

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

**S W I S S**

**REVIEW**

AUGUST 2008 / NO. 4



**Should the Federal Council  
be elected by the people?**

**The "home of athletics"  
based in Lausanne**

**Euro 2008: all hell  
breaks loose in the cities**

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## All hell breaks loose in the cities

**W**ell over 100,000 Dutch football fans visited Berne and Basel during the European Football Championship, turning both cities orange for a few hours. Those who were there will long recall this peaceful invasion in the name of football. So many people wearing orange shirts crowded the streets that some public transport had to stop operating in both cities. There were people in Dutch national colours supporting their national football team for as far as the eye could see.

500,000 litres of beer were drunk in Basel before, during and after the Holland-Russia match alone. The street-cleaning department had to dispose of 40 tonnes of rubbish after the departure of 150,000 to 180,000 Dutch fans and 10,000 Russians. 800 people received medical treatment and 65 required hospitalisation. 50 thugs were arrested by Basel police. All things considered, the organisers and security personnel were very happy at the end of this celebration of football, which had taken over half the city, causing all hell to break loose.

In the run-up to the biggest sporting event ever held in Switzerland, organisers estimated that Euro 2008 would provide Switzerland with CHF 1.5 billion in revenues. Many business people found the prospect of making so much money mouth-watering. But because the weather failed to play its part at the start of the competition and generally fewer people visited the numerous fan zones, lots of stall holders, who, in Zurich for example, had had to pay a fee of CHF 15,000 for a stall space, were left with piles of saws and crates of beer.

Many people were also unhappy at UEFA's demands, every single one of which had to be met by the authorities. For instance, even listed buildings were used for the advertising activities of sponsors, bars in the fan zones were obliged to sell Carlsberg and there were even dress codes that had to be respected. Only T-shirts featuring sponsors' advertising were permitted in the fan zones. Anyone wearing a Heineken shirt had to get changed...And, for weeks, the local people had to weave their way through the cities through stalls, mobile toilets and grandstands for public viewing.



Heinz Eckert

People also found it difficult to understand why UEFA – alongside FIFA one of the most successful money-making machines in international sport – is able to benefit from the advantages of a charitable organisation and does not therefore have to pay tax on the revenues of CHF 1.2 billion.

It will probably never be possible to put an exact figure on the long-term benefit for Switzerland of co-hosting Euro 2008. Certainly, many landlords and hoteliers did a roaring trade. However, Switzerland clearly did not obtain the economic or emotional boost that was predicted by the organisers. But how and why should this have happened in the first place?

In terms of image, Euro 2008 probably merely confirmed to other countries what they all already knew – that Switzerland is a beautiful, clean and well-run country.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Car cemetery in the Gürbe Valley, Berne (see page 7)

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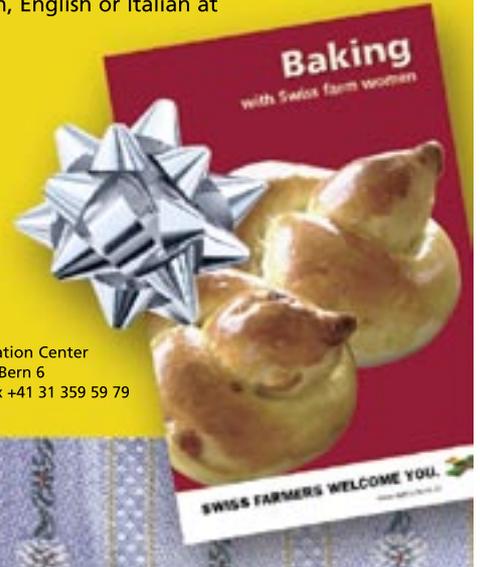
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**SwissLife**

### Constant companion

The great thing about magazines is that you can take them with you everywhere: the bus, the garden, the dentist's waiting room and even the bath. "Swiss Review",

with its diverse range of articles, is a constant companion for me and one I would not want to be without. I sincerely hope we Swiss abroad continue to receive it in its current form and I am already looking forward to the next edition.

MARGI-MARIA DAHM, MÜNSTER, GERMANY

### A damp outlook

I feel compelled to respond to the letter by Adrian H. Krieg. I would in no way describe myself as left-wing, but to label "Swiss Review" a "propaganda tool for the political left and multiculturalism" is well wide of the mark. Clearly, anyone who does not hold his evidently beloved Mr Blocher in high esteem is deemed to be leftist.

That would also include part of the SVP. Mr Krieg (interesting that his name means "war") clearly wages war on anyone holding a different opinion to his own, and to call third-world countries lazy and stupid is nonsensical in every respect. However, it is futile trying to explain something to someone whose view of the world has been dampened a little by life in Florida.

HEINZ LYNER, PRAGUE CZECH REPUBLIC

### Bad taste

I was so delighted to receive my June issue of "Swiss Review". That is, until I came upon the letter from A H Krieg



from Florida, whose words left a very bad taste behind. I even wondered if it was a genuine letter.

The bottom line is that whatever our views we all live on one planet and

ultimately all depend on one another for our survival. This will become increasingly clear in the years ahead as climate changes prise us out of our western comfort zones.

I hope Mr Krieg will grow to become more aware of this, despite his doubtless comparatively privileged vantage point, before he again sweepingly surmises that 3rd world nations must be "lazy and stupid". Perhaps he should travel more, at least away from the shores of Xenophobia and Ignorance. Such views really do contribute to giving Switzerland a negative reputation abroad and make me feel quite sad and ashamed to be Swiss.

ESTHER A. AUSTIN, MANCHESTER, GREAT BRITAIN

### Keep up the good work

I am an avid reader of "Swiss Review". As a Swiss citizen who has lived abroad for many years (UK, USA, Japan and now 10 years in Canada) I look forward to every edition.

As President of the Swiss Canadian Chamber of Commerce (SCCC) in Toronto, I organised the opening event Euro Soccer 2008. As a football fan, I particularly enjoyed the interview with Umberto Barberis in the April edition.

Keep up the good work and many thanks for the interesting news.

ERNST NOTZ, TORONTO, CANADA

### A bridge between languages

Why do so few French-Swiss speak Swiss German when they studied High German at school? An important yet obvious question. Some might say that Swiss German is a spoken rather than a written language which is alive and evolving, and they would be right. However, there has never been a light-hearted, educational dictionary to assist not only learners whose mother tongue is French but also English and German native speakers. Paradoxically, the solution to this problem came about as a result of a meeting in Zurich between Anglo-Columbian illustrator Sergio J. Lievano and German teacher Nicole Egger. The expatriate found he could not apply what he had learned in his High German course in everyday life, so he learned Swiss German directly with his teacher. This collaboration inspired the creation

of an original English-Swiss German dictionary, which is remarkable because of its attractive layout and educational illustrations. Sergio J. Lievano works as a caricaturist for the "Zürcher Oberländer" and the "Anzeiger von Uster" newspapers, so humour is a key feature. As translator Laurent Droz puts it: "The 'Hoi' dictionary is an easy and entertaining way of immersing yourself in Swiss German." It provides a number of strategies and methods for bridging the gap between High German and Swiss German. As an appetiser, it contains an introduction to Swiss German, its history, geography and regional characteristics. From "the history of the dialects" to "why the Swiss Germans don't like speaking German", "Hoi! – your Swiss German survival guide" covers all practical aspects of immersing yourself in the country of singer Mani Matter. It provides a basic vocabulary of 2,000 words and phrases needed for everyday situations under different headings: chatting, invitations, love, finding the right word at the right time, at work, on the telephone, e-mail and SMS messaging, correspondence, the media, eating and drinking, health, the body, emotions, emergencies, the police, shopping, clothes, money and banking, transport, directions, in the countryside, leisure activities, the family, babies, the elderly, at home, neighbours and the authorities, numbers, toilets, education, colours, animals, the weather and the temperature, etc. "Hoi! – your Swiss German survival guide" also includes Swiss German slang, Swiss sayings and a 1,500-word dictionary. "To hear" is no longer "hören" but "losä". Readers will find that Swiss German expressions are often funny and rather musical. A person who is a little snobbish is called "Schikki-Mikki".

