

The Christian Right in Europe: Austria

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Introduction

Austria is defined by the dominant position of the Roman Catholic Church and a traditionally inclusive approach toward religious minorities. Previously often perceived as a model for religious inclusiveness, the success of right-wing populism and power shifts within the Austrian religious landscape have clouded this positive image. In recent years, Christian-Right activism in Austria has increased significantly and has become more vocal. The networks and political ties of conservative Christian actors are well-established and nothing new. What is new is the outspokenness of their political activities, as well as the alliances among very conservative and sometimes fundamentalist Christian groups of different denominations and their appearance in mainstream politics.

Christian-Right actors have experienced a strong upswing as part of the overall politicization of religion as a result of migration issues. As in other European countries, the problematization of Islam has made the invocation of Christian values a popular practice among right-wing populists. Here, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) has increasingly adopted populist positions known from the for many years highly successful far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). While the moderate Christian mainstream has voiced concerns over this utilization of religion, actors on the fringes of the conservative Christian spectrum have capitalized on this development. They have been able to push their agenda, which includes the idea of Christian supremacy and fundamentalist views on gender relations, reproductive rights, and concepts of the family, toward the political center. At the same time, the ÖVP, after its takeover by Sebastian Kurz, has partly abandoned its historic orientation in the Catholic mainstream and reoriented in the direction of becoming a more fundamentalist group (Mattes 2021). In 2017, when he was about to become

ÖVP leader, Kurz set an ultimatum for his party, demanding extensive powers for this position and threatening to refuse to take over otherwise. Until his resignation in 2021 following large-scale corruption scandals, the federal party structures were bypassed, and a closed circle of Kurz's intimates became the steering group. Among the people within this circle was Bernhard Bonelli, who is reportedly affiliated with Opus Dei, along with other Christian-Right actors (Knittelfelder 2020). In the course of these developments, old alliances between political and religious actors were deployed and new ones formed. It remains to be seen what religion politics after the political episodes dominated by Kurz and his affiliates will look like.

Following the invasion of Ukraine, most protagonists of Austria's Christian Right do not openly support Russia. Actors who once spoke alongside Russian Orthodox figures at international ultraconservative gatherings (e.g., ÖVP politician Gudrun Kugler; OTS 2022) have clearly voiced their support for Ukraine, as do most Christian-Right institutions (e.g., the International Theological Institute, Trumau; ITI 2022). Rather isolated individuals, such as the former FPÖ politician and very outspoken Catholic Christian Ewald Stadler, have attracted attention in the past through their support for the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation and for the secession of Donbas from Ukraine. However, Austria's renowned close ties to Putin's regime are political (driven by the FPÖ's quest for fraternization; Thalhammer 2019) or economic (fostered by well-connected businessmen such as Sigi Wolf and Rainer Seele; Marchart and Strobl 2022) rather than religiously motivated.

In this article, we discuss the religious protagonists of the Christian Right, aspects of their narratives and ideology, and the effects on their targeted political audiences in two areas central to Christian-Right activities in Austria: *anti-genderism/anti-abortion activism* and *Christian nationalism*. Following an overview of the Austrian political and religious landscape, we conclude with a summary of the development, successes, and setbacks of Austria's Christian Right.

Church and state in Austria

The Austrian political system is characterized by a consensus orientation and corporatist structures. The Social Democratic Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs; SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party were historically aligned along the cleavage between the secular urban labor force

and the rural Catholic owners, which defined the political system after World War II. In addition, the Austrian Freedom Party (formerly the Federation of Independents), with its anti-clerical German nationalist orientation and more liberal branches, was present from the beginning of the Second Republic. However, this party only gained momentum when populist Jörg Haider became the party leader in 1986, the same year that the Green Party entered parliament. Following Haider's new course, the party eventually split into a liberal party (Liberales Forum, now merged with NEOS–Das Neue Österreich) and the much more successful far-right FPÖ. The success of these left- and right-wing niche parties happened at the expense of the now catch-all parties, the SPÖ and the ÖVP, which had built the corporatist structures that are still decisive for Austrian politics, namely the inclusion of social partners and a very inclusive *system of shared tasks* in terms of religion politics (Minkenberg 2003; Gresch et al. 2008; Nautz, Stöckl, and Siebenrock 2013). This seeking of consensus as a guiding principle is often described as a takeaway from the historical experience of societal polarization that paved the way for two fascist regimes: the Austrofascist dictatorship based on Catholic teachings (1933/34–1938) and Nazism (1938–1945) (Rathkolb 2015).

