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WIENER NEUSTADT

NEOS- LETTER

MAY 2024
3RD EDITION

A CITY MADE FOR OUR CHILDREN



ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The city government's kindergarten initiative is a mislabeling at the expense of children and caregivers. The city is heavily focused on quantitative expansion of care facilities. Increasingly ambitious goals are being set: from initially 25 new groups, now up to 100 (!) are discussed for 2025. However, sufficient care places for children under three are only available on paper, and there is no legal entitlement to a childcare place from the first birthday. We NEOS want a clearly visible education strategy with binding quality objectives and a phased plan. There is a need for a long-term and realistic vision for the expansion of care hours and fewer closure days. To relieve our educators and caregivers, we propose an education initiative: It has been known for years that especially those who train via a second educational pathway (Kolleg) actually end up working in kindergartens. Wiener Neustadt itself operates a school for this, the BAfEP. Here, we want to abolish tuition fees and launch an advertising campaign to attract more people to work in kindergartens.



SAFETY

Children and parents often cannot move safely through the traffic in Wiener Neustadt. For a long time, we NEOS have been demanding that traffic safety around kindergartens and schools be improved. We can already look at successful models in our city: In front of the Sta. Christiana elementary school, there are "parent parking spots" and temporary stopping and driving bans on school days. Most of our educational institutions, especially in front of kindergartens, lack similar measures. Encounter zones could also be an effective means to improve traffic safety for children and parents walking and cycling. It requires accompanying technical measures such as speed bumps or road narrowings to effectively protect against reckless road users. Together, we can achieve a lot: a safe environment for our children, improved communication among all road users, and a strengthened community. Our schools and school routes must become places where children and parents alike feel safe and comfortable!



INFRASTRUCTURE

Without a car, getting around in our city is difficult. The city government deliberately limits its own scope for action when it comes to expanding modern infrastructure. Instead of perpetual empty promises, deceptive practices, and retro projects, it's time to invest in our future. It's unacceptable for parents to be stuck in traffic outside schools because the bus is overcrowded, frequently delayed, or doesn't even serve the neighborhood. It's unacceptable for parents to be afraid to let their children bike because there are no safe bike paths. We NEOS want to enable climate-fit mobility for all generations. This requires a unified bike network through filling gaps and expanding high-quality bike paths. We need a modern bus system with efficient routing from Monday to Sunday, including evening trips and increased frequency for young people.

CRASH AND BURN: THE THE 'CITY CENTRE-OFFENSIVE'



After countless years and attempts to revitalize the downtown area, a sad picture still emerges for our town center. More and more stores are closing. Some areas, like Neunkirchner Straße, are almost completely empty. We still have the highest vacancy rate in Austria.

Meanwhile, over a million euros of taxpayer money have flowed into the downtown area: downtown bonuses, Christmas vouchers, an empty bike garage, and funding for the Marienmarkt. Yet, there is no noticeable lasting effect. We NEOS are therefore convinced: the city government's measures to revive the downtown area are not working.

We need to go back to the drawing board. Randomly distributing taxpayer money has not worked. All measures only try to answer the question, "How can it be like before?" instead of, "How can it be better in the future?"

Our resources are being squandered ineffectively because the city government cannot let go of the past. What is needed is more courage and innovation. We need a complete reevaluation of the goals and vision for the downtown area. We want to...

- ... to revitalise vacant buildings by reducing bureaucratic hurdles.
- ... to open up the city centre to all business sectors, instead of a rigid focus on retail.
- ... to stop to the removal of public facilities from the city centre.
- ... a serious evaluation of opening shops on Sundays as a unique selling point and competitive advantage for the city centre.
- ... targeted and future-orientated subsidies instead of the scattergun approach.
- ... more feel-good factors – public transportation, greenery, access to toilets, etc.
- ... to open up the town hall and other municipal buildings to associations and civil society.



WHO'S WHO - BERNHARD

- ✗ 34-years-old
- ✗ loving and committed father
- ✗ professional in the field of artificial intelligence



I have been with NEOS since 2018 to address the challenges of our time with innovative politics. Renewable energy and a digital and transparent administration are my core issues. What I appreciate most about our city is its just right size. It's neither a large city nor a village. Plus, it has the perfect geography for cycling with the kids!

I am involved in the local party group because I firmly believe that we have the responsibility to enable a livable future for our children—my children and the children of our city. Because Wiener Neustadt is a great city to live in—I am ready to make it even better.



CANDIDATES FOR THE EU ELECTIONS: TOGETHER FOR ALL GENERATIONS!

Helmut Brandstätter and Anna Stürgkh are our lead candidates for the upcoming European elections on June 9th. Both aim to create a Europe for all generations, one that actively supports the lives of its citizens and places greater emphasis on its regions.

