



Photo: City Hall Vienna

Women's Political Participation on the Local Level in Austria

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Foreword¹

Whilst Austria ranks quite high as an OSCE participating State as far as female representation goes at national level it shows considerable deficits when it comes to representation in local structures and municipalities². The critical mass of 30 percent regarded as the threshold for consolidation of fair gender representation is a far off goal at this level of governance. The OSCE stresses the importance of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women to participate in political and public life. This is seen as an essential prerequisite to “achieve a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic OSCE area”.³ Furthermore the Organisation encourages “all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving a better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making”. The Council of Europe, of which Austria is a member, “has set the objective of achieving a gender balance in decision-making processes, with the initial target of a critical mass of at least 40% women in all governmental and elected bodies”.⁴

The picture regarding women’s participation in the regional (Landtag) parliaments of Austria is geographically patchy and trends are not entirely consistent. An increase in representation here is not always matched by an increased female presence in the state governments. For example, whilst there is a high percentage of female representation in the Landtag of Upper Austria, the percentage in the government is low. When there is fair gender representation (eg Tyrol), the departments assigned to women are the typical “soft” female profiles, eg family, women, children etc. A report of the upper house of the Austrian parliament, the Bundesrat, also noted that women are not so often to be found as chairs of committees in the chamber, and when, then mostly on committees for youth, family, equality, health and education.⁵

¹ Information was collected at the end of 2013 from official sources. At local and regional levels changes frequently occur. The numbers of Mayors in Austria is provided by the Austrian Association of Municipalities (Gemeindebund) that itself receives updated information from the towns with a time lag of a few months. The ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully, updated some entries for Lower Austria. All statistics therefore represent a time snapshot.

² See P. Norris/M. Krook, “Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan”, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 2012.

³ See „Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, Ministerial Council Decision 7/09 <http://www.osce.org/mc/40710>. The OSCE comprises 57 participating States stretching across three continents, North America, Europe and Asia.

⁴ Council of Europe Resolution <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/ERES1489.htm>

⁵ „Frauen in der Kommunalpolitik“, Report Bundesrat, 2011/12, Parliamentary Administration, Vienna.

In addition to quantitative participation and representation, the “power mass” is a consideration, ie the type of representation, at what level and with what powers, influence, prestige, or competencies. This point was noted in relation to the parity government in France, “a closer examination of the portfolios given to the new government reveals ongoing inequalities, with gender stereotyping appearing to influence portfolio allocation, and the most powerful positions remaining almost exclusively the preserve of men”.⁶

This short overview study shows that there is still much to do in raising awareness of the value of women’s political participation in Austria. This is especially acute in communal politics although it must be noted that here there is a problem of finding sufficient candidates to come forward for posts such as mayors. Both men and women are deterred by the unsocial hours and increased responsibilities, but women with young families find it especially hard to manage without adequate support from relatives or networks. The political culture at local level can be an additional hurdle for women thinking of standing for office in local structures.

I. Female Representation and Multi-Level Governance

Austria is a federal state composed of nine separate provinces or states (Land). Each has their own regional parliament (Landtag) and government with a state governor (Landeshauptmann). Currently, none of the state governors are female. In the past, the state of Salzburg had a female governor 2004-13 (SPÖ), as also did Styria 1996-2005 (ÖVP). In practice, the governors of Lower Austria (ÖVP) and Vienna (SPÖ) are reckoned to wield considerable influence in national politics; neither post has been held by a female.

Below the nine states are over two thousand towns and municipalities with councillors and a mayor.

The party system in Austria has played a fundamental role in shaping historically the state and has largely been dominated by two main parties, the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and Christian Democratic People’s Party (ÖVP). In addition, there are four other parties in parliament, viz the right wing Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Greens, a Team Stronach and a newcomer to the political scene, the Neos. Whilst the dominance of the two main parties has waned considerably at national level, they still to a large extent influence politics at state and communal levels. Almost 90% of all female mayors come from either

⁶ Rainbow Murray, “Towards Parity Democracy?”, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66/1/2013.

the ÖVP or SPÖ. All nine governors currently are drawn from these two parties, which are in coalition with each other at national level.

Austria has constitutional rights for women and men and a proportional representation election system, reckoned to provide fair gender opportunities. But as the OSCE report on the parliamentary elections of 2013 noted, there are no special provisions to promote women candidates⁷. Parties draw up candidate lists, which allow for preferential voting. Each Land has their own laws governing elections and constitutional provisions.

