

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

JANUARY 2012 / NO.1



**Federal Councillor
Alain Berset and his
meteoric rise**

**Traditions: the UNESCO list
and Switzerland**

**Iouri Podladtchikov:
an incredible talent**



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The struggle over concordance

A freshly elected Parliament, a new Federal Council, new faces and new political forces – so does this also mean a new beginning? In the six weeks between the parliamentary elections on 23 October 2011 and the Federal Council election, endless discussions took place on various bodies about the right composition of the Swiss government. The notion of concordance was at the heart of all these talks. The debate became so intense that it seemed as though the future of Switzerland depended solely on the system of concordance, also known as the magic formula. This principle of power distribution among the four strongest parties in the Federal Council according to their number of seats in Parliament, which the FDP, The Liberals and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) wanted to uphold, was ultimately rejected by the Federal Assembly (report on page 14).

However, the magic formula's power distribution principle is certainly no guarantee of concordance or successful government. The word "concordance" contains the Latin terms *con* (with) and *cor* (heart). *Concordare* means "to reach agreement". A body committed to concordance in this sense of the word requires people who act together in heart and mind as far as possible, and who are willing and able to cooperate with their political adversaries in the interests of the common good. The search for widespread majority support and the involvement of minorities in the decision-making process are fundamental to the success of this form of government.

The vast majority of Swiss people clearly favour this type of government. A Federal Council at loggerheads and dominated by mistrust and machinations, as we have seen in the past, would be disastrous in light of the financial and economic crises and the challenges that lie ahead in global politics over the coming years.



In view of this situation, it is questionable whether it was a wise decision to deny the Swiss People's Party (SVP), which still has the largest number of votes, the second seat on the Federal Council that it is entitled to under the magic formula or mathematically under the concordance system. Only time will tell. The SVP clearly contributed to Parliament's refusal to grant it a second Federal Council seat with its unsuccessful candidate selection and

its approach to the Federal Council election on 14 December, which was driven by anger and vengeance. If the SVP, which has been humiliated for a second time, following the de-selection of Christoph Blocher in 2007, now focuses on a policy of opposition and obstruction, government will become a difficult task. This will certainly not be in the best interests of the nation, and the new beginning will be destined to fail.

Besides politics in Berne, the second major issue this edition of "Swiss Review" focuses on is "intangible cultural heritage". This awkward and not immediately transparent term has been coined by UNESCO. It refers to traditions practised worldwide, such as Mongolian folk songs with circular breathing, yodelling, fondue and Malian wisdom rites. The article on well-known and less familiar Swiss traditions on page 8 contains plenty of surprises.

BARBARA ENGEL

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Echo

Cover photo: As she herself says, Christine Lauterburg's roots are in alpine folk music. The 56-year-old from Berne is also called a "techno yodeller". Her unconventional interpretations constantly meet with disapproval from traditionalists. Photo: donated

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Subtle, current and well drawn

I would like to respond to the letter entitled “Offensive” by Ms. Zingg from Taiwan. The “Drop it!” caricature by Peter Gut in your September edition is subtle, humorous, current and well drawn. I would not have felt offended even if I were a Federal Councillor. It may just be a case of the end justifying the means. But many things are all too readily called “misogynistic”. I am grateful to “Swiss Review” for allowing me to appreciate some current Swiss humour.

CAROLE DAUBERSCHMIDT,
LUXEMBOURG

Sexist and lacking in respect

“Drop it!” – have I missed something or do I completely lack a sense of humour? I find this caricature misogynistic, sexist and lacking in respect. It certainly does not belong in “Swiss Review”.

GABRIELE MÜLLER GLOOR,
CIUDAD COLON, COSTA RICA

A rare blunder

I was saddened and extremely disappointed to find a caricature of our Federal Councillors in such bad taste and a rare blunder in “Swiss Review”. I am astonished that the editorial team allowed those so courageous and willing to commit themselves where men are not brave enough to be ridiculed.

ALEXIS WARIDEL, QUEBEC

Aloof internationalists

Philosophy professor Georg Kohler unprofessionally said of the Swiss army: “It still exists but is no longer fit for purpose in its current form. It must urgently join an alliance because the opposition forces have become too powerful.” Which alliance? The EU and/or NATO? Such writing by internationalists who see themselves as being above the electorate is inaccurate,

undemocratic and extremely questionable in terms of state politics. The incorrect claim that the modern army is no longer fit for purpose is an affront to all those who perform military service in accordance with the constitution and, above all, the officers.

HEINRICH L. WIRZ,
RETIRED COLONEL,
BREMARTEN (SWITZERLAND)

Great on the iPad too

We are delighted that we can now read “Swiss Review” on the iPad too. It is great that you have decided to do this, and we are sure that lots of readers are also grateful for the app. My wife and I have been living in Antigua and Florida for six years and continue to read “Swiss Review” with great interest. Many thanks for all your efforts.

ROLAND AND SILVIA BACHMANN,
ANTIGUA

Extremely frustrated

As an avid reader of “Swiss Review”, I followed the articles on developments in Swiss politics and was preparing to vote by post. I was extremely frustrated when I received the election update on 20 October. Owing to a postal service strike, all mail was delayed and it was too late to send the ballot envelope via the consulate in São Paulo. It is time the Swiss government thought about electronic voting in all countries by using the Swiss diplomatic representations.

ALEXANDRE DEVELEY,
SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

Goodbye Swissinfo disk

The last Wahl-CD from swissinfo.ch will become a collector’s item as it is the last one. What a sad loss. We are constantly encouraged to follow

More readers’ letters on page 6

MERCENARIES DO NOT HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION. The Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi attempted for months to prevent his fall from power in October 2011 with foreign troops. The UN recently warned of a worrying rise in the number of mercenaries in Africa. The use of “external military forces” is outlawed in Switzerland but that has not always been the case. The Swiss were among the most sought-after mercenary forces for half a millennium. Well over a million Swiss mercenary soldiers fought on the battlefields of Europe. They were renowned for their brutality and boldness, which made them much coveted and feared in equal measure. They served almost every European power. At one stage, one in three of the French army’s infantry came from Switzerland. And in the 19th century, liberation movements were often confronted with Swiss

troops serving royal dynasties in decline. Swiss mercenaries of old are a far cry from the idyllic image of the modern-day papal Swiss Guard as an historic relic.

Probably no other phenomenon had a stronger influence on pre-modern Switzerland than its mercenaries. Journalist Jost Auf der Maur points out that it is strange that there is little general awareness of this extraordinary historical phenomenon. Extensive research has been carried out into mercenaries in military history, but the cultural history and socio-political dimension has largely been overlooked. In his book “Söldner für Europa” (Mercenary soldiers for Europe), Auf der Maur highlights this black hole in Swiss history. He felt obliged to do so as many of his direct ancestors were officers in the pay of foreign powers.

In one respect, it was a “dirty business”, one that established an aristocracy founded on the mercenary trade and wielding political power. The book’s illustrated annex impressively shows the financial gains of Swiss mercenary entrepreneurs, which were turned into architecture – stately homes built on blood in the truest sense of the word in many parts of Switzerland. Mercenary soldiers who avoided death on the battlefield often returned home in poverty, mutilated and suffering from alcoholism. Switzerland suffered huge population loss.

On the other hand, the long periods abroad resulted in a transfer of knowledge. Those who managed to return home in good health and perhaps even with some prosperity brought culture and knowledge from many foreign countries with them. Auf der Maur even claims that Switzerland

would not have survived without its foreign mercenaries. The courts of Europe had become so dependent on Swiss troops that they refrained from attacking their supply line of soldiers. The Swiss were able to call their troops home whenever they needed them for themselves. A mechanism was practised here that gradually became an ever stronger commitment to neutrality.

Based on his family history, Jost Auf der Maur provides new, fascinating and sometimes disconcerting insights into a turbulent and underappreciated chapter in Swiss history.

JÜRIG MÜLLER



mainstream trends and in fact to become sheep. It has been a great source of information, enabling people to listen to the pros and cons from party representatives on upcoming vote and election issues. To hear someone's voice and points provides so much more clarification, especially to those abroad who are not "bombarded" with daily debate. This is another example of how technology separates people.

HELENE LETTAU, GRINDELWALD,
TASMANIA

Voting by the Swiss abroad

As a Swiss citizen abroad, I do not agree with those who argue that the Swiss abroad should not be allowed to have an opinion on decisions taken about Switzerland and its political af-

fairs. Thanks to the Internet and TSR/I, expats are well informed about current affairs and politics and can vote with full knowledge of the facts. These citizens live abroad for a variety of reasons and often remember Switzerland as a good place to live where workers focussed on ensuring a job well done. If Switzerland joined the European Union it would lose its national sovereignty and become dependent on Brussels. I do not wish to see Switzerland become like France, Germany and Italy. The bilateral agreements go far enough. If Switzerland were tempted to accede to the EU, it would no longer be the highly regarded and much envied country that it is today.

GUY NICOLAS, DIJON, FRANCE

Much handier

I just wanted to give you some quick feedback on "Swiss Review". I love the fact that it gets sent out in printed paper form again. I had stopped reading it when it became electronic. The paper form is so much handier.

SANDRA CAFAZZO, LONDON

Editorial note: Any Swiss citizen abroad can order the printed version of "Swiss Review" at www.swissabroad.ch

The biggest idiots

In the last edition of "Swiss Review", your reader, Bernhard Balmer, lambasted the European Union and bemoaned how "we again find ourselves in thrall" to it. However, in recent years Switzerland has not been humbled by the European Union, losing its dignity and honour, but rather

by Muammar Gaddafi and the US tax authorities. (...) But Mr Balmer is right. The majority of Swiss people have had "enough of multiculturalism". Let's shut ourselves off from the outside world – not their wealth, of course, just everything else, and let's hope that they will not become resentful enough to withdraw their money too. Let's cast aside our principles of hospitality and tolerance, which are part of our enlightenment tradition. We are a small country, so let's remain one. What could be better than keeping ourselves to ourselves? It is a well-known fact that inbreeding produces the biggest idiots.

EDOUARD REICHENBACH,
ANTONY, FRANCE

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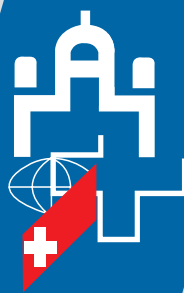
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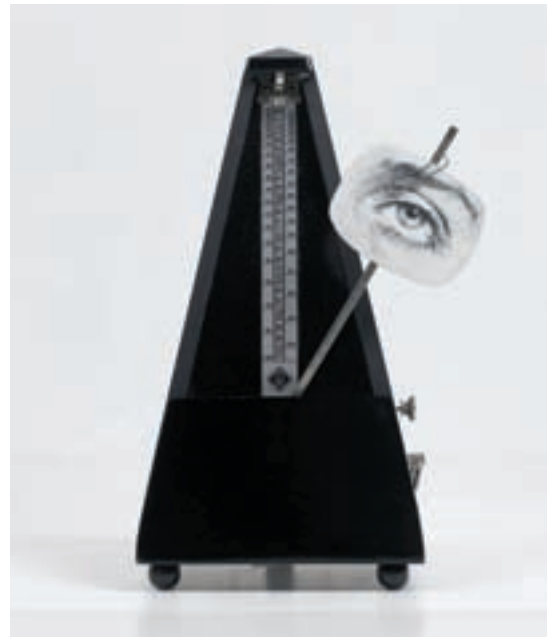
The exhilaration of art

Surrealism, inspired by André Breton and Sigmund Freud, was one of the most important artistic and literary movements of the 20th century. The artists of surrealism opened doors to the unknown and the disconcerting. A unique exhibition on "Surrealism in Paris" is now on display at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel. This features almost 300 paintings, manuscripts, objects, items of jewellery, photographs and films from around 40 artists.

The exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler will close on 29 January 2012. It will then be displayed at the **Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels** (16 March to 15 July 2012)



"Ma gouvernante - my nurse - mein Kindermädchen"
Meret Oppenheim, 1936/1967



"Indestructible Object"
Man Ray, 1923/1933/1965



"The Great War"
René Magritte, 1964



"Soft Construction with Boiled Beans - Premonition of Civil War"
Salvador Dalí, 1936

Switzerland: land of herb gardens and motorbike meetings

Switzerland is drawing up a list of its “thriving traditions”. The survey has thrown up a few surprises, with some regions astonished at what is seen as tradition in other parts of the country. This has led to lively debates about the role of tradition in shaping identity. What does a conservative politician-cum-writer have to say about this? And what about a painter who paints nothing but cows? And why does a progressive yodeller keep stumbling over dogged traditionalism?

By Marc Lettau

Sometimes the baddies are actually the goodies. When men with bulging muscles take to the ring to engage in Swiss-style wrestling known as Schwingen, the enthusiastic crowd doesn't talk about the strong guys, but about the bad guys. And what about when one of the really bad guys throws his opponent onto his back with a powerful cross-buttock – what does he do then? Before raising his arms aloft to celebrate, he first dusts the sawdust off his opponent's shoulders. So, as the cheers ring out, he is really one of the good guys.

All cultures are familiar with martial arts, where brute force is made civilised more or less by competition rules. So, it's not the force part that makes Schwingen a typically Swiss sport. It is, to a large extent, the image of the winner and the fact that in his moment of triumph he shows respect for his defeated opponent. Obviously not all baddies are inherently good. The act of wiping the sawdust off the loser's shoulders is part of the tradition and of the values associated with Schwingen, which are passed down from one generation to the next. This

also resonates outside the wrestling ring. Only very few Swiss people actually engage in Swiss wrestling themselves. But they all know that – if they ever win anything – they should wipe the dirt off their opponent's back.

Trend towards the archaic

At the next Swiss Federal Wrestling Festival in 2013 – it is only held once every three years – the good sportsmanship of these bad guys is set to make even more of an impact than in previous years as the archaic appeal of the sport is increasingly making its mark on urban Switzerland. And the advertising industry won't shy away from putting the spotlight on the tough guy wrestlers themselves as Schwingen is likely to be definitively awarded UNESCO heritage status as an example of Switzerland's intangible cultural heritage before the next wrestling festival.

Switzerland is currently drawing up a list of its thriving traditions for UNESCO. In typical Swiss fashion, this is being done in as complex a way as possible. In some cantons, teams of experts have pored over the ques-

tion of what traditions and customs might be deemed worthy of UNESCO status, while in others ordinary people have been asked for their opinions. The Federal Office of Culture (FOC) is now busy working on documenting the 387 suggestions received and whittling them down to fewer than half that number. The final list will be submitted to UNESCO for review in April 2012.

A mind-bogglingly colourful mix

When researchers and folklorists come together to list ancient customs, and ordinary people say what they consider to be traditions, the result is a very colourful mix. The responses from the cantons initially threw up a rather mind-boggling array of suggestions. Before being whittled down by the team from the Federal Office of Culture, the suggestions ranged from mountaineering to oral irrigation, from chalet architecture to banking confidentiality, from monastic herb gardens to the Paléo Music Festival in Nyon, and from flag throwing and hunting for rock crystal to Switzerland's special virtue: cleanliness. The results have revealed



things that even Switzerland didn't know about itself, and some regions have been astonished to learn about what is seen as tradition in other parts of the country. The process has seen various practically untranslatable concepts discussed in a single breath. What on earth are Gansabhauet, Rabadán, Pschuuri, Troccas, Tschäggättä and Pfingsblüttlern all about? Schwingen, of course, is something we all understand. But now even the most tradition-conscious Swiss people are realising that Switzerland has many traditions that they know very little about as they are mostly other people's traditions.

One objective has already been achieved

In compiling the UNESCO list, one objective has already been achieved even before the publication of the final shortlist, says David Vitali, Head of the Culture and Society Department at the FOC: "We hope this process will raise awareness, firstly that these traditions exist and secondly that they have a valuable role to play." The FOC obviously hopes these thriving traditions will receive greater appreciation and believes the mere fact of compiling the list of suggestions has brought this one step closer. Folklorists and newspaper commentators think the resounding response the campaign has received is down to globalisation, which is changing the meaning of traditions. Vitali shares this view. These days, cultivating traditions is in no way simply about reducing them to a "patriotic phenomenon". Traditions have long been a key part of identity:



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What's the benefit of all this?

You could be forgiven for asking what the point is of the FOC compiling a list of traditions. Vitali acknowledges that drawing up the list does not directly help preserve traditions: "Traditions have to constantly evolve, otherwise they die out." Ultimately, this means that "the supporters of a tradition decide whether or not they want to pass that tradition on". It is therefore clear that neither the FOC nor UNESCO will be issuing any regulations regarding the customs and traditions. It is also clear that the process is not about protecting traditions and, at worst, "mummifying them". Traditions have to be able to evolve on their own: "Drawing up the list therefore only has an indirect impact, if anything, on the traditions."

A broad concept of tradition

Holzschnitser, Appenzeller Witze, Köhlern, Jassen, Maskenschnitzen, Volkstänze, Vereinswesen, Gebetsheilen and Töfftreff (wood carvers, jokes from Appenzell, charcoal burners, a Swiss card game, mask carving, folk dances, clubs and societies, prayer healing and motorbike meetings). Can you really call hundreds of motorcyclists in leather jackets bombing along winding mountain roads and stopping for a beer on Hauenstein a typically Swiss tradition? Vitali advocates an open-minded, unprejudiced and all-embracing concept of what constitutes a tradition. He says one key character-



istic of a tradition is "something that is handed down from one generation to the next". A tradition calls for a clearly distinguishable group of followers; a vague sense of belonging is not enough to create a tradition. He goes on to say that tradition is therefore something that shapes the identity of a specific group of individuals. This can be said of the Hauenstein motorbike meeting, the Töfftreff Hauenstein: "For many the Töfftreff is a focal point." Since 1964, motorbike enthusiasts have been meeting up with their beloved two-wheeled machines every Thursday.

Vitali takes another, somewhat questionable, example to demonstrate the broad concept of tradition. Switzerland has put forward the way it deals with the dangers posed by avalanches for the UNESCO list. "This, too, is completely justified as the topic represents Switzerland's attitude to risks and dangers, which is firmly engrained in society."

Between tradition and folklore

Vitali believes some people's amazement at certain nominations is due to the fact that tradition is often equated with folkloric cus-

Poya art from the canton of Fribourg (photos above) was traditionally just a depiction of alpine scenery for decorating homes, but these days it is also in demand from art lovers

Switzerland's cultural heritage includes wrestling and bilingualism, which is part of everyday life in Biel as the signposts illustrate (photos left)



toms. Obviously customs will take up a great deal of space on UNESCO's list. However, the "traditional" customs are often much younger than many Swiss people think. Yes, really. Even some of the most uncontested candidates have only been flourishing for a matter of decades, rather than centuries. The alphorn, for example, was as good as forgotten at the beginning of the last century. It only began to re-emerge from 1930 onwards, in the wake of the developing tourism industry. In other words, a desire for alpine "authenticity" on the part of outsiders led the locals to unearth things they considered passé. This symbiotic relationship between tradition and tourism is quite delicate.

Advertisers sense a competitive edge

Companies promoting Swiss tourism are showing a keen interest in UNESCO's list of thriving traditions. The process has given rise to animated discussions among tourism experts as to how marketing traditions more strongly could lead to a competitive advantage, creating more value. The marketing organisation "Switzerland Tourism" also wants Swiss traditions to feature more heavily in its advertising campaigns from 2013 onwards. Vitali points out the opportunities in this area: "Tourism definitely has a role to play in conserving traditions, such as ancient arts and crafts or traditional forms of agricultural management." At the same time, tourism runs the risk of monopolising traditions and reducing them to a money-making factor. Vitali refuses to demonise the tourism industry,

however: "To a degree, many traditions only came about because of tourism. Tourism itself is a kind of Swiss tradition."

University lecturer and tourism expert Urs Wagenseil recently summarised roughly where the boundary might lie: "If you see an alphorn formation playing at the top of the Kleine Scheidegg with a Bernese mountain dog drafted in specially to sit in front of them, we would see that as kitsch. But for a Chinese person, that's a real piece of Switzerland before their very eyes."

The lone voice of opposition

We put a question to a representative of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) in Valais, a canton where tourism plays a major role: So, what's your view on tradition? A perfectly reasonable question since the SVP was the only political party to oppose the ratification of the UNESCO convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Does this mean that the conservative SVP, with its constant talk of traditions, is against the strengthening of traditions? "Quite the opposite", says Oskar Freysinger, National Councillor for the canton of Valais. It is not the UNESCO list that is the problem, he says, but the fact that yet again Switzerland is in the process of giving up the principle of being free to take its own decisions only to "subject itself to the objectives and agendas of a supranational institution". This means the SVP is holding firm to its "tradition" of seeing a loss of sovereignty lurking behind any dealings with an international organisa-

Folk music: Performed by alphorn players in the traditional way, and reinterpreted by Christine Lauterburg with the Swiss accordion

Below, the Swiss Post Office's controversial stamp to mark the 100th anniversary of the Swiss Yodelling Association

The cultural heritage list also includes the motorbike meeting at Hauenstein, which dates back to the 1960s (bottom left)



tion. In addition, for the SVP, any government commitment to cultural values smacks of patronising "state culture".

"Tradition is vital"

Of course, like anyone, the SVP is happy that the reputation of Swiss wrestlers, alphorn musicians and Jassen players might be given a boost. According to Freysinger, there is no intrinsic reason to criticise the Federal Office of Culture (FOC). "They're aiming in the right direction. It's a rich and diverse list that has been put together." The underlying position that globalisation underscores the importance of traditions is spot on in Freysinger's opinion. "Tradition is vital. Globalisation makes a lot of people feel that they no longer control their own fate. Tradition puts the focus back on roots." However, Freysinger also believes that traditions cannot be stage-managed: "Just because you play at being a cowboy doesn't make you a cowboy. Artificially staged customs do not possess any vitality."

Tradition passes on values

Freysinger's formula is clear: traditions produce values, values provide support and stability. And traditions stand for permanence and depth, not for just a stringing together of isolated moments. "The modern-day trend towards an ever more comprehensive state of timeless present simply creates the illusion of eternity." Tradition is more honest: "It doesn't deny death." Instead, it offers room for life through all its stages – germinating, blossoming, fading and dying. "Peo-





ple die, traditions remain.”

On what does he base his view? On the Fête-Dieu (Corpus Christi procession) in his home town of Savièse, for example, “an extraordinary affair that has incredible dynamism and stands for much more than religiosity, namely for community, which is built around specific values”.

The debate on traditions will see a literary contribution from Oskar Freysinger in spring. Freysinger is basing his next novel in the world of the Suonen, the irrigation channels artfully constructed along the rock face in Valais. While it is a tradition of note, the construction of these channels has not found its way onto the UNESCO list. This is no slight on the Suonen; it simply underscores the fact that the sheer diversity of Swiss traditions makes a clear overview impossible.

Cows, cows... and more cows

While Oskar Freysinger is busy writing books, Francis Oberson is in his workshop north of the Alps painting cows on an enormous wood surface using a tiny brush. Oberson is a poya artist. He only paints cows. His paintings do not end up hanging in galleries, but adorn the walls of farmhouses in the Gruyère region. Oberson paints rows of cows winding their way up mountains and over alpine pastures and flower-filled meadows. He paints an idealised world, where no machinery, commercial aircraft or tourism infrastructure blights



the landscape. The same effect as idealised reality is produced by realistically painted images of the unrealistic – a painted reminder of what is good. What do such paintings have to do with tradition?

Poya painting is art, but not a personal form of art. It is art that belongs not to the artist, but to the region in which it “thrives”. Oberson: “If you paint a picture for a farmer, then the farmer lives with that painting.” The important element for Francis Oberson is, therefore, not the passing on of knowledge and values from one generation to the next, but the unconditional connection with a place. Poya paintings can only be painted by those who have their roots in those places. Oberson says that he observed and sketched cows for nine years before he saw himself as a poya painter. Since then, painting has been “like a prayer” for him, an attempt to “capture the light of the Gruyère region”, a call to embrace the slower pace of life.

