

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

SWISS

REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2008 / NO. 1



A world without poverty  
remains a dream

Christophe Keckeis –  
"Do your duty, then step aside"

Diego Mathier crowned  
2007 Winemaker of the Year

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## Stable Swiss democracy

**N**OBODY SERIOUSLY THOUGHT THAT CHRISTOPH BLOCHER would be voted off the Federal Council. So it was all the more astonishing when it actually happened and Blocher's seat went to Grisons finance chief Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf. While the left of the council celebrated after the votes were counted, there was consternation and disappointment on the right.

While it was an open secret that the Minister for Justice would not get the votes of the Social Democrats, the Greens or many members of the Christian Democrats in his re-election attempt, the fact that Blocher did not get the backing he needed from the Liberal Democrats to secure his re-election was completely unexpected.

Most political commentators agreed that Christoph Blocher was not voted out for the way he ran his department. On the contrary, he was widely credited for the efficient and cost-conscious management of the Department of Justice. Nor was his political stance likely to have been the reason why many Liberal Democrats wanted him off the Federal Council. His sometimes uncouth manner and high-handed attitude would seem to explain his political demise. Such a domineering, omnipresent member of the Federal Council, who was unsuited to our country's collegial system of government, was no longer acceptable to many centre-right politicians.

In his departing speech to parliament, Christoph Blocher apologised for his frequent verbal attacks and asked for forgiveness from anyone he may have offended in the last four years.

The role the SVP will take up on the opposition benches will not become clear until the next parliamentary session. We will also soon find out how SVP Federal Councillors Samuel Schmid and Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf – who are not being supported by their party – will operate in a party-political vacuum. Christoph Blocher – the SVP's



Heinz Eckert

Vice-Chairman and financial backer – will become the party's head of research, strategy and campaign management. The 68-year-old will therefore continue to play an important role in Swiss politics.

Rolf Ribi's article on Swiss development cooperation starts with a quotation by Christoph Blocher, who repeatedly questioned its benefits. Blocher was vehement in his criticism of the CHF 400 million in aid sent to Africa each year.

The fact is that Switzerland is contributing increasingly less funds to development work, as the statistics show. In 2006, Swiss development aid amounted to 0.46% of GDP. Among the twenty-two OECD donor countries, Switzerland's contribution to aid ranks eleventh, well below the 0.7% proposed by the UN.

The ousting of Christoph Blocher from the Federal Council is unlikely by itself to result in an increase in Switzerland's contribution. All that will happen is that discussions will be somewhat calmer and the issue will cause more argument than controversy.

Otherwise everything will remain as it always has been. Why? Because Swiss democracy is inherently stable.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Ex-Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher in his new/old function. By cartoonist Peter Schrank in the Basler Zeitung.

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Cover: Water is a coveted asset in Nepal, too.  
Photo: Helvetas

**IMPRINT:** "Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 35th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 400 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

■ **EDITORS:** Heinz Eckert (EC), Editor-in-Chief; Rolf Ribi (RR), René Lenzin (RL), Alain Wey (AW), Gabriela Brodbeck (BDK), responsible for "Notes from Parliament", Service for the Swiss Abroad, DFA, CH-3003 Berne Translation: CLS Communication AG ■ **POSTAL ADDRESS:** Publisher, editorial office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Tel.: +41 31 356 61 10, Fax: +41 31 356 61 01, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. Internet: [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch) ■ **E-MAIL:** [revue@aso.ch](mailto:revue@aso.ch) ■ **PRINT:** Zollikofer AG, CH-9001 St.Gallen. ■ **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to Berne.

Single copy: CHF 5 ■

## www.soliswiss.ch now in five languages

To coincide with its 50th anniversary, Soliswiss has launched an attractive, user-friendly website in five languages. Check it out! Visit us at [www.soliswiss.ch](http://www.soliswiss.ch)



### Felix Bossert, Director of Soliswiss with overall responsibility for the new website

«Our members live in 144 countries around the world. The fastest and most convenient way of publicising our attractive products is the Internet. The first version contained German and French versions. This was then expanded to include English, Italian and Spanish, and our messages were made shorter and snappier.

We look forward to feedback from around the world!»



### Hans Grüninger of Weiersmüller Bosshard Grüninger WBG, AG für visuelle Gestaltung, Zurich, responsible for the graphics

«The aim of the new website is to inspire Internet users to check out the services provided by Soliswiss. Clear, contemporary graphics allow them to immediately identify and understand what Soliswiss is all about and what type of benefits they can derive from Soliswiss products.

The website layout is based on horizontal levels with different emphases and colouring. The familiar visual language is supplemented by imagery reflecting the four core activity areas of Soliswiss.

Textual and visual information is graphically applied in a controlled but entertaining manner so as to enable visitors to prioritise visual content. This guides the user as he or she navigates smoothly from the essentials to the details.»



### Robert Roos and Alice Baumann, text experts, responsible for the editing of textual content

«In an age obsessed with the visual, texts have a difficult time

being noticed. Text should therefore be as simple, short and understandable as possible. Faced with the complex issues contained in the new Soliswiss website, our team tried to come up with texts that could be read and understood with as little effort as possible. The ultimate goal of reading is to elicit a response – to instil trust in Soliswiss products.»



### Patrick Schürmann of Adwired AG, Zurich, responsible for consulting and design

«The main aim of the new website was to offer users more information with fewer mouse-clicks. In short: To simplify the search for information and enhance the presentation of Soliswiss products.

This includes an easy-to-follow product range structure and streamlined content, particularly for potential policyholders, as well as direct access, for example, to damage claims for existing clients.

Plus a new feature: To enhance the quality of content even further, boxes adjacent to the product pages provide regularly updated information on topics of interest and details of special Soliswiss offers.

The new-look Soliswiss website with its contemporary structure makes finding information child's play.»

The screenshot shows the Soliswiss website homepage in English. The top navigation bar includes links for 'Home', 'Produkt', 'Health', 'Life', 'Wealth', and 'News'. Below the navigation is a search bar and a 'Soliswiss' logo. The main content area features a large red banner with the text 'Health - Jetzt für Sie!' and 'soliswiss:'. A sidebar on the left provides information about financial protection in case of illness and accident, mentioning 'With Soliswiss you have the right insurance cover'. Another sidebar on the right contains contact information for reporting a claim, including phone numbers (T +41 21 309 70 30), fax (Fax +41 21 301 00 28), and email (mailto:tagen@soliswiss.ch). Logos for partners like Vitasana, KPT, and CCA are also present.

The screenshot shows the Soliswiss website homepage in German. The layout is similar to the English version, with a top navigation bar, search bar, and 'soliswiss:' logo. The main content area features a large yellow banner with the text 'Health - Jetzt für Sie!' and 'soliswiss:'. A sidebar on the left provides information about health and occupational accident insurance, mentioning 'Health and occupational accident insurance are mandatory under Swiss law'. Another sidebar on the right contains contact information for reporting a claim, including phone numbers (T +41 21 309 70 30), fax (Fax +41 21 301 00 28), and email (mailto:tagen@soliswiss.ch). Logos for partners like Vitasana, KPT, and CCA are also present.

## **Switzerland extends beyond the German-speaking part**

What are we to make of a "Swiss Review," which is supposedly a publication for Swiss people abroad, when it is only a pale reflection of Switzerland and its diversity? Issue No. 5 for October 2007 is a particularly good example of there being little of interest for French-speaking or Italian-speaking Swiss in the "Swiss Review". You would think that Switzerland stops at the German-speaking boundaries! Apart from the fact that the editorial and all of the background articles, with the exception of one, were written in German and published as approximate translations, the topics too often overlook our country's minority-language areas in spite of the intentions indicated by the front-page claim. A good example in this issue is the article by Rolf Ribi entitled "Swiss newspaper market in flux" which aims to carry out a "review of Switzerland's newspaper landscape." In the three pages that make up the article, only three lines address the situation of the press in French-speaking Switzerland, while Italian-speaking Switzerland is overlooked completely. Worse still, the drawing by a French-speaking caricaturist (Chap-patte), which is about a French-Swiss subject of national interest – the victory of the Alinghi catamaran in the America's Cup – is published in German. It must be recognised that articles written by journalists of Swiss-German mother tongue determine how our country is looked at, limiting Switzerland to the German-speaking part. For a publication that is supposed to be for the Swiss abroad community as a whole, it un-

fortunately does not reflect the rich diversity of all the country's parts.