According to information from the Austrian parliament, around a third of deputies in the National Council are women and 18 of 61 members of the Upper House Federal Council (29.5%)⁸. In 2006 the first female Speaker of the National Council was elected, Ms. Barbara Prammer from the SPÖ, who was confirmed in office in 2013.

Current entries on the website of the Austrian parliament indicate that ten members of the Federal Council are also mayors of which two are women. Currently, there are 13 mayors who are also members of the National Council and of these, three are women (two coming from Lower Austria for the ÖVP and one from Upper Austria for the SPÖ).⁹

In the European Parliament, 31.6% of those elected in Austria are women. Austria has never had a woman as Federal Chancellor or Federal President, although there was a female Vice Chancellor 2000-3 (FPÖ). The post of president of the National Audit Office, elected by parliament, has since the war been occupied by men.

The parliamentary elections of 2013 showed a slight increase in female representation in the Lower House or Nationalrat. The main negotiation teams for hammering out a coalition pact however showed a paucity of women representatives. Despite promises that this would be “rectified” at ministerial level, the all-important Finance Ministry became once again a male preserve. Typical ministries held by women since the war have tended to be health, social affairs, education, family, women’s issues, and justice¹⁰.

⁷ „Parliamentary Elections, Republic of Austria“, OSCE/ODIHR Report, December 2013.

⁸ http://www.parlament.gv.at/SERV/STAT/PERSSTAT/FRAUENANTEIL/frauenanteil_NR.shtml

⁹ Information supplied by Marion Breitschopf of „meine abgeordneten“.

¹⁰ See „Frauenbericht 2010“, Federal Chancellery, Vienna.

In Austria, women form the majority of the population and make up 51.8% of those eligible to vote in parliamentary elections, according to figures released by the Ministry of Interior.

Female Representation at Local, Regional Level, Population Austria %

Federal State	Mayors	Deputies <i>Landtag</i>	% Population
Burgenland	4.1	19.4	51.9
Carinthia	2.3	22.2	51.5
Lower Austria	7.7	21.4	50.1
Upper Austria	6.5	46.4	50.8
Salzburg	2.5	41.7	51.5
Styria	5.4	33.9	51.1
Tyrol	3.6	30.6	51.0
Vorarlberg	6.3	33.3	50.8
Vienna	-	35.0	52.0
Austria	5.6	32.4	51.2

Sources: Austrian Association of Municipalities, Federal State Webportals, ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully; data from end of 2013 and Statistik Austria (population figures for 2012).

Over the last 20 years, an increase in female representation in the state parliaments can be noted especially in Upper Austria and Tyrol. In Carinthia in the south of Austria, there has been a slight increase, whilst the figure for Vienna has stabilised at a high level.

% Female Representation in the Landtagen 1996-2008

Federal State	1996	2000	2003	2008
Burgenland	8	17	19	22
Carinthia	17	19	17	19
Lower Austria	13	18	18	18
Upper Austria	21	27	25	39
Salzburg	25	33	35	36
Styria	18	21	29	25
Tyrol	8	17	17	25
Vorarlberg	22	25	33	39
Vienna	35	37	37	42

Sources: Webportal and B. Steininger, “Der Wiener Landtag”, 2008 accessed under www.demokratiezentrum.org; statistics given often provide different information depending on when collected in the year. Here the data for 2008 has been taken from the Report on Women, Federal Chancellery, 2010, and “Women and Men in Styria”, 2008.

According to the “Report on Women” of the Federal Chancellery, the average percentage of women in the state governments rose from 18% in 1994 to well over 30% in 2008, but this is attributable to a strong increase in a few regions,

eg in Vienna there were in 1994 just 26.7% female members of the city government. Vorarlberg increased female representation in the state government from 14.3% in 2000 to 28.6% in 2009, which is the current figure. In Styria the percentage of female representation has declined since 2000.

At the moment, female representation in the state governments on average in Austria is about a third.

% Female Representation in the State Governments 2000-13

Federal State	2000	2008	2013
Burgenland	-	28.6	28.6
Carinthia	14.3	14.3	28.6
Lower Austria	22.2	44.4	44.4
Upper Austria	11.1	11.1	11.1*
Salzburg	22.2	42.9	28.6
Styria	33.3	22.2	22.2
Tyrol	28.6	25.0	50.0
Vorarlberg	14.3	14.3	28.6
Vienna	35.8	50.0	46.2

Sources: B. Steininger, *Feminisierung der Politik*; City Government Vienna; Frauenbericht, Federal Chancellery, Vienna, 2008; Webportals, and ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully.