Sixteen religious groups, among them Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Alevis, hold the legal status of a *recognized religious community* (Staatlich anerkannte Religionsgemeinschaft), which grants them a broad set of privileges (oesterreich.gv.at 2020). This constitutional setting provides for an institutionalized dialogue of religious communities and state actors on religious matters (Kalb, Potz, and Schinkele 2003). However, inclusiveness toward religion is not limited to legally granted rights but extends to the broader treatment of religious communities as important public stakeholders.

More recently, breaches with this inclusive tradition have become observable, particularly concerning the symbolic and non-constitutional forms of inclusion of religious minorities. The discursive exclusion of Islam since the mid-2000s was followed by a series of legal restrictions on Islamic clothing from 2016 onwards. A larger controversy concerned the change in regulations regarding Good Friday as a holiday for members of the Lutheran and Reformed Protestant Churches (Niksova 2019). In some cases, the ÖVP-led government's measures were even in conflict with the interests of the Catholic Church, and the tone between party and Church became increasingly unfriendly. In a WhatsApp chat conversation that became public in 2021, Kurz cheered on a member of his inner circle who reported on threatening a Catholic repre-

sentative with cutting the Church's tax privileges (Nikbakhsh and Melichar 2021).

The FPÖ, Kurz's former coalition partner, also has an ambivalent relation to religion. It emerged out of the anticlerical Third Lager as a gathering point for Nazi sympathizers, but it changed its religious course and claimed to embrace a *Christian identity* in the late 1990s. This claim is very superficial and frequently criticized by Christian churches (Hadj-Abdou 2016). When last in government (2017–2019), leading figures of the party sought open confrontation with Christian welfare organizations (e.g., Caritas and Diakonie) on matters relating to refugee protection, thereby contributing to the widening gap between government and churches (Krb 2019).

Overall, these developments constitute a turning away from inclusive traditions in the politics of religion. Despite the provocative role of its junior partner, the FPÖ, during its last short-lasting coalition government, this turn can be primarily linked to the reorientation of the ÖVP following the takeover by Sebastian Kurz and his supporters (Mattes 2021). The FPÖ traditionally had a small group of ultraconservative Christian members, but due to internal quarrels, this group, based around MEP Ewald Stadler, left the party and campaigned independently without any success (Zaunbauer 2014). Hence, most party-politically engaged Christian-Right actors are found within the Austrian People's Party rather than the FPÖ.

Concerning religious affiliation, Austria is still a very Catholic country. Although membership is declining steadily, between 50% and 60% of the Austrian population are members of the Roman Catholic Church. In 2021, Statistics Austria conducted a voluntary survey on "Religious affiliation of the population in private households". These most recent numbers show the following affiliations: 55,2% Catholic, 8,3% Islamic, 4,9% Christian Orthodox, 3,8% Protestant, 5,5% affiliated with other religious traditions (e.g. Buddhism, Judaism, other Christian Churches, etc.) and 22,4% not affiliated. Smaller Christian groups (e.g., Charismatic and Evangelical Churches) are emerging throughout Austria; according to calculations by the Statistics Austria, 0,3–0,5 % of the Austrian population are members of the umbrella organization "Free Churches in Austria" (Statistics Austria 2022).

Anti-genderism: New and old political alliances against abortion, reproductive rights, and non-traditional families

When analyzing the Christian Right as “a particular brand of politically engaged religious fundamentalism,” the centrality of sexual morality/reproductive rights and “the patriarchal family based on binary gender essentialism” (Mattes, Urbanic, and Limacher 2020, 243) is unsurprising. Within the Religious Right, this focus is often subsumed under *family values* (Dowland 2009), though in recent academic discourse, the term *anti-genderism* is being established (Strube et al. 2021).

