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Political Parties of the World in 2004

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Kurt Richard Luther

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Launched in September 2000, the Keele European Parties Research Unit (KEPRU) was the first research grouping of its kind in the UK. It brings together the hitherto largely independent work of Keele researchers focusing on European political parties, and aims:

- to facilitate its members' engagement in high-quality academic research, individually, collectively in the Unit and in collaboration with cognate research groups and individuals in the UK and abroad;
- to hold regular conferences, workshops, seminars and guest lectures on topics related to European political parties;
- to publish a series of parties-related research papers by scholars from Keele and elsewhere;
- to expand postgraduate training in the study of political parties, principally through Keele's MA in Parties and Elections and the multinational PhD summer school, with which its members are closely involved;
- to constitute a source of expertise on European parties and party politics for media and other interests.

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Political Parties of the World in 2004: Austria*

Capital: Vienna

Population: 8,174,762 (2004E)

First founded in 1919 following the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in World War I, the Republic of Austria was re-established after World War II and obtained international recognition as a “sovereign, independent and democratic state” under the Austrian State Treaty signed on May 15, 1955, by Austria, France, the UK, the USA and the USSR. The Austrian constitution provides for a parliamentary system of government based on elections by secret ballot and by “free, equal and universal suffrage”; as amended in 1945, it proscribes any attempt to revive the pre-war Nazi Party. There is a bicameral parliament consisting of a 183-member lower house called the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and an upper house called the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), which in mid-2004 had 62 members. Together, they form the Federal Assembly (*Bundesversammlung*). The *Nationalrat* is elected for a four-year term under a highly proportional representation system (subject to a minimum requirement of 4% of the national vote) by all citizens over 18 years of age. Members of the *Bundesrat* are elected for from four to six years by the legislatures of the nine Austrian provinces (*Länder*), each of which has an elected assembly (*Landtag*). The President of the Republic (*Bundespräsident*) is elected for a six-year term (to a maximum of two consecutive terms) by universal suffrage, the functions of the post being mainly ceremonial but including the appointment of the Federal Chancellor (*Bundeschancellor*) as head of government, who recommends ministerial appointments for confirmation by the President. Each member of the government must enjoy the confidence of a majority of members of the *Nationalrat*. Austria joined what became the European Union on Jan. 1, 1995, and as of 2004 elects 18 (hitherto 21) members to the European Parliament.

* Chapter draft for Bogdan Szajkowski (ed.) (2004), *Political Parties of the World*, 6th Edition, London: John Harper Publishing.

Under the Parties Financing Act of 1975, parties represented in the *Nationalrat* are granted federal budget support (for publicity and campaigning) in the form of a basic sum and additional amounts in proportion to the number of votes received in the previous election, subject to at least 1% of the valid votes being obtained. Parties also receive state contributions to their national and European Parliament election expenses. The total such support paid in 2002 was €25,840,000 (ca. \$31,810,000), dropping to an estimated €14,380,000 (ca. \$17,710,000) in 2003, when no national election was held. Of this funding, the total available to the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), for example, was €8,950,000 in 2002 and an estimated €5,240,000 in 2003. Separate state assistance is available to research foundations linked to the parties, totalling an estimated €9,140,000 in 2003, of which, for example, the SPÖ-linked Karl Renner Institute received €3,050,000.

Elections to the *Nationalrat* on Nov. 24, 2002, resulted as follows: Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) 79 seats (with 42.3% of the vote), Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) 69 (36.5%), Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) 18 (10.0%), The Greens–Green Alternative 17 (9.5%). In presidential elections on April 25, 2004, former SPÖ *Nationalrat* President, Heinz Fischer, defeated ÖVP Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner by 52.4% to 47.6% of the vote.

In the European Parliament elections held on June 13, 2004, the opposition Social Democrats performed marginally better than Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel's conservative People's Party. Very significant, however, were the losses suffered by the far-right Freedom Party. Its share of the vote slumped dramatically from 23.4% in the last election to 6.4%, losing the party four of the five seats it had previously held. The other surprise of the contest was the success of a list fielded by independent candidate Hans-Peter Martin, an MEP who had waged an anti-fraud campaign after being kicked out of his party for exposing what he saw as expenses abuses by his European colleagues. On a turnout of 42.44 % the SPÖ, with 33.4% of the vote, won 7 seats (+1); the ÖVP (32.7% of the vote) won 6 seats; the GA (12.7% of the vote) won 2 seats; Hans-Peter Martin (Independent anti-fraud list, 14.0% of the vote) won 2 seats (+2); and the FPÖ 1 seat (-4).

