



International Renewable Energy Agency

20 September 2024

Twenty-eighth meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 24-25 October 2024

Note on the Establishment of the IRENA Liaison Office Vienna

During discussions of the twenty-seventh Council meeting held on 13-14 June 2024, the Council requested that further information be provided by Austria and the IRENA Secretariat, taking into account the interventions made, including on the roles and responsibilities of the office, the funding commitment by Austria as well as budgetary implications.

In response to these discussions, the present document provides an overview of key elements relating to the arrangements for the establishment of the IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna (ILOV) as well as next steps. The Council further agreed to continue discussions at its twenty-eighth meeting on 24-25 October 2024.

This document has been prepared as a collaborative effort between Austria and the IRENA Secretariat, for further consideration by the Council at its twenty-eighth meeting.

Background

1. At the time of IRENA's establishment, Austria, Denmark, Germany and the United Arab Emirates applied to host the Agency's headquarters in 2009, when the Preparatory Commission was tasked with its operationalisation. After discussions, Denmark, followed by Austria and Germany, withdrew their candidatures in favour of the United Arab Emirates.
2. The decision of the Preparatory Commission to establish an IRENA Innovation Centre (IITC) in Bonn, Germany and an IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna, Austria was communicated in document PC.2/SR¹. This decision was also reflected accordingly in the 2010 Work Programme and Budget, contained in document IRENA/PC.3/dc.6², which stated that "in addition to the headquarters agreement, agreements have to be drafted and negotiated for the Bonn Center and the Vienna Liaison Office."
3. At its first session on 4-5 April 2011, the IRENA Assembly decided to designate by acclamation Abu Dhabi as the seat of IRENA, as contained in document A/1/DC/11³. Through decision A/1/DC/8⁴, the Assembly adopted the Work Programme and Budget for 2011 and operationalised the IITC in Bonn. The document also stated that "the establishment of the IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna has been put on hold", as Austria had not been a full member of IRENA yet. Moreover, paragraph 31 of the Proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2011, in Annex I of the Assembly Decision, noted that "the organizational and resource requirements for the IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna will be determined at a later stage".
4. The Liaison Office was subsequently discussed in the Note on an IRENA Presence in New York, contained in document C/4/CRP/3⁵, and submitted for the consideration of the fourth meeting of the Council on 12-13 November 2012. Paragraph 5 stated that "IRENA was never intended to be a large ubiquitous entity, but there was recognition from the outset that IRENA's physical presence would be required in certain locations that have a concentration of renewable energy organisations. This understanding was also reflected in the decision to have a liaison office in Vienna, funded by Austria, to facilitate regular contact with relevant UN agencies."
5. Following Austria ratifying the Statute and becoming a full Member of IRENA on 1 January 2021, the Government of Austria indicated through a letter from H.E. Leonore Gewessler, Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, sent on 15 May 2024, which was circulated to the Membership on 30 May 2024, its intention to proceed with the implementation of this

¹ Available [here](#).

² Available [here](#).

³ Available [here](#).

⁴ Available [here](#).

⁵ Available [here](#).

office.⁶ It stressed the continued relevance of establishing the office for “strengthening (existing) collaboration between international organisations, while pushing the agenda for a rapid energy transition” particularly in light of the historic decision at COP28 to transition away from fossil fuels, tripling renewable power and double energy efficiency by 2030.