ALAIN WEY



"Hoi – your Swiss German survival guide", N. Egger & S. Lievano, Bergli Books, 2005.  
 "Hoi! Et après... Manuel de survie en suisse allemand", Nicole Egger & Sergio J. Lievano, traduction Laurent Droz, Bergli Books, 2008.  
 "Hoi Zäme – Schweizerdeutsch leicht gemacht", N. Egger & S. Lievano, Bergli Books, 2006.  
[www.bergli.ch](http://www.bergli.ch)

## 50 years Soliswiss: Swiss security without borders

**Soliswiss – The solidarity fund cooperative for Swiss citizens living abroad – is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Visions for the future are more important than looking back at the past: Soliswiss is a unique service provider with high core skills in the areas of asset formation, insurance and protection against political risk. We talked to Soliswiss Director, Dr Felix Bossert.**



### **Mr Bossert, at 50 a person is both dynamic and mature. Where does Soliswiss stand today?**

We are feting our 50th anniversary with pride and pleasure and are grateful for all that has been achieved since 1958. Tradition means keeping the fire alive and not praying to the ashes! That wise saying by the Austrian composer Gustav Mahler is a very apt description of our situation today. At the outset, the emphasis was on material solidarity, but today our values are changing to solidarity based on ideas. Swiss citizens abroad are a model of globalisation, plural values and individuality. Our services enable our customers to create conceptual spaces around their personal dreams.

### **What benefits do you offer your customers?**

The benefit varies from person to person: in functional terms, we provide safeguards against personal risks in other countries. On the economic side, we safeguard assets for people whose life is mobile. People who enjoy protection can feel at ease as citizens of the world, keep focused on the essentials in their lives, set about their life adventure in a more relaxed state of mind and feel free to enjoy unfamiliar things abroad.

### **What products do you offer?**

As an independent discussion partner, Soliswiss can do a great deal to find and implement a reasonable security concept. This is made up of international healthcare insurance, life and pension insurance, asset management and protection against political risk. All this from a single source.

### **Who needs Soliswiss most?**

Protection is a fundamental need. A person who is secure can act more boldly. A wide range of people in every situation and phase of life are turning to Soliswiss today: professionals, pensioners – an increasingly numerous group – educators, young globetrotters and travelling romantics.

### **Which professional categories are your main customers?**

Soliswiss does not work in categories. However, there are main groups: managers deployed abroad, public servants and staff of non-governmental organisations; sportspersons, cultural workers abroad and increasingly often pensioners who have moved to another country. They all wish to enjoy the advantages of other countries, but with Swiss security. Their dreams merit protection!

### **How would you summarise the services of Soliswiss in a single sentence?**

Swiss citizens abroad take bold ventures in their lives. Soliswiss helps them all over the world.

### **What makes your offering attractive?**

Our customers are looking for experts who are familiar with the needs of Swiss citizens abroad and have been for a long time. It is important to have an overview. Customers want service, they want their needs to be handled helpfully and dependably. That perfection demands a compact organization, an open-minded attitude, accessibility and responsibility when giving advice.

### **What do you mean by political risk?**

Even if the world has become a village because a whole network of international airlines has shortened distances or because international treaties have brought states closer together, daily experience unfortunately shows that the number of conflict zones has not diminished. The demand for security therefore remains great. Soliswiss provides that protection. The range of hazards faced by our customers include risks such as kidnapping, threats, blackmail for ransom money, unrest, attacks and bombings, national and international terrorism, acts of war, civil war, expropriation and nationalisation. Assets are threatened and life itself at risk. For the individual these may seem to be rare events but when an individual, a family or a business is affected it is a huge blow of fate. Such a fate cannot be avoided but its consequences can be alleviated. An (insurance) community can achieve that aim more readily than close acquaintances and relatives.

### **What is the right time to join Soliswiss?**

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*A detailed version of this interview with CEO Felix can be found in a PDF newsletter at [www.soliswiss.ch](http://www.soliswiss.ch) in five languages. Win attractive prizes in the jubilee competition on the last page of this issue!*

**A final resting-place for cars.** Kaufdorf, in Berne's Gürbe Valley, is home to probably the world's most unusual cemetery. It contains row upon row of disused cars rusting and covered in moss. Sixty years ago, racing driver and scrap dealer, Walter Messerli, began leaving vintage cars in the meadow on the outskirts of the village. The subject of many years of quarrelling, the car graveyard is now about to be cleared.



## Should the Federal Council be elected by the people?

The question of whether the Federal Council should be elected by the people has appeared on the political agenda time and again ever since our federal state was founded. A popular initiative calling for this extension of direct democracy has been tabled. There are sound reasons for the involvement of the people, but some reservations too. By Rolf Ribl

"The people's welfare means the people's vote" was the slogan that appeared on the placards of the Zurich Social Democrats in 1900. It referred to the election of the Federal Council by the Swiss people. What the left was campaigning for in the last century is now being taken up by the right. It was the then National Councillor Christoph Blocher who demanded the election of the national government by the citizens in 1998. The popular initiative of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) is, according to the party president Toni Brunner, currently "in the drawer, ready to be signed".

The situation is as professor of constitutional law, Alfred Kölz, describes it: "The question of introducing direct popular elections for our national government is like a bed of glowing embers, which are fanned from time to time because of changing political winds." A quick look back at Swiss history over the past two centuries shows that this politically explosive issue has repeatedly pre-occupied the Swiss.

Our nation's democratic state is based on the ideas of a great French thinker and one of Geneva's most famous citizens, Charles de Montesquieu, who established the concept of a separation of constitutional powers and the modern constitutional state. In 1748 he said: "A fundamental maxim of this form of government is that the people appoint its ministers." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, likewise from Geneva, wanted to involve the people in all areas of politics. The power of the government should be limited. Its members should be accountable to the people at all times.

When the first federal constitution was being drafted in 1848, Ulrich Ochsenbein, as president of the Diet, called for the election

of the Federal Council by the people, "because it serves the unity of the nation". However, his proposal was defeated, but only narrowly by 10 votes to 9. The Diet later came to the same decision by a clear majority. From this time forth the cantons began electing their governments by plebiscite. All cantons introduced direct popular elections for cantonal governments between 1847 (Geneva) and 1921 (Fribourg).

### Popular initiatives of the left

Two popular initiatives of 1900 and 1942 brought the issue of

Federal Council elections back onto the Swiss political agenda. The first initiative called for direct popular election of the government, an increase in the number of federal councillors to nine, "at least two of whom had to come from French-speaking Switzerland", and a proportional representation voting system for the National Council.

The proposal's supporters argued that the people were capable of choosing the best candidates. They said popular elections of the government had proven successful in the cantons, the changes would make the Federal Council more independent from Parliament and that elections by the people would form "the cornerstone of the democratic extension of the state". Opponents said the Federal Council would gain too much power over Parliament, the small cantons would lose influence and the division between the various parts of the country would become more pronounced. The left were in fact attempting to gain a share of power in government through popular elections. The Social Demo-

crats' two-fold initiative was rejected with 65% of votes going against it in a high turnout, though seven cantons and two half-cantons did vote in favour.

