



# The National-Liberal Lager and the Freedom Party of Austria

## History – Election Results – Programme



Gesellschaft für Politik, Kultur & Meinungsfreiheit

**Political Academy of the Freedom Party of Austria**  
Institute for Politics, Culture and Freedom of Speech

**ENGLISH**

# **The National-Liberal Lager and the Freedom Party of Austria**

History – Election Results – Programme

## The National-Liberal Lager and the FPÖ

The Freedom Party of Austria came into being on 7 April 1956 at a founding party conference. In its name it bears the word "Freiheit" (freedom), which is considered a core element of its programme. However, the roots of this national-liberal community of shared beliefs go back to the early 19th century. In this brochure we illuminate the history of Austria's national-liberal political camp and the FPÖ.

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## IN A NUTSHELL: ELECTION RESULTS AND FEDERAL PARTY LEADERS

## LIST OF FEDERAL PARTY CHAIRMEN AND CHAIRWOMEN

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## FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

The Third Lager can look back on an eventful history. That history began in 1848, the year of revolutions, and can be traced through the end of the Monarchy and the two World Wars. It continued through the First Republic and all the way up to Austria's re-establishment in the Second Republic. The events that have shaped our homeland also include the end of the Eastern Bloc, Austria's accession to the EU and several examples of FPÖ participation in government at federal and provincial level. And no one can deny that the Third Lager has consistently made a significant contribution to the history of Austria and to democracy and the rule of law.

Even the tragic missteps of individual Third Lager representatives cannot conceal this fact. It is therefore all the more important to know one's own history. Because only if we know where we come from can we find the sense of direction needed to move forward into the future. The present documentation on the history of the FPÖ and the national-liberal Lager from 1848 to the present is intended to promote such insights. And everyone will come to realise that "The Freedom We Mean" is still highly relevant today.



**Herbert Kickl**

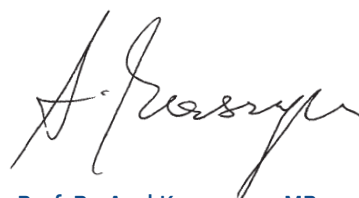
Federal Chairman of the  
Freedom Party of Austria

## FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

With this publication the Political Academy of the Freedom Party of Austria adds another important work to its numerous publications of recent years and decades and thereby fulfils its legal and statutory mandate.

The Political Academy is the educational institute of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). Its purpose and mission are, in particular, to promote civic, political and cultural education, and to foster insights into political, economic, legal and social contexts at the domestic and international levels. As the FPÖ's educational institute, its special tasks are on the one hand to nurture the skills, attitudes and knowledge of FPÖ personnel and on the other hand, to support the further development of Freedom Party positions and their introduction into and dissemination within public debate. Special emphasis is placed on international political education work and on the associated deepening and intensification of international contacts, projects and cooperation. This compact and informative English-language overview of the history and work of the national-liberal Lager and the Freedom Party of Austria is intended to contribute to the achievement of this goal.



**Prof. Dr. Axel Kassegger, MP**

President of the Political Academy  
of the Freedom Party of Austria



## THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL-LIBERAL LAGER AND THE FPÖ



Photo: Illustration / F. Werner

In May 1848, barricades were erected at the University of Vienna.

### The Revolution of 1848 and the Significance of the Student Fraternities

#### The Roots of Third Lager Thought

After the Napoleonic Wars, the 1814/15 Congress of Vienna created the German Confederation, a loose federation that comprised German states and parts of the Austrian Empire. Numerous contemporaries regarded this absolutist structure as a suppression of nationalist and liberal

movements, and demanded a German nation state.

Right across Germany, there developed a new bourgeois movement calling for freedom. The driving force behind this movement were students, who in 1815, in

the city of Jena, established the very first student fraternity (Urburschenschaft, or original fraternity). They demonstrated in support of freedom and constitutional government, including at the Hambacher Festival of 1832, at which 30,000 people championed national unity and national sovereignty, whilst waving the student fraternities' black-red-gold flag, the colours of which were later incorporated into the flag of Germany.

On 12 March 1848, students gathered at the University of Vienna, amongst them members of the hitherto secret fraternity Arminia. They presented a petition demanding freedom of the press and of speech; academic freedom at universities; religious freedom; equal rights for Jewish fellow citizens, as well as a popularly elected parliament. The following day was marked by an uprising, at which the students were joined by additional citizens and heavy casualties ensued. Parallel to this, workers protesting against their working conditions stormed factories in the Vienna suburbs. This bourgeois revolution gripped the whole of Germany, from Berlin to Vienna, and was not with-

out consequences. It resulted in the first free democratic elections in the whole of Germany, namely, those for a future German National Assembly. The latter met for the first time on 18 May 1848 in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt and as its President, it elected the liberal student fraternity member, Heinrich Freiherr von Gagern. The most important task of the National Assembly was to develop a German constitution.

There were further uprisings on the part of students and revolutionary citizens, but they were ultimately defeated by the bloody intervention of the Imperial Army. In October 1848, Vienna was captured by Imperial troops and Franz Joseph I restored the Austrian Empire's pre-existing absolutist system. The revolution had failed.

However, the idealism of the revolutionaries of 1848, their commitment to the idea of freedom, their democratic aspirations and their social commitment to workers and to the poorest sections of the population have continued to this day to shape the development of the national-liberal Lager (camp) in Austria.

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The original fraternity fought for freedom and constitutional government whilst waving the student fraternities' black-red-gold flag, the colours of which were later incorporated into the flag of Germany.



## The Strongest Force in the Austrian Imperial Assembly

### The National-Liberal Parties and Parliamentarism under Franz Joseph I

During the final years of absolutism in the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy, when Austria was defeated by France and Sardinia-Piedmont in the 1859 Second Italian War of Independence and lost territories in Italy, a domestic political thaw took place. Civic associations and student fraternities received growing support and were to become the building blocks of the national-liberal Lager. The advisory Reichstag was expanded to include members from the new Diets of the Crown Lands and reinforced by the October Diploma of 1860. Yet, the Liberals under Minister of State Anton Ritter von Schmerling aspired to a genuine parliamentary constitution. This led to the February Patent of 1861, which applied to the entire Austrian Empire and transformed the Imperial Assembly into a parliament with legislative powers. Subsequent to Austria's defeat by the Kingdom of Prus-

sia at Königgrätz in 1866 and its resulting political exclusion from Germany, Emperor Franz Joseph I had to agree to the 1867 Compromise with Hungary. The December Constitution of 1867 was proclaimed for the Austrian half of the newly-formed Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, that is to say, for what was officially defined as "the Kingdoms and Lands represented in the Imperial Council", a separate parliament which it established in Vienna.

The national-liberals were by far the strongest force in the Austrian Imperial Council, where they were opposed by the Catholic Conservatives. Their advocacy on behalf of the German-speaking population of the Monarchy also fuelled conflict with the Slavs. For, despite the fact that the Habsburgs had for centuries played a leading role in German affairs, Austria had since the 1866 Austro-Prussian



The sessions of the Imperial Council were already being held in the Parliament on Vienna's Ringstraße.

Photo: Wilhelm Müller

War been separated from most of the German-speaking area. Suddenly, German-speaking Austrians in Austria-Hungary were confronted with a majority of non-German peoples.

This meant that several national-liberal parties developed. Taken together, they always constituted a majority of the deputies in the Austrian Imperial Council, yet they were also divided amongst themselves. The national-liberal Lager can thus be considered to have from the outset been a pillar supporting Austrian parliamentarism.

A particularly influential personality was Georg Ritter von Schönerer, who adopted the position of a social reformer. His political acolytes and comrades in arms included Karl Lueger in Vienna, the foun-

der of the Christian Social movement, as well as Victor Adler and Engelbert Pernstorfer, the founders of Austrian Social Democracy. The latter two figures, incidentally, were also fraternity members. Schönerer became increasingly radicalised. However, he and his Pan-German Association were opposed by a number of national-liberal politicians such as Otto Steinwender.

For all that, national-liberal forces in Austria were also particularly committed to universal suffrage, which was first implemented in 1907 as universal, equal, secret and direct suffrage for all men. Yet at the same time, the national-liberal Lager also advocated in favour of the continued existence of Austria-Hungary and ultimately went into the First World War in support of the Emperor and the Fatherland.

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The national-liberal Lager was from the outset a pillar of Austrian parliamentarism. Taken together, the national-liberal parties always constituted a majority of the deputies in the Austrian Imperial Council.



Photo: public domain.

The proclamation of the Republic took place on 12 November 1918 in front of the Parliament building on Vienna's Ringstrasse.

## The National-Liberals at the Cradle of the Republic

### The Third Lager and the Foundation of the Republic of German-Austria in 1918

The rule of the House of Habsburg in Austria, which had lasted more than 600 years, came to an end in 1918, after defeat in the First World War. Following the death of Franz Josef I in 1916, while the war was still in progress, Emperor Charles I had succeeded to the throne and then tried in vain to preserve the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary as a "Federation of Free Peoples".