*Should increase to 22.2% at the end of January 2014 according to information office of Upper Austria state government.

Vienna includes in its City Government councillors without portfolios in addition to Executive City Councillors. All have been included here for the sake of comparison with earlier data. Those without portfolio also sit and can vote in the city government. If those without portfolio are excluded female representation in the city government would amount to 55.6% (2013).¹¹

II. The Capital

Vienna has a special status as a municipality and a federal state (Art 108 – 114 Federal Constitution). Since 1945, the position of the Mayor, who is also at the same time the Governor (Landeshauptmann), has been held by a man. Currently, there are two deputy mayors (deputy governors) who are both women (one from the SPÖ and one from the Greens).

In the Landtag, since 1945 the percentage of women represented surpassed the critical mass of 30%, although the upward trend is not consistent.

¹¹ See Wiener Stadtverfassung and M. Welan, „Verfassung als Wiener System“, in A. Khol et al ed. *Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik 1991*.

Female Representation in the Vienna Landtag after Regional Elections

Year	% Women
1945	14
1949	13
1954	17
1959	16
1964	15
1969	15
1973	19
1978	20
1983	18
1987	25
1991	28
1996	35
2001	37
2005	40
2008	42
2010	34

Source: „Frauen und Männeranteile der Mitglieder des Wiener Landtages 1945-2010“, www.wien.gv.at.

There have been female chairs of the municipality (1973-78, 1991-96 and 1996-2001). One deputy mayor is a woman in charge of finance and economic affairs (SPÖ) whilst the other deputy, a member of the Greens, is responsible for climate, transport and urban planning. Furthermore women have executive responsibilities for integration, women's issues, consumer protection, environment, public health and hospitals.

Women chair committees covering consumer protection, women, integration, petitions and European affairs. The City Council has a project office for gender mainstreaming and departments concerned with promoting gender equality.

III. Local Structures and Mayors¹².

Austria is a country of mayors, there are 2,354 towns, cities and municipalities but very few (131) have a female Bürgermeister. Within their own confines, the mayor can exercise considerable power and influence. The first female mayor in Austria was in a town in Lower Austria in 1953. Up until 2004 there were no

¹² This section is based on a number of interviews by phone and e mail conducted with mayors, regional politicians and experts at the end of 2013/beginning of 2014. Special thanks due amongst others to Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Salzburg), Daniel Kosak of the Austrian Association of Municipalities and the mayor of Wiener Neustadt, Bernhard Müller. The summary presented here is the conclusion of the ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully.

female mayors in the state of Salzburg. In 1991 there were just seven women as mayors in the whole of Austria. Studies carried out in 2003 showed that in Austria the percentage of female mayors was just under two percent and in 1998 the figure was 1.4%¹³. The first female mayor in Vorarlberg was elected in 1995. In 2008 there were just 4% women mayors in Austria with just 0.7% in Tyrol and almost 6% in Lower Austria. Whilst five years ago the percentage of female mayors in Carinthia was 3.8% it is now just 2.3%. Salzburg with 2.5% has stagnated.

% Women Mayors by Land 1999-2013

Federal State	2013	2008	1999
Burgenland	4.1	3.5	1.8
Carinthia	2.3	3.8	1.6
Lower Austria	7.7	5.9	2.8
Upper Austria	6.5	4.5	1.8
Salzburg	2.5	2.5	-
Styria	5.4	3.9	2.4
Tyrol	3.6	0.7	0.7
Vorarlberg	6.3	3.1	1.0
Vienna	-	0.0	-
Austria	5.6	4.0	1.4

Sources: Austrian Association of Municipalities, Webportals, ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully; Report on Women 2010 and K. Hofer/E. Wolfgruber „Politik und Geschlecht“, Studienverlag, Innsbruck, 2000.

Numbers of Female Mayors by State and Party 2013

Federal State	SPÖ	ÖVP	Other
Burgenland	6	1	-
Carinthia	2	-	1
Lower Austria	16	27	1
Upper Austria	10	17	2
Salzburg	1	2	-
Styria	8	20	1
Tyrol	2	2	6
Vorarlberg	-	3	3
Vienna	-	-	-
Austria	45	72	14

Source: Austrian Association of Municipalities, end of 2013

¹³ Research by U. Gadermeier, University of Vienna and B. Steininger “Feminisierung der Demokratie?”, Vienna, 2000.

