ELECTORAL LAWS IN AUSTRIA SINCE 1945

Dear Jean-Benoit Pilet,

the relevant law in Austria is the so-called "Nationalrats-Wahlordnung" (Federal Law on Parliamentary Elections).

Each "Nationalrats-Wahlordnung" since 1945 is electronically available at the website of the "The Legal Information System of the Republic of Austria (RIS)" (http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/). So the source of all the documents that I am sending you is always the same: this website.

Unfortunately only one single "Nationalrats-Wahlordnung" is available in English. It is the law of 1992. And it is not the exact version of 1992 but the one of 2001 that includes the amendments of this law in the time from 1992 until 2001.

Luckily the structure of the articles within this "Nationalrats-Wahlordnung" has largely remained constant through the years. The numbering of the single articles changes over the years, but Ithe titles of the single articles stay almost the same through the years.

So what I have done is that I tried to stay in the same language as in this official English version of the law of 1992 for all my article translations. Hence I would recommend you to do the same: to always compare my article translations to the equivalent articles in the English document of the law of 1992 (in the 2001 version).

As you certainly already know there have been mainly four important reforms of the federal law on parliamentary elections in Austria since 1945 there have been mainly four important reforms of the federal law on parliamentary elections in Austria: in 1949, 1971, 1992 and in 2007 – the one in 1992 without doubt being the most significant. In the following pages I have translated the relevant articles concerning the electoral formula, the number and magnitude of the electoral districts, threshold and the allocation of seats within lists to individual candidates of the reforms of 1949 and 1971. For the case of the 1992-reform that is available in English I have written together a sort of directory for the relevant articles. This English version of the 1992 law already includes the amendments of this law from 1992 until 2001.

One final task is not included yet in these page but that I will send you as soon as possible: The evaluation of the latest, the 2007-reform. I can already anticipate that the 2007-law did not reform in an important manner the number and magnitude of the electoral districts, the threshold or the allocation of seats within lists to individual candidates. Its' main substance was that from 2007 on elections are held every 5 years instead of every 4 years. I will be able to send this on the 17th of February.

One last remark: In between of these 4 laws there have of course been many small amendments to these laws. Most of the time these amendments concern minor formalities. I have included one of them into this document for illustration but assume that you expected me to report the above mentioned main four reforms as finally the contents of the amendments in between these four reforms are traceable in the four laws.

I hope that the way I did the work is fine. If there remain any open questions please feel to contact me at <u>Katharina.Zahradnik@ihs.ac.at</u>.

Best regards,

Katharina Zahradnik

Federal Law on Parliamentary Elections 1949

Source of the document:

http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BqblPdf&Dokumentnummer=1949 129 0

\$\) The electoral formula:
\$\)
1
4
5
pp. 623-624

Translations:

- §1 Number of members, Announcement of the election, Day of election, Qualifying date1
 - (1) The National Council consists of 165 members, who are elected according to the provisions of this federal law.
- § 4 Number of mandates in the election districts2

See second page (p.624) in the pdf-file. Note: "Wahlkreis" = electoral district. "Mandate" = seats.

- § 5 Calculation of number of mandates in accordance with the last census3
 - (1) After obtaining the results of the first official census the number of mandates to be allotted in each of the electoral districts is to be calculated as follows.
 - (2) The number of citizens which, according to the last census has to be divided by 165 (§1). The result has to be rounded to the third digit after the decimal sign. This gives the proportion figure. Every election district receives the number of mandates, which results from the division of the number of citizens, which were permanently residing in the election district by the proportion figure. Also this has to be rounded to the third digit after the decimal sign.
 - (3) In case that seats remain left then the remaining mandates are allocated to those election districts, which have the largest decimal figure. When, as a result of an equal decimal figure, more than one election district is in a position to receive the remaining mandate, the question of which one does receive it is decided by drawing lots.
 - (4) The number of seats allotted to each constituency according to al. (2) and (3) shall be proclaimed by the Minister for the Interior in the Federal Law Gazette immediately following the confirmation of the final results of the latest ordinary or special census respectively. The allotment of the seats so proclaimed shall be applied to all National Council elections that take place from the effectiveness of the proclamation till the proclamation of the allotment of seats on the grounds of the next census.