On 21 October 1918, subsequent to the other nationalities having withdrawn from the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, the 208 German-speaking members of the Imperial Council in Vienna that had been responsible for that half of the Empire convened in the Lower Austrian Provincial

Diet (Landhaus) in Vienna. The largest parliamentary group comprised national-liberal and German-national deputies; the next-largest were made up of Christian Socials and of Social Democrats. The deputies decided to establish an independent state and constituted themselves as the Provisional National Assembly. The name chosen for the new republican state was "German-Austria". This National Assembly is therefore considered to be the first Austrian parliament.

On 30 October 1918, the National Assembly adopted a preliminary constitution and dispatched a note to the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, stating that the "German Nation in Austria" had

decided to form its own state. This can be regarded as a proclamation of statehood and thus as the actual founding date of the Republic. The first State Law Gazette of the new state of German-Austria is also dated 30 October 1918.

The Presidium of the Provisional National Assembly comprised three Presidents: the German-Liberal Franz Dinghofer, the Christian Social Johann Hauser (subsequent to the resignation of Jodok Fink) and the Social Democrat Karl Seitz. Franz Dinghofer, a German-Liberal and student fraternity member, served as the first President of the Provisional National Assembly. The Social Democrat Karl Renner was elected as State Chancellor. On 12 November 1918, after Emperor Charles I had renounced any role in state affairs, the Provisional National Assembly met for its third session and unanimously adopted the Law "On the Form of State and Government of German-Austria". This was three days after the proclamation of the German Republic in Berlin. The new law's first two articles read as follows: "Article 1. German-Austria is a democratic republic.

All public authorities are appointed by the people. Article 2. German-Austria is an integral part of the German Republic [...]". In the end, Franz Dinghofer was the politician who on 12 November 1918 proclaimed the new Republic from the ramp of the Parliament building on Vienna's Ringstrasse.

The first popular election to the Constituent National Assembly then took place on 16 February 1919, with women also being able to cast their votes for the first time. Some 72 of the 170 newly-elected members were Social Democrats, 69 were from the Christian Social party and merely 26 were affiliated with national-liberal or German-national parties.

As a result, the latter had become the new Republic's Third Lager – a designation still employed today. The national-liberals were closely associated with the emergence of the First Republic. In view of its commitment to the welfare of the state, the largest parliamentary Lager of the old Imperial Council was even prepared to surrender to the Social Democrats its immediate claim to leadership.

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On 12 November 1918, Franz Dinghofer, a German-Liberal and student fraternity member, proclaimed the new Republic from the ramp of the Parliament building in Vienna as President of the Provisional National Assembly.



## From the Founding of the Republic to the “Anschluss”

### The National-Liberals in the First Republic

The Republic of German-Austria was founded in 1918 and never achieved equilibrium. One challenge it had to endure was the 1919 Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain, signed with the victorious powers of the First World War. In accordance with the Treaty's terms, German-speaking areas of the former Monarchy, such as South Tyrol, were ceded, the name of the new state (“German-Austria”) was prohibited and an “annexation” to Germany was forbidden. The latter had in 1918 been demanded by both the national-liberal parties and the Social Democrats.

The coalition of Christian Socials and Social Democrats that was formed in 1919 soon broke up. The national-liberal parties, which were now the “Third Force” in Parliament, included the Greater German People's Party and the Agrarian League, which until 1933 governed in alternating coalition

configurations together with the Christian Socials. Leading national-liberal personalities included Federal Chancellor Johannes Schober and the first Federal President of the Republic of Austria, Michael Hainisch, who was a formally non-partisan national economist.

After the hyperinflation of the 1920s, it proved possible to stabilise the currency through the introduction of the schilling. At the same time, however, there was a militarisation of domestic politics, with both the Christian Socials and the Social Democrats creating paramilitary organisations. This resulted in conditions akin to a civil war, which peaked in the 1927 burning of the Palace of Justice in Vienna, during which almost 100 people died. Coupled with the consequences of the world economic crisis, the final outcome was a disavowal of democracy. The

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In the First Republic, the Christian Socials and Social Democrats created the Heimwehr and the Republikanischer Schutzbund as paramilitary organisations. Conditions akin to a civil war culminated in the burning of the Palace of Justice in Vienna.



The burning of the Palace of Justice in 1927 illustrates the tensions of the First Republic.

Photo: gemeinfrei

Christian Socials increasingly looked to Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, from whom they hoped to receive support against the aggressive policies of Adolf Hitler's Germany. The Social Democrats' direction of travel also became more authoritarian, while the supporters of the Third Lager increasingly shifted their allegiance to the Austrian National Socialists.

In view of the strength of the National Socialists and the conflict with the Social Democrats, the Christian Social Federal Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuß, used a March 1933 procedural crisis in the National Council to eliminate parliamentary democracy and pave the way towards the authoritarian Ständestaat. Protests by the national-liberals were suppressed. The Austrian National Socialists were banned in 1933 and following a short, bloody civil war in February 1934, the Social Democrats were also proscribed. The

pressure which National Socialist Germany exerted on Austria increased. In July 1934, Dollfuß was assassinated during an unsuccessful National Socialist coup and his successor, Kurt Schuschnigg, intended to continue the authoritarian course. However, the loss of Mussolini's support and growing pressure from illegal Nazis within Austria eventually resulted in Hitler's imposition of the “Anschluss”. On 12 March 1938, the German Wehrmacht rolled into Austria. This move was supported by persons within all political parties, including the traditionally pro-German Third Lager. But the Archbishop of Vienna, Theodor Innitzer, and the Social Democrat, Karl Renner, also welcomed the “Anschluss”.

In this way, the unloved First Republic – a state that no one wanted – came to a tragic end and as part of the German Reich, Austria was drawn into the horrors of the Second World War.



Photo: Votava / Imagno / picturedesk.com

Herbert A. Kraus addressing a VdU rally on Vienna's Rathausplatz in 1949.

## The Return of the Third Lager after 1945

### The Rise and Fall of the VdU

The Republic of Austria was re-established in April 1945, after the end of the Second World War. Initially, only three parties were permitted by the Allied Occupying Powers. These comprised the Christian-conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), the Socialist Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ), which together formed the Provisional State Government led by Karl Renner. During this constitutive period of the Second Republic, the national-liberal Lager remained excluded from political participation. This was also due to the fact that, regardless of whether they had participated in crimes, all former party members and membership candidates of the NSDAP and other Nazi organisations were deprived of their right to vote. At the first National Council election of 1945, there

were therefore approximately 600,000 "second class" Austrian citizens, who were excluded from the exercise of essential political rights. It was not until spring 1949 that Herbert A. Kraus and Viktor Reimann succeeded in founding the League of Independents (Verband der Unabhängigen, VdU).

The constitution of this new party took place in Salzburg, since it was considerably easier to found a new party in the American zone of occupation. However, the VdU was registered as an association because it could not obtain a "party licence" from the Allies. On the one hand, the VdU wanted to lead back into Austrian political life the historically evolved national-liberal Lager, which had before 1938 accounted for almost 20 percent of the total elec-

torate. On the other hand, it wanted to integrate the "Lesser National Socialists", who had until then been excluded from political participation. In 1947, their active right to vote had been restored under the terms of the National Socialists Law. Further target groups were those returning from the war and ethnic German expellees from Central and Eastern Europe.

At the second National Council election of 1949, when it competed as the "Electoral Party of Independents" (Wahlpartei der Unabhängigen, WdU), the VdU obtained about 11.7 percent of the vote and 16 National Council seats. Its success continued at several provincial elections. The VdU's "Social Manifesto" of 1950 can also be considered an attempt to win over the working class.

Nevertheless, the VdU became increasingly isolated politically, not least because of the actions of the ÖVP and SPÖ. As a result, disputes broke out within the League. The loss of votes at the 1953 National Council elections resulted in an intensification of the conflicts between the

national and liberal wings, as well as between the party's many strong personalities such as Viktor Reimann, Willfried Greidler, Gustav Zeillinger and Helfried Pfeifer. To be sure, in May 1954 the VdU adopted in Bad Aussee a new party programme with more pronounced nationalist characteristics and dialogue was sought with the recently-founded Freedom Party (Freiheitspartei). But when further provincial elections held during 1954 resulted in substantial losses, the VdU was already showing signs of disintegration. Thus, in 1955, negotiations took place between representatives of the VdU and the markedly nationalist Freedom Party of Anton Reinthaller, which had in the Upper Austrian provincial elections of 1955 already formed an electoral alliance with the VdU and independents.

Finally, on 17 October 1955, the VdU and Anton Reinthaller's Freedom Party agreed in Vienna to merge to form the FPÖ. This laid the foundations for a successor party that was to continue until the present day to make a decisive contribution to shaping Austrian politics.

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The VdU was founded in 1949 by the journalist Herbert A. Kraus and the resistance fighter Viktor Reimann in order to represent expellees and returnees, as well as "Lesser" former members of the NSDAP, and to reintegrate them into the democratic system.

# The Founding of the FPÖ

## The Years 1956 to 1958

On 17 October 1955, the Chairman of the VdU Max Stendebach and the Chairman of the Freedom Party Anton Reinthaller agreed in Vienna to merge their two parties to form the FPÖ and to simultaneously dissolve both the VdU and the Freedom Party.