Austria used to have conservative regulations on most issues relevant to anti-genderists. Same-sex marriage was only legalized following a constitutional court decision in 2017 (Verfassungsgerichtshof Österreich 2017). Regarding bio-ethical issues, the country still has some of the strictest regulations in Europe. Austrian abortion legislation poses an exception to this conservative orientation and fits into the larger European context: the decriminalization by the socially progressive Social Democrats (SPÖ) in 1975 happened in parallel to other European countries (Obinger-Gindulis 2015, 195–199). The *Fristenlösung* (term solution) is on the liberal end of the international spectrum and exempts from punishment abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy based on the sole choice of the pregnant person and, beyond that, if certain indications are met (i.e., risk to the psychological or physical health of the pregnant person, expectation of the child’s serious psychological or physical disability, or under 14 years of age at the time of conception). The cost of the procedure is only covered by public healthcare in cases of a medical indication (oesterreich.gv.at 2021). The politicization of reproductive rights in recent decades has parallels in other EU countries (Mancini and Stoeckl 2018, 225). The following examples of Austrian activism against abortion and for traditionalist models of family serve to introduce some of the actors and networks, their aims, and their degree of public involvement. These actors, although not new per se, have recently become more vocal and gained the endorsement of prominent public figures from political parties and Christian churches.

The demonstration *Marsch für die Familie* (March for the Family) has been held annually since 2012 on the day of Vienna’s Gay Pride Parade. In 2021, the speakers included former Slovak prime minister Ján Čarnogurský (billed as a “hero of anti-communist resistance”), the notoriously conservative former auxiliary bishop of Salzburg Andreas Laun, clergy from the Syrian Orthodox Church, and activists from the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X and organi-

zations associated with the event. The agenda covered a whole range of anti-genderism motivations, opposing abortion, gay marriage and adoption rights, sex education in schools, and *Gender-Wahn* (*gender insanity*) and calling for a *salary for mothers* instead of out-of-home childcare. While this event is small in numbers, its radicalness is outstanding.

Among its supporters are the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Tradition, Familie und Privateigentum (the Austrian branch of Tradition, Family and Property; TFP), Human Life International Österreich, Plattform Ärzte für das Leben (Doctors for Life), and the proprietor of the homepage of Marsch für die Familie, PRO VITA. This association also organized a Rally for a Free and Strong Christian Europe in Vienna on September 12, 2020.¹ Its most recent publications are almost entirely dedicated to opposition to and conspiracy theories about COVID-19 measures and the vaccination.

Though very close in name, Marsch fürs Leben (March for Life), which also organizes an annual *pro-life* march in Vienna, is much more compatible with both the religious and political conservative establishments, including Church officials and ÖVP politicians (Wölfl 2021). Unlike the Marsch für die Familie, actors in this event use a more moderate wording to communicate their claims and seek broader alliances rather than provocation. For 2021, the organizers reported 2,500 participants at the event, among them ÖVP Member of Parliament Gudrun Kugler, auxiliary bishop Franz Scharl, and evangelical pastor Raimund Harta. The homepage and campaign materials appear to be designed for wider public appeal. Similarly named protests are held across German-speaking regions (i.e., Germany, Switzerland, and Italy). In June 2021, an impromptu demonstration against the European Parliament's ratification of the Matić-Report on sexual and reproductive health and rights was held in Vienna (Sutter 2021). While originally a Catholic endeavor, Marsch fürs Leben increasingly accommodates other Christian actors and, in conjunction with the rally, now offers a service by the Evangelical Alliance (Evangelische Allianz) and an Orthodox liturgy in addition to a Catholic Mass (Katholische Kirche 2021).

1 Actors of the far right have been trying to establish this date and location as a commemoration of the battle that broke the Osman Empire's siege of Vienna in 1683, stylized as Christian Europe's victory over Islam. The mixture of far-right activists has been summed up as "ultraconservative Christians, monarchists, fraternities, and right-wing extremist identitarians," thereby showing linkages to the Austrian Freedom Party (Auer 2020).

These transdenominational alliances have been an observable development in Austrian antiabortion activism of recent years.

In 2018, the parliamentary citizens' initiative (Parlamentarische Bürgerinitiative) #fairändern began to gather signatures and was subsequently submitted to the Austrian Parliament. While the wording of the campaign was decidedly secular and framed the issue in terms of fairness to families and disability rights, it was deeply embedded in Austria's Christian antiabortion movement. It called for national abortion statistics regarding the number of and motives for procedures, obligatory consultations prior to abortions specifically highlighting alternatives (e.g., adoption), a mandatory period for consideration between consultation and surgical procedure, an end to legal provisions for late-term abortions due to embryopathic indications, and unspecified support for women potentially giving birth to a disabled child (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2021a).