Austrian People's Party

Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP)

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Leadership. Wolfgang Schüssel (chairman); Wilhelm Molterer (parliamentary group leader); Andreas Khol (*Nationalrat* President); Reinhold Lopatka (general secretary)

Founded in 1945 from pre-war Christian democratic groups, the ÖVP was the leading government party from 1945-66, in coalition with what later became the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ). In sole power from 1966, the ÖVP was narrowly defeated by the SPÖ in the 1970 election, after which it was in opposition for 16 years. Although it lost ground in the 1986 election, simultaneous SPÖ losses dictated the formation of the first of a series of ÖVP-SPÖ “grand coalitions” that were to rule the country until 1999, with the ÖVP as junior partner. Earlier in 1986, the ÖVP had become enmeshed in public controversy over Kurt Waldheim, whose election as President with ÖVP backing was accompanied by claims that as a German Army officer he had participated in Nazi atrocities in the Balkans during World War II.

Waldheim's successor as President, Thomas Klestil, was elected in 1992 as the ÖVP-backed nominee. But other elections in the early 1990s showed falling support for the ÖVP, mainly to the benefit of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). In the October 1994 federal election, the ÖVP slumped from 60 to 52 seats and to a low of 27.7% of the vote. Given their determination to exclude the FPÖ from government, the ÖVP and SPÖ both felt obliged to resurrect their coalition. Vice-Chancellor Erhard Busek later paid the price of the ÖVP's election setbacks, being replaced in April 1995 as party chair and Vice-Chancellor by Wolfgang Schüssel.

The SPÖ-ÖVP coalition unexpectedly collapsed in October 1995 over budget policy differences. To general surprise, the ÖVP emerged from the election of Dec. 17 with slightly higher representation of 53 seats, on a vote share of 28.3%, and in March 1996 entered a further coalition headed by the SPÖ. In Austria's first direct Euro-elections in October 1996 the ÖVP headed the poll with 29.6% and seven seats, following which Klestil was re-elected as President in April 1997 with ÖVP backing. Strains arose in the coalition in March 1998 when the SPÖ insisted on maintaining Austria's neutrality, whereas the ÖVP favoured a commitment to NATO membership. In the June 1999 Euro-elections the ÖVP slipped to second place behind the SPÖ in percentage terms, although it improved to 30.6% of the vote and again won seven seats.

The governmental dominance of the SPÖ, combined with the electoral rise of the FPÖ, culminated in the ÖVP being reduced, very narrowly in terms of the popular vote, to third-party status in the October 1999 national elections. Although it retained 52 seats, its vote share was a post-war low of 26.9%. Schüssel initially announced the party would go into opposition, but in February 2000 formed a controversial coalition with the FPÖ, whose presence in Austria's government caused the EU to impose diplomatic sanctions on Austria. Schüssel stood his ground, however, and the sanctions were eventually lifted in September 2000.

Schüssel's leadership of his party was greatly strengthened and the ÖVP reinvigorated by the sanctions, the ÖVP's reacquisition of the chancellorship (last held in 1970) and by the manifest success of his strategy of co-opting and thus demystifying the FPÖ. At the Styrian provincial election of October 2000, the party gained 11 percentage points, winning 47.3% of the vote and an absolute majority of seats. At the general election of Nov. 24, 2002 – held early because of the 'Knittelfeld' crisis within the FPÖ – the ÖVP experienced the greatest ever increase in an Austrian party's share of the vote. With 42.3% and 79 seats it also came ahead of the SPÖ for the first time since 1966. At provincial elections in March 2003, the ÖVP retained the governorships of Lower Austria, where its historic absolute majority of the vote was restored, and of Tyrol, where it obtained an absolute majority of seats.

Thereafter, however, the ÖVP lost electoral ground, largely because of squabbling within its coalition partner and the unpopularity of the government's policies of economic retrenchment, privatization and welfare state reform. In September 2003 it retained the Upper Austrian governorship, despite a small reduction in its share of the vote at the *Landtag* election. In March 2004, however, an analogous decline in Salzburg resulted in the ÖVP's first ever loss of the governorship of that *Land*, whilst in Carinthia the party suffered a virtual halving (to 11.6%) of its vote and has been replaced by the SPÖ as the FPÖ's partner in the *Land* government. In view of these setbacks, Schüssel's leadership of his party has come under renewed internal criticism.

