

## AUSTRIA

**Date of Elections:** 24 April 1983

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the seats in the National Council following premature dissolution of this body. The Council's term would normally have expired in June 1983; previous general elections had been held on 6 May 1979.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The bicameral Parliament of Austria consists of the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*).

The National Council is composed of 183 members elected for 4 years. The Federal Council comprises 63 members elected by the country's nine provincial assemblies for terms based on the term of office (up to 6 years) of the provincial legislatures delegating them.

### **Electoral System**

Any Austrian citizen at least 19 years old is entitled to vote for members of the National Council if registered as an elector within the constituency in which he is residing\*. Disqualified are the insane and criminals.

Electoral registers are compiled at the municipal level and revised continuously. Voting is compulsory in three provinces (Styria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg); abstentionists are, in theory, liable to be fined.

All qualified electors at least 21 years old may be candidates for the National Council. Candidates for the Federal Council must reside in the *Land* which delegates them and must be eligible for, but not necessarily members of, their provincial legislature. Members of the Constitutional Court and the Administrative Court, the President and Vice-President of the Audit Office and executives of joint stock companies, banking, commerce, transport and industrial private limited companies, provincial credit institutes and mutual insurance companies are among those persons who cannot simultaneously be members of Parliament.

Candidates for the National Council are nominated by political parties and must be supported either by three outgoing members of the National Council or, depending on the population of the constituency, by anywhere from 200 to 500 electors. For each constituency in which it proposes a candidate a party must pay a deposit equivalent to US\$325 to the Federal Government; this sum is to meet the expenses of printing the ballot papers and is not refundable. The number of candidates put forward by each party cannot be more than twice the number of seats to be filled.

\* He as she may also vote outside his/her constituency (by means of a "wahlkarte").

For elections to the National Council each of the country's nine provinces comprises an electoral constituency; the number of seats allotted to each is based on the number of residents who are Austrian nationals. Seats are distributed among the parties presenting lists of candidates on the basis of proportional representation calculated according to the Hagenbach-Bischoff method, the electoral quota within each constituency being established by dividing the number of seats to be filled, plus one, into the total number of valid votes; every party is given one seat for every completed number of times which this quota is contained in the number of votes cast for it. Seats remaining to be filled after applying this quota are subsequently distributed at the national level on the basis of the d'Hondt rule of highest average, applied to each party's surplus votes.

In the Federal Council, the number of representatives from each *Land* (at least three) depends on its population (the most populated has 12 representatives). The seats are divided between the parties according to the number of seats they hold in the provincial assemblies, which are determined on the basis of proportional representation.

A vacancy arising in the *Nationalrat* between general elections is filled by the individual who is "next-in-line" on the list of the party which formerly held the seat. Alternate members chosen at the same time as titular members fill vacancies in the *Bundesrat*.

### **General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

The April 1983 general elections were premature in name only, since for constitutional reasons the setting of a slightly earlier election date necessitated the required measures (dissolution, on 21 February 1983).

Primary contenders for the 183 National Council seats were, once again, the ruling Socialist Party, headed by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, the conservative People's Party, led by Dr. Alois Mock, and the liberal Freedom Party. Economic issues, especially unemployment, dominated the election campaign. The Socialists emphasized Government spending programmes to reduce unemployment, while the People's Party called for more incentives for private industry. The latter also criticized the Socialists' proposed new taxes. Other parties fielding candidates were the Communists and two environmentalist organizations - the Greens and the Alternative List.

Voting results left the Socialists as the country's largest single party but deprived them of the absolute parliamentary majority they had held for more than a decade; the People's Party, on the other hand, gained four additional seats. In this context, Mr. Kreisky stepped down after 13 years as Chancellor; he was succeeded by Mr. Fred Sinowatz, at the head of a coalition Socialist - Freedom Government composed of 15 Ministers.

## Statistics

*1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats  
in the National Council*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	5,316,438
Voters. . . . .	4,922,454 (92.6%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	69,037
Valid votes. . . . .	4,853,417

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Socialist Party (SPO) . . .	183	2,312,529	47.65	90	94	95
People's Party (6VP) . . .	183	2,097,808	43.22	81	77	77
Freedom Party (FPO). . .	183	241,789	4.98	12	11	11
Communist Party (K.PO)	183	31,912	0.66			
Others. . . . .		169,379	3.49		1	
				183	183	183

*2. Distribution of Members of the National Council according  
to Professional Category*

Political party officials. . . . .	46
Industrial workers and craftsmen. . . . .	31
Farmers. . . . .	23
Employees in commerce. . . . .	15
Liberal professions. . . . .	9
Housewives. . . . .	3
Part-time workers and civil servants. . . . .	55
Others. . . . .	1
	183

3. *Distribution of Members of the National Council  
according to Sex*

Men . . . . .	165
Women . . . . .	<u>18</u>
	183

4. *Distribution of Members of the National Council  
according to Age Group*

Under 30 years . . . . .	2
30-40 . . . . .	15
40-50 . . . . .	66
50-60 . . . . .	84
Over 60 . . . . .	<u>16</u>
	183