There was another vote on Federal Council elections in 1942 in the middle of the difficult Second World War period. The social-democratic popular initiative demanded the election by the people of a government of nine members, "at least three of whom would be from the parts of the country where Latin languages are spoken". Any Swiss citizen put forward by at least 30,000 voters would be eligible for election. Proponents of the idea said it would extend democracy and the democratic rights of the people, provide a Federal Council accountable to the people and reduce the influence of big business. The proposal's opponents countered that increasing the standing of the Federal Council vis-à-vis Parliament would distort the balance of power between the institutions. They also argued it would make the representation of minority groups difficult and could result in "irresponsible people" ending up in government. The initiative was defeated by a majority of 68%, with a high turnout, and rejected by all cantons.

### "The people are no less intelligent"

Yet the "burning embers" of popular elections for the Federal Council continued to glow. Motions in Parliament from the right (National Councillor James Schwarzenbach of the Republican Party) and left (National Councillors Leni Robert of the Green Party and Andrea Hämmerle of the Social Democrats) met with defeat. Nevertheless, in 1998, the powerful SVP National Councillor Christoph Blocher launched his proposal for direct Federal Council elections. He said the government should be subject to the direct democratic judgement of the people, "as the people are no less intelligent than Parliament". Two years later, SVP National Councillor Christoph Mörgele put his proposal forward.

The "completion of democracy" and the "stricter separation of constitutional powers"



are its key concepts. As things currently stand, the Federal Council is primarily accountable to Parliament. If the Federal Council were elected by the people, the government would be directly accountable to its voting citizens. In the view of the SVP strategists, the new Article 175 of the federal constitution should provide for a Federal Council made up of seven members who would be elected directly by the people on a majority basis. The whole

of Switzerland would form a single constituency. At least two members of the Federal Council would be elected by voters in the cantons of Fribourg, Ticino, Vaud, Valais, Neuchâtel, Geneva and Jura.

The election of the Federal Council by the people rather than Parliament raises fun-

damental constitutional questions. These concern the standing of the Federal Council and its relationship with Parliament, the protection of minority language groups and the country's political stability.

### The Federal Council and Parliament

"The Federal Council is the federation's highest executive body", according to Article 174 of the federal constitution of 1999. Any Swiss person who can be elected to the National Council can be elected as a member of the national government (i.e. anyone with Swiss citizenship and aged at least 18). The constitution allows for more than one member to be elected from the same canton. Parliament must however take into account the various parts of the country and the areas of Switzerland where different languages are spoken.

The members of the Federal Council are elected for a fixed four-year term and cannot be recalled during this period. The government is elected by the United Federal Assembly. The two hundred members of the National Council and the 26 cantonal representatives of the Council of States elect each member of the government individually in a secret ballot. It is Parliament's constitutional duty to supervise the government. This

gives the legislative a higher standing than the executive, which contradicts the principle of a separation of powers. The fact that the Federal Council is accountable to Parliament undermines its legitimacy with the people.

The political reality is that the Federal Council is a powerful organ of our state. The international integration of Switzerland and the expertise of the federal administration strengthen the government's position. Their decisions are not subject to referenda, unlike those of Parliament. Referenda that are lost or defeats in Parliament seldom result in the resignation of the Federal Councillor concerned. The Federal Council as the national government is popular amongst the people; Federal Council elections arouse huge public interest.

What effect would election of the Federal Council by the people have on the government's standing? Zaccaria Giacometti, doyen of federal constitutional law, believes popular election of the Federal Council would constitute "a further strengthening of the executive". The Federal Council would become "directly accountable to the people politically". Election by the people better represents the democratic ideal and the principle of a separation of powers.

This is the verdict of Ulrich Häfelin and Walter Haller, the authors of the book "Schweizerisches Bundesstaatsrecht" (Swiss Constitutional Law): "Popular elections would give the Federal Council the same democratic legitimacy as the Federal Assembly." The Federal Council and Parliament would obtain "equal status, which would make Parliament even weaker than at present".

Professor of constitutional law, Alfred Kölz, author of "Neue Schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte" (The New History of the Swiss Constitution), believes the Federal Assembly would be in a "rather weaker position". He also refers to the policing role of

Parliament, which has no professional politicians. Parliament's key responsibility, namely that of legislating, lies mainly with the Federal Council and administration. The Federal Assembly already struggles to supervise the government. "This fundamental responsibility in particular would be made much more difficult if the Federal Council were elected by the people." This task could not be carried out by the people.

### The cantonal model?

The cantonal system is often put forward as a model for direct popular Federal Council elections. Indeed, election of the government by the people has been taking place in all the cantons for some time now. The people also elect municipal councillors in the political communes without any fuss. The cantons are politically manageable "unitary states". The candidates standing for election to government are well-known in the cantons.

Direct popular Federal Council elections would be different. There would be a single constituency of Switzerland and candidates from all parts of the country would be elected. Despite the modern mass media, a conservative from Appenzell would find it difficult to

elect a liberal from Geneva, whom he hardly knows, to the Federal Council. The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" provides food for thought: "In our direct democracy we entrust the people to make decisions on the most complex issues, yet take the view that the people are not capable of exercising enough sense to elect the Federal Council and maintain a degree of consociationalism."

Another argument used by the opponents of popular elections is that if Federal Councillors were elected by the people every four years, they would have to organise election campaigns. Election campaigning might prevent them from focusing on their responsibilities, favour populist government proposals, require funding and give influence to

interest groups. "Election campaigning based on personalities and populist pledges would know no bounds", warned Alfred Kölz. And popular election of the Federal Council "would encourage authoritarian tendencies in times of crisis".

### Protecting minority groups

The concept of federalism as a "culture of equilibrium" and the protection of minority groups are deeply engrained in the Swiss people. "Peace in Switzerland depends greatly on how the major languages and regions are represented by the members of the government", wrote former Liberal National Councillor Suzette Sandoz. The Federal Assembly has a legal duty to take into account Switzerland's political and cultural diversity when forming the government. But would minority groups receive protection under election of the Federal Council by the people?

Some cantons have found a constitutional solution to the problem of protecting minority language groups when holding direct government elections. The Canton of Berne guarantees the people of the Jura region representation in the Cantonal Council. The Canton of Valais has developed a sophisticated system which takes into consideration the interests of all parts of the canton. Similar models could be used at federal level. Options might include dividing up the country into several constituencies or setting quotas for minorities. But such regulations are complex and undermine the character of a national election.

### Danger to consociationalism

According to former Federal Councillor Arnold Koller, Switzerland is a "consociational democracy which is deeply rooted in the national consciousness". For him, political consociationalism means "that the major political parties that form the government solve political problems on the basis of a broad consensus achieved through negotiation". The entry of the Social Democratic Party into national government in 1943 marked the beginning of consociational democracy. The high-point of consociationalism came with the magic formula of 1959 (a Federal Council



made up of two FDP councillors, two CVP councillors, two SPS councillors and one SVP councillor). The magic formula came to an end after 44 years in December 2003 with the removal from office of a CVP Federal Councillor and the election of a second SVP representative. In Arnold Koller's view, "not much remains of political consociationalism today".

Our country has enjoyed remarkable political stability because of consociationalism. A key aspect of consociationalism is the will of the government to seek consensus and cooperation. Some commentators believe that the election of the Federal Council by the people might jeopardise this stability. It is of no benefit to democracy if the Federal Councillors constantly have to court favour with the electorate, says René Rhinow, former professor of constitutional law and member of the Council of States. According to former National Councillor Suzanne Sandoz, the sense of joint responsibility for government would be undermined, while Bruno Frick, member of the Council of States, believes posturing to win public opinion would damage cooperation. The long-serving Federal Chancellor, Annemarie Huber-Hotz, hopes "that those advocating the election of the Federal Council by the people are aware that they risk jeopardising the stability of our country".

### Don't we already have election by the people?

Don't the people already elect Federal Councillors in a way – in parliamentary elections? "Make Blocher stronger, vote SVP" was the slogan that appeared on thousands of placards across the country during the last National Council elections. The Christian Democrats' (CVP) poster campaign also called for people to vote CVP in support of

the policies of Federal Councillor Doris Leuthart.

