

# Narratives of election pledges in Austria

Katrin Praprotnik (University of Graz)

Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik (University of Vienna)

Day of Parliamentary Research  
20 June 2024

# Motivation: Missing link

Mandate theory (e.g. McDonald and Budge 2010, Roberts 2010)

- Parties make pledges
- Voters chose parties based on these pledges
- Parties aim to implement these pledges

# Motivation: Missing link

Mandate theory (e.g. McDonald and Budge 2010, Roberts 2010)

- Parties make pledges
- Voters chose parties based on these pledges
- Parties aim to implement these pledges

Pledge literature (e.g. Thomson et al. 2017, Praprotnik 2017)

- Amount of pledge fulfillment
- Country differences
- Factors influencing parties' abilities to follow through on their pledges

# Motivation: Missing link

Mandate theory (e.g. McDonald and Budge 2010, Roberts 2010)

- Parties make pledges
- Voters chose parties based on these pledges
- Parties aim to implement these pledges

Pledge literature (e.g. Thomson et al. 2017, Praprotnik 2017)

- Amount of pledge fulfillment
- Country differences
- Factors influencing parties' abilities to follow through on their pledges

# Contribution

## Research question

What is the history of pledges in Austria?

Understanding the history of pledges helps to understand

- electoral campaigns (e.g. policy changes)
- coalition negotiations (e.g. evaluating relevance of pledges)
- coalition governance (e.g. capacity to fulfill)

# Contribution

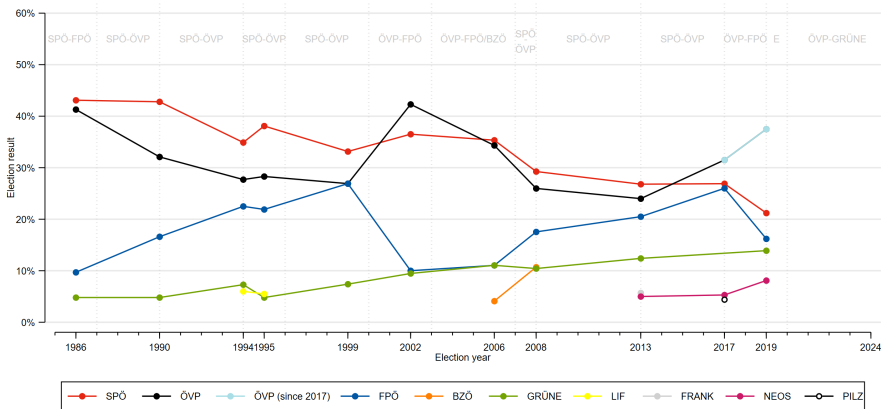
## Research question

What is the history of pledges in Austria?

Understanding the history of pledges helps to understand

- electoral campaigns (e.g. policy changes)
- coalition negotiations (e.g. evaluating relevance of pledges)
- coalition governance (e.g. capacity to fulfill)

Figure: Election results and government formation



## Amount and characteristics of pledge-making

- On average, 153 different pledges per manifesto
- No indication of a recent increase in the number of pledges



## Amount and characteristics of pledge-making

- On average, 153 different pledges per manifesto
- No indication of a recent increase in the number of pledges
- Government parties increasingly pledge to maintain the status quo, opposition parties advocate change

## Amount and characteristics of pledge-making

- On average, 153 different pledges per manifesto
- No indication of a recent increase in the number of pledges
- Government parties increasingly pledge to maintain the status quo, opposition parties advocate change
- Across all parties, a significant number of election promises focus on the welfare state

## Amount and characteristics of pledge-making

- On average, 153 different pledges per manifesto
- No indication of a recent increase in the number of pledges
- Government parties increasingly pledge to maintain the status quo, opposition parties advocate change
- Across all parties, a significant number of election promises focus on the welfare state
- Most election promises are independent of each other (i.e. not identical and even less frequently in direct contradiction)

## Amount and characteristics of pledge-making

- On average, 153 different pledges per manifesto
- No indication of a recent increase in the number of pledges
- Government parties increasingly pledge to maintain the status quo, opposition parties advocate change
- Across all parties, a significant number of election promises focus on the welfare state
- Most election promises are independent of each other (i.e. not identical and even less frequently in direct contradiction)

## Amount and characteristics of pledge-fulfillment

- On average, 55% of government pledges at least partially fulfilled
- Pledges are more likely to be fulfilled:
  - ▶ Maintain the status quo
  - ▶ Included in coalition agreements
  - ▶ Government party has sole responsibility for the relevant ministry
  - ▶ Implementation falls solely within the jurisdiction of the government majority
  - ▶ Periods of positive economic growth (esp. target commitments)
  - ▶ Legislative term is not prematurely terminated

## Amount and characteristics of pledge-fulfillment

- On average, 55% of government pledges at least partially fulfilled
- Pledges are more likely to be fulfilled:
  - ▶ Maintain the status quo
  - ▶ Included in coalition agreements
  - ▶ Government party has sole responsibility for the relevant ministry
  - ▶ Implementation falls solely within the jurisdiction of the government majority
  - ▶ Periods of positive economic growth (esp. target commitments)
  - ▶ Legislative term is not prematurely terminated

**Table:** Types of narratives of pledges

	One previous election	Multiple previous elections
One Party	Without change/ With change	Without change/ With change
Multiple parties	Without change/ With change	Without change/ With change

# Conclusion

## Meaning of the narratives of pledges for...

- ... electoral campaigns (e.g. policy changes)
- ... coalition negotiations (e.g. evaluating relevance of pledges)



# Conclusion

## Meaning of the narratives of pledges for...

- ... electoral campaigns (e.g. policy changes)
- ... coalition negotiations (e.g. evaluating relevance of pledges)
- ... coalition governance (e.g. capacity to fulfill)

# Conclusion

## Meaning of the narratives of pledges for...

- ... electoral campaigns (e.g. policy changes)
- ... coalition negotiations (e.g. evaluating relevance of pledges)
- ... coalition governance (e.g. capacity to fulfill)

Thank you for your attention!