¹ Compare to § 1 in 1971

² Compare to § 3 in 1971

³ Compare to § 3 in 1971

II) Districts (number and magnitude):

§§

2,

3,

6

(pp. 623-624)

Translations:

§ 2 Election districts, associations of election districts4

The federal territory is divided in twenty-five election districts for the purposes of the elections. The election districts are divided into four associations of election districts. The association I of election districts is composed of the election districts of Burgenland, Lower Austria, and Vienna. The association II of election districts is composed of the election districts of Carinthia, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tirol and Vorarlberg.

§ 3 Election districts

The election districts are the following:

See first page (p.623) in the pdf-file. Note: "Nummer" = number. "Bezeichnung" = name.

§ 6 Associations of election districts5

(Constitutional Law). Each of these form an association of election districts:

- 1. the election districts in Vienna
- 2. the election districts in Lower Austria
- 3. the election districts in Upper Austria Salzburg, Tirol and Vorarlberg
- 4. the election districts in Burgenland, Styria and Carinthia

5 Compare to § 2 in 1971

⁴ Compare to § 2 in 1971

III) Threshold and the allocation of seats within lists to individual candidates:

§§

82,

89,

97,

98,

102

Translations:

§ 82 Ascertainment of the electoral points6

- (1) The electoral authority shall ascertain the electoral points for each of the candidates of each election proposal as follows:
- (2)In case that the ballot that does not have an annotation of sequence7 [§ 78, al. 2] the electoral points for the candidates are calculated as follows: the candidate that is ranked first in a published party list (§ 55) obtains as many electoral points as there are candidates listed in this party list; the second, third, fourth and so forth candidates obtain the next lower number of points in the order of sequence (basic number). Hence in the case of official ballots without explicit annotation of sequence the number of electoral points for the candidates is the product of this basic number for each candidate with the number of these official ballots.
- 2a) In case that the ballot does have an annotation of sequence8 [§ 78, al. 3] the electoral points are calculated as follows for the candidates: The candidate that is listed on the first place by the voter obtains as many electoral points as there are candidates listed in this party list. Candidates listed on the second, third, fourth and so forth place by the voter obtain the next lower number of points in the order of sequence.
- b) In case that not all of the listed candidates have obtained an annotation of sequence by the voter then only those candidates which have annotated by the voter obtain electoral points as described in 2a). The rest of the listed candidates obtain votes the next lower number of points in the order that they are ranked on the party list.
- c) In case that the name of a candidate has been canceled by the voter (crossed out) then this candidate shall not obtain any electoral point for this ballot, irrespective of whether the ballot does have or does not have an annotation of sequence. For the other candidates listed on this ballot the number of electoral points is calculated as if this canceled candidate would not be listed in the list.

⁶ Compare to § 91 in 1971

⁷ read: an explicit cast of preferential vote

⁸ read: an explicit cast of preferential vote

- d) In case that two or more candidates have obtained the same rank by the voter in the annotation of sequence then these candidates have to be ranked in between the next higher and the next lower candidates in the list and they obtain the identical number of electoral points (for example 5a, 5b, 5c, ...). For the rest 2a) or 2b) apply.
- (3)The sum of the electoral points calculated on the basis of (1) and (2 al. a to d) is the number of electoral points obtained by the candidates.
- (4) The results have to be published in the protocols of the election authority.
- § 89 Definite result in the regional election district, allotment of seats to the parties9
- (1)On basis of the election records received according to § 86 the regional electoral authority shall verify for possible errors in the figures of the result the election results of the constituencies ascertained by the district electoral authorities, in case of necessity effect the respective rectification and then finally conclude the preliminary results ascertained by the regional electoral authority according to § 88.
- (2) The seats that are to be distributed within the regional election district shall be allotted to the party lists on the basis of the election quotient. The election quotient is calculated by dividing the total of valid votes cast for the party lists in the regional constituency by the number of mandates <u>plus 1 (one is added)</u>. The resulting figure shall be rounded to the next following whole number and shall be the election quotient.
- (3) Each party is allotted the number of seats corresponding to the quotient between total of votes gained divided by the election quotient.
- (4) Mandates which cannot be allotted on basis of this allocation (rest-mandates), as well as party votes that are not sufficient for the allocation of a mandate (rest-votes) have to be allotted to the confederate electoral authority.
- § 90 Allotment of seats to the candidates of the party lists in accordance with the electoral points, Sequence of stand-by candidates10
- (1) The seats reserved to candidates of a party according to § 89 al. 3 shall be allotted according to number of electoral points obtained by the candidates in the electoral district.