As already mentioned, the Federal Office of Culture does not want traditions to be “mummified” and advocates an open mindset. Traditions, including folklore-based customs, are seen by practically everyone as fine, colourful, enriching and even significant social structures. The growing interest of an urban audience in age-old traditions such as Schwingen reinforces this view. As do the few instances where very un-farmer-like bankers commission poya paintings. There

A WORLD FULL OF TRADITIONS

Chinese calligraphy, Spanish flamenco, Balinese temple dancing: UNESCO’s aim is that such “intangible cultural heritage” remains alive in all its diversity. Switzerland has signed the UNESCO resolution on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions along with 94 other countries. Consequently, it will have to submit a report to UNESCO on its cultural diversity in April 2012. To broaden the debate, the Federal Office of Culture prefers to talk of “thriving traditions” rather than “intangible cultural heritage”. Whatever the terminology used, however, the ultimate goal remains the same: Switzerland, too, wants to contribute to a social climate where traditions are honoured and maintained. (MUL)

For the complete list of all 167 traditions considered, visit: www.bak.admin.ch

are, however, critical voices that challenge such homogeneity. The Berne-based musician and singer Christine Lauterburg is one such voice. She says that, for many years now, she has struggled with what she sees as an overly dogged take on traditions. As a yodeller who combines traditional songs with contemporary music, Lauterburg is exposed to constant hostility. “There is a small circle of ‘gatekeepers’ who almost live in a self-enclosed parallel world, in the holy grail of folk music. And that’s a really narrow world that’s not much fun. It doesn’t bring people together; it excludes them.” Lauterburg surmises that the “reactionary tendencies” and monopolising of folk culture within traditions are at their most extreme in yodelling.

Christine Lauterburg is the enfant terrible of folk singing, a “techno-yodeller” who is not looking for a power play with the Swiss Yodelling Association, the body that oversees “correct” yodelling. “I’m just not interested in joylessly going through the motions in my folk music. I want to contribute spontaneously to folk music that develops, that’s alive, that laughs.” She wants, for example, to be allowed to yodel and accompany herself on the violin at the same time – something the custodians of tradition will not accept. She says she has no interest in static, unchanging customs.

A stamp of approval?

This Berne-based yodeller even has the power to annoy when she is doing nothing. To mark the centenary anniversary of the Swiss Yodelling Association (in 2010), her image was used

Watch-making (photo right) is among the Swiss traditions worthy of protection, as is the “Fête-Dieu”, the Corpus Christi procession in Savièse in the canton of Valais (photo below)



on a commemorative stamp from the Swiss Post Office – just eleven millimetres across, but big enough to spark a major fuss and some strong reactions from traditional yodellers: a “lapsed” follower, with her face on a stamp! It created “a real stink”, says Lauterburg. Despite her negative experiences, she nevertheless hopes that the approach to tradition can

change in such a way as to make it “fun; to let it include young people, emphasise the elements that bring people together and eradicate those elements that exclude”.

A snapshot in time

The conflicts that Lauterburg describes do not change the fact that yodelling is without a doubt part of Switzerland’s “intangible cultural heritage”. The UNESCO list has not one, but two entries for yodelling: one for Juuz yodelling from central Switzerland and the other for natural yodelling from Appenzell and Toggenburg. Why these two particular variations? According to David Vitali from the Federal Office of Culture, despite every effort to the contrary, the UNESCO list is simply a snapshot in time. It is not set in stone. The aim, he says, is to review it on a periodic basis and keep the debate on traditions and their value alive. This means that, whether they like it or not, the question of what their view is on tradition is one that is set to follow the “lapsed” yodeller, the painter who only paints cows and the politician-cum-writer for the rest of their lives.



MARC LETTAU is an editor at “Swiss Review”

A referendum has been called

On 11 March, the people and cantons will decide on five proposals concerning book prices, home ownership, landscape conservation, lotteries and more holidays.

By René Lenzin

Parliamentary and Federal Council elections have dominated the political debate in Switzerland for many months. Now, specific political issues are back on the agenda, for both parliamentarians in Berne and the electorate throughout Switzerland. They must decide on five proposals simultaneously on 11 March: three popular initiatives, a parliamentary counterproposal to a popular initiative and a federal law against which a referendum has been called. The adoption of the initiatives and the counterproposal will require the majority support of both the Swiss people and the cantons, while the majority support of just the people will suffice for the law.

“An end to the unrestricted construction of second homes”

This popular initiative from the environmentalist Franz Weber's Helvetia Nostra foundation calls for the proportion of second homes to be restricted to 20% of the gross area used for residential purposes per commune. The supporters of the initiative say that second homes are usually empty, have a detrimental effect on the most beautiful mountain landscapes and lead to an uncontrolled rise in property prices. The Federal Council and the majority of parliamentarians reject the initiative because it does not take account of the differing requirements of tourist and non-tourist areas. They want to tackle the issue of second homes with spatial planning measures – a process already launched by federal government, the cantons and many communes. The National Council rejected the initiative by 123 votes to 61, and the Council of States by 29 votes to 10.

Home purchase savings initiative

This popular initiative from the Swiss Society for the Promotion of Home Purchase Savings calls for the cantons to introduce tax incentives for the acquisition of property for owner occupation. Single persons should be allowed to deduct up to 15,000 Swiss francs a year from taxable income as a home purchase savings deposit for a maximum period of 10 years, while the limit for married couples would be twice as high. It also calls for deductions of up to 5,000 and 10,000 Swiss francs for structural energy-saving measures. Those behind the initiative want to allow more people than at present to achieve the dream of owning their own home. The Federal Council opposes the initiative because home ownership already enjoys tax benefits and because the initiative would primarily benefit people on higher incomes. As the National Council and Council of States were unable to agree on a position on the initiative or on an indirect counterproposal, the initiative will go to a referendum without a parliamentary recommendation.

“Six weeks holiday for everyone”

This popular initiative from the Christian-socialist federation of trade unions, Trauvsuisse, calls for all employees to be given at least six weeks of paid holiday per year. The law currently provides for four weeks, and five weeks for the under-twenties. Those on the left and the trade unions hope to achieve a better balance between work and relaxation through this initiative. They claim that workloads have constantly increased with negative repercussions for the health of many employees. The Federal Council and the conservative parties argue that the current regulations have proven effective. These leave it to social partners to negotiate more generous holiday provisions or to pass on increases in productivity in the form of higher wages or shorter working hours. The National Council rejected the initiative by 122 votes to 61, and the Council of States by 32 votes to 10.

Gambling for the common good

With the “Gambling for the common good” popular initiative the cantons sought to secure their control over lotteries and to guarantee the use of gaming revenues for culture, social affairs and sport. The Federal Council and Parliament tackled the issue with a direct counterproposal, which led to the withdrawal of the initiative. The National Council recommended adoption of the counterproposal by 193 votes to 3, and the Council of States by 42 votes to 0.

Fixed prices of books

The fixing of prices of books, in other words the sale of books at set prices, is a constant political issue. In 1999, the Competition Commission declared a 100-year-old industry agreement in German-speaking Switzerland illegitimate. To save price fixing, advocates submitted proposals for it to be enshrined in law. These were approved by both chambers, against the will of the Federal Council, by 96 votes to 86 in the National Council and by 23 votes to 19 in the Council of States. Price fixing is to apply to online trading as well as bookshops. The Consumer Forum for German-speaking Switzerland and the Young Liberals have successfully called a referendum against the law. They want to allow competition in the book trade and to prevent excessive prices. Supporters of price fixing argue that it protects the book as a cultural asset. They claim that although bestsellers would be cheaper without price agreements, many books with small print runs would disappear from the shelves.

Almost everything is as it was in the Federal Council

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf was confirmed in office, and the Swiss People's Party failed to obtain a second seat as the party with the largest number of votes. Alain Berset replaced Micheline Calmy-Rey, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

By René Lenzin

The party political composition of national government is unchanged - the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP) and the FDP. The Liberals each hold two seats; the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP), the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the Conservative Democratic Party (BDP) each have one. The United Federal Assembly re-elected all the Federal Councillors who stood for office again at the general election on 14 December. In the order in which they were elected, these are: Doris Leuthard (CVP), Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf (BDP), Ueli Maurer (SVP), Didier Burkhalter (FDP), Simonetta Sommaruga (SP) and Johann Schneider-Ammann (FDP). Alain Berset, the Social Democrat from Fribourg, replaced his party colleague Micheline Calmy-Rey, who stepped down at the end of 2011. The Federal Chancellor, Corina Casanova (CVP), was also confirmed in office.

The clear winner in this election is Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf. Four years ago, she was elected to national government when still an SVP politician in place of Christoph Blocher, against the will of her party. After her expulsion from the SVP, she joined the newly formed BDP, which had little chance of securing a seat on the Federal Council with its 5% share of the vote. With the help of the SP, CVP, Greens (GPS) and Green Liberals (GLP), Widmer-Schlumpf was nevertheless comfortably re-elected to office in the first round of voting.

The second winner is Johann Schneider-Ammann. The Free Democrat from Berne, only elected a year ago, was regarded as an outside candidate because his party lost votes in the National Council elections and looked unlikely to win two seats. Finally, the SP can also be satisfied with the outcome after masterfully managing the succession of Micheline Calmy-Rey and easily holding both its seats.

Will the SVP go into opposition?

The main loser is the SVP. As the party with the largest number of votes by some margin, it had the strongest claim

to two Federal Council seats and no one apart from the Greens disputed this. Its attack on Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf nevertheless failed. Its candidates, Jean-François Rime and Hansjörg Walter, had no chance against the politician from Grisons. It received support from the FDP, but the two parties together still only have around 100 seats in the 246-strong Federal Assembly. And when the SVP with Rime came up against the FDP and SP it lost out again.

The party leadership clearly sees this outcome as an infringement of the system of concordance. It will ask the party base how it should respond at a meeting of delegates in January. Possible scenarios include Ueli Maurer stepping down from the Federal Council and going into opposition. Or they could remain in national government and pursue a policy of "half government and half opposition" as long as the demand for a second seat remains unmet.

The SVP will have to put this defeat down to itself to a large extent. It took a long time over its search for a suitable candidate for the Federal Council position. It had only just selected the Zurich National Councillor Bruno Zuppiger as its candidate when he was forced to withdraw owing to his involvement in a shady inheritance affair. The SVP also refused to stand against the FDP until election day, despite the fact that these two parties could hardly expect to win four of seven seats with a 42% share of the vote.

However, the main reason for the SVP's failure is the centre-left coalition that elected Widmer-Schlumpf four years ago and now returned her to office. Although this coalition has a clear majority in the Federal Assembly, it made no serious move for the SVP to obtain a second seat at the expense of the FDP against its will. The desire to elect Widmer-Schlumpf and to weaken the SVP was ultimately stronger than the general commitment to the system of concordance.

The result is a government that will be able to work well together in terms of

personalities. How interaction with Parliament and an SVP that is half in opposition will work remains to be seen.

Allocation of ministries

Following her comfortable re-election, Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf was also the overwhelmingly popular choice for Swiss President for this year. Ueli Maurer is the Vice-President. Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter is the new Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Since his election to the Federal Council in 2009, the Free Democrat from Neuchâtel had directed the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA). The FDHA is now headed by Alain Berset. The other five Federal Councillors will continue in the same departments they directed before the elections.



Alain Berset in his first media appearance as a Federal

A young star with a meteoric career

39-year-old Alain Berset, the former Council of States member for Fribourg, is one of Switzerland's youngest Federal Councillors.

By René Lenzin

Alain Berset does not like to give away any secrets. At least this is the impression he gave in his interviews as a Federal Council candidate. He evaded the most tenacious interviewers by making vague and general statements. In his first interviews after the election, he again did not wish to comment specifically on his priorities in his future government role either. He told the media that he would initially have to integrate into the team and find out which department he would be taking over. He gave a polished performance but remained rather elusive as a person and as a politician.

