured that the electricity they purchase comes from renewable sources.

### Emission-free electricity generation

Generation from hydropower and wind power does not produce any direct emissions. This means that by purchasing electricity from VERBUND, our customers are making an active contribution to lowering carbon emissions in support of SDG 13 – “Climate action”.

### Secure supply thanks to hydropower

Our run-of-river hydropower plants in Austria produce sufficient electricity from renewable sources to cover the required baseload energy supply. As opposed to

hydropower plants, however, wind farms and solar installations are unable to provide a constant and secure supply of electricity. The transition to new forms of energy therefore presents us with new challenges. We need to integrate a strong transmission grid into our existing system of electricity generation and concurrently develop intelligent systems for storing the electricity produced. Since they permit flexible operation, our pumped storage hydropower plants are making a substantial contribution to this.

### Investment in the future

We invest regularly in our power plants to ensure their long service life and numerous hours of operation. By expanding our plants and making them more efficient, we are increasing the proportion of electricity generated from Austrian power plants and optimising the existing infrastructure. New projects are planned and executed to incorporate the latest technologies and meet the most stringent environmental standards. This allows us, together with our project partners, to make a valuable contribution to SDG 7 – “Affordable and clean energy”.

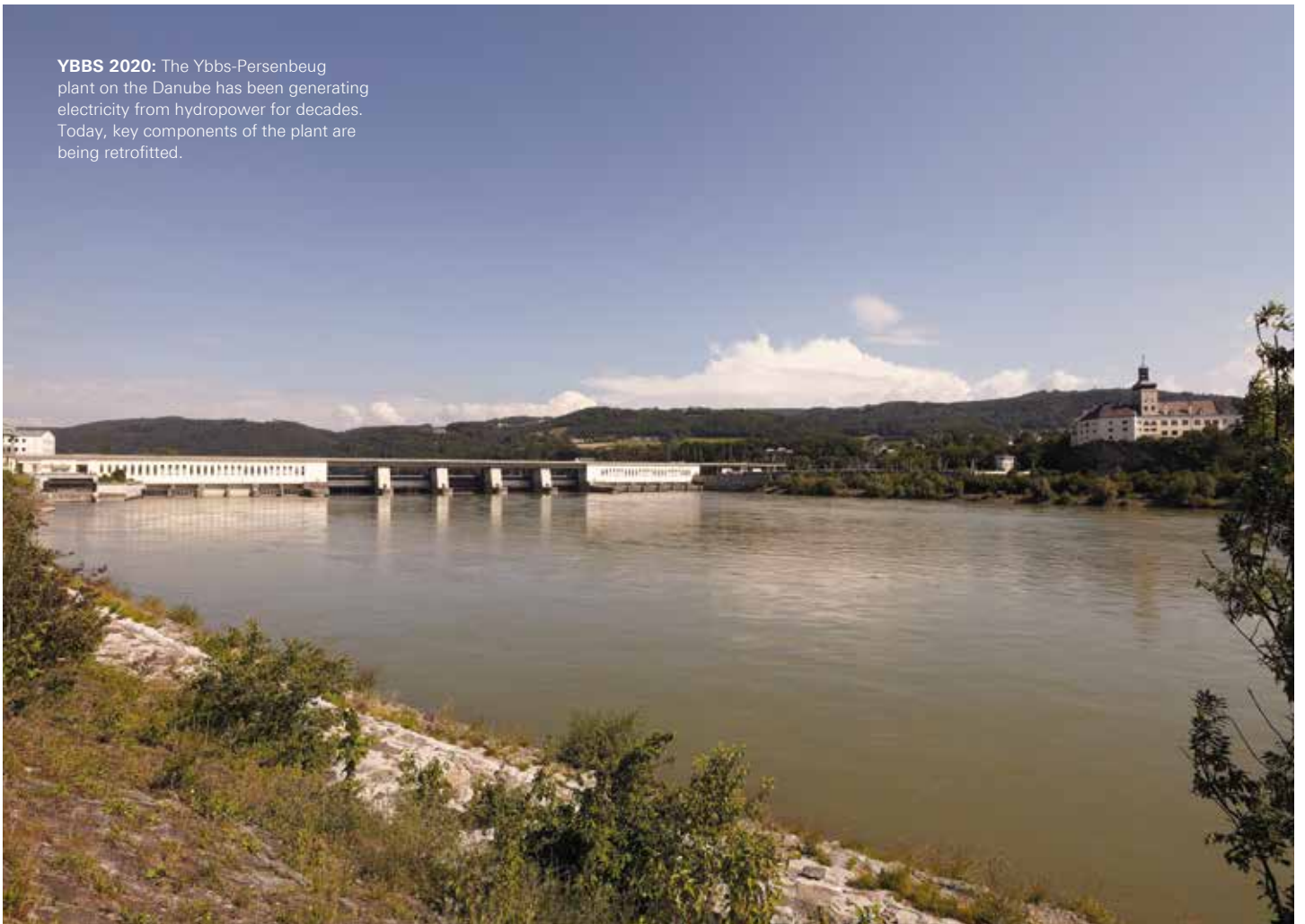
### Flourishing wetlands

Back in the 1970s, the estuary of the Traisen River was diverted in connection with construction of the Altenwörth plant on the Danube River in Lower Austria. The resulting riverbed flowed in a straight line through wetlands into the Danube. VERBUND has made extensive ecological improvements to this stretch of the river.





