

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Elisabeth Koestinger Again Austrian Minister Responsible for Agriculture

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Report Highlights:

On January 7, 2020, Elisabeth Köstinger from the Austrian Peoples' Party (ÖVP) was sworn in as Minister responsible for the agriculture portfolio in the newly formed ÖVP - Greens Party coalition government. Köstinger is heading the Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism.

New “Old” Austrian Minister Responsible for Agriculture Köstinger



Elisabeth Köstinger, Minister for Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism

Elisabeth (“Elli”) Köstinger from the Austrian Peoples’ Party (ÖVP) again took over the agricultural agenda in the new government as Minister of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism. (NOTE: Austria changes the name - and portfolio - of their ministries with every new government). The Ministry of Agriculture is now officially the Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism, where it was previously known as the Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism.) Köstinger previously served Minister of Sustainability and Tourism also covering for agriculture during the ÖVP - Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) government 2017-2018. Köstinger was the first Austrian female Agriculture Minister. She is a well-known expert in Austrian and European agricultural and environmental policy. Before her position as Agriculture Minister she was a member of the European parliament. Köstinger is a close confidant of head of the ÖVP, Sebastian Kurz, and played a major role during the coalition negotiations. As a member of the ÖVP, she is not expected to change any of the basic elements of Austria’s agricultural policies, but rather will seek to support Austria’s small-scale family farms and maintain Austria’s strict environmental, animal welfare, and food standards. However, considering the coalition with the Greens, agricultural regulations in connection with environmental (e.g. plant protection) and animal welfare issues may become even more stricter as they already are.

New Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism

Unlike the previous Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism, the portfolio for the new Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism does not include environmental and energy issues. These issues will go to the “super” Environment Ministry that handles environment, infrastructure, traffic, energy, and technology, which will be headed by the Greens. In addition to agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism includes water management, mining, tourism, telecommunication, and civilian service issues.

New Austrian Coalition Government

On January 1, 2020, the head of the ÖVP, Sebastian Kurz, and the party leader of the Austrian Greens Party (Greens), Werner Kogler, announced in a joint statement that an agreement was reached, and coalition negotiations were concluded. The next day, January 2, they presented their 300 pages coalition agreement and a complete list of ministers to the Austrian President, Alexander Van der Bellen, and afterwards to the public. Kurz became again Austrian Chancellor, and Kogler Vice Chancellor of the new government. The Greens control four out of the 15 ministries. For the first time in Austria, there are more female ministers than male ones. The new Austrian government was sworn in on January 7, 2020. This is the first time that the Greens are in the ruling Austrian government, having previously only served in the parliament.

Compromises Between Ideologically Very Different Parties

During the coalition negotiations both parties, the ÖVP and the Greens, tried to find balanced compromises while maintaining their key principles and campaign promises. Kurz takes a tough line on immigration and is pro-business, while the Greens advocate multiculturalism and climate change. Kurz stated, that “it’s possible to cut taxes and make the tax system more ecological. It’s possible to protect the climate and the borders.” And Kogler stressed on the Greens’ major agenda, that “Austria should become a European and international leader on climate change issues.” It will be challenging for the ideologically very different new coalition partners to always find workable compromises while not upsetting their voters.

Attachments:

No Attachments.