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**Eurosceptic When it Comes to Helping Others: Austria’s FPÖ**

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In the campaign for the September 2013 legislative elections, Austria’s Eurosceptic Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) softened its voice, replaced its anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric with a “pro-Austrian” discourse, and made limited use of Eurosceptic topics. The party received 20.5% of the vote and won 40 seats out of 183 in Austria’s National Council. This makes it the third most popular party in the country after the Social Democrats (26.82%) and the Christian Conservatives (25.98%). The FPÖ also holds two seats in the European Parliament.

A 2009 AUTNES survey shows that 87% of FPÖ’s voters are Catholic, 99% are born in Austria, only 4% have completed a university degree, 64% have white-collar jobs, 39% make less than €1950 per month, and 66% are aged 40 or younger.

FPÖ’s current president is Heinz-Christian Strache, a former dental technician who joined politics in 1991. Strache is a disciple of Jörg Haider, the long-time party head who led FPÖ to 26.9% at the 1999 legislative elections and got them into the subsequent government coalition. For vote maximization, Strache replaced slogans such as *Wien darf nicht Istanbul werden* (Vienna should not become Istanbul), *Zu viel Fremdes tut niemandem gut* (Too many foreigners benefit nobody), and *Wiener Blut* (Viennese blood) from the 2005 and 2010 campaigns with more subtle *Liebe deine Nächsten. Für mich sind das unsere ÖSTERREICHER* (Love your neighbors. For me, these are our AUSTRIANS). Still, some party members use Nazi symbolism “opportunistically.” Legalizing Nazi symbols used to be on the party’s agenda. Strache issued a declaration while visiting Jerusalem in 2010 recognizing Israel’s right to exist, distancing FPÖ from its anti-Semitic past.
FPÖ Agenda

Veiled anti-Muslim points on FPÖ's agenda include: “Preserve Austria's European cultural heritage as shaped by Christianity, influenced by Judaism, Humanism and Enlightenment; defend European values and basic liberal-democratic order against fanaticism and extremism; protect ‘our’ native language;” “Protect the separation of church and state, freedom to practice religion, and freedom not to be exposed to religious doctrines” (Muslim prayers).

Blending anti-immigration with economic prosperity, FPÖ includes such points as, “Use the prosperity that Austria ‘achieved industriously over generations’ for those people and their descendants who worked to achieve it,” or another one, a common point in the agenda of European right-wing parties: “Prioritize social housing for locals (Australians).”

Welfare tourism or job outsourcing to Eastern Europeans willing to work for less is yet another favorite topic: “Austria is not a welfare service or job center for eastern European countries,” said Strache, quoted by Reuters. Other critical points include:

- Reject artificial synthesis of diverse European languages and cultures by means of “forced multiculturalism,” globalization, and mass immigration
- Promote a market economy with social responsibility and equitable distribution of contributions and benefits; focus on “honest performance” with fair wages, reasonable corporate taxation, and strong work ethic
- Give precedence to low taxes and performance incentives over subsidies and redistribution
- Free farmers from subsidy constraints and the interests of monopolizing agriculture corporations; compensate agricultural output with fair product prices
- Ban genetically modified foods, label all ingredients in food products
- Reject gay marriage, define family as a partnership between a man and a woman
- Reject the death penalty; deport foreign criminals
- Reject army deployment abroad except for disaster relief, humanitarian missions, and UN mandated peacekeeping missions
- Support South Tyrol's right to self-determination

Sympathies and Alliances

Strache vowed to “Fight Alongside Serbs” and supports the Serbian Progressive Party (former Serbian Radical Party).
as well as Putin’s United Russia Party. In November 2013, Strache announced an alliance with six other European far right parties (France’s Front National, Italy’s Lega Nord, the Sweden Democrats, Belgium’s Vlaams Belang, and the Slovak National Party) ahead of the May 2014 elections for the European Parliament.

In Austria, FPÖ is challenged by Team Stronach, a Eurosceptic party with a similar agenda minus the anti-immigration topics, which received 5.73% of the vote at the September elections. Led by businessman Frank Stronach, the party supports Austria leaving the Euro currency and cutting bureaucracy. A third Eurosceptic party, Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ) only received 3.5% of the votes, losing all 28 seats it previously held in the National Council. BZÖ is Jorg Haider’s wing that split from the FPÖ in 2005. Added up, the three Eurosceptic parties in Austria (FPÖ, Team Stronach, and BZÖ) received 29.7% of the vote in the 2013 elections.

EuroPoint: The FPÖ is primarily an anti-immigration, nationalist party that uses Euroscepticism for an opportunistic anti-establishment discourse. Opposition to EU membership for Muslim countries (such as Turkey and Kosovo) and the free movement of labor from Eastern countries are its defining features.