**LIFE+ Traisen:** Now that the river restoration project has been completed, the new course of the Traisen River is bringing back life to the surrounding wetlands.



**YBBS 2020:** The Ybbs-Persenbeug plant on the Danube has been generating electricity from hydropower for decades. Today, key components of the plant are being retrofitted.

**River life:** Wetlands along the banks of the Inn River in Bavaria offer a diverse habitat for flora and fauna.



**Schwabeck power plant:** The technical fish pass located at the Drau River in Carinthia is Europe's highest fish pass to date.



**Inn River: diverse ecology**

We have created an extensive water development concept for the Inn River in Bavaria. The numerous ecological measures include constructing fish passes, redesigning waterways, linking up side tributaries and restoring reservoir areas along with ecological dam maintenance and protecting endangered species in the water and on land. The work we do contributes to maintaining and enhancing the highly diverse ecosystem of the Inn River and the surrounding wetlands.

**Drau River: clear passage for fish**

In 2016, clear passage for fish and other aquatic life forms was restored along a 135-kilometre stretch of the upper Drau River in Carinthia following completion of a fish pass. This is particularly important for the Nase and Barbel species as they migrate long distances upstream to reach their breeding grounds. To assess the success of the Drau fish passes, we use a video monitoring system developed together with the Vienna University of Life Sciences and Natural Resources. The FishCam records and identifies migrating animals and adds them to a database for evaluation.

**Systematic environmental management**

In its environmental mission statement, VERBUND has committed to taking a responsible approach to the environment. We not only support environmentally friendly conduct, but we also expect it – both internally and from our suppliers, partners and customers. The environmental management systems we have implemented at our generation locations and grid facilities as well as at our main administrative sites are all certified to ISO 14001. The systems are reviewed and certified by independent auditors.

**Protecting plant life and other living organisms**

VERBUND implements numerous measures to minimize the impact of our power plant construction and operation activities on plants, animals and humans. We take existing regions of ecological importance into consideration and invest in projects that either secure or improve plant and animal biodiversity. This supports SDG 15 – “Life on land” in particular.

**Habitats for increased biodiversity**

Animals require different habitats depending on their stage of life and the time of year. Fish, for instance, need spawning grounds, refuge from floods, shelter in the wintertime and shady areas along the banks in the sum-

mer. We establish such habitats by linking rivers with previous estuaries and wetlands and creating new structures. This benefits many types of animal life other than fish, as well as plants and trees. For example, birds find watering holes and indigenous trees and shrubs that offer food and shelter. Diverse riverbank areas offer an ideal habitat and place of retreat for many forms of life, including endangered species.

**Fish passes ensure biodiversity**

In our projects to restore river passability, we make use of technical structures and natural detours to connect the headwater and tailwater areas of our power plants. We pay particular attention to currents when selecting the locations for the fish passes to ensure that aquatic organisms can find the entry points. This enables aquatic creatures to migrate to spawning grounds, to repopulate after flooding and to exchange genes between different species.



# Creating value for people and society

## Equal opportunity: women at VERBUND

The diversity of our workforce is a major success factor for us as a company. We focus on having a good balance of male and female employees and have created several initiatives designed to ensure a balanced gender ratio. One of these is the VERBUND women's network, where we explore the topic of gender equality from the perspective of both strategy and sustainability. Another is the VERBUND women's scholarship, which has supplied financial aid to highly qualified female students at the Technical University of Vienna since 2009. Our Women in Technology initiative is designed to encourage female secondary school graduates to study technical subjects at university. In addition, each year VERBUND participates in Vienna's Take Your Daughter to Work Day to promote interest in technical careers among schoolgirls.

One of VERBUND's primary tasks is to provide all customers with a reliable supply of green energy. This is a responsibility that we take great care in fulfilling. We also honour the contribution of our employees by offering them prime working conditions – because apart from our technical installations, it is our employees whose experience and expertise guarantee the security of supply.

