

AUGUST 2023

# Swiss Review

The magazine  
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**Who will you vote for on 22 October 2023?**  
Read our big election survey on page 17.  
Or visit [www.revue.ch/en](http://www.revue.ch/en) for the full-length version.

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Cover: The iconic SKA ski hat of the 1970s.  
Photo: Silas Zindel, [www.silaszindel.com](http://www.silaszindel.com)

# Ski hats and Credit Suisse shares



A marketing coup by Swiss big bank Schweizerische Kreditanstalt (SKA) kept everyone warm almost 50 years ago, when the forerunner of Credit Suisse gave away 800,000 ski hats. These blue, red and white knitted accessories were striking rather than aesthetically appealing. Made of acrylic and sometimes a little too tight for comfort, they were an iconic piece of branding. Everyone wanted one. It gave SKA a clearer public profile.

These hats, originally freebies, currently fetch prices of up to 200 Swiss francs each at online auctions. In March, the going rate was 280 times the value of one Credit Suisse share. With the downfall of CS complete, the hat is now a sought-after retro relic. This is after the Swiss government forced big bank UBS to take over its ailing competitor practically overnight. Berne and the Swiss National Bank pledged billions of francs to backstop the takeover.

The shock waves from this deal will continue to reverberate for a while yet. Switzerland has also learned over the years that one banking crisis leads to another. As economic historian Tobias Straumann says drily in his interview with “Swiss Review”: even UBS, now the only big bank left in Switzerland, will probably need the state (taxpayer) to bail it out sooner or later (see page 4).

Long gone are the days when a bank was that friendly branch around the corner that gave your children their first piggy bank, supported business ventures and helped you to realise dreams, and then guaranteed you financial security on retirement. The excesses of today's global banking juggernauts leave us disconnected and bewildered. The bosses at Credit Suisse epitomised this, taking millions in bonuses even in loss-making years. There was little sympathy for the bank when the end finally came.

Switzerland will elect a new parliament on 22 October. Whether voters want greater regulation of the banking sector remains to be seen. In any event, these elections will shape the way in which this and many other areas develop. In this edition, we grill the country's six biggest political parties on a range of issues. Their answers will provide food for thought for the roughly 220,000 people in the “Fifth Switzerland” who are already on the electoral register. Our printed magazine contains a selection of these Q&As – while the complete survey is available at [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch).

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“Swiss Review”, the information magazine for the “Fifth Switzerland”, is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.



# “Berne will probably still need to keep the new banking colossus on an even keel.”

The end came for banking stalwart Credit Suisse 167 years after its founding, when the government forced UBS to take over its ailing competitor. Economic historian Tobias Straumann on Switzerland and its big banks, on wishful thinking in Berne – and on the question of whether our small country still needs an international banking giant at all.

INTERVIEW: SUSANNE WENGER

**Swiss Review: Tobias Straumann, does the loss of Credit Suisse with its long history mark a tipping or turning point for Switzerland?**

Tobias Straumann: Well, it is certainly a milestone. Credit Suisse (CS) was Switzerland’s oldest big bank still in existence. But its demise is not a huge turning point as such. Big banks were

already failing back in the 1990s. Switzerland had five big banks around 30 years ago. Now there is one. The 2008 global financial crisis and ensuing government bailout of Switzerland’s biggest bank UBS were of much greater significance. So was the end of banking secrecy for foreign clients.

**From rescuing UBS to forcing it to acquire CS, the state has had to bail**

**out Swiss big banks twice in the last 15 years – in a country that prides itself on its free-market principles.**

**How does that make sense?**

Switzerland is not as market oriented as you may think. This country has many state-owned or pseudo state-owned enterprises. You have the cantonal banks for a start – these are also public-sector entities. Moreover, in my view government bailouts of big banks

## 1856

### Bank for the railways

The liberal politician and businessman Alfred Escher (photo) founds Schweizerische Kreditanstalt (SKA) in Zurich with the help of his peers. SKA, the forerunner of Credit Suisse, quickly becomes Switzerland’s biggest merchant bank and helps to fund the expansion of the Swiss national railway.



Photo: ETH-Bibliothek, Bildarchiv

## 1934

### Banking secrecy enshrined in law

Parliament approves legislation ensuring banking secrecy for bank clients in Switzerland. This is a contentious issue at home and abroad, but Berne fiercely defends banking secrecy for a long time. Amid growing international pressure over tax evasion,



Switzerland begins to phase out banking secrecy for foreign clients in 2009.

## 1977

### Ski hats for the people

To boost its image, SKA gives away 800,000 branded woolly hats to the public. These beanies remain a common sight on the ski slopes well into the 1990s, later becoming a cult item. The merch becomes popular again after the demise of Credit Suisse, worth a lot more than the CS share price.



are no longer as shocking as they used to be. Since the 1990s, the vulnerabilities of the highly globalised and liberalised banking system have been in evidence all over the world. Repeated state intervention has become the norm. Indeed, there is no other option, because the alternative would be global financial meltdown. Other countries do not want Switzerland to be a source of contagion for the entire banking system.

**But after the UBS bailout, parliament's too-big-to-fail law was meant to prevent the government and taxpayers from having to take so much financial risk again. Is the fall of Credit Suisse a rude awakening for lawmakers?**

As a historian, I am not too surprised about what happened. In a crisis, you need the mechanisms to be very simple. Not only was the too-big-to-fail law too complicated, it was also untested and a little naive. You have to remember that foreign authorities are always involved and have their own responses. It can take a while before they all agree.

**What can Berne still do, if anything, in the face of the global financial markets?**

I would say that Berne can – and must – still do a lot to keep the banking sector on an even keel. It did a good job with UBS in 2008. The bank was partially nationalised for a time, while the federal government even ended up earning something from the deal. UBS also overhauled its risk culture. In the case of Credit Suisse, Berne believed a merger was the safer option. Time will tell whether it was the right one.

“We overstate the economic importance of the financial centre.”



Tobias Straumann, 57, is Professor of Modern History and Economic History at the University of Zurich. His research focuses on financial and monetary history, among other things. Straumann is particularly interested in the interplay between economic crises, institutions, and politics.

**Who or what was primarily responsible for the collapse of CS?**

The management and the Board of Directors. CS had been poorly run for years. But the authorities must also take a good look at themselves. They had known since October 2022 that the bank was in difficulty, yet it still took a long time in March to put together a rescue plan. It all seemed a bit off the cuff, unlike the bailout of UBS. This surprised me. We still don't know enough to pass verdict. A parliamentary inquiry committee has been set up to look into the takeover. However, the bank itself still has a part to play. It should be proactive in producing a

## 1991

### Collapse of a regional bank

Regional bank, the Spar- und Leihkasse Thun (canton of Berne), goes into liquidation following the bursting of the property bubble. News of Switzerland's first-ever bank run goes around the world. Over 220 million Swiss francs worth of private and corporate assets are lost.



## 1997

### Merger to create UBS

Two of Switzerland's banking giants, Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation, merge to create the country's biggest bank UBS. The new company expands more into international finance, an area in which it wants to become a world leader.



## 2008

### State bailout of UBS

Following the collapse of US bank Lehman Brothers, UBS comes unstuck in the ensuing financial crisis. The federal government and the Swiss National Bank (SNB) hand the big bank a 60-billion-franc lifeline. The bailout succeeds without taxpayers taking a hit.



Photos: Keystone



comprehensive report on what went wrong at CS. It owes Switzerland that much.

**Despite losses and scandals, CS paid exorbitant salaries and bonuses. Some bankers only seem to be driven by greed and are ready to risk everything in their pursuit of money. What happened to the entrepreneurial bank of yesteryear that helped to develop the country's economy?**

CS kept supporting business until the very end, doing a very good job with its corporate lending. It is true that founding father Alfred Escher and his peers invested in infrastructure in the 19th century, but the railways were also a risky business. The early years at Schweizerische Kreditanstalt were turbulent, with railway stock prices going up and down. Bankers earned handsomely when things went well, but their bonuses vanished into thin air when stocks plummeted. That is the difference from today. CS did make mistakes because of greed, but the bank's demise was mainly down to the incompetence of the Board of Directors and management.

**Why this incompetence?**

From the 1990s onwards, the Swiss big banks turned into international busi-

nesses. However, Swiss-managed companies have always had an extremely hard time of it in London and New York, where investment bankers have a completely different mindset. The approach in these English-speaking financial centres sits uncomfortably with Swiss business culture. Furthermore, the Swiss big banks often employed second-rate staff in London and New York, who behaved like mercenaries and were only out to make as much money as they could as quickly as possible.

**UBS took over CS in June and is now a huge bank. Will this story end well?**

Just to give some perspective: the new UBS is smaller than the UBS before the financial crisis – and will probably shrink a bit more. But it is still very big of course, with a balance sheet twice the size of Switzerland's GDP. Will the story end well? I don't know. However, it is highly likely that this new banking giant will also find itself in a predicament and need the government to step in. It is already clear that greater regulation will not solve the problem.

**Politicians are nevertheless calling for greater regulation of systemically relevant banks.**

Banks having more of a buffer, i.e. a greater share of equity, would make

## 2010

### Excessive bonuses at CS

CS CEO Brady Dougan (photo) receives a record bonus of almost 71 million francs in addition to his annual salary of around 19 million francs. The excessive bonuses at CS continue to attract criticism in Switzerland over the following years, but the bank's shareholders keep approving them.



## 2011

### Too-big-to-fail law

Parliament approves a bill from Finance Minister Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf (photo) to impose greater regulation on systemically relevant banks, including UBS and CS. Such banks are "too big to fail", because their failure would damage the economy. Capital requirements are increased, and a bank resolution framework is put in place.



## 2021

### CS loses billions

Risky investments in finance company Greensill and the hedge fund Archegos result in losses running into the billions for Credit Suisse. The Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA) opens proceedings over Greensill and imposes remedial measures on CS.





sense, I think. But it still wouldn't make UBS secure, we need to realise that. The global financial system is very fragile. CS was struggling, but not so badly off either. It was meeting all the financial regulator's requirements. But all it takes is something to happen, and the contagion begins. Governments can neither predict nor prevent financial crises. All they can do is mitigate them in time and prevent a catastrophic outcome. But it is hard to know when best to intervene.

#### Can a small country like Switzerland still afford to have a major global bank, given the risk?

There are advantages to having a big bank on your doorstep offering the full range of services. These advantages would be lost if UBS had to spin off its problematic international operations at the behest of lawmakers, or if it moved its headquarters elsewhere. But you would have more stability. Foreign subsidiaries would take care of certain ar-

**“It is already clear that greater regulation will not solve the problem.”**

eas of business – in much the same way that the airline Swiss covers a specific area of the market for its German parent carrier Lufthansa. It would work. The end of banking secrecy did us no harm either, did it? Is Zurich any poorer than it was before? Quite the opposite.

#### How important was being an international financial hub for Swiss prosperity?

We overstate the economic importance. The First World War turned Switzerland into an international financial centre, although in 1914, just before the outbreak of hostilities, we were already the richest country on the European continent based on per capita GDP. Industrial activity was the primary driver of that. Industry was highly dynamic and has underpinned Swiss prosperity from the 19th and 20th centuries to the present day. Switzerland only became a financial hub as a result of industrialisation, with wealth management providing a completely new, rich source of income. This has always had its pros and cons from an economic perspective.

#### What were the drawbacks?

High wages in the banking sector attracted many highly qualified workers, who were then missed in other, more innovative industries. With the banking sector now being less of a draw, there is more scope for other industries and innovations to thrive again. Zurich is also a very successful insurance hub – a more predictable and stable line of business that suits the Swiss mentality much better, I feel.

## March 2023

### Emergency takeover by UBS

The crisis at CS comes to a head. Clients withdraw their assets. On the evening of Sunday 19 March, Finance Minister Karin Keller-Sutter announces UBS's takeover of CS in the presence of the two bank bosses. The federal government pledges 109 billion francs to backstop the emergency sale. The Swiss Sergio Ermotti becomes UBS's new CEO.



## April 2023

### Initial snub in parliament

In an extraordinary session, the National Council rejects the CS rescue deal. But its decision is largely symbolic. The Council of States votes in favour. The debate reignites on whether lawmakers should do more to keep banks in check. The National Council adopts motions to ban executive bonuses and introduce higher equity ratio requirements.



The debate reignites on whether lawmakers should do more to keep banks in check. The National Council adopts motions to ban executive bonuses and introduce higher equity ratio requirements.

## June 2023

### Inquiry into the collapse of CS

The National Council and Council of States set up a Parliamentary Investigation Committee (PlnC), their most powerful control body. Led by the Centre Party Council of States member Isabelle Chassot (photo), the PlnC will this autumn investigate the actions of the Federal Council, the SNB, and FINMA before and during the CS takeover.



# Alain Berset



It was a photo that raised eyebrows: Federal Councillor Alain Berset sitting on the edge of a New York sidewalk in a blue suit, nonchalantly studying his notes. The picture, taken in 2018 during the UN General Assembly, epitomises the confident, purposeful image that the Fribourg social democrat likes to project as one of the more unconventional members of the federal government.

Berset, just 51, has announced his surprise resignation from the Federal Council. He will not be running for another term after this autumn's federal elections. In his 12 years as interior minister, Berset had to deal with difficult issues like pension provision and rising healthcare costs – areas in which he made little progress. An avowed bon vivant, he rode a tidal wave of popularity for his leadership during the Covid crisis.

Berset has also been a little less than statesmanlike at times. He flew a light aircraft into French airspace without permission. He had an extramarital fling which led to a blackmail attempt against him. The interior minister was able to come through these incidents without his popularity taking a hit.

More serious are allegations that Berset's communications chief leaked confidential information to the boss of Ringier media group during the Covid crisis, as this potentially compromised public trust in the Federal Council.

