

‘Cash Is Printed Freedom’ - 530,000 Austrians Demanded Right to Cash Payments be Added to Constitution, But They Are Being Betrayed, Says FPÖ

A world without cash would lead to “financially incapacitated” citizens, argues the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)

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After 530,000 Austrians [signed a referendum petition](#) calling for the right to cash payments to be enshrined in Austria’s constitution in 2022, Austria’s political class is refusing to move forward with adding this legal right, warns the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ).

“Nowhere else in the world is an everyday life without cash so clearly rejected as in Austria. We see this justified desire of the population, which is reflected in the popular petition ‘For unrestricted cash payment,’ as a concrete work order to the parliament!,” said Finance and Budget Spokesman of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) Hubert Fuchs during a parliamentary debate.

Although the referendum is not binding, in a country of 8.9 million, the fact that over half a million signed the referendum petition shows a broad level of resistance against the push for digital currencies promoted by central banks across the world and institutions like the World Economic Forum (WEF). It was the 13th most popular referendum in the country’s history. However, the center-right Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), which has long been said to have backed the right to cash, is now joining the left-wing parties of Austria and blocking all attempts to add this right to the country’s constitution.

FPÖ says ‘cash is freedom’

Fuchs sees the great support for the petition as a clear mandate to the National Council, which is one of the two houses in Austria’s parliament.

“The initiators and supporters of this petition do not just want words of thanks. Rather, it is a concrete request to the National Council to ensure that the federal government finally gets its act together. But let me report from the finance committee: Our motion for the preservation of cash was once again rejected by the ÖVP. So it’s all just lip service and fine words, while these are not followed by action,” said Fuchs.

The ÖVP is reportedly attempting to blame their coalition partners, the Greens, but the FPÖ rejects these claims. Fuchs argues that if “nothing can be brought forward in the country (through legislation), one should step soon again to the ballot box — the republic would be served thereby very much.”

The FPÖ, known for its [stance against Russia sanctions](#) and its calls to stop immigration by building “[Fortress Austria](#),” is currently the [most popular party in the country](#), with polls putting it at approximately 27 percent. The party, although conservative, takes a skeptical view of unbridled free market capitalism, and argues that the government must protect against real estate speculators and provide generous cash benefits to encourage Austrians to have more children.

The party has also made the right to cash payments an intrinsic part of its platform, arguing that they ensure freedom from government oversight and also protect Austrians from predatory banks and credit card institutions.

“We, the Freedom Party — in contrast to all other parties — have already been campaigning for years for the preservation of cash as well as for the anchoring of the right to cash payments in the constitution. This was also included in the ÖVP-FPÖ government program (of the previous government), but unfortunately could no longer be implemented. And I wonder why, if all parties are in favor of preserving cash, especially the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), they have not tabled a motion on this today?” asked Fuchs. “According to the current legal situation, there is no real obligation to accept cash. The relevant legal provisions need to be tightened up here.”

Fuchs also said in his speech that implementing a financial system where only digital currencies exist would lead to an increase in money laundering and covert financing of terrorism, as according to him, digital and cryptocurrencies are a hotbed for criminality.

“This freedom of choice must continue to exist in the future. Cash is data protection in action. Cash is printed freedom. And another aspect should not remain unmentioned: Without cash, how are children supposed to learn how to handle money and thus how to do business? Money at their fingertips is very important for children. But it is not only important for children, but also for adults in terms of their own spending control,” explained the FPÖ finance and budget spokesman.

Fuchs may be referring to the practice of many consumers reverting back to cash [to better control spending](#), which is a trend seen in the United States this year. Experts argue that using physical cash instead of electronic payments helps people better control and track their spending.

However, the FPÖ also points to a new Marketmind study, which shows that 48 percent of women and 40 percent of men in Austria cannot get a credit card due to their low income and are therefore dependent on cash.

“That’s no wonder when you consider that in our country around 17 percent of the population must be classified as at risk of poverty. That is just one of the many reasons why we have to insist on (the right to) receiving cash with all our might,” said the FPÖ consumer protection spokesman, Peter Worm.

“In view of the fact that more than 530,000 citizens have signed the referendum entitled ‘For unrestricted cash payments’, it is more than opportune to recognize the importance of the issue. The unified opposition of the ÖVP, SPÖ, Greens and NEOS talk loudly about receiving the cash, but votes against every one of our proposals to ensure cash, including cent and euro coins along with notes in the current form, is preserved and to anchor cash in general in our constitution. Our application to establish a constitutionally stipulated obligation to contract for the movement of goods and services in connection with the basic acceptance of cash as a means of payment in the Austrian legal system also failed due to all four parties,” explained Wurm.

“But we Liberals will continue to comply with the will of the citizens. Cash means survival, freedom and self-determination. The transparent citizen has already become a reality to some extent, and only receiving cash in a constitutionally protected form can prevent even worse things from happening,” emphasized Wurm.

In Austria, [50 percent](#) of all transactions are still conducted in cash, far above the European average of approximately 30 percent. Germans are also against digital transactions, with just [9 percent](#) saying they would use mobile payments.

Why protect cash?

As Remix News previously [reported](#), privacy and civil rights organizations have long advocated the right to cash with the argument that privacy, civil liberties, and financial security are at stake. Abolishing cash would force citizens to conduct all transactions through a digital medium, such as mobile payments, credit cards, or digital currencies. Banks and electronic mediums remain vulnerable to hacking attacks and even natural disasters, for example, if the power grid were to be knocked out. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, which is a part of the Ministry of Justice, warned in one report that [a totally cashless society would be extremely vulnerable](#) if the country were attacked or exposed to a natural disaster

For those concerned about privacy, such as those in Germany and Austria, digital payments give law enforcement and government authorities a direct window into all transactions.

Even more worrying for some, digital money could one day be linked to political and social behavior in Western countries in a social credit system, as seen in China. Already, during the [“Freedom Convoy” trucker protests against Covid-19](#) policies in Canada, the left-wing government of Justin Trudeau took the unprecedented step of freezing the bank accounts of protesters. Although civil liberty groups decried the authoritarian action as a flagrant abuse of power, many critics worry that the action could now serve as a template to deal with protesters and dissent in the future. If dissidents and those critical of the government cannot keep their money outside the digital space, then they will have nowhere to hide their finances should governments, like the one in Canada, take action against them.

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