The #fairändern initiative intended to limit women's access to non-indictable abortions, claiming that women are often pressured to terminate their pregnancy by doctors who do not inform patients about alternatives and due to a lack of support for mothers of disabled children. It did so using a strategy of the Christian Right: framing opposition to abortion in secular language (Bailey 2002). Rather than calling for a ban on abortion, the initiative made more cautious claims, aimed at the reopening of political debate on the subject. The affiliations of those involved, however, suggest a deep involvement with Christian antiabortion activism. Chairperson Carina Marie Eder had been a spokesperson for Jugend für das Leben (Youth for Life) and was reported to have stated in 2015 that "the resistance will not end until everything is done to make abortions unthinkable" (Mittelstaedt, Gaigg, and Schmid 2019). *Erstunterzeichnerin* (first signee) Petra Plonner, who was the de facto voice of #fairändern, is both a pastor in a congregation of the Pentecostal LIFE Church and deputy chairperson of Österreichische Lebensbewegung (Austrian Life Movement), which offers pre- and post-abortion counselling for women and their partners.

There were prominent testimonials by politicians from the ÖVP and the FPÖ, which was remarkable given that these parties formed the Austrian government at the time. The initiative also had the support of the Austrian Catholic Church, including the endorsement of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn and the archbishop of Salzburg Franz Lackner, who promoted it through various channels, although the welfare association Caritas seems to have remained silent on the matter. On the Protestant side, support came from Evangelical organi-

zations, including LIFE Church and Evangelische Allianz, but noticeably not from the Lutheran and Reformed Protestant Churches.²

In parallel with #fairändern, a second citizens' initiative, Fakten helfen! (Facts Help!), initiated by the *pro-life* organization Aktion Leben and limited to a call for national abortion statistics, was under review in Parliament (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2021b). The fact that two ÖVP ministers, Susanne Raab and Christine Aschbacher, submitted official statements of support for the initiative caused some public discussion (*Kurier* 2022). Both efforts were ultimately "noted" ("zur Kenntnis genommen"), without further action by Parliament, but they were supported by several MPs from the ÖVP and the FPÖ in the plenary discussion (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2021a).

While this in itself cannot be considered as a triumph for Austrian anti-abortion activists, it has brought the issue into the political arena and showcased their influence among politicians (Hausbichler 2019). According to Mancini and Stoeckl (2018), "antiabortion movements pursue an incremental agenda, whereby each accommodation is a step further toward the ultimate victory over reproductive rights" (255). When ÖVP and FPÖ formed the state government in the federal state of Salzburg in 2023, they stated their intention to invest in awareness campaigns to prevent unwanted pregnancies and promote adoption and foster care explicitly as alternatives to abortion and to conduct a survey of motives for abortions (Ruep 2023) – a central talking point of Austrian anti-abortion activists.

Austria as a Christian nation

While abortion activism has always been central to the activities of the Christian Right in Europe, we observe a growing number of both religious and political actors who claim Christianity as an essential part of national political identity. Internationally, the concept of the *Christian nation* has gained prominence through political developments in the US, especially following the interference of the well-connected Christian Right, such as the *Moral Majority*, in a wide range of issues (e.g., sexuality, health care, gun ownership, and public

2 For official support statements by further church and other organizations, see Parlament der Republik Österreich 2019a. (NB: Because the initiative was considered in two consecutive legislative periods in the Austrian Parliament, it has two file numbers depicting the process and containing different related documents from 2019 and 2021.)

education) since the 1980s (Ben Barka 2011). In Austria, the concept of a *Christian nation* is closely linked to the re-politicization of religion and the rise and strengthening of the populist radical right over the past 30 years. As Marzouki, McDonnell, and Roy (2016) have shown, populists *hijack* religion as an identity marker, especially to fuel anti-Muslim sentiments or xenophobic sentiments in general. However, the populist radical right often faces the challenge of reconciling its newfound Christian identity with long-standing anticlerical positions that bring it into conflict with established institutions such as Christian churches (DeHanas and Shterin 2018, 177). Mancini and Rosenfeld define religious populism as “projecting a part as the whole when circumscribing ‘the people’” based on a particular religious affiliation (2020, 2). The authors also provide a helpful distinction between religious populism and religious nationalism, the latter understood not so much as an identity marker of *the people* but as a form of religious affiliation that shapes national identity. Therefore, it is not only the populist radical right that uses Christianity as an identity marker. Conservative political parties—in Austria, primarily the ÖVP—also seem to be recalling a Christian identity in view of the electoral success of the populist radical right, and not necessarily only through its traditional alliance with the Catholic Church.³