DAVID J. L. BONGARD

### **Campaign advertising**

I already expressed my views against advertising by political parties in the "Swiss Review" in the run-up to the parliamentary elections. I was pleased to read the letter by Georg Ehret from the USA who was spot-on when he referred to "manipulation of voting." Your editorial comment, "All parties were free to place ads" has to be considered in the light of the election report on page 14 where RR says: "It (the Swiss People's Party - SVP) clearly has unlimited financial resources, which it does not have to disclose."

The right-wing political propaganda received as much "understanding" abroad as UBS's loss of billions of francs or the infamous "grounding". Both damage the image of "Idee Suisse". Your publication should steer away from politics and focus on providing factual reports. Otherwise, the "Swiss Review" is OK. The report on Einsiedeln Abbey was very interesting.

BRUNO NEIDHART, CONSTANCE, GERMANY

### **Thank you**

As a Swiss person from abroad, I look forward to receiving each copy of the magazine, which keeps me up to date and in touch with my beloved Switzerland. I am privileged to know Switzerland and the first time I went, I discovered for myself what people say in Argentina: Switzerland is a tidy, clean, meticulous and friendly country – please keep it that way!

Thank you!  
HUGO KLINKE, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

In the course of the 20th century, war and tyranny cost more than 160 million people their lives. Conflict and mass destruction seem to be the fate of mankind. A small Swiss with a flowing white beard spent 60 years trying to stem the seemingly relentless tide of senseless killing: Max Daetwyler travelled half the world with his white flag, waging a non-violent campaign for peace.

It all began on 5 August 1914 with a thoroughly un-Swiss incident on the parade ground of Frauenfeld barracks, when fusilier Max Daetwyler, the second youngest of twelve children born to a respected family from Arbon in Eastern Switzerland, refused to take the oath of allegiance just as the First World War was breaking out. Responding to his commanding officer, this fusilier with six military refresher courses behind him said, "I am against the war. I will not swear the oath." He was the first Swiss man to refuse to take the oath, for which he was temporarily sent to a lunatic asylum and subsequently declared unfit for service. But this was to be the start of Daetwyler's lifelong mission for world peace. With his legendary white flag, he travelled half the globe, preaching his grand idea of friendship and brotherhood in Moscow, Washington, New York, Geneva, Berlin and Cairo. His image went around the world. Time and again, Daetwyler would seek an audience with those in power, but neither in Moscow nor in Washington was he ever able to meet the great and powerful in person.

While Max Daetwyler was dismissed by some as a deviationist fool, others marvelled at his selfless dedication and the depth of his conviction. His only moral authority was the voice of his conscience, which he followed throughout his life. And nothing could break his will and determination to campaign for an end to senseless wars throughout the world. He even served countless prison terms and submitted himself to six psychiatric assessments. It was not until after his death in 1976 that he was recognised as a Swiss icon of the 20th century.

Journalist Stephan Bosch has examined the extensive collection of Max Daetwyler's personal effects in the Federal Archive in Berne and has written an extremely accurate, objective and entertaining biography entitled "Max Daetwyler: Der Friedensapostel" (Max Daetwyler: Apostle of Peace). He portrays a long life shaped by numerous dramatic events, family crises and an unceasing campaign for peace. Daetwyler's biography has also become an important historical record, reflecting the thinking and world view of Swiss officialdom in the period from the First World War until the death of the Apostle of Peace. Attempts were repeatedly made to have Daetwyler committed for psychiatric treatment, but his local

community in Zumikon defended their fellow citizen, pointing out, quite legitimately, that he was a man who did no-one any harm.

Stephan Bosch's book is as engrossing as a good novel.

EC



STEPHAN BOSCH: Max Daetwyler: Der Friedensapostel. Mit der weißen Fahne um die Welt. Rüffer & Rub, Zurich, 2007. Available in German only.

### Swissair in the dock

I am always reading with interest the "Swiss Review". It is always the special contact with the old country.

Your article "Swissair in the dock" caught my special interest. I am highly surprised to read about the outcome of the trial of Buelach ZH. I am shocked to read that the 19 defendants including several former executives of the airline were cleared and received compensation, as much as half a million Swiss francs in the case of Mario Corti.

I agree with the former employees and creditors who were furious at the outcome, saying justice had not been done. Zurich's public prosecutor should be forced to resign and I hope that Zurich's Supreme Court will have to rule on the affair. Years ago I used Swissair for my worldwide travelling wherever possible and I was always very proud of my decision. I consider Mario Corti a commercial "criminal" who should be punished for the bankruptcy.

I am interested to know the reaction of the Swiss people to the shameful decision of the court of Buelach and last but not least to the Swiss Government's opinion that justice is absolutely necessary.

WERNER GRETHER, LOS OSOS, CA, USA

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### A double-dose of irony

Thanks for your special issue about the federal elections. It reminded me of one reason (amongst several) why I left Switzerland as soon as I reached my 18th birthday. This special issue contained advertisements from every Swiss political party, yet *only*

one of those parties, when submitting the text of their ad to The Magazine for the Swiss Abroad, felt it necessary to translate from German (a language which I do not speak nor understand) to English (the international language of the Swiss abroad): the SVP/UDC!

For all of their reputation of racism and close-mindedness, apparently they were the only ones interested in talking to me (and believe me: I am anything *but* their target audience ...) And since a double dose of irony is always better than a single one, I noticed at the bottom of the SVP ad that their "international president" lives in South Africa! This is too precious. I wonder how he likes being the white

sheep in a country of black ones.

To me, this hilarious episode is a typical illustration of the immeasurable ethnocentrism (or, in this case, linguacentrism) of the powerful Swiss-German majority establishment. "Why would we need to translate our

ads? Everyone in the world speaks Swiss German, right?!"  
CHRIS DUFOUR, NEW YORK CITY, USA



### Swiss Newspaper market in flux

In his excellent report on the Swiss media, Rolf Ribi overlooked one of the most disturbing developments of recent years: The re-introduction of censorship and political "brainwashing" by large media conglomerates, in turn owned and directed by powerful global players.

I believe it was George Orwell who wrote: "Omission is the worst kind of lie". This is exactly what we are confronted with these days.

BRUNO HÄFLIGER, MIAMI, FLORIDA

### This can happen only in a Swiss consulate

The consulate general in Bordeaux which is to be closed was my „lifesaver“ in Fall 2005. I visited a friend in Toulouse for a weekend prior to leaving for Morocco the following Monday morning on an official visit (for the World Bank). On Saturday morning I just could not find my passport in my friend's home though I still had it when arriving in Toulouse from Zurich. I immediately called the Swiss Embassy in Paris which drew my attention to the consulate general in Bordeaux. I phoned the office - supplementing my French with the best "Zueri-Duetsch" - explaining my situation. If I made it before 1 p.m. and brought a couple of photos, I was told that I should be able to receive an interim passport. My friend drove at the maximum permissible speed from Toulouse to Bordeaux after I had obtained the photos. We arrived just in time. The consular official had already obtained all the relevant data from his counterpart in Bern. He also was most courteous. It was a masterful performance. As my French friend said with envy: "this could happen only in a Swiss consulate".