Organizational and resource requirements for the IRENA Liaison Office Vienna

Rationale for the Implementation of the Office

6. The climate crisis, widespread energy poverty, concerns over energy security and sustainable development imperatives have added to the urgency to accelerate renewable energy deployment globally including achieving the pledge to triple global renewable power by 2030. In this regard, IRENA Members tasked the Agency to “take the leading role in accelerating the global, renewables-based energy transition to fight climate change, enhance human welfare and drive an urgent and systemic shift for increased energy access, reduced inequalities, improved energy security, and prosperous and resilient economies and societies” in IRENA’s Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027.⁷
7. Addressing these global challenges and implementing IRENA’s mission will require unprecedented collaboration across countries, intergovernmental organisations, multilateral development banks, financial institutions, trade associations, labour unions and civil society. As an increasing number of institutions engage on renewable energy, ensuring that actors closely coordinate and act in lockstep to support countries’ renewable energy and climate efforts is critical. Mechanisms to facilitate alignment of work and building strong multi-Agency and multistakeholder partnerships will therefore be essential to ensure the efficient use of limited public funding and promotion of synergies.
8. Furthermore, Members have highlighted during IRENA’s governing body meetings the need to strengthen international cooperation and avoid duplication of work with other international entities. The Agency’s experience with the Liaison Office in New York, but also the presence of the IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre in Bonn, have shown the immense value of continuous in-person exchange with stakeholders for raising awareness about the insights, tools and services the Agency offers and forging stronger partnerships, thus avoiding duplication. The pandemic has further underscored both the promise but also the limitations of virtual exchanges in the diplomatic and international cooperation context.
9. Vienna is home to an energy hub spanning a unique collection of organisations, whose mandates and activities are directly related to IRENA’s mission. This includes the Energy Community (EnC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the OPEC Fund for International Development (OPEC Fund), the Organization for Security

⁶ Available [here](#).

⁷ Available [here](#).

and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The World Bank Group also runs an office in Vienna that serves as regional operations Hub for Europe. These organisations meet regularly as ‘Vienna Energy Club’ to exchange on recent and future activities.

10. Establishing ILOV is as pertinent today as it was during the establishment of the Agency, when the notion of establishing an Office was conceived. Given the direct relevance of the engagement with Vienna-based global institutions to achieving IRENA’s mission, the city remains a location of strategic importance. The offer by the government of Austria to fully fund a liaison office will bolster the ability of the Agency to carry out its mandate more effectively, without incurring on additional financial cost to the core budget.

Objectives and Scope of Work

11. ILOV was conceptualized in 2010 with the intention to that it ‘serves as an institutional link between IRENA and the international organisations’.⁸ Based on this vision, and taking into account the rationale set out above as well as the establishment of the office in New York, the following objectives are put forth for the ILOV:
 - a) *Strengthen the institutional link between IRENA and key institutions based in Vienna:* Vienna hosts several key organisations working on energy issues including the Energy Community (EnC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the OPEC Fund for International Development (OPEC Fund), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and representation of IRENA through ILOV will support alignment of work. Some of these entities, such as EnC, IAEA, SEforAll and UNIDO are IRENA key partners and co-location would greatly improve collaboration, harnessing synergies amongst respective mandates and support delivery of joint objectives under memoranda of understanding.
 - b) *Broaden and deepen the network of organisations in the field of renewable energy:* With the seat of the Energy Community Secretariat in Vienna and considering the city’s proximity to countries in Central and Eastern Europe, ILOV will facilitate a closer and more effective coordination in the region and with diplomatic missions in Vienna without establishing a presence on the ground. It will also focus on forging stronger partnerships for action, along with identifying opportunities for mobilising resources for energy transition efforts. This will enable the Agency to amplify its impact while using its limited resources judiciously.

⁸ IRENA/PC.3/dc.6

- c) *Mainstream renewable energy discussion across sectors and institutions:* Since its establishment, IRENA has built an unparalleled body of knowledge, data and analyses on the different aspects of the energy transition and its impact at the global, regional and national level. Vienna is home to an array of technical entities across different sectors and ILOV will enable the mainstreaming of renewable energy solutions in wider decarbonization and development efforts by public, civil society and private sector stakeholders. By representing IRENA in relevant meetings as well as convening regular bilateral, multi-agency or multistakeholder exchanges and events, ILOV will further strengthen the ability of the Agency to carry out its mandate as the global voice for renewables.

Overall, ILOV will support improved joint action, making IRENA's expertise more accessible and widely known as well as contribute to avoiding duplication of work in the international energy, climate and development space, being cognisant of limited public resources and funding.