"The misuse of SVP posters to support Blocher was tantamount to an initiative in favour of popular election of the Federal Council", wrote Liberal Suzette Sandoz. The Federal Councillors Blocher, Leuthart and Calmy-Rey are "totem-like figures for their parties", explained media studies expert Roger Blum. Professor of philosophy Georg Kohler also believes that "the Federal Councillors have become the main representatives of their parties".

Parties using their Federal Councillors to fight election campaigns is one thing, but individual Federal Councillors using the parliamentary elections to secure their seats in government through popular support is quite another. Reflecting on last year's election campaign, the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" said: "The National Council elections were practically stage-managed as an early election of an SVP Federal Councillor by the people." And Roger Blum said: "In a sense we already have the election of the Federal Council by the people."

If parliamentary elections are increasingly turning into Federal Council elections, we cannot be far away from the election of the Federal Council by the people. When the last survey was carried out four years ago, 49% of Swiss people were in favour of electing the Federal Council directly. Change is only likely to happen when a political movement backs this extension of citizens' rights. The major parties will remain silent as long as they continue to hold power in the national government. And the Swiss Parliament is unlikely to

voluntarily give up its constitutional responsibility of electing the Federal Council. The status quo will be maintained for the time being, but the "burning embers" of direct election of the government by the people will refuse to die out.

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Dokumentationszentrum  
www.doku-zug.ch



## The political landscape in transition

The continued electoral success of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the ousting of its Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher are resulting in changes to the political landscape: expelled and rebel SVP members are forming a new party, and the Free Democrats (FDP) and Liberals are moving towards an alliance. By René Lenzin

On 12 December 2007, Parliament elected the then Grisons cantonal councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf to the Federal Council in place of Christoph Blocher. The Swiss People's Party (SVP) felt deceived and betrayed by party member Widmer-Schlumpf. She was accused of contravening a party and parliamentary group resolution by accepting the position and of making a deal with the political opposition. Three months after her election, the party executive demanded that Widmer-Schlumpf stand down from the Federal Council and resign from the party. When the newly-elected Federal Councillor refused to go, the party executive gave the Grisons cantonal section an ultimatum: expel Widmer-Schlumpf from the party or your cantonal party will cease to be a member of the national SVP.

However, the Grisons party was not willing to abandon its Federal Councillor and was consequently expelled from the national SVP. This led to a split in the Grisons SVP. Some of the party members formed the new SVP, which followed the Blocher line politically and became part of the national SVP. The others founded the Civic Democratic Party (Bürgerlich-Demokratische Partei, BDP). There are numerous office-holders from the former SVP in its ranks. In addition to Federal Councillor Widmer-Schlumpf, it has both cantonal councillors, both National Councillors and the 32 cantonal MPs.

There was little opposition from the other cantonal sections to the action taken by the SVP against the Grisons section. Only in Berne and Glarus was there open rebellion from individual party members leading to some breaking away. In Glarus, the sole SVP cantonal councillor and 8 of 26 MPs joined the new BDP. In Berne, one of the two cantonal councillors, 2 of 10 National Councillors, the sole member of the Council of States and 17 of the 47 cantonal MPs

switched allegiance to the BDP. The Bernese Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid, who was expelled from the parliamentary group by the SVP after his election in December 2007, also joined the BDP.

At the time of going to press, the new party therefore had two Federal Councillors as well as five federal and 57 cantonal members of Parliament. However, it cannot form a parliamentary group in the Federal House as this requires at least five seats on the National Council. Whether the BDP can establish itself in the long term and how much damage it will do to the SVP remain to be seen. One thing is clear – the presence of both parties in national government does not sit well with the Swiss system of consociationalism. There are likely to be major changes in the Federal Council by the 2011 elections at the latest.

### Alliance of the federal state founders

The recent development in the SVP has not just led to the forming of a new party, but has also triggered further shifts in the political landscape. The SVP increased its share of the vote from 11% to 28.9% between 1987 and 2007. This unprecedented growth by Swiss standards is partly explained by the fact that the party has absorbed almost everything to its political right. It has also lured voters away from the traditionally middle-class parties. The SVP has seen its strongest growth in the rural Catholic areas of central and eastern Switzerland and in the reformed rural areas of French-speaking Switzerland. Its success has primarily been at the expense of the Christian Democrats (CVP) and, to a lesser extent, the Free Democrats (FDP) and Liberals (LPS).

Nationally, the vote for both founder parties (FDP and LPS) "only" fell by 7.9% between 1987 and 2007. The loss of support, however, was disproportionately great in the former Liberal strongholds of French-

speaking Switzerland: down 24.5% in Neuchâtel, 22.3% in Vaud and 13.6% in Geneva. At the same time, the SVP made gains in these cantons of 23.2%, 16.2% and 21.1%, respectively. Now the FDP and LPS have taken stock of the losses and put their long rivalry to one side to form an alliance. On 21 June, the Neuchâtel cantonal sections united to form the Neuchâtel Radical Liberal Party (Parti libéral-radical neuchâtelois), and the alliance is set to be extended to national level in October.

Free Democrat-Liberal parties already exist in the cantons of Fribourg, Jura, Ticino and Valais. Only the Liberals in Basel-Stadt have so far categorically opposed the alliance.

The FDP and LPS have made up a joint parliamentary group in the National Council since 1999 when, for the first time, the Liberals won fewer than the five seats required to form a parliamentary group.

### A split amongst the Greens

The third significant change in the Swiss political landscape has nothing to do with the SVP. It concerns the Greens who, along with the SVP, made the greatest gains at last year's parliamentary elections.

The Green Liberals in Zurich broke away during the course of the last legislative period on account of political and, above all, personal differences. This new party won three seats on the National Council and one on the Council of States in October 2007 at the first attempt. Now Green Liberal sections have been formed in nine other cantons. This new party combines ecological issues with a rather middle-class outlook in terms of finance and social policy. Whether its success will last remains to be seen. The Green Liberals occupy the political middle ground and are part of a parliamentary group in the Federal House with the Christian Democrats (CVP) and the Evangelical People's Party (EVP).



## Change of address

**Please register any change of address, telephone number or e-mail address, etc. in good time with the representation responsible for you: [www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch) (Representations).**

Your cooperation will prevent time-consuming searches, and registering these changes is the only way to ensure you automatically receive your voting documents (provided you are registered with a Swiss electoral commune) and "Swiss Review" at your new address. Please do not send notification of a change of address to the Service for the Swiss Abroad or the editorial department of "Swiss Review" in Berne.

## Voting papers and documents

**Do you receive your voting documents only shortly before the vote takes place and do you not have time to study them? Would you prefer to receive your voting documents in another language?**

The timescales and procedures concerning the sending of documents are governed by law. The electoral communes are obliged to send voting documentation to Swiss citizens living abroad five weeks before the day of the vote. The timescale is considerably shorter for National Council elections, at ten days. The speed and reliability of the delivery cannot be predicted as the communes have no influence over the organisation and procedures of foreign postal services.

The Federal Chancellery publishes the voting papers and the commentary by the Federal Council not just in paper format but also on the Internet at

[www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch) (Political business – Elections and popular votes; available in German, French and Italian) from the sixth week leading up to the day of the vote. You can use this facility to save time and make up your mind early so that you can complete and return the ballot paper as soon as it arrives. This also gives you the opportunity

to study the voting documents in another language.