HANS WYSS, WASHINGTON, USA

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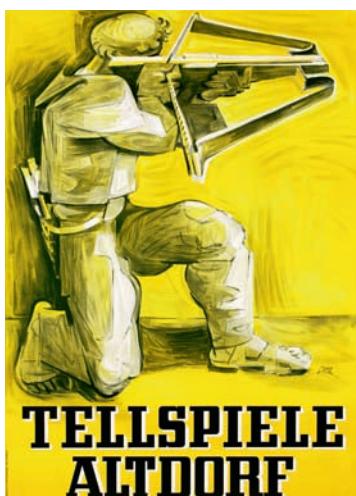
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## Advertising with Tell

Since the 19th century, William Tell has been used time and again as a propaganda tool, being depicted variously as a moral or political symbol or even a caricature. Some 100 or so Tell posters from the Graphic Art Collection are currently being exhibited in the Swiss National Library in Berne. The "Tell im Visier" exhibition will run until 30 March 2008.



## "Make poverty history"

A world without poverty is an age-old dream for mankind. The United Nations Millennium Declaration pledges to halve the number of people suffering from extreme poverty by 2015. "Make Poverty History" is the battle cry of development organisations worldwide. Switzerland too must now reassess its development cooperation activities. By Rolf Ribi



"We are contributing CHF 400 million in development aid to Africa alone. I don't want to comment on the benefits. As a businessman, I don't see any. I don't know what we should do about Africa. One option would be to leave it to its own devices." These words spoken a year ago by Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher (since voted out of office) before the National Council's Commission on Development Aid sparked outrage.

Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey swiftly responded: "The idea of leaving Africa to its own devices shows great ignorance of what is going on there. Development aid in Africa is necessary and good." Walter Fust, Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, echoed her sentiments: "The Africans must decide on their own development. But to leave Africa to its own devices is no solution."

The Swiss Federal Council also received a response from the Tunisian ambassador, Khadija R. Masri, who represents the 53 member states of the African Union at the United Nations in Geneva: "Africa will not be able to help itself unless Europe is prepared to reduce agricultural subsidies and lift trade

barriers." According to Ambassador Masri, in African history Europe stands above all "for the slave trade, colonisation and the plundering of our mineral resources". He believes that development aid means the settling of a historical debt, and is in Europe's interests as well as Africa's. "Otherwise, the stream of immigrants to Europe will never stop."

### Petition for more aid

The controversy surrounding federal councillor Blocher's comments underlines just how contentious development cooperation with third-world countries is. Development is currently a big issue in Switzerland. Under the slogan "0.7% – Together against Poverty!" – Helvetas and sixty other civil-society organisations have been collecting signatures for a petition to Parliament and the Federal Council. This "petition of the people" calls for an increase in Swiss development aid to 0.7 percent of the GDP. It has already been signed by well over 100,000 citizens.

"Poverty is a scandal" reads one line in the petition. It calls on parliament and the government to step up their commitment "to halve the most extreme poverty and the number of

starving by 2015." The main aim of the petition is to gradually increase public development aid to 0.7 percent of GDP, and to ensure that these funds are used to help the world's poorest people as well as to protect the environment. "Fighting poverty is humanity's duty and it makes political common sense," says Melchior Lengsfeld of Helvetas.

The call for a 0.7 percent development aid contribution from industrial nations was made back in 1970 by the United Nations and is still regarded as a global yardstick today. How much is being contributed by wealthy Switzerland, whose banks manage one third of the world's private assets? Switzerland only makes an average contribution when it comes to development aid. Of the 22 member states of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), our country is ranked 11th with a development aid contribution of 0.46 percent (15th in absolute terms). Other countries such as Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, have already reached and even exceeded the 0.7 percent target. In 2005 the 15 "old" member states of the European Union agreed to increase their development aid contribution to 0.56 percent by 2010 and 0.7 percent by 2015.

### Switzerland under pressure

Switzerland is under a certain amount of pressure. In 2000, all UN member states, including Switzerland (see box), agreed to eight development goals for 2015. The eighth goal specifically requires "more generous public development aid." Addressing the UN General Assembly at the 2005 UN summit on the progress made in meeting these "millennium goals," Swiss President Samuel Schmid said: "Switzerland intends to increase its public development aid contribution after 2008."

Nothing much will come of this. If anything, the reverse is more likely. The Federal Council has promised on several occasions to increase development aid to 0.4 percent by 2010.

The government has even resorted to tinkering with statistics to achieve this goal. Expenditure on asylum seekers, spending on peace building, the provision of military materials and, above all, debt relief for Iraq and Nigeria have been included as development aid. Aid suddenly rose to 0.44 percent for 2005, without a single additional franc going to the poorest countries.

In November 2006, the Federal Council decided to increase all federal expenditure (except on education) by a maximum of 2 percent a year. This means that public development aid would still only reach 0.37 percent of GDP by 2015. This approach has come in for criticism. Bastienne Joerchel of Alliance Sud - the Swiss Alliance of Development Organisations - said: "If it stands by its decision, Switzerland will be the only country in Europe whose policy is not in line with the millennium goals. This would be very difficult to justify internationally." Eveline Herfkens, director of the UN millennium campaign, maintains: "In my view, recognising the millennium goals is a moral obligation."

### An overview of development aid

According to the OECD, worldwide public development aid for 2006 stood at USD 104 billion. Switzerland's USD 1.55 billion contribution may not be decisive in global terms, but it is nevertheless much appreciated (as Economiesuisse - an umbrella organisation for the Swiss economy - points out).

Federal development aid is mainly managed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Seco). These are the figures for 2006: CHF 1.1 billion for development cooperation, CHF 0.3 billion for humanitarian aid, and CHF 0.15 billion for cooperation with Eastern Europe. If help for asylum seekers, spending on peace building and debt relief are factored in, total public development aid stands at a good CHF 2 billion. Around three-quarters of this is spent on bilateral aid for countries and regions, in particular in Africa and Asia, and a quarter on multilateral aid for UN organisations and other international development organisations.

SDC's aid for the South goes to 14 priority countries which include some of the poorest in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, using economic and trade policy measures, focuses on 10 priority countries, mainly in Africa. Swiss humanitarian aid mainly goes to various international organisations (such as the UN's World Food Programme and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees), the International Red Cross (CHF 98 million), to the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit and to Swiss non-governmental organisations (CHF 27 million).

What about the private development aid provided by the many NGOs? And how generous are the Swiss when it comes to donations? Private Swiss aid to developing countries - i.e. the contributions of development organisations and other charitable bodies - reached CHF 413 million or 0.08 percent of the GDP two years ago. The private contribution made by development organisations - mainly through direct donations from the general public - amounted to CHF 55 per capita - the second highest total of all DAC countries.

### Is development aid really needed?

Yes, without question. There is extreme poverty in Africa, Latin America and Asia. William Easterly, one of the fiercest critics of state development aid, said: "There are three billion people in the world living on less than two dollars a day. The need is endless." That means that three thousand million people are fighting for day-to-day survival. Poverty,

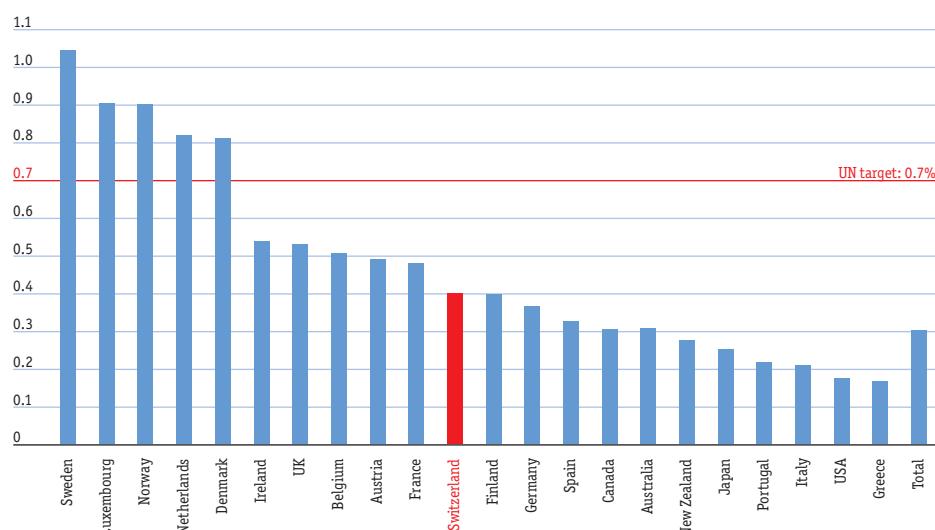
hunger and desperation are part of their everyday lives.

