



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

**REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA**  
**PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**  
**29 September 2013**

**OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT**  
**29-30 April 2013**



Warsaw  
29 May 2013

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**REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA**  
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**OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report**

## **I INTRODUCTION**

On 30 April 2013, the Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE invited the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) to observe the 29 September 2013 parliamentary elections.<sup>1</sup> In line with its methodology, the OSCE/ODIHR undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Vienna from 29-30 April. The NAM was composed of Mr. Richard Lappin, Senior Election Adviser, and Mr. Raul Mureşan, Election Adviser.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an OSCE/ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from federal institutions and the election administration, as well as with representatives of political parties, civil society and media. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

The OSCE/ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry for European and International Affairs for its assistance and co-operation in organizing the visit. The OSCE/ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM.

## **II EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Austria is a federation composed of nine autonomous provinces with legislative power vested in a bicameral parliament composed of the National Council and the Federal Council. On 29 September, voters will elect 183 members to the National Council for five-year terms. Currently, six parliamentary parties are represented in the National Council.

Parliamentary elections are regulated primarily by the Constitution and the Parliamentary Elections Law. The OSCE/ODIHR has previously assessed the election legislation as providing a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. Since the 2010 presidential election, the authorities have addressed a number of prior OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, including the promulgation a new law on political party and campaign financing. At the same time, some recommendations are yet to be addressed, including the lack of provisions for citizen election observation, which is at odds with OSCE commitments.

The National Council is elected through a proportional system, with closed candidate lists and preferential voting. Votes may be cast at polling stations or by post, with mobile voting permitted at prisons, hospitals, and for homebound voters. Elections are administered by a five-tiered system, which mirrors the local governance structure. It includes the Federal Election Board (FEB), 9 Province Election Boards, 117 District Election Boards, 2,354 Municipal Election Boards and some 12,000 Polling Station Boards. Parliamentary parties can appoint board members, while parties that participated in the previous parliamentary elections are entitled to nominate observers. All

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<sup>1</sup> The official date of the elections is yet to be formally announced. According to the officials met with by OSCE/ODIHR NAM, it is expected that the election day will be 29 September.

OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed full confidence in the work of the election administration.

The FEB is responsible for supervising the work of all other election boards. Its sessions are not public, although they can be attended by those potentially affected by a decision. Nevertheless, these procedures limit the transparency of the work of FEB. The decisions are appealable to the Constitutional Court, but only by the political parties represented in the FEB. In addition, the complaints will be decided upon only once the final results are announced. The lack of complaints mechanisms for pre-electoral complaints does not guarantee effective remedy, as required by paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

There are approximately 6.4 million registered voters. Voter registration is passive and administered at municipal level. While the system requires municipalities to access a number of locally-maintained databases, all OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed full confidence in the accuracy and inclusiveness of the voter lists. A central voter register is due to be introduced from January 2014.

Candidate nomination will conclude on 12 August. Parliamentary parties can nominate candidates without any special requirements, while the candidacy of a non-parliamentary party has to be endorsed either by three members of parliament or by voter support signatures. A citizen can support only one party. This is recorded on the voter register which may affect the privacy of citizens' support. The legislation does not provide for independent candidates, which challenges OSCE commitments, and there are no special measures to promote women candidates.

The upcoming election campaign is anticipated to focus on the economy, education, housing and Austria's role in Europe. No OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns about the ability to campaign freely and most anticipated a high level of interest for these elections despite the relatively low voter turnout in recent local elections.

Legislation regulating political party and campaign financing was adopted at the end of 2012 and will be applicable for the first time during the upcoming elections. According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the law represents an important step forward in promoting transparency, but it remains to be tested and concerns were noted with respect to the timing and scope of disclosure reports as well as the lack of effective sanctions.

The media environment is pluralistic and diverse. It is largely self-regulated, including with regard to the coverage of political parties and election campaigns. The main source of information is television and the public Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) has the largest market share. ORF has a general obligation to provide fair and balance political coverage and plans to cover the upcoming campaign activities based on their newsworthiness and through a number of debates. Newspapers play an important role in framing political events and enjoy wide circulation. Overall, OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed satisfaction with the media coverage of the political life.