Most female mayors are either from the ÖVP (55%) or the SPÖ (34%). A third of all female mayors come from Lower Austria.

Mayors are directly elected apart from the states of Lower Austria, Styria and Vienna. Mayors also can be members of a Landtag or members of parliament (Federal or National Council).

The easternmost federal state of Burgenland has a low percentage of female mayors, but one is in Mattersburg with a population of just over 7,000.

Only one of the nine federal state capitals, Innsbruck in Tyrol has a woman mayor, just over 11%. Innsbruck is the only town with a population over 50,000 to have a female mayor.

Of the first ten largest towns in Austria (excluding the capital), only one has a woman mayor in addition to Innsbruck ie Dornbirn (ÖVP) with just over 46,000 inhabitants in Vorarlberg (since 2013). The next largest town with a female mayor (SPÖ) is in Amstetten, Lower Austria with a population of almost 23,000. Only about 10% of towns in Austria have a population of over 5,000. Of the towns, cities and local structures with a population over 10,000 there are seven with a female mayor (just over 9%).

Numbers of Female Mayors according to Size of Town, 2013

Population	Female Mayors	Total Number
Over 50,000	1	9*
20,001-50,000	2	17
10,001-20,000	4**	50
Up to 10,000	124	2278
Total	131	2354

Figures from Statistical Office Austria, 2013 and Austrian Association of Municipalities, end of 2013.

*Including Vienna; ** Hall in Tyrol (ÖVP), Wörgl Tyrol (SPÖ), Lienz Tyrol (SPÖ), Seekirchen Salzburg (ÖVP).

IV. Challenges and Good Practices

Reasons given for the low presence of women mayors range from a perceived hostile political culture in small villages and towns to an apparent lack of willing candidates of either sex to fulfil the increasing onerous duties of a Bürgermeister. Women, it is said, often choose themselves to prioritise the

family and are reluctant to take the initiative in standing for local public office¹⁴. Combining the two is seen as a major challenge without support from family members or support groups. Being a mayor is not only a full time job even in small communities, but more a way of life. A mayor is expected to show up to every christening, wedding and funeral and absence would cause insult to possibly close neighbours. There are in addition administrative, managerial and financial control duties that come with the job that over the years have increased. A mayor is responsible for a palette of financial decisions and can be expected to be subject to more media scrutiny and transparency than ever before. A lapse can lead rapidly to a corruption case, a scandal in the media and a ruined career even if subsequently allegations prove groundless.

For many in rural areas the mayor should be a convivial type, someone to go for a drink with and who is active in the community in a local club, association or voluntary fire brigade service. The president of the Association of Municipalities considers that the culture is quite different in Austria than elsewhere, “the mayor has to be available the whole time and is in charge of security, building works as well as acting as a kind of spiritual Father for confession”. With one evening obligation after another, little time is left for anything else. In rural areas and small communities, it is expected and also mostly the case that women are in charge of running the household and the family. Those that do make it in local politics speak of the vital support they received from family members. The mayor of Innsbruck for example, said “without the help of my parents I could never have gone in to politics”

In the Tyrolean small village of Niederndorferberg, the first woman mayor was elected in 2013 representing a joint list of women - “Gemeinschaftsliste der Frauen”. Asked how she would combine the job with being a mother of three, she replied “the youngest is 11 and goes to school (Hauptschule) and the two others are aged 18 and 20”.

The Mayor of Innsbruck further noted that a female politician is under constant observation and traits that would be accorded a sign of strength in a man, for a woman are considered negative. For example a strong determined woman will be criticised for being stubborn and pushy, and instead of being seen as friendly or entertaining a woman will be dubbed chatty, trivial or laughable.¹⁵ Women

¹⁴ Based on several (off the record) telephone interviews with experts involved in promoting network groups at local level, conducted by ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully, at the end of 2013/beginning of 2014.

