

## AUSTRIA

**Date of Elections:** October 10, 1971

### **Reason for Elections**

Elections were held to renew all the members of the National Council, 2\*4 years before such elections were due. This body, elected on March 1, 1970, for 4 years, in fact dissolved itself only 16 months later — on July 14, 1971.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The federal Parliament of Austria is bicameral. It is composed of the National Council (*Nationalrat*), whose members represent the whole nation, and the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), whose members represent the provinces comprising the federation.

The National Council consists of 183 members (increased from 165 in the previous legislature) following the reform of November 27, 1970. These are elected for 4 years.

The Federal Council consists of 58 members elected by provincial legislatures (*Lander*). The number of representatives from each *Land* (at least 3) depends on its population (the most populated has 12 representatives); a quota is arrived at by dividing the population by 12. The term of office of these members is determined by each *Land*.

### **Electoral System**

All Austrian citizens of either sex are entitled to vote, provided they are at least 19 years old on January 1 of the election year. They must also be registered on the electoral Usts, which are revised constantly. Voting is compulsory in certain federated provinces, such as Tyrol and Vorarlberg.

All voters at least 25 years old on January 1 of the election year are eligible as candidates to the National Council. There is incompatibility of office, however, between parliamentarian and member of a provincial legislature or judge of the supreme courts.

Candidatures must be presented at the main voting office of the particular constituency at least 30 days before the scheduled election. They must be signed either by a minimum of 3 outgoing members of the National Council, or, based on the population of the constituency, by anywhere from 200 to 500 electors. The number of candidates put forward by each party cannot be more than twice the number of seats to be filled.

Members of the National Council represent 9 different federal provinces; each province (*Land*) comprises an electoral constituency. By dividing 183 into the total population of the country, the number of seats allotted to each province is fixed. This number, carried to 3 decimals, is the quotient for the number of seats to be allotted to each constituency; each of them obtains as many seats as the quotient is divisible by its population. The rest of the seats are distributed by the system of greatest remainder. Election is by party-list system with proportional representation according to the Hagenbach-Bischoff method, the electoral quotient being established by dividing the number of valid votes in each constituency by the number of seats to be filled, plus one. A second distribution, at the national level, is then carried out on the basis of the remaining votes and according to the d'Hondt method.

Substitutes elected at the same time as titular members fill vacancies occurring in the *Nationalrat* or *Bundesrat* between general elections.

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

The election campaign opened on September 1, 1971. The People's Party (OVP) provided the strongest opposition for the Socialist Party (SPO), which, with the support but without the active participation of the Freedom Party (FPO), had formed a minority Government subsequent to the preceding elections. Since 1965, in fact, the Socialist Party and the People's Party have together been the foremost political organizations in Austria.

The Socialists, led by the outgoing Chancellor, Mr. Bruno Kreisky, strove for an absolute majority of seats in the National Council. They had barely missed doing so in the last elections, when they won 79 seats in the then 165-member chamber. As a consequence, they formed an alliance with 6 members of the Freedom Party, which, though it stopped supporting the Socialist Government in July 1971, nevertheless aided it in dissolving Parliament.

All the parties presented candidates separately. The electorate could thus choose from among a large progressive organization (SPO), a large conservative force (OVP), and various smaller groups — the right-center (FPO), the Communist Party (KPO), and the *Offensiv Links* (dissident Communists). The Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP), both of whose candidates were blanked in 1970, did not participate this time.

The main campaign themes, for all parties, dealt with domestic issues — inflation, the rise in the cost of living, military service reforms, and the question of nationalization. The Socialist Party, stressing the Government's achievements marking its 18 months' duration, publicized itself as a great reformist and socialist movement and, in this regard, proposed the building of a modern Austria. The People's Party, lacking momentum since the elections of 1970, advocated a very similar program, promising above all to reduce the income

tax. The Freedom Party, assuming a " pan-European " stance and favoring free enterprise, was hopeful that the electoral reforms, which were effected despite the opposition of the People's Party and which, in fact, were more beneficial to the smaller splinter groups, would help them in getting enough seats to enable their participation in the future Government. The Communists also counted on these reforms, but their internal division — orthodox versus dissident (the Vienna-based *OffensivLinks*) groups—proved an insurmountable handicap.

The Socialists — as they hoped — indeed won an absolute majority in the National Council, taking 93 of 183 seats. Mr. Kreisky, once again Chancellor, formed a new Socialist Government on October 21, 1971.

## Statistics

### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Nationalrat

Number of registered voters. . . . .	4,984,448
Voters. . . . .	4,607,616 (92.4 %)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	50,626
Valid votes. . . . .	4,556,990

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats in the <i>Nationalrat</i>
Socialist Party (SPO). . . . .	2,280,168	50	93 (+ 12)
People's Party (ÖVP). . . . .	1,964,713	43	80 (+2)
Freedom Party (FPÖ). . . . .	248,473	6	10 (+4)
Communist Party (KPO). . . . .	61,762	1	
<i>Offensiv Links</i> . . . . .	1,874		—
			183

### 2. Distribution of Members of the Nationalrat according to Professional Category

Salaried clerks. . . . .	126
Farmers. . . . .	22
Managers. . . . .	18
Professionals. . . . .	13
Journalists. . . . .	3
Housewife. . . . .	1

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3. *Distribution of Members of the Nationalrat according to Sex*

	172
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	183

4. *Average Age: 49.6 years*