All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed full confidence in the election process. The high degree of political pluralism, the diverse media, and the checks and balances of the legal framework indicate that limited added value is likely to be brought by a significant presence of the OSCE/ODIHR on election day. At the same time, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted that the campaign finance regulations might benefit from further scrutiny. In addition, the OSCE/ODIHR has never followed a parliamentary election process in Austria. Accordingly, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM

recommends the deployment of an Election Expert Team for the upcoming parliamentary elections to review the new legal framework, particularly in regard to political party and campaign finance.

### III FINDINGS

#### A BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Austria is a federation composed of nine autonomous provinces (*Länder*). Legislative power is vested in the bicameral parliament composed of the 183-member National Council (*Nationalrat*), directly elected for five-year terms, and the 62-member Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), indirectly elected by province legislatures.

The last parliamentary elections were held on 28 September 2008 and resulted in five parties elected to the National Council: The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) with 57 seats, the Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP) with 51 seats, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) with 34 seats, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) with 21 seats, and the Green Party (*Die Grünen*) with 20 seats. Some 29 per cent of members of parliament (MPs) are women. Following the election, SPÖ leader Werner Faymann was sworn in as Chancellor by President Heinz Fischer.

In September 2012, a new parliamentary group was created in the National Council, after five MPs joined the newly formed party, Team Stronach.

The OSCE/ODIHR previously deployed an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) for the 2010 presidential election and also visited the country in the context of the 2009 European Parliament elections.<sup>2</sup>

#### B LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary elections are regulated primarily by the Constitution and the Parliamentary Elections Law.<sup>3</sup> The 2010 OSCE/ODIHR EAM final report assessed the election legislation as providing a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. The report proposed a number of recommendations aimed to improve the electoral legal framework, several of which have been addressed by the authorities: a new law was adopted to increase the level of transparency and accountability in political party and campaign financing; candidacy rights were extended to descendants of formerly regnant families; voting cards necessary to vote outside of regular polling stations now have to be individually collected by voters; and the deadline for returning postal ballots was shortened and now any ballots that arrive by close of polls will be counted. However, a number of recommendations are yet to be addressed, including procedures to address pre-electoral complaints as well as the lack of provisions for citizen election observation, which is at odds with paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>4</sup>

The National Council is elected through a proportional system, with closed candidate lists and preferential voting. Under this system, the country is divided into 9 constituencies that correspond

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<sup>2</sup> All OSCE/ODIHR reports on Austria are available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/austria>.

<sup>3</sup> Other relevant legislation includes the Political Parties Act, the Incompatibility Act, and the Law on the Rules of Procedure of the National Council.

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document provides that “the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other [O]SCE participating States...”.

to the provinces, which are in turn divided into 43 regional constituencies. Each regional constituency is allotted a number of seats on the basis of its population as determined at the last census, ranging from 1 to 8.

Using a single ballot paper, voters mark their choice of candidate list and may additionally cast preferential votes for one federal list candidate, one province list candidate and one regional list candidate. Seats are allocated in a three-stage procedure, first in the regional constituencies, then in the province constituencies and finally at the federal level. At the regional level seats are allocated to parties according to a mathematical method *sui generis*, at the provincial level according to the Hare Method, and at the federal level according to the d'Hondt system for those parties that gained at least four per cent of the votes nationwide. Seats won at a given stage are subtracted from seat allocation at the following stage.

The Federal Council is not elected directly, with members delegated by the provincial councils in accordance to the number of seats won by each party in the respective province council elections. The number of members is not predetermined, and varies from 3 to 12 by province, according to the population. The current Federal Council has 62 members. As province council elections are held on different dates, the composition of the Federal Council frequently changes.

All citizens who are at least 16 years old on election day are entitled to vote and all citizens who are at least 18 years old on election day have the right to be elected, provided that they have not had their suffrage rights suspended by a court decision.<sup>5</sup> Previously, citizens would automatically lose their voting rights if convicted of a criminal offence exceeding one year of imprisonment.