⁹ Compare to § 96 in 1971

¹⁰ Compare to § 97 in 1971

- (2) For this purpose the regional electoral authority shall ascertain the total number of electoral points cast within the regional electoral district for each of the candidates headed on the ballot of the elected party list in the regional constituency in accordance with § 89 al.1.
- (3) The seats to be allotted shall first have to be allotted in the order of sequence of the electoral point's totals of each candidate, starting from the highest total followed by the respective following lower totals. In case that due to equality in the number of electoral points candidates would have equal right to be allotted then it shall only be decided by lot if it is the only or the final seat to be allocated to a party. Otherwise, each of the candidates that have obtained the same number electoral points obtains a seat.
- (4) Candidates not elected shall be considered in case a seat of their list will be vacated. In this case the sequence of the candidates is determined by the number of electoral points obtained by the candidates. Al. 3 applies accordingly.
- § 97 Ascertainment and allotment of the remaining seats (rest-seats)11
- (1) Parties who have not gained any seat in the federal territory in the first ascertainment procedure are not entitled to being allotted any rest-seats in the second ascertainment procedure.
- (2) The confederate electoral authority has to ascertain in accordance with § 91 al. 5 on the basis of the protocols delivered to her by the regional electoral authorities the number of rest-seats to be allotted within the association of election districts as well as the sum of rest-seats to be allotted to the in accordance with al. 1 and § 95 suitable parties in the second ascertainment procedure.
- (3) The remaining rest-seats to be assigned in the second ascertainment procedure are distributed among these parties by use of the election quotient to be calculated according to al. 4 and 5.
- (4) The totals of the rest-votes cast for each party shall be written next to each other in the order of sequence starting with the largest number; under each number its half shall be written, followed by its third, its fourth, and as needed its subsequent fractions.

¹¹ Compare to § 102 in 1971

- (5) The election quotient shall be the largest figure in order of sequence of the figures written when one seat is to be allotted, the second largest figure in the case of two seats to be allotted, the third largest figure in the case of three seats, the fourth largest in case of four seats and so forth.
- (6) Each party gains as many seats as often as the election quotient is contained in the total of rest-votes cast for it.
- (7) If as a result of this calculation two or more parties should be entitled to be allotted the same seat, the decision shall be made by drawing lots.

§ 98 Elected candidates, Announcement12

- (1) In case that the parties that obtained additional seats in the second ascertainment procedure had previously delivered an confederate election proposal the additional seats to be allotted shall be assigned to the candidates of the various parties in the order of sequence as stated in the confederate election proposal.
- (2) In case that there is no confederate election proposal or that there are not sufficient candidates the additional seats to be allotted shall be assigned as stated in § 97, al. 4 to 7 and allotted to those candidates that were not elected in the first ascertainment procedure in accordance with the sequence defined in § 90, al. 3.
- (3) The result ascertained shall be announced immediately in the form stated in § 100 al. 1. The announcement shall be posted at the official bulletin board of the agency to which the chairperson of the confederate electoral authority belongs to. The announcement shall also state the date when it has been posted.
- (4) If a candidate is elected on a regional or confederate election proposal he should declare within forty-eight hours whether he decides for the regional or confederate election proposal. After this deadline this is decided by the central electoral authority.