¹⁵ This section is based on interviews noted by Petra Tempfer, „Männer haben mich gewählt“, *Wiener Zeitung*, 7.3. 2012.

also complain that their competence, eg on economics would often be questioned by men trying to put them down. An insistence on recognition of qualifications proves a forbidding hurdle in a predominantly male environment at a small local meeting.¹⁶

A former mayor of Eisenstadt, the capital of Burgenland also mentioned in an interview the difficulties of combining family with politics. When she entered politics, her son was already ten years old, but many women, in her opinion, prefer to concentrate on the family. Generally, the former mayor believes that women seem to be less inclined on planning a career in politics than their male colleagues, but decide more spontaneously when asked first, rather than taking the initiative. Also, the foundation for a political career as mayor is very often forged between the ages of 30 and 40 within a party structure, an age when many women will give priority to the family.

Party Rules and Quotas

Experts note that internal party quotas at local level count for little, not to mention so-called “modern” ideas of gender balance¹⁷. Most of the main Austrian parties have some kind of internal quota provision for the candidate lists, apart from the FPÖ. The SPÖ and Greens have introduced “zipping” for the lists, but only the Greens have this at all levels for elections. Whilst the SPÖ has zipping for the party lists in its statute since 2010, it is not always carried out consistently in practice, especially at local level and some behind the scenes bargaining goes on beyond the formal drawing up of the lists. The FPÖ rejects quotas in principle. None of the parties has a quota for “newcomers”, as adopted by the Greens in Berlin to ensure a certain number of new candidates.¹⁸ In larger towns, eg Wiener Neustadt, parties will consider a gender balance, candidates with migration background as well as a representative geographical or generation balance¹⁹. Aside from how the lists are constituted, it often transpires at local level that women themselves ask to be ranked lower down. Local politics is seen as too time consuming and a high ranking position could bring

¹⁶ B. Blaha/O. Zwickelsdorfer, „Geschlechter-Quoten in Wahlsystemen“, Grüne Werkstattsschriften, 4/2013.

¹⁷ Interviews with local politicians as well as experts in the main parties, conducted by ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully, at the end of 2013/beginning of 2014.

¹⁸ Thanks is due to Barbara Hofmann of the Renner Institute, Vienna; information also in B. Blaha/S. Kuba “Das Ende der Krawattenpflicht”, Vienna 2012. See also Iris Bonavida, “Die verschlungenen Wege ins Parlament”, Die Presse, 17.8. 2013.

¹⁹ Information from the Mayor of Wiener Neustadt.

with it the “risk” of standing as mayor.²⁰ A report on one of the main regions in Vorarlberg with 24 towns showed that in most there was only one list and “finding candidates is done by the most powerful in the village”.²¹

Capacity Development

In 2007, the first network of women mayors was founded in Salzburg with the aim of increasing female participation at local level. It was supported by the Association of Municipalities which then stated, it aimed for 10% women mayors in the “coming years”.²² Although this has not materialised, women are now better integrated into a network that they value for exchanging ideas with colleagues. Regular workshops and annual meetings are held of the women mayor network. Party politics takes a back seat in the project, which seeks to mutually support female mayors throughout the country. The network organises courses dealing with problems that could crop up in daily political life, the media and politics, how to manage emotional topics, sickness in the family and generally combine job and family²³. Courses are offered for local politicians on time management, local budgets, and support for stress management. Today a mayor can be expected to deal with a higher stress threshold than before. Also they will be held responsible for the failings of national politicians or policies. The training courses also include how to deal with threats or abuse that a mayor may encounter while in office. The Association of Municipalities supports the network although the administration is undertaken by the mayors themselves and there is no autonomous structure. Mayors applaud this scheme and in eg Tyrol report that the network has been a success.

In addition to this national network, the individual federal states also now have their own webportals with comprehensive information for women covering not only political participation but gender issues, the family and work environment. The women’s network in Vorarlberg for example was founded in 2000 and has a department in the Vorarlberg state government. There are special courses including “Fit for Politics”, support lines, newsletters and experts on hand throughout the state to advise and encourage women in careers and regional or communal politics. In Tyrol similarly a women’s department in the state

²⁰ Discussions by ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully, with local and regional politicians.

²¹ Jutta Berger, „Diskussion über Kandidatenfindung im Bregenzerwald“, *DieStandard*, 10.3. 2010.

²² „Gemeindebund will mehr Bürgermeisterinnen“, *DieStandard*, 30.8. 2007.

²³ See Camilla Kleinsasser, „Zereißprobe zwischen Amt und Familie“, *Kleine Zeitung*, 16.8. 2013.

government is active in organising mentoring programmes, courses in public speaking, local budgetary issues and the law and other practical and relevant topics for communal politics and management.