The choice of name itself points to one of the basic principles of the FPÖ: The freedom of the individual as well as the freedom of the community and of one's own people should be at the centre of all policy

statements and programmes. However, it was not until 7 and 8 April 1956 that the constitutive party conference, which was also the founding party conference, met in the hotel "Zum weißen Hahn" located in the Viennese district of Josefstadt. Among the founding members were Willfried Gredler, Jörg Kandutsch, Tassilo Broesigke, Gustav Zeillinger and Max Stendebach from the VdU, and Anton Reinthaller, Emil van Tongel and Friedrich Peter from the Freedom Party. The fact that Anton Reinthaller was elected as the first Chairman

of the FPÖ is often cited by researchers as indicating that within the new FPÖ, the Freedom Party and its more national-conservative programme had prevailed over the somewhat more liberal positions of the VdU. This attitude was also reflected in the first party programme, which was approved as the so-called Short Programme or "Fourteen Points" at the founding party conference in 1956 and explained in more detail in the 1958 "Richtlinien freiheitlicher Politik".

It is worth adding in this connection that Anton Reinthaller remains a figure of controversy. Born in Upper Austria, Reinthaller was considered after the war to have been one of the former high-ranking National Socialists in Austria. He had for example served as Minister of Agriculture in the "Anschluss Government" installed by Hitler's Germany and led by Chancellor Arthur Seyß-Inquart. For some, the committed Catholic was considered an "idealist" who had played no part in the crimes of National Socialism. For others, however, he was also a former SS Brigade Leader, who had already been agitating for the Anschluss of Austria to Germany whilst that was still illegal. But the FPÖ's hope that by adopting a markedly national party line it could build on the successes of the Third Lager during the inter-war period and obtain up to 18 percent of the vote in National Council elections was not fulfilled. At the National Council elections of May 1956, the FPÖ obtained only 6.5 percent of the vote and six National Council seats.



Anton Reinthaller was the first Chairman

Photo: NFZ / APA / picturedesk.com

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1. We are committed to the principles of freedom and thus to fundamental human rights and rights of peoples.

2. We are committed to the social community of the people (soziale Volksgemeinschaft) and opposed to all thinking and acting based on class and on group interests.

3. We affirm the sovereignty of Austria, are committed to the German ethnic and cultural community and advocate a close union of the free peoples and states of Europe on the basis of complete equality and self-determination.

4. We oppose the omnipotence of the state and of the power apparatuses coupled to it, which threaten all human freedoms. We are committed to the democratic constitutional state of free men and women who are equal under the law, and we therefore demand the elimination of the demoralising system of party patronage (Parteiproporz). (...) (Excerpt from the FPÖ's first party programme of 1957)

The FPÖ's parliamentary group in the National Council was from the outset committed to the roles of opposition and scrutiny. Its members included Caucus Leader Willfried Gredler; former university professor Helfried Pfeifer; former VdU Chairman Max Stendebach; Heinrich Zechmann, previously Provincial Chairman of the VdU Salzburg and subsequent Ombudsman Gustav Zeillinger, as well as Jörg Kandutsch, who later became President of the National Audit Office (Rechnungshof). Within the organisation, the Viennese pharmacist Emil van Tongel held the positions of press and finance officer.

After the death of Anton Reinthaller in 1958, Friedrich Peter was elected Federal Party Chairman. This marked the end of the founding phase of the FPÖ. Yet the party was not yet able to come out of its domestic political isolation and had to compete for recognition in a Second Republic political landscape dominated by black-red (ÖVP-SPÖ) politics.





Photo: Votava / Imagno / picturedesk.com

SPÖ Chancellor Bruno Kreisky welcomes Friedrich Peter (right) in October 1975 in the Federal Chancellery in Vienna

## A National-Liberal Party of Notables

### The Friedrich Peter Era

After the death of Anton Reinthaller, Friedrich Peter was elected Federal Party Chairman of the FPÖ in 1958. Having led the party for just under 20 years, Peter remains its longest-serving leader.

The Upper Austrian Peter also managed finally to lead the FPÖ out of its domestic political isolation. For the FPÖ succeeded for the first time in forging mutual alliances in parliament, for example with the SPÖ on the question of the Habsburg Laws and Otto Habsburg's return to Austria. With Members of Parliament such as Tassilo Broesigke, Otto Scrinzi and Gustav Zeillinger, the Freedom Party was in due course able to make its mark in the National Council as a national-liberal party of notables and as a pivot, tipping the scales between the People's Party and

the Socialists. This is why the FPÖ had high expectations for the 1970 National Council elections, launching itself into the campaign with the slogan "No red Chancellor, no black single-party government". In the end, however, the FPÖ National Council election result stagnated at 5.5 percent. Nevertheless, Friedrich Peter seized the opportunity and in return for agreeing to support the SPÖ minority government under Bruno Kreisky, was able to achieve electoral law reform that was favourable to the Freedom Party.

When National Council elections took place under the new regulations in October 1971, the FPÖ was able to increase from six to ten its number of parliamentary seats in a chamber that had been enlarged from 165 to 183. Under Friedrich

Peter, the FPÖ also initiated a process of programmatic modernisation. In 1968, the more modern "Ischl Party Programme" was adopted in Bad Ischl, and at Peter's suggestion, the so-called "Attersee Circle" was founded, a working group for young and more liberal-oriented intellectuals, one of whom was the later Party Chairman, Norbert Steger.

The "Attersee Circle" subsequently provided valuable stimuli for the modernisation of the party and, among other things, took on the preparatory work for the "Freiheitliche Manifest zur Gesellschaftspolitik" ("FPÖ Manifesto on Social Policy"). Adopted in 1973, it already contained a chapter devoted to environmental protection.

However, the later years of Peter's chairmanship were overshadowed by Simon Wiesenthal's highlighting from 1975 onwards of Peter's Second World War role within the Waffen-SS, though SPÖ

Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, a friend of Friedrich Peter, took Peter's side. The affair ultimately also prevented Friedrich Peter being elected as Third President of the National Council. Following internal party disputes about Peter's past, Alexander Götz became the FPÖ's new Party Chairman in 1978. Yet until 1986, Friedrich Peter remained Chairman of the FPÖ Parliamentary Group in the National Council.

Friedrich Peter became increasingly estranged from the FPÖ after the election of Jörg Haider as Party Chairman in the autumn of 1986, a development that culminated in his resignation from the party in 1992. Peter's relationship with his former party remained tense until his death in September 2005.

Nevertheless, it can be considered an historical achievement of Friedrich Peter to have anchored the FPÖ and thus the Third Lager as a stable factor in Austrian domestic politics.

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With the votes of the SPÖ and FPÖ, the National Council passed the so-called "minor electoral law reform". By increasing the number of parliamentary seats, reducing the size of constituencies and equalising the number of votes which large and small parties required to obtain a seat, this reform lowered the hurdle faced by smaller parties seeking parliamentary representation.

## The Social-Liberal Experiment

### Norbert Steger and the First FPÖ Government Participation

After the long-term Party Chairman Friedrich Peter had resigned in 1978 and been briefly succeeded as party leader by Alexander Götz, Mayor of Graz, the lawyer Norbert Steger was elected FPÖ Party Chairman in March 1980. Moulded by the "Attersee Circle", a liberal think-tank founded under Peter, the new party leadership around Steger wanted to turn the hitherto markedly national FPÖ into a "flawless" liberal party.

It is true that the FPÖ was able to achieve only a modest result in the 1983 elections to the National Council, namely around 5 percent of the vote. However, electoral arithmetic made it possible for the FPÖ to still win 12 National Council seats, while the SPÖ lost its absolute majority for the first time since 1971. In this situation, Friedrich Peter's tactic of drawing closer to the Socialists paid off; as Chairman of the FPÖ Parliamentary Group, he negotiated with Bruno Kreisky the terms of a "Small

Coalition" and from 1983 to 1986, the SPÖ formed a red-blue coalition with the FPÖ led by Norbert Steger, initially under Chancellor Fred Sinowatz and then under his successor Franz Vranitzky.

In this Federal Government, the FPÖ was represented by Steger as Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Trade; Harald Ofner as Minister of Justice and by Friedhelm Frischenschlager and later Helmut Krünes as Minister of Defence. However, the coalition had to struggle with enormous problems. These included an exploding budget deficit and the precarious situation in nationalised industries.

At the same time, trouble was brewing within the FPÖ electorate. For one, there were discussions about the FPÖ's ideological direction, as articulated above all in the new party programme of 1985. This was scarcely accepted by more national-oriented supporters of the Freedom

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Norbert Steger was shaped by the "Atterseekreis". Founded in 1971 under the party leadership of Friedrich Peter to strengthen the liberal wing within the FPÖ, it continues to this day to provide important intellectual stimulation for the party.