There are lots of facts and figures on world poverty: 980 million people live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than a dollar a day. More than 850 million people are starving worldwide. Every second someone dies of malnutrition. Every year, six million children starve to death before they reach the age of five. More than a billion people have no access to clean drinking water, and more than 2.5 billion do not have access to sanitary facilities. Every minute a mother dies during childbirth or pregnancy due to a lack of medical care. Every thirty seconds someone dies of malaria, despite this being a treatable disease.

### Criticism of development aid

"Developing countries all lack public infrastructure, access and the right to water, education, healthcare services and employment opportunities," explained Peter Niggli, CEO of Alliance Sud, the Swiss Alliance of Development Organisations. There is no lack of critics of development aid, despite the enormous human need in the third world. Some of the most common criticisms (and the response to them) are:

**There is still tremendous poverty in the third world despite half a century of development aid.** Unfortunately, that is true. Development aid has nevertheless achieved a great deal, in particular in terms of healthcare and education but also in terms of biological farming, mini-credit lending and democratisation. Fewer people live in extreme



Development cooperation: Switzerland versus other countries (Source OECD 2007)

poverty today (though nevertheless 19 percent of the world's population). Life expectancy has risen, child mortality has dropped significantly, diseases such as smallpox have been wiped out and others, such as polio, reduced. Illiteracy has fallen sharply and more children complete primary education. Humanitarian aid has helped millions of people to survive. The living conditions of millions of people have improved thanks to aid on the ground.

The good news comes from Asia, while the bad news is from Africa. Poverty is on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa, and the number of people living in extreme poverty is rising. Poverty is so persistent in Africa because of the growing population. Fighting poverty is not always the motive behind state development aid. Donor countries are often more concerned with strategic and economic interests (such as access to raw materials and markets).

### **Development aid does not contribute to economic growth in the recipient countries.**

True and false. Developing countries in Asia, such as China, India and Vietnam, are achieving high levels of economic growth. They have open markets and can sell their goods on the global market. They are also politically stable. However, the environmental and social costs of this economic growth are enormous, as the example of China illustrates.

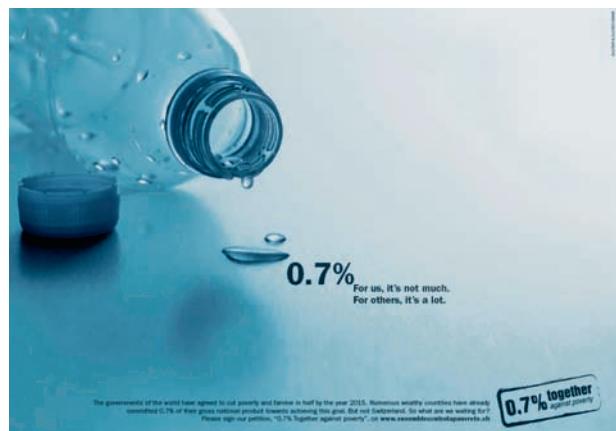
Traditional development aid is aimed at meeting the needs of people. The main aim of development cooperation is not economic growth. It is economic and social development from the bottom up. "A society that meets basic requirements - such as water, nutrition, education, peace, democracy and the rule of law - provides a good foundation for a strong and growing economy," say Helvetas in their "Poverty is not Destiny" publication.

Access to other markets is vital for third world countries. The developing countries are calling on industrial nations to abolish farming subsidies and to get rid of import duties. According to development critic William Easterly, "It is truly scandalous that there is still so much protectionism against exports from poor countries."

### **Development aid stops third world countries from devising their own initiatives and taking on responsibility for themselves.**

### **MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

All of the world's nations, including Switzerland, signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000. Eight Millennium Development Goals oblige governments to fight the most extreme poverty and help the world's most needy by 2015. This declaration provides a global framework for international development cooperation. The first and best-known goal is the elimination of extreme poverty and hunger. The other goals are to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve ma-



Advertising campaign run by Swiss relief agencies for the "0.7% – Together against poverty" project

ternal health, combat AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and build a global

partnership for development (which will also ensure more generous public development aid).

There is some validity in this argument. Development aid has sometimes led politicians and people on the ground to develop a hand-out mentality. Today's development organisations recognise this problem. "Development cooperation is a way of helping the poor to help themselves. It is based on enabling them to develop their own initiatives and assume joint responsibility," say Helvetas. Aid is only provided when the local population is actively involved in a project. At the same time, those living in poverty need all their strength to survive day-to-day.

**Development aid only benefits the corrupt elite and does not reach the poor.** There is some truth in this too. Mismanagement and corruption are rife in Africa, the world's poorest continent. This is why development aid organisations have adopted a cautious approach. They select their partners carefully, and project management always includes monitoring and financial controlling. The development organisations work specifically with the local population and not with the elite. Building solid partnerships, developing a local presence and fostering good governance, democracy and legal stability are all part of the work carried out by development organisations.

The outflow of capital, not least to Switzerland, is another problem. The flow of ca-

pital out of Africa is estimated at around USD 30 billion a year: more than the total public development aid for the continent (USD 25 billion). Africa's assets abroad are higher than its foreign debt. The Swiss National Bank reported CHF 13 billion in fiduciary deposits from Africa, mainly for tax evasion purposes.

### **Aid is in our interest**

Micheline Calmy-Rey, Swiss Federal President in 2007, insists that "Development aid is an ethical duty and also in our interests. When human rights are being violated, hunger is widespread and people are left with no hope, the danger of conflict and terrorism grows. Development policy is also an investment in our own security and future."

### **DOCUMENTATION**

Peter Niggli: Nach der Globalisierung. Entwicklungspolitik im 21. Jahrhundert. Rotpunktverlag, 140 pages CHF 18, Euro 11.50 / William Easterly: Wir retten die Welt zu Tode. Für ein professionelles Management im Kampf gegen die Armut. Campus Verlag, 388 pages. CHF 44, Euro 24.90 (the original American edition "The White Men's Burden" was published in 2006 by The Penguin Press, New York) / www.deza.admin.ch (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) / www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Federal Department of Economic Affairs) / www.alliancesud.ch (Alliance of Swissaid, Catholic Lenten Fund, Brot für alle, Helvetas, Caritas, Heks) / www.evb.ch (The Berne Declaration. Development organisation for global justice) / www.millenniumcam-

## Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf replaces Christoph Blocher

Parliament ousted Justice Minister Christoph Blocher after four years in office, electing Grisons finance director

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf to take his place in the national government. Despite having two federal councillors, the SVP feels it is no longer represented in the government and has gone into opposition. By René Lenzin

The Federal Council elections produced quite a turn-up. Although the Swiss People's Party (SVP) strengthened its position in the National Council elections basing its campaign around Christoph Blocher, the party's leading light lost his seat on the Federal Council after just one term in office. He was defeated by a narrow majority by Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, who accepted the position after brief consideration. The shock result was brought about by the Social Democrats, the Greens, most of the Christian Democrats (CVP) and some Liberal Democrats. Widmer-Schlumpf won 125 votes from this coalition, while Blocher could only secure 115. This was reminiscent of the events of 2003, when Blocher forced Ruth Metzler of the CVP out of office.

Blocher said he felt both disappointed and relieved after the results were announced. He claimed that while the defeat hurt, it meant he would once more enjoy more political freedom and be able to express his opinion without taking into account decisions he did not support but had to accept as part of the government. In the run-up to the election, the SVP declared that it would go into opposition if Blocher was voted out. The party stuck by its pledge, withdrawing support for SVP Federal Councillors Samuel Schmid and Widmer-Schlumpf and announcing that it would fight unacceptable decisions of the government and parliament with even greater conviction than before.