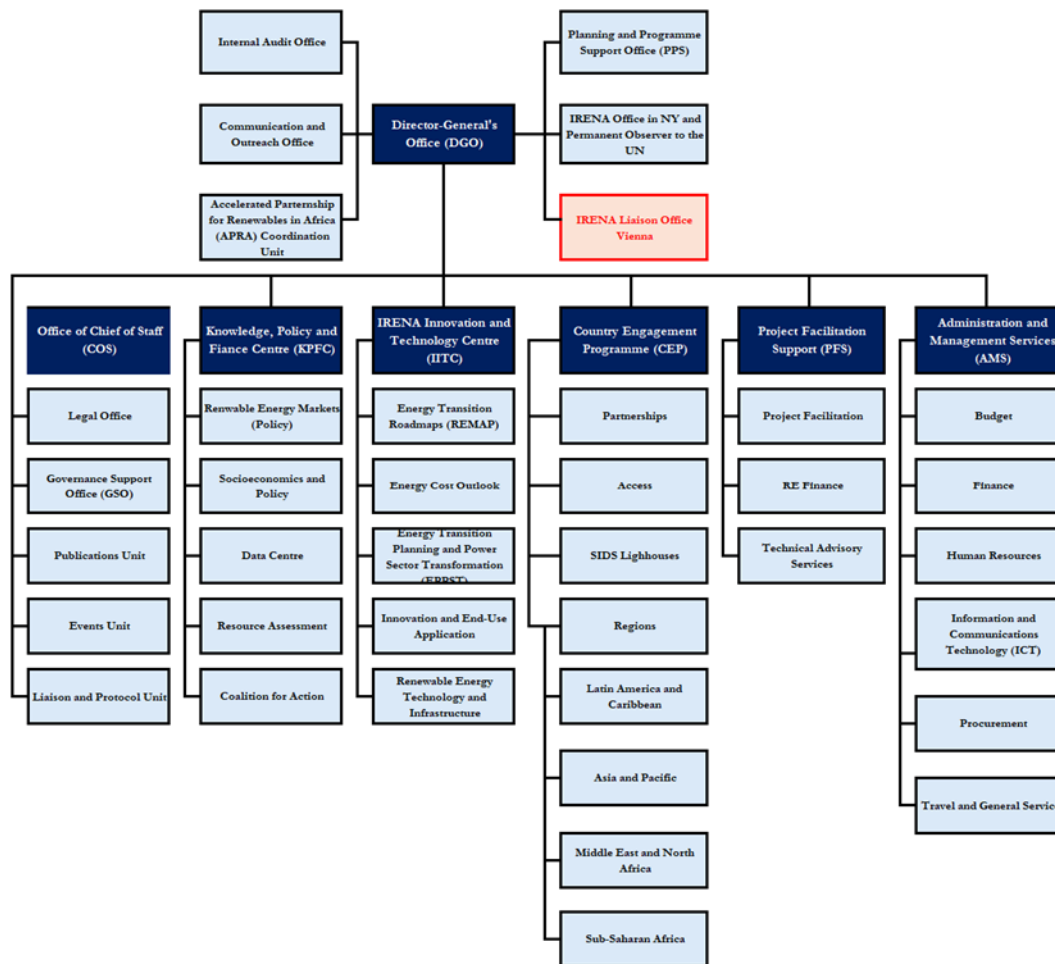
12. The ILOV will be an integral part of the institutional structures of the IRENA Secretariat. Its roles and responsibilities have been carefully conceptualized to complement and amplify the substantive work and strategic priorities of the Agency (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Delineation of mandates of IRENA's constituent divisions and offices

IRENA Headquarters Abu Dhabi	IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre, Bonn	IRENA Office of the Permanent Observer to the UN, New York	IRENA Liaison Office Vienna
Executive Office of the Director-General Administration and management services Programmatic divisions focused on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country engagement and partnerships - Knowledge, policy and finance - Project facilitation and support 	Programmatic division providing information, analyses and tools related to renewable energy technologies and innovations as well as technology roadmaps and outlooks	Office of the Permanent Observer to the UN to increase collaboration with international organizations, including the UN, country representations other relevant entities with presence in NY and increase awareness of IRENA's activities with US-based entities	Liaison Office to increase collaboration with UN and other international organizations, country representations and relevant entities with presence in Vienna and increase awareness of IRENA's activities with Vienna-based entities

13. The Head of Office of ILOV, as in the case of the Head of NY Office, will report to the Office of the Director-General. This will ensure that both Offices will collaborate closely with the various divisions as well as with each other (Figure 2). With regard to the staffing, it is proposed that the office would be composed of 1 P4 and 1 GS staff, reflecting the role as liaison office envisaged.