Pay for a mayor varies from state to state and depending on the size of the town. This can range from under 2000 Euros a month in a village with less than 500 inhabitants in Burgenland or Styria to around 7000 to 8000 Euros in a town with over 20,000 people in Lower Austria or Upper Austria²⁴. The job of a mayor in a small town is not seen as especially rewarding, considering the time it necessarily involves. About 80% of mayors, according to the Association of Municipalities, have a civilian job and therefore will be working around 70 hours a week or more.

Numbers of women councillors are estimated to make up on average just over 20% of the total, in comparison with 14% in 1999. Studies show for example that in Burgenland there was an increase from around 10% in 1992 to just under 20% in 2011; in Vorarlberg in 1991 there were just 9% female councillors which has increased steadily (13% in 1995, 17% in 2000, 20% just over since 2005).

Data for 2011 shows for Styria around 23%, and Salzburg 18%, with Tyrol at 16.5%, and there were less than 20% female councillors in Carinthia.²⁵ Local councillors too have increased their networking by forming cross-party mentoring projects.

V. Power at Land Level (apart from Vienna)

In addition to the points above, the following serves as a brief overview of the individual states in Austria. It does not aim to be comprehensive, but show in addition to statistics the power distribution in terms of portfolios in government and a selection of other important, leading posts.

1. In **Burgenland**, two of the seven members of government are women (one SPÖ, one ÖVP) (28.6%) responsible for women, the family, youth, consumer

²⁴ Thanks to Marion Breitschopf of Meine Abgeordneten (<http://www.meineabgeordneten.at>) for pay scales for 2013.

²⁵ See Association for Municipalities, and Doris Damyanovic, research on Burgenland, 2011 and V. Lehner, Politische Partizipation von Frauen auf kommunaler Ebene, 2007. Also „Frauen/ die Kommunalpolitik“, EuroKommunal, August, 2010; Bericht zu „Gender Budgeting“. Frauenreferat Vorarlberg, 2012.

protection and the environment and water, sanitation, tourism, schools, kindergärten. Burgenland has had a male governor since the war.

All chairs of the Landtag since the war have been male and currently there are two deputies also male. Women chair three committees of eleven, dealing with responsibility for social affairs (SPÖ), the environment (SPÖ) and economics (ÖVP). The Burgenland court of audit is also run by a man.

2. In *Carinthia*, the government consists of two women out of seven (28.6%). The governor is male with a female deputy in charge of social affairs, health, women, youth and senior citizens. Another woman, also deputy, has the finance and housing agenda. As for the nine committees, one is chaired by a woman on social, health, family, women issues and another on financial oversight.

The chair of the Landtag is male as also are the deputies. The head of the state court of audit is male.

There are regular reports on women in the administration, politics, business and economics, which also highlight the rather large gender gap in the state.²⁶

3. In *Lower Austria*, the government consists of nine members, including the male governor with four women with responsibilities for consumer protection, economics, tourism, social and family affairs, building law and rights as well as asylum.

There are 13 committees, of which four are chaired by women, covering education, health, environment, and economic and financial matters.

The chair of the Landtag is male as are also the two deputies. The Lower Austrian state audit authority is headed by a woman.

4. In *Upper Austria*, the chair of the Landtag is male as also is the head of the state court of audit. Whereas Upper Austria has a relatively high percentage of women deputies in the Landtag, it is not matched by high gender representation in the state government. There are nine members of the government (just over 11%) with one woman (ÖVP) responsible for family, youth and school policies. According to the information office of the state government on 23 January 2014, a woman should replace a male member (social and youth affairs) bringing the figure to 22.2%.

²⁶ Carinthia Frauenreferat, Berichte.

There are 16 committees in the Landtag and women chair five, covering constitutional matters, environment, women, EU affairs, and petitions.

Since 2010, Upper Austria has produced a Report on Women, including political participation as well as social and economic indicators. The first report highlighted the underrepresentation of women in politics and in the capital Linz showed that, whilst women chaired a third of committees, they were primarily typical “female” ones such as family, youth, and women’s issues. It stressed the importance of increasing numbers of women in politics referring to the problems associated with isolation in a male dominated committee or group. Whilst working together with male colleagues could help, the report mentioned the problem of men who sought in this way to increase their own profile, without any genuine interest in promoting female participation.