## Expansion of the Service for the Swiss Abroad website / new bulletins

**Would you like to know where to apply for a new Swiss pass-**

**port? Do you have questions concerning social insurance or the Swiss citizenship of your children?**

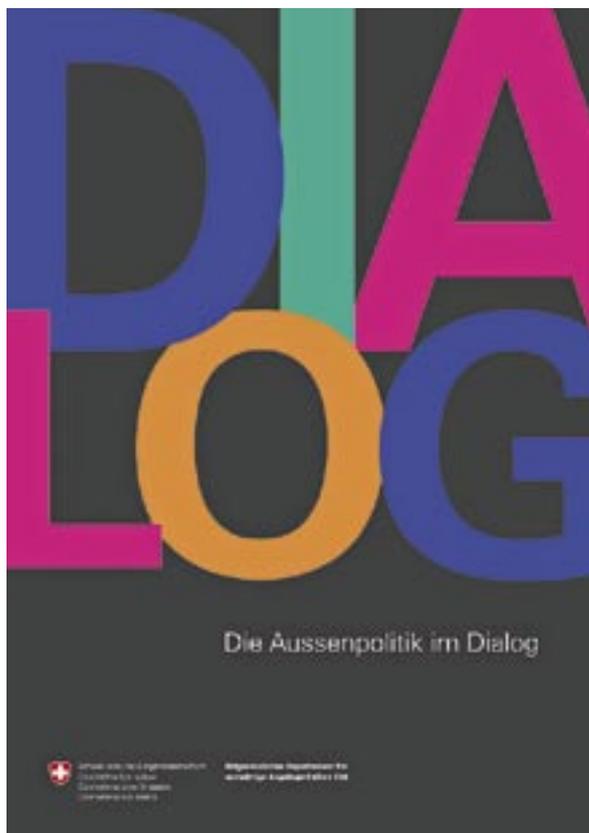
The Service for the Swiss Abroad has extended the range of information on its website and has combined the most frequently asked questions in a bulletin entitled "Frequently asked questions". If you have recently moved abroad, the new "Bulletin for persons who have recently moved abroad" may prove a useful rough guide (available in German, French and Italian). Comprehensive information on all issues affecting the Swiss abroad is contained in the popular document "Advice for Swiss citizens living abroad" (available in German, French and Italian).

[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch) (Documentation – Publications – Travelling and living abroad)

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

**On 1 June 2008, Swiss citizens abroad were able to vote electronically for the first time in the Canton of Neuchâtel. The Canton of Zurich is planning to allow the Swiss abroad to vote electronically in 13 communes in 2009.**

57 of 155 registered Swiss citizens abroad voted electronically in the Canton of Neuchâtel on 1 June 2008. The vote was held without any problems. For reasons to do with the reliability of electronic services, only Swiss citizens living in an EU state or a country that has signed the Wassenaar Arrangement can currently vote electronically.



## Dialogue on foreign policy

**Do you understand the key aspects of Swiss foreign policy? Would you like to get to grips with this complex issue?**

The "Dialogue" brochure launched by Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey explains how Swiss foreign policy works and where its emphasis lies using the examples of "The neutrality of Switzerland", "The Swiss embassies and consulates", "Peace policy", "Switzerland and the international organisations", "Switzerland's policy on Europe" and "Development cooperation".

The "Dialogue" brochure can be downloaded in German, French and Italian from the DFA website at [www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch) (Documentation – Publikationen – Die Aussenpolitik im Dialog) or ordered from the following address: Information EDA, Bundeshaus West, CH-3003 Berne



However, 90% of Swiss people presently living abroad and entered in a Swiss electoral register are resident in one of these countries. The following countries have signed the Wassenaar Arrangement: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK and the USA.

The Canton of Zurich is currently putting in place the structures needed to allow the Swiss citizens abroad registered in 13 Zurich communes to vote electronically in 2009. The communes concerned are Bertschikon, Bülach, Schlieren, Mettmenstetten, Kleinandelfingen, Boppelsen, Bubikon, Thalwil, Männedorf, Fehraltorf and Maur as well as the Altstadt district of Winterthur and districts 1 and 2 of the city of Zurich. Swiss citizens living in an EU state or a country that has signed the Wassenaar Arrangement will be entitled to vote this way.

## Protection against firearms violence

**A lobbying association made up of various parties and organisations launched the Swiss popular initiative "Für den Schutz vor Waffengewalt" (Protection against firearms violence) in September 2007.**

The initiative aims to increase safety, reduce the potential of violence and prevent suicides.

Anyone wanting to purchase, own, carry or use firearms and ammunition would have to provide evidence of the need to do so and possess the necessary capabilities. Military weapons would no longer be kept at home but instead stored in secure army premises. Weapons surplus to requirements, which are kept at home, would be collected in. All other weapons would be registered, which would help towards the prevention and prosecution of crime. The initiative aims to add an Article 118a to the Swiss Constitution of 18 April 1999 for this purpose.

More information on the issue can be found on the website of the committee behind the initiative at [www.schutz-vor-waffengewalt.ch](http://www.schutz-vor-waffengewalt.ch). The "Protection against firearms violence" initiative can be signed until 4 March 2009.

## Less taxation for housing savings

**The "Swiss society for the promotion of saving for housing" submitted a Swiss popular initiative in March 2007 entitled "für ein steuerlich begünstigtes Bausparen zum Erwerb von selbst genutztem Wohneigentum und zur Finanzierung von baulichen Energiespar- und Umweltschutzmassnahmen" (tax benefits for saving to purchase a residential property for personal use and to finance energy-saving and environmentally-friendly construction measures), also known as the "Bauspar-Initiative" (housing savings initiative). It originates from the Canton of Basel-Landschaft, which has been using a system like this for over 15 years.**

The initiative is seeking a change to Article 129 of the Swiss Constitution. This Article governs the harmonisation of direct taxes from the federal government, cantons and communes, and the initiative would add sub-paragraphs a) and b). Sub-paragraph a) would govern the taxation of home loan and savings deposits and sub-paragraph b) the taxation of premiums on home loan and savings deposits.

The initiative would enable all cantons to voluntarily introduce two forms of housing savings schemes with tax benefits. This would allow the as yet unknown "energy-saving housing savings scheme" to be added to the already established housing savings scheme. The housing savings scheme for the purchase of residential property should make it easier for people renting to buy their own home. The energy-saving housing savings scheme should pro-

vide home owners with an incentive to make their property energy-efficient (e.g. upgrading cladding, installing energy-efficient heating systems and switching to technologies using renewable energy).

The introduction of the new sub-paragraph a) would also see a new section 8 added to Article 197 of the transitional provisions of the Swiss Constitution. The new transitional provisions would enable the cantons to adopt their cantonal provisions directly based on Article 129 a) and b) of the Swiss Constitution. This would apply until the amended provisions enter into force as definitive federal law.

More information on this issue can be found on the website of the committee behind the initiative at [www.bausparen.ch](http://www.bausparen.ch). The housing savings initiative can be signed until 27 September 2008.

## POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following initiative has been launched since the last issue:

■ "Gegen neue Kampfflugzeuge" (Against new fighter planes), until 10 December 2009

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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RAHEL SCHWEIZER, SERVICE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD/FDFA, BUNDESGASSE 32, CH-3003 BERNE, TEL. +41 31 324 23 98, FAX: +41 31 324 23 60  
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### The home of athletics

The Olympic Museum in Lausanne, home of the headquarters of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), is a splendid example of modernity situated in idyllic surroundings on Lake Geneva. It is a centre of art, culture and history as well as a sporting temple. An Olympic visit. By Alain Wey

Citius, Altius, Fortius – faster, higher, stronger – the Olympic maxim engraved into the wall of the museum's entrance sets the tone of this temple dedicated to sport. The notion of exceeding limitations is also reflected in the museum's architecture and its exhibitions. Situated on Lake Geneva in Lausanne, the museum is home to the greatest collection of Olympic artefacts in the world. There are permanent exhibitions on the history of the Olympics and temporary ones on the Olympic Games in Beijing. A fusion of sport and art awaits visitors to the museum. A guided tour.