The first FPÖ ministers Norbert Steger, Harald Ofner and Friedhelm Frischenschlager (fltr)

Photo: ÖNB-Bildarchiv / picturedesk.com

Party. Meanwhile, in Carinthia the young up-and-coming politician Jörg Haider was on his way to becoming the harshest critic of the FPÖ government team. In May 1983 Haider had been appointed Managing Chairman of the Carinthian FPÖ and was soon able to score points with his outspoken opposition to the federal party.

Moreover, the FPÖ's decision not to nominate its own candidate at the 1986 federal presidential election was judged too great a concession to the SPÖ and in the eyes of numerous FPÖ party officials, enough was enough. This also meant that Steger's attempt to transform the FPÖ into an enduring liberal governing party along the lines of the German FDP had failed. When opinion pollsters predicted in the summer of 1986 that the FPÖ would receive barely more than 3 percent of the

vote at the next National Council election, many in the party considered the only possible salvation to be Jörg Haider's election as Chairman. As a result, in September 1986 in Innsbruck, the chairmanship was contested between Steger and Haider and the Viennese Steger lost the vote to the Carinthian provincial party leader. Shortly thereafter, SPÖ Chancellor Vranitzky terminated the red-blue coalition and Austria went into new elections.

Overall therefore, the lesson of the FPÖ's first participation in a Second Republic government remains ambivalent. Although that government failed prematurely, historically, the red-blue government can be considered to have been akin to a completion of the integration of the historically-rooted Third Lager into the political system of the Republic.





Jörg Haider has significantly influenced the FPÖ

## The Rise of the FPÖ under Jörg Haider Against the Red-Black System

The development of the FPÖ under the leadership of Jörg Haider is considered one of the most exciting episodes in the history of the Second Republic, since the rise of the native Upper Austrian led to the first fundamental change since 1945 in the domestic party landscape. Besides, the 14-year period between 1986, when Haider was elected FPÖ Chairman at the contested Innsbruck vote against Norbert Steger, and the black-blue (ÖVP-FPÖ) government in 2000, saw a string of successes.

The trained lawyer, who had in 1979 already entered the National Council as an FPÖ Member of Parliament and in 1983 took over the leadership of the Carinthian Freedom Party, was also able to rein-

tegrate the national Lager into the FPÖ and broadened the party both in terms of policy and personnel. As a consequence of Haider's election, SPÖ Chancellor Franz Vranitzky terminated the "Small Coalition" with the FPÖ, which had existed since 1983. At the resulting new elections in November 1986, the FPÖ under Jörg Haider received about 9.7 percent of the votes. The SPÖ and ÖVP reacted to the sudden strength of the Third Lager with another SPÖ-ÖVP "grand coalition" and an ongoing political and media marginalisation of the FPÖ. This gave Haider even more opportunity to denounce the manner in which the SPÖ and ÖVP provided economic privileges for their members and partisans and to position the FPÖ in the National Council as an opposition party against this "red-black

system". Haider thus became the political motor of change in a country where politics had until then still been determined by the Lager mentality of the post-war period. Carinthia became the trailblazer of the transformation of the Austrian political system. There, Haider was in 1989 able to break the absolute majority of the SPÖ and with the help of the ÖVP was elected the first FPÖ Provincial Governor of the Second Republic. At the 1999 provincial elections, the FPÖ became the party with the largest number of votes and Haider was again appointed Governor.

But the FPÖ also achieved considerable successes in federal elections and these were scarcely affected even by the 1993 breaking away from the FPÖ of the Liberal Forum. After obtaining 22.5 percent in the 1994 National Council election, Haider achieved a historic result with the FPÖ in the 1999 election to the National Council: with 26.9 percent of the vote, the Freedom Party ousted the ÖVP from second

place. Together with ÖVP Chairman Wolfgang Schüssel, Haider agreed a black-blue coalition, in which he himself did not hold an official position, however, and in which Schüssel became Federal Chancellor. Susanne Riess-Passer joined the government as FPÖ Vice-Chancellor.

Even though Jörg Haider's political path after 2000 was marked by a number of fault lines – even with his former party – many political observers, contemporary observers and also former opponents acknowledge Jörg Haider's achievements in the fight against the red-black Proporz and the excesses of the neo-corporatist "chamber state", as well as the deregulation of the quasi-state sector triggered by this. And last but not least, with the 1993 FPÖ referendum "Austria First" on migration policy, Haider for the first time clearly highlighted a topic that almost 30 years later has achieved widespread social saliency and is exercising the whole of Europe.

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**From small beginnings, our contribution to democracy has grown and we have, as it were, become a movement of liberation from party patronage, privileges and the intellectual narrow-mindedness of functionaries, as well as a movement for a new beginning full of opportunities in a changing world.'** (Jörg Haider in his book: *Befreite Zukunft jenseits von links und rechts*, 2001)

## A Party in Crisis

### From Black-Blue (ÖVP-FPÖ) Coalition to the Founding of BZÖ

The FPÖ had emerged from the 1999 National Council elections with 26.9% of the vote and, for the first time ever, had become Austria's second-strongest party. Jörg Haider then agreed on a joint coalition with the ÖVP. With ÖVP Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel as its partner, the Freedom Party thus assumed government responsibility at the federal level for the second time in its history. Susanne Riess-Passer became FPÖ Vice-Chancellor and the FPÖ also received five additional cabinet minister posts and two junior minister ("state secretary") positions.

On 4 February 2000, the new federal government was sworn in. Throughout its early months, the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition was confronted with the sanctions imposed by the European Union. Notwithstanding the government's early successes, such as in respect of pension reform, or the introduction of child benefit, differences soon arose between the ÖVP and the FPÖ. In addition, there were discussions within the party

about the government's ideological orientation. On the one hand, many voters and party functionaries regarded the FPÖ government's direction under Riess-Passer – for example in European and social policy – as a break with the traditions of the Third Lager. On the other hand, Haider remained the dominant personality within the party, despite his resignation as Party Chairman and his replacement in that position by Susanne Riess-Passer. In the summer of 2002, the situation came to a head: the flood disaster in the country caused the black-blue government to postpone the scheduled tax reform. However, this was not accepted by Carinthian Governor Jörg Haider and elements within the party's grassroots. In their opinion, this decision placed a central FPÖ project in jeopardy.

At a meeting convened in Knittelfeld, Styria, party delegates approved the demand for an extraordinary party conference and did so very much against the wishes of FPÖ Vice-Chancellor, Susanne Riess-



Susanne Riess-Passer and Jörg Haider went their separate ways

Photo: picturedesk.com

Passer. In response to the Knittelfeld decision, she resigned, along with FPÖ Parliamentary Party Leader Peter Westenthaler and FPÖ Finance Minister Karl-Heinz Grasser. Wolfgang Schüssel promptly responded by terminating the coalition.

At the National Council elections of November 2002, the ÖVP was able to register 42.3 per cent of the vote, while the FPÖ achieved only 10.01 per cent. Nevertheless, the ÖVP renewed the black-blue coalition with Herbert Haupt as FPÖ Vice-Chancellor and with the Freedom Party government team almost halved.

There followed an intensification of disputes within the FPÖ, where many were fearful of being enveloped in the embrace of a rampant ÖVP. In addition, from 2004 onwards, the party leadership around Haider and Federal Party Leader Ursula Haubner witnessed the growth of an internal party rival, in the form of Heinz-Christian

Strache, the leader of the FPÖ's provincial branch in Vienna. The conflict between the national wing of the party and the federal party leadership finally came to a head at the beginning of 2005, having been exacerbated by electoral defeats in the federal provinces and by the party's collapse at the European Parliament elections of June 2004, when Andreas Mölzer, representing the anti-government wing of the FPÖ, won the party's only seat.

On 4 April, Jörg Haider and the whole FPÖ government team broke away from the FPÖ and founded the "Bündnis für die Zukunft Österreichs" ("Alliance for the Future of Austria", or BZÖ). The Freedom Party, whose leadership was temporarily assumed by the former chairman of the Vienna FPÖ, Hilmar Kabas, in his capacity as the longest-serving member of the Federal Party Executive, was thus faced with rebuilding the party from the ground up.

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In Susanne Riess-Passer, the FPÖ provided the first female Vice-Chancellor in the history of the Republic. Yet the governing coalition with the ÖVP lasted only three years.