A voter can vote in person at their assigned polling station or by postal ballot. Mobile voting is also permitted at prisons, hospitals, and for homebound voters. In order to be able to vote outside of his or her regular polling station, a voter has to apply for a voting card at the local municipality, based on a specific reason.<sup>6</sup> The municipalities, however, do not have the obligation to verify this reason.

After the card is issued, the voter list is marked and the voter will be allowed to cast a ballot only upon presentation of the voting card. For the first time in a federal election, voting cards will be issued individually only, and not also to family members as was the case in the past. Another change in procedures is that postal ballots must be received by the close of polls in order to be counted.<sup>7</sup>

Voters living outside of the country can only vote by postal ballot, after they register as voters living abroad with an Austrian municipality. They can opt to receive voting cards and postal ballots for any federal election taking place in the following 10 years. If voters wish to use the local embassy for posting back their votes, these ballots are to be delivered to the embassy until six days prior to election day for residents in the European Economic Area or Switzerland, or until nine days prior to election day for the rest of the world. However, voters are free to use any other means of transportation without being bound by deadlines, be that a postal service, a private delivery service, or a person of trust. In practice, all ballots are counted provided that they arrive by close of polls.

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<sup>5</sup> This followed the 2010 decision of the European Court of Human Rights on the case *Frodl v. Austria*, application No. 20201/04. The Court decided that decision on voting disenfranchisement “should be taken by a judge, taking into account the specific circumstances of the case, and that there must be a link between the offence committed and issues relating to elections and democratic institutions”.

<sup>6</sup> In the 2008 parliamentary elections some 500,000 voting cards were issued, and approximately 375,000 were returned by post.

<sup>7</sup> As an exception, postal ballots are counted by the District Election Boards and not by Polling Station Boards.

A number of initiatives aim to inform and increase the number of registered out-of-country voters, as only some 40,000 of an estimated 500,000 eligible out-of-country voters are currently registered. In this respect, the MFA will mail information and voter education materials to those registered and the Association of Austrians Living Abroad has a programme called “100,000 by 2014”, which includes publishing information from political parties in its magazine.

## C ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Elections are administered by a five-tiered system, which mirrors the local governance structure. It includes the Federal Election Board (FEB), 9 Province Election Boards (PEB), 117 District Election Boards (DEB), 2,354 Municipal Election Boards (MEB) and some 12,000 Polling Station Boards (PSB).<sup>8</sup>

Parliamentary parties can appoint election board members and parties that participated in the previous parliamentary elections are entitled to nominate observers. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed full confidence in the work of the election administration.

The FEB is an independent body composed of 17 members and chaired by the Minister of Interior. Two members are judges appointed by the Ministry of Justice, and the remaining members are nominated by the political parties in parliament, according to the number of MPs. The Department of Electoral Affairs in the Ministry of Interior (MoI) is responsible for most of the technical preparations for elections and supports the work of the FEB.

The FEB is responsible for supervising the work of all other election boards and for announcing the final election results. It has no rules of procedures and its meetings are called by its chairperson whenever required, usually five times during parliamentary elections. FEB sessions are not public, thereby limiting the transparency of its work. However, those potentially concerned by a certain decision are invited to attend the respective session.<sup>9</sup> The most relevant decisions are published in the official gazette. The decisions are appealable to the Constitutional Court, but only by the political parties represented in the FEB. The Court decides upon complaints only after election results are published (see section on Complaints and Appeals).

The PEBs, DEBs and MEBs are composed of nine members plus a chairperson, each having a substitute. The chairperson is usually the respective governor or mayor. The members are elected by the local governments at their respective level, and the number of seats reflects the results obtained locally in parliamentary elections.<sup>10</sup>

The PEBs primary role is to compile the election results. DEBs are responsible for counting postal votes. MEBs compile the results from polling stations and are also responsible for voter registers. Municipalities are, in turn, divided into precincts for the purpose of voting.

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Ministry of Interior, the number of polling stations will decrease compared to the 2008 elections (particularly in large cities), due to an increased use of postal voting and difficulties at times of political parties to nominate sufficient PSB members.