However, European values and the pillars of our community are currently under severe threat. The unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine highlights the urgent need for a more capable Europe.

Additionally, the frustration of the European population with the EU's complex decision-making processes underscores the need for a more democratic and citizen-friendly EU.

But for us, this does not mean wanting less Europe or even considering an exit. For Austria, a strong Europe also means a strong, secure, and future-ready country. Therefore, our vision are the United States of Europe.

These would mean a real common foreign and security policy, a strengthened European Parliament, an efficient European government, and increased opportunities for the citizens of the Union to participate.

We NEOS call for showing our boundaries more clearly to the outside, but within the EU, we aim to remove barriers—such as in the labor market, education, and energy infrastructure. For too long, we were dependent on Putin's gas, and for too long, we relied on the USA for the security and defense of our Europe. We in Europe must be able to defend ourselves and also be economically resilient. We must speak with a strong voice as Europe to remain relevant in a volatile world.

The achievements and freedoms in Europe are not to be taken for granted: We all must work every day to preserve them—we NEOS are ready to do just that.

Election date
June 9th



You can find our
policy papers on
our website



Our upcoming events!

May 9th: European Picnic in the Stadtpark
May 11th: Eurovision Get-Together
May 21st: 'Save Europe' with Anna Stürgkh
June 1st: EU Freedom Zone at Pride
June 7th: Discussion panel at the 'Städtetag'



THE NO-FUTURE-BUDGET 2024

The city government recently presented this year's annual budget for Wiener Neustadt. Mayor Schneeberger and Finance Councillor Stocker are still overpraising their own abilities. We however dared to take a look behind the scenes.

If you take a closer look at the estimate for 2024, you may come across some worrying shortfalls. There is a deficit of 4.7 percent in the municipal budget. After many years of debt reduction, the city's liabilities are once again rising. As it stands, we are missing 18 million euros from the city's purse this year. Despite rising tax revenues, the city is no longer able to cover its expenditure with its income. While the official budget text makes excuses about external factors, we know the real reasons: Ineffective subsidy programmes, an overblown bureaucracy, political favouritism, and excessive construction projects - all this and more have gotten us into this situation. The city has a spending problem, not a problem with its revenue.

End of the 'Schneeberger-effect'

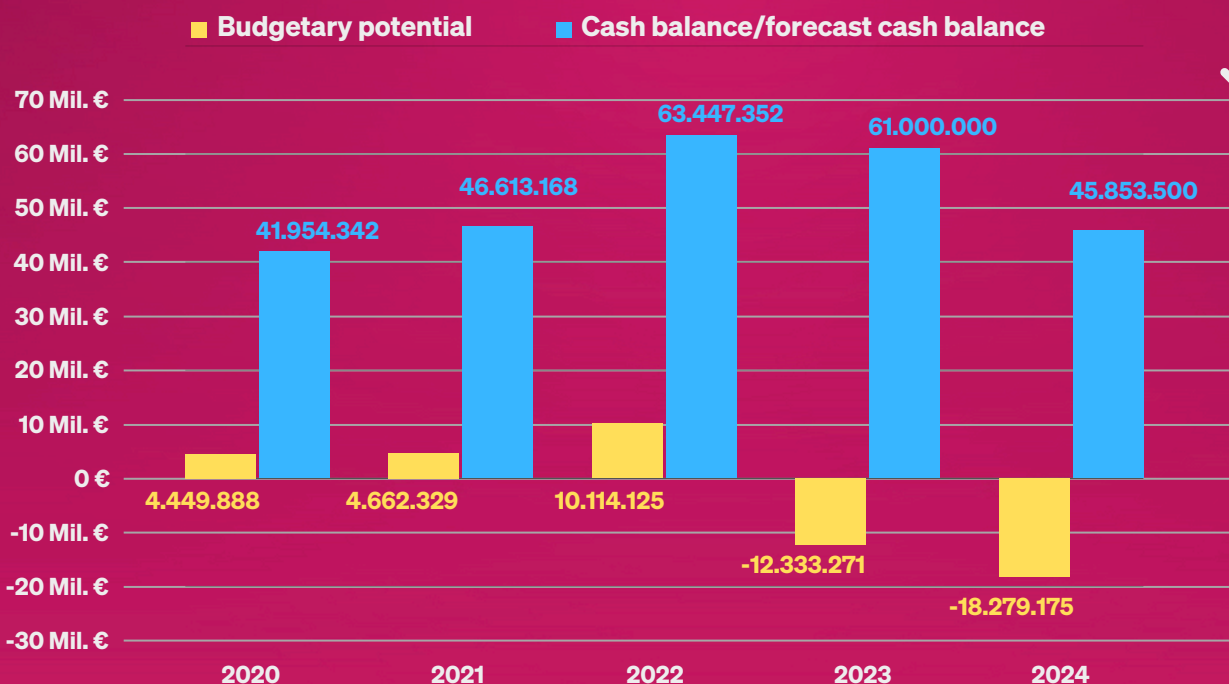
It seemed like our mayor had turned the tide in 2014, putting an end to the financial crisis caused by the Social Democrats. However, his accomplishments appear to only have had a temporary effect on the city's finances. The perpetual flow of money via party connections to the state government has dried up. Mr Schneeberger is destroying his own legacy in record time with his wasteful 'keep it up' policies. Pouring concrete over problems (at taxpayers' expense) and hosting grand events, just