¹² Compare to § 103 in 1971

§ 102 Backup-Candidates: Appeal, Refusal, Deletion13

- (1) Backup-candidates of regional election proposals shall be appointed by the regional electoral authority, backup-candidates of confederate election proposals shall be appointed by the confederate electoral authority. In this case the order of sequence of their appointment for backup-candidates of regional election proposals is determined according to § 90 al. 4, for backupcandidates of confederate election proposals according to the order of sequence in the confederate party list. If a candidate to be appointed in this manner had already been elected in a regional or confederate election proposal, he shall be requested by the electoral authority, intending to appoint him, to declare within eight days, for which election proposal he will decide. If no such declaration is received within this term, the electoral authority shall decide. The electoral authorities concerned by the decision shall be informed of it. The name of the definitely appointed candidate shall be announced in the usual official manner and, in case of an appointment of a candidate of a regional election proposal, the confederate electoral authority shall be informed immediately in order to be able to issue an election certificate.
- (2) If a backup-candidate to be considered nominated for a vacated seat refuses to be appointed, he still retains his position on the list of the backup-candidates.
- (3) A candidate on a regional election proposal can at any time request the regional electoral authority, and a candidate on the confederate election proposal can request the confederate electoral authority to delete him from the list. The electoral authority shall publicly announce such a deletion.

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¹³ Compare to § 106 in 1971

Federal Law on Parliamentary Elections 1971

Source of the document:

http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BqblPdf&Dokumentnummer=1970 391 0

I) The electoral formula:

§§

1

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Translations:

- § 1 Number of members, Announcement of the election, Day of election, Qualifying date
- (1) The National Council consists of 183 members, who are elected according to the provisions of this federal law.
- § 3 Number of mandates in the election districts, calculation in accordance with the last census14
- (1) The number of mandates in the federal parliament in every constituency is to be calculated in accordance with the regulations set out in paras 2 to 4.
- (2) The number of citizens which, according to the last regular or exceptional census (Census law, FLG. Nr. 159/1950), were permanently residing in the Republic of Austria has to be divided by 183. The result has to be rounded to the third digit after the decimal sign. This gives the proportion figure.
- (3) Every election district receives the number of mandates, which results from the division of the number of citizens, which were permanently residing in the election district by the proportion figure (para 2).
- (4) In case that, in following the described procedure, it is not possible to distribute all 183 mandates, the results of the calculations described in para 3 have to be rounded up to the third digit after the decimal sign. The remaining mandates are then allocated to those election districts, which have the largest decimal figure. When, however, the decimal figures of more than one election districts are equal, they each receive an additional mandate, except when there is only one mandate, from the 183, left to be allocated. When, as a result of an equal decimal figure, more than one election district is in a position to receive the remaining mandate, the question of which one does receive it is decided by drawing lots.

II) Districts (number and magnitude):

§ 2

14 Compare to § 4 in 1992

Translation:

- § 2 Election districts, association of election districts; vote districts
 - (1) The federal territory is divided in nine election districts for the purposes of the elections; in this case every province constitutes an election district. The election district carries the name of the respective province and receives a number, corresponding to the alphabetical order of all provinces.
 - (2) The election districts are divided into 2 associations of election districts. The association I of election districts is composed of the election districts of Burgenland, Lower Austria, and Vienna. The association II of election districts is composed of the election districts of Carinthia, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tirol and Vorarlberg.
 - (3) The casting of votes takes place in the presence of the local election officials. Local election officials are the municipal election officials and the ward election officials.
 - (4) Every political district as well as every town with an own charter constitutes a constituency. In the City of Vienna every municipal district is also an election district.

III) Threshold and the allocation of seats within lists to individual candidates:

§§ 91, 95, 96, 97, 102, 103,

Translations:

- § 91 Allotment and ascertainment of the electoral points15
- (1) Every person campaigning on the party list of a provincial election proposal made public in the provincial constituency shall get an electoral point each time his name is indicated by the voter on the official ballot (§§ 79, 82 al. 2).