#### Renaissance of the Olympics

A whole section of the permanent exhibition is dedicated to the games in ancient Greece

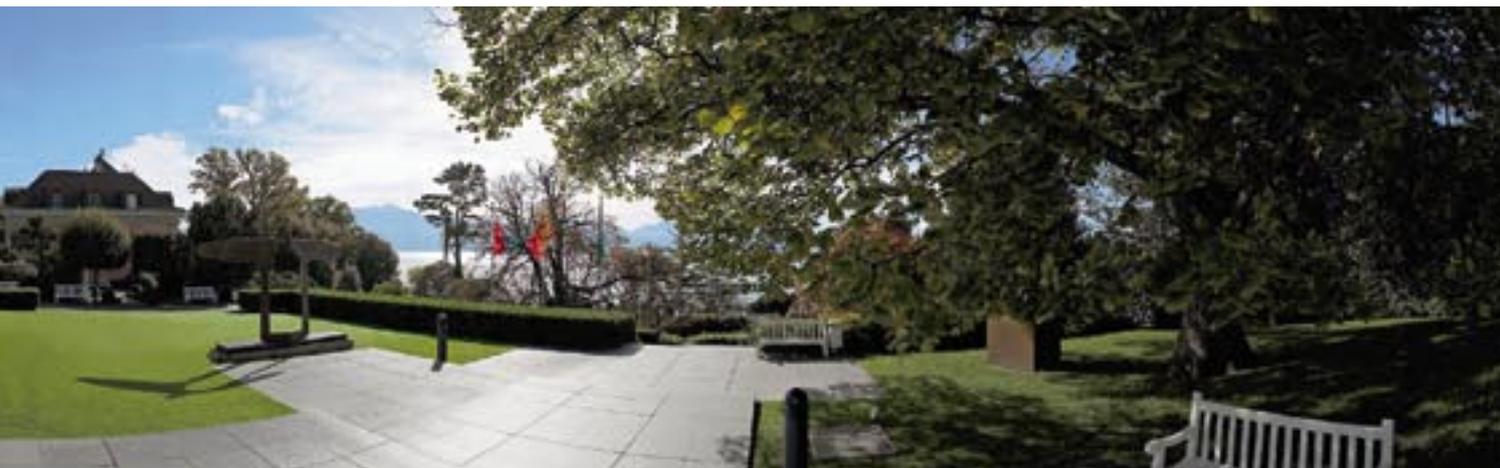
which lasted from 776 B.C. to 393 A.D. The Roman Emperor Theodosius put an end to the Olympics because they were devoted to pagan gods. The Olympic ideal was not reborn until 1894. It was revived by the Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937) who avidly sought to create modern games and to educate young people through sport. While the First World War was raging in Europe, he decided to establish the headquarters of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne. Visitors are immersed in the history and the origins of the games. Nike, the goddess of victory, is engraved on most Olympic medals. Examples of all of the torches are on display from the first Olympic relay in Berlin in 1936 through to the Turin Win-

ter Olympics of 2006. Homage to the ancient games where the Greeks lit a great fire in honour of Zeus, the Olympic flame carries a message of peace, solidarity and the coming together of peoples.

Art and sport are always closely connected here, as illustrated by a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin from 1904 called "The American Athlete". The symbols of the games, its founders and interactive multimedia areas are all features of the exhibition. The five rings symbolising the five continents which appeared for the first time in Antwerp in 1920, the scale of the Olympic movement worldwide, economic aspects, the medals, engravings, coins, stamps and the succession of IOC presidents etc. are all themes that are covered. The second permanent exhibition, "The Athletes and the Games", displays the equipment of the various disciplines of the summer and winter Olympics and their development. Visitors are welcomed by the museum's enormous garden, facing the lake, with its imposing sculptures by great artists. Modernity and interactivity are also key aspects of the per-



A glimpse of the temporary exhibition on the Olympic Games in Beijing: the Olympic stadium, the pictograms of all the sporting disciplines and the medals inset with jade.



The Olympic Museum in Lausanne is situated in a 22'000 m<sup>2</sup> park.

manent exhibition as it is even possible to hire an mp3 player which provides information on each part of the tour in a variety of languages.

#### The exhibition on the Beijing Olympic Games

On 8 August 2008 at 8.08 a.m. and 8 seconds, the 29th Olympic Games will open in Beijing. Eight is a lucky number for the Chinese. To mark the occasion, the temporary exhibition, Beijing 2008 (February to October), presents various aspects of the Olympics and Chinese culture in four huge rooms. Superstition features heavily.

The east section displays icons of the games – the torch decorated with clouds that augur well, the medals with a jade disk inset on the reverse side that is supposed to see off evil spirits, the 35 pictograms of the sporting disciplines and the five mascots in the colours of the rings. The west section exhibits the architectural transformation undergone by Beijing to host the games, focusing on two Olympic venues, the Water Cube and the Bird's

Nest. The design of the Water Cube aquatic centre looks like water molecules and is perfectly suited to staging the swimming and diving events. The Bird's Nest Olympic stadium was designed by the Swiss company Herzog & de Meuron. For the Chinese, a bird's nest is a culinary dish, but also a symbol associated with trees, air and nature. The other buildings displayed are the Beijing opera house, representing a pearl emerging from the water, the towers of the national TV station, which look like two towers of Pisa supporting one another, and Beijing airport, resembling a dragon with its wings spread open.

The north section focuses on Chinese culture with its traditional sports and blending with modernity. The emblem of the games is called "dancing Beijing". Work by the artist Li Wei examines sport and the theme of movement and originality. Visitors discover China's diversity with its 56 ethnic groups, its culinary traditions, medicines and contrasts. Finally, the south section, following the contour of the park, concludes the visit with a chronological comparison of Chinese and

European history. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, events and performances bring Chinese culture to life and sporting action is shown on a giant screen.

When you leave the museum opposite the lake and look at the eight Greek columns where engravings commemorate the 28 summer and 20 winter Olympic Games, you cannot help noticing that six columns are reserved for centuries to come. The notion of man seeking to improve transcends time like the Olympic maxim. Going beyond limitations, not in competition with others but with himself to exceed himself and become a better man.

#### MUSEUM FACTS AND FIGURES

Before the Olympic Museum opened on 23 June 1993, the collections were on display in Lausanne at the Villa Mon-Repos from 1922 to 1970, and then later in a temporary museum. Under the direction of Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the IOC from 1980 to 2001, the new museum was built by the architects Pedro Ramirez Vazquez from Mexico and Jean-Pierre Cahen from Lausanne. Switzerland's fourth most important museum has already received more than 2.5 million visitors, 50% coming from abroad. There are around 200,000 visitors a year, of whom around 30,000 are school children. The museum's 11,000 m<sup>2</sup> are divided between five floors, and its park is 22,000 m<sup>2</sup> in size. The museum also has an auditorium with 180 seats, five meeting rooms, a restaurant, a library, a video library and an educational service for schools. Lausanne is also the headquarters of the IOC and the home of Olympic solidarity. [www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)





Ski camps, past and present: Engelberg 1942



Hasliberg 2006

## Swiss Ski

### Free Juskila trip for 13 and 14-year-old Swiss and Swiss living abroad

280 Swiss children and 20 Swiss children living abroad born in 1994 and 1995 can take part in the Swiss Ski Association's big ski camp in Lenk free of charge. This will take place from 2 to 9 January 2009. To take part in the Juskila trip, Swiss children abroad must be able to communicate in at least one of the three Swiss national languages (German, French or Italian). The participants will be decided by a draw in mid-October.

## Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad

### Winter camp 2008/2009 for 8 to 14-years-old

Whether they are skiers or snowboarders, beginners or at an advanced level, Swiss children living abroad aged 8 to 14 will have a great time at our winter camps.