Heinz-Christian Strache was appointed Chairman in 2005

## A new Beginning under HC Strache

### Political Orientation as a “Social Homeland Party”

On 4 April 2005, the FPÖ leadership left the party and founded the movement “Alliance for the Future of Austria” (BZÖ). The leading light of this movement was Jörg Haider. He was able to persuade the entire team of FPÖ cabinet and junior ministers then serving in the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition, as well as numerous members of the FPÖ parliamentary caucus, to join the BZÖ. Almost all political observers therefore viewed the Freedom Party’s future prospects as slim, and some commentators even predicted an end to the Third Lager as it had previously existed. For the FPÖ was now able to rely on only two National Council members who professed a clear commitment to the party’s line. In addition, there was Andreas Mölzer, who held a seat in the European Parliament. Moreover, the party was faced with a huge mountain of debt. Nevertheless, the party grassroots had by and large not opted to join the BZÖ. With the exception of Carinthia, the Freedom Par-

ty’s provincial branches had all remained with the FPÖ. Even in Upper Austria and Vorarlberg, it proved possible to persuade the provincial party organisations to remain in the Freedom Party family. On 23 April 2005, Heinz-Christian Strache was elected Federal Party Chairman of the FPÖ with 90.1 per cent of the vote of the delegates assembled in Salzburg for the FPÖ’s 27th Ordinary Federal Party Congress. The then 35-year-old leader of the Viennese provincial party had long been regarded as a promising future prospect for the FPÖ. The intention was for the FPÖ to make headway as an edgy opposition party, emphasising topical issues such as the preservation of Austria’s “Leitkultur” (core culture). The new Chairman was to be assisted by a seasoned team comprising two FPÖ Secretaries-General: Herbert Kickl and Harald Vilimsky. Marketing was optimised by creating the brand of “HC” and attaching that to the new leader, with a view to

thereby enabling the party to also reach younger members of the public. The first sign of life for the FPÖ with Heinz-Christian Strache at the helm came as soon as the Vienna state and municipal elections of 23 October 2005. The FPÖ achieved 14.83 per cent of the vote, which placed it third, behind the SPÖ and the ÖVP.

At the federal level, the party also consolidated its position. The first occasion at which Strache assumed the role of nationwide lead party candidate (“Spitzenkandidat”) was at the National Council election of 1 October 2006. The FPÖ achieved 11.04 per cent of the vote, while the BZÖ just managed to scrape into Parliament, on merely 4.11 per cent. The FPÖ had thus proven itself to be the more successful part of the Third Lager “divorce”. What was to follow was an almost identical repeat under Heinz-Christian Strache of the FPÖ’s earlier rise under Haider. At the National Council election of 28 September 2008, the party already scored 17.54 per cent of the vote. It is true that at this election, the BZÖ achieved more than 10 per cent and was thus able to overtake the Greens. Yet the unexpected death of Jörg Haider on 11 October 2008 put an abrupt end to speculation about cooperation between the FPÖ

and the BZÖ and ultimately sealed the political fate of the BZÖ. Overall, the FPÖ under Heinz-Christian Strache was characterised by a return to Freedom Party values. This was also reflected in the party’s programme. For example, in the new party programme, which was adopted in Graz in 2011, there was a renewed commitment to the German cultural community.

The Freedom Party gained considerable support among the Austrian population as a result of the mass influx of asylum seekers in the summer of 2015. According to many opinion polls, the FPÖ was the country’s strongest party. At the National Council election of 15 October 2017, it won almost 26 per cent of the vote and obtained 51 seats, which enabled it to close the gap to the ÖVP and SPÖ. The ÖVP’s election victory and the Freedom Party’s remarkable result led to the formation of a centre-right government made up of the ÖVP and FPÖ. Heinz-Christian Strache became Vice-Chancellor in this “turquoise-blue” ÖVP-FPÖ coalition led by ÖVP Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. The FPÖ had risen anew and, as in the year 2000, the culmination of its recovery was again crowned by entry into the federal government.

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Taken as a whole, the period of Heinz-Christian Strache’s leadership of the party can be characterised as a return to traditional FPÖ values.

## A Reform Coalition for Austria

### From Federal Presidential Elections of 2016 to the “Ibiza Affair” of 2019

Parallel to the rise of the FPÖ under Heinz-Christian Strache, there was an increasing loss of support among the population for the SPÖ-ÖVP grand coalitions, which had been in place since 2007. In addition, during the summer of 2015, the Europe-wide refugee crisis led to mass immigration and its consequences for the social system and security in the country. As a result, the Freedom Party's immigration-critical stance gained more support. This shift in political mood was confirmed at the federal presidential elections of 2016. Norbert Hofer – who had since 2013 served as Third President of the National Council – was the Freedom Party's candidate. He won the first round of the election and was in the final ballot narrowly defeated by Alexander Van der Bellen, who went on to become Federal President. Hofer managed to mobilise some 2.12 million voters.

The party's success continued at the National Council elections of October 2017,

when the FPÖ achieved around 25.97 per cent of the vote. Yet at over 31 per cent of the vote, the ÖVP – competing for the first time as the “New People's Party” and rebranded in turquoise – emerged as the party with the most votes. Thereupon, coalition negotiations took place between the ÖVP and the FPÖ, with agreement being reached on a joint government to be led by ÖVP Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. On 18 December 2017, Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen swore in the members of the cabinet of Kurz I, which comprised representatives of the ÖVP and FPÖ.

FPÖ Federal Party Chairman Heinz-Christian Strache became Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for the Civil Service and Sport. Five further cabinet ministers and one junior minister (state secretary) were also provided by the FPÖ. The newly-sworn-in Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs was Karin Kneissl, a



Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache and his Government Team

non-partisan who had been nominated by the FPÖ. The defence portfolio was taken on by Mario Kunasek, the Chairman of the Styrian branch of the FPÖ. Norbert Hofer, who had until then served as the Third President of the National Council, became Federal Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Technology. Beate Hartinger-Klein, a health manager, took on the leadership of the Health Ministry. Herbert Kickl became the first FPÖ Federal Minister of the Interior in the history of the Second Republic. Hubert Fuchs, who had until then been a member of the National Council, took on the role of State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance.

The Freedom Party's imprint was clearly visible on the cornerstones of the turquoise-blue government programme. The government was committed, for example, to adopting a new approach in respect of migration policy, to strengthening border protection, to reforming the system guaranteeing a minimum income and to merging the various social insurance institu-

tions. Tax reform was also being planned. Despite the government's positive opinion poll ratings, the coalition collapsed in May 2019, as a consequence of the fallout arising from the “Ibiza Affair”. The trigger was a compromising and apparently illegally-shot video that dated from 2017, which was published on 17 May 2019. The video depicted Heinz-Christian Strache in a private setting, on the Mediterranean island of Ibiza, as he – according to the allegations made – was engaged in negotiations with a purported female Russian investor about granting state contracts in exchange for party donations. In light of the affair, on 18 May 2019, Heinz-Christian Strache resigned as Vice-Chancellor and FPÖ Federal Party Chairman. In December 2019, he was expelled from the FPÖ. On 18 May 2019, ÖVP Chancellor Sebastian Kurz announced new elections, thereby terminating the turquoise-blue coalition. As early as 27 May 2019, however, the ÖVP-led interim government was itself removed from office by a National Council motion of no confidence that had been co-sponsored by the FPÖ.

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The cornerstones of the government programme were, among other things, support for indigenous Austrian families, the prevention of immigration into the Austrian social system, the fight against asylum abuse and the commitment to freedom, to responsibility and to our homeland.





In June 2021 Herbert Kickl was formally elected the new Federal Party Chairman

## The Freedom Party on a new Track

### The 2019 National Council Election and its Consequences for the FPÖ

The political aftershocks triggered by the "Ibiza Affair" and the resignation of FPÖ Chairman Heinz-Christian Strache marked a turning point in the history of the Third Lager. For the FPÖ, they meant above all a change of personnel at the top of the party, which had experienced fourteen years of leadership continuity. As early as 19 May 2019, Norbert Hofer was designated the new party leader and in September 2019, he was in Graz officially elected as the new FPÖ Federal Party Chairman.

Norbert Hofer - who had been Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Technology in the 2017-2019 ÖVP-FPÖ federal government - also stood as the FPÖ's lead candidate at the National Council election held in the autumn of 2019. The former FPÖ Minister of the Interior, Herbert Kickl, filled the second spot on the FPÖ's federal election candidate list. The aim of this "dual leadership" was both to appeal to different segments of the electorate and to campaign for a conti-

nuation of the turquoise-blue government coalition. Yet at the National Council election of 29 September 2019, the FPÖ obtained only 16.71 per cent of the vote, whilst the vote share of the ÖVP, led by the former Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, grew to over 37 per cent. Following a round of exploratory talks about forming a new government, the FPÖ emphasised that the Freedom Party's election result could not be interpreted as a mandate to govern. Moreover, the FPÖ stated that it wished to concentrate on its internal renewal. On 23 October 2019, the newly-elected National Council finally met for its constitutive session. This was also the occasion for a change in direction within the FPÖ. Herbert Kickl became the new Chair of the parliamentary party and Norbert Hofer was again re-elected by a clear majority to the position of Third President of the National Council.

In view of the Corona pandemic, which was rampant in Austria from March 2020, the FPÖ succeeded in resuming its role as an assertive opposition parliamentary party and in reestablishing its position in the opinion polls. Under the leadership

of Parliamentary Party Chairman Herbert Kickl, it opted for a hard line against the policies and measures which the turquoise-green federal government adopted to combat the Corona crisis. In light of growing numbers of asylum seekers, the FPÖ simultaneously called for a stricter approach to migration policy.

On 1 June 2021, having served as FPÖ Chairman for two years, Norbert Hofer announced his resignation from that position. In addition, he stated his intention to remain Third President of the National Council. On 7 June 2021, the Freedom Party Executive Committee designated FPÖ Parliamentary Party Chairman Herbert Kickl to be the new leader of the party. On 19 June 2021, at an Extraordinary Party Conference held in the Lower Austrian city of Wiener Neustadt, Kickl was formally elected the new Federal Party Chairman. He was elected to that position by the votes of 88.24 percent of conference delegates. The former General Secretary had advanced to the top of the FPÖ, where he signalled a sharpening of the party's policy profile, as well as a continuation of its success story.