Claiming a membership of c.300,000, the ÖVP is affiliated to the International Democrat Union and the Christian Democrat International. The party's six representatives in the European Parliament sit in the European People's Party/European Democrats group.

Freedom Party of Austria

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)

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Leadership. Ursula Haubner (chairperson); Heinz-Christian Strache and Günther Steinkellner (deputy chairpersons); Herbert Scheibner (parliamentary group leader); Uwe Scheuch (general secretary)

Often described by the international media as far-right or even “neo-Nazi” because of its historical antecedents, opposition to immigration and other populist policies, the FPÖ vigorously rejects such descriptions. It was formed in 1956 as a merger of three right-wing formations, notably the League of Independents, which had won 14 lower house seats in 1953 on a platform of opposition to the post-war system of *Proporz*, under which state jobs and resources were largely shared out between the two main parties. Initially supported by many former Nazis, the FPÖ remained for many beyond the political pale and languished at around 6-7% of the vote. From the late 1960s, Friedrich Peter (FPÖ leader from 1958-78) sought to modernise the party’s programmatic profile and membership. In 1983 the FPÖ won 5% of the vote and 12 seats under the liberal leadership of Norbert Steger and joined a coalition government with what later became the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ). This alienated the party’s traditionally protest-oriented and right-wing grass-root activists and weakened it in the polls. The ensuing intra-party conflict culminated in Steger being replaced by youthful populist Jörg Haider in September 1986, whereupon the SPÖ unilaterally terminated the coalition.

At the November 1986 election the FPÖ almost doubled its vote share to 9.7% on a populist platform including opposition to foreign immigration. In 1989 Haider became governor of the southern province of Carinthia in a coalition between the FPÖ and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), but was obliged to resign two years later after asserting in a *Landtag* debate that "an orderly employment policy was carried out in the Third Reich, which the government in Vienna cannot manage". Further honing its populist message, the FPÖ increased its vote to 16.6% at the 1990 federal election and thereafter made a series of major gains in provincial elections. Haider replaced the FPÖ's traditionally strong support for European integration with opposition to European Union membership, but failed to prevent the electorate voting decisively in favour in June 1994. After registering a further advance in the Vorarlberg provincial election in September 1994, the FPÖ's share of the vote rose to 22.6% (and 42 seats) in the October federal elections.

Caught off guard by the sudden collapse of the federal SPÖ-ÖVP coalition in October 1995, the FPÖ slipped to 40 seats and 21.9% at December's snap election. Yet the re-establishment of the SPÖ-ÖVP coalition gave the party renewed momentum at Austria's first direct Euro-elections of October 1996, at which it won 27.5% of the vote and six seats. Its subsequent provincial election successes featured a 42% vote share in Carinthia in March 1999, as a result of which Haider again became provincial governor (in coalition with the SPÖ and the ÖVP).

In the June 1999 Euro-elections the FPÖ fell back to 23.5% and five seats. But Haider achieved a major advance in the October federal election, his party's 26.9% vote share being slightly greater than the ÖVP's and giving it 52 *Nationalrat* seats, the same number as the ÖVP. The eventual outcome in February 2000 was the formation of a highly controversial ÖVP-FPÖ coalition in which the FPÖ took half of the ministerial posts, although the coalition agreement contained none of the FPÖ's more radical policies. Haider himself not only did not figure in the new ministerial team but also bowed out as FPÖ chairman, being succeeded by the new Vice-Chancellor, Susanne Riess-Passer. He nevertheless remained effective leader of the party.

Soon after the diplomatic sanctions imposed on Austria because of the FPÖ's entry into government were lifted in September 2000, the party started to experience the political consequences of its abrupt transition from strident populist protest to incumbency. From late 2000 onwards, it lost substantial ground at virtually all elections, including in Vienna in March 2001 (minus 8 percentage points and 8 seats). Haider blamed the party's participation in a federal government which "needed to show more concern for the common people". The gulf between the FPÖ's government team and its uncompromising grass-roots (egged on by Haider, who was then still a member of the coalition committee) grew. Divisions crystallized in particular around various government policies that were at odds with the party's longstanding populist message. These included the decision to fund interceptor fighters and delay tax reductions at a time of welfare cuts; the government's acceptance of EU enlargement eastwards despite concerns over the Czech Republic's refusal to rescind the Benes decrees (enacted after World War II to expropriate the Sudetenland Germans) or close down a nuclear plant that the FPÖ and many others argued was unsafe; and what the party grass-roots regarded as wholly inadequate safeguards against post-enlargement migration of eastern European workers.