Stepping down from government is now another bombshell. With Berset's government seat up for grabs in December, the Federal Council "magic formula" (2 SVP, 2 FDP, 2 SP, 1 Centre) could change if the October elections lead to a shift in the parliamentary balance of power.

JÜRIG STEINER

## Zelensky addresses Swiss parliament

On 15 June 2023, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky was allowed to address the Swiss parliament via direct video link. In his short speech, Zelensky asked Switzerland to hold a peace conference. In the days leading up to Zelensky's address, pro-Russian hackers unleashed massive cyberattacks on Switzerland's IT infrastructure. The hackers targeted the websites and applications of the Federal Administration and Swiss parliament as well as the official websites of numerous Swiss cities. Just before these attacks, hackers stole information belonging to the Federal Office of Police, the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security, various cantonal police forces, and the state-owned arms manufacturer RUAG. (MUL)

## Swiss negotiator with the European Union is stepping down

Livia Leu, Switzerland's chief negotiator with the European Union (EU), is stepping down at her own request to become Swiss ambassador to Germany this autumn. Leu's departure after less than three years in office comes at a delicate moment, because exploratory talks between Switzerland and the EU on a new agreement have entered an important phase. Leu is reputed to be a tenacious diplomat who knows her brief. However, her dealings with Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis have been strained of late. The job of chief negotiator has changed hands numerous times. Roberto Balzaretti, Pascale Baeriswyl, Jacques de Watteville and Yves Rossier have preceded Leu in the post over just the last ten years. (MUL)

## Thomas Zurbuchen joins ETH Zurich

Swiss Thomas Zurbuchen, 55, the former head of research at NASA, the US space agency, has returned to Switzerland to work for ETH Zurich. From August 2023, he will head the ETH Zurich Space initiative as Professor of Space Science and Technology. Considered one of the world's most influential scientific researchers, Zurbuchen had a decisive influence on space science at NASA. According to the ETH Zurich President Joël Mesot, Zurbuchen "decided to join ETH Zurich despite numerous offers from top universities around the world". (MUL)

## 100 million from Russia for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein

UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein has received a donation of 100 million Swiss francs – from dissident Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021. Muratov's independent Russian newspaper "Novaya Gazeta" has had to suspend its activities amid pressure from the Russian authorities. In 2022, Muratov decided to sell his golden Nobel Prize medal at an auction in New York. He has now donated the entire proceeds to UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein, an organisation providing emergency relief in Ukraine. (MUL)

Additional news is available in our online edition at [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch).



# The new e-voting trials have gone well

Basel-Stadt, St Gallen and Thurgau piloted a new e-voting system on 18 June 2023.

All three cantons were satisfied with the results. Swiss Abroad in particular took advantage of these digital trials.

EVELINE RUTZ

The “Fifth Switzerland” wants to vote online. This is attested to by the first trial run of the new e-voting system. On 18 June 2023, Swiss Abroad were able to vote digitally across three cantons. After grinding to a halt almost four years ago, e-voting was up and running – and very popular – again. “People are delighted to be using the digital voting channel again,” says Barbara Schüpbach-Guggenbühl, chancellor of the canton of Basel-Stadt. Around 53 per cent of the expatriate electorate taking part in the Basel-Stadt cantonal votes used e-voting. The proportion was 54 per cent in St Gallen and 56 per cent in Thurgau.

## Initial reaction is positive

Everyone concerned is happy with how things went. Voters navigated the system well, according to Benedikt van Spyk, chancellor of the can-

ton of St Gallen. “We hardly received any support queries,” he says, adding that feedback from Swiss Abroad was positive. It was the same story in Thurgau. “We are very satisfied with how e-voting went,” says Thurgau Chancellor Paul Roth. The three cantons, the Federal Chancellery, and Swiss Post, which developed the new system, will analyse the trial run in detail and make adjustments where necessary. For example, Benedikt van Spyk has indicated that the login procedure will be simplified: “The login in its current form is a relatively big hurdle.”

## No hacker attacks, no attempted fraud

The new system made a “successful debut”, according to Swiss Post, which monitored the pilots and assisted cantonal officials on site. No irregularities were recorded, says Michael Egger, who coordinates e-voting

at Swiss Post. “All votes submitted electronically were valid. Ballot secrecy was maintained at all times, and the results were counted correctly.” There were no hacker attacks of the type that have affected a number of Swiss companies, the Federal Chancellery and other authorities since the beginning of June. “IT security is never static but an ongoing process,” Egger points out. The pilots “went well”, and he is “confident” that e-voting will also be used in the federal elections this autumn. This is pending a decision by the cantons.

Basel-Stadt, St Gallen and Thurgau want to continue offering e-voting and have received an initial licence from the Federal Council to do so until May 2025. They have requested a separate licence for the National Council elections of 22 October 2023; the authorisation process is currently ongoing. No other cantons will be offering e-voting by October. It is too late to do so, says the Federal Chancellery – for logistical and other reasons.



Barbara Schüpbach-Guggenbühl at a media conference on the eve of the trials – the chancellor of the canton of Basel-Stadt is positive about the e-voting system's performance.  
Photo: Keystone

## OSA: “Big success”

According to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), the 18 June trials were a “big success”, demonstrating that e-voting caters for a need within the “Fifth Switzerland”. E-voting was available to 25,494 Swiss Abroad in the three participating cantons. It was used by 3,616 expats. Some 85.3 per cent of all online votes came from outside Switzerland. Organisation of the Swiss Abroad Director Ariane Rustichelli: “The new e-voting system has passed the test.”

Demo version of the e-voting system:  
[demo.evoting.ch](https://demo.evoting.ch)

See page 35 for more on this topic

# Switzerland aims to become carbon-neutral by 2050

A clear majority of the Swiss electorate, almost 60 per cent, voted in favour of the Climate and Innovation Act on 18 June 2023. The new legislation cements the gradual shift away from fossil fuels like oil and gas. But a new debate is brewing over zero-carbon alternatives.

THEODORA PETER

“Switzerland has set itself an ambitious target,” said Federal Councillor Albert Rösti (SVP) after the vote. The energy and environment minister – who only joined the government in January – had campaigned for the parliament-approved Climate and Innovation Act against the will of his own party. Insisting that the switch from oil and gas endangers the security of Switzerland’s energy supplies, the SVP had initiated the 18 June referendum against what it called the “energy-guzzling act”. However, a majority of voters followed the yes recommendation of all the other parties, with 59.1 per cent endorsing the target of carbon neutrality by 2050. Among the Swiss Abroad approval of this target was as high as 76.8 per cent.

## Boost for renewable energy

Under the Climate and Innovation Act, businesses, road users, and private households will be incentivised to help slash harmful greenhouse gas emissions over the next three decades. Massive investment in zero-carbon technology will be needed. To this end, parliament has approved financial support – totalling 3.2 billion Swiss francs

– for homeowners to replace climate-damaging oil and gas heating with heat pumps. Electric vehicles will replace petrol and diesel on the roads, while industrial and commercial businesses will have to transition to climate-friendly production practices.

According to Rösti, Switzerland can only reach the net-zero target by producing more of its own electricity. “We cannot simply rely on imports,” he said. Rösti hopes parliament will approve the Federal Act on a Secure Electricity Supply in September. This new bill aims to promote hydro, solar and wind. But political opinion is divided on the extent to which new dams, wind turbines, or solar plants should be allowed to affect wildlife and natural landscape. Depending on the outcome of the parliamentary debate, this matter could also end in a referendum.

## Calls for new nuclear power stations

The centre-right and right-wing parties as well as industry groups are sceptical as to whether renewables can meet Switzerland’s electricity needs in future. There had already been calls as early as the day of the vote for new nuclear power plants to be built. According to the FDP and

The Climate and Innovation Act lends additional impetus to new major solar and wind projects. Opinion is divided on the extent to which such projects should be allowed to affect wildlife and the natural landscape. In the photo: Europe’s highest wind park, overlooking Lake Gries (canton of Valais) near the Nufenen Pass.

Photo: Keystone



SVP, it would be careless to dispense with “climate-friendly” energy from nuclear fission. However, the construction of new nuclear power stations has been banned under Swiss law since 2017, when the electorate accepted the revised Federal Energy Act (“Energy Strategy 2050”), which incorporated Switzerland’s withdrawal from nuclear energy production.

Yet the speed of climate change and fears over electricity supplies could lead to a rethink – or at least delay the shift from nuclear. SVP Federal Councillor Röstli advocates keeping the country’s existing nuclear power plants on-line for as long as possible – “as long as safety is guaranteed”. But this would necessitate some costly retrofitting. It remains to be seen whether nuclear power plant operators would want to make such an investment. Energy group BKW took the Mühleberg nuclear plant offline in 2019, simply because running it was no longer economical.

Nuclear is an issue likely to preoccupy the electorate again in a few years’ time. The centre-right and right-wing parties are collecting signatures for a popular initiative dubbed “Stop the blackout”, which aims to reverse the current ban on new nuclear power stations and make “all climate-friendly types” of electricity generation admissible under the constitution. Sceptical left-wing politicians have dismissed the initiative as “ideological cloud-cuckoo land”. There will be no power shortages in winter if we develop renewables as planned, says energy politician and SP National Councillor Roger Nordmann. In addition to hydro and wind, the left-green parties believe there is huge untapped potential in solar installations on buildings.

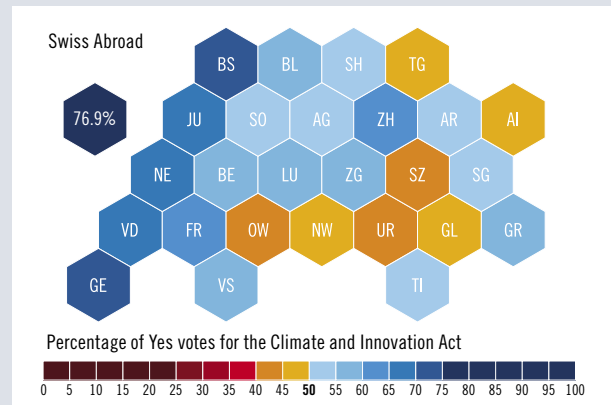
### Climate Alliance wants greater urgency

The outcome of the 18 June vote is a triumph for the Climate Alliance. Buoyed by the yes result, this cross-party association now expects Switzerland to “raise its ambitions”. The climate activists want greater urgency, especially with regard to the proposed revision of the CO2 Act. The bill, which is currently being considered by parliament, is not enough for Switzerland to meet its climate goals on time, they say, adding that financial services must also play their part. Swiss banks should force “climate-destroying multinationals” to rethink and change. The Climate Alliance intends to drive home its message at a climate protest on the Bundesplatz in Berne on 30 September – three weeks before the federal election.

Voters again followed the recommendations of the government and parliament (see diagram on the right), when two other proposals were put to the people on 18 June – the last day of popular votes in this election year. They approved the introduction of a global minimum tax for multinationals as well as a precautionary extension to the Covid-19 Act until the end of 2024.

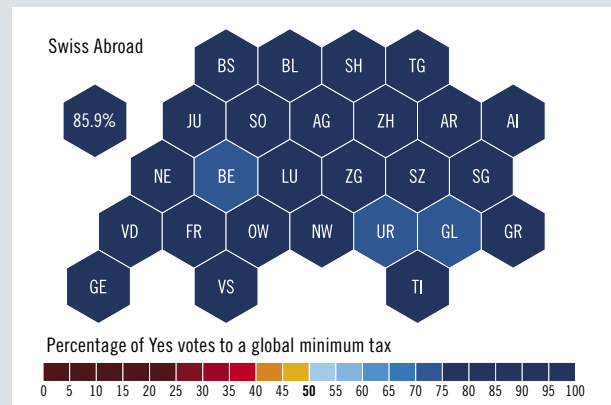
### Yes to the Climate and Innovation Act

A majority of 59.1 per cent voted in favour of the Federal Act on Climate Protection Targets, Innovation and Strengthening Energy Security, which aims to make Switzerland carbon-neutral by 2050.



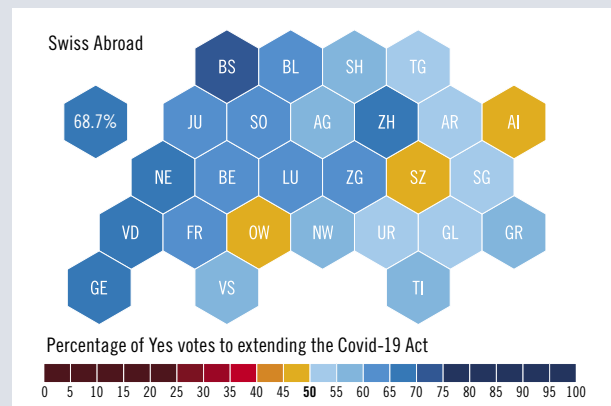
### Yes to a global minimum tax

A majority of 78.5 per cent backed the introduction of a global minimum tax on large multinational companies, which will see Switzerland implementing OECD/G20 recommendations.



### Yes to extending the Covid-19 Act

A majority of 61.9 per cent approved extending the Covid-19 Act on a precautionary basis until the end of 2024. This means that the Covid vaccine passport requirement can still be reactivated, if necessary, e.g. for travel to other countries.





How to declutter a museum? Carmen Simon, manager of the Chüechlihus in Langnau (canton of Berne), has enlisted the help of the public and turned this challenge into a very democratic process. Photos: Andreas Reber



## How to declutter a museum

From hats, to shirt collars, to braces – locals in the Emmental Valley have been given the opportunity to decide which artefacts their regional museum should discard and what should happen to these items thereafter. This pioneering project has democratised a process common to every museum: deaccessioning, or the permanent removal of artefacts.