When confronted with this perception, Berset told the Tages-Anzeiger: "I represent our social democratic positions with conviction and commitment." He is in fact highly esteemed within his party and hardly ever takes up a position at odds with the party line. The man from Fribourg is also seen as a bridge-builder and consensus-oriented politician who is also well regarded by most politicians in the conservative parties. These are typical qualities often attributed to Council of States members and generally represent a solid foundation for a term in government. Berset's detractors do not level their criticisms at his ability to operate in a

consensual manner, but rather at his lack of executive experience. He claims he was previously a freelance strategy and communications consultant. In fact, he was already a professional politician before joining national government.

The 39-year-old Social Democrat is one of the youngest Federal Councillors in the history of the federal state. He is the youngest member of the current government by some margin. Berset has enjoyed a meteoric rise in his political career. He spent three years on the communal parliament in Belvaux where he lives and was a member of Fribourg's Constitutional Council for four years before the electorate in his canton voted him onto the Council of States in 2003. He was comfortably re-elected four years later and also eight years later. In 2009, he became President of the smaller chamber. He has been the Vice-President of the SP faction in the Federal Palace since 2005. In this capacity, he apparently played a major role in the de-selection of Christoph Blocher in December 2007. A graduate in politics and economics, he is married and has three children aged four, six and eight. As a jazz pianist he once undertook part of a tour of Latin America and was junior champion in middle-distance running in French-speaking Switzerland.

Difficult tasks at the FDHA

Alain Berset overcame the former National Councillor and current member of the Cantonal Council of Vaud, Pierre-Yves Miallard. He achieved a surprisingly clear victory over his rival in the first round of voting and overcame the hurdle of the absolute majority in the second round. He is replacing his party colleague Micheline Calmy-Rey on the Federal Council. However, he has not taken over the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs from her, instead becoming Head of the Department of Home Affairs (FDHA). Difficult tasks await him there: he will have to attend to the blocked reforms of both health and social insurances schemes, which have been the subject of heated political debate for years.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WIN COUNCIL OF STATES ELECTION

Only 27 of the 46 seats on the Council of States were filled after the election on 23 October 2011. A second round of voting was subsequently held in 13 cantons.

- The Social Democratic Party (SP) emerged as the winner. It increased its number of seats by two compared to 2007. If the seat in Berne, which was lost in the interim period, is also included, the total gain is in fact three seats. With 11 seats, the SP is stronger than ever before.

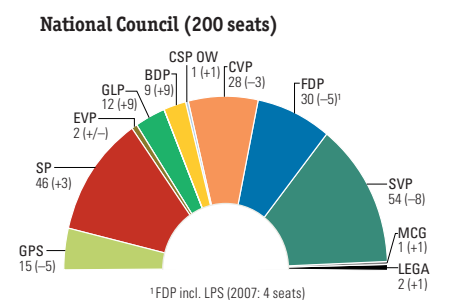
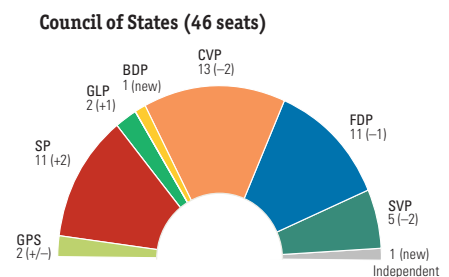
- The parties previously dominant in the chamber of cantonal representatives, the Christian Democrats (CVP) and the FDP. The Liberals, now only have half the Council of States members. The CVP lost three of its 15 seats and the FDP one of its 12.

- The major offensive on the Council of States by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) clearly failed. It has one seat fewer than four years ago. If the Berne seat, which was lost just a few months after the election, is also counted, the number of seats lost is two.

- The number of parties in the Council of States has increased. The Greens (GPS) and Green Liberals (GLP) each hold two seats and the BDP one. With Thomas Minder, the politician behind the so-called "Initiative against rip-off salaries", an independent member has also entered the smaller chamber. He has joined the SVP faction but wants to remain independent.

DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN 2011, BY PARTY

Change compared to 2007 in brackets



Councillor

How do the Swiss abroad vote?

The question as to whether the Swiss abroad vote differently to the electorate living in Switzerland is frequently asked after elections and referenda. And if so, how? We have analysed this issue as far as it is possible to do so.

The question about the voting behaviour of the Swiss abroad in elections and referenda can only be answered selectively. This is because not all the cantons provide separate information on their voting patterns. However, based on the little data available from the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Lucerne, Aargau, Thurgau, St. Gallen and Valais, it is clear that the party political preferences of voters abroad vary significantly from one canton to the next. Whether Swiss voters abroad in a particular part of the world, such as the USA or South-East Asia, have similar preferences cannot be determined as the statistics on votes from abroad are not broken down by origin.

Surprising details

The data available from the parliamentary elections on 23 October 2011 reveals some interesting facts:

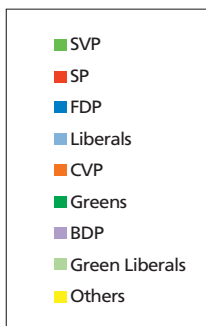
- The Greens were clearly more successful among the Swiss abroad than they were on average in all the cantons, in some cases significantly more so.
- The Social Democratic Party (SP) performed exceptionally well among the Swiss abroad everywhere except in the canton of Vaud.
- The Free Democratic Party (FDP) was more successful among the Swiss abroad than on average in the cantons of Aargau and Thurgau, but less successful by contrast in Geneva, Vaud, Lucerne and Valais.

■ The Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) achieved above-average results among the Swiss abroad in Geneva and Vaud but, by contrast, below-average results in Lucerne, Aargau, Thurgau, St. Gallen and Valais.

Comparisons with previous elections

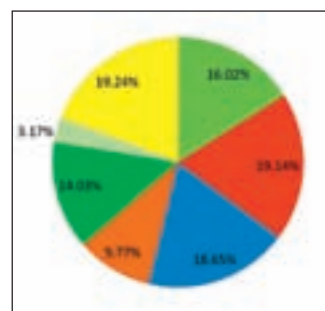
In comparison to 2007, the Greens, FDP and CVP increased their vote among the Swiss abroad in Geneva, whereas the SP and Swiss People's Party (SVP) share of the vote fell. The Greens, CVP, SVP and SP increased their support in the canton of Vaud, while the FDP combined with the Liberals lost votes. The SVP made slight gains in Lucerne, whereas the CVP and FDP lost ground.

It is also noticeable that the SVP is the strongest party among the Swiss abroad in four of the six cantons surveyed (Lucerne, Aargau, Thurgau and St. Gallen). Four years ago, it did not occupy the top spot in any of the three cantons that revealed the results for the Swiss abroad at the time (Geneva, Vaud and Lucerne). However, the SVP is between 4.4 and 14.2 percentage points weaker among the Swiss abroad than the cantonal average in all the cantons where it now holds top position. Only in Valais did the SVP win a higher percentage of votes abroad than the cantonal average.

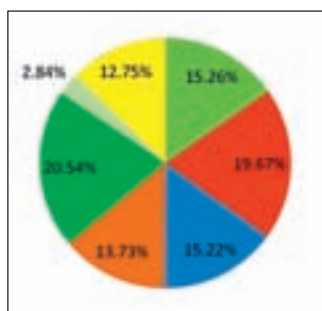


Legend for the charts below

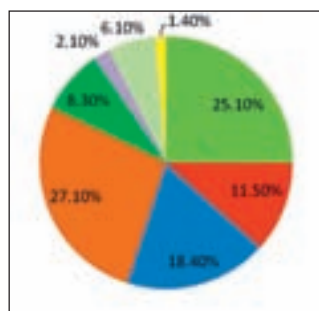
Geneva: canton as a whole



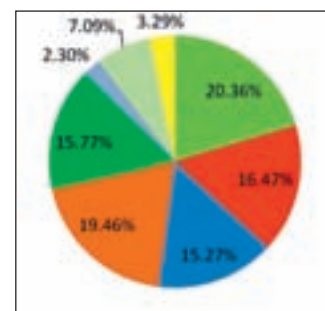
Swiss abroad



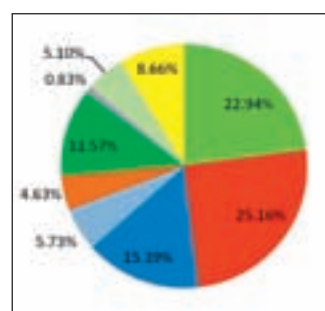
Lucerne: canton as a whole



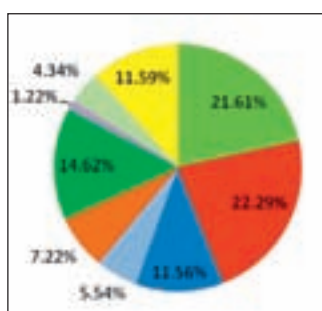
Swiss abroad



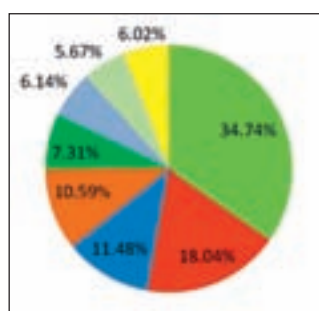
Vaud: canton as a whole



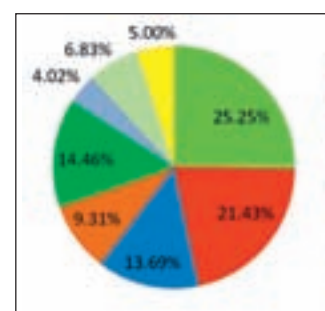
Swiss abroad



Aargau: canton as a whole



Swiss abroad



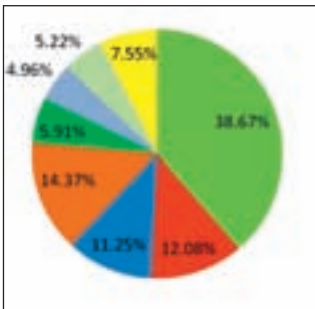
Calls for e-voting

The charts provide a detailed representation of each individual party's share of the vote among all the eligible voters in the respective cantons as well as the strength of each party if only the votes cast by Swiss abroad are taken into account.

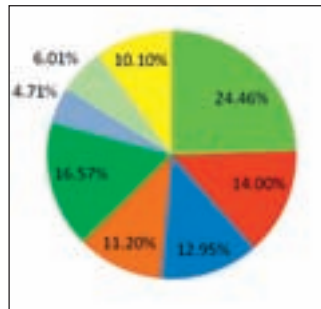
As can be seen from the appeal opposite, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has set itself the goal of enabling all those entitled to vote to take part in elections and referenda via the Internet. OSA believes this would facilitate the political participation of the Swiss abroad enormously and would therefore also result in a higher turnout. E-voting is also an issue for the electorate living in Switzerland, particularly younger generations. (BE)

Further details of the e-election trials can be found in the Federal Chancellery's text on page 28

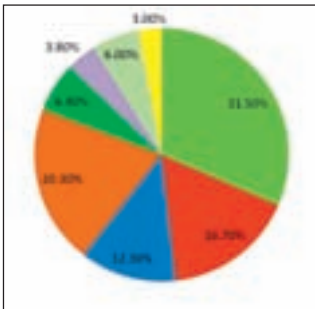
Thurgau: canton as a whole



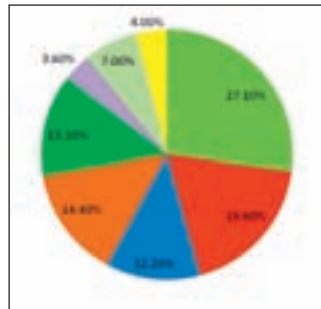
Swiss abroad



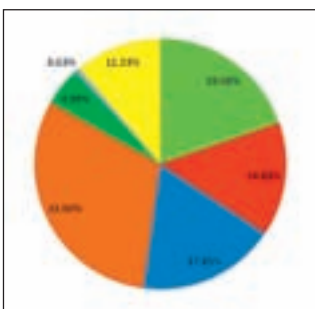
St. Gallen: canton as a whole



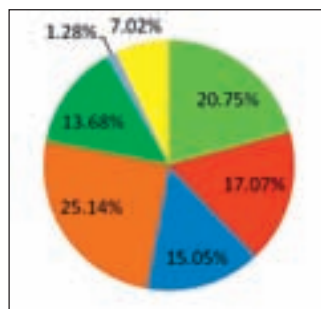
Swiss abroad



Valais: canton as a whole



Swiss abroad



**"E-voting for all"
OSA Petition to the Federal Council**



With a petition, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is calling on the Federal Council and the relevant cantonal authorities to take quick action to make e-voting and e-election available to all Swiss citizens, living at home or abroad.

