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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Austrian Ex-Foreign Minister Who Danced With Putin Gets Rosneft Board Seat

Karin Kneissl becomes the second former high-ranking European politician to join the Russian state-owned oil company's board of directors.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin dancing with then-Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl at her 2018 wedding. **ROLAND SCHLAGER / POOL / TASS**

A former Austrian foreign minister who danced with Russian President Vladimir Putin has been voted onto the board of directors of Russia's largest oil company.

Karin Kneissl, who served as Austria's foreign minister from 2017-2019, will join the board of state-controlled Rosneft, the company said Wednesday in a statement.

Kneissl caused a stir across Europe in August 2018 when she invited Putin to her wedding, and

was pictured dancing with the Russian president just months after the EU had expelled dozens of Russian diplomats and several countries had broken off high-level meetings following the Novichok nerve agent attack on Sergei Skripal in Britain.

Her appointment was confirmed by a vote of Rosneft's shareholders at the firm's annual general meeting (AGM) on Tuesday, after being nominated to the post in March.

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Rosneft, which is majority-controlled by the Russian government, accounts for around a third of the country's lucrative oil extraction. Boss Igor Sechin is a close ally of Putin and seen as one of Russia's most influential figures.

Kneissl becomes the second former European government minister to serve on Rosneft's board, joining former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who is also chairman of Gazprom's controversial Nord Stream 2 initiative.

Three other Western business figures sit on Rosneft's board, including the American former BP boss Bob Dudley and the Irish current BP CEO Bernard Looney. BP owns a 19.75% stake in the oil giant. The rest of the 11-strong body is made-up of Russian government figures and representatives from Qatar, which also owns an 18.53% stake of Rosneft.

Rosneft posted profits of 147 billion rubles ($2 billion) in 2020 — down 80% on pre-pandemic levels — as it slashed production as part of Russia's pact with Saudi Arabia to prop-up oil prices throughout the pandemic.

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