¹⁵ Compare to § 91 in 1992

- (2) The total number of electoral points cast for a campaigner shall be ascertained by the district electoral authority for the area of the voting district, and by the regional electoral authority for the area of the provincial constituency (§ 97 al. 2).
- (3)If the electoral points can not be ascertained on the basis of the official ballots then it should be refrained from asserting the electoral points.
- § 95. Determination of the provisional election results for the election districts by the central electoral authority
- (1) On the basis of the reports submitted to them by the regional electoral authorities according to \S 93, para 2, and \S 94, para 2, the central electoral authority has to provisionally determine, for each of the nine electoral districts and for the whole federal territory the following:
 - a) the total number of valid and void votes;
 - b) the number of void votes;
 - c) the number of valid votes;
 - d) the number of valid votes cast for each party (totals for party votes).
- (2) Thereafter, the central elections authority hay to determine the number of mandates falling to the individual parties, according to the provisional election results, following the regulations set out in §§ 96, para 3 to 5 and 102.
- § 96. Definite result in the regional election district, allotment of seats to the parties16
- (1) On basis of the election records received according to § 90 al. 3 the regional electoral authority shall verify for possible errors in the figures of the result the election results of the constituencies ascertained by the district electoral authorities, in case of necessity effect the respective rectification and then finally conclude the preliminary results ascertained by the central electoral authority for the regional election district according to § 95 as well as the results from other regional election districts according to § 94 al. 1 and henceforth immediately notify the central electoral authority of the result. The result of this ascertainment shall be recorded in a vote protocol.
- (2) If, due to extraordinary circumstances, the official ballots described in § 94 al. 3 would get lost, then the preliminary election result ascertained by the regional electoral authorities according to § 94 al. 1 should be considered as definite result for the regional election district.
- (3) The seats that are to be distributed within the regional election district shall be allotted to the party lists on the basis of the election quotient. The election quotient is calculated by dividing the total of valid votes cast for the party lists in the regional

¹⁶ Compare to §§ 96 (2), 97, 98 (4) in 1992

constituency by the number of mandates. The resulting figure shall be rounded to the next following whole number and shall be the election quotient.

- (4) Each party is allotted the number of seats corresponding to the quotient between total of votes gained divided by the election quotient.
- (5) Mandates which cannot be allotted on basis of this allocation (rest-mandates), as well as party votes that are not sufficient for the allocation of a mandate (rest-votes) have to be allotted to the confederate electoral authority.
- § 97 Allotment of seats to the candidates of the party lists in accordance with the electoral points, Sequence of stand-by candidates17
- (1) The seats reserved to candidates of a party according to § 96 al. 4 shall be allotted according to the provisions of al. 3 and 4.
- (2) For this purpose the regional electoral authority shall ascertain the total number of electoral points cast within the regional electoral district for each of the candidates headed on the ballot of the elected party list in the regional constituency. This is done on the basis of the electoral points-protocols by the district electoral authority (§ 90 al. 2) and on the basis of the ballots that have been forwarded to regional electoral authority in accordance with § 94 al.3. § 91 applies accordingly. The result of this ascertainment shall be recorded by the regional electoral authority in an authentic votes report.
- (3) The seats to be allotted shall first be allotted in the order of sequence to those candidates who have obtained a number of electoral points at least equivalent to the election quotient in the regional election district.

The order of sequence for allotment of the seats depends in this case on the order of sequence of the electoral point's totals of each candidate, starting from the highest total followed by the respective following lower totals. In case that due to equality in the number of electoral points candidates would have equal right to be allotted a seat and if it is the final seat to be allocated to the party, the sequence of the candidates indicated on the party list shall govern.

(4) Seats of a party which on basis of the electoral points cannot be allotted at all or not fully to candidates shall be allotted to the candidates in the order of sequence

¹⁷ Compare to § 102 in 1992

as they appear on the party list. In this connection candidates who have already gained a seat on basis of electoral points shall not be taken into consideration.

- (5) Candidates not elected shall be considered in case a seat of their list will be vacated. In this case the sequence of the candidates indicated on the party list of the regional election district shall govern.
- § 102 Ascertainment and allotment of the remaining seats (rest-seats)18
 - (1) Parties who have not gained any seat in the federal territory in the first ascertainment procedure are not entitled to being allotted any rest-seats in the second ascertainment procedure.
 - (2) The confederate electoral authority has to ascertain in accordance with § 98 al. 8 on the basis of the protocols delivered to her by the regional electoral authorities the number of rest-seats to be allotted within the association of election districts as well as the sum of rest-seats to be allotted to the in accordance with al. 1 suitable parties in the second ascertainment procedure.
 - (3) The remaining rest-seats to be assigned in the second ascertainment procedure are distributed among these parties by use of the election quotient to be calculated according to al. 4 and 5.
 - (4) The totals of the rest-votes cast for each party shall be written next to each other in the order of sequence starting with the largest number; under each number its half shall be written, followed by its third, its fourth, and as needed its subsequent fractions.
 - (5) The election quotient shall be the largest figure in order of sequence of the figures written when one seat is to be allotted, the second largest figure in the case of two seats to be allotted, the third largest figure in the case of three seats, the fourth largest in case of four seats and so forth.
 - (6) Each party gains as many seats as often as the election quotient is contained in the total of rest-votes cast for it.