5. In **Salzburg**, two of the seven members of government are women (28.6%), one of whom is a deputy governor. Amongst other matters, the women in government are responsible for the environment (Green), child care, youth, family and women (Green). As for committee chairs, three women out of ten are to be found for those concerned with infrastructure and transport as well as social and health affairs and petitions. Committees on finance, constitutional issues, economics, Europe and foreign affairs have male chairpersons.

The chair of the Landtag is female (ÖVP). The state court of audit is led by a man. Since the war, there was one female governor from the SPÖ in 2004-2013.

Salzburg City too produces a regular report on women in the city, which has over 52% women in the population. It shows that the number of female councillors has increased from 13% in 1977 to around 40% at present²⁷.

6. In **Styria**, there have been seven state governors since 1945, one of whom was a woman from the ÖVP in 1996-2005. The current government has nine members, including two women (22.2%), one from the ÖVP and the other from the SPÖ. They are responsible for health care, women, science and research, and finance.

The chair of the Landtag is male (ÖVP) and of the 16 committees, three are chaired by women covering health, administration, economy and tourism.

The head of the Styrian court of audit is a woman.

²⁷ See also „Politik für 52,8 Prozent“, http://www.stadt-salzburg.at/pdf/frauenbericht_der_stadt_salzburg_2013.pdf

7. In *Tyrol*, all nine governors since the war have been male. The current government has gender parity. Of the eight government members there are six from the ÖVP with two women and two Greens both female. There are two deputy governors, one of them a female from the Green party. Women are responsible for the environment, social, youth, women, education, family, senior citizens, and industrial affairs.

The chair of the Landtag is male, assisted by two male deputies. The Court Auditor of Tyrol is also male.

8. In *Vorarlberg*, the westernmost federal state, a woman has held the chair of the Landtag (ÖVP) since 2009, responsible for procedural matters (akin to the job of a Speaker), order in the chamber. Since 1945, there have been ten chairpersons of the Landtag (the incumbent and her predecessor both female).

The Landtag elects the federal state auditor currently held by a man, with a female as deputy.

Female members of the state government have increased since 2000 (14.3%) with a jump in 2009 to 28.6%²⁸. Since 1945, there have been five governors, all male.

In the Landtag government, two of the seven posts (28.6%) are held by women (both ÖVP). They are responsible for family, women, children, youth, senior citizens, education, kindergarten and sport matters. Of the 14 committees four are chaired by women covering social affairs, environment, finance, European affairs and emergencies.

VI. Politics, Media and Women

Women face a number of hurdles in politics in general which at local and regional level seem complicated by the endemic political culture. Many note also at national level that attention is paid to appearance rather than the content of speeches. Yet it must be said that today's media consumer age concentrates on external appearance at the expense of a politician's message. Much in the press for example will be made of a man who prefers a bow tie to a conventional tie, or the pattern of the tie may arouse interest in a parliamentary speech and an open neck shirt also will be described in detail. Emotions of politicians are

²⁸ Bericht, Frauenreferat, Vorarlberg, 2012.

extensively documented, but the media has covered cases of men as well as women politicians breaking out in tears when leaving office or confronted with problems. Politicians in general can be expected to come under more media attention at a time of duress. Experts note that the media landscape in Austria is largely dominated by a few mass “boulevard” papers, with little quality press, as compared with for example the UK, Germany or Switzerland²⁹. Furthermore, although there are many women journalists in Austria, there are few at the top in positions as editors. A gender balance between interviewees, whether print, radio or television, could be more consciously addressed to assess to what extent male and female experts and politicians are likely to be quoted or invited for opinion³⁰. A UK study covering ten advanced democracies found that there is a wide gender gap in political knowledge. The reasons given were that news coverage is heavily weighted toward male sources and that overall women are only interviewed or cited in 30% of TV news stories. The study concluded that such under-representation of women in news media may discourage women from political participation and “even prevent women from engaging as citizens in a democratic society”.³¹ The study further revealed that in all the countries researched, female sources tended to appear in soft news topics, such as family, lifestyle and culture. The research did not include Austria, but such work could raise awareness on women, politics and portrayal in the media and could influence political participation.

The image of a modern politician, tough as steel and with the constitution of an elephant has conditioned the way parliamentarians at all levels are seen. Austria still has a long way to go in accepting a kind of “normalcy” for the work of politicians. There have been cases where politicians covered up serious illnesses to maintain this image of a tough politician, while a recent change shows a few politicians brave enough to talk openly about ill health and stress.

