

AUSTRIA

Date of Elections: 23 November 1986

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the National Council following premature dissolution of this body. The Council's term would normally have expired in May 1987; previous general elections had been held on 24 April 1983.

Characteristics of Parliament

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

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

Electoral System

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

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

All qualified electors at least 21 years old may be candidates for the National Council. Candidates for the Federal Council must reside in the *Land* which delegates them and must be eligible for, but not necessarily members of, their provincial legislature.

Members of the Constitutional Court and the Administrative Court, the President and Vice-President of the Audit Office, the (three) Parliamentary Commissioners (Ombudsmen or "Volksanwälte") and executives of joint stock companies, banking, commerce, transport and industrial private limited companies, provincial credit institutes and mutual insurance companies are among those persons who cannot simultaneously be members of Parliament.

Candidates for the National Council are nominated by political parties and must be supported either by three outgoing members of the National Council or, depending on the population of the constituency, by anywhere from 200 to 500 electors. For each constituency in which it proposes a candidate a party must pay a deposit equivalent to approximately US\$ 430 to the Federal Government; this sum is to meet the expenses of printing the ballot papers and is not refundable. The number of candidates put forward by each party cannot be more than twice the number of seats to be filled.

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

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

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

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

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The *Nationalrat* was prematurely dissolved on 23 September 1986 after Chancellor Franz Vranitzky (Socialist Party - SPÖ) ended the coalition with the small, rightist Freedom, or Liberal, Party (FPÖ) that had ruled the country since 1983. Mr. Vranitzky, who had become Chancellor in June 1986 as successor to Mr. Fred Sinowatz, deemed the FPÖ as taking an unacceptable shift to the right with its election as leader of Mr. Jorg Haider.

The election campaign was dominated by domestic issues and centered as much on personalities as party programmes. The primary opposition People's Party (ÖVP), headed by Mr. Alois Mock, criticized the budgetary deficit and unemployment rate under the outgoing Government and advocated a free enterprise economy. The Socialists favoured austerity in budgetary matters, tax reform and privatization of state-owned industries.

On polling day, both major parties lost ground to the FPÖ and environmentalist Greens but the SPÖ remained the largest single party. The results meant that a fourth party was represented in Parliament for the first time since 1959. FPÖ's strong showing was attributed in large part to the personal charisma of Mr. Haider.

On 14 January 1987, after weeks of protracted negotiations, the SPÖ and conservative ÖVP agreed to form a "grand coalition" Government as they had from 1945 to 1966; the new Cabinet was sworn in on 21 January.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	5,461,291	
Voters.	4,940,298	(90.46%)
Blank or void ballot papers.88,110	
Valid votes.	4,852,188	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Socialist Party (SPO)	183	2,092,024	43.12	80	90	90
People's Party (6VP)	183	2,003,663	41.30	77	XI	XI
Freedom Party (FPÖ)	IX?	472,205	9.73	IX	12	12
The "Greens"	183	234,028	4.82	8	—	—
Communist Party (KPO)	183	35,104	0.72	—	—	—
Others.		15,164	0.31			
				783	183	183

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

Public civil service.60
Employees of social security institutions, trade unions, political parties.41
Industry & trade.27
Farming & forestry.20
Professionals.17
Commerce & traffic.16
Household.2
	183

Distribution of Members of the National Council
according to Sex

Men	162
Women	
	183

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

Under 30 years.	2
31-40 years.	20
41-50 »	68
51-60 »	74
60 years and above.	19
	183