Added to such substantive concerns were petty jealousies, political rivalries and a patent inability to recruit and retain competent ministers. The outcome was a public and highly dramatic process of political self-destruction that peaked in the so-called "Knittelfeld rebellion" of September 2002, which saw Ries-Passer's leadership team resign its government and party offices because it was unable to convince the grass-roots of the need to compromise. Schüssel called early elections for November 2002, at which the FPÖ crashed to 10% of the vote and 18 seats. Though the coalition was eventually reformed, the FPÖ received only three seats in cabinet and has since suffered further electoral setbacks, the last being at the Euro-elections of June 2004, when it could muster only 6.3% of the vote and one seat. By contrast, at the Carinthian *Landtag* elections of March 2004, Haider not only retained the governorship, but marginally increased his party's share of the vote (to 42.4%).

Though Haider remained the power behind the throne, the FPÖ has formally had four leaders since September 2002: Herbert Scheibner, former Infrastructure Minister Matthias Reichhold, Social Affairs Minister Herbert Haupt and, since July 3, 2004, Haider's sister, Ursula Haubner, who was elected at an extraordinary party congress. She took over an organizationally weak and demoralized party that had lost more than half of its state funding. Persistent calls for party unity notwithstanding, it appeared likely in mid-2004 that the internal disputes would continue.

In mid-2004, the FPÖ headed the Carinthia government, but only participated in one other provincial administration: that of Vorarlberg (in coalition with the ÖVP). It was reluctant to disclose its membership figures, which have presumably dropped from the 2000 level of 51,296. The FPÖ does not belong to a transnational party federation and its single MEP is part of the "unattached" contingent.

The Greens–Green Alternative

Die Grünen–Die Grüne Alternativen (GA)

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Leadership. Alexander Van der Bellen (spokesperson and parliamentary group leader); Eva Glawischnig (deputy spokesperson); Madeleine Petrovic (deputy spokesperson and leader of Lower Austrian *Landtag* group); Franz Floss (business manager)

The GA was formed in 1987 as a union of three alternative groupings which had won a total of eight seats in the 1986 federal election, although the conservative United Greens of Austria subsequently opted to retain their organizational independence. Its component groups had already become influential through campaigning on environmental issues, their biggest success being the referendum decision in 1978 not to proceed with the commissioning of the country's first nuclear power station at Zwentendorf. As a parliamentary party, the GA has not only sought to bring environmental concerns to the forefront of economic and industrial decision-making but has also pressed for the dismantling of the *Proporz* system whereby the two main post-war parties have shared out the top posts in government bodies and nationalized industries. Compared to many Green parties abroad, the GA's policy profile is relatively moderate and its leader enjoys very high public approval ratings.

The GA increased its representation to 10 seats in the 1990 federal election and thereafter unsuccessfully opposed the government's policy of joining the European Union. In the October 1994 federal elections the formation advanced to 7% of the national vote, giving it 13 seats, but it fell back to 4.8% and nine seats in the December 1995 elections. In Austria's first direct elections to the European Parliament in October 1996, the GA improved to 6.8%, which gave it one seat. It doubled this tally to two seats in the June 1999 Euro-elections (with 9.2% of the vote) and then advanced to 14 *Nationalrat* seats in the October 1999 federal elections (with 7.4% of the vote). The party's growing success continued at the general election of November 2002 (9.5% and 17 seats) and the Euro-election of June 2004 (12.75% and two seats). A key consequence of the GA's enhanced electoral strength has been the perception that it may soon enter national government. Until the end of the 2002 campaign, this seemed most likely to be in coalition with the SPÖ. Yet, to the surprise of many, the GA was invited by Chancellor Schüssel to post-election discussions about a possible coalition with the ÖVP and that option has remained a topic of conversation ever since.

At provincial level the GA was in mid-2004 represented in all nine of Austria's *Landtage*. Its share of the vote is greatest in urban Vienna (12.5% in March 2001) and in Tyrol (15.6% in 2003), where transit traffic constitutes a major political theme. The GA passed a political milestone in December 2003, when following its strong showing at the Upper Austrian *Landtag* election of September 2003 it entered a provincial government for the first time. The fact that its partner was the ÖVP significantly weakens the arguments of those who seek to portray the GA as a peripheral party lacking governmental potential.