Not just the image of the individual politician affects women’s participation in politics in Austria, but the generally poor image of politics as a job. An emphasis on confrontation rather than working together puts many women off going into politics, according to a former chairwoman of the Landtag in Vorarlberg. Often, as in her case, support comes from a family already long

²⁹ See T. Steinmauer, “Medien und Politik”, Forum für Politische Bildung”, 2012, pp.9-10. The popular „Kronen Zeitung“ dominates the market with almost 40% of all readership in Austria. Quality papers reach less than 10% of the market.

³⁰ Information supplied by Ulrike Weish, University of Vienna.

³¹ Prof Kaori Hayashi, Economic and Social Research Council, “Media System, Political Context and Informed Citizenship”, London, 2013. Among the countries covered were Australia, Canada, Italy, Norway and the UK.

engaged in politics. Despite the negative image of politics, many of those interviewed for this short study thought that the local mayor was a person held in some respect and enjoyed certain prestige and power within the community. However, he or she is “on view” the whole time and can expect little privacy; whether going shopping or about town, they will often be approached with a question or problem. In small towns, their private address is known, the family and almost every movement.³²

VII. Conclusion

Gender and politics is a topic which receives attention in Austria, but still many question why there should be such a concentration on women’s participation. There are after all many other groups underrepresented in politics, as the recent parliament elected at national level demonstrates. However, women form the majority of the population in Austria, and whilst parliaments may not have to be a true mirror image of society, the local gender gap is particularly glaring. The reports of women in politics come with a predictable ritualism every year before women’s day or after elections, while a presentation of the statistics slightly up or down acquires short term media interest, but glosses over the underlying problems. At communal level in Austria, there is a dramatic gender gap which can be and is being reduced by women’s networks. Here, the aim for a “critical mass” is an important one since with increased female presence and support, the feeling of being alone is reduced; critical mass is turned into critical action, in order to exercise critical power. At regional level, the problem is more to consolidate in cases where the critical mass of 30% has already been achieved, for example in the state parliaments. In addition, the “power mass”, to ensure that women are not stereotyped with responsibility in politics as at home with family issues, children and looking after the elderly, is a vital factor. Although these tasks are important in themselves, the high power positions and appointments in finance and economics should also be within the realistic reach of a woman politician.

Many initiatives at local level, such as networks, have proved their worth in boosting the morale of women considering politics. Increased work in this area, focussed on media, knowledge networks, mentoring programmes, skills and

³² Based on (off the record) interviews with women politicians, conducted by ODIHR commissioned expert, Melanie Sully, at the end of 2013/beginning of 2014.

training, could see an increase in those active in communal and regional politics. Around 300 network groups exist in Austria, offering support for women thinking of politics as a career, eg Alphafrauen, Frauennetzwerk Medien, Österreichischer Frauenring, Women's Career Network Vienna. In the federal states there are also networks with experts, eg on media and politics with workshops and seminars.

More could be achieved, as put forward in the ODIHR six-step action plan for gender equality in elected office³³ in the fields of *capacity development, and party rules and recruitment procedures*. Legal quotas tend to be a controversial and emotional topic in Austrian politics and a consensus is unlikely to quickly emerge. Voluntary quotas are not always met, sanctions non-existent and transparency in the formation of candidate lists often lacking; many local party structures are male-dominated. Smaller and newer parties tend to be keen on experimenting with candidate hearings and primaries for elected office, eg the Neos, but even they do not have quotas although there is an ongoing internal discussion. The OSCE report on the conduct of the parliamentary election of 2013 noted, "Building upon the existing good practice of some political parties, consideration could be given to introducing special measures in the legal framework to promote women candidates, in line with international standards. This could be a minimum number of candidates from each gender on all candidate lists".³⁴ Here the political parties, the gatekeepers, so important in the Austrian context hold the keys to greater representation and can do much to encourage or discourage women thinking of going into politics. This is valid especially for the local structures, where female representation lags behind national averages.

³³ For further details see "Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan", P. Norris/M. Lena Krook, OSCE/ODIHR.

³⁴ The Report alluded to paragraph 40.4 of the OSCE 1991 Moscow Document in which participating States affirmed that it is their „goal to achieve not only de jure but de facto equality of opportunity between men and women and to promote effective measures to that end“.