EVA HIRSCHI

“People don’t like to talk about it,” says Carmen Simon, manager of the Chüechlihus Regional Museum in Langnau im Emmental (canton of Berne), “but there is nothing new about museums having to dispose of objects”. This should not really be a surprise, because no museum can continue collecting ad infinitum. Particularly at a regional museum like the Chüechlihus, where the vast majority of items have been donated, there may be more than one version of the same object. Or some artefacts may be damaged. And one day there will be no more space.

Simon, 37, took over management of the museum in 2021. “Careful curating not only involves building your collections, but reducing them too,” she says. Museums must review their inventories on a regular basis and dispense with individual items where necessary. This is called deaccessioning.

### A novel idea

The Chüechlihus in Langnau, one of Switzerland’s biggest regional museums, has a novel take on this process. In a project unique in Europe, if not the world, the local population can decide which items the museum should give away and what should happen to them. “We believe the people of the Emmental Valley should have a say in what happens to their cultural heritage,” says Simon. The municipal council agrees. “No museum needs 20 walking sticks and 12 spinning wheels in its collection,” says Martin Lehmann, the culture officer in Langnau. “The more we talked

about it, the more obvious that became.”

In consultation with a dedicated committee, the museum initially got rid of over 2,000 textiles – from top hats, nightshirts and aprons, to shirt collars, folk costumes and scarves. In addition to museum, local authority and political representatives, five randomly chosen members of the public from Langnau sit on the committee. They include 36-year-old Jacqueline Maurer. “I immediately agreed to join,” she says. “It’s exciting to be part of this process.”

The committee met to discuss which items were to be discarded. All citizens of Langnau – living inside or outside the municipality – were able to add their voices by voting online at [www.entsammeln.ch](http://www.entsammeln.ch). All the objects in question were photographed and displayed on the museum website. They are also displayed in the top floor of the museum and can be viewed by anyone – QR codes contain descriptions of each individual item. “The idea is that the local people become actively involved,” says Simon. “Unlike in other museums, they can even handle the objects if they wish. This further increases their sense of engagement.”

### Initial scepticism

This democratic process has also attracted dissent. “Many in the museum community were initially sceptical,” says Simon, whose tactic to counteract any misgivings was full disclosure, with the entire process clearly documented on the museum website. According to the International Council of Museums guidelines,

From antique furniture, to traditional textiles, to heirloom crockery – everything must go. Photos: Andreas Reber (left), Eva Hirschi (right)



any object being disposed of must first be offered to another museum. But Simon believes that public museums are not the only place to keep artefacts. “We apply a broad interpretation of the guidelines,” she says. “However, we give priority to professional applications from other museums,” she quickly adds.

Jacqueline Maurer has no issue with the project either: “The museum staff have only disposed of items that are already covered in the collection. In addition, the project helps to keep the museum in people’s minds.” This approach seems to be working. The public nature of the process has also helped to elicit new information, re-



Carmen Simon:  
“The people of the  
Emmental Valley  
should have a say  
in what happens  
to their cultural  
heritage.”  
Photo: Eva Hirschi

sulting in the museum changing its mind and keeping certain artefacts after all.

Simon: “We have enough specialist expertise to know what specific items were for, but we don’t always know whom the things belonged to.” Take the work garment that was returned to the collection. “We thought it was just a tatty coat, but we have now discovered that it belonged to a radio mechanic whom everyone knew in the village.” The committee decided to keep the garment.

### Duty of care

The bequeathing phase finally took place this summer. This involved working out what exactly will happen to each and every object. Not through an auction or an online shopping platform (no money changed hands), but

via a thorough application process. Museums, organisations and individuals – including those outside the Emmental region or even abroad – can apply to obtain a specific item. There are no conditions attached to future use, regardless of the intended purpose – upcycling, art, interior decoration, or whatever. Next come the decisions on who gets what: the committee meets again in mid-August, taking account of the online public votes in each case.

The entire process is time-consuming, taking about a half a year in total. But Simon thinks this is justified: “After all, these objects have been entrusted to us. As museum curator, I have a duty of care.” Initial scepticism among the public seems to have evaporated, while interest across the wider museum community has also grown. They are even getting inquiries from abroad from people who want to know how the project works.

Carmen Simon is delighted. This is already the second round of deaccessioning – the museum conducted its first round last year, albeit for only about a hundred items. Another round is planned for 2024. According to a Chüechlihus survey of those who voted online, many in the local population now feel a greater attachment to the museum. “Bringing the museum to our community is exactly what we want to do,” says Simon. “What matters is that we establish a connection. It is not about objects, but people.”

Langnau native Jacqueline Maurer agrees: “I had forgotten that this region has so many intriguing things to offer. We should be proud to live here.” Because the aim of the project is not simply to free up space – but win hearts and minds.

For more photos of deaccessioned artefacts in Langnau, visit: [revue.link/langnau](https://revue.link/langnau).



### GERHARD LOB

Ticino is known as one of the sunniest spots in Switzerland. The sun does indeed shine very often in the country’s most southerly canton. Ticino often vies with Valais for the title of Switzerland’s sunniest canton. Sometimes the former comes out on top, sometimes the latter. But Ticino is the sunniest on average, according to MeteoSwiss meteorological records from 1990 to 2020. Ticino boasts five of the ten sunniest places in Switzerland. Cardada-Cimetta, the mountain overlooking Locarno, is in first place, with an average of 2,256 hours of sunshine each year. The Valais capital of Sion comes second, with 2,192 hours.

It is, therefore, no coincidence that Cardada-Cimetta is a popular destination for both locals and tourists. The 1,670-metre summit, Cimetta, is easy to reach. You first take a cable car from Orselina (395 metres) to Car-

# The sunny mountain

No other place in Switzerland receives more hours of sunshine than Cardada-Cimetta above Locarno. This lofty location is a centre of solar research.



Cardada-Cimetta, the mountain overlooking Locarno, receives an average of 2,256 hours of sunshine each year. It was formed as a result of a collision between the European and African continental plates. Photo: Gerhard Lob

dada (1,340 metres) – a mountain settlement with its own little church and two restaurants, a place where many Locarno locals own a second home. Star architect Mario Botta modernised the Orselina-Cardada line in 2000, redesigning the top and bottom stations. The cable cars have had automatic doors since then. Up in Cardada, the air is fresh. When you alight there in summer, it is a blessed relief from the hot, humid conditions in Locarno. You then cover the 300-metre difference in altitude between Cardada and Cimetta in a sideways chair lift dating back to the 1950s. It is the last lift of its kind in Switzerland. The panorama is breathtaking.

From the mountaintop station, it's just a few more metres' walk up the hill to the Cimetta viewing platform. From there, you can enjoy an incredible panoramic view encompassing Switzerland's lowest point down below, Lake Maggiore, and its highest



Higher, farther, faster, more beautiful?  
In search of somewhat unconventional Swiss records  
**This edition:  
Cardada-Cimetta – the sunniest spot in Switzerland**

point, the Dufourspitze, in the Valais Alps further away. A geological fault called the Periadriatic Seam runs right under this point from east to west. To oversimplify (or exaggerate), you could say that this is the border between northern and southern



© Swisstopo

Ticino – or the boundary between the continental tectonic plates of Europe and Africa. A red line on the platform marks the spot.

Impossible to ignore, a number of MeteoSwiss measuring devices are situated directly below this viewing point. These measure the sunshine duration, explains MeteoSwiss meteorologist Nicola Gobbi, who works at the Locarno-Monti weather station. On the roof of the MeteoSwiss offices sit an SPN1, the cutting-edge precision instrument now used to record sunshine duration, and a Solar 111 B, an older measuring device manufactured by Hänni (and still used up at Cimetta). On the Solar 111 B, solar cells are shaded successively at short intervals by a set of quickly rotating blades. All periods during which a minimum difference is exceeded between uninterrupted radiation and the value when shading occurs are defined as periods of sunshine.



Michele Bianda of the IRSOL solar research institute.  
Photo: Gerhard Lob

From ski resort to hiking destination – nearly all the ski lifts at Cardada-Cimetta have been dismantled. Photo: ascona-locarno.com

Switzerland has around 260 automatic monitoring stations like the one at Locarno-Monti. This ground-based network goes by the name of SwissMetNet.

The MeteoSwiss base in Locarno is a scientific hub that produces statistics and evaluates weather data. Situated in its garden, the Specola Solare Ticinese is a solar observatory that was built in the International Geophysical Year of 1957. The Specola Solare Ticinese is dedicated to counting the relative sunspot number (or “Wolf number”). Until 1980, it was an external observing station of the former Eidgenössische Sternwarte (federal observatory) at ETH Zurich. It has been privately operated since then, providing data to the Royal Observatory of Belgium, the institution responsible for publishing the relative sunspot number. Fun fact: sunspot maps are still drawn by hand.

Another solar research institute, the Istituto Ricerche Solari Locarno (IRSOL), is situated a little further up the mountain, slightly hidden amid the verdant greenery. IRSOL is devoted to solar physics. The German university of Göttingen founded IRSOL

in 1960 and managed it until 1984. It had scouted out various locations in Europe but eventually settled on Locarno as the most suitable place, due to its position and its abundant hours of sunshine. There were partnerships with a number of universities in the 1990s, including ETH Zurich in particular. IRSOL is now affiliated to the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) in Lugano. Michele Bianda worked as managing director at IRSOL for many years but is now retired. “We have a special device at our disposal, called ZIMPOL. It is a high-precision solar polarimeter,” he says.

### Good for science, bad for skiing

Science and research evidently play a key role on the Cardada-Cimetta mountain. However, climate change means there are drawbacks to having so much sun. Cardada-Cimetta was a ski resort for a long time. Gliding down freshly prepared pistes above Lake Maggiore used to be a magical experience. In point of fact, there was a ski lift that predated the cable car. Snow at intermediate altitudes has become less frequent, which is why

the decision was taken in 2019 to close the ski lifts. Nearly all of these lifts have since been dismantled, not least because they are too expensive to maintain for the rare times they are used. Cimetta is now geared to summer activities instead. In winter, some people still come to go walking, snowshoe hiking, or ski touring when it does actually snow.

Sunshine is good for body and soul. But the sun astonishingly plays only a minor role in helping to advertise Cardada-Cimetta as a resort, even though it is depicted in the tourist logo. The mountain is being pushed as a recreation and hiking area for the whole family. It was a different story during the pioneering days of tourism in Ticino at the end of the 19th century, when the Gotthard railway opened. Some official posters back then compared sunshine hours in Locarno and Lugano with those in London and Hamburg. The cliché of Ticino as Switzerland’s sunniest place is now just that – a cliché.



# What should Switzerland's direction be over the next four years? Welcome to our big 2023 election survey.

THEODORA PETER UND MARC LETTAU

In around two months' time, on 22 October 2023, Switzerland's voters will choose a new parliament. The 246 newly elected National Council and Council of States members will then shape the country's political course over the next four years. In December, parliament will appoint the seven-member federal government, the Federal Council, for a new term. According to an unwritten rule, referred to as the "magic formula", the three biggest political parties are entitled to two Federal Council seats each, and the fourth-strongest party to one seat. This arrangement could change based on how the current parties in government (the SVP, SP, FDP, and Centre) perform in the parliamentary elections. With Alain Berset (SP) announcing that he will step down from the government at the end of the year (see page 8), there is already one vacant seat up for grabs. The six remaining members of the Federal Council intend to stand for election again.

## Parliament plays a key role

The Federal Council and parliament pass legislation and set the course for



making decisions that affect our everyday lives and shape the outlook of future generations. In direct democracy, voters can influence the country's political course through referendums and initiatives. Nevertheless, the composition of parliament plays a key role in determining the overall orientation. Over the next few years, Switzerland faces significant political challenges both domestically and abroad. What is the country's position on Europe? Must we redefine Swiss neutrality in view of Russia's war of aggression? How do we meet our climate goals? How will Switzerland meet its future energy needs? How do we secure the long-term funding of pension provision?

## Six parties in the spotlight

"Swiss Review" grilled Switzerland's six biggest political parties ahead of the elections. We wanted to know the positions of the SVP, SP, FDP, Centre, Greens, and Green Liberals in three key areas: environment and energy; neutrality and foreign policy; and society and domestic policy. We also focused on the "Fifth Switzerland" in our survey. What do you think about the Swiss Abroad exercising their po-

litical rights? Should Switzerland go ahead with e-voting? And the key question: why should Swiss citizens living abroad vote for your party?

On pages 18 to 23, you can now read the answers that the political parties gave to these and other fundamental questions. Further questions and answers are available online – in addition to a comprehensive dossier containing every "Swiss Review" article on the 2023 elections to date. Finally, page 24 contains the names of the candidates from the "Fifth Switzerland" who are standing for a seat in the National Council. It also includes an explanation as to why it is particularly hard for these candidates to get elected to parliament.

### Further information

How the main political parties approach the "Fifth Switzerland": [revue.link/parties](https://www.revue.ch/revue/link/parties)

Online guidance for voters ahead of the federal elections: [revue.link/aides](https://www.revue.ch/revue/link/aides)

Election dossier of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad: [www.elections-2023.ch](https://www.elections-2023.ch)



### Swiss People's Party (SVP)

Right-wing national-conservative party; strongest party since 2003. 2019 election: 25.6%. Current political weight: 53 seats in National Council, 7 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council.  
www.svp.ch



### Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP)

The only left-wing party in government; roots go back to labour movement. 2019 election: 16.8%. Current political weight: 39 seats in National Council, 7 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council.  
www.sp-ps.ch



### FDP – The Liberals

Merged with the Liberal Party in 2009 to establish FDP.The Liberals. 2019 election: 15.1%. Current political weight: 29 seats in National Council, 12 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council.  
www.fdp.ch

Approved by voters on 18 June 2023, the Climate and Innovation Act points the way towards making Switzerland carbon-neutral by 2050. Do we need further climate action?