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¹⁸ Compare to §§ 97, 100, 101, 107 in 1992

(7) If as a result of this calculation two or more parties should be entitled to be allotted the same seat, the decision shall be made by drawing lots.

§ 103 Allotment to the candidates, Written report, Announcement19

- (5) The seats allotted in the second ascertainment procedure (§ 102) shall be assigned to the candidates of the various parties in the order of sequence as stated in the confederate election proposal. Candidates not elected are to be taken into consideration in case a seat of their list in the confederate election proposal shall be vacated. The order of sequence of their nomination shall in this case be determined by the order of sequence in the confederate election proposal.
- (6) The confederate federal electoral authority shall display the result of its second ascertainment procedure as follows:
 - a.the total number of rest-votes cast for each one of the parties;
 - b.the number of rest-seats gained by each party;
 - c. the names of the candidates who have been allotted rest-seats according to § 102.
- (7) The result ascertained by the confederate electoral authority shall be recorded in a written report which shall contain at least:
 - a.the names of the confederate electoral authority members present and absent b.the results ascertained according to al. 2.
- (8) The result ascertained shall be announced immediately in the form stated in al. 2. The announcement shall be posted at the official bulletin board of the agency to which the chairperson of the confederate electoral authority belongs to. The announcement shall also state the date when it has been posted.
- (9) Thereafter the result ascertained shall be announced immediately by the confederate electoral authority to the central electoral authority by telephone and by teletypewriter and the protocols have to be sent to the central electoral authority as well.

§ 106 Backup-Candidates: Appeal, Refusal, Deletion20

(1) Backup-candidates of regional election proposals shall be appointed by the regional electoral authority, backup-candidates of confederate election proposals shall be appointed by the confederate electoral authority. In this case the order of sequence of their appointment for backup-candidates of regional election proposals is determined according to § 97 al. 4, for backup-candidates of confederate election proposals according to the order of

¹⁹ Compare to § 108 in 1992

²⁰ Compare to § 111 in 1992

sequence in the confederate party list. If a candidate to be appointed in this manner had already been elected in a regional or confederate election proposal, he shall be requested by the electoral authority, intending to appoint him, to declare within eight days, for which election proposal he will decide. If no such declaration is received within this term, the electoral authority shall decide. The electoral authorities concerned by the decision shall be informed of it. The name of the definitely appointed candidate shall be announced in the usual official manner and, in case of an appointment of a candidate of a regional election proposal, the confederate electoral authority shall be informed immediately in order to be able to issue an election certificate.

- (2) If a backup-candidate to be considered nominated for a vacated seat refuses to be appointed, he still retains his position on the list of the backup-candidates.
- (3) A candidate on a regional election proposal can at any time request the regional electoral authority, and a candidate on the confederate election proposal can request the confederate electoral authority to delete him from the list. The electoral authority shall publicly announce such a deletion.

Amendment of Federal Law on Parliamentary Elections in 1979

Source of the document:

http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/

§ 106 al 1. is changed into:

(1) Candidates who have not been elected or who have not accepted an election won by them as well as such candidates who have accepted their seat but have resigned later, remain on the list of back-up candidates as long as they have not expressly requested to be deleted from the party list (al. 4).

Federal Law on Parliamentary Elections 1992

Source of the document:

http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=Erv&Dokumentnummer=ERV 1992 471

- I) The electoral formula: $\S\ 4$
- II) Districts (number and magnitude):

§§ 2, 3

- + Attachment 1 of the document
- III) Threshold and the allocation of seats within lists to individual candidates:

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§§
91,
95,
96, para 2,
97,
100,
101,
[Thresholds: in §§ 100, 101]
107,
108,
111
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Reform of the Federal Law on Parliamentary Elections 2007

Source of the document:

http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblAuth&Dokumentnummer=BGBLA 2007 1 28