This petition can be signed by any citizen who supports this measure.

Sign today. Every signature will increase the chances of success!

www.petition.aso.ch

“Seeing the EU as nothing more than an export club is completely wrong”

Michael Reiterer was the EU ambassador in Berne from January 2007 until the end of 2011. Even during difficult times, he made a major contribution to enabling constructive discussions between Switzerland and the EU. An interview at the time of his departure.

By Barbara Engel

“SWISS REVIEW”: You were the first EU ambassador to come to Berne in 2007. Was Berne a destination you wanted at the time?

MICHAEL REITERER: Yes, even in the EU system you have to apply for a job, and I applied for the Switzerland post. I had lived in Switzerland previously – I spent two years studying in Geneva and two years with the Austrian delegation to GATT. I’m now returning to Brussels with nine years’ experience of Switzerland.

Why were you interested in the position of EU ambassador to Switzerland?

I was attracted by the prospect of establishing something new. There had previously been no EU representation in Berne. I started off with nothing more than a rented building. I also found the opportunity to live and work here for a longer period of time appealing as I was already very familiar with Switzerland and its virtues.

Relations between Switzerland and the EU have become strained in recent times. The tone adopted is sometimes not very friendly. Are you glad to be leaving Berne at this point?

No. I don’t believe relations have become more strained. The issues have always been more or less the same since the Swiss voted against joining the EEA in 1992. We have constantly been seeking a modus vivendi ever since. This has to be adapted from time to time because the EU has changed.

How has the EU changed?

First and foremost, it has increased in size from 12 to 27 states. The internal market has grown and deepened. The framework conditions have changed. As a consequence, we also need to find new forms of cooperation between the EU and Switzerland.

From a Swiss perspective, Brussels sometimes makes unachievable demands. This has caused fronts to harden.

I don’t wish to talk about fronts because we are not fighting a war. Switzerland clearly wants to participate in the European Union’s internal market. The EU, for its part, has to ensure that the rules that apply within the internal market are uniform across the board. Discussions with Switzerland about this are currently ongoing. I am confident that now that the parliamentary and Federal Council elections in Switzerland are over we can adopt a more offensive approach to these discussions again.

In Switzerland, there are several sensitive issues associated with fears about the free movement of persons and the EU.

The EU was and remains a peace project. That comes at a price.

The buzzwords are “foreign judges” and “social tourism”. Can you understand this?

I’ve got an anecdote to tell you about this. A cantonal politician once told me that foreign judges from Lausanne introduced the right to vote for women. This illustrates how relative the term “foreign judges” is. Switzerland is a member of several international organisations that have their own jurisdiction. For instance, Switzerland does not have an issue with being subject to WTO jurisdiction on trade disputes. There are also Swiss judges at the European Court of Human Rights, and a Swiss judge even represents the principality of Liechtenstein at the EFTA Court. It would appear that exporting foreign judges does not present a problem. As far as “social tourism” is concerned, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs will readily confirm that the institutions of the Swiss social security system would be in a very poor state if it were not for the contributions of foreigners. Fears arise because sensationalist and populist language is used.

Which areas are on the EU wish list for the bilateral agreements with Switzerland?

The EU does not have a wish list. But there are some issues that are being negotiated, such as free trade in agriculture. Switzerland is holding things up here. There are also negotiations on the internal electricity market, an area where common interests exist.

An analysis from Brussels in “Swiss Review” suggests that Switzerland’s approach is perceived as “cherry-picking” in Brussels. Is that true?

I recently put this question to the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy. He said that it was certainly not an expression he would use. There is no question that Switzerland benefits from political stability and economic prosperity in Europe. The Swiss government and most of the Swiss people also appreciate this. It is therefore important that the EU is seen as a project in which everyone plays a part. When it comes to developing Europe further, for example through expansion, active participation is vital. Relationships between states are like those between people – you communicate, think things through together, work together and when one refuses to talk, the others notice this. The same will also apply to developments we have yet to encounter.

The keyword is development of the European Union – a peace project has turned into a commercial association.

Seeing the EU as nothing more than an export club is completely wrong. It has actually developed the other way round. The European Economic Community was set up first, and this later became the European Union. The latter incorporates close cooperation and integration in the fields of justice, migration, asylum, foreign policy and security policy. Of course, the internal market



Michael Reiterer, the EU ambassador in Berne, returned to Brussels at the end of 2011. He made frequent public appearances in his five years as ambassador, such as at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lugano last year. Reiterer is succeeded in Berne by British diplomat Richard Jones.

remains important and we have the euro as a result of this. It also requires us to coordinate our policies. But the political project is equally important, with Europe wanting and needing to appear united.

How and where does the European Union play a united role?

The global political situation is going through radical changes. There are new players, such as the G20 and an emergent China, which is reclaiming its position in the world. The USA remains the strongest military power but faces competition from Europe and Asia as an economic force. There are also competing ideas. Something more than just a commercial association is required in this environment. Europe must assert its values because the EU is first and foremost a community of values.

What values does the EU represent?

Democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law are the fundamental values on which the EU was built. Great importance

is also attached to these goals in the EU's foreign policy in its relations with other states.

But the institutions that exist in the EU for this purpose are weak?

We have strengthened our institutions through the Lisbon Treaty. The new positions of EU President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, which are currently held by Herman van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton, are intended to get the EU more involved in global politics and are succeeding in doing so.

In what way?

The EU supported the Arab revolution. The UN Security Council's resolution on the protection of the Libyan civilian population was initiated by the EU, and the EU worked with the Arab League to obtain its approval. All of this is extremely political. These are not the actions of purely a free

trade organisation. The EU has also successfully intervened in conflicts much further away from Europe, such as the Aceh conflict in Indonesia. The Indonesian government explicitly requested the EU as a mediator rather than a national state.

The German Chancellor recently said that we need a new EU. Does the euro crisis really call everything into question?

I don't know exactly what Ms Merkel meant by that. But, of course, in tackling the debt crisis it has become clear that individual countries need to coordinate their policies to a greater extent, particularly their economic policies. The bail-out plans have, after all, been approved by the countries. This is something completely new. Nobody would have thought such resolutions possible two years ago.

Has the EU grown too quickly, as critics constantly claim?

It depends on which area they are referring to. From an economic perspective, the EU may well have grown too quickly. Its absorption capacity has indeed reached its limits. But, as we have already said, the EU is a political project. After 1989, the primary aim was to stabilise the Central and Eastern European states freed from the shackles of communism and to ensure they developed democratically. The aspiration to create and maintain an area of democracy and freedom has always existed in the European Union. This has worked. The EU was and remains a peace project. That comes at a price.

The EU supported the Arab revolution.

You are now returning to Brussels. What role will you take up there?

I will rejoin head office after ten years of service abroad.

That doesn't sound very exciting.

You won't find many diplomats, irrespective of which country or service they are from, who are enthusiastic about returning to head office. But it's standard practice, and after two or three years you are assigned elsewhere again.

Do you have another dream destination?

I would like to be an ambassador again in an Asian country.

A biologist becomes a TV star

“Netz Natur” (Nature Network) is one of the most popular shows on Swiss TV. Biologist Andreas Moser manages to attract around 400,000 viewers eight times a year and has been doing so for almost 20 years. But he doesn’t feel like a star - he’s too shrewd and dedicated for that.

By Heinz Eckert

Andreas Moser’s interest in animals stems from his background and family. Having grown up near to Basel Zoo, or “Zolli” as the locals call it, Moser spent a lot of time with his grandfather in the zoological garden, came into contact with animals and keepers, sometimes helping them with their work, and learned a great deal about animals in the process. These experiences influenced his choice of career and the course of his life. He actually wanted to become a zookeeper, but his parents persuaded him to finish his school education first and go on to university as well. He chose biology, majoring in zoology. He carried out field studies on indigenous reptiles during his degree course at the University of Basel and soon became an expert on snakes.

After graduating, Andreas Moser ran the poisonous animals laboratory at the Swiss Tropical Institute in Basel as an academic assistant and laboratory chief. There he was responsible for keeping poisonous snakes, spiders and scorpions.

Successor to a legend

Instead of taking up the opportunity available to him to travel to Africa to carry out further research into poisonous snakes, Moser joined the Swiss state television company in 1987. He worked on the “Karussell” programme and began producing TV programmes on natural history. When the highly successful “Karussell” came to an end, he joined the “Menschen-Technik-Wissenschaft” editorial team. The concept of “Netz-Reportage aus der Natur” was developed here as a successor to the well-known productions of Hans A. Traber. Moser has been the programme’s presenter since 1989 and its head of editorial content since 1993. Last year, the programme featured the following topics: “All about the cow”, “Switzerland – a cow nation?”, “Who stinks here?”, “Wild nature – money or life”, “Mangroves – apes, crabs and crocodiles”, “Horned animals” and “Animals – creatures of honour”.

Moser is highly committed to and a strong advocate of the interests of animals and nature, but he is certainly no missionary. A natural scientist to the core, he analyses situations, makes deductions and draws conclusions. He presents these to viewers in an easy-to-understand way, but without dramatic or pedagogic undertones.

The wolf and the sheep

He adopted the same approach when the Swiss Parliament expressed concern about wolves migrating back to Switzerland. Moser said that the killing of sheep and goats by wolves was a problem of man’s own making. “Wolves treat unattended pets as part of nature”, he explained to Parliament. The 10 or so wolves living in Switzerland kill around 350 sheep and goats a year. That is a small number in relation to the 4,000 to 10,000 sheep “which die each year, sometimes in excruciating pain, due to accidents and diseases because shepherds leave them to graze in the mountains for weeks or months on end without supervision or protection”.

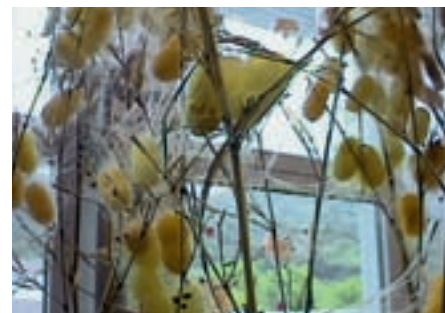
Moser pointed out that sheep on the Alps need constant shepherding and occasional treatment from a vet in the same way as pets. They require protection at night, ideally through electric fencing, and shepherds and sheepdogs are also needed to look after the flock. “Sheep looked after in this way are rarely in danger from wolves”, said Moser, emphasising that federal government pays farmers 43 million Swiss francs a year in subsidies for keeping sheep. He said this funding should also be used to keep animals in accordance with the provisions of animal protection legislation.

He was fairly astonished that Parliament would not take this on board in the debate on wolves. Wolves are the natural adversaries of roe, chamois and deer and are biologically programmed to live here. It is simply that they have been unable to establish themselves in the past because they have often been killed by poachers. They are also

an ideal target for misuse by politicians in election campaigns for propaganda purposes.

Honorary doctorate

Moser views himself primarily as a conveyer of information because he sees how much nature is being destroyed by a lack of awareness. He explains: “‘Netz Natur’ is an ideal platform for showing people how nature is interconnected and explaining to them through images, the senses and sometimes also through emotion that other perspectives exist besides the human one.” In an age when nature is increasingly sacrificed for industry, for the construction of housing and roads, but also for leisure activities, he has the task, within the scope of Swiss television’s public



service mandate, of reporting on the opportunities and risks for the natural environment in a scientifically accurate but entertaining way and in line with journalistic criteria.