<sup>9</sup> International observers can attend FEB meetings and observe all stages of the electoral process, as provided by the law.

<sup>10</sup> Accepting the nomination as a member or substitute member of an election board is compulsory for voters registered within the respective community. In practice, according to the MoI, the parties ask the people whether or not they would accept such nominations in advance.

PSBs are composed of three members and a chairperson (usually the mayor), each having a substitute. They are responsible for the organization of voting and counting.<sup>11</sup> The opening hours of polling stations are decided by the local authorities. Some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that the opening hours should be regulated at federal level and extended in order to facilitate higher turnout of voters on election day.

The MoI will prepare training manuals for PSBs, including on ballot validity. It will also produce information sheets for voter education, including for special categories of voters (for example disabled or out-of-country).

## **D VOTER REGISTRATION**

There were approximately 6,355,800 registered voters for the 2010 presidential election. Voter registration is passive and voter lists are extracted from a Central Population Register and then administered and updated at the municipal level.

Voter lists are publicly posted for a 10-day period and voters can contest any entry on them. Upon request, municipalities are obliged to present copies of the voter lists to the parliamentary parties and parties running in the elections. At least three days before election day, voters receive information regarding the location and opening hours of their polling station, and their number on the voter list.<sup>12</sup>

While the system is not centralized and requires a municipality to access a number of locally-maintained registration databases, all OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed full confidence in the accuracy and inclusiveness of the system.

A central voter register is anticipated to be introduced from January 2014. According to the MoI, this should improve the accuracy of the voter list and efficiency of the registration system, although initial efforts will be required to safeguard against multiple registration, particularly with regard to citizens living outside of the country.

## **E CANDIDATE REGISTRATION**

Candidate nomination will conclude by 12 August. Parliamentary parties can nominate candidates without any special requirements. In order to stand in federal elections, a non-parliamentary party has to have the support of three MPs or of 2,600 voter support signatures.<sup>13</sup> Parties register lists at the federal, provincial and regional level and candidates may only be registered on one list. The number of candidates on a list is limited to double the number of available seats. Parties have to contribute EUR 435 per candidate list for the production of the ballot papers.

The legislation does not provide for independent candidates, which is at odds with with paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>14</sup> There are no legal requirements to promote

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<sup>11</sup> An MEB acts as PSB in case the municipality has only one precinct.

<sup>12</sup> This obligation concerns only municipalities with more than 1,000 inhabitants.

<sup>13</sup> The minimum number of required support signatures per province is 100 (Burgenland and Vorarlberg), 200 (Carinthia, Salzburg and Tirol), 400 (Upper Austria and Styria), and 500 (Lower Austria and Vienna). A party is allowed to correct any errors in its nomination documents within the same deadline.

<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document provides that participating States will “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”.

women candidates, although two out of four parties met with by OSCE/ODIHR NAM stated that they have specific, internal party policies to promote women candidates.

Citizens who wish to support a candidate must collect a form from their municipality proving their voter registration. The municipality marks the voters name against the voters list once the form is completed, as a voter can only support one candidate. While this procedure may affect the privacy of citizens' support, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not raise it as an issue.

## **F CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

The upcoming election campaign is anticipated to focus on the economy, education, housing, and Austria's role in Europe. Political parties informed the OSCE/ODIHR NAM that they will rely on traditional campaign methods such as canvassing and public meetings, although social media is expected to play an increased role.<sup>15</sup> Some websites offer programmes to help voters identify candidates and parties who share their political opinions, based on user responses to a questionnaire.<sup>16</sup> No OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns about the ability to campaign freely and most anticipated a high level of interest in these elections, although several recent local elections were characterized by historically low voter turnout.

Legislation regulating political party and campaign financing was adopted at the end of 2012 and will be applicable for the first time during the upcoming elections.<sup>17</sup> According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the law represents a significant step forward and clarifies a number of aspects of campaign finance, including disclosure of donors for the first time. It is unclear, however, if expenditures by "independent foundations" in support of political parties should be reported. In addition, several OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the EUR 2,000 upper limit for anonymous donations was unduly high.

