

di Barbara Steiner

Vienna election, 11 October 2020

## Results

Graphic <https://orf.at/wahl/wien20/ergebnisse>

All parties except the extreme right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) won. The Freedom Party had won more than 30 percent in the last Vienna elections in 2015, their party ruled the Republic from 2017 to 2019 together with the right-wing conservative People's Party of Chancellor Kurz ("New ÖVP"). After the release of the "Ibiza Video", where it was secretly filmed how the then party leader boasted about selling state property and the largest tabloid to a Russian oligarch and describing illegal practices of party financing, this government was ended. After a period of an interim technocratic government, new elections were held, and since January 2020 the conservative People's Party has been ruling with the Greens, the latter for the first time since its founding in 1987 in government on a national level.

In the Vienna elections the FPÖ achieved a devastating result - it fell to 7.11 percent. Together with the votes for the former party leader ("Team HC" - 3.27 percent), who was expelled after "Ibiza" and expense corruption, the extreme right scored 10.38 percent, which is again far below the National election result of 2019 with 16.2 percent. The trend that the extreme right in Vienna is digging away the clientele of the SPÖ has been stopped for the time being. 10 percent for the German nationalist, racist, nationalist right in traditional Red Vienna is probably the most convinced base of their voters\* who still vote even after all these scandals and the split.

The Social Democratic Party, which has ruled continuously since 1945, won the election again this time - with 41.62 percent, after a downward trend since 2005, the 40% mark was exceeded again. The Green Party, which is in government with the SPÖ in Vienna and with the ÖVP on national level, have gained nearly 3 percent (14.80 percent). The ÖVP made the biggest gains, especially from the group of former FPÖ voters; the right-conservative party more than doubled from its historic low in 2015 from 9.2 to 20.43 percent. The economically radical neoliberal and socio-politically liberal NEOS party reaches 7.47 (+1.31) percent.

## Coalition still open

According to an election day survey, federal politics played a major role for the majority of voters who voted for ÖVP, Greens, FPÖ and NEOS. For the majority of SPÖ voters, however, the ballot was "exclusively a Viennese decision". The SPÖ achieved only 21.2 percent in the last national election - the lowest in its history. With which of the three parties the SPÖ and its mayor Michael Ludwig will form a coalition is still open, the FPÖ was excluded as coalition partner already beforehand. It is not clear whether it is a poker game for position and influence over the previous green coalition partner or whether there are really serious considerations to form a coalition with a strengthened right-wing conservative ÖVP or the market radical NEOS. The SPÖ was also strengthened in many of the 23 districts - and here especially in those "Flächenbezirke", on the periphery of the city, which are traditionally car-friendly. The red district leaders, who are powerful in the city's SPÖ, want the removal of the transport department from the Greens.

## Success for LINKS

For the Left, the result of LINKS (LEFT) is a great success: 2.06 percent were won at the municipal level, in the last election in 2015 the left-wing electoral alliance “Wien anders” (“Vienna different”) won 1.07 percent. This is the best result of a left list in Vienna since 1973 (2.73 percent for the communist party KPÖ), but the entry failed again at the 5 percent threshold. The KPÖ fell out of the municipal council in 1969 and since then no party to the left of Social Democracy and later Greens has been represented in the Vienna Parliament. LINKS is a cooperation between the KPÖ and the party LINKS, newly founded in early 2020, with the participation of independent leftists. Instead of six district councilors (five “Wien anders” and one former Green), LINKS will in future have 23 councilors in 15 districts and quadrupled the number of councilors. Eight of the 23 are members of KPÖ. LINKS has seven district clubs (more than one mandate). In six districts LINKS is stronger than the FPÖ, in one even stronger than the extreme right FPÖ and Team HC together and in its “stronghold” Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus LINKS is ahead of NEOS. LINKS is particularly strong in those inner-city districts where the Greens are also strong. Here live people with middle income and higher education. An increasing strength can also be observed in those working class districts where students, artists and academics are moving in and those areas that have been slowly “upgraded” in the rental sector. It is interesting to note that LINKS reached 5 percent among the young voters. The aim of the party LINKS is to organize also at the national level, it is to be seen whether a fresh left wind will blow in Austria soon.

Graphic: <https://www.facebook.com/linkswien/photos/a.121939219253494/348520169928730/>

## Lively left-wing election campaign

According to activists, various factors play a role in the good performance of LINKS. On the one hand, the concrete situation of the other parties: this time it was clear that there will be no “duel” between SPÖ and FPÖ for the first place, as announced in the last election. So left-wing voters did not tactically vote SPÖ to prevent a feared right-wing extremist mayor. The tactical vote for the Greens is also not as strong, the Greens are in the state and federal government, they now became the governing party, a space for left-wing opposition opens up. The support of the racist policy of the ÖVP by the Greens in the federal government is a reason for socio-politically left-wing voters to vote LINKS this time. The ending of structural racism and the right to vote for all who live in Vienna for one year was a central demand of LINKS. It can be observed that EU citizens voted slightly more LINKS than non-EU citizens, which was also clearly visible in the “Pass egal” (“Passport doesn’t matter”) election, where one and a half thousand people without an Austrian passport voted and LINKS came in third place with 12 percent. Many left-wing voters were attracted by the other two focal points of the election campaign: Housing and work, with partly radical demands for expropriation and always in connection with feminist and anti-racist demands. The media appearances of left-wing candidates in Austria are traditionally sparse, but they were original and clever. The appearances of the activists created a diverse, lively, young, feminine and multifaceted image. Writings on streets in giant letters, inspired by the Black Lives Matter actions, which pointed out vacancies and space for the reception of refugees or the number of dismissed workers in corporations were committed and impressive. Last but not least, a low voter turnout is always advantageous for small left-wing parties, as these are the more convinced voters.

## Democracy scandal

Voter turnout fell drastically from just 75 percent to under 65 percent, making the group of non-voters the largest voter group of all eligible voters. Also because of the health situation - the restrictions on public life and the advice to avoid crowds - many stayed at home on election day. 40 percent of voters voted with a voting card, which is a record. In the last election in 2015, 203,000 voting cards were issued and this year 382,000 - almost double the number. Vienna is not only the capital of Austria but also of the federal state, therefore the municipal council is also the federal council. Only Austrian citizens were allowed to vote for the municipal council, EU citizens were only allowed to vote at district level. Holders of citizenship of a so-called "third country" - mostly from Serbia or Turkey - have no right to vote at all, which is 16 percent of the inhabitants of the city of two million. In the workers' district Rudofsheim-Fünfhaus 42 percent of the residents of voting age are excluded and only 58 percent of the residents are eligible to vote. The scandal of democratic politics is that 16 percent of Viennese people of voting age are not allowed to vote at all because of their nationality and 28 percent are not allowed to vote at the municipal level.

If one considers the non-voters and the exclusion from the right to vote, the SPÖ was elected 101 years after the establishment of the "Red Vienna" by only 18 percent of Viennese people of voting age.

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