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The new Federal Party Chairman Herbert Kickl stands for a sharpening of the party's policy profile, as well as a continuation of its success story.





Federal Party Chairman Herbert Kickl and the FPÖ Members of the National Council

## The FPÖ as the Strongest Party in Austria

### Record-Breaking Election Results

The European Parliament elections in June 2024 marked a significant shift in Austria's political landscape. For the first time in the history of the Second Republic, the FPÖ won the most votes of any political party in a nationwide election, attracting 25.4 percent of the vote and doubling the number of its MEPs.

The next watershed moment came in the National Council elections held a few months later in September 2024, when for the first time the FPÖ emerged as the strongest party in a National Council election. This was now the second time in a row that voters had put the Freedom Par-

ty in first place in a nationwide election. The Freedom Party under its lead candidate Herbert Kickl, who is also head of the party and chairman of its parliamentary grouping, secured victory with almost 29 percent of the vote (+13%), while the ÖVP came in second with 26 percent (-11%). The SPÖ fell to third place for the first time in a National Council election, drawing 21 percent of the vote (+/-0%). The Greens also posted losses, receiving 8 percent (-6%). The NEOS increased their share of the vote by 1 percent to take 9 percent and thus, fourth place. Voter turnout was 77.3 percent. Of the 4,929,745 votes cast, 1,408,514 went to the FPÖ. In Carinthia,

Styria, Upper Austria and Burgenland, the FPÖ came first in terms of votes cast in the 2024 National Council election, and second in the remaining federal states.

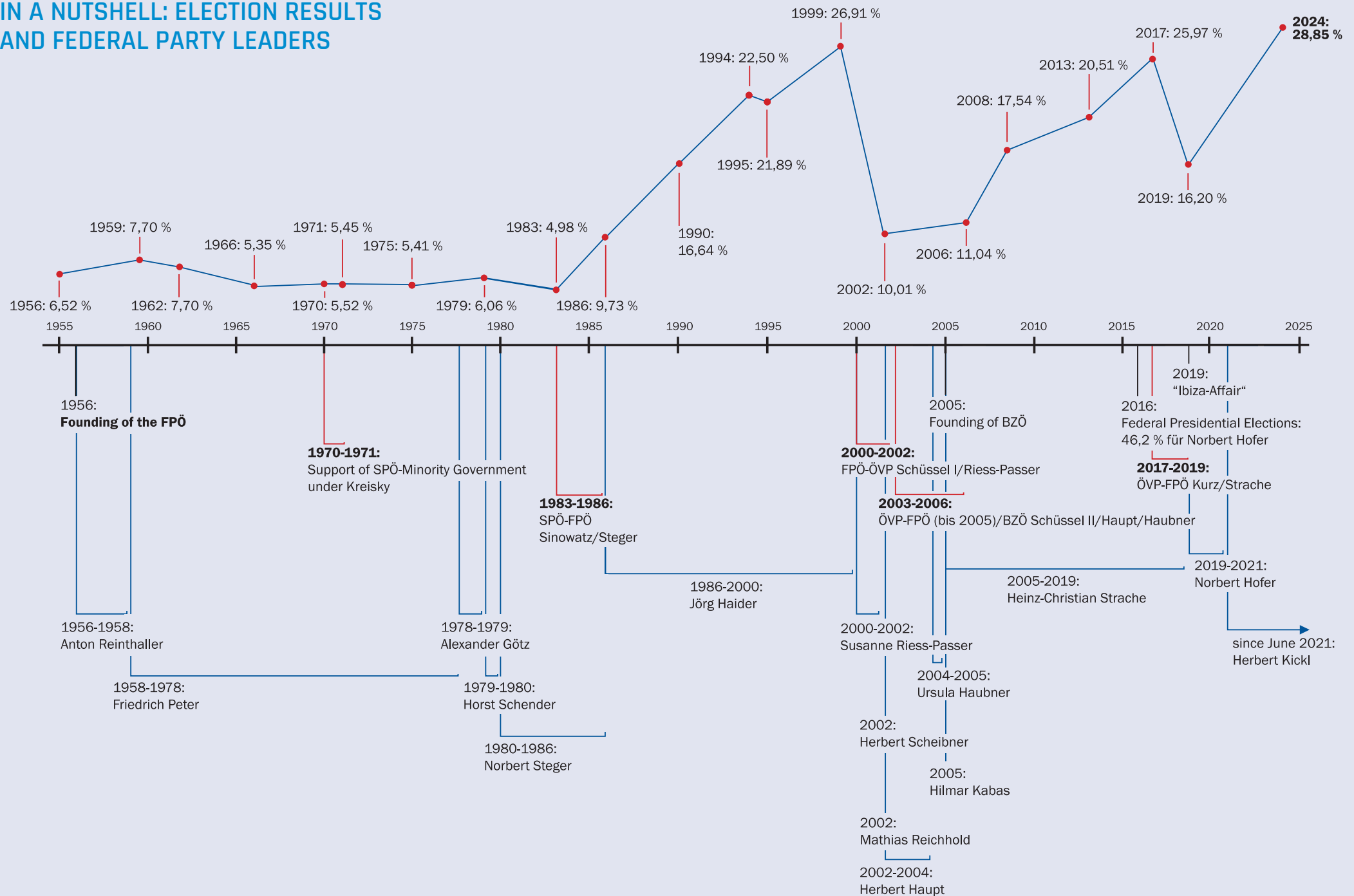
This election has resulted in significant changes to the composition of the National Council: the ÖVP parliamentary group has lost 20 representatives and slipped to 51 seats. Due to changes in electoral arithmetic, the SPÖ gained one mandate and has 41 seats. The Freedom Party

won 57 seats, adding 26 new members to its grouping in the National Council. The Greens lost ten seats and now have 16 seats in parliament, while the NEOS gained three seats and ended up with 18 seats. Although the FPÖ had finished first, Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen, in a departure from previous practice, gave the task of forming a government not to the party with the most votes, but to the then Chancellor and leader of the ÖVP, Karl Nehammer.

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For the first time in the Second Republic, the FPÖ emerged as the strongest party in a National Council election.

## IN A NUTSHELL: ELECTION RESULTS AND FEDERAL PARTY LEADERS



## List of Federal Party Chairmen and Chairwomen



Photo: NFZ / APA / picturedesk.com

**Anton Reinthaller**

07.04.1956–06.03.1958



Photo: HOPI-MEDIA Medienservice GmbH

**Friedrich Peter**

13.09.1958–30.09.1978



Photo: www.parlament.gv.at

**Alexander Götz**

30.09.1978–01.12.1979



Photo: www.fbi-politikschule.at

**Horst Schender (acting)**

01.12.1979–02.03.1980



Photo: ÖNB-Bildarchiv / picturedesk.com

**Norbert Steger**

02.03.1980–14.09.1986



**Jörg Haider**

14.09.1986–01.05.2000



Photo: HOPI-MEDIA Medienservice GmbH

**Susanne Riess-Passer**

01.05.2000–08.09.2002



Photo: Parlamentsdirektion / WILKE

**Herbert Scheibner (acting)**

08.09.2002–21.09.2002



Photo: HOPI-MEDIA Medienservice GmbH

**Mathias Reichhold**

21.09.2002–31.10.2002



Photo: HOPI-MEDIA Medienservice GmbH

**Herbert Haupt**

08.12.2002–3.07.2004 <sup>1)</sup>



Photo: Parlamentsdirektion / WILKE

**Ursula Haubner**

03.07.2004–04.04.2005



Photo: www.fbi-politikschule.at

**Hilmar Kabas (acting)**

04.04.2005–23.04.2005



**Heinz-Christian Strache**

23.04.2005–18.05.2019



**Norbert Hofer**

14.09.2019–01.06.2021 <sup>2)</sup>



**Harald Stefan (acting)**

01.06.2021–19.06.2021



**Herbert Kickl**

since 19.06.2021

<sup>1)</sup> acting: 31.10.2002–08.12.2002

<sup>2)</sup> acting: 18.05.2019–14.09.2019



## Party Programme of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)

As resolved by the Party Conference of the Freedom Party of Austria on 18 June 2011 in Graz

### Austria First

The freedom, security, peace and welfare of Austria and its people are the guidelines and the benchmarks for our actions as a social, performance-oriented and patriotic Austrian political force.

Our roots in a rich history and in our traditions are inextricably linked with the responsibility that this creates to play an active role in shaping the future for the coming generations.

We are committed to our homeland of Austria as part of the German-speaking linguistic and cultural community, to the groups of people native to our country and to a Europe of free peoples and fatherlands.

We are committed to freedom and responsibility of the individual and the community, to democracy, to liberty and the rule of law, as well as to the principles of the market economy and social justice.

We are committed to Austria's right to self-determination and to preserving and protecting our view of mankind and society that has matured in our traditions and in our history.