What this opposition policy will look like, and just how uncompromising the SVP's stance will be, was still unclear on going to press. However, details have emerged about Blocher's future role in politics. He confirmed that he would remain in politics immediately after the election results were announced. As the SVP's Vice-Chairman and financial backer, he now plans to oversee the party's strategy and de-

velopment. He will refrain from returning to the National Council for the time being. An immediate return would only be possible if one of Blocher's fellow party members volunteered to step down and all unelected candidates on the SVP list of the canton concerned passed up a promotion opportunity.

### DAUGHTER OF A FEDERAL COUNCILLOR AND A DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

While Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf was not a member of parliament before her election to the Federal Council, she was nevertheless a familiar figure in Bern. In 1998 she became the first woman to be elected to the Grisons cantonal government where she took over the department of finance. She achieved national recognition as head of all cantonal finance directors. She was also the driving force behind Switzerland's first cantonal referendum and successfully fought the federal government's tax-reduction proposals, which were rejected by voters in May 2004.

Widmer-Schlumpf fought for women's rights and was considered a role model for how a woman could reconcile family life with a career. Although her political roots were with the socialist-liberal Grisons democrats, her politics represent solid middle-class values. She put the canton's finances back on an even keel and succeeded in reducing Grisons' structural

weaknesses and cutting taxes. The new Federal Councillor is a dyed-in-the-wool federalist. She is said to be very affable, but also someone who drives a hard bargain.

The Doctor of Law, who will be 52 on 16 March, is married with three grown-up children. The life of a Federal Councillor is nothing new to her. Her fa-

ther, Leon Schlumpf, was part of the national government as Transport and Energy Minister from 1979 to 1987. On 1 January, his daughter succeeded Christoph Blocher as head of the Department of Justice and Police.

RL





## Electronic voting for Swiss people living abroad – a look at the past and the future.

**With the coming into force on 1 January 2008 of changes to the political rights of Swiss abroad, the cantons are required to centralise their electoral registers. These measures will help to create the necessary conditions that will allow all of our compatriots abroad to vote online.**

### Background

E-voting allows voters to participate in elections and plebiscites via the Internet and to sign initiatives and referenda electronically. The e-voting project owes its origins to the Federal Council's 1998 strategy to create an information society in Switzerland, and to

parliamentary initiatives in 1999 and 2000. The Federal Chancellery is responsible for implementing the project.

In 2002, the Federal Council submitted a preliminary report to parliament on the risks and opportunities of e-voting and its realisation in Switzerland. Parliament then gave the Federal Council the go-ahead to revise legislation accordingly, and to carry out pilot projects with the aim of determining the feasibility of e-voting in Switzerland.

### Pilot projects

Between 2003 and 2005 the Federal Chancellery carried out projects in cooperation with three pilot cantons – Geneva, Neuchatel and Zurich – based on contractual agreements negotiated between these cantons and the Federal Council. Voting rights had to be verified and the secret ballot guaranteed before the pi-

lot projects could be approved. Safeguards against misuse of the e-voting system had to be in place. Each of the systems developed by the pilot cantons also had to be tested at least once in a federal referendum.

In 2003, Geneva became the first canton in Switzerland to allow its electorate to vote online in a federal referendum. Electronic voting was subsequently used seven times for federal referenda in selected communities in the three pilot cantons. All of these tests proved successful and went without a hitch.

### Follow up

In 2006 the Federal Council concluded in a second report on the e-voting trials that e-voting was feasible in Switzerland. Parliament took note of this second report and approved the legal amendments required to further develop e-voting also for Swiss voters abroad.

The know-how gained from the pilot projects has been made available to all Swiss cantons. Cantons interested in the tried-and-tested systems can adopt one of the developed systems or combine elements of different systems under federal supervision. They must, however, meet the costs themselves. They must also apply to the Federal Council for approval to test e-voting in federal elections.

The amended legislation that provides for the development of e-voting also allows the cantons of Geneva, Neuchatel and Zurich to continue using the practice in federal referenda. The Federal Council can authorise the cantons to use e-voting for a certain period – subject to restrictions on when, how and where

it is used – provided at least five successive trials have been successfully carried out and the system is not changed.

The trials are restricted to no more than ten percent of the electorate (494,000 citizens throughout Switzerland) until the end of the legislative period in 2011.

### What about the Swiss abroad?

Up to now, Swiss citizens living abroad have not had the opportunity to vote online, primarily for security reasons. Even with today's IT standards, there is still a risk of data misuse during transfer. Complex organisational, technical and legal precautions have to be in place before e-voting can be adopted. This is the only way to guarantee a secret ballot for Swiss voters abroad when they vote online, and to prevent votes from being manipulated, changed or misdirected. Some foreign states do

not allow encrypted data to be sent electronically, while others monitor Internet traffic. It is not simply a matter of providing Swiss voters abroad with voting documents. The technical systems and processes also have to work perfectly. This includes the relevant technical security measures and system modifications.

### The electoral register issue

Direct democracy in Switzerland has evolved over the centuries to meet different regional needs, which explains why the electoral registers vary widely from one canton to another. There are significant differences, not only between the cantons but also between the 2,700 communities. These individual electoral registers have worked

### PREVENT MULTIPLE SENDING OF "SWISS REVIEW"

"Swiss Review" is sent free of charge to all adults registered with a Swiss representation abroad. As a result, households with several adults receive several copies of the magazine, which has a significant effect on our costs.

Among other things, "Swiss Review" provides information about important political events and developments in Switzerland. The "Notes from Parliament" section contains information on changes to legislation and the rights and obligations that directly concern and affect Swiss nationals living abroad. The dates of federal referenda and elections are also published.

There has been an online edition of "Swiss Review" since 2003, and the regional sections have also been available electronically since January 2007 under "Regional news": [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch)

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perfectly well until now. But smaller communities now find it difficult to provide the technical infrastructure needed to allow their residents to vote online. It is therefore indispensable to draw up standardised electoral registers dedicated to Swiss abroad in one location per canton, in order to make e-voting available for Swiss citizens living abroad. Only seven cantons currently keep such centralised systems for Swiss abroad: Lucerne, Zug, Basel-Stadt, Appenzell-Innerrhoden, Vaud, Neuchatel and Geneva.

The legislation requiring cantons to centralise their electoral registers entered into force on 1 January 2008. The cantons now have 18 months to amend their laws. This process will be completed by mid-2009 at the earliest, unless a cantonal referendum opposing the changes is called. Once the cantons have amended their laws, the individual communities must implement the changes. This will involve the definition and construction of interfaces, programming, data transfer, and carrying out checks (between communities as well as between communities and cantons) to ensure everything has been completed and is working properly.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs is supporting the Federal Chancellery and the cantons so as to speed up the introduction and make it also available to Swiss abroad. The federal authorities are currently working closely with the canton of Neuchatel, which aims to offer its citizens living abroad the option of voting electronically at one of the next referenda. The 05/07 edition of "Swiss

Review" featured a report on this.

### Outlook

The Federal Council does not want to be over-hasty in rolling out e-voting and has therefore decided to put security before speed. There must not be any risk that one day a federal referendum has to be repeated due to flaws in the e-voting system. Expensive compensation claims from campaigning organisations would be the consequence. Even more importantly, the confidence of our citizens in our system of direct democracy would suffer immense damage.

Electronic voting will therefore be introduced in stages. The first stage is to standardise the electoral registers in line with federal requirements, and then to introduce e-voting for referenda. The next stage will see the introduction of e-voting for National Council elections. Then, and only then, will the most complex stage be implemented, enabling the electronic signing of people's initiatives and referenda.