#### Winter camps Sedrun (Grisons)

*Date:*  
Friday, 26 December 2008 to Sunday, 4 January 2009  
*No. of participants:* 48  
*Cost:* CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

#### *Skj or snowboard hire:*

Approx. CHF 150

#### *Registration deadline:*

15 October 2008

#### Winter camps

##### Unterwasser (St. Gallen)

#### *Date:*

Saturday, 31 January 2009 to

Saturday, 7 February 2009

#### *No. of participants:* 24

*Cost:* CHF 700

#### *Skj or snowboard hire:*

Approx. CHF 140

#### *Registration deadline:*

15 December 2008

#### Registration

More information on the winter camps and the registration form will be available from 15 September 2008 at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch).

ch (rubric: Offers / Offers for Children and Young People / Camps and offers / Holiday camps and travel). Reduced contribution rates are granted in just cases. We are also happy to send you our information brochure by post, on request.

## Contacts around the world

Lots of young Swiss people abroad get to know each other through the events organised by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). They have spent their holidays together in Switzerland. Having met on skiing trips, at summer camp, on a language course or in the same host family, they become friends and keep in touch over thousands of miles. Some of them will meet up again at the events being organised by OSA this year. Young Swiss abroad taking part for the first time will be welcomed with open arms. So, what is there to look forward to?

### Swiss young people's session

(17.11.08 – 23.11.08)

The meeting of the young people's parliament in Switzerland is organised exclusively by young people. A

#### REGISTRATION FORM TO TAKE PART IN THE DRAW:

First name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

No., street: \_\_\_\_\_ Town/city, postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent(s)/guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Female  Male Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Commune of origin in Switzerland (see passport/ID): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address of parent(s)/guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of sport:  Alpine skiing  Cross-country skiing  Snowboarding

Language of child:  German  French  Italian

Please only tick one box. The type of sport cannot be changed after the draw.

Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of child: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send the form by 15 October 2008 to: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01, E-mail: [sjas@aso.ch](mailto:sjas@aso.ch), [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) (rubric: Offers / Offers for Children and Young People / Camps and offers / Holiday camps and travel)



session is held every year in the Swiss Federal House, where young people can put their views and demands to Switzerland's decision-makers. Taking part in the young people's session is a unique opportunity to take a look behind the scenes of politics. OSA gives the young people an introduction to the Swiss political system and looks at the issues involved in the young people's session in advance with the participants so that they are able to take an active part in the debates. Do you want to change the world? Everyone's opinion counts.

**New Year ski camp in Lantsch (Grisons) (26.12.2008 – 04.01.2009)**

The popular ski resort of Lenzerheide in the mountains of Grisons is just four kilometres from Lantsch. We are based in spacious accommodation and practise winter sports every day on the Lenzerheide. Qualified skiing and snowboarding instructors help the young

people to improve their technique on the snow. The corks will be popping at the New Year's Eve party to start 2009 in style.

**Educational programmes**

Young Swiss abroad benefit from our language programmes in Switzerland. We provide them with an insight into the Swiss education system. Our affable host families welcome the young people and they can explore Switzerland independently using the Swiss rail pass. Enjoy a dream holiday in Switzerland.  
*Youth Service*  
*Telephone: +41 31 356 61 00*  
*youth@aso.ch*  
*www.aso.ch*

**Exercising political rights for Swiss abroad**

**On 22 May, OSA representatives informed the National Council's Political Institutions Committee of problems encountered**

**by Swiss people living abroad with regard to exercising their political rights. Jacques-Simon Eggly and Rudolf Wyder, President and Director of OSA respectively, informed the Committee of various complaints received following the federal elections in 2007.**

The OSA representatives explained the various problems concerned with sending voting documentation to Swiss people living abroad, which made their participation in the democratic process difficult or even impossible. Problems included late delivery, documentation in the wrong language or incomplete, and the deletion of citizens from the electoral registers.

As the problem concerns the application of legislation, Eggly and Wyder called for the introduction of e-voting as quickly as possible. They also asked for the votes of Swiss abroad to be recorded separately.

The Committee refused, by 8 votes to 7, to table a recommendation conferring on the Confederation the task of sending voting documents to Swiss people living abroad, on the grounds that the action taken by the Fed-

eral Chancellery, which sent a circular to the cantons and communes currently responsible for sending documentation, was sufficient.

OSA believes the current situation is untenable. Swiss citizens abroad should be able to exercise their political rights in the same way as Swiss nationals resident in Switzerland. OSA will therefore continue to draw the attention of members of Parliament to the need to establish a viable system so as to ensure good quality of service for our compatriots abroad.

The more general issue, which underlies these demands, remains the recognition of the political, economic and cultural power of the Swiss abroad.

The decision to hear the OSA representatives had been made during debates on the Sommaruga parliamentary initiative concerning the direct representation of Swiss abroad in the federal chambers. This provided Eggly and Wyder with the opportunity to point out that there is currently no general law governing the application of Article 40 of the Federal Constitution which would constitute a solid legal basis for federal policy on Swiss citizens domiciled abroad.

*Resolution of the Swiss abroad in support of "Swiss Review"*

Swiss people living abroad are moving to support "Swiss Review". Meeting at annual congresses in their countries of residence, Swiss citizens living in France, Germany, Italy and the UK voiced their concerns about plans to reduce the circulation of "Swiss Review" in its current form.

They emphasised the importance of this means of communication, which is the only medium to reach all Swiss living abroad. They believe it is important for the publication to be sent to all registered Swiss expatriates so that they maintain strong ties with their home country. The resolutions call on the head of the DFA, Micheline Calmy-Rey, to take all steps necessary to ensure that "Swiss Review" continues to exist in its current form and be sent to all registered Swiss abroad.

**ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD**

*Our services:*

- Legal Department
- Youth Service
- Association for the Promotion of Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS)
- Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA)
- Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

*Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne  
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## Long live football

A tournament full of twists and turns and a carnival atmosphere with Switzerland under the spotlight for three weeks: football's Euro 2008 proved a tremendous success with more than four million fans visiting the host cities. We look back at the event now that the final whistle has gone. By Alain Wey



The fan zone in the Federal Square in Berne firmly in the grip of the Dutch.

“Lo, lo, lo, lo, lo, lo... lo!” – the European Football Championship climaxed in Vienna with Spain being crowned as champions of Europe. As is the tradition with Latin teams, Swiss cities were treated to a cacophony of horns as masses of cars took to the streets. A touch of melancholy was felt by some Swiss supporters after three weeks of scintillating football. It's over, but what a fantastic tournament! Beyond the fan zones and the majestic stadiums of the major Swiss cities, the entire country, both in rural and urban areas, joined in the celebration of football. In Fribourg, the Fri-Son concert venue was transformed into a temple of football with three giant screens on which fans enjoyed the matches in good spirits even in defeat. Will Switzerland ever become a great footballing nation? The foundations are in place. The support is there, as is a pool of talented players. Many Swiss fans were disappointed after their team's exit, but it made little difference. In the host nations of mountains and lakes, Euro 2008 witnessed lots of great achievements as well as moments of grace and euphoria. The hospitality and organisation were also first-class. A look back at the tournament.