Political parties receive public subsidies, totalling some EUR 30 million per year.<sup>18</sup> The expenditure limit for a political party during the official campaign period is EUR 7 million, which includes a EUR 15,000 cap per candidate. According to most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the sanctions for exceeding the limit are ineffective due to their limited financial impact.<sup>19</sup>

Parties have to report their income sources and expenditures at all levels of their party structures to the Court of Audit. Any in-kind donations have to be estimated by the parties and reported. Donations above EUR 3,500 have to be made public immediately, and those above EUR 50,000 (or EUR 30,000 in Vienna) are to be reported immediately to the Court of Audit, which publishes the details on its website.<sup>20</sup> There are no specific time requirements for reporting on campaign

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<sup>15</sup> Some 80 per cent of Austrians use the internet. See: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm>. To date, there are no reliable figures regarding social media usage.

<sup>16</sup> For example, "Polling Booth"; see at: <http://wahlkabine.at>.

<sup>17</sup> The Federal Law on Federal Subsidies for Political Parties and the Federal Law on Financing of Political Parties.

<sup>18</sup> Each political party represented with at least five MPs in the National Council receives EUR 218,000 annually. The rest of the money is distributed to parliamentary parties according to the number of votes received in the last election, at EUR 4.6 per vote. Non-parliamentary parties which obtained more than one per cent of the votes in a National Council election received EUR 2.5 per vote.

<sup>19</sup> In the event that this cap is exceeded by up to 25 per cent of its value, the sanction is 10 per cent of the extra amount spent. For higher overspending, the sanction is 20 per cent of the amount overspent.

<sup>20</sup> See: [www.rechnungshof.gv.at/beratung/parteispenden.html](http://www.rechnungshof.gv.at/beratung/parteispenden.html). At the time of writing, such donations exceeded EUR 10 million in 2013, out of which 94 per cent were for Team Stronach from its leader.

expenses. They are to be included in a regular annual report, to be submitted to the Court of Audit by September of the following year.

There are no self-reporting mechanisms initiated by political parties to enhance the transparency of campaign finances. Some civil society initiatives monitor this field, including the Austrian Chapter of Transparency International, and the privately financed transparency platform, "My Deputies".<sup>21</sup>

## G MEDIA

The media environment offers a pluralistic and diverse range of views. The media is largely self-regulated, including with regard to the coverage of political parties and election campaigns. According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, media is characterized by professionalism, high ethical standards and, by a critical stance towards the government, thereby providing an effective watchdog function on the political system.

The main source of information is television and the public Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) has the largest television market share.<sup>22</sup> It is followed by a number of German channels, and by the privately-owned ATV and Puls4.<sup>23</sup> Newspapers play an important role in framing political coverage and enjoy wide circulation. The most read paid dailies include *Kronen Zeitung* (2.2 million readers), followed by *Österreich* (550,000) and *Kurier* (470,000). Other significant newspapers include *Die Presse*, *Der Standard* and *Wiener Zeitung*. Popular free newspapers include *Kleine Zeitung* (820,000) and *Heute* (530,000).<sup>24</sup> Regional newspapers are also popular in most provinces. According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, it is anticipated that some private media will openly support certain parties.

ORF functions on the basis of the 2010 media law and is funded through a public subsidy and commercial advertising.<sup>25</sup> ORF has a general obligation to provide fair and balanced political coverage and plans to cover the upcoming campaign on the basis of newsworthiness. ORF is not obliged to provide free airtime to electoral candidates but will organize a series of debates, including: one debate with the leaders of all 6 parliamentary parties; 15 separate head-to-head debates with the leaders of all of these parties; and 1 debate between the leaders of non-parliamentary parties running in the elections. Complaints against ORF's coverage can be filed with the ORF Supervision Board. Its decisions can be appealed to the Austrian Communications Authority, and its decisions can be appealed to the Federal Communications Committee. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed overall satisfaction with the political coverage by ORF.

