

IMPACT: Walter Rosenkranz is a long-standing Austrian politician of the far-right FPÖ. In 2024, he was elected First President of the National Council, which is the second most powerful office in Austria. Rosenkranz has a long history of making Islamophobic statements and policy proposals, and has transnational links with anti-Muslim actors.

- **Walter Rosenkranz has had a long career as an Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) MP.** From 2008 to 2019, he was a member of the National Council, the Upper Chamber of the Austrian national parliament. From 2013-2019, he was the regional party chairman of the FPÖ in Lower Austria. From 2017-2019, during the coalition formed by the FPÖ with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Rosenkranz was the parliamentary club chairman. From 2019-2024 he was the Ombudsman. **In 2022, he ran as a presidential candidate with the support of his party. From 2013 to 2017, he was the FPÖ's education spokesman and deputy parliamentary group leader.** He completed his law degree in 1989.
- **Rosenkranz is a member of the German nationalist fraternity, Libertas. This is a so-called "white" fraternity, which belongs to the conservative wing of the already far-right German fraternity.** As the anti-racism researcher Andreas Peham points out, the Libertas fraternity, which was founded in 1860, was the first fraternity not to accept Jews for "racial" reasons in 1878. In response, Rosenkranz wrote in 2012 in the fraternity anniversary volume by FPÖ politician Martin Graf (from the Olympia fraternity) that student anti-Semitism arose because "an above-average number of Jews were students at the universities."
- **In January 2009, Rosenkranz called for an amendment to the Islam Act of 1912, insinuating that the Islamic religious community in Austria was "passing on anti-democratic views to pupils in class".**
- When the ban on minarets was discussed in Switzerland in 2009, members of parliament criticized the vote as an abridgement of civil and fundamental rights. Walter Rosenkranz was of the opinion that "the vote of the Swiss should be respected" and that "the construction of minarets is not a fundamental right", meaning that freedom of religion is not affected.
- In 2014, as a member of the National Council, Rosenkranz criticized the fact that English, Turkish and Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian words were mentioned alongside German terms in a dictionary for elementary school: "Do primary school pupils now also have to deal with what the respective words mean in Turkish?"
- As part of a debate on internal security in November 2016, the national parliament's press service reported on Rosenkranz's statements: "Walter Rosenkranz raised the threat of Islamist terrorism. In his opinion, politicians are doing too little to take action against Islamist fundamentalists. Specifically, **he called for a ban on the Koran distribution campaign. Overall, Rosenkranz is convinced that 'Islam does not belong to Austria'.**"
- **On November 22, 2016, Rosenkranz said in the National Council addressing the Foreign Minister** "(...) Because he has already said once that Islam belongs to Austria, **I would like to say to him: No, Islam does not belong to Austria!**"
- When an integration bill was passed by the government in May 2017, the national parliament's press service reported on Rosenkranz's comments: "When it comes to the first legal basis against distribution campaigns to spread radical ideas, Walter Rosenkranz criticized the fact that the word 'Koran' does not appear once in the law. He said that trying to solve the problem of Salafist Quran distribution campaigns by amending the Road Traffic Act was too elastic and left too much leeway".
- **In the course of a debate on education reform in the National Council in June 2017, the parliament's press service reported that Rosenkranz said: "Furthermore, the Freedom Party wants to withdraw the right of public access from Islamic educational institutions.** According to Walter Rosenkranz, schools with poor quality should have their public status revoked if they violate

WALTER ROSENKRANZ

the headscarf ban, do not comply with the German language requirement, are financed from abroad without permission or spread a misogynistic world view. Pupils' performance, effort and discipline should be insisted on in schools, said Rosenkranz, questioning the funding of the reform."

- In September 2017, **Walter Rosenkranz, head of the FPÖ party in Lower Austria, published a press release entitled "Pre-schools without pork? The creeping subordination to Islam out of false tolerance has reached Lower Austria" and said: "Although we knew very well that this (abolition of pork in kindergarten) is only a pretext for submission to Islam when Muslim children are in kindergarten. Although the substitute of antibiotic-laden turkey meat from abroad is the actual unhealthy diet - not pork from Austrian farmers"**.
- In February 2018, Rosenkranz, together with MP Harald Vilimsky, issued a press release on the appointment of a commission of historians to critically examine the history of antisemitism in their own party. They stated: "We not only reject extremism, but also want to fight all its forms with democracy, the rule of law and arguments. In particular, we will also take a stand against imported anti-Semitism and against the extremism that feeds on radical Islam and is increasingly spreading in Europe".
- In the course of the FPÖ and ÖVP government coalition, the Symbols Act was expanded in November 2018 to include not only violent organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, but also the Muslim Brotherhood, the Grey Wolves, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Hamas, the military wing of Hezbollah and the Croatian Ustasha. Rosenkranz argued at the time: "It's about criminalizing the approval of the ideologies mentioned".
- In March 2019, Rosenkranz criticized the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ) and its criticism of the then-party chairman of the FPÖ, Heinz-Christian Strache, with the words: "Austria remains a secular state and we Freedom Party members will do everything we can to prevent anti-state, radical Islamism," Rosenkranz emphasized.
- **In 2019, Rosenkranz said he initially found the actions of the far-right movement, 'The Identitarians', "quite refreshing". When the financial links between the Christchurch attacker and the Austrian Identitarian movement became an issue in parliament in March 2019, he "accused the opposition of being blind in one eye and not seeing either far-left or Islamist terror"**. Rosenkranz later said that he had been able to extract a certain charm from the Identitarians. However, the Identitarians are now "very far to the right of the spectrum". After he was elected First President of the National Council in October 2024, he was interviewed for twelve minutes by Philipp Huemer, the former head of the Identitarian Vienna regional group.
- As part of the presidential election campaign in 2022, Rosenkranz said that he could imagine sacking the federal government if it maintained the sanctions against Russia. He also considered leaving the EU conceivable at the time.
- **In June 2023, Rosenkranz accepted an invitation from the far-right Alternative for Germany in Bavaria. The White Power sign was displayed at the meeting in the Bavarian state parliament, which was attended by 50 guests, including members of the Identitarian Movement and the Danubia Munich fraternity.**
- **In October 2024, Rosenkranz was elected First President of the National Council with the votes of the Austrian People's Party. The First President of the National Council is the second most powerful office in the country after the Federal President. He can "ban speakers from speaking and even delay laws"**. Political scientist Arno Tausch called this election an "absolute and negative breach of taboo". Historian Andreas Kranebitter drew attention to the fact that Rosenkranz described well-known National Socialists in his own words as "top performers in Austria between 1918 and 1938" and commented: "Either Rosenkranz was unaware of the Nazi crimes in his home town, or they are no reason for him not to classify an 'association brother' like Stich as a 'top performer'. Both

WALTER ROSENKRANZ

disqualify him for the second highest office in the Republic.”

- **After Rosenkranz became President of the National Council, the first invitation to a guest was extended to Viktor Orbán, who in the meantime had founded the Patriots for Europe group in the European Parliament together with the FPÖ and his Fidesz governing party in the summer of 2024.**

Bridge Initiative Factsheet