“The atmosphere in the cities and streets, the newspaper articles and television coverage all confirm that Euro 2008, a great unifying festival of the people, was a remark-

able success”, commented Samuel Schmid, Minister of Defence and Sport, and Benedikt Weibel, Federal Council delegate for Euro 2008. According to initial estimates, more than four million people visited Basel, Geneva, Zurich and Berne for the 15 matches held in Switzerland. Throughout the tournament, 930,000 fans watched the matches in Berne, peaking on 13 June with a 150,000-strong orange army invading the streets of the capital for the Holland v. France match (see video and photos at [www.oranjebern.ch](http://www.oranjebern.ch)). In addition, 1,050,000 visitors were recorded in Basel, 700,000 in Geneva and around two million in Zurich (700,000 in the fan zone alone). The sixteen UBS arenas around the country welcomed around a million fans. Despite poor weather conditions the atmosphere was extremely cordial and the event was a hit. A German fan said ironically: “The only thing the Swiss couldn't organise for us was the weather.” Switzerland's public transport was used by 85 percent of the supporters, with almost two million football fans taking advantage of more than 4,000 special trains to get to the Euro 2008 matches.

While the Swiss only had a brief period in which to cheer on their team, they continued to fervently follow their favourite teams and enjoy the tremendous drama of the competition. The way initial animosity towards Turkey turned, in the course of the tournament,

into respect for the fighting spirit of a team that scored three times in the final minutes of its matches, is still fresh in the memory. At such times football seems to heighten all human emotions, from the most base to the most noble. Nor will we forget the Dutch orange invasion, with their improvised campsites, or the dark red shirts of Portugal. Switzerland's Portuguese community gave their team an incredible welcome, with 2,000 motorbikes following the Portuguese team bus from Geneva airport to Neuchâtel.

Euro 2008 is without doubt the most important international event held in Switzerland over the past fifty years. The impression it has made on major international sporting bodies may well convince them to stage other large-scale events in Switzerland. This prestigious tournament has left us with many fond memories: rarely have so many goals been scored at the quarter-final and semi-final stages. The impact of Euro 2008 remains to be seen. Cooperation with Austria worked well and hundreds of thousands of football fans fell in love with our beautiful country. Even though the Swiss team missed their opportunity, the Swiss showed a great sense of fair play, kept their spirits up and got behind the qualifying teams in a way that warmed the heart. The favourites Holland, the virtuosity of the Spanish and the feline grace of Fernando Torres will remain in the hearts of the Swiss and Austrians. While Mexico cried “olé” in 1986, France chanted “I will survive” in 1998, Euro 2008 rocked to “Seven Nation Army” by The White Stripes, and at each match fans euphorically sang “Lo, lo, lo, lo, lo, lo... Lo”: in other words, long live football!



Spain coach Aragones as a bullfighter.

■ The **level of unemployment** in Switzerland has dropped below 100,000 for the first time in six years. Unemployment fell to 2.4% in May, standing at 3.7% in French-speaking Switzerland and 1.9% in German-speaking Switzerland.

■ With almost 16.8 million overnight stays, the last winter season produced the best results in the history of **Swiss tourism**, up 6.2% on the previous year.

■ The traditional **identity card** will be phased out after the introduction of the biometric passport in March 2010. The National Council sealed its fate in June.



■ Five **Swiss soldiers** drowned in strong currents during a rafting exercise on the Kander River near Wimmis (Berne). The company's commander is being investigated under military law.

■ **Swiss companies:** more than half (53%) of senior managers come from abroad. According to the consulting firm Guido Schilling & Partner, the proportion of foreign executives has increased from 32% to 38% in a year. The number of Germans has risen from 30% to 34%. 12% are American and 10% British.

■ From 2010, **rent** increases will be based on one criterion alone – inflation. The Swiss Tenants' Association (Asloca) is concerned that an inflationary spiral will be triggered as the calculation of inflation takes rents into account.

*"I hope Christoph Blocher doesn't miss the opportunity to retire; otherwise he could become a burden for the party."*

Peter Spuhler, leading SVP politician and entrepreneur

*"Many Swiss people manage to see problems in any joyful occasion. What is wrong with our country? Have we become incapable of being happy?"*

Filippo Leutenegger, FDP National Councillor from the Canton of Zurich

*"The Swiss are very independent. They are proud of their country and their democracy. We respect their current bilateral approach to Europe."*

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner for External Relations

*"If we create a magnificent car that is inexpensive and runs on hydrogen, people will buy it."*

Nicolas G. Hayek, on his project for a zero-emission fuel-cell car

*"Not all Swiss agricultural products have the same opportunities in the international marketplace. Cheeses and sausages have better opportunities than apples and carrots."*

Rolf Büttiker, President of the Swiss Meat Association

*"Switzerland has committed itself to significantly reducing the loss of different species of plants and animals by 2010. Yet, unfortunately, not much is actually happening in our country."*

Kurt Eichenberger, biodiversity project manager at the WWF

*"50 hospitals of the over 300 that exist in Switzerland would be enough. These days, virtually every small hospital does everything, but not always as well as it might."*

Manfred Manser, head of the largest health insurance provider, Helsana

*"Alcohol has become part of the everyday scene for young people. This is why we are seeing a constant rise in violent crime committed by young people under the influence of alcohol."*

Esther Maurer, city councillor in Zurich

*"We Swiss players are too nice. At the European Championships you have to do things differently. You cannot give your opponent any opportunity to get into the game."*

Patrick Müller, defender in the Swiss national football team, after Switzerland's exit from Euro 2008.

*"The national team is something special in Switzerland. The support from the people is greater than in Germany. The Swiss are more patriotic."*

Ottmar Hitzfeld, high-profile new coach of the Swiss national football team.

■ The **Swiss National Science Foundation** spent more than CHF 531 million last year on measures to promote scientific research. This represents an annual increase of CHF 40 million, setting a new record.

■ The trial concerning the **Bassersdorf (Zurich)** air crash in 2001, in which 24 were killed, has cleared Crossair. The former directors of the airline, Moritz Suter and André Dosé, were

acquitted by the Federal Criminal Court.

■ A foreign team will play in the top division of **Swiss football** for the first time ever. Having been crowned Challenge League champions,



Vaduz (Liechtenstein) have been promoted to the Swiss Super League.

■ Following losses of CHF 11.5 billion from January to March, **UBS** has announced plans to cut 5,500 jobs, including 1,500 in Switzerland, between now and mid-2009. The bank is also suspected of having assisted wealthy American clients to evade the tax authorities.



■ Jean-Paul Clozel, founder of the Basel biotech company Actelion, has been crowned **World Entrepreneur of the Year** after being chosen from 48 competitors from 40 countries. This is the first time that a Swiss has won the prize awarded by accountancy and consulting firm Ernst & Young.

■ The Canton of Uri has banned **smoking** in public places. It is the seventh canton to do so following Ticino, Solothurn, Grisons, Appenzell Auser-Rhoden, St. Gallen and Geneva. Valais is to vote on the issue soon.

■ Pascal Couchepin has had to explain why in 2007 the Federal Council secretly destroyed 100 federal files filled with sensitive documents on suspected trafficking in **nuclear material**. Serious doubts surround the legality of the action. The president of the National Council's Foreign Policy Committee, Geri Müller, is demanding an inquiry as he suspects the USA of having put pressure on Switzerland.

AW/RR

# Attractive prizes to be won

1958  
2008

at home worldwide

**soliswiss**

## Jubilee sweepstake

### ! On which date was Soliswiss founded?

- 29 August 1958
- 3 April 2006
- 1 January 1962

### ! What was the start-up capital?

- CHF 100 cash
- A gold coin ("Goldvreneli")
- CHF 20,000 cash

### ! What was the original purpose of Soliswiss?

- A Swiss Christmas carol choir
- Assistance in response to the loss of livelihood caused by war or crisis
- The communal celebration of 1 August

### ! Which services were added later on?

- Swiss kitchen appliances
- Holidays in Switzerland
- Health insurances, life insurances, personal asset management

### ! Where is Soliswiss headquartered?

- Berne
- Zurich
- Geneva

Forename

Surname

Road

Town

Country

Telephone

Email address

Member since

Non-member

I hold Swiss nationality

Date of birth

Soliswiss will turn 50