**No.** There is no need for government intervention in a free-market economy. We need to intensify energy research instead. To ensure safe electricity production, we also need new fourth-generation nuclear power plants as well as a system for recycling spent fuel rods.

**Yes.** To meet our climate goals, we must expedite our energy transition towards renewables. We must improve energy efficiency, speed up the modernisation of buildings, enhance public transport, regulate and hold the financial sector to account, and reduce energy consumption to a reasonable level.

**Yes.** Provided we implement liberal policies to meet our climate goals. This includes agreeing on targets and carbon trading rules for the industrial sector as well as implementing measures related to buildings and mobility. We should look for technology-neutral solutions in all areas.

As approved by voters in 2017, Swiss law bans the construction of new nuclear power stations. Should we lift the ban?

**Yes.** Because the catastrophic meltdown at the Japanese nuclear power plant in Fukushima influenced the electorate's decision to approve the ban. This disaster is irrelevant to Switzerland and the safety of our power plants.

**No.** As part of the Paris Agreement, Switzerland and other countries are committed to limiting global warming to no more than 1.5°C. This means moving away from fossil fuels and nuclear power.

**Neither yes nor no.** Apart from a massive expansion in renewable energy, Switzerland urgently needs new big power plants to ensure energy security with enough base-load capacity throughout the year, including winter.

The expansion of solar power, wind power and hydropower is increasingly to the detriment of environmental protection. Is this a justifiable trade-off?

**Neither yes nor no.** It depends on whether the expansion in renewables relates to existing infrastructure such as dams or installations on buildings that already have an environmental impact, or to new infrastructure with a highly detrimental impact on wildlife and the natural landscape.

**Yes.** But the SP has already suggested specific ways in which to reconcile the rapid roll-out of hydro, wind and solar with environmental concerns. It is possible to turbocharge the development of renewables while preventing irreversible biodiversity loss.

**Yes.** We need a rapid expansion in power capacity. Both the public sector and electricity suppliers must drive the increase in renewables and take advantage of simplified approval procedures. Efforts by the left-green faction and environmental organisations to oppose this are counterproductive.

The Swiss Evangelical People's Party (EVP) (3 seats in National Council), the Partei der Arbeit Schweiz (PdAS) (1 seat), Solidarités (1 seat), the Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (EDU) (1 seat), and Lega (1 seat) were not included in the survey. One independent sits in the Council of States.



## The Centre

Founded in 2021 following the merger of the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) and Conservative Democratic Party (BDP). 2019 election (cumulative result): 13.8%. Current political weight: 28 seats in National Council, 14 seats in Council of States, 1 seat in Federal Council. [www.die-mitte.ch](http://www.die-mitte.ch)



## Swiss Green Party (the Greens)

Left-wing party whose roots go back to the anti-nuclear movement. 2019 election: 13.2%. Current political weight: 28 seats in National Council, 5 seats in Council of States, 0 seats in Federal Council. [www.gruene.ch](http://www.gruene.ch)



## Green Liberal Party (the Green Liberals, GLP)

Founded in 2007 as a moderate splinter group of the left-leaning Greens. 2019 election: 7.8%. Current political weight: 16 seats in National Council, 0 seats in Council of States, 0 seats in Federal Council. [www.gruenliberale.ch](http://www.gruenliberale.ch)

**Yes.** The Climate and Innovation Act delivers on the net-zero goal of the Paris Agreement. With its stimulus programme for residential buildings, its emission reduction targets, and its promotion of innovation, the legislation constitutes an effective, balanced package. It is an important step in the right direction. Further democratically approved steps are still necessary.

**Yes.** The legislation sets climate goals and promotes key action. But more money is needed. This is why the Greens have co-launched the Climate Fund Initiative, calling for 0.5 to 1 per cent of GDP to be set aside for the purpose of fighting climate change and protecting the environment.

**Yes.** We need further action to achieve the aims of the legislation. Our four-pronged strategy (efficiency, renewables, energy storage, and Europe) offers intelligent solutions to optimise the synergies between ecology and economy while ensuring energy security.

**No.** We oppose the construction of new nuclear power stations. Instead, we need quick to implement, realistic, pragmatic solutions focusing on domestic, renewable energy to ensure energy security, drive the switch from nuclear and fossil fuels, and reduce our reliance on foreign energy.

**No.** Any new plant would take decades to start producing energy, while costing billions of francs. There are also major safety issues, not to mention the still unsolved problem of nuclear waste. There are good, less expensive, more quickly available renewable alternatives like solar and wind.

**No.** We can ensure energy security with renewables. Nuclear brings major risks and involves the unresolved question of how we dispose of the waste. Our four-pronged strategy (efficiency, renewables, energy storage, and Europe) is clearly a better alternative. However, we support nuclear research.

**Yes.** The Climate and Innovation Act means that Switzerland is committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. We therefore believe it is acceptable to prioritise specific projects aimed at generating renewable energy. This includes developing dams and pushing solar power.

**No.** Biodiversity and the switch from nuclear and fossil fuels are inextricably linked. We, the Greens, are committed to expanding renewable energy in tandem with nature. This means stopping energy wastage as well as installing solar panels on all suitable roofs, facades and infrastructure to mitigate the environmental impact.

**Yes.** Provided there is no irreversible, disproportionate impact that cannot be offset through suitable replacement or compensatory measures. Furthermore, we are against irreversibly damaging and destroying natural or cultural assets of national importance. The benefits must also be sufficient to justify the environmental impact.

Additional questions and answers can be found in our online edition: [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch)



Several European countries would like to supply Ukraine with Swiss-manufactured weapons, but this is not possible under Swiss law as it stands. Should Switzerland allow the re-export to take place?

**No.** A country that respects the rule of law keeps to the agreements that it has signed. The unilateral re-export of arms to a warring party would violate Swiss neutrality. We would lose our international status as a neutral country – and consequently our role as an unbiased intermediary.

**Yes.** Although Switzerland is a neutral country, it has a legal, political and moral duty to support Ukraine. The SP advocates a solution that would allow the Federal Council, under strict conditions based on international law, to approve requests to re-export weapons to Ukraine by way of exception.

**Yes.** The war in Ukraine has shown that the War Materiel Act in its current form is unsuitable for the challenges of today. For months, the FDP has been committed to finding a solution compatible with neutrality.

Russia's war on Ukraine is testing Swiss neutrality. Must we redefine what neutrality means?

**No.** Switzerland is a sovereign country. Our neutrality defines our foreign policy and forbids us from being a party to armed conflicts between other countries. However, we must provide humanitarian assistance to all warring parties and support all peace negotiations.

**Yes.** We must adapt neutrality to the reality of the times. Neutrality does not mean championing a country or a group of countries with imperial aspirations, but standing on the side of international law at all times. This also includes being more proactive in supporting the UN and its objectives.

**Neither yes nor no.** Neutrality is an instrument for maintaining security and not a means to shirk responsibility. We should always adapt it to the prevailing circumstances. Neutrality was never meant to be rigid.

The retirement age for men and women will be 65 from 2028. Should the retirement age be raised again for both sexes to secure the long-term funding of the welfare system?

**Neither yes nor no.** Further reform will be necessary in future. Demographic changes mean that the retirement age needs to be made more flexible. The current reform has stabilised Old-age and survivors' insurance (OASI) until at least 2030. We will see what the next reform brings, as soon as we begin to address the time beyond 2030 within the next few years.

**No.** The right-wing parties want to hollow out the welfare state bit by bit. Less money is available thanks to their policies. Instead, we need to shore up pensions to protect purchasing power. This is why the SP is against a further increase in the retirement age and in favour of a 13th OASI pension payment.

**Yes.** OASI is heading for financial meltdown due to demographic changes. By raising the retirement age to 66 and linking the retirement age to life expectancy, our Pension Initiative is exactly what is needed to address the problems besetting OASI and ensure that the state pension system continues to work in future.

Around a quarter of Switzerland's population have no Swiss passport. Should we lower the obstacles to citizenship?

**No.** In our direct democracy, citizens have the final say on political decisions. It is, therefore, important that people who arrive in Switzerland understand and learn about their responsibility, the workings of our country, and the long-term consequences of future decisions. This takes time, interest and commitment.

**Yes.** We believe that it is in the interests of us all that the people who live here shape the future of our country. To do so, they need to be allowed to have a say and take decisions like the rest of us. We need uniform, formal naturalisation criteria at federal level, while the naturalisation procedure itself also needs to be quick and inexpensive.

**No.** Simplified naturalisation for third-generation foreign nationals was an important step in 2018. You can always talk about making certain changes here and there, but the FDP believes that the naturalisation procedure works well by and large. The principle still holds that citizenship comes after the process of integration and does not precede it.



**Yes.** The Centre believes that Switzerland must stand with Ukraine and allow other countries to transfer Swiss weapons to Ukraine. We will work constructively towards solutions to support Ukraine as effectively as possible.

**No.** The War Materiel Act forbids the export of Swiss armaments to countries embroiled in war, while our military neutrality precludes making decisions on a case-by-case basis. Switzerland must support Ukraine by providing much more financial assistance, freezing all oligarch assets and banning Russian commodity trading.

**Yes.** Because Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a criminal war of aggression under international law.

**Neither yes nor no.** Neutrality is a foreign policy instrument and not an end in itself. Its function is to ensure Switzerland's independence, security and prosperity in a turbulent world. Swiss neutrality does not absolve us of our responsibility to take a stance.

**Yes.** The war has changed what we thought we knew. Switzerland must contribute to security and stability in Europe. The debate on neutrality has begun. For us, Switzerland clearly stands on the side of international law and human rights.

**Yes.** The Federal Council's interpretation of neutrality is too strict. Where the use of force violates international law, Switzerland must be able to support the victim, particularly by providing essential supplies (e.g. protective helmets and vests) to the civilian population.

**No.** The latest reform has secured the funding of OASI for the next few years. A further increase in the retirement age is, therefore, neither financially necessary nor socially acceptable. However, OASI still discriminates against married couples by capping their pensions. This needs to stop (see our Fair Pensions Initiative).

**No.** A further increase in the retirement age is unnecessary. OASI can easily be funded through a fair reallocation of SNB profits and a slight increase in the contribution percentage rate. The Greens also support an inheritance tax on the superrich to the fund OASI.

**Yes.** Retirement provision is becoming increasingly unbalanced as a result of demographic change. To keep pension benefits at their current levels, we need to change the retirement age and make it more flexible. But other measures are still needed (e.g. a debt ceiling for OASI).

**No.** The Centre opposes any changes to the Swiss Citizenship Act, which was only amended five years ago. To become a Swiss citizen, you must meet certain conditions. Acquisition of citizenship is the outcome, not a condition, of successful integration.

**Yes.** Because our democracy becomes stronger when more people are able to participate in it. This is why the Greens support the Democracy Initiative to make naturalisation a fundamental right, with the same fair conditions for naturalisation applying to everyone.

**Yes.** We want the following: 1) The process of becoming Swiss to start at school: those in compulsory education for at least 5 years considered to be integrated in and familiar with Swiss life. 2) Naturalisation applications can be made after 7 years instead of after 10. 3) The minimum period of stay in the municipality should be reduced to 1 to 3 years. 4) No more naturalisation "interviews".



Several cantons have voted no to lowering the cantonal voting age from 18 to 16. Should 16-year-olds be allowed to vote at federal level?

**No.** Sixteen-year-olds are children in the eyes of the law and do not have the same rights and obligations as adults. They are not yet integrated into the world of work either, which is why lowering the voting age is inappropriate. All decisions at the ballot box have consequences. A 16-year-old cannot make these decisions yet.

**Yes.** Political participation is crucial. Teenagers under 18 are unable to vote despite the fact that political decisions will affect them the longest. This is wrong. They should have voting rights at municipal, cantonal and national level from the age of 16.

**No.** In several cantons, a lowering of the voting age has been rejected at the ballot box or at parliamentary level. Introducing this change at federal level and presenting the cantons with a fait accompli would be undemocratic. The voting age should remain at 18, when children legally become adults. Instead of making more exceptions, we need to have a fundamental discussion about the adult legal age.

E-voting pilots took place again in three cantons on 18 June. Should we now push ahead with e-voting and make it available to all Swiss Abroad in particular?

**Neither yes nor no.** Our system is secure and well thought out. E-voting, on the other hand, is prone to fraud (e.g. through hacking). Unfortunately, our suggestion that voting papers be sent to the Swiss Abroad by email and returned by post fell on deaf ears.

**Yes.** Many Swiss Abroad are unable to exercise their constitutionally enshrined political rights, because voting papers continue to arrive too late for many. E-voting is the only way to ensure that the entire “Fifth Switzerland” can take part in elections and popular votes.

**Yes.** Many Swiss Abroad are still unable to exercise their right to vote, because voting papers arrive too late or not at all. E-voting could help to redress this – but not completely, because the necessary codes would still have to be sent by post.

Do we need to take other concrete steps to ensure that the Swiss Abroad can exercise their political rights? If so, what exactly should be done?

**No.** Compared to other countries, our expatriates have generous voting rights. The Swiss Abroad can take part in elections and popular votes at municipal, cantonal and federal level. What is more, it is possible for Swiss Abroad to be elected to the National Council, the Council of States or the Federal Council, even if that is somewhat unlikely.

**Yes.** The Federal Council and the cantons must work towards developing a reliable, trustworthy and financially secure e-voting channel specifically for the “Fifth Switzerland”.

**Yes.** The introduction of a government e-ID scheme is vital to ensuring that the necessary codes for e-voting can be sent electronically. An e-ID scheme would also simplify various government and consulate services.