ORF is not allowed to sell political advertising, but advertising is permitted on private outlets. The prices for such adverts are not public, but the OSCE/ODIHR NAM was informed that they follow the same rules as for commercial advertising.

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<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.ti-austria.at> and <http://www.meineabgeordneten.at>.

<sup>22</sup> The ORF had a broadcasting monopoly until 1998 in radio and until 2003 in television.

<sup>23</sup> ORF2 has 22 per cent market share and *ORFeins* has 14 per cent. They are followed by the German channels Sat1, RTL, PRO7, ZDF and Vox, with between 4 and 5 per cent, and by ATV with 3.4 per cent and Puls4 with 3.1 per cent. See: [http://www.agtt.at/show\\_content.php?sid=23&language=en](http://www.agtt.at/show_content.php?sid=23&language=en).

<sup>24</sup> See: [www.publicitas.com/en/home/media-news-events/news-detail/?newsid=43588&title=austria-top-daily-newspapers](http://www.publicitas.com/en/home/media-news-events/news-detail/?newsid=43588&title=austria-top-daily-newspapers).

<sup>25</sup> Each household with an income above EUR 10,000 per year pays a EUR 24 monthly tax to ORF. The contribution for the remaining households is paid by the federal government. Some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the government is late in paying these sums, as well as in adjusting the monthly tax to inflation rates, which has a negative effect on the management and budgeting of ORF.

## H COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The complaints and appeals process is regulated by the Constitution, the Constitutional Court Law and the Parliamentary Elections Law. There are few formal procedures for the submission of complaints to election administration bodies and, in general, complaints can only be resolved after the announcement of final results. The Constitutional Court cannot initiate complaint proceedings *ex officio*. A number of local elections in the past were cancelled by the Court after it decided that irregularities affected the election results.

Voter registration is the only area where election-related complaints are allowed prior to election day. A written or oral complaint can be filed by any citizen to an election body requesting the addition or deletion of a person to the voter list. However, no further appeal is allowed, thus denying voters access to a court to resolve registration disputes.

While the complaints and appeals system enjoys a high level of public confidence, it does not guarantee effective remedy of pre-election complaints, challenging paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and other international standards.<sup>26</sup>

## IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the impartiality and professionalism of the election administration, and expressed no concerns with regard to election day proceedings. The high degree of political pluralism, the diverse media, and the checks and balances of the legal framework indicate that limited added value is likely to be brought by a significant presence of the OSCE/ODIHR on election day. A number of previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations have been addressed by the authorities.

At the same time, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted that the campaign finance regulations might benefit from further scrutiny. In addition, the OSCE/ODIHR has never followed a parliamentary election process in Austria. Accordingly, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Expert Team for the upcoming parliamentary elections to review the new legal framework, particularly in regard to political party and campaign finance.

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<sup>26</sup> Paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document provides that “everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity”.

## **ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS**

### **Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs**

Brigitta Blaha, Director of the Department for Austrians Abroad

Georg Woutsas, Deputy Head of Department

Christine Moser, Head of the Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE

### **Federal Ministry of Interior**

Robert Stein, Head of Department, Electoral Affairs

Gregor Wenda, Deputy Head of Department, Electoral Affairs

### **Constitutional Court**

Helmut Hörtenhuber, Member of the Constitutional Court

### **Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ)**

Kurt Sturzenbecher, Club Secretary

Monika Juch, Club Secretary

### **Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)**

Helmut Epp, Deputy Club Director

### **The Green Party**

Stefan Wallner, Secretary General

Mr. Robert Luschnik, Executive Director of the Green Group in the Parliament

### **Team Stronach**

Thomas Bachheimer, Head of the European Group of Experts

Christine Weber, Club Director

### **Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF)**

Fritz Dittlbacher, Editor in Chief

Armin Wolf, Associate Editor

### **Die Presse**

Christian Ultsch, Foreign Editor

Oliver Pink, Domestic Policy

### **Transparency International – Austrian Chapter**

Hubert Sickinger, Deputy President of Advisory Council, Expert on Campaign Finance

*Meetings were requested with all parliamentary parties and were granted by four of them.*