Just how skilfully he does this is highlighted not only by his huge fan base but also by the fact that his rather unspectacular pro-

Andreas Moser
filming one of
his programmes
(right)

Images of silkworms
and butterflies from
the programme “Wie
ein Schmetterling
die Welt verändert”
(How a butterfly
changes the world) –
below left



gramme has neither fallen victim to cost-cutting measures nor had to follow the widespread trend towards sensationalism and populism in Swiss television.

Andreas Moser has received many awards for his work, but he was particularly pleased with the University of Zurich's reasons for awarding him an honorary doctorate: “The University of Zurich awards an honorary doctorate to Dr. Andreas Moser in recognition of his services to the portrayal of animals and their relationship with their natural habitat. Through his television programmes, Andreas Moser has made a major contribution to improving people's understanding of animals in the places where they live and of other important issues concerning the natural environment and, in so doing, has played an important role in the protection of animals and nature.” This was recognition of Moser's efforts from the highest echelons.

New awareness among youngsters

Moser will, unfortunately, never run out of issues for “Netz Natur”. He believes biodiversity will be extremely important for the future. The highly diverse relationships bet-

ween different species are vital to the existence of living organisms, including humans. Moser explains: “Just take milk and meat for example – without the vast number of soil-dwelling organisms, no grass or cultivated plants would grow. And cattle and sheep need grass to produce milk and meat. Everything is interrelated.” He points to further correlations: without bees there would be no pollination of fruit trees, without earthworms there would be no humus on the fields or on the forest floor which provides food for plants, holds back water and prevents erosion and flooding.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN, has published some alarming figures – of the 47,677 endangered animal and plant species on the red list, 17,291 are at acute risk of extinction. “Nature is fundamental to our existence. By destroying it, we are destroying ourselves”, says Moser. “Despite this, we continue to chop down the tropical rain forests – the most abundant eco-systems in existence – and release vast quantities of fertilisers from intensive agriculture into rivers and seas where they destroy coral reefs and make fish infertile owing to the hormones in the water.”

But are there encouraging signs too? Andreas Moser believes there are. The “Netz Natur” team works a lot with young people and is forever noticing that awareness about interrelationships and attitudes towards nature are better among younger people than with older generations. Youngsters are also willing to make their own contribution. “Politicians cannot afford to make any more decisions concerning nature and the environment that are irreversible. Anything short of this would be unethical. We owe that to future generations”, says Moser.

“Netz Natur” is scheduled to be broadcast on the following dates in 2012: 15 March, 26 April, 24 May, 21 June, 20 September, 18 October, 15 November, 20 December

The programme can also be watched online www.sendungen.sf.tv/netz-natur/
All series are also available on DVD:
www.sendungen.sf.tv/netz-natur/Formulare/Kontakt-NETZ-NATUR-SF-1

HEINZ ECKERT is a freelance journalist in Basel; he was the Editor-in-Chief of “Swiss Review” until 2010.

The acrobat of the slopes

Iouri Podladtchikov is on first name terms with the American stars of snowboarding. The Zurich-based snowboarder – World Championship runner-up in the half-pipe – has consistently succeeded in accomplishing some of the most remarkable manoeuvres on the circuit. We met the circus acrobat of the slopes following his World Cup triumph in Saas-Fee.

By Alain Wey



Iouri Podladtchikov on the podium and in the half-pipe in Saas-Fee last November

He flies into the half-pipe, soaring over four metres above the 6.5-metre-high walls of snow. Phenomenal spins and perilous, jaw-dropping flips – it seems nothing can stop Iouri Podladtchikov. He won the World Cup event in Saas-Fee with panache and without excessive risk-taking. In the finish area he is all smiles, focussing on the television cameras. Podladtchikov is one of the few Europeans capable of competing with the giants of the sport from the USA like Shaun White who remains invincible. After the Olympic champion, he is only the second snowboarder to have landed the double McTwist 1260, which involves two flips and three and a half spins. The man nicknamed iPod has risen to fame throughout Switzerland after only missing out on a medal at the Vancouver Olympic Games by a few points. He also picked up a silver medal at the legendary North American Winter X-Games in 2010. At the Hôtel du Glacier in Saas-Fee, the 23-year-old snowboarder puts aside his boards and guitars for a moment to give us

the opportunity to find out more about the man he is today.

Brother as a role model

Iouri arrived in Switzerland in 1996 at the age of eight. His family followed his father, a geophysics professor, who moved from Moscow to the Netherlands and then to Switzerland and Zurich, where he was a lecturer at the Federal Institute of Technology. Iouri recalls: "I started snowboarding at the age of 11 in Flumserberg. My older brother Igor was a very keen snowboarder and I always wanted to emulate him. I was already skateboarding so snowboarding was a natural step. It meant everything to us. I would go into the mountains every weekend with my parents and they allowed me to go on my own from the age of 13, mainly to Laax or Davos because, right from the start, I wanted to surf the pipes, jumps and rails." Iouri studied at the sports high school in Davos and became a Swiss citizen in 2007, just a year after taking part in the Turin Olympic Games in Russian colours while training in Grisons with his Swiss friends and coaches, Marco Bruni and





Pepe Regazzi from Swiss Ski. “But I was always the Russian”, he recalls.

When asked whether he feels more Russian or Swiss, Iouri sidesteps the question: “I hate that question, that’s my answer!” he smiles. And what about in terms of his character and outlook? “I’ve experienced many different countries and I feel multicultural. But my parents are Russian, very Russian in fact. Perhaps my mindset is somewhat more Russian than that of my Swiss friends. But I’m not Russian in Russia and I’m not Swiss in Switzerland. That’s how it is. At the end of the day, I’m Iouri and I’m not worried about anything else.” And does Switzerland have a special place in his heart? “It represents a lot to me – the mountains, my friends, love and Zurich”, he explains, with a glint in his eye. He adds: “Switzerland is wonderful.” His home town also presented him with the title of “Sportsperson of the Year” in 2009.

Always focussed on a goal

What is a year in the life of Iouri like? He replies: “The first word that springs to mind is chaotic because I’m constantly travelling around the world. I’m not very good at settling down and not moving. I never get to spend more than four months a year in Switzerland. For example, I took part in competitions in New Zealand in August and then went back there in October for training.” He is always on the go. “I’m very instinctive. I have very high expectations of myself and therefore also of others”, he says. With a passion for photography, the guitar and skateboarding, he still dreams about winning competitions like the Winter X-Games and, of course, winning a medal at the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi in his native Russia. With so much creative talent, does he have a philosophy? “Not really, because things are constantly changing. I don’t know what I’m going to be doing tomorrow. I simply concentrate on moving onwards and upwards, focussing on the goal in front of me.”



Summer camps in 2012 for children aged 8 to 14

Are you aged 8 to 14? Would you like to spend 14 days in Switzerland getting to know your homeland better? Then sign up for a holiday camp run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad. We organise summer holiday camps in Switzerland's most beautiful regions during July and August.

Programme

Our camps give you the opportunity to see the sights, to discover lakes, mountains, rivers and incredible scenery, to go on short hikes and perhaps even visit some cities. Some days are also spent at the camp, where we organise games, sporting activities and various workshops.

You will also have the chance to learn lots of useful things about Switzerland. For example, we look at the Swiss languages, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes and typically Swiss games and sports.

The interaction between participants beyond all linguistic, cultural and national boundaries provides an opportunity to enjoy an unforgettable experience and to make lots of new friends.

Costs

The prices of the offers are set out in the list below. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad wishes to give all Swiss children abroad the opportunity to spend a holiday in Switzerland at least once if



Happy times at past summer camps run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad

possible. We therefore offer reduced camp rates. The relevant application form can be requested with the registration form.

Travel/meeting point

The meeting point is Zurich airport around lunchtime.

Travel to and from Zurich airport is organised and paid for by parents.

Leaders

Experienced, multilingual teams of leaders ensure that the two-week holiday camps are well-organised and offer a wide variety of activities.

Registration

The exact details of the individual holiday camps and the registration form can be found, from Wednesday, 1 February 2012, at www.sjas.ch. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request. The registration deadline is 15 March 2012.

Please contact the office in Berne for further information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad

Alpenstrasse 26 CH-3006 Berne

Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 16

Fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01

E-mail: sjas@aso.ch

www.sjas.ch (Our forthcoming activities)

SUMMER CAMPS IN 2012

- Sat. 30.6.–Fri. 13.7.12: Gsteig b. Gstaad (Berne) for 40 children aged 8–14, price: CHF 900.
- Wed. 11.7.–Fri. 20.7.12: Swiss trip for 24 children aged 12–16, price: CHF 950.
- Sat. 14.7.–Fri. 27.7.12: Mümliswil (Solothurn) for 36 children aged 8–11, price: CHF 900.
- Sat. 14.7.–Fri. 27.7.12: Prêles (Berne) for 36 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900.
- Sat. 28.7.–Fri. 10.8.12: Obersaxen (Grisons), sports camp for 48 children aged 12–14, price: CHF 950.
- Sat. 28.7.–Fri. 10.8.12: Aurigeno (Ticino) for 36 children aged 8–11, price: CHF 900.
- Sat. 4.8.–Fri. 17.8.12: Mariastein (Solothurn), radio camp, children produce radio broadcasts and discover Switzerland. For 48 children aged 8–14, price: CHF 950.
- Sat. 18.8.–Fri. 31.8.12: Valbella (Grisons) for 36 children aged 8–14, price: CHF 900.

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OSA advice

I would like to study in Switzerland – what would happen in terms of military service?

In Switzerland, all men are obliged to carry out military service before the end of the year in which they turn 30 years of age or 34 years of age if they already completed military training school before leaving Switzerland. Upon your return to Switzerland, you will therefore be called upon to fulfil your military obligations based on your age and aptitude level. Swiss citizens can be recruited until the end of the year in which they turn 25 years of age. They will then be asked to attend military training school before the end of the year during which they turn 26 years of age. An exception exists for men who have already carried out military service in Switzerland, who have been granted military leave to go abroad or who have not been in the country for an uninterrupted period of over six years and are no longer needed by the army. Citizens not recruited owing to

their age do not have to complete military training school but have to pay military service exemption tax. Swiss citizens abroad who wish to stay in Switzerland for a period of over three months have to notify the head of section within 14 days of their arrival.

If you hold dual nationality and have already carried out military service or alternative civilian service or have made an exemption payment in your country of origin, you no longer have to carry out military service in Switzerland. However, this does not release you from the obligation to provide notification of your arrival and you may have to pay the military service exemption tax. If you have carried out military service or alternative civilian service in Germany, Austria, France or Italy, you will be exempt from paying the military service exemption tax owing to agreements that Switzerland has concluded with these countries.

You can also voluntarily decide to attend military training school in Switzerland as a Swiss citizen abroad. Requests in such cases should be addressed to:

*Führungsstab der Armee
Personelles der Armee (FGG 1)
Steuerung und Vorgaben
Rodmattstr. 110, 3003 Berne
Tel. 031 324 32 56, Fax 031 324 14 92
E-mail: personelles@gst.admin.ch
Website: www.vbs.admin.ch*

Conscientious objectors to military service can undertake alternative civilian service. Alternative civilian service lasts one and a half times longer than military service. For further information:

*Zivildienst Zentralstelle
Malerweg 6, 3600 Thun
Tel: 033 228 19 99, Fax: 033 228 19 98
E-mail: info@zivi.admin.ch
Website: www.zivi.admin.ch*

SARAH MASTANTUONI, Head of the Legal Department

OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

Area for the Swiss Abroad – new ideas sought

A global ideas competition for the design of the Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen has been launched by the Foundation Council.

Ideas are being sought for a prominent, meaningful and permanent symbol that expresses the concept of the Area for the Swiss Abroad in a clear and contemporary way and is perceived as a distinctive feature.