The Swiss Abroad have an indefinite right to vote. Should this right to vote be time-limited instead, e.g. to 30 years?

**No.** Any time limit would be very hard to implement. It is likely that third- or later-generation expats rarely exercise their right to vote anyway, because they no longer have a real connection to Switzerland – unless they actually return to Switzerland.

**No.** More and more Swiss live abroad for differing lengths of time. Many of them will return sooner or later. It is, therefore, right that the Federal Constitution allows them to continue exercising their political rights even if they stay abroad for several decades.

**No.** Swiss have the right to vote both at home and abroad. Swiss Abroad must make sure that they are on the electoral register. Those who no longer have a close connection to Switzerland tend not to exercise their voting rights anyway.



**No.** The youth wing of our party supports lowering the voting age. We are more sceptical. You would first have to lower the adult legal age to 16, which we do not support.

**Yes.** Young people, who still have a long time to live, should also be involved in taking decisions that affect their future. People in modern, progressive democracies should be able to vote from the age of 16. Greater participation makes democracies stronger and more future-proof.

**Yes.** Young people should be able to vote earlier on issues that affect their future (e.g. pension provision, environmental policy, climate and energy policy).

**Yes.** E-voting is very important for Swiss Abroad. It makes it easier for our expatriate nationals to exercise their political rights. The Centre believes, therefore, that the introduction of e-voting is an absolute priority.

**Yes.** However, for security reasons, pilots should be strictly limited to Swiss Abroad and to people with physical and/or mental impairments, to whom e-voting offers genuine added value. If all Swiss Abroad could be officially assigned to their own canton, this would expedite the process.

**Yes.** As long as we can ensure that e-voting is fraud-proof.

**Yes.** The Centre supports concrete measures that allow the Swiss Abroad to participate in Switzerland's political and social life. International election lists is one such measure, which is why we will again have candidates from the "Fifth Switzerland" representing our party this year at the national elections.

**Yes.** We want to make it easier for Swiss Abroad to vote. The Greens believe that embassies and consulates should oversee the process, without the need for any more time-consuming postal deliveries. Furthermore, we support a change in the constitution that would ensure that Swiss Abroad are also represented in parliament.

**Yes.** We should make voting easier wherever possible. This also includes authorities being more proactive in informing Swiss Abroad of their right to vote.

**No.** The Centre believes there is no need to put a time limit on voting rights for Swiss citizens, either at home or abroad.

**No.** The Greens want to extend, not remove, political rights. The Swiss Abroad are no exception in this regard. But it also applies to foreign nationals in Switzerland.

**No.** Swiss expatriates clearly have a role to play in our country's political life. We are committed to increasing expat participation in elections and popular votes. This is why we have launched our international section, GLP International.

Additional questions and answers can be found in our online edition: [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch)

# Swiss Abroad aiming for the Federal Palace

MARC LETTAU

It is an exceedingly high hurdle to overcome, but this has not deterred another group of candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” from standing for election to the National Council. One of the difficulties is that there is no dedicated electoral constituency for the “Fifth Switzerland”. Swiss Abroad simply vote in the canton in which they most recently lived. Those who wish to stand for election must also do so in “their” canton. They must rely on a cantonal party to add them to an election list. Switzerland’s former ambassador to Germany, Tim Guldemann, is to date the only Swiss Abroad who has managed to reach the Federal Palace. He was elected from the SP Zurich list in 2015.

## A tricky question of strategy

It has not always been easy for the parties to strike the right balance in this regard. Sometimes they have lots of expatriate candidates, like the SP and SVP four years ago. Sometimes they have very few Swiss Abroad standing for election. The SP had 30 candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” in 2019. It now has just one Swiss Abroad hoping to win the voters’ trust: Pascal Cuttat (Nairobi, Kenya).

By the time of going to press, “Swiss Review” had received notification of the following candidates for the National Council:

### SVP

GENEVA: Grégory Leutert, Hungary; Marc Van Oost, Luxembourg. LUCERNE: Inge Schütz, president of SVP International, Belpberg/Stockholm; Nicolas Szita, London. SCHAFFHAUSEN: John McGough, Hungary; Björn Stahel, Norway.

### SP

BERNE: Pascal Cuttat, international crisis manager, Kenya, SP men’s list for Berne.

### FDP

There are no Swiss Abroad standing for the FDP. However, the party has a list of domestic candidates who intend to represent the interests of the “Fifth Switzerland”. This list will soon be

available on the FDP International website (under “Wahlen”/“Élections”): [fdp-international.com/wahlen](http://fdp-international.com/wahlen).

### Centre

The Centre had not supplied any names by the time of our editorial deadline but was intending to have expatriate candidates standing in St Gallen, Thurgau and Ticino.

### Greens

The party was in the process of drawing up expatriate lists in a number of cantons but could not supply any names by the time of our editorial deadline.

### Green Liberals

BASEL-STADT: Wanja Kaufmann, Sweden; Thomas Willhelmi, Germany; Andrea Frey, Italy; Thomas Hâni, Germany. GENEVA: Franz Muheim, UK; Antoine Belaieff, Canada; Bastien Debiève, Spain; Dominique Caillat, Germany. VALAIS: Valérie Biermann, Switzerland/Canada.



## Candidates from the OSA committees

The leading committees of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) – the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) and the “Fifth Switzerland” parliamentary group – also have members who are standing for the National Council and Council of States. According to OSA President Filippo Lombardi, these candidates are important: “They all represent and bring the interests of the Swiss Abroad to bear in parliament, while ensuring that the views of those living abroad are incorporated in the policies of their respective parties.”

### OSA Executive Board

Carlo Sommaruga, Council of States (SP, Geneva, standing for re-election); Laurent Wehrli, National Council (FDP, Vaud, standing for re-election); Franz Muheim, UK, National Council (GLP, Geneva).

### Parliamentary group

Leading members: Martina Bircher, National Council (SVP, Aargau, standing for re-election); Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter, National Council (Centre, Basel-Landschaft, standing for re-election); Roland Fischer, National Council (GLP, Lucerne, standing for re-election); Nicolas Walder, National Council (Greens, Geneva, standing for re-election).

## Recommendations from umbrella organisations (example of Israel):

Regional expatriate umbrella organisations can also make voting recommendations. Swiss Community Israel (SCI), for example, approved a list of the following candidates at its extraordinary general meeting:

### National Council

Sarah Wyss, CSA member (SP, Basel-Stadt, standing for re-election); Eric Nussbaumer (SP, Basel-Landschaft, standing for re-election); Andri Silberschmidt (FDP, Zurich, standing for re-election); Claudia Friedl (SP, St Gallen, standing for re-election); Marianne Binder-Keller (Centre, Aargau, standing for re-election); Sonja Rueff Frenkel (FDP, Zurich); Fabian Molina (SP, Zurich, standing for re-election); Laura Riget (SP, Ticino).

### Council of States

Carlo Sommaruga (SP, Geneva, standing for re-election); Daniel Jositsch (SP, Zurich, standing for re-election).

Explaining its recommendations, SCI said that the candidates in question had “specifically looked after the interests of the Swiss Abroad”.

## SCI organising its own courier service

Will the votes of the Swiss Abroad arrive in Switzerland on time? This question, one frequently asked in places outside the EU, has also been preoccupying Swiss voters in Israel, who have taken matters into their own hands. According to its representative Erich Bloch, SCI is going to organise its own courier “because of the importance of these elections”. A Swiss expatriate will bring the sealed ballot envelopes to Zurich’s main post office in person. Bloch: “There is no other option, because the Israeli postal service is so unreliable.”

Our online edition has a continually updated list of candidates: [revue.link/candidates](http://revue.link/candidates)



# No ticket to ride

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Please advise your local embassy or consulate. The editorial team cannot access your address and administrative data. Thank you.



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**74,000**

The only way is up – at least as far as Switzerland’s population is concerned. In 2022, the number of people living in the country increased by almost 74,000 to 8.8 million. The growth applies to all cantons led by Schaffhausen and Fribourg, with Jura having the fewest new arrivals.



However, only around 82,000 babies were born in Switzerland in 2022 – some 8.5 per cent fewer than in the previous year. This is a “historic low”, say statisticians, given that births in 2021 were already at a low level. The total fertility rate (the average number of children born to a female over their lifetime) has fallen to 1.38. Discounting immigration, a rate of 2.1 is needed for the population to remain stable. (Source: Federal Statistical Office, FSO)



**230,000**

Even in a rich country like Switzerland, there are people who live below the poverty line. Surprisingly, many of them fail to collect their state benefits. These include 230,000 pensioners. According to a study by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, fear, shame, a lack of knowledge, and too much bureaucracy are some of the reasons why people forgo their benefits.

**27**

The driving factor behind poverty in Switzerland? High living costs. In cost-of-living terms, statisticians in the UK have calculated that £1,000 – or around 1,200 Swiss francs – will last one person only 27 days in Switzerland. The same amount will last you 33 days in Norway, 38 in Japan, 42 in Austria and 44 in France. However, you only need to work for five days in Switzerland to earn this amount. (Source: money.co.uk)



**60,000,000**

Public transport is expensive in Switzerland, which makes it tempting to ride without a valid ticket. Because the phenomenon is so widespread, public transport operators set up a joint national register for fare dodgers in 2019, which shows that fare evasion is becoming more common. The public transport sector lost out on around 60 million francs in 2022 as a result. This is why repeat offenders will now have to pay a successively higher fine each time they are caught without a ticket. (Source: Alliance Swiss Pass)

## Swiss politician – and convicted criminal – Pierre Maudet wins re-election

Pierre Maudet has lied on multiple occasions, accepted luxury travel from foreign royals and has a criminal conviction. But that didn't stop him being re-elected to the Geneva cantonal government and causing ripples throughout the country, especially in the German-speaking part. Political analysts put his comeback down to charisma.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

"This is a triumph for him," declares Nenad Stojanović, a political scientist at the University of Geneva. Maudet's re-election follows a lengthy period in the wilderness: thrown out of his party, stripped of his department at the Geneva Council of State, found guilty of accepting illegal favours and roundly condemned by the Swiss media.

The scandal can be traced back to a 2015 trip to Abu Dhabi paid for by the Emirati crown prince. The Geneva criminal appeal and review court (Chambre pénale d'appel et de révision) ruled on 26 May 2023 that Maudet must repay the cost of this trip, put at more than 50,000 Swiss francs, to the canton of Geneva. The newly re-elected state councillor was also given a suspended 120,000 Swiss franc fine. The court declared that Maudet had accepted an undue favour, knowingly exposing himself to the risk of influence over the performance of his duties as a state councillor. The Maudet affair was first revealed by the "Tribune de Genève" newspaper in May 2018 and turned into a national scandal – particularly coming shortly after the 2017 Federal Council elections, in which he came close to winning a seat. "It is a serious political matter, and in his shoes 99 percent of elected representatives would have stepped down," says Stojanovic.



### Shock, outrage and admiration

Maudet's re-election – along with the election to the Grand Council of 11 deputies from the Liberty and Social Justice movement that he established – provoked a mixture of shock, outrage and admiration. "It's staggering that he has been voted back in," says Lukas Golder, a political analyst and media expert who jointly heads up the gfs.bern research institute. There has been no major outcry about Maudet's return from national elected representatives in Berne; their line has very much been that voters have the right to elect the candidate of their choice. The "NZZ" newspaper has not shied away from comparing Maudet to Donald Trump, however, labelling the affair a classic example of "Genfererei" – a term denoting the political contortions perceived as typical of this canton.

For their part, Swiss political commentators attribute Maudet's re-election to his exceptional personal qualities: intelligence, resilience and powers of communication. "Voters in other cantons would be just as ready to forgive

a personality like this, if one existed," argues Golder. He stresses that first-past-the-post elections amplify the reach and appeal of characters like Maudet. "French-speaking Switzerland does have a certain reputation, but in fact the whole 'Genfererei' line is a myth," says Stojanovic, pointing to other scandals that originated in German-speaking Switzerland and Ticino.

His University of Geneva colleague Pascal Sciarini notes that voters on the other side of the Röstigraben

From zero to hero – Pierre Maudet with jubilant supporters after winning re-election to the Geneva cantonal government on 2 April.

Photo: Keystone

were themselves seduced by Maudet in the 2017 Federal Council elections. "He ran an excellent campaign and wasn't far off being elected. So don't be so sure that a similar situation could not arise in another urban canton."

### The biggest political scandal since Kopp

"The Maudet affair is the biggest scandal in Swiss politics since the resignation of Elisabeth Kopp in 1989," wrote Philippe Reichen, French-speaking Switzerland correspondent at the "Tages Anzeiger" newspaper. Meanwhile, Golder of gfs.bern points out that "Kopp lied when under pressure and was not convicted, whereas Maudet persisted with a long-term lie". Is Swiss politics sexist? Golder also observes that "following her resignation, Kopp never attempted a comeback. That contrasts with several cases where erring male politicians in this country have seized their second chances, in circumstances where women tend to give up". He cites in particular the case of Geri

## Ylfete Fanaj, a Lucerne trailblazer

Müller, former mayor of Baden in the canton of Aargau and National Council member for the Green party. Müller became embroiled in controversy in 2014 when it emerged that he had sent naked selfies. He did not stand for re-election to the National Council and three years later was voted out as mayor of Baden. His was a case of moral – but not criminal – wrongdoing. In another case, Roberto Zanetti, member of the Solothurn government, was involved in a 2004 scandal over electoral campaign donations, which he repaid. He was not re-elected in 2005, took some time away from politics and was voted onto the Council of States in 2010. Once again, there was no condemnation.