Further information on the e-voting project can be found at: [www.bk.admin.ch/themen/pore/evoting/index.html?lang=de](http://www.bk.admin.ch/themen/pore/evoting/index.html?lang=de)

## Fair taxation for everyone

**The Swiss Social Democratic Party launched a federal popular initiative campaign in November 2006 entitled "Fair taxation – stop misuse of tax competition," otherwise known as the fair taxation initiative.**

The initiative concerns very high income and assets.

A new subsection 2bis to be incorporated into article 129 of the Swiss Federal Constitution would introduce a minimum tax rate on the high incomes and assets of people living alone, which would be at least 22 percent for incomes over CHF 250,000 and at least 0.5 percent for assets over CHF 2,000,000. These rates may be increased for people living in the same household.

The initiative also aims to prevent tax rates being reduced as incomes or assets increase: in other words it would not allow anygressive tax models. This would bring an end to the misuse of tax competition at the expense of people on low and average incomes. Although the initiative provides for a minimum tax rate, it allows the cantons and communities to determine their own taxation policy up to a taxable income of CHF 250,000. Hence the minimum threshold tax rates could also be exceeded.

New sections 8 and 9 would also be added to article 197 of the transitional provisions of

the Federal Constitution. These would require the necessary legislation to be enacted within three years of adopting the new article 129 subsection 2bis. In case of delay the Federal Council would have to establish the implementing provisions by decree. The cantons would also be given a time frame within which to amend their constitutions.

A new transitional provision to article 135 of the Federal Constitution would also be created to govern financial equalisation between the cantons. Cantons that were obliged to amend their tax rates and systems in line with the new article 129, subsection 2bis, and collected more taxes as a result, would have to make additional contributions under the system of financial equalisation among cantons.

## PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES

No new initiatives have been launched since the last issue. Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded from [www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis\\_1\\_3\\_1\\_1.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html)

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## **Christophe Keckéis – “Do your duty, then step aside.”**

Admired by some and condemned by others, Christophe Keckéis stepped down as commander-in-chief of the Swiss army at the end of last year. The former military supremo talks about national defence and Switzerland in an interview with Heinz Eckert.

*SWISS REVIEW: Would you agree that the Swiss people have become less supportive of the army? Is there no direct threat?*

CHRISTOPHE KECKEIS: I don't believe the Swiss people are less supportive of the army. More than two-thirds have a positive perception of it. It's true that there is no obvious threat. But because today's dangers are more widespread and more complex, the new role of the army is more difficult for people to understand. Terrorism and organised crime are today the main threats worldwide. The army is needed to counter these threats. Just because we are not faced with conventional military aggression, that doesn't mean there is no danger.

*How do we counter these threats?*

We need to improve information levels and have a debate on security policy. It's astonishing that not everyone is aware how important security is to Switzerland. It is vital to the banks, the insurance companies, the economy as a whole and the prosperity of the entire whole country. This is something that has to be debated and put on the agenda. It amazes me that many business leaders no longer appreciate the value of the army. Security is a priceless asset and must be guaranteed.

*Are business leaders also to blame for the fact that military service has become less attractive in terms of career prospects?*

Not solely. But there are lots of foreign CEOs who are not familiar with the Swiss army and national service system and cannot understand why their employees have to repeatedly serve in the armed forces. Anyone unable to work because of military service is seen as a loss.

*Does that mean the national service system no longer meets modern requirements?*

No, not at all. I fully support national service and hope we can maintain it. As the

whole of Swiss society serves in the army, the level of education is very high. National service is also considerably less expensive than a professional army. It also provides a higher standard of soldier as it is not made up of people who are unable to do anything other than enter the army.

*How fit for duty are the young men who have to enter military service? Is it true that fewer and fewer young men are up to standard?*

No, that is an inaccuracy that keeps reappearing in the media. We are very pleased with the number of men fit for duty. In 2005 it was 61 percent, and a few percent higher last year. Then there are the 18 percent who do non-military service. What does concern us is the enormous differences between the cantons. While around 80 percent of those eligible for service are fit for duty in central Switzerland and Canton Appenzell, cities like Basel are well below average.

*You were given the task of carrying out a reform of the army in 2003. How successful was it?*

We carried out the most far-reaching reform of the army ever and met 80 percent of our targets. The remaining 20 percent are well-defined challenges that we must tackle over the coming years. What matters to me is that all of our efforts were successful. We have made tremendous progress in recruitment and have improved security analysis. We were not able to increase the number of professional soldiers for financial reasons, and that is fatal in my view. We are simply not getting the funding that we need. We receive CHF 600 million less a year, yet our responsibilities are the same.

*You have said that the Swiss army is not equipped for a crisis situation. What did you mean by that?*

I have been widely misquoted on this. What I actually said was that the Swiss

army is not prepared for a conventional war today. But it doesn't have to be, and that applies to all European armies. In Switzerland we must also accept that the army now has a different role today to the one it fulfilled during the Second World War. It's time to stop dreaming about tanks and artillery guns. We no longer have to defend our borders against an enemy. The Swiss army is in great shape to carry out all its other duties.

*And what are these duties?*

They might involve unrest within Switzerland, demonstrations, riots or terrorism: the kind of problems that often occur in other countries. The army must support the police in certain circumstances or even be able to take over the role of the police, for instance in security operations. The football season causes problems nowadays due to the rise in hooliganism. The forthcoming European Cup Championship also poses major challenges.

*You came in for constant criticism over operations involving Swiss soldiers abroad.*

Politicians often forget that operations abroad are part of the federal constitution. Under the army reform it is our duty to commit battalions of soldiers to operations abroad for peace-keeping operations.

*Did you feel that you were sometimes let down by politicians?*

As head of the army I understand the primacy of politics and have to accept the decisions of parliament. However, the fact that the defence budget was cut in the year following the reform certainly didn't make the job any easier. The debate on keeping ammunition and military-issue weapons at home is detrimental to the army. The army is being used as a scapegoat in both cases for what is a social problem.



*Opinion on the army is increasingly divided. Some people would like to see it abolished, others still want an army like the one in the Second World War.*

That is exactly right. This is why we urgently need a debate on security policy: a topic which in recent years has been neglected. Support for maintaining security levels has been declining in Switzerland, and many people can't see things as they really are. We are not an island and could just as easily be a terrorist target as other countries. But we just won't accept that here. We are still doing very well for ourselves and sometimes we lose sight of things. People criticise my zero-tolerance stance on smoking pot in the army, saying that it's just part of life today. I simply can't understand that.

*You have also been criticised for favouring internationalism and for destroying the Swiss army.*

Yes, but I was just carrying out political decisions or what was set out in the constitution. It wasn't my idea to reduce the number of troops from 800 000 to 220 000. That I'm in this position now is just part of history.

*The key debate still centres on the purchase of military aircraft. Does Switzerland actually need an air force?*

I believe we do. We are responsible for our own airspace which requires protection and surveillance. Aeroplanes are needed for that.

*Where do you think military weapons should be stored in future?*

If someone is killed with an army-issue weapon, that is a social problem – not an

army one. A decision on this requires a great deal of consideration. If parliament discusses this issue in spring, its complexity should not be underestimated. Just think of the shooting clubs up and down the country and the organisational problems the army would face if weapons had to be stored in arsenals. We would not have the space, the staff or the money to do it. It would cost millions of francs. We should be focusing on what other measures can be taken.

*What do you have in mind?*

The lack of discipline that has taken hold in civilian life should not be allowed to spill over to the army. High standards of discipline must be set for soldiers. We should also consider making data protection less stringent. We should know which soldiers have previous convictions and what for, so that they can be dealt with accordingly. As things stand, all that we are allowed to know about soldiers' previous convictions is the law that applied and the sentence that was given. It is staggering how many soldiers have criminal records today.