The proposals must be compatible with requirements for the protection of the natural environment, landscape and lakeside as well as with the utilisation needs of the Area for the Swiss Abroad Foundation and the expectations of the local population.

Competition entries may consist of keywords, detailed text, sketches or other illustrations. They must be suitable for

further development and realisation. Participants should provide as much detail as possible concerning the implementation of their ideas and the cost and effort involved. Ownership of the competition entries will be transferred to the Area for the Swiss Abroad

Foundation upon submission, and they may be used, developed or modified by the Foundation as required.

Full competition details can be found on OSA's homepage at www.aso.ch

The deadline for the submission of ideas is 31 March 2012. The winning ideas will go on public display in Brunnen in July/August and at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne in August 2012.



The Area for the Swiss Abroad in 1991 with the "Botta Tent", which was erected to celebrate 700 years of the Swiss confederation



On a voyage of discovery

OSA has a new offer for young Swiss people abroad – the chance to spend two weeks discovering wide-ranging aspects of life in Switzerland, writing reports on their findings and publishing these online.

Water, history and architecture are just three of ten topics for which OSA has pro-



duced suggestions for day trips. Participants will be given these suggestions together with plenty of background information.

The project participants will then go off on their excursion, observing and describing what they see, and answering questions. All this material will go into their reports. These will then be uploaded to the Internet as text, photos or videos.

Other items required for the project will be a camera, a pen and a notepad. A ticket for public transport in Switzerland during the stay will be provided.

Each young explorer from abroad will stay with a Swiss host family, who will be very interested to hear all about their guest's life story, culture and experiences. The host families will also provide Internet access for the publications.

OSA is looking forward to reading the reports and contributions of Swiss abroad who have discovered Switzerland in this way and is hoping to see an impressive output.

Young people will also, of course, be able to take advantage of this offer prior to or after one of our holiday camps. There are



still some places available to latecomers on the winter sports week in Wengen. OSA is also organising an Easter camp in Fiesch with a wide range of activities. All OSA's offers for young people can be found at www.aso.ch (Offers).



90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad: 17 to 19 August 2012

At the 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne participants will debate Mobility and Innovation: Switzerland in Times of International Challenges. More on this topic and the latest information on the 2012 congress can be found at: www.aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad/2012.

Put the congress dates in your diary today. We look forward to seeing you at the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne.

Please send me the registration documents in spring 2012 for the 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (17 to 19 August 2012 in Lausanne).

My address is:

Surname:

First name:

Address:

Country:

Postcode/city:

E-mail:

Please write clearly in block capitals

Send the completed form to: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Communications & Marketing, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01 or e-mail us at communication@aso.ch.

Assistance for Swiss abroad and travellers

The FDFA Helpline reduces the workload of the head office in Berne and of Switzerland's network of diplomatic and consular representations abroad. Constant dynamic expansion and four supplementary projects.



Hans-Peter Heiniger

In addition to the embassies and consulates, which are the first port of call for information for Swiss citizens registered or travelling abroad, the FDFA Helpline at the Consular Directorate (CD) has been providing a “single point of contact” for queries concerning consular services since the beginning of 2011. This citizen service

takes in account the growing importance of consular affairs and improves the FDFA's impact and visibility externally. The FDFA Helpline staff answer over a thousand queries a month, which clearly shows just how well citizens have responded to the new service. Most questions can be answered directly by Helpline employees thanks to their high level of expertise. This has freed up back-office resources, which can be used to resolve complex and time-intensive issues. The objective is for the other FDFA directorates and the network abroad to also benefit increasingly from the Helpline. Hans-Peter Heiniger, Head of the FDFA Helpline, spoke to the editorial team about ongoing projects.

“SWISS REVIEW”: *The FDFA Helpline has been set up and expanded rapidly since the start of 2011. What phase is it in now?*

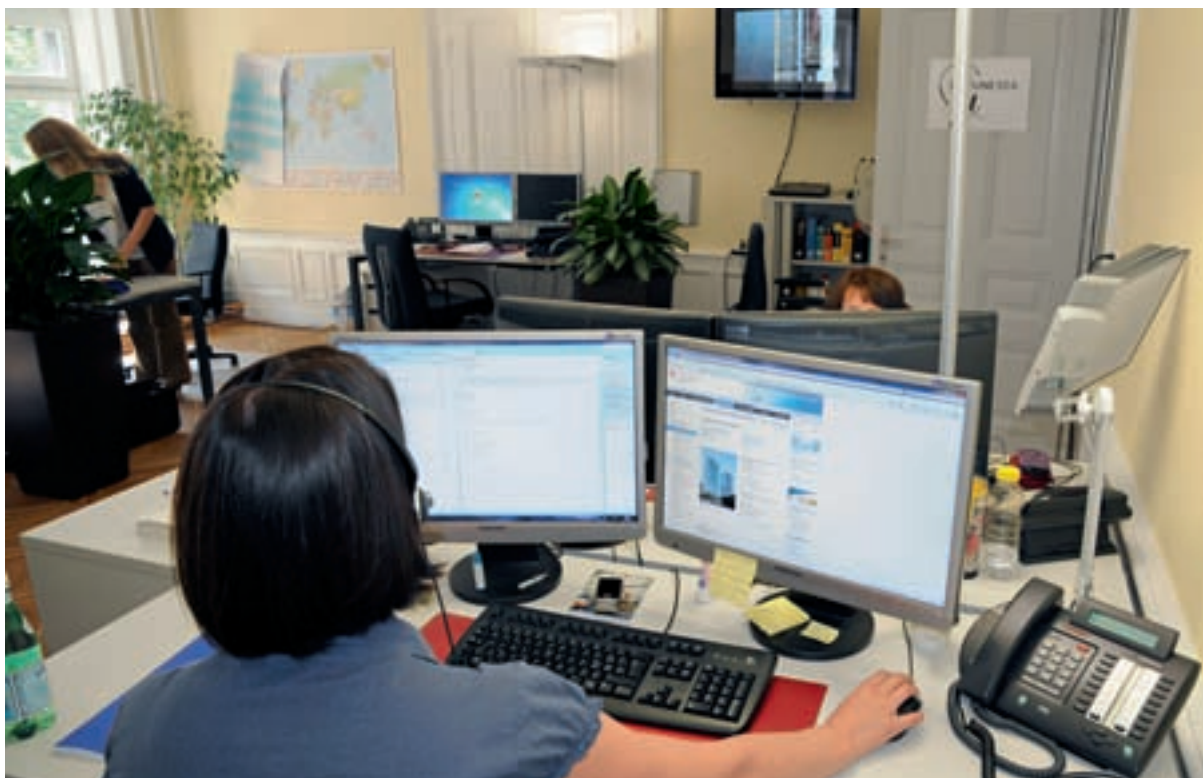
HANS-PETER HEINIGER: People have been able to reach us from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., since the start of 2011. The first phase was launched with three employees. We have now had eight Helpline staff in place since 1 October 2011 and have moved on to phase two. This means we now answer queries every day from Monday to Sunday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

What steps are planned over the coming months?

We will optimise the existing services by, for example, providing further staff training in the various consular affairs. Our goal from the outset was to be able to answer at least 80% of queries to the Helpline directly. We have actually exceeded this target thanks to the outstanding level of expertise of Helpline staff. We answer over 90% of all queries ourselves, without having to pass them on to other offices. In phase three, we will provide 24-hour availability, take over the FDFA's standby service, and receive calls in Berne that are made to representations abroad outside office hours. This will reduce the workload of our colleagues in the embassies and consulates.

Everyone concerned will be pleased about that. However, there are clearly still obstacles to overcome before this objective is achieved...

As I mentioned earlier, our goal is to be available for our customers 24 hours a day. The introduction of such a service depends on technical and organisational capacities as well as resources. Like everywhere else, these are in short supply here too. We are working at full tilt to achieve our objective as quickly as possible despite the challenging framework. However, we



FDFA Helpline employees – supporting the Swiss abroad with advice and practical help



cannot, at the moment, rule out the possibility of delays in the launch of the 24-hour service owing to the resources situation.

What service are you providing at the moment?

Customers from Switzerland and abroad can contact us with questions and approach us about matters relating to consular services. We offer the best possible service in line with our service charter. Our intention is to provide expert consular information. We regard customer friendliness as our top priority.

What are the differences between the Helpline and the FDFA Hotline that is set up in crisis situations?

The Helpline is permanently available to customers for any question relating to consular matters. We also take queries via our Helpline in crisis situations. However, if the Helpline requires support in the event of a major crisis or catastrophe abroad, we can get our Hotline operators ready in next to no time. Customers are then forwarded to the Helpline or the Hotline (for announcements and reports regarding missing persons) depending on their needs. The number (+41 (0) 800 24-7-365) remains the same in any event.

Press reports said that 36,000 SMS messages and e-mails were sent by the FDFA from Berne during the red-shirt demonstrations in Thailand in May 2010. Was the Helpline involved in that?

The Helpline did not exist then. This task was handled by the Crisis Management Centre (CMC). However, messages of this kind will in the future be sent by the Helpline in close cooperation with the CMC and the representations abroad.

In other words, the Helpline will also reduce the Crisis Management Centre's workload. How will you set up the infrastructure for such major operations in the future?

We have eight lines available to us for the Helpline, and up to 16 can be provided for the Hotline. The Helpline and the Hotline are located on the same premises at Bundesgasse 32 in Berne.

What about the technical infrastructure of the Helpline and Hotline? Are you well equipped for the next major emergency?



Yes, we are very well equipped. Not just from a technical perspective but also in terms of our psychological and social preparation. Our Helpline employees and Hotline operators are being given basic and advanced training using various scenarios to prepare them for such events, with annual refresher courses to follow.

What is the planned online counter all about? And how will the Helpline be affected by this?

We still have no means of online registration for Swiss travellers abroad. This is one of the four sub-projects in the Citizen Services division that we plan to implement by spring 2012. We have access to the contact details of the registered Swiss community abroad so that we can send e-mails and SMS messages at any time in an emergency, as described above in connection with Thailand. This is why we use every opportunity to encourage the Swiss abroad to register and to ensure their details held by the embassy or consulate are always up-to-date.

Four Helpline projects are currently underway? What do these involve exactly?

Sub-project 1 aims at expanding and optimising the existing Helpline application. Sub-project 2 involves the voluntary online registration I mentioned for Swiss citizens travelling abroad so we have as good an idea as possible of all citizens who may be affected in crisis situations. Sub-project 3 should enable both Swiss Citizen Services at the Consular Directorate and the Swiss embassies and consulates abroad to send mass SMS messages more efficiently. As the example of Thailand showed, the current solution has reached its limits. Sub-project 4 is about replacing the existing ageing telephone system with a state-of-the-art call centre system.

Smaller projects, such as the availability of the FDFA Helpline via Skype, have already been implemented.

What is the long-term future of the FDFA Helpline?

We have made great progress in terms of customer proximity and customer friendliness after a successful start for the "single point of contact" at the beginning of 2011. With our well trained and highly motivated Helpline team, we will continue to offer customers the best possible service while also reducing the workload of specialist departments at head office and at our embassies and consulates as much as we possibly can.

Interview: Mitarbeiterzeitung EDA
Adaptation: Thomas Kalau

First attempt at electronic voting in national elections

Four cantons successfully carried out e-voting trials during the 2011 National Council elections. 3,562 Swiss citizens abroad eligible to vote from the cantons of Basel-Stadt, St.Gallen, Grisons and Aargau cast their votes electronically.

According to a statement by the Federal Chancellery, the e-voting trials ran smoothly in all four cantons. The cantons concerned overcame the technical and logistical challenges without any technical failures or incidents. According to the Federal Chancellery the use of e-voting at the 2011 National Council elections can therefore be regarded as a success.

Around 22,000 Swiss abroad had the opportunity to cast their votes electronically at the first e-voting trial in national elections. Up to 53.1% took advantage of the new voting method, depending on the canton (see pages 16–17 on the voting behaviour of the Swiss abroad).