For his part, Pierre Maudet did step down from the Geneva government, but only as a step towards rehabilitating himself. Between the two rounds of voting in the Geneva elections, Green party State Councillor Antonio Hodgers expressed indignation, asking: “When the people decide to vote into office someone who has been convicted of corruption, who has lied to the authorities... what value does that place on ethics in politics?” But in a democracy, it is the people who decide. “Voters wanted to focus on the good and forget about the bad,” concludes Sciarini.

### Above all, people vote for human beings

Golder points out that “the media are very quick to make a moral judgment, whereas voters are more likely to look at someone as a human being, with a hope for redemption”. During his most recent campaign, Maudet adopted language and attitudes that underscore people’s fascination with him. “I met him once,” says Stojanovic, who found him to be empathetic and humble. He also points out that Maudet has genuine fans: “a rarity in Swiss politics”. It should be remembered, however, that Maudet showed a much harsher side in his dealings with civil servants. Another fly in the ointment is that, in the words of the appeal court, Maudet “has never accepted, not even in part, the criminal nature of his actions, pleading legal uncertainty in order to escape sanction”.

Going forward, Pierre Maudet “has no choice but to work effectively with his colleagues on the Council of State. It could be that five years from now he will have regained all his legitimacy,” argues Golder.



Photo: Keystone

Ylfete Fanaj’s election to the Lucerne cantonal government in mid-May was remarkable in more ways than one. Fanaj, 41, from the city of Lucerne is the Swiss Social Democratic Party’s first representative for years in what was previously a purely centre-right and right-wing – and exclusively male-run – executive. Ylfete Fanaj has also become Switzerland’s first-ever cantonal cabinet member of Kosovan origin. Kosovans, particularly Albanian speakers, make up one of the country’s biggest immigrant groups. Born in Prizren, Fanaj arrived in Switzerland aged nine at the beginning of the 1990s. Her father was a seasonal worker. Her family settled in Sursee. This small town in the canton of Lucerne was their home for a long time. Sursee shaped her as a person, says Fanaj, who became a Swiss citizen there at the age of 20. Fanaj was good at school but only obtained a commercial apprenticeship after receiving 200 rejections – an experience that she shared with other teenagers from the Balkans. But young Ylfete was willing to work hard. She completed a vocational university entrance diploma and studied social work before becoming the cantonal integration officer of Nidwalden. Fanaj’s political career in Lucerne took the classic Swiss route from bottom to top – from city council to cantonal parliament, from faction leader to speaker. She is now a member of government in the predominantly conservative canton of Lucerne. Her story has attracted considerable attention in both Switzerland and Kosovo. “Change is possible,” was her response. Fanaj, who has a young son, has blazed a trail but refuses to make a fuss. Lucerne’s cantonal government “now reflects our diverse society”, she says instead.

SUSANNE WENGER

## Gjon's Tears – the Swiss voice making the whole world sob

After years of success on TV and YouTube, the Swiss singer with Kosovan roots has brought out his first album. “The Game” is packed with poetic pop songs tugging at heartstrings the world over.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

The Swiss singer Gjon's Tears released his first album, “The Game”, in April. However, this young man, who hails from Gruyère but now lives in Paris, is by no means a newcomer to the music industry. He already has hosts of fans, after representing the country at Eurovision and appearing on TV talent shows. His fame has also been amplified many times over by YouTube views, with “Tout l'Univers”, Switzerland's 2021 Eurovision entry, attracting comments from more than 3,600 users. He came third in the contest, notching up 55 million views. Gjon's Tears came to fame on the internet, which continues to serve him well. A user named Domups wrote “World class, our Federer of singing” about his song “Cancer”. “You've got me crying in bed at 00.42 in the morning,” wrote another fan. The song conveys an unfathomable sense of melancholy. Gjon Muharremaj, who performs on stage with trademark blue or black tears drawn onto one or both cheeks, has devastated listeners with the lyrics about how the disease will catch up with you and cause insomnia before taking you in its embrace. “I cried listening to ‘Cancer’,” wrote acidlullaby on YouTube, who admitted to not understanding the words but explained they were moved by Gjon's Tears' hauntingly high voice, which made them “feel the song with my heart”. The track in question is dedicated to a friend who died of leukaemia.

### Duet with Géraldine Chaplin

“The Game” showcases the full range of Gjon's talents, with a voice that spans several octaves. It expresses sadness, melancholy and joy. Some tracks simply have chart smash written all over them. A case in point is “Pure”, which is built on an electronic bassline and has a very slick video – like his others – that begins with a conver-



Gjon Muharremaj – fake tears, real feelings.

Photos: Keystone (left), Jo&Co (above)

sation with Géraldine Chaplin. Gjon sings that life is hard, but it's worth it, and when it's pure, my God, it's beautiful. He evokes the need for sharp elbows in order to succeed, but also backstabbing. There are parallels with the setbacks that Gjon encountered after moving to Paris. “The world of show business is not always a very nice place to live,” he explained in an interview.

### A musical childhood in Gruyère

This sensitive young man's story can be read as an ode to a pluralist Switzerland. Gjon Muharremaj was born in

## “La grande peur dans la montagne”

Saanen, in the canton of Berne, on 29 June 1998. His Kosovan father Hysni is a crane operator and bricklayer. His Albanian-born mother Elda worked at the Cailler chocolate factory after the family moved to Broc in 2000, according to his Wikipedia profile. Gjon grew up in the village of Gruyère. He fell in love with music when learning the piano. The story goes that two years later he moved his grandfather to tears with his rendition of Elvis Presley’s “Can’t Help Falling in Love”. This is where his rather unusual stage name comes from (NB: Gjon is pronounced like the English name John).

### Influenced by The Cure and Björk

Gjon, whose live performances call to mind those by a lyrical singer, borrows from a number of genres. His debut album cover shows him wearing a black frock coat and Doc Martens, paying homage to the New Wave movement and The Cure in particular. Listeners can also detect a love of disco in “The Game”. Gjon, who played Bach as a child and has also tried yodelling and Indian chanting, cites Cesária Évora, Grace Jones, Björk and David Bowie among his influences. The tone and profundity of his lyrics give a poetic, literary edge to his pop songs. When he plays the piano solo, Gjon might call to mind the French chanteuse Barbara, Jacques Brel or, closer to our own time, the Belgian singer Stromae.



GJON'S TEARS: “The Game”, 2023, Jo&Co, Paris; CD (EAN 3700187680213) and vinyl (EAN 3700187680220)



“La grande peur dans la montagne”, CHARLES FERDINAND RAMUZ/ QUENTIN PAUCHARD, CHF 35 (available in French only)

Helvetiq publishing house has come up with the inspired idea of bringing out its Collection Ramuz Graphique, retelling classic Swiss literature in graphic novels – a format that enables all manner of liberties to be taken with form. “This was a way of connecting young people to the classics and inspiring in them a desire to read the originals,” explains its CEO, Hadi Barkat. “La grande peur dans la montagne” (Great fear in the mountains), which came out in April with illustrations by Neuchâtel artist Quentin Pauchard, is the second in the series. It transports us to the Alpine pastures of Sasseinère, in the French-speaking part of the Valais, to which a handful of peasants young and old are determined to lead their animals. The area had been abandoned 20 years earlier, after several men died in mysterious circumstances.

After a few days, the cattle fall sick. The village vet imposes a quarantine. Fears and superstitions start to spread, and the pasture turns into a prison.

Pauchard, who was born in Val-de-Ruz in the canton of Neuchâtel, travelled to Evolène in the canton of Valais to capture the local ambience. He felt that he was walking in the footsteps of Ramuz. “Like a lot of people, I encountered his novels in school, but I didn’t remember them very clearly. As an adult, I’ve taken a lot of pleasure from rediscovering them and seeking to make Ramuz’s work accessible, while still capturing its essence,” he explains. His illustrations use sombre blocks of colour, illuminated in places by rosy or golden rays of sunlight, taking the reader by the hand and drawing them into the book. We share the sense of despair when young Victorine risks all to find her lover, trapped high up the mountain. The men’s fears are transformed into phantoms that rattle the roof at night. The sickness rages. The mountain that should be providing nourishment oppresses the men. Ultimately, the graphic novel sparks a desire to re-read Ramuz.

The same is true of “Derborence”, the first volume in this collection, which was published in 2022. It tells the story of another mountain pasture in central Valais that was devastated by a landslide in 1714. Fifteen people and many hundreds of animals lost their lives. “Ramuz has a sparse writing style,” says Fabian Menor, the young illustrator, who hails from Geneva. “He doesn’t include a lot of descriptions of landscapes or the relationships between people; he simply presents the story. When I read “Derborence”, I filled in the gaps in my own head. I can use my drawings to show what Ramuz did not put to paper.” Gems to discover.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

## She wrote with all her senses

Anne-Lise Grobéty's debut novel "Pour mourir en février" was a subtle rebellion against the complacent Switzerland of the 1960s.



**Anne-Lise Grobéty**  
(1949–2010).

Photo: Yvonne Böhler

CHARLES LINSMAYER

"Pour mourir en février" (To die in February) was the Swiss literary sensation of 1969, winning the Prix Georges Nicole and then appearing in the Cahiers de la Renaissance Vaudoise as a book in 1970. Its author, Anne-Lise Grobéty, was born in La Chaux-de-Fonds on 21 December 1949. Grobéty had written the novel at the age of 18 while studying literature at the University of Neuchâtel. The press and public were euphoric. "This novel makes me look like an amateur," poet Maurice Chappaz freely admitted.

### A friendship falls apart

Grobéty's novel is the story of a friendship between Aude, a sensitive 18-year-old girl, and an older woman called Gabrielle. Told from Aude's perspective, it details how uncomprehending, strait-laced attitudes in society condemn the friendship to failure, despite the wisdom that the older Gabrielle could have given her younger ally in how to lead her life – a life that can otherwise only find fulfilment in death, as the title of the book implies. The novel's attraction lies less in its plot and more in one person's pushback against society's unrealistic norms and conventions – a rebellion that reaches a crescendo but ultimately ends in capitulation. When Aude's mother complains that her daughter has a rebellious nature, the teenager counters: "Do I? Good! I am sick of the whispering, the wretched bourgeois petty-mindedness, the Saturday errands, the football on television, the lovely Strauss concertos. I want to be able to breathe!"

### Female stories

It was another five years until Grobéty – now a wife, a mother of three daughters, and a political activist – published her second novel. Its title "Zéro positif" refers to the blood type that Laurence, 28 and unhappily married, wants to avoid passing on to any fu-

"Today, 17 February, I would like to sink into the snow. I want to lie on the road and stay there. Melt and disappear. Cold and insoluble. Mixed into the asphalt.

I want to leave an imprint on my way into the centre of the blisteringly hot iron. To find you, my burn mark!"

Excerpt from the novel "Pour mourir en février",  
by Anne-Lise Grobéty

ture child. Laurence escapes from her husband. Following an unedifying extra-marital fling in Amsterdam, she realises, however, that what she was running away from was less her marriage and more her alcoholism. She actually wants to have a child after all. Female stories – and not exclusively ones with feminist overtones – dominated the 12 remaining novels and narratives that Anne-Lise Grobéty published in addition to countless critiques and columns before her early death on 5 October 2010. The surreal, grotesque and often puzzling nature of her works was reminiscent of the avant-garde nouveau roman (New Novel) movement of the mid-20th century. However: "I write not only with my brain but with all my senses," she once remarked. "With my eyes and my ears." Her novel "La Corde de mi" (The C string), 2006, provides the most emphatic example – not only through its sensitive description of the countryside between Neuchâtel and La Chaux-de-Fonds, but, above all, in the manner in which the protagonist, a daughter in the last weeks of her life, finally gets to meet her long-lost father, learns of his tragic life, and takes with her the memory of a person who loved music with all their heart and soul.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: "Pour mourir en février" is available from Payot, Lausanne. The German translation by Andreas Grosz, "Um an einem Februar zu sterben" (2016), is available from Edition pudelundpinscher, 6682 Linescio.

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# Number of Swiss Abroad up by 34% since 2002

The number of Swiss nationals living abroad has grown constantly since 2002 and exceeded 800,000 in 2022. More and more people are living in South-East Asia. These findings and more are revealed in the statistics on the Swiss Abroad published by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).

Statistics on the Swiss Abroad 2022

## Swiss citizens living abroad



# 800 000

By sex

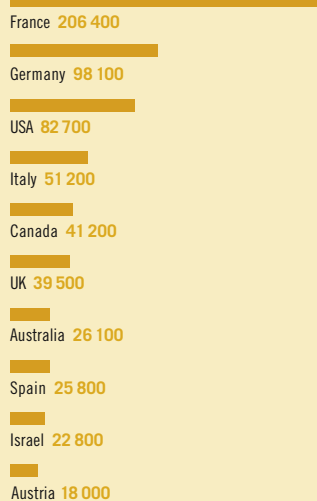


Average age

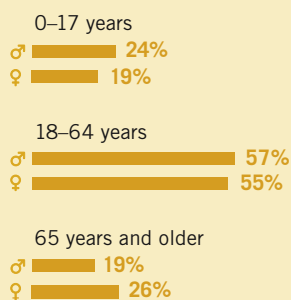
40 years      45 years

## The most common countries of residence

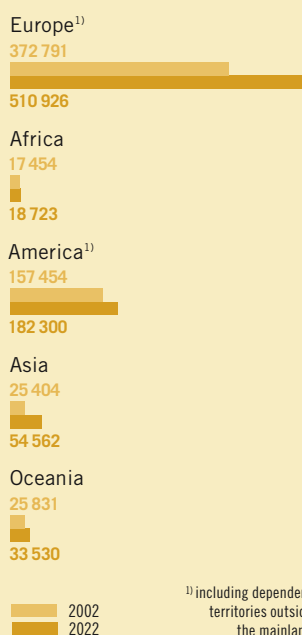
(including dependent territories outside the mainland)



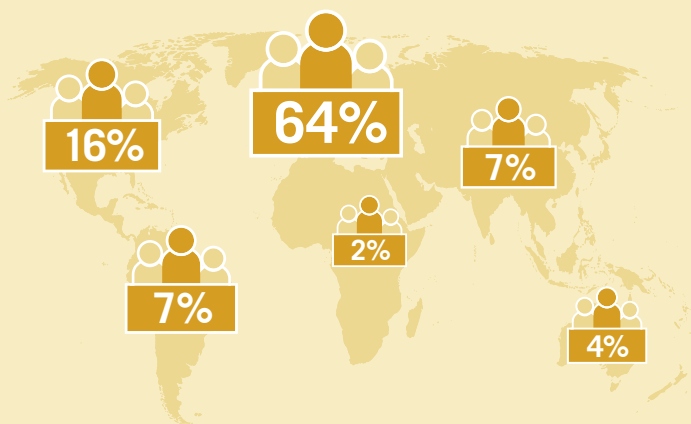
## Swiss citizens living abroad by sex and age group



## Swiss citizens abroad by continent, in 2002 and in 2022



## Percentage of Swiss citizens living abroad by continent of residence



## Swiss citizens living abroad as a percentage of all Swiss citizens



## Swiss abroad with multiple citizenships



As at 31 December 2022, 800,041 Swiss nationals were registered with a competent Swiss representation abroad. This number has grown continuously from 598,934 in 2002, an increase of 34%. The upwards trend was observed in every continent, but was more marked in some than in others: +115% in Asia, +37% in Europe, +30% in Oceania, +16% in America and +7% in Africa.