to be able to show off good press photos is not a viable strategy for the sustainable development of our city. One thing is clear: if the city government does not change strategy on their spending policy, fees and taxes will inevitably increase following this year's elections.

Investing in the future instead of the past

We do not want to stand idly by and watch as new debts are haphazardly created at the expense of future generations. Our children and grandchildren deserve a flourishing and stable city. We must thoroughly evaluate the city's budget and consistently cut unnecessary expenditure. We want:

- ... a future quota in the budget, especially for education, the environment and mobility.
- ... no fee and tax increases to finance excessive expenditure.
- ... to reform the city's countless subsidies: targeted effectiveness instead of the generous scattergun approach.
- ... to put an immediate end to post haggling and favouritism.
- ... full transparency in the city administration.



Offener Haushalt



Estimate for 2024



Note: The budgetary potential reflects the financial capacity of a municipality and whether it is able to cover its regular expenditure with regular income (similar to profit/loss for companies).

THE 'LEINER-AREAL' DISPUTE

In 2022, the former Leiner department store in Wiener Neustadt was demolished. For years, there was talk of the city renting space in a new building to be erected there at a low cost. Now that the construction project is stalled, the city suddenly wants to be the builder itself and will likely have to take on 50 million euros in new debt for it. What caused this change of heart?

Schneeberger decides everything

Interestingly, according to media reports, the co-governing parties, the SPÖ and FPÖ, were not informed about the deal either. However, they did not express any complaints during the city council meeting in February. The ÖVP denies any criticism. Klaus Schneeberger believes he is within his rights to negotiate such mega-deals himself, without involving anyone else. This deal potentially results in over €1,000 in new debt for each municipal citizen. We NEOS demand that citizens be informed in advance about such large projects and that negotiations not be conducted behind closed doors.

Missing educational concept

Whether the new location for the schools will enable new types of teaching, whether there will finally be the option of a public all-day school in Wiener Neustadt, and whether the old overhead projectors and chalkboards will be allowed to move with them—on these matters, the city has no answers. The only thing important to the city government is that as much as possible is built as quickly as possible.

For us, one thing is clear: a new educational campus needs an educational concept first and foremost, before everything else is put into action.

Poor negotiating skills

The maintenance of existing school buildings has been neglected for years. Smaller investments were deliberately not made, which today causes high renovation and maintenance costs. To this day, there is no clear plan for the future of the old facilities.

The start of construction has been announced multiple times, although the actual start remains unclear. The public maneuvering over land swaps by SÜBA indicates that the ÖVP is willing to accept anything just to still launch the project by autumn 2024.

A construction site incurs many fixed costs—all of which are now borne solely by us taxpayers, instead of being proportionally shared in a complete project. And this is despite no one knowing when or if the rest of the building project will ever come. We are paying for the mayor's miscalculations with our tax money.

A project for whom again?

The entire project was designed by a small circle of planners and investors, without sufficient participation of our citizens; the public was only allowed to decide on the name. Residents who later voiced complaints were initially ignored until the administration reluctantly incorporated a few changes into the plan. How much can we trust a government that so strongly opposes its own citizens and opportunities for public participation?

Our demands regarding this scandal

A serious voice in the city government that pays attention to our future is lacking, so that the debt burden on future generations does not continue to grow.

Our citizens have the right to know how this deal came about. We demand insight into the negotiation process through the disclosure of all documents.

We also want to know if further backroom deals are being prepared. Too often, the city hall cherry-picks positive information about its own projects to appear in a good light, without substantiating this with data and facts. We therefore demand more transparency in municipal administration, starting exemplarily with the proactive publication of all relevant data on the city website.

A future-proof education concept is needed that meets the needs of the students and includes modern technical equipment. Additionally, the city must present a clearer plan for the future of the old school buildings: as it currently stands, they will otherwise become part of the downtown vacancy problem.