The following examples serve to introduce some of the actors and events that have helped shape the Christian-Right project of *Austria as a Christian nation* in recent years.⁴ We discuss former chancellor Sebastian Kurz’s appearance at the 2019 evangelical event *Awakening Austria* and a much-noticed parliamentary prayer from 2020, the organization of which was financed with taxpayers’ money. Consequently, the lack of separation between Church and state was criticized. The parliamentary prayer was also criticized for providing a stage for the conservative Loretto Community, a Catholic association with a strong missionary orientation, while excluding non-Christian religions other than Judaism.

3 There has been discord between the ÖVP and the more liberal parts of the Church regarding migration and social policies. In the course of the investigation surrounding the *chat affair* that led to the resignation of ex-Chancellor Sebastian Kurz in the fall of 2021, chats have come to light indicating that the ÖVP was threatening to withdraw tax privileges of churches in 2019 (ORF 2021).

4 We focus on the alliances of party political actors with various Christian actors. For far-right actors in Austria who join forces with ultraconservative Christian groups, see the aforementioned Rally for a Free and Strong Christian Europe on September 12, 2020, in Kahlenberg.

Awakening Europe is a series of Christian missionary events organized by GODfest Ministries, an evangelical association affiliated with the charismatic Bethel Church in California (Mattes, Urbanic, and Limacher 2020, 261–262). This initiative organizes events throughout Europe and claims to focus on their “national impact” by “leading many people to salvation in Jesus” since “the continent is in great need of Jesus again” (GODfest Ministries 2022), thus following the idea of *reclaiming* Europe (Mittelstaedt und Schmid 2019). Ben Fitzgerald, lead organizer of the Awakening Europe event series, also led the much-discussed event Awakening Austria in 2019, with stakeholders from local Christian churches of various denominations. Local actors included the evangelical pastor Chris Pöschl and the archbishop of Vienna Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, who gave a speech. The participation of Austrian politicians from the ÖVP culminated in an appearance and brief blessing in favor of Sebastian Kurz, the former federal chancellor, who was campaigning for re-election at the time.⁵ Kurz’s presence triggered a great deal of criticism from both political and religious actors, as religious organizations in Austria generally refrain from directly supporting a political candidate (Mattes, Urbanic, and Limacher 2020, 260). With its clear missionary agenda and its special design as a series of decidedly national events with the aim of “transforming nations,” as well as its unusual intermingling with aspects of current national politics, Awakening Europe, an “imported actor of the New Christian Right” (Mattes, Urbanic, and Limacher 2020, 264), contributes to the shaping of Austria as a Christian nation.

The Parliamentary Prayer of 2020,⁶ by contrast, can be understood as a homegrown attempt to strengthen the concept of Austria as a Christian nation. Originally born out of an initiative of the 1980s (Kühne 2020) and based on the American tradition of the National Prayer Breakfast (Peterson 2017), a so-called National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast has been held in the Austrian parliament since 2017. The event sees itself as part of a network of similar events that “exist in many other cities around the world” (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2019b). It describes itself as organized on a non-partisan and interdenominational basis by the Committee of the National Parliamen-

5 For Ben Fitzgerald’s prayer for Kurz, see KATH.NET (2019).

6 Excerpts from the program can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpJZ6zxIP_Q (accessed January 18, 2022).

tary Prayer Breakfast, an association of members of the Austrian Parliament.⁷ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 event was downsized and broadcast online on December 8.