Claiming an individual membership of 3,000 as well as many affiliated groups, the GA is a member of the European Federation of Green Parties. Its two representatives in the European Parliament sit in the Greens/European Free Alliance group.

Social Democratic Party of Austria

Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ)

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Leadership. Alfred Gusenbauer (chairman and parliamentary party leader); Josef Cap (executive parliamentary party leader); Doris Bures & Norbert Darabos (party managers)

The SPÖ is descended from the 1874 Social Democratic Workers' Party, which advocated social revolution and the transformation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a federation of co-existing nations. It developed a mass party organization and became the largest parliamentary party on the strength of universal male franchise, but had no direct political influence before World War I. On the establishment of the Austrian Republic in 1919 it was briefly in government under Karl Renner, but went into opposition in 1920, formally remaining committed to "Austro-Marxism" and to resorting to armed struggle if the bourgeoisie sought to resist social revolution. In the early 1930s, the pro-fascist Dollfus government adopted authoritarian methods, dissolving the *Nationalrat* in March 1933 and introducing rule by decree. The party's paramilitary Republican Defence League, itself already banned, responded by mounting an uprising in Vienna in February 1934, but was quickly defeated. Following the proclamation of a quasi-fascist constitution three months later, the party went underground and participated with other democratic forces in anti-fascist resistance until German forces occupied Austria in 1938.

On the re-establishment of the Republic in 1945, the SPÖ adopted a pro-Western stance and participated in an all-party coalition government including the Communist Party of Austria. From November 1947, however, it became the junior partner in a two-party coalition with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) that endured until 1966, when the SPÖ went into opposition. In 1970 it returned to power as the sole governing party under the leadership of Bruno Kreisky, forming a minority government until 1971, when it gained an absolute *Nationalrat* majority it retained in the 1975 and 1979 elections. A party congress in 1978 renounced public ownership as a necessary requirement of democratic socialism.

Losing its overall majority in the 1983 election, the SPÖ formed a coalition with the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and Kreisky handed over the government and party leadership to Fred Sinowatz. The day after the SPÖ's candidate failed to win the presidential election in June 1986, Sinowatz resigned and was succeeded as Chancellor by Franz Vranitzky, who in September 1986 terminated the coalition because of the FPÖ's move to the right. Having lost ground sharply in November elections, the SPÖ formed a "grand coalition" with the ÖVP in January 1987, under Vranitzky's chancellorship. Later that year an SPÖ congress gave qualified support to the government's privatization programme.

The SPÖ-ÖVP coalition was maintained after the October 1990 elections, in which the SPÖ remained the largest party. In 1991 the party renamed itself "Social Democratic" rather than "Socialist", retaining the SPÖ abbreviation. The government's key external policy of EC/EU membership was endorsed by the electorate in June 1994 by a 2:1 majority. In the October 1994 federal elections, the SPÖ vote slipped to a new post-war low of 35.2% and the party opted to continue its coalition with the ÖVP. In October 1995, however, the coalition collapsed over budget policy differences, with the result that new elections were held in December. Against most predictions, Vranitzky led the SPÖ to a significant electoral recovery, yielding 71 seats and 38.1% of the vote. In March 1996 he was appointed to a fifth term as Chancellor, heading a further coalition between the SPÖ and the ÖVP.

Austria's first direct elections to the European Parliament in October 1996 produced a slump in SPÖ support, to 29.2% and six seats. In January 1997 Vranitzky resigned as Chancellor, a week after the SPÖ had pushed through the controversial privatization of the Creditanstalt, the country's second-largest bank. The architect of the privatization, Finance Minister Viktor Klima, succeeded him as Chancellor and, in April 1997, as SPÖ chairman. Subsequent regional elections showed an erosion of SPÖ support, which recovered only to 31.7% in the June 1999 European Parliament elections, in which the party increased from six to seven seats.

The October 1999 parliamentary elections produced a setback for both federal coalition parties, the SPÖ falling to 33.2% and 65 seats. As leader of still the largest party, Klima was asked to form a new government, but this attempt failed and the SPÖ went into opposition to a controversial new coalition of the ÖVP and the FPÖ. Klima resigned as party chairman in February 2000 and was succeeded by Alfred Gusenbauer. He inherited a party in considerable debt, shell-shocked at being catapulted into opposition – a role the SPÖ had only experienced for four of the preceding 55 years – and at risk of severe internal conflict over policy. During the early months of his leadership, Austria's political agenda was dominated by the sanctions imposed upon the government by the remaining members of the EU, making it all but impossible for Gusenbauer to focus public attention on issues he thought might help his party, including, for example, the government's unpopular economic retrenchment policies.