With the current legal situation, around 90% of Swiss abroad could take advantage of e-voting. These are Swiss citizens residing in either an EU member state or one of the 45 states that have signed the Wassenaar Arrangement (www.wassenaar.org). Among other things, this arrangement governs the encryption of data transmis-

sion over the Internet, which is fundamental to e-voting.

Milestone in the introduction of electronic voting

The second phase in the implementation of e-voting has been reached with its first deployment in national elections. The project was launched in 2000, and trials have been held in federal referenda since 2004. In 2007, the Federal Council and Parliament approved the gradual introduction of electronic voting. Four development stages were planned:

1. Electronic voting in referenda
2. Electronic voting in elections
3. E-collecting (electronic signature for initiatives and referenda) and
4. Electronic signature for election nominations. Thirteen cantons are currently involved in the project.

The positive experiences with e-voting at the 2011 elections have given the federal

government a boost in its efforts to give most Swiss citizens abroad who are eligible to vote the opportunity to do so via the Internet at the 2015 National Council elections. The experiences of recent years will be evaluated by the Federal Chancellery over the coming months. The Federal Council's next report on electronic voting is scheduled for 2013 (also see page 17: Petition of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad).

The focus of OSCE election observation

A team of nine experts from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) observed the elections in Switzerland from 10 to 28 October 2011. The experts were primarily interested in electronic voting because this technology is relatively new and pilot trials are only just being held in a few participating states. The OSCE Report on the 2011 National Council elections is expected to be published approximately two months after the election date (www.osce.org/odihr/elections/Switzerland/83755).

Thank-you from the Consular Directorate

The FDFA's Consular Directorate would like to thank the Swiss abroad who took part in the post-election survey conducted by the Swiss Foundation for Research in Social Sciences (FORS) at the University of Lausanne on the voting behaviour of Swiss voters abroad. The results of this survey will be published in spring 2012. Further information will be provided in this publication.

Important

Please do not forget to provide the embassy or consulate general responsible for you with your valid e-mail address and your mobile phone number.

Register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss out on "Swiss Review" or information and newsletters from your representation. The current edition of "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read or printed out at any time at www.revue.ch or via the "Review" link on the websites of Swiss embassies and consulates.

ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

The Federal Council decided at its meeting on 9 November 2011 to put the following proposals to the people on 11 March 2012:

- Popular initiative of 18 December 2007 "Schluss mit uferlosem Bau von Zweitwohnungen!" (Put an end to the unrestricted construction of second homes!)
- Popular initiative of 29 September 2008 "Für ein steuerlich begünstigtes Bausparen zum Erwerb von selbst genutztem Wohneigentum und zur Finanzierung von baulichen Energiespar- und Umweltschutzmassnahmen – Bauspar-Initiative" (Tax benefits on home purchase savings for a property lived in by the owner and for financing structural energy-saving and environmental protection measures – home purchase savings initiative);
- Popular initiative of 26 June 2009 "6 Wochen Ferien für alle" (Six weeks holiday for everyone);
- Federal resolution of 29 September 2011 on the regulation of gambling for charitable purposes (counterproposal to the popular

initiative "Für Geldspiele im Dienste des Gemeinwohls" (Gambling for the common good) and

- Federal Law of 18 March 2011 on fixed book prices (BuPG).

Details of the proposals can be found on page 13. The referendum dates for 2012 are 11 March, 17 June, 23 September and 25 November.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following federal popular initiatives have been launched since the last edition of "Swiss Review" (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- "Für eine Wirtschaft zum Nutzen aller" (For an economy that benefits everyone) (01.05.2013)
- "Wolf, Bär und Luchs" (Wolf, bear and lynx) (11.04.2013)
- "Rettet unser Schweizer Gold – Gold-Initiative" (Save our Swiss gold – gold initiative) (20.03.2013)
- "Für eine neutrale weltoffene und humanitäre Schweiz – Neutralitätsinitiative" (For a neutral, humanitarian Switzerland that is open to the world – neutrality initiative) (13.03.2013)

The complete list can be found on the Federal Chancellery's website www.bk.admin.ch, in German under Politische Rechte/Volksinitiativen (also available in French and Italian)

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Witch-hunt in the castle

The witches have returned to Chillon Castle. Not the ones from fairy tales, but the women who for centuries were rumoured to be working in cahoots with the devil to bring disaster upon the people. These women were pursued, hunted, tortured and burned to death. Switzerland was particularly industrious and especially thorough when it came to witch-hunting, with more than 3,500 witches burned at the stake between the 15th and 18th centuries. Anna Göldi from Sumiswald was one of the



last witches in Europe to be executed. That was back in 1782 – in 2008, following many years of to-ing and fro-ing, the Glarus cantonal parliament cleared her name on the grounds that she had been subjected to an illegal trial.

The exhibition features numerous documents, which are being displayed to the public for the first time and which illustrate the role played by politicians and the Church in this inglorious chapter in Switzerland's history. Chillon Castle, with its dungeon where countless witches awaited trial and subsequent death, is an ideal venue to house such an exhibition.

BE

The exhibition will run until 24 June 2012. www.chillon.ch

A bird's eye view of Ticino



the north in their thousands each year. The aerial shots provide remarkable images. The bird's-eye-view perspective highlights the coexistence of the natural environment, which has developed over a long period of time, and man-made civilisation with its rapid invasion.

The photos reveal beauty and correlations that cannot be seen at ground level by normal travellers, but also expose the brutal encroachment upon and despoliation of nature. "This book does not seek to cast blame or to gloss over the issues – it is simply a snapshot (...)" writes the photographer in the epilogue.

He is right, but it is also more than that – it is a wonderful snapshot beautifully presented with concise, insightful text.

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"Ticino tra cielo e terra"; Fontana Edizioni, 6963 Pregassona, 264 pages, CHF 64 plus delivery costs. Order: edizioni@fontana.ch



Rémy Steinegger provides a scenic flight over Ticino in his collection of photographs entitled "Ticino tra cielo e terra" (Ticino between Heaven and Earth). It contains 126 photographs of a canton that has undergone fundamental change over the past century, where agriculture has been almost completely replaced by tourism and service industries because its beauty attracts visitors from

Writings rather than photographs

It is an adventure, an anachronism that will have many people shaking their heads. But it is certainly an adventure that has started successfully. "Reportagen" is the title of a new magazine first published in Switzerland in October 2011. The name says it all really – 120 pages, no photos, no PR and no high gloss. Quite simply articles cover to cover, and what exceptional articles they are. Six authors contributed tales to the first edition that will live long in the memory. Margrit Sprecher, for example, wrote about Ireland and about how it became rich, then poor again but wiser. In "Zwischen Töten und Tanzen", Karin Wenger described her visit to the closed-off bases of the US troops in Afghanistan. Erwin Koch's article entitled "Sarah" told of 17-year-old Sarah's fight against cancer. "Reportagen" does not reflect the spirit of the times in journalism, but it is an absolute pleasure.

BE



Series of lectures on "Reportagen" in collaboration with "Freitag":
 16.02.2012 Hamburg with Peter Stamm
 12.04.2012 Vienna with Sibylle Berg
 28.06.2012 Cologne with Ilija Trojanow
 23.08.2012 Berlin with Linus Reichlin
www.freitag.ch

Subscription: www.reportagen.com/
 Tel: +41 31 981 11 14, CHF 100/year.

Bulletins

“Hardworking” parliamentarians

The number of initiatives (motions, postulates, interpellations, etc.) at the Swiss Parliament increased significantly in the last legislature to a total of over 5,000 in the National Council alone. The number of motions in the National Council and Council of States rose from 1,290 during the 2003–2007 period to 1,952, which represents an increase of 51%. Postulates were up around 18%, while the number of interpellations rose by 19%. Many parliamentarians “grasp at initiatives to prove they are tackling people’s concerns”, wrote the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, commenting on the deluge of submissions.

Federer in illustrious company

Swiss tennis player Roger Federer came second on a list of “most respected people”, behind Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa. This was the outcome of a survey by the Reputation Institute among 51,055 people worldwide. The 54 nominees were figures from politics, business, sport and culture. George Bush, Silvio Berlusconi, Mahmud Ahmadinejad and Kim Jong-Il were at the bottom of the list.

New head of the ICRC

Peter Maurer will take up the position of President of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the middle of next year. Maurer is currently the State Secretary at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and previously made a name for himself as the Swiss ambassador to the UN. He will replace Jakob Kellenberger at the head of the ICRC, who held the office for 12 years.

German-speaking Swiss overrepresented

Employees from French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland are still underrepresented in the federal administration. This has been revealed by research carried out by the news magazine “L’Hébdö”. In the Department of Defence, for example, only 10.3% of management positions are not held by German-speaking Swiss. In the Department of Foreign Affairs, which holds the top spot, 29% of the management are from French-speaking Switzerland or Ticino. The Federal Council aims to achieve the following linguistic distribution by 2015: German 70% (72.1% in 2010), French 22% (21%), Italian 7% (6.6%) and Romansh 1% (0.3%).

2,000 jobs axed

Novartis is cutting around 2,000 jobs worldwide from its 121,000-strong workforce with the aim of saving USD 200 million a year. 760 jobs will go in Basel, 320 in Nyon, and the other 900 or so positions will primarily be lost in the USA. The downsizing plans sparked major demonstrations and strike action at Novartis in Nyon in mid-November.

An expensive business

The decommissioning of Switzerland’s existing nuclear power stations and the disposal of radioactive waste will cost at least 20.6 billion Swiss francs – 10% more than previously forecasted. These figures come from the latest calculations by federal government, which calculates anticipated costs every five years. The Swiss Energy Foundation (SES) expects decommissioning and demolition costs to be much higher.

Quotations

“Now there’s someone who should definitely be burned at the stake.”

SVP President Toni Brunner about Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf

“There is no reason why our country can’t have three Federal Councillors from the French-speaking territory.”

SVP parliamentary group leader Caspar Baader, following the nomination of Federal Council candidates Jean-Francois Rime and Bruno Zuppiger

“Do I really have to become President of the Confederation? Is there no way of bypassing the post?”

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer to one of his staff members

“I stay true to myself. And I want to be allowed to be so. It’s not always that easy.”

Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann on DRS Radio on 12 November 2011

“I’m not a populist, more a unifying figure.”

FDP President Fulvio Pelli on DRS Television

“Even our own members see us as the party for fat cats.”

Philipp Müller, FDP National Councillor

“The FDP still only represents high finance. I’ve had enough of this arrogance.”

Otto Ineichen, FDP National Councillor

“No comment, no comment, no comment...”

The chief strategist of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), Christoph Blocher, on his financial involvement and influence at the “Basler Zeitung”

“If you can’t stand losing, don’t go into politics.”

Bruno Frick, Member of the Council of States from the canton of Schwyz, who lost his seat after 20 years in Parliament



“Switzerland is a tame country. I never encounter the devil here. If I did, I would immediately ask him if he had a story for me”, says Catalin Dorian Florescu. The 44-year-old author won this year’s Swiss Book Prize for his novel “Jacob beschliesst zu lieben” (Jacob Decides to Love). Florescu was born in Temesvar in Rumania in 1967 and has lived in Switzerland since 1982. He studied psychology and psychopathology

in Zurich. He gave up his profession as a psychotherapist in 2001 and has worked as a freelance writer ever since. Florescu describes the jury’s decision as “courageous”: After Melinda Nadj Abonji (2010) and Ilma Rakusa (2009), this is the third time in succession that a Swiss writer with roots abroad has won the Book Prize. The first prize winner in 2008 was Rolf Lappert, a Swiss citizen living in Ireland.



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Ursula Deplazes

Researcher from Graubünden, living in Rome



“Networking plays an important role among the Swiss abroad – both personally and professionally.”



Urs Steiner

Teacher from Berne, head of the Swiss School in Peru

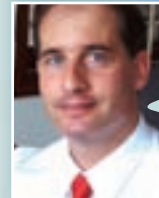


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Daniel Keller

Manager from Zurich, living in Hanoi



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