*Has discipline in the army suffered generally?*

Nowadays people are always on the telephone or writing text messages. I believe

team spirit has suffered. Soldiers are now much more concerned with themselves than with the group. Lots of commanding officers are too soft and do not demand enough discipline. A national military service army reflects the society it serves. More discipline is needed. You wouldn't believe how many complaints I get from people about how untidily soldiers are dressed or about their behaviour in public. This type of thing immediately creates the impression that these young men are just as sloppy when carrying out their military duties. And that is certainly not the case. Standards are generally very high. But the image of the army is tarnished by a lack of discipline.

*What do you plan to do when you retire?*

I'd like to spend a lot of time travelling. I've had no time to do that in recent years. I'd like to go to Patagonia, then to Namibia and Zimbabwe, and also to Mongolia and China. Then I'll take my time looking at the options available to me. But I'll be leaving my colleagues in peace to get on with their jobs – I very much believe in doing your duty, then stepping aside.



## "Switzerland without borders" is the theme of the 86th Congress of the Swiss Abroad

**The 86th Congress is fast approaching. This year we will be meeting in Fribourg from 22 to 24 August. "Switzerland without borders" – this year's theme at the most important meeting of Swiss abroad – is very apt for the cosmopolitan host canton.**

The Congress will tackle issues concerning Schengen and the free movement of people in the light of the prospective European policy agenda (extension of free movement of people to Rumania and Bulgaria, the future of free movement of people, joining the Schengen area).

There are many issues that concern us in this respect. Are we heading for a future without national borders? What would happen to Switzerland? What about our security? What effect would withdrawing from the agreement on free movement of people have? These



Congress venue Fribourg

and many other political, economic and ethical issues will be addressed at the next Congress. It is important that the experiences of Swiss people abroad are taken into account. After all, they have followed similar debates in their countries of residence and have first-hand experience of the consequences of opening up borders.

### Federal Councillor Leuenberger will be guest of honour

The Congress will officially open on the evening of Friday 22 August at the Forum Fribourg following the meeting of the Council of the Swiss

Abroad. The plenary session will take place on Saturday. Various well-known figures from Switzerland and abroad will discuss the opportunities and risks of free movement of people. As before, one of the highlights of this year's event will be the attendance of a member of the Federal Council. We are pleased that Federal Councillor Moritz Leuenberger will be joining us.

### Plenty to warm the soul

There will be lots of interesting things going on at this year's Congress thanks to the OSA. There will be a visit by Swiss

children from Latin America and a photographic exhibition on the theme of "Borders". Workshops involving various experiments should also be well worth a visit.

Sunday's programme will also be good for the soul. It includes an ecumenical church service followed by a tour of Fribourg's picturesque Old Town.

Many details have yet to be finalised. You can find out much more by filling in the form below to order the Congress information pack. Rest assured you can rely on the 86th Congress to feed the mind, warm the soul and of course tickle the palate. For more information visit [www.oso.ch](http://www.oso.ch).

## More money for Swiss schools abroad

**Swiss schools abroad can continue to provide their valuable service. The Council of States followed the lead of the National Council on the review of the federal budget, approving a CHF 20 million federal subsidy for Swiss schools abroad.**

This increase from CHF 16.1 million to CHF 20 million will help raise quality standards in the 17 official Swiss schools abroad. A requirement analysis conducted by the Federal Commission for the Promotion of the Education of Young Swiss Abroad estimated that CHF 20 million in state funding was needed to maintain quality standards in the schools and to finance their growth.

The budget is seen as a "rational decision" rather than as a "Christmas present." "Good Swiss schools abroad convey an excellent image of our country," said Derrick Widmer, Chairman of the

### 86TH CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD, 22 TO 24 AUGUST 2008

Please send me the information pack on the 86th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Fribourg (please use block capitals).

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Please complete and return the form to the following address by 30 May 2008. Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Congress, Alpenstrasse 26, CH - 3006 Berne. For organisational reasons, the registration deadline for the Congress is the end of June. The registration form is included in the Congress information pack that can be ordered using the form above. The Congress information pack can also be ordered by e-mail from [congress@oso.ch](mailto:congress@oso.ch). Please remember to give your full postal address.



Impressions of the 2007 Easter camp in Fiesch:

Committee of Swiss Schools Abroad. Experience has shown that pupils who attend these schools retain strong ties with Switzerland for the rest of their lives. Irene Spicher, the Committee's Managing Director, added: "To finance their growth, the schools have already had to make some significant sacrifices. Further cutbacks would have threatened their very existence."

## A warm welcome to Switzerland

**The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) offers young Swiss abroad some interesting opportunities for getting to know Switzerland. The new summer brochure, packed with holiday and educational programmes for young people, has just come out. Also, there are still places available for the Easter camp in the Valais. We would be happy to provide you with more information.**

Switzerland was blessed with an abundant early snowfall this year. The pistes in the ski resorts are in excellent condition and the OSA ski and snowboarding instructors can't wait to teach you the latest techniques in winter sports.

The Easter camp for young people aged 14 and above will be held in the sports and holiday centre in Fiesch. Young Swiss people from all over the world will meet in the home town of the reigning world skiing champion, Daniel Albrecht, from 22 March to 29 March 2008. This is a fantastic opportunity to spend sun-filled days on snowy peaks and to enjoy the famous alpine panorama of the Aletsch region with views of Switzerland's largest glacier and the Matterhorn. The place where you will be staying in Fiesch offers lots of alternatives to winter sports. An indoor pool, climbing walls, an indoor sports hall and outdoor facilities are there for your enjoyment.

OSA's study programmes allow you to find out all about Switzerland.

The Swiss education system is explained, and there is an opportunity to visit Switzerland's best schools and universities to make valuable contacts.

And there's lots more going on besides for young people. Visit our website at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) and select the programme that best meets your needs. We look forward to your visit.

As usual, information and details on the above arrangements are available from the



An après-ski fondue party

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

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## 2008 summer camp

**Young Swiss abroad aged 8 to 14 are invited to join our two-week summer camps between July and August 2008.**

There are still some free places available for our summer camps. As before, between 30 and 50 kids from around the world will attend each camp.

The parents' contribution of CHF 900 covers all the costs of the stay.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad would like all Swiss children living abroad to

have the opportunity to take advantage of our arrangements at least once. It has therefore set up a special fund for subsidised contributions. An application form can be requested when registering.

More information on the holiday camps and the application form are available at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) (under "Offers for Children and Young People"). Registrations are dealt with on a first-come, first-served basis. Please register your child as quickly as possible. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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## "This Pinot Noir is a gentleman."

Diego Mathier from Valais was crowned 2007 Winemaker of the Year at the "Grand Prix du Vin Suisse" in Berne. His Pinot Noir produced in Salquenen won gold in its category, and his Dôle Blanche was runner-up in the rosé category.

A profile by Alain Wey

"This is not a one-man show. It is a reward for the hard work put in by the whole team over the last few years," said Diego Mathier, 2007 Winemaker of the Year. "It is also a reward for the previous generations who bought the vineyards in the right location. The soil is very important." The title caps off an extraordinary year for the Adrian Mathier cellar of Salquenen, in the canton of Valais, which won more than 50 gold medal awards in 2007 at national and international competitions.

"In the spring," explained Diego Mathier, "after tasting and bottling, we thought that all of our wines had a chance of winning a gold medal, so we entered lots of them into competition." Six wines from the Adrian Mathier cellar made the finals of the "Grand Prix du Vin Suisse." The Pinot Noir Les Pyramides 2005 was awarded the gold medal, while the Dôle Blanche Frauenfreude 2006 picked up silver. The title of "Winemaker of the Year" is awarded to the producer who ends up with the best ratings for all the wines he has entered into the competition. Quality, expertise, passion, enjoyment and innovation are all part of the Adrian Mathier cellar's recipe for success.

### A university-educated wine-maker

"I think about wine from the moment I wake up in the morning until when I go to bed at night. I'm sure I even dream about wine," confesses Diego Mathier. Born on 8 September 1970 in Salquenen, he graduated in economics from the

University of St Gallen. After working in a bank for two years, he took over the four family-owned distribution businesses in German-speaking Switzerland and then, in 2002, the cellar in Salquenen. The family cellar was established by Diego's great-grandfather in the 1920s during the depression. He explained: "As a child, I always worked in the vineyards. I learnt my trade step-by-step.