## Liberal policy guidelines

1. Freedom is our highest good. Since the civil revolution of 1848 we have dedicated ourselves to the struggle for freedom, and to defend it wherever what has been achieved is threatened again.
2. We are committed to protecting our homeland of Austria, our national identity and autonomy as well as our natural livelihood.
3. The freedom of citizens is ensured and protected by means of liberty and the rule of law, as well as by a genuine community of solidarity.
4. The family, as a partnership between a man and a woman with common children, is the natural nucleus that holds a functioning society together, and which, in combination with generational solidarity, underpins our sustainability.
5. We support performance in a market economy with social responsibility, defend private property and stand for an equitable distribution of contributions and benefits for all.
6. The purpose of public health care is to provide citizens with the best possible preventive, medical and nursing care.
7. Austria must do all in its power to protect its national territory, maintain its neutrality and provide its citizens with protection and assistance whenever threats arise.
8. To develop and evolve, a society requires comprehensive education, academic freedom and independent art and culture.
9. Austria's role in the world must be shaped by humanitarian responsibility, self-awareness and the preservation of Austrian interests.
10. An association of free peoples and self-determined fatherlands is the basis of our European policy and international contacts.

## 1) Freedom and responsibility

Freedom is our highest good. Since the civil revolution of 1848 we have dedicated ourselves to the struggle for freedom, and to defend it wherever what has been achieved is threatened again.

The dignity of man is rooted in freedom. Freedom in the form of self-determination goes hand-in-hand with the willingness to assume responsibility, and rules out all forms of repression. Freedom and responsibility constitute the core of personal development and our community.

Our concept of freedom is rooted in an idealistic world view and does not regard people as defined merely by their material

needs. The freedom of the individual is limited by the freedom of fellow citizens.

Freedom, human dignity and democratic solidarity are the foundations of FPÖ ethos and of our positions in respect of the following topics:

- Homeland, identity and environment
- Law and justice
- Family and generations
- Prosperity and social balance
- Health
- Security
- Education, science, art and culture
- Openness to the world and autonomy
- Europe of diversity

## 2) Homeland, identity and environment

We are committed to protecting our homeland of Austria, our national identity and autonomy as well as our natural livelihood.

We are committed to the right of self-determination of peoples, to the independence and autonomy of our homeland Austria and to the solidarity of all Austrian citizens.

We are aware of our attachment to our forefathers and our responsibility to our descendants, and want to preserve a homeland for future generations that fa-

cilitates autonomous living in an intact environment and positive development in freedom, peace and security.

The language, history and culture of Austria are German. The vast majority of Austrians are part of the German peoples' linguistic and cultural community. Our indigenous ethnic groups of the Burgenland Croats, Slovenians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks and the Roma are historically-resident minorities and as such both enrich and are an integral part of Austria and our nation state.

Humanity dictates that political asylum should be granted in our homeland for those persecuted for racist, religious or political reasons, provided there is a need for such protection. Those entering Austria from a safe third country should apply for asylum there.

Austria is not a country of immigration. This is why we pursue a birth-oriented family policy. Immigrants who are already integrated, are of good standing and legally present, who speak the German language, fully acknowledge our values and laws and who have set down cultural roots, should be given the right to stay and obtain our citizenship.

Austria is part of the cultural region of Europe. The roots of European culture stretch back to Ancient Times. Europe was decisively shaped by Christianity, influenced by Judaism and other non-Christian religious communities, and underwent a fundamental further development through humanism and the Enlightenment. We acknowledge the basic values that resulted from this and to a European world view, which we describe, in a broad sense, as cultural Christianity, and which is based on the separation of church and state.

We are prepared to put up a resolute defence of these European values and our basic liberal-democratic order against fanaticism and extremism, and to take action to maintain and develop our core culture and our way of life in peace and in freedom.

The privileged status of a public law corporation shall be reserved for religious communities who acknowledge the separation of church and state as an achievement of our enlightened society and adhere to our Constitution and laws. The freedom to practise religion in Austria also presupposes the freedom – protected by our rule of law – to be able to escape religious dogmas.

Protecting our natural environment as the underpinning of our existence in our homeland of Austria, sustainable and careful resource management along with biological diversity are extremely important for us. We reject the use of nuclear power to generate energy.

Animals, as our fellow creatures, shall be protected from distress and suffering by treating them with respect and in harmony with nature.





### 3) Law and justice

The freedom of citizens is ensured and protected by means of liberty and the rule of law, as well as by a genuine community of solidarity.

We are committed to a social state governed by the rule of law, where our coexistence is shaped by law and order, as well as by social responsibility.

We are committed to the constitutional principles of democracy, the rule of law, republicanism, separation of powers and federalism; to respect for life and human dignity, as well as to liberal freedoms such as those of assembly and of the press.

We are committed to expanding direct democracy, to a proportional electoral system based on free, secret, equal and individual voting, as well as to media laws that prevent monopolies and the manipulation of public opinion.

Our state is a community of citizens that have particular rights and obligations.

### 4) Family and generations

The family, as a partnership between a man and a woman with common children, is the natural nucleus that holds a functioning society together, and which, in combination with generational solidarity, underpins our sustainability. We are com-

The rights of our citizens include the right to vote, the right to adequate education and the right to help from the community when in need. The duties include solidarity with fellow countrymen, the payment of contributions to maintain state functions, and personal engagement to maintain internal and external security, as well as the fabric of society. The entering into and fulfilment of international obligations may not be to the detriment of the Austrian population.

Our social policy is aimed at protecting against existential hardship that can arise due to age, disability, illness, accident, unemployment, or through severe misfortune. Social housing is designed primarily to serve the housing needs of Austrian citizens. We are committed to a humanistic society in which solidarity is practised efficiently and fairly, and to the sustainable financing of the social fabric. This requires effective measures to combat social welfare abuse and the encouragement of performance.

mitted to equal opportunity for men and women, to mutual respect and to fair incomes, regardless of sex.

We emphatically reject the preferential treatment of one sex to overcome actual

or perceived discrimination. Statistical inequalities can be attributed to a variety of factors and cannot be compensated by injustice to individual people. This is why we speak out against any quota regulation or „gender mainstreaming“.

The family, characterised by the responsibility of partners and generations for one another, is the foundation of our society. A child turns a life partnership between a man and a woman into a family. Those who take on the responsibility of being a single parent form a family with their children.

We are committed to the primacy of marriage between a man and a woman as a distinct way of protecting child welfare. Only partnerships between men and women provide our society with an abundance of children. We reject a separate legal institution for same-sex partnerships.

We believe that if the state intervenes in family autonomy pursuant to its mandate to protect, it should only do so where failure of the family concerned leads to a clear impairment of the best interests of the child. If parents separate, continuation of joint responsibility for the child must be a priority.

In the tax system, families are to be construed as an economic community. The pension system must take account of time spent caring for children, as well as the provision of care support for relatives. Taking care of children within the security

of a family takes precedence for us over substitute state-run systems. Parents should receive benefits to support them with this until their children are of school age. At the same time, we advocate the provision of a broad range of childcare places so as to ensure genuine choice in the interests of promoting child welfare and professional development.

No leniency should be shown to brute force, especially against children. We are committed to the most severe penal provisions for crimes committed against children and vulnerable members of our society.

Austria's future depends on our young people. The goal of FPÖ youth policy is to have enlightened and mature citizens, equipped with all the knowledge and skills they require to hold their own as free individuals of steadfast character.

We are committed to solidarity between the generations and recognise the social, cultural, economic and political contributions as well as the life experience of older generations. We advocate the participation of all generations in decision-making processes and the formation of the democratic will.

We are committed to a harmonised, performance-based and social state pension system, as well as to occupational and private pension planning. We are determined to respect the dignity of the elderly and combat all forms of neglect, abuse and violence.

## 5) Prosperity and social stability

We support performance in a market economy with social responsibility, defend private property and stand for an equitable distribution of contributions and benefits for all.

We are committed to a market economy with social responsibility, promote performance orientation and facilitate growth for small and medium-sized businesses.

Honest performance must be rewarded. Fair wages and equitable corporate taxation should encourage our citizens' aspiration to deliver performance, and should facilitate ownership and prosperity.

We are committed, on the basis of an equal opportunities approach, to all Austrians enjoying the best living conditions, in freedom and in a social homeland. Austria's prosperity was hard-earned over generations and must be preserved for the future. It must be used predominantly for those people and their descendants who worked to achieve it. We are committed to an economic policy oriented towards the concrete challenges of the time, free of ideological reservations, and to a national budget balanced over the economic cycle.

Low taxes and performance incentives are crucial for a successful economy and a healthy labour market. These shall take precedence over subsidies and redistribution. Young Austrian entrepreneurs

should be provided start-up support and tax breaks. We are committed to a performance-based and socially balanced tax system and the equivalence of labour income and capital income as the basis for broad prosperity and social justice. Corporate taxation should encourage investment in the company and job creation.

The goal of FPÖ budget policy is to relieve the burden on citizens. The level of employee and employer taxation and charges is to be limited to the minimum necessary, through effective administration and the frugal, economic and expedient use of public funds.

