

Prof. Dr. Werner Zögernitz
President
Vienna, 02/03/2016

Institute
for Parliamentarism
and Democracy Questions 
www.parlamentarismus.at
info@parlamentarismus.at

The Strengths of the Six Parliamentary Groups and Their Development over the XXVth Legislative Term

1. General Remarks

Under § 7 of the National Council Rules of Procedure Act (GOG-NR), Members have the right to form a – single – parliamentary group at the beginning of each legislative term, but not later than one month after the first meeting of the National Council.

Whereas, for democratic legitimacy reasons, the forming of a group is to be possible only at the beginning of a legislative term, the principle of the free exercise of the mandate allows Members at any time to join an existing parliamentary group, leave such a group or – subject to the consent of the admitting parliamentary group – switch from one group to another.

Under the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985, parliamentary groups comprise, apart from the Members of the National Council (NC), also Members of the Federal Council (FC) and Members of the European Parliament elected in Austria that belong to the same party.

The National Council is composed of 183 Members. The number of Members of the Federal Council is currently set at 61. And as for the Members delegated to the European Parliament, their number was still at 19 at the beginning of the XXVth legislative term. All in all, the three bodies of Members totalled 263 persons.

2. The Situation at the Beginning of the XXVth Legislative Term

Of the 183 Members of the National Council, one did not belong to any of the parliamentary groups at the beginning of the XXVth legislative term (29 October 2013).

Of the Members delegated to the European Parliament by Austria, four (3 of Hans Peter Martin's list and 1 of BZÖ, i.e. the Alliance for the Future of Austria) were neither part of a parliamentary group in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 nor politically aligned to a Federal Council group.

The following table shows the size and composition of the parliamentary groups as they were at the beginning of the XXVth legislative term:

Social Democratic Parliamentary Group (SPÖ): 79

(52 NC, 22 FC, 5 MEPs)

Parliamentary Group of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP): 78

(47 NC, 25 FC, 6 MEPs)

Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party (FPÖ): 51

(40 NC, 9 FC, 2 MEPs)

Green Parliamentary Group (Grüne): 30

(24 NC, 4 FC, 2 MEPs)

Parliamentary Group "Team Stronach for Austria" (STRONACH): 11

(10 NC, 1 FC)

Parliamentary Group NEOS / Liberal Forum : 9

(9 NC)

3. Changes until March 2016

From the beginning of the XXVth legislative term (29 October 2013) until 1 March 2016, the following events caused changes in the sizes of parliamentary groups:

- In late November 2013, one non-attached Member renounced her seat. With the Member who succeeded to her seat, drawn from the candidate list of the campaigning party "FRANK", the number of members of the Team Stronach parliamentary group rose from 11 to 12 (11 NC, 1 BC).

- Following the elections to the European Parliament, the number of Members to be delegated by Austria was cut back from 19 to 18 as of 1 July 2014, which reduced the total of National Council, Federal Council and European Parliament Members to 262.

At the same time, the number of members of the Parliamentary Group of the Austrian People's Party decreased by one while that of the Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party increased by two. The number of MEPs belonging to the Green Parliamentary Group rose from two to three. And the Parliamentary Group NEOS also had one MEP among its members as of 1 July 2014.

At that time, each of the 262 Members belonged to a parliamentary group in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985.

- As of 4 June 2015, two Members of the National Council left the parliamentary group of Team Stronach and joined that of the Austrian People's Party, resulting in corresponding changes in membership figures.
- In mid-June 2015, two Members of the National Council and one Member of the Federal Council ceased to be members of the Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party and from that time were neither members of a National Council group in terms of § 7 GOG-NR nor of a parliamentary group in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985.

The total of Members that belonged to a parliamentary group under the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 was thus reduced by two Members of the National Council and one Member of the Federal Council, who retained their seats as non-attached Members.

- In the wake of regional elections in Styria, the parliamentary groups of SPÖ und ÖVP lost one Federal Council Member each to the Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party as of 16 June 2015.
- In early August 2015, two more National Council Members switched from the Parliamentary Group Team Stronach to that of the Austrian People's Party.
- On 11 August 2015, one Member of the National Council left the Team Stronach group, without at first joining another parliamentary group.

This raised the number of non-attached Members of the National Council from two to three, and the total number of non-attached Members (NC und FC) from three to four.

- Following regional elections held in Upper Austria on 27 September 2015, one Federal Council seat each of SPÖ and ÖVP moved to FPÖ. The resulting distribution of Upper Austria's Federal Council seats was as follows: 4 ÖVP, 3 FPÖ, 2 SPÖ and 1 Greens.
- In the Vienna regional elections of 11 October 2015, FPÖ won one Federal Council seat from ÖVP, which resulted in the following distribution of Vienna's Federal Council seats: SPÖ 6, FPÖ 4, Greens 1.
- On 2 November 2015, one Member was expelled from the Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party.
- On 23 December 2015, one Member who had left the Parliamentary Group Team Stronach in August 2015 joined the Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party.
- On 1 March 2016, finally, one Member who had previously switched from the Parliamentary Group Team Stronach to that of ÖVP ceased to be a member of the latter.