While the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast had been criticized in previous years against the backdrop of the historically painful separation of Church and state in Austria, it was particularly its staging in 2020 that received much publicity. The invitation was extended by the president of the Austrian National Council, Wolfgang Sobotka (ÖVP), together with the president of the Federal Council, Andrea Eder-Gitschthaler (ÖVP), and the corresponding committee. The prayer was moderated by Gudrun Kugler (ÖVP), who has been a Member of Parliament for the ÖVP since 2017. She is an alumna of the International Theological Institute, Trumau, as well as a trained lawyer and a nationally and internationally well-connected activist who works to spread conservative Christian values. Her numerous engagements and activities demonstrating her commitment against abortion include appearances as a regular speaker at Austrian anti-abortion rallies, such as the March for Life (Wölfl 2020), and as a member of the Europe-wide network Agenda Europe (Datta 2018), which aims to restrict human rights regarding sexual and reproductive health. She has participated in transnational Christian-Right activities, such as the World Congress of Family, alongside US Evangelicals and actors from the Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican (Janik 2019). Together with her husband Martin Kugler, a former spokesman for Opus Dei, she founded a PR company that promotes conservative Christian projects, as well as a Catholic online dating platform (Mattes, Urbanic, and Limacher 2020, 261).

This event consisted of a series of prayers from religious representatives and politicians (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2020). After it became known that, in addition to Jewish and several Christian representatives, members of the Charismatic and Loretto communities would also be participating, while at the same time no Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist religious representatives had been invited, many of the invited parliamentarians pulled out, leaving only politicians from the ÖVP and the FPÖ to speak at the event (Gaigg and Schmid 2020; Gaigg and Müller 2020). The fact that the Loretto Community, an explicitly missionary, conservative Catholic group, was offered a stage reinforced the existing criticism of the mixing of Church and state. Furthermore, it showed the close relation of some parts of the ÖVP and FPÖ

7 A list of committee members can be found in the invitation to the third parliamentary breakfast in 2019 (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2019b).

with actors of the Christian Right who are actively trying to shape and/or regain Austria and Europe as a Christian territory.

Conclusion: Mobilization of the Christian Right in Austria

We would like to summarize how recent developments point to the mobilization of a Christian Right in Austria. A look at the *protagonists* that we have described reveals that the Christian Right in Austria presents itself as a heterogeneous field of new and old alliances between political and religious actors. Particularly in more recent constellations, confessional boundaries seem to be losing importance in the face of common issues.

The defining *narratives* of the Austrian Christian Right can be summarized in two key aspects: Firstly, there is an increasing importance of Austria as a Christian nation. Secondly, there is a growing emphasis on an anti-genderism agenda that promotes an essentialist understanding of gender through various policies and opposes policies based on a non-essentialist understanding of gender (Hark and Villa 2015, 19). Consequently, we see that opposition to abortion in Austria is now a stepping stone from which gay marriage and adoption rights, sex education in schools, and other issues are under attack. This is particularly evident in the three federal states where ÖVP-FPÖ coalitions currently hold (co-)government positions. In addition to the previously mentioned awareness campaigns against unwanted pregnancies in Salzburg, there has been a much-discussed ban on using gender-inclusive language in public administration of Lower Austria in summer 2023 (Stepan 2023). In addition, Lower Austria and Salzburg are currently discussing the introduction of a childcare allowance (commonly referred to as the "hearth bonus"). Under this system, which already exists in Upper Austria, families receive financial support for the care of their children at home – at the expense of access to institutional childcare facilities and further restricting women's participation in the labor market.

Due to the numerous actors involved, both political and religious, it is difficult to identify a clear-cut *target audience* for the Christian Right in Austria. While there are continuities, such as in the context of anti-abortion activism, we also see innovations, such as the *conversion* of the formerly anti-clerical FPÖ into a party that defines itself as Christian (Hadj-Abdou 2016). Another important recent development is the targeting of the political mainstream as an audience. The increasingly interdenominational nature of anti-abortion activism,

together with the cooperation between religious and political actors, as in the case of the parliamentary prayer, helps in addressing audiences at the center of society.

Finally, regarding the *effects* of the mobilization of the Christian Right in Austria, we would like to highlight two aspects. First, despite the ongoing secularization processes, a discursive shift in politics is underway in which Christian values and a Christian identity are particularly emphasized. However, this development is more due to the increasing success of populist positions and their adoption within the political mainstream over recent years. It is not surprising that, in this context, actors of the Christian Right are also increasingly appearing. Their increased appearance repeatedly causes irritation, but it has also heightened the awareness of parts of the public regarding their narratives. Second, the religious activism that we have described takes place along issues rather than along denominational lines. It remains to be seen whether this *generically Christian* activism of the Christian Right is a development that progressive religious groups will eventually adopt, thereby increasingly challenging established religion–state relations.

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