RETRO-SAGA OSTUMFAHRUNG

A transport concept was first developed in the 1970s, with the idea to connect the high-speed roads around Wiener Neustadt into a single ring road. Despite numerous announcements and attempts, the 'Ostumfahrung' (eastern bypass road) was never realised. The ground-breaking ceremony shall, according to official reports, commence in autumn this year.

The official goal is to relieve traffic congestion in the city centre, as most people drive through and into the city, rather than circulating within it. Commuters are supposed to benefit the most from this construction project, although it will only increase their dependence on their car. The current impact assessment predicts a slight reduction in the increase in traffic. In other words: despite the Ostumfahrung, more and more traffic will come into the city, just not as much at first.

We NEOS wonder if the at least 60 million euros that the eastern bypass will cost are really the best investment. Our city is surrounded by communities that are heavily sprawled and poorly accessible by public transport. Our bicycle network is fragile and unsafe, and the bus network is inefficient. The construction project is primarily a diversion from decades of neglect in spatial and mobility planning; that's where the focus should be.

Therefore, we NEOS want a re-evaluation of the project. The calculations that led to this decision are decades old. In the meantime, several developments justify a reassessment: awareness of land sealing has increased, construction costs have doubled, and both the state government and the city have missed checking alternatives.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH 7.000 EURO EVERY MONTH?

Political salaries and transparency were point of discussion in a TV-debate between Christian Stocker and Armin Wolf in 'ZIB 2' on the 2nd of April. Things escalated when the question of Herr Stockers earnings were raised. According to his own statement, he gets paid 7,000 euros for the post of vice-mayor, which he considers to be 'additional salaries' – leaving room for further speculation of his full salary.

Our party exemplifies maximum transparency. We are the only party in Austria to fully disclose our finances and public funds. Major reforms are necessary so that citizens like you can trust politics again. That is why we are working for you on all levels to oust the corrupt system created by ÖVP-SPÖ-FPÖ so that Austrian politics can return to honestly serving its people.

DRAMA ABOUT FAVOURITISM

In October, a second management position was opened up to the city's cultural enterprise 'WN Kul.Tour.Marketing GmbH'. There was no fair competition for this position, as the mayoral office openly announced a favourite: Maria Großbauer, cultural spokesperson for the ÖVP. It wouldn't be the first time she gets appointed to a lucrative position thanks to her party connections. A similar suspicious act happened under former chancellor Sebastian Kurz, where she was put in charge of the prestigious Vienna 'Opernball'.

At a time when the ÖVP is collapsing in the polls and losing its grip at federal level, it is outrageous that the taxpayers of Wiener Neustadt must now pay to take care of the mayor's friends and party members. In our opinion, Ms. Großbauer does not have sufficient experience in the theatre business.

We also miss a clear cultural utilisation strategy for the venues in our city. Our city already has high-ranking venue with the 'Kasematten'. It remains a mystery how the city's theatre will find its role within the cultural landscape of the district, as its renovation nears completion. The creation of unique selling point and the development of an all-encompassing cultural strategy should take priority, instead of promoting new and useless positions for political cronies.

We call for an open discussion and more transparency in the shaping of our city's cultural policy. Those responsible in the administration must remember who they are committed to: The citizens of this city, not themselves or their political friends.

MACHEN STATT BLABLA

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niederosterreich.neos.eu



INSTAGRAM



FACEBOOK

You would like to improve this city?

So do we! But we can't do it alone. Your ideas, your energy and your voice are crucial for the future of this city. Be part of change - since real progress cannot come from mere words, but must be made from daily commitment for a better future!

Contact us and tell us about your concerns!



wienerneustadt@neos.eu



niederosterreich.neos.eu/gemeinden/wiener-neustadt

Terms and conditions of participation (EU-Event Prize draw)

To take part in the competition, you must take part in our event at the Zentralkino Wiener Neustadt on May 21st at 7 pm. Participation in both the competition and the event is free of charge and does not require any form of registration. All people aged 18 and over, who are resident in Austria, are eligible to take part. Members of the party and their relatives are excluded from participation. You may win a cash prize worth 100 euros. This amount is intended to top up your budget for your next holiday in Europe, but is not earmarked for a specific purpose. The winner will be chosen at random on site from all eligible entries after the official part of the event. A lottery drum will be used in front of all participants to ensure that the selection is fair and transparent. The prize will be handed over directly. It is therefore important that you are present the entire evening. If a winner is no longer present, the prize will be awarded to another participant. We do not collect or process any personal data if you take part in the competition. We are not liable for damages that may arise due to errors, delays or interruptions in transmission, malfunctions of the technical equipment and service, incorrect content, loss or deletion of data, viruses or in any other way during participation in the competition, unless such damages are due to gross negligence or intent on the part of the organiser. Austrian law applies.