## South-East Asia, Europe, North America and North Africa are the main destinations

The population of Swiss citizens abroad has increased in all countries in South-East Asia, North Africa, Europe and North America (+132%, +59%, +37% and +18% respectively) since 2002. In South-East Asia, the largest increases were seen in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, and in North Africa in Algeria and Morocco. The European countries recording the greatest increases included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Turkey (Türkiye). The United States and Canada, meanwhile, saw increases of +19% and +17% respectively.

By contrast, other regions of the world saw their Swiss community shrink between 2002 and 2022. For example, the number of Swiss nationals in Central and Southern Africa fell by 24% and 10% respectively. In both regions, most countries recorded a decrease. A similar trend was observed in many Caribbean and South Asian countries, which also recorded a drop in the number of Swiss nationals.

FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

Sources: FSO – Population and Households Statistics (STATPOP), Statistics on the Swiss Abroad (SE-Stat)



## The Swiss Abroad are our calling card

The Consular Directorate of the FDFA acts as a central point of contact, providing efficient administrative services geared to the needs of our compatriots in other countries. We spoke to its new director general, Ambassador David Grichting, about his priorities and how he is approaching his new role.

Since April 2023 David Grichting has been at the helm of the Consular Directorate, which oversees the laws governing the Swiss Abroad and is a privileged partner of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). After graduating in business administration and entrepreneurial studies, the 43-year-old from Valais spent several years working in marketing and project management roles before joining the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in 2009. Since then he has gained extensive and varied experience both in foreign representations and at head office (attaché in Tel Aviv, head of consular services in Pristina, CFO of the FDFA, ambassador in Astana), giving him a wide-ranging perspective on issues pertinent to the Swiss Abroad that he will be able to leverage to good effect over the coming years. How does he see his role?

### A long and dynamic history

“People tend to forget that Switzerland is also a country of emigration, and has been for several centuries,” says Ambassador Grichting. Johann August Sutter, Louis Chevrolet and Francesco Borromini are some of the most illustrious examples. While the reasons for this emigration, be it temporary or permanent, may have changed, the flow of people has not. Whether for love, work, education or a desire to discover the world, emigration clearly helps improve the diversity and dynamism of our population. The ambassador notes that “the pace of this increasing mobility is picking up, giving rise to varying needs among the Swiss Abroad that we have to take into account in our day-to-day activities”. The “Fifth Switzerland” is hugely important and therefore merits special attention. With this in mind, the new director general hails the importance of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and underlines how much it matters that expats are still able to exercise their political rights.



Ambassador David Grichting at his new place of work, the Consular Directorate in Berne. In his new role, he is also keen to “engage with our compatriots and listen to what they have to say”. Photo: Danielle Liniger

### Interaction in the common interest

Ambassador Grichting makes the point that 11 percent of Swiss citizens live abroad. “They are not only a key source of information but also an ideal intermediary for our economy, businesses, research, etc.,” the diplomat says. “I have observed on multiple occasions the enormous contribution they make to promoting Switzerland’s positive image by helping open up our geographically landlocked country to the rest of the world.” He also notes that “this idea of interaction between Switzerland and its community of citizens living abroad is enshrined in

Article 40 of the Federal Constitution, which stipulates that the Confederation shall encourage relations among the Swiss Abroad and their relations with Switzerland.” The SwissInTouch app helps support this requirement.

### What role does the FDFA Consular Directorate play?

As outlined in the May 2023 edition of “Swiss Review”, “the Consular Directorate works closely with other institutions to best serve the interests of the Swiss Abroad”. However, the ambassador is keen to stress that a key





David Grichting came to Berne via Kazakhstan. As Switzerland's ambassador to the country, he immersed himself in local cultural activities such as the Nauryz Spring Festival seen here. Photo: Lisa Wermelinger

aspect of its activities is working with other offices and partners to generate synergies and maximise its impact. He also points out that “the principles of individual responsibility and of the subsidiarity of state action form the cornerstones of consular activities”. As such, the Consular Directorate must provide the Swiss Abroad with services and information that meet their needs and develop modern instruments aimed at facilitating relations. Personal dialogue is essential in order to better understand expats' needs and expectations. David Grichting: “I shall make it a point of honour to listen to and engage with our compatriots through our representations abroad or during my travels around the world. I look forward to accompanying and supporting our communities abroad, and first and foremost to meeting my expat compatriots. By transporting kindness and our values to the places they now live, the Swiss Abroad are both a calling card and a key intermediary for Switzerland.”

FDFA, CONSULAR DIRECTORATE

## Federal elections 2023

The general elections to both chambers of the federal parliament take place on 22 October 2023. For information, explanatory videos, and interactive charts about the elections to the National Council and the Council of States, visit [www.ch.ch/wahlen2023](http://www.ch.ch/wahlen2023) – a service brought to you by the Federal Chancellery, the Parliamentary Services, the Federal Statistical Office and the cantons. This website will also publish the election results on 22 October 2023.

This information, including the election results, will also appear on the Federal Chancellery app Voteinfo. To download the app, visit [revue.link/voteinfo](http://revue.link/voteinfo).



## Federal votes

Due to the elections, there are no further voting dates in 2023. The next voting date is 3 March 2024. The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date.

Everything you need to know about these voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by parliament and the Federal Council, etc.) is available at [www.admin.ch/votes](http://www.admin.ch/votes) or via the Federal Chancellery's VoteInfo app.



## Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiatives have already been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Anyone wanting to pay in cash should be able to do so!’ (21.09.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Yes to the secure supply of medical products’ (04.10.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘For the equality of people with disabilities (Inclusion Initiative)’ (25.10.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘To protect humans, domestic animals and livestock from wolves.’ (02.11.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Yes to a future without animal testing’ (09.11.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Confirmation of Federal Council members by the people and the cantons’ (16.11.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘For a modern right to citizenship (Democracy Initiative)’ (23.11.2024)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in German at [www.bk.admin.ch](http://www.bk.admin.ch) > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



## “Swiss Review” – theft of mailing address data

As already reported on the FDFA and OSA websites in June, the Swiss printing company Vogt-Schild, which prints and sends out “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, has been the victim of a cyber attack.

The Swiss printing company Vogt-Schild, which prints and sends out “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, has been the victim of a cyber attack.

As part of the attack, an unknown number of mailing addresses for the March 2023 issue of “Swiss Review” were stolen. Depending on how the “Swiss Review” is sent, the stolen data includes either the email addresses or the surnames, first names and postal addresses of the recipients. Vogt-Schild does not hold any other personal information relating to the mailing of “Swiss Review”. Vogt-Schild has taken additional measures to strengthen the security of its IT infrastructure and has lodged a criminal complaint. In the meantime, the federal authorities responsible for data protection and combating cyber-crime have been informed.

As a reminder, everyone is advised to change their passwords regularly and, ideally, to use two-factor authentication.

For all questions relating to cyber security, important additional information can be found on the website of the National Cyber Security Centre NCSC: [revue.link/ncsc](https://revue.link/ncsc)

## Help to obtain an education or training in Switzerland

Young Swiss Abroad receive personal counselling on the topic of education in Switzerland.



Information related to education in Switzerland is available in various languages. Photo: Anja Lötscher

Every year, the staff of *educationsuisse* receive numerous inquiries from Swiss citizens abroad or from their relatives and friends in Switzerland. Most questions concern scholarship opportunities and university studies. However, *educationsuisse* also receives a wide variety of questions about vocational training, finding an apprenticeship, accommodation, insurance and the language skills required. What often becomes apparent is that owing to the rather high cost of living in Switzerland, financing an education can be a problem. However, a solution can always be found.

The *educationsuisse* service offers free advice and support in the search for suitable education or training solutions:

- Information relating to different educational options such as university studies or vocational training
- Information relating to specific questions regarding admission requirements, required language skills, deadlines, accommodation, insurances, etc.

- Individual counselling on site in Berne or online regarding education in Switzerland
- Vocational and study counselling in cooperation with a professional career counselling provider (fee-based)
- Assistance in applying for cantonal scholarships and administrative support
- Financial help (grants/loans) from *educationsuisse* and private foundations

The *educationsuisse* staff speak English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. They will be glad to help and answer questions about education in Switzerland via email, telephone or Skype, or on site in Berne.

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE



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## The new e-voting system is “miles better than all the alternatives”

Whenever e-voting is on the political agenda, the main questions have to do with security. Initiated by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), the meeting between the “Swiss Abroad” parliamentary group and Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr was no exception.

MARC LETTAU

The time was right. In May, about one month before the popular votes of 18 June 2023, Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr and members of the National Council and Council of States came together to look closely at the issue of e-voting. An important pilot had been scheduled for 18 June, with the new Swiss Post e-voting system due to be trialled for the first time in the cantons of Basel-Stadt, St Gallen and Thurgau. We now know that the system passed the test (see page 9) – although this outcome was still uncertain at the time of the OSA-initiated meeting of the “Swiss Abroad” parliamentary group.

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr was already in confident mood. A lot of time had passed since the last e-voting pilots were suspended in 2019, he said at the meeting. But it was wrong to think that nothing had happened in the interim. “The time was used to rethink everything, take on board criticism of the previous pilots and expand collaboration with experts.” They also cranked up the technical requirements for e-voting, he added. The integrated control mechanisms in particular are now reliable, and it is even possible at the time of voting to check whether your vote has been properly recorded.

Yet there was, and still is, scepticism in some quarters. National Councillor Jean-Luc Addor (SVP, canton of Valais) wondered at the meeting whether just a “gradual” or “partial” approach to the issue would be better, such as the voting papers being sent electronically (and returned by post). Dispatching the voting papers in advance was fraught with risks, Thurnherr replied. The new e-voting system was “miles better than all the alternatives”, in his view. “Why not use the safer method?”

The Federal Chancellor also believes that e-voting in its new guise is better and safer than the idea put forward by National Councillor Andri Silber-schmidt (FDP, canton of Zurich) of dispatching and returning voting papers via diplomatic courier. Thurnherr: “A modern e-voting system is much safer than postal voting – a procedure that we already trust – and more secure than the usual e-banking platforms that we use on a daily basis.”

The parliamentary group co-chair, Elisabeth Schneider-Schneider (The Centre, canton of Basel-Landschaft), noted that any decisions to expand the new e-voting pilot to more cantons depended not on the federal government but on the cantons themselves, because it is the cantons that organise the voting process. She agreed with the Federal Chancellor on one thing: if Swiss Abroad express an interest in using e-voting in their canton, this would exert

additional pressure and help to change the dynamic.

The Federal Chancellery itself will not put any pressure on the cantons, stressed Thurnherr. Piloting the new e-voting system is their decision alone. “We are not applying pressure or banging the drum. All we want is to be transparent.”



Walter Thurnherr: “Why not use the safer method?”

Photo: Danielle Liniger



Talks took place at the Federal Palace, but the future conversation on e-voting will now be shaped by the cantons. Photo: Danielle Liniger

## Well-trained camp leaders are essential to every great holiday camp

Our holiday camps for children and young people are a source of exciting experiences and enduring memories. Well-trained camp leaders are vital to ensuring that all participants remember their time fondly. Here is a brief look back at this year's training course.

The Y+S training course, run jointly by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) and the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), took place again over Easter. Y+S stands for Youth and Sport, the federal government scheme to promote sport. Camp leaders for our summer holiday camps are trained at these courses over nine days.

Well-trained camp leadership teams are immensely important to the success of OSA and FYSA summer holiday camps. Specific Y+S criteria apply to anyone offering and running summer holiday camps in Switzerland. One of these criteria is that, for every 12 participants, there must be a competent camp leader who has done the Y+S Camp Sports/Trekking training course. This is because our summer holiday camps fall into the Camp Sports/Trekking sports category.

The primary themes of this year's training course were: planning and carrying out the programme of camp activities, getting to know the needs of children and young people, and taking responsibility as a camp leader. The course also provided information on specific activities, such as how to plan hikes, read maps, or put up a tent correctly and safely.

There was a lot to take in over a relatively short space of time, so each course day was long – starting at 9 a.m. and rarely ending any time before 10 p.m. This is an intense but unique course, because camp leaders not only get to know the theory but are also able to immediately put what they have learned into practice. For example, all the participants were put in groups. They then planned and performed their own sports activities and prepared and did their own hikes, learning first-hand about relevant opportunities and challenges while having to consider and take necessary precautions.