You have to work things out carefully in your head before you make wine. Then you can set about the task of producing this ideal wine. That is our philosophy."

Married to Nadia and a father of five daughters, Diego has two passions in life – wine and his family. "My parents are retired, but they help us out if we need them. My wife deals with customers who come to Salquenen. I manage the business as well as the blending and finishing processes. At the tastings you'll find the oenologists: my wife and I." Diego is a hedonist, but also a perfectionist, who lives life to the full. These character traits help him to produce high-quality wines that provide maximum pleasure. "When I do something, I give it everything I've got. I am quite extreme – at least that's what my wife tells me."

### FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE ADRIAN MATHIER CELLAR



Nadia and Diego Mathier

- Area: 25 hectares between Chamoson and Tourtemagne, adjoining 75 hectares belonging to wine-makers that the family has worked with for generations.
- Quantity of wine: 750,000 to 800,000 liters of wine a year.
- Altitude of the vineyards: between 500 m and 750 m above sea-level.
- The wines: The Adrian Mathier cellar produces 40 different wines (Chasselas, Johannisberg, Muscat, Malvoisie, Ermitage, Gamay, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Amigne, Petite Arvine, Heida, Humagne Blanche and Humagne Rouge, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Cornalin, Merlot, Riesling, etc.).
- Employees: 25 people employed at the cellar, five permanent employees in the vineyards, rising to 13 with seasonal workers.
- Awards in 2007: Gold for the Syrah Diego Mathier 2006 in France. 14 gold medals at Expovina in Zurich, including the best speciality white (La Petite Arvine), the best Merlot and the best Swiss rosé.
- 12 gold medals at the Vins du Valais selections.
- "It was an extraordinary year. In 2006, we won 15 gold medals (50 in 2007) but we entered less wine in competition. We now have some 250 gold medals in total."

[www.mathier.com](http://www.mathier.com)

[www.grandprixduvinsuisse.ch](http://www.grandprixduvinsuisse.ch)

### Glacier wine and tasting

The Adrian Mathier cellar also produces a wine in the ice cave of the Rhône glacier, 2030 meters above sea-level. It was entered into the Guinness Book of Records as the highest and most extraordinary example of wine storage in the world. "To make a sweet wine, the first fermentation has to be stopped by the cold. The barrels are placed in the cave in the middle of the glacier during winter and spring-time." The wine is also bottled in the cave at the end of June.

When it comes to tasting, Diego Mathier carries out a full study of the wine. "The aroma has to be characteristic of the type of wine, the region and the year. The palate must have volume and harmony. I feel a little bit like a chef looking for a balance between sharpness, sweetness and aroma. Our aim when tasting, blending and producing is to find a perfect balance between fruit, tannins, alcohol and acidity." Diego waxes lyrical when he talks about the Pinot Noir that won him gold. "It has finesse, elegance and an extraordinary balance. Wine is like people, and this Pinot Noir is a gentleman."

## Sportsman of the Year

Roger Federer was crowned Swiss Sportsman of the Year for the fourth time after already picking up the award in 2003, 2004 and 2006. Berne's Simone Niggli-Luder – who has won 14 world titles in orienteering – was named Sportswoman of the Year. The best team award went to Team Alinghi for its second consecutive victory in the America's Cup.

## Flat-rate tax

Obwald will become the first Swiss canton to introduce a flat rate of taxation. 90.7% of the electorate approved an amendment to the fiscal law. In June, the Federal Court ruled that degressive taxes favouring wealthy taxpayers – recently approved by the people – were unconstitutional. The authorities wasted no time in responding.

## Record losses for UBS

Initial estimates indicate that UBS lost more than CHF 16 billion in a half-year – unprecedented for a Swiss bank – following the American mortgage credit crisis. Switzerland's biggest bank also posted a loss for the whole of the 2007 financial year. Federal Councillor Hans-Rudolf Merz is expecting "a fall in tax revenues of several hundred million francs."

## Switzerland ranked highly

Switzerland is one of the top countries in the world in terms of logistical performance. The World Bank evaluated the ability of 150 countries to connect to global markets to dispatch goods. Switzerland was ranked in seventh place.

## Planet football

The final countdown has started. The Swiss team now knows who it will face in the



**EURO 2008 DRAW:** The coach of Switzerland's national soccer team Jakob "Köbi" Kuhn, Portugal's coach Felipe Scolari, Turkey's coach Fatih Terim, and Czech coach Karel Brueckner, from right, hold the trophy during the Euro 2008 final draw in Lucerne, Switzerland, on Sunday 2 December, 2007.

first stage of the 2008 European Championships – the Czech Republic (7 June in Geneva), Turkey (11 June in Basel) and Portugal (15 June in Geneva). Let's hope everyone supporting the team gives them a boost after several defeats in 2007. Switzerland has been drawn in an "ideal" qualifying group for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. The Swiss squad will face Greece, Israel, Moldavia, Latvia and Luxembourg.

## Around the world in a solar-powered car

Louis Palmer from Lucerne has set out on a 50,000 km journey taking him through 50 countries in 16 months in a car powered only by solar energy. Such a feat has never been achieved before. The "Solar-taxi" project – a joint venture between Switzerland and Germany – was designed by four Swiss universities. After setting off from Lucerne on 3 July, Palmer reached New Delhi in November, where he was greeted by Micheline Calmy-Rey. He arrived at the climate conference in Bali in early December. [www.louispalmer.ch](http://www.louispalmer.ch)

## Tax on CO<sub>2</sub>

The tax on CO<sub>2</sub> entered into force on 1 January 2008. It aims to encourage companies and the public to use fossil fuels (heating oil, gas) more effi-

ciently. Switzerland is committed to reducing its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 4 million tonnes by 2010 (by 10% compared to 1990) under the Kyoto Protocol. The tax will initially rise to CHF 12 per tonne and could then be doubled or even tripled if targets are not met.

## Martina throws in the towel

Martina Hingis announced her retirement from tennis at the beginning of November after testing positive for cocaine at Wimbledon. Hingis, from St Gallen, returned to tennis in December 2005 after calling an end to her career in 2003. She finished 2006 ranked seventh in the world and was still ranked nineteenth before announcing her retirement.

## Proud to be Swiss

According to the Credit Suisse annual survey on the concerns of the nation, 43% of Swiss people are "very proud" of their nationality (21% in 2006) and 43% are "quite proud." Security, neutrality, the landscape, prosperity, precision, freedom, the Alps, the banks and cleanliness are the main attributes that Swiss people associate with their country.

## Unemployment amongst young people

Unemployment amongst the 15 to 24 age group fell by 22%

to 17,534 in 2007. At 3.2%, the unemployment rate amongst young people is still higher than the average rate of unemployment (2.8%).

## A second presidency

Pascal Couchepin – a Federal Councillor since 1998 – was elected President of Switzerland for 2008 by a comfortable margin, taking over from Micheline Calmy-Rey. This is the second time the Minister of Home Affairs has been leader of Switzerland after his first term in 2003.

## Human Rights Prize

Dick Marty from canton Ticino received the 2007 Human Rights Prize in Berne



from the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), for his work on the illegal activities of the CIA in Europe. Marty, a member of the Swiss Council of States from Ticino, denounced the existence of secret CIA prisons in Poland and Romania in two reports to the Council of Europe.

## Postal champions

The Universal Postal Union announced that the Swiss are the postal service champions, with an average of 713 items sent by each person every year. Switzerland came ahead of the USA (667) and Norway (573).

ALAIN WEY

## University studies in Ticino

### Bachelor and Master in:

- : Architecture
- : Communication
- : Economics
- : Informatics

### Information Days:

- : Master Info Days: 29.02. and 25.04.08
- : Bachelor Ministage: 13-14.03.08

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