### Know-how

To ensure the smooth operation of our plants, we rely on having highly qualified employees. VERBUND apprentices are schooled in not one but two vocations: electrical engineering and metalworking. In the last part of the four-year training program, students who have already completed vocational training in one of these professions receive comprehensive training to add to their knowledge of the other vocation. In order to meet not just current but also our future needs, we are also increasing the level of digitalisation – with due consideration for data protection requirements – and implementing new methods. In this way, we support smart working, which is becoming increasingly significant as a driver of vital innovation.

### Establishing prime working conditions

Our versatile employees ensure that our plants are operated safely and securely and attend to our customers' needs. The conditions we offer them allow them to develop their potential and perform at their best. Flexible hours and opportunities to enhance both their professional qualifications and their social skills are just as much a part of this as is equal opportunity for all. The safety of our employees is critical to us. For decades, VERBUND has placed great value on occupational safety and takes numerous safety measures, especially at our plants.

### Dual apprenticeship: more than just training

The future of green energy rests on the young people entering the field. To ensure the reliable operation of our plants, in 1983 VERBUND became one of the first companies in Austria to offer a four-year dual vocational training programme in electrical engineering and metalworking. First-year apprentices learn the basics of each profession at one of our three state-of-the-art training facilities. From the second year onwards, the apprentices work on-site at our power plants, where they are able to acquire the necessary plant expertise. The high quality of our vocational training programme can be seen in the outstanding results achieved in the apprentices' final examinations. That is one of the reasons we are recognised by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs as a nationally certified training institution.







**Empowered women** We are dedicated to training women for the trades and technical professions.



**Climate rangers as role models:** national park rangers pass on their knowledge to visiting schoolchildren.

#### Climate School: nature conservation in action

How do our actions impact the environment? Located in the Hohe Tauern National Park, the VERBUND Climate School offers 10-16-year-old schoolchildren the opportunity to learn how they can protect the environment in their daily lives. A mobile teaching unit travels to meet pupils in the National Park regions of Carinthia, Salzburg and Tyrol, where specially trained national park rangers teach them about the correlations between our climate, energy and climate protection. The lessons take the form of a project week, with a hands-on introduction to climate protection that employs a variety of methods and provides cross-curricular access. Interested students can find more information at our website [klima.schule](http://klima.schule).

#### Electricity for those in need

The VERBUND electricity relief fund works together with Caritas, a Catholic charity, to assist people in need. It's often the case that people with low incomes have disproportionately high electricity costs. Michael Landau, President of Caritas Austria, believes that help in practical matters is what people need most: "Partnering with VERBUND allows us to offer professional energy counseling, appliance exchange programmes and short-term loans to people experiencing difficulties in paying their electricity bills. These are exactly the services that are requested from us the most." Caritas operates more than 30 social welfare counselling centres throughout Austria, where people can sign up to receive assistance regardless of who their energy supplier is.

#### A self-determined lifestyle

The VERBUND Empowerment Fund run by Diakonie offers immediate assistance to people with disabilities in order to help them lead an independent life. Part of this involves expanding the consulting network available to the affected persons and their friends and family, for example. We also offer early child development programmes and arrange for supportive technologies and accessible teaching programmes, including training courses and counselling. The courses are developed by Diakonie together with LIFEtool and the Austrian Institute of Technology.

#### Achieving accessibility

It's important to us to consider the topic of disability and accessibility even beyond the scope required by law. An essential part of this involves raising awareness by providing targeted informational materials and training programmes to members of management and employees. The accessibility management programme introduced in 2014 has been effective in increasing the accessibility of our sites and our corporate communications as well as in bringing suggestions for improvement. Our goal is to facilitate access to our company. This means not only creating barrier-free structures, but also dismantling barriers in our communications and informational materials. The products offered on VERBUND's website must offer the highest possible degree of accessibility to a variety of target groups. To achieve this, we aim to meet the highest standards for Web accessibility specified in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).



As Austria's leading utility with approximately 2,800 employees, we provide forward-looking solutions for responsible individuals.

The generation of electricity from hydropower forms the basis for our long-term success. We are one of Europe's biggest producers of hydroelectricity, with more than 90% of our electricity coming from climate-friendly hydropower.

This ensures that VERBUND is a guarantor of clean energy in all of its markets. We supplement our generation portfolio with wind power and highly efficient thermal plants for producing electricity and heat. In the long term, we want to make 100% CO<sub>2</sub>-free electricity generation a reality.

Our mission is to energise the future with clean electricity and innovative solutions.

ESG research and rating  
agency ISS-oekom (formerly  
oekom research) recommends  
VERBUND as a prime investment.



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July 2018

**Editorial details**

**Published and distributed by**  
VERBUND AG, 1010 Vienna  
**Photos:** VERBUND archive/Thomas Topf  
**Print:** gugler GmbH, 3390 Melk/Donau