

AUSTRIA

Vorarlbergers

Activity: 1979-2004

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- In 1979, an autonomist organization, Pro-Vorarlberg, published an appeal in which it demanded special status for Vorarlberg within the Austrian republic. This “led to an initiative by the provincial diet to conduct negotiations... on financial and fiscal autonomy, and increased control of local education, commerce, forestry, agriculture, and communications” (Minahan 2002: 2016). We peg the start date to 1979, since this is the first evidence of self-determination activity. The initiative was approved by a provincial referendum on June 23, 1980; it was then opposed by the Austrian government (Minahan 2002: 2016). Pro-Vorarlberg was politically active on a smaller scale in the 1980s. However, according to Bussjäger (2006) the movement died down after the failed reform of the federation in 1994. We do not find evidence for separatist activity after this, and the movement is not represented in Minahan (2016), Roth (2015) nor in the The World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Groups. Therefore, following our ten-year rule we code an end to the movement in 2004. [start date: 1979; end date: 2004]

Dominant claim

- Pro-Vorarlberg, the organization associated with the movement, called for increased autonomy and a special status for Vorarlberg. No other claim was found. [1979-2004: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- This movement’s claims concern the Vorarlberg state in western Austria. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- No violence has been found, hence a NVIOLSD coding for the whole movement. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- During the Napoleonic Wars, Vorarlberg was given to Bavaria. Following Napoleon's demise, the Vorarlbergers became part of Austria once more. In 1861, a bishopric was established in Bregenz. During WWI, Vorarlberg supported Austria. Amidst the chaos of Versailles, the Vorarlbergers declared themselves a separate non-Austrian, Germanic people, and local leaders set up a separate administration as the civil government of the empire collapsed. The independence of the Republic of Vorarlberg was declared on November 3, 1918, and the new nationalist government began to establish close ties to the neighboring Swiss confederation. A plebiscite on independence from Austria and an alliance with neutral Switzerland was organized. However, the secession was blocked by both the allies and the new Austrian government (Minahan 2002: 2015). Under strong political and economic pressure, the Vorarlbergers finally joined the new Austrian republic, becoming an autonomous land, or state, with a separate provincial assembly. But the secessionist movement remained active throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1938, Vorarlberg lost all of its autonomy when Austria was annexed by the Nazis (Minahan 2002: 2015). In 1945, Vorarlberg again became a federal state of Austria (Minahan 2002: 2015). From the outset, Austria had a centralist form of federalism, and subsequent policies contributed to further centralization. For instance, a 1962 constitutional amendment centralized significant bits of education policy (Erk 2004: 12-15). A reversal of the centralization in the area of education was among the core demands of the Pro-Vorarlberg movement (Erk 2004: 11). The 1974 constitutional reform led to a slight extension of Länder competencies (Öhlinger 1977: 408; Demokratiezentrum Wien). [1974: autonomy concession]

Concessions and restrictions

- Constitutional reforms in 1983, 1984, and 1988 led to a strengthening of federalism and the competencies of the Länder (Bussjaeger 2006: 206; Demokratiezentrum Wien). While the reforms were rather marginal and did not change the centralist nature of Austria's federalism (Erk 2004: 11), some competencies were devolved, including new legislative competencies. [1983, 1984, 1988: autonomy concessions]

Regional autonomy

- Vorarlberg has been a federal entity throughout. [1979-2004: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Vorarlbergers
<i>Scenario</i>	n:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Austrians
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	30501000

Power access

- The Vorarlbergers are a regional branch of EPR's Austrians group. According to EPR, the Austrians have monopoly power in Austria. Vienna is by far Austria's most influential and much overrepresented region. The Vorarlbergers were not consistently represented in Austria's cabinet during the movement's existence. However, during the period at least two ministers seem to have a Vorarlberger background: Günter Haiden (minister from 1976-1986 and born in Vorarlberg) and Jürgen Weiss (serving from 1991 to 1994 and also born in Vorarlberg). There are no signs of a policy of exclusion. On this basis, we code the Vorarlbergers as junior partner throughout. [junior partner]

Group size

- According to Minahan (2002: 2013) there are about 326,000 Vorarlbergers in Austria. According to the World Bank, Austria had a population of 8.08 million in 2002. [0.0403]

Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 2013), 95% of all Vorarlbergers reside in the state of Vorarlberg, where they comprise 88% of the local population. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- There is no notable Vorarlberger diaspora. Minahan (2002: 2013) reports that the Vorarlbergers are "historically and culturally more closely related to the Swiss Germans and Swabians than to the neighboring Tyroleans or Austrians." However, it is questionable whether these ties are strong enough to support an ethnic kinship coding. [no kin]

Sources

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