Our economic policy recognises the strengths of industry's technology and export orientation, the innovative strength of small and medium-sized enterprises and their achievements in employment and in dual training, as well as the individual service orientation and the earning potential of our micro and small enterprises.

We pursue a comprehensive overall infrastructure strategy that does justice to the significance of information and communication technologies, co-ordinates the services of the individual modes of transport and ensures people's freedom of individual mobility. A healthy and efficient farming community is essential for security of supply and the protection of our natural livelihood in a high-quality natural and cul-

tural landscape. Austria's farmers should be free of subsidy constraints and the interests of monopoly-oriented agricultural

corporations. Agricultural services must therefore be compensated through fair product prices.

## 6) Health

The purpose of public health care is to provide citizens with the best possible preventive and medical care.

People's right to life, their health and their dignity are not amenable to utilitarian considerations. Therefore, a person's existence may never be called into question by economic considerations, nor may they be deprived of their dignity by the misuse of medicines and gene technology, or by neglect in relation to illness or disability.

We are committed to the political goal of not promoting multi-class medical care in the public health care system. The public health care system must rule out privileges based on social origin or religious orientation.

The protection of life as well as maintaining and restoring mental and physical health are our objectives for the public health care system. Alongside treatment and aftercare, we attach great importance to prevention.

Health care administration and organisation must be based on the principles of frugality, economic efficiency and expenditure, so that the people benefit from

health-care spending. We are committed to a financing structure for health care that avoids high non-wage labour costs as far as possible, and ensures a broad contribution base. Health care and nursing care should be financed from the same source. People working in health professions should in Austria receive the best training possible, and be able to carry out their responsible tasks with fair remuneration and sufficient rest.

Health care is based above all on individual responsibility. This is why we advocate for a clear labelling of all ingredients in foodstuffs, combat substance abuse, and are committed to ensuring agriculture is in harmony with nature and is free of genetically manipulated organisms. Sport and exercise, especially in our nurseries and schools, should be actively supported by relevant policies. Nutrition education should be included in the curricula of compulsory schools. The medical care of children and young people is of the highest priority for us.

For citizens from abroad, access to the services of the Austrian health care system must be ensured by means of an independent social insurance system.

## 7) Security

Austria must do all in its power to protect its national territory, maintain its neutrality and provide its citizens with protection and assistance whenever threats arise.

Law and order are fundamental values of FPÖ ethos and promote the security of our citizens.

We view security as a basic need and as a basic prerequisite for positive human development. Safeguarding our security requires the ability to defend ourselves. We are therefore committed to the best possible training and equipment of our police force and armed forces.

When combating organised crime, gangs, human trafficking, drug trafficking, terrorism, violence and other types of crime, the state has to be decisive in employing the instruments available to it.

We categorically reject the death penalty.

In our penal system, the highest priority attaches to the protection of our society and to protecting and assisting the victims of crime. This must be taken into account when integrating offenders back into society. Victims should be the primary beneficiaries of fines. In a humane society, there must be a distinct difference between sentences for violent crimes and

sentences for crimes against property.

Foreigners convicted of a crime in Austria must be deported to their homeland.

We are committed to comprehensive national defence and to general compulsory service for all male citizens in the form of military service, or alternative national service as a personal contribution to the security and independence of Austria and to social peace. For female citizens, there should be an opportunity to take up voluntary military service, alternative national service, or social service.

Protecting our homeland and defending our country take precedence over deployments of the army abroad. The deployment of Austrian soldiers abroad should be completely voluntary, and only take place for disaster relief, for humanitarian missions, or for peacekeeping and take place under a UN mandate.

Austria is an autonomous and peace-making country, and must therefore not be a member of a military pact. Decisions about the deployment of our army and our soldiers are made by Austria alone, as a sovereign and neutral state, aware of its responsibility for the security and freedom of its citizens.



## 8) Education, science, art and culture

To develop and evolve, a society requires comprehensive education, academic freedom and independent art and culture.

For human beings to be able to develop fully in society, they need intellectual education, the best possible training and further education, a guarantee of freedom in teaching and learning, as well as equal social opportunities. To this end, scientific research and teaching, the development and opening up of the arts as well as the teaching of the arts must be free.

The main tasks of state school and education policy are teaching the cultural techniques of reading, writing and arithmetic; the comprehensive acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills; the promotion of individual talents and gifts; the best possible education in preparation for work, as well as the transmission of the values and traditions of our community. The school and education system must take account of the diversity of people's intellectual abilities and interests, reflect this diversity and abstain from any ideological tutelage.

Proficiency in German, the language of instruction, is a prerequisite for participating in regular education at public schools in Austria.

We are committed to the free development of science within the framework of

the common good. Science is based on the unity of research and teaching and it serves only to establish the truth; it requires neither extraneous curtailment nor to be oriented to, or constrained by allegedly popular pedagogy. The state must refrain from making ideological interventions into the autonomy of the sciences.

Targeted research and development work are pillars for the positive future of our homeland. Basic research is just as important as applied research. Research and teaching may not be subordinate or of secondary importance to economic interests. We are committed to the ethical boundaries of research, which may not be overstepped.

Art and culture in all their manifestations contribute significantly to shaping our society's identity. Culture, as the totality of all forms of human expression, finds its highest creative expression in art.

In our society, art is only limited by the legal system and by the humanist image of man and society on which our Constitution is based. Artistic freedom requires the freedom of the citizen to criticise and critically engage with art.

Our western culture is rich and diverse. It unites the cultural nations of Europe. In this context, the preservation of our cultural heritage is of great importance to us.

It is important that, proceeding from the high level achieved, we enable the free further development of our own culture and protect our mother tongue, as the most important culture-forming element.

The main task of cultural policy is to promote the further development of the cultural wealth of our society. In this respect, politics should only create the framework

conditions to guarantee the freedom and diversity of art, as this diversity evolves through individual artistic achievement. Art must never be instrumentalised by the state; it is an end in itself. Only in this way can art remain a school of imagination and self-awareness.



## 9) Cosmopolitanism and independence

Austria's role in the world must be shaped by humanitarian responsibility, self-awareness and the preservation of Austrian interests.

Sovereignty and freedom of our homeland enable us to open up to the world. Our foreign policy must be driven by humanitarian responsibility, self-awareness and preserving the security as well as the economic and cultural interests of Austria and its citizens throughout the world.

This means we are committed to a foreign policy that focuses on securing the sovereignty of Austria and the objective of protecting the freedom of its citizens. Any foreign policy, bilateral or multilateral activity in Austrian politics must take these common Austrian interests into account. We are committed to Austria's peace-promoting neutrality and to European solidarity. We want to contribute to ensuring peace in the world, in keeping

with a tradition of mediation and conciliation.

In addition to autonomy and freedom, the love for our homeland and the people in our country, the cultivation of our traditions, our identity and our culture are the foundation for our openness to the world. Those who value their own culture and origins can sincerely respect other cultures, or fend them off if necessary, should they manifest an aggressive character that threatens to displace our own culture.

The basic principle of Austrian development aid is help for self-help. It promotes freedom and responsibility and is a response to crisis situations and refugee flows.

Austria is the advocate of the German and Ladin South Tyroleans and represents the interests of all German-speaking Old

Austrians from the territories of the former Habsburg monarchy. We strive for the unity of Tyrol and are committed to

South-Tyrol's right to self-determination and to supporting the associations of expellees.

## 10) Europe of diversity

**An association of free peoples and self-determined fatherlands is the basis of our European policy and international contacts.**

We are committed to a Europe of historically-evolved peoples and autochthonous groups of people, and firmly reject any artificial assimilation of the diverse European languages and cultures by means of forced multiculturalism, globalisation and mass immigration. Europe is not to be reduced to the political project of the European Union. We are committed to a Europe of self-determined peoples and fatherlands and to European cooperation according to the principles of subsidiarity and federalism. The destiny of Europe must be shaped by the free decision-making capacity of its states.

The goal of European integration is the community of those states that geographically, spiritually and culturally constitute Europe and which are committed to Western values, the heritage of cultures and the traditions of the European peoples.

We advocate a Europe that facilitates genuine democracy and respects responsible, free citizens. Fundamental changes to the Federal Constitution via treaties, such as in European law for example,

require a binding referendum.

We are committed to a European treaty with a catalogue of rights and duties for the Union and Member States. The basic constitutional principles of sovereign Member States must have absolute priority over Community law.

The Beneš decrees and AVNOJ regulations, which infringe human rights, coupled with all the related amnesty laws, cannot be accepted in a humanist Europe and should be revoked in the interests of justice for those displaced, murdered and dispossessed. We are committed to a common foreign and security policy of such a European confederation of states, while preserving Austrian neutrality and clearly distinguishing ourselves from non-European powers and non-European-dominated military alliances, in order to safeguard common European interests worldwide.







**FPÖ** DIE SOZIALE  
HEIMATPARTEI

**THE FREEDOM WE MEAN!**





Gesellschaft für Politik, Kultur & Meinungsfreiheit

**Political Academy of the Freedom Party of Austria**  
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