Yet the SPÖ's electoral fortunes did revive, first at Vienna's 2001 provincial election, where the party won 47% of the vote and 50 (of 100) seats. In the November 2002 general election the party came second with 69 seats (36.5% of the vote); at the presidential election of April 2004 its candidate won by 52% to 48%; and in the EU elections of June 2004 it increased its share of the vote by four percentage points to 33% and took seven of the 18 seats. The SPÖ also made advances at all provincial elections held between 2001 and mid-2004. Increases ranged from 3 to 13 percentage points (Lower Austria in March 2003 and Salzburg in March 2004 respectively). In mid-2004, the SPÖ held the governorships of Vienna (in coalition with the ÖVP), of Burgenland (in coalition with the ÖVP and FPÖ) and – for the first time ever – that of Salzburg (in coalition with the ÖVP). It also participated in the governments of the other six provinces.

Though he managed to somewhat reduce the intra-party influence of the SPÖ's trade union wing, by mid-2004 Gusenbauer had not realized his ambition to radically overhaul the party's cumbersome apparatus. Nor had he been able to capitalize fully on the frequent crises within and between the governing parties. Moreover, the post-2002 election coalition discussions between the ÖVP and GA mean the latter could in principle coalesce with the ÖVP, which in turn means that even if the SPÖ were to emerge from a subsequent general elections as the strongest party, it could potentially still find itself relegated to an opposition role.

In mid-2004, the SPÖ's membership was about 360,000 (down from a high of 721,262 in 1979). The SPÖ is a founder member of the Socialist International and its seven representatives in the European Parliament are members of the Party of European Socialists group.

Other Parties

Communist Party of Austria (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*, KPÖ), founded by pro-Soviet Social Democrats in 1919. In government from 1945-47 and represented in the lower house until 1959; it was until the 1990s reputedly one of the richest Austrian parties on the strength of industrial holdings acquired under the post-war Soviet occupation. In late 2003, it finally lost a lengthy legal battle to control the assets of the former East German company Novum and found itself in severe financial straits. It took only 0.3% of the vote in 1994 parliamentary elections, improving to 0.48% in 1999 and 0.56% in 2002.

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Leadership. Walter Baier (chairman)

Hans-Peter Martin List – For Real Control in Brussels

Liste Dr Hans-Peter Martin – Für echte Kontrolle in Brüssel (HPM)

Launched in May 2004, the HPM List won 14% of the vote and two seats at the 2004 European Parliament elections. Having achieved Europe-wide publicity for his attacks on fellow MEPs' alleged abuse of the European Parliament's lax regulations on travel expenses, Hans-Peter Martin fought the elections on a ticket opposing EU waste and corruption. His success owed much to the support of the tabloid *Kronenzeitung*, Austria's largest circulation newspaper. An author and former *Spiegel* journalist, Martin had headed the SPÖ list at the 1999 European elections, but soon broke with his delegation and the party. Though it has suggested it might contest Austria's next general election, in July 2004 it remained unclear whether the HPM List would turn out to be just a flash party.

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Leadership. Hans-Peter Martin (party leader)

Liberal Forum (LIF, *Die Liberalen*), launched in February 1993 by five *Nationalrat* deputies of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) who disagreed with Haider's anti-EU and anti-foreigner stance and led by Heide Schmidt. Given the prevailing mood of anti-party scepticism, the LIF eschewed the label "party" and terms its members "partners". It sought to position itself as market oriented and libertarian and in June 1996 became a full member of the Liberal International.

The LIF achieved successes in the federal elections of October 1994 (5.7% and 11 seats) and December 1995 (5.7% and 10 seats), as well as at the October 1996 European Parliament elections (4.3% and one seat). However, its failure to surmount the 4% barrier at any subsequent national election means it no longer has *Nationalrat* or European Parliament seats. Though it won representation in the *Landtage* of Lower Austria (1993), Styria (1995) and Vienna (1996), it has since failed to get elected to any provincial parliament. These failures unleashed severe internal conflict regarding the leadership of Schmidt, who resigned in 2000, and the relative significance of social and economic liberalism. In October 2002, the LIF obtained only 0.98% of the general election vote.

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Leadership. Alexander Tach (party spokesperson)