In addition, prospective camp leaders were invited to think about and discuss other themes such as styles of communica-



Camp leaders need to trust and count on each other – in every situation. Photo provided

tion, styles of leadership, and social interaction. We also took an interesting practical look at intercultural awareness and communication, as well as providing tips on how to handle challenging behaviour.

Despite its instructive nature, the course had plenty of that inimitable camping atmosphere. We cooked over a fire every evening, learned lots of new games and spent a night camping outdoors. Sleeping in our tents was the highlight of the trip for many.

Everything that our young camp leaders learned and experienced will stand them in

good stead for drawing up camp activities themselves and making sound decisions. Thanks to this year's course, we now have a new generation of camp leaders who can put their knowledge into practice at our summer holiday camps and provide good support to our team.

Incidentally, it is gratifying to see that our people want to carry on learning. Camp leaders do a refresher course every two years to ensure they retain their Y+S accreditation, and often attend other important training courses.

ISABELLE STEBLER (FYSA) AND FABIENNE STOCKER (OSA)

### We would like to know what you think

We at the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) want to respond to the needs and wishes of young Swiss Abroad more effectively, which is why we are now conducting a questionnaire about our activities and offers. In doing so, we want to help young expatriates to think about and strengthen their connection to Switzerland. We would be delighted if you could take 15 minutes of your time to fill in the questionnaire.

This survey is dedicated primarily to young people aged 15 to 25, as well as adults that know young Swiss Abroad who are interested in what we offer.

FABIENNE STOCKER, OSA YOUTH SERVICE

[Revue.link/survey](https://www.revue.link/survey)



## OSA to hold more webinars after successful debut

Retirement abroad and the OASI state pension scheme were the important themes of the inaugural webinar held by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) last February in collaboration with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Swiss Compensation Office (SCO), and Soliswiss. Retirement is on many expatriates' minds, given that the number of Swiss pensioners in the "Fifth Switzerland" is currently increasing by around three per cent every year. During the webinar, Michel Malizia of the FDFA, Philippe Girard and Susan Flückiger of the SCO, and Nicole Töpferwien and Isabelle Baur of Soliswiss all provided insights into this complex issue. The event was a big success, with over 500 Swiss Abroad dialling in from around the world.

A recording of the webinar is now available to watch at [revue.link/webinar](https://www.revue.link/webinar).

The event attracted very positive feedback, which is why OSA has decided to hold more webinars on issues of interest to the Swiss expatriate community. A webinar on estate planning for Swiss Abroad took place on 13 June 2023 in partnership with the FDFA.

Webinars on the following themes are scheduled to take place.

20 September 2023:

### **Military service for Swiss Abroad**

(see the adjacent article)

17 October 2023:

### **Banks**

13 December 2023:

### **Social security and health insurance**

These events are part of OSA's ongoing mission to inform and advise the Swiss expatriate community. Given the success of the format, it intends to offer further webinars next year.

STEPHANIE LEBER, OSA

## “Will I have to do military service when I return to Switzerland?”

**Question:** “I live in France and have both a Swiss and French passport. I am 18 years old and would soon like to start a university course. I am now thinking of studying in Switzerland. Will I have to do military service when I return to Switzerland?”



Recruits in Colombier (canton of Neuchâtel). Drills are an integral part of basic military training. Photo: Keystone

**Answer:** Military service in Switzerland is mandatory for all Swiss men but voluntary for Swiss women. You are obliged to do military service after you turn 18, and are liable for conscription until you reach the age of 25. You must complete basic military training within a year of conscription.

Provided you are living abroad, you are exempt from conscription and military service in peacetime. However, if you return to Switzerland to study and therefore intend to stay in Switzerland for a period of more than three months, you will be liable for conscription and obliged to do military service – assuming that you are deemed fit for military service. You will consequently be obliged to report to the relevant cantonal district command within 14 days of your arrival in Switzerland.

Alternatively, you have the option of doing civilian service instead of military service. If you do neither military service nor civilian service, you must pay a levy called the military service exemption tax. If you return to Switzerland after you turn 25, this tax obligation will continue at the latest until the end of the year in which you reach the age of 37.

Military service is also mandatory if you hold dual nationality. However, if you can

prove that you are a dual national and have already carried out military service or civilian service in the other country of which you are a citizen, you no longer have to do military service in Switzerland. Switzerland has concluded bilateral agreements with various countries – including France – with regard to military service for dual nationals. In your specific case, you can do military service in either France or Switzerland, after which the obligation to do military service or pay exemption tax would then no longer apply in any other country.

If you have any other questions regarding the military service obligation for Swiss Abroad, please address them to:

STEPHANIE LEBER, OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Training and Education Command  
Armed Forces Personnel  
Area of application of law/guidelines  
Rodtmattstrasse 110, 3003 Berne, Switzerland  
Telephone +41 800 424 111  
Email: [personelles.persa@vtg.admin.ch](mailto:personelles.persa@vtg.admin.ch)  
[www.vtg.admin.ch](http://www.vtg.admin.ch)

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad will also hold a webinar about military service on 20 September 2023 (see adjacent text). Participation in the webinar is free of charge.

## Discussion: Carl Lutz and the Holocaust

Agnes Hirschi, from Berne, escaped the Holocaust in Hungary as a child – thanks to the diplomat Carl Lutz, who later became her stepfather. Today, Hirschi is doing all she can to ensure that we never forget what Lutz did in saving her and thousands of others. Our readers were moved by her story.



Agnes Hirschi  
Photo: Danielle Liniger

### Carl Lutz rescued 50,000 Hungarian Jews

#### WOLF STAUB, AYSÉN, CHILE

This recognition is richly deserved and, unfortunately, much too late. People like Carl Lutz are true heroes in our nation's history. And there were still others who, as the article mentions, never got due recognition. Indeed, quite the opposite. It tells of a dark chapter in Swiss history.

#### KATHARINA HOTZ, WINTERTHUR

Thank you very much for this enlightening article. In 2017, a plaque commemorating Carl Lutz was inaugurated at the Riehen Memorial (near Basel). Shedding light on historical events and, specifically, on Switzerland's role during the Second World War, this privately founded site is of notable educational value for young people including Swiss Abroad. [revue.link/riehen](http://revue.link/riehen)

#### ARNO FUCHS, ISRAEL

I have long wondered why the Swiss government needed half a century to rehabilitate Carl Lutz and Paul Grüninger (1995) – and why they applied double standards. They chose not to punish Carl Lutz, but they cheated Paul Grüninger of his pension. They stole his money. I suddenly realised why a few days ago: Carl Lutz only cost the country a little extra paperwork. The Jews whom he rescued in Hungary emigrated to Palestine. There was no expense involved for Berne. On the other hand, Paul Grüninger cost the country money. "His" refugees remained in Switzerland and had to be

supported. Who had to cough up the francs? Exactly.

#### RALPH UNO, ARGENTINA

Was there ever a reason found why the government did not agree with Mr Carl Lutz for saving so many lives? If there was a reason, it should be known.

#### PETER OCHSNER, NAIROBI, KENYA

Your article forgot to mention one phrase: never forget. Lutz had no interest in fame, even on his deathbed. What he wanted was that the world would never forget the death and destruction caused by the Nazis and their warped ideology. Phrases like "It's such a long time ago" or "Life goes on" are intolerable in this context.

### About "Swiss Review" in general

#### TONI CAVELTI, WEST VANCOUVER, CANADA

I enjoy every edition of "Swiss Review". The March issue was particularly interesting for two reasons. I first encountered the beautiful Shep-en-Isis during my youth in St Gallen. Our classroom was situated directly above her sarcophagus, and visits to the Abbey Library were an annual occurrence. Who would have thought back then that she would be at the centre of an international squabble! Secondly, your article about Romansh. Although I grew up in St Gallen, it is still the language that my family and I use to speak to each other at home here in Canada. The type of Romansh that we speak has become our own little dialect. I find it hard to read and understand the "standard" Romansh that they use today.

Visit the online edition of "Swiss Review" at [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch).

Read the latest comments on our articles and join the conversation yourself.

## The "Swiss Review" thanks its readers

Many readers in the "Fifth Switzerland" particularly appreciate the print edition of "Swiss Review". Not only do they want to read the magazine, but they also want to hold something tangible and tactile from Switzerland in their hands. We are very grateful to those who support the paper version of "Swiss Review" with a voluntary subscription fee: Your donations are a source of encouragement to us.

At the same time, the challenges remain enormous: Extremely high mailing costs coupled with the sharp rise in energy and raw material prices – not least due to the war in Ukraine – mean that "Swiss Review" has had to take a financial hit. What compounds the situation is that we have no additional funds available – and that the magazine is essentially free of charge for Swiss Abroad.

**Voluntary subscriptions from our readers are, therefore, an important and much-appreciated way to ensure the print edition's long-term survival. We hope you agree that this latest magazine illustrates our unwavering commitment to the hard-copy format, as we believe that we have put together another content-packed, stimulating and highly readable "Swiss Review". And we would really like to continue doing this in future - for you, our readers.**

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

How to contact "Swiss Review":

Email [revue@swisscommunity.org](mailto:revue@swisscommunity.org);

Phone +41 31 356 61 10

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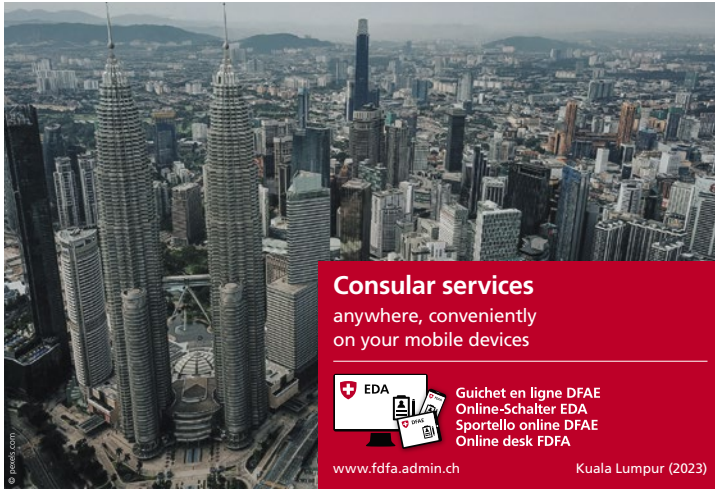
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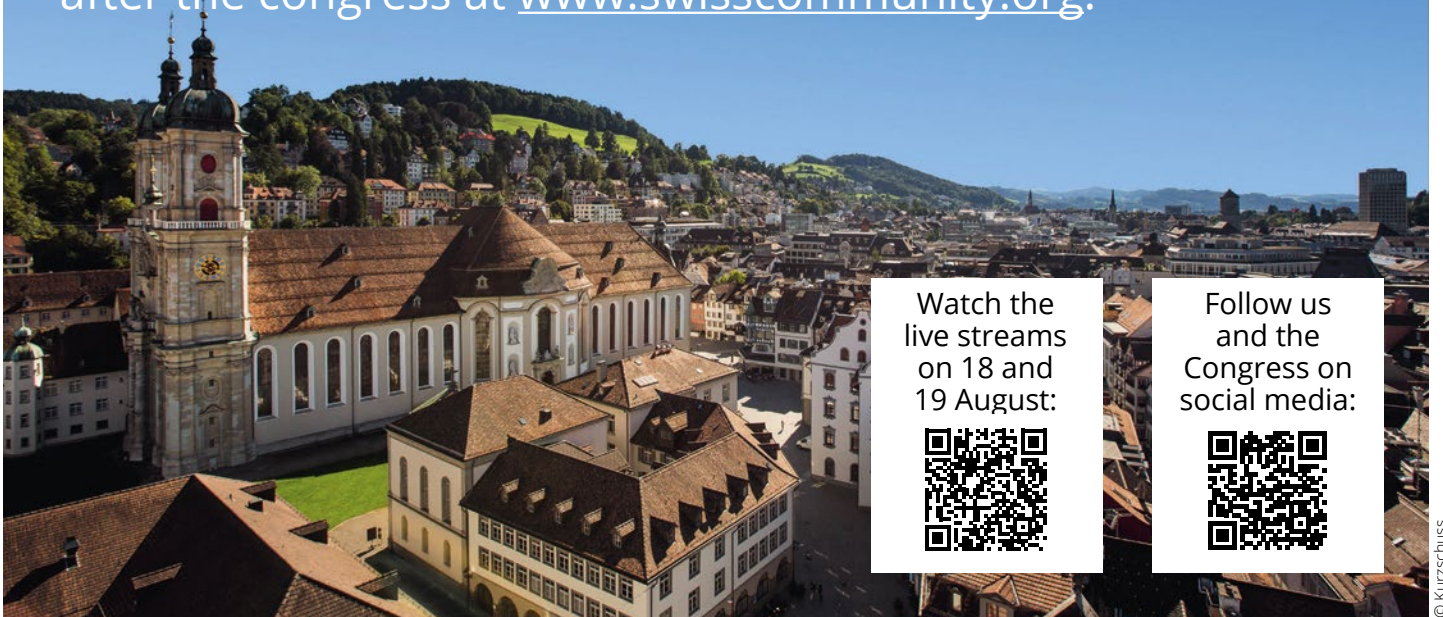


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# Follow the Congress of the Swiss Abroad from home!

The 99<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be held in St. Gallen from 18-20 August 2023. Follow it from home if you are not attending in person!

The meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad, the political programme and the plenary session will be broadcasted as live streams. Watch them during or after the congress at [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org).



Watch the live streams on 18 and 19 August:



Follow us and the Congress on social media:



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