4. The Situation of the Parliamentary Groups as from 1 March 2016

Following the above, the total number of Members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 both of the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group and of the Parliamentary Group of ÖVP each stands at 77 as of 1 March 2016.

The Social Democratic Parliamentary Group is still represented in the National Council by 52 Members, which is two more than those of the Parliamentary Group of the Austrian People's Party (50). Of the Federal Council Members, on the other hand, two more belong to the Parliamentary Group of the Austrian People's Party than to that of the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group.

The National Council is still composed of 183 Members, and the Federal Council (since August 2013) of 61 Members. The number of Members delegated to the European Parliament by Austria has been at the level of 18 since 1 July 2014.

The aggregated memberships of the three bodies thus total 262 persons, of which at the time (1 March 2016) 257 are members of a parliamentary group in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985, while four National Council Members are non-attached and one Federal Council Member neither belongs to a parliamentary group in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act nor to a Federal Council group.

The Size and Composition of the Parliamentary Groups in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 as of 1 March 2016 are shown in the table and diagram below:

Social Democratic Parliamentary Group (SPÖ): 77
(52 NC, 20 FC, 5 MEPs)

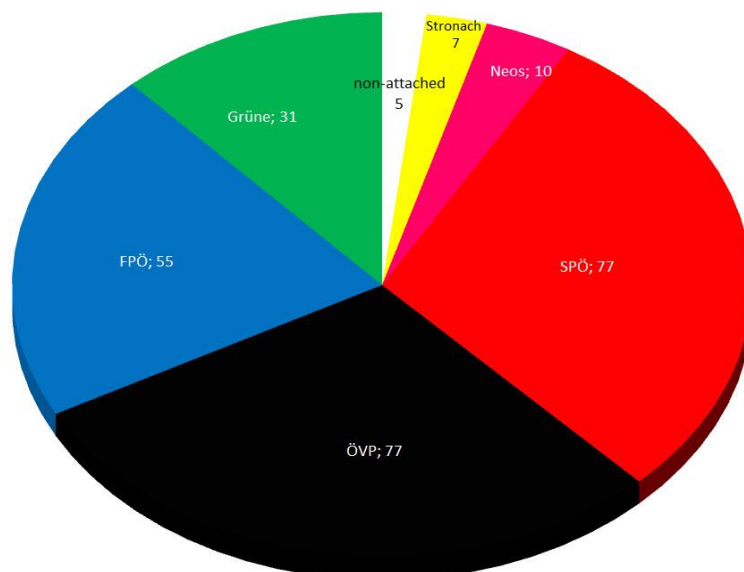
Parliamentary Group of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP): 77
(50 NC, 22 FC, 5 MEPs)

Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party (FPÖ): 55
(38 NC, 13 FC, 4 MEPs)

Green Parliamentary Group (Grüne): 31
(24 NC, 4 FC, 3 MEPs)

Parliamentary Group NEOS: 10
(9 NC, 1 MEP)

Parliamentary Group Team Stronach (FRANK): 7
(6 NC, 1 FC)



5. Summary

From 29 October 2013 to 1 March 2016, the sizes of the parliamentary groups in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 changed as summarized below:

- ***Social Democratic Parliamentary Group***

The number of members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 went down by two. The number of Federal Council Members belonging to this group has decreased by two since the beginning of the XXVth legislative term.

- ***Parliamentary Group of ÖVP***

The number of members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 was reduced by one over this period. However, there also occurred shifts between its component groups: While the ÖVP Parliamentary Group has recorded a net increase by three of its National Council Members (50), the number of its Federal Council Members decreased by three (22), that of its MEPs by one (5).

- ***Parliamentary Group of the Freedom Party***

The number of members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 has risen from 51 to 55 during the period in question. The net result of intra-group shifts is as follows:

The number of National Council Members has dropped by two (38), while there has been a net increase by four of the Federal Council Members, and the number of MEPs has grown from two to four.

- ***The Green Parliamentary Group***

The number of members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 has increased from 30 to 31. This results from the fact that the number of Members delegated to the European Parliament by the Green Parliamentary Group has risen from two at the beginning of the legislative term to three at present.

- ***Parliamentary Group of NEOS***

The number of members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 has grown from 9 to 10. This is due to the fact that since July 2014 the Parliamentary Group of NEOS has also included one Member of the European Parliament.

- ***Parliamentary Group Team Stronach***

The number of members in terms of the Parliamentary Groups Funding Act 1985 has declined from 11 (or 12) to a total of 7 (6 NC, 1 FC).

This results from the fact that five Members of the National Council have left the Parliamentary Group Team Stronach, while one originally non-attached Member renounced her seat already in November 2013 and was succeeded by a Team Stronach Member.