Figure 2 –Indicative institutional arrangements with the IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna



* For the latest up-to-date and comprehensive organizational structure with post distribution see document C/28/3 - Report of the Director-General on Human Resources Management and Trends.

** The Office is envisaged to have two additional posts (funded by Austria) – P4 and GS

Privileges and immunities

14. The IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna will benefit from the necessary privileges and immunities as agreed between IRENA and the Republic of Austria.

Budget and Resources

15. Austria expressed its intention to fully cover costs resulting from the operation of the IRENA Liaison Office in Vienna since the inception of the office, as reflected in Decision PC.4/DC.6.⁹ It also reiterated this commitment during the twenty-sixth meeting of the IRENA Council. The resource requirements reflected in Table 1 also reflect this commitment.
16. It is proposed that the costs would be reflected as core non-assessed contributions in future Work Programmes and Budgets (Table 2). This is consistent with the agreement in Decision PC.4/DC.6 and practice since then on the funding for the IRENA Headquarters as well as the IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre received respectively by the United Arab Emirates and Germany.

Table 1 – Indicative Resource Requirements: IRENA Liaison Office Vienna

Category	Resources (in USD thousands)	Core Posts
Staff Costs	706	2
Non-staff Costs	140	-
Total	846	2

Breakdown by activity	Estimate per biennium (in USD thousands)
Total Staff Costs*	706
Total Non-Staff Costs**	140
Project & Seconded Personnel, Interns and Consultants	-
Contractual Services	110
General Operating Expenditures	-
Travel of Staff	24
Programme and Expert Meetings	-
Furniture and Equipment	6
Total	846

⁹ Available [here](#).

*Estimated staff costs for 2 posts at P4 and GS5 levels

**Preliminary non-staff costs subject to further requirement discussions for ILOV establishment in Vienna

Table 2 – Indicative biennium core assessed and core non-assessed resource requirements (in USD thousands)

	2024-2025 Biennium Proposed Budget	2026-2027* Biennium Approved Budget	2026* Proposed Budget	2027* Proposed Budget
Assessed Contributions (Core Budget)				
Assessed Contributions (Core Budget)	44,778	44,778	22,389	22,389
Total Assessed Contributions (Core Budget)	44,778	44,778	22,389	22,389
Core Non-Assessed UAE Contributions:				
UAE Support	5,000	5,000	2,500	2,500
Governing Body Meetings	3,200	3,200	1,600	1,600
IT Infrastructure support	920	920	460	460
<i>Subtotal UAE Contributions</i>	9,120	9,120	4,560	4,560
Core Non-Assessed Germany Contributions:				
Innovation and Technology Center	10,890	10,890	5,445	5,445
<i>Subtotal Germany Contributions</i>	10,890	10,890	5,445	5,445
Core Non-Assessed Austria Contributions:				
Liaison Office in Vienna	-	846	423	423
<i>Subtotal Austria Contributions</i>	-	846	423	423
Total Core Non-Assessed	20,010	20,856	10,428	10,428
Grand Total	64,788	65,634	32,817	32,817

*2026-2027 Proposed Budget included only for presentation purposes

Proposed Next Steps on Implementation

17. *Finalization of documents relating to the organizational and resource requirements:* Taking into account discussions at the twenty-eighth meeting of the IRENA Council, the Secretariat will update the documents informing the establishment of the Liaison Office.
18. *Endorsement of the establishment by the IRENA Assembly:* Decision PC.2/SR to establish ILOV requires an approval by the IRENA Assembly, in line with article IX, paragraph J of the Statute of IRENA, given that the establishment was put on hold pending the determination of organizational and resource requirements for the Liaison Office.
19. *Implementation of the decision to establish the Liaison Office:* Following the endorsement of Decision PC.2/SR, Austria and the Secretariat would proceed with the organizational and administrative arrangements to establish the Office, including recruitment.
20. *Inclusion of the office in future work programmes and budgets:* In line with resources for the IRENA Headquarters and IITC, the funding for the Liaison Office would be included in the 2026-2027 Work Programme and Budget and all subsequent work programmes and budgets.
21. *Regular updates to IRENA Governing Bodies:* Updates on the developments and progress pertaining to the establishment and functioning of the Liaison Office will continue to be provided on a regular basis, as needed.