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The Main Committee

Republic of Austria: Parliament of Austria

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The Main Committee

Parliament not only exercises control over the work of the Government but also shares responsibility with it regarding the administration of certain matters. It has extensive rights of participation within the scope of the European Union.

What is the Main Committee?

The Main Committee is the institution through which the National Council performs its third function – participation in executive functions at the federal level (the first two being legislation and control). Its tasks are therefore strictly regulated by the Constitution.

In the Main Committee of the National Council, members deliberate certain decisions with the competent government members. Action can only be taken with the approval of the Main Committee.

The Main Committee is one of Parliament's standing committees and can meet at any time. It is traditionally chaired by the President of the National Council or his/her deputies. The chairpersons of parliamentary groups are ex-officio members of the Main Committee.

Why Participation in the Administration

The participation of Parliament in the administration dates back to the early days of the First Republic. In the newly formed state, the intention was to attribute the principal role to Parliament. The Federal Government was subordinate to Parliament, and the latter was endowed with a great many functions of control and participation in the federal administration.

The Constitutional Reform of 1929 strengthened the position of the Federal President and the Federal Government but left a number of rights of participation vested in Parliament.

Matters on which the Main Committee Shares in the Power to Decide

Participation in decision-making means sharing responsibility. Mostly the issues in hand are particularly important affairs of state. Some Regulations require the approval of the Main Committee – for instance Government Regulations calling an election. The Committee's consent is also required for the dispatching of troops abroad to participate in peace-keeping measures, for export promotion and the sale of state assets.

Other Functions of the Main Committee

Further functions include

in particular the participation in the political work of the European Union. The Federal Constitution entrusts this function to the Main Committee, which has set up a special Sub-Committee for this purpose. This enables the National Council to decide promptly on matters of this nature;

making nominations for the President of the Court of Audit, members of the Ombudman's Office and the Chairpersons of the Parliamentary Armed Forces Commission;

electing directly the board members of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism and deliberating the appointment of Austrian judges to the European Court of Justice and Austrian members of the EU Commission.

A Committee on Stand-By: the Standing Sub-Committee of the Main Committee

The Main Committee elects a Standing Sub-Committee, which has to be ready to meet at any time. It becomes active if the Federal President dissolves the National Council (which has so far happened only once in the history of Austria).


Should this occur, the Sub-Committee would assume the functions of the Main Committee until a newly elected National Council can be convened.


Emergency Decrees

The Standing Sub-Committee has a particularly important role to play in exceptional situations – natural disasters or the outbreak of a war: if the National Council cannot meet, the Federal President can issue emergency decrees, but only when proposed by the Federal Government, which in turn requires the approval of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Main Committee.

Contact Us

Do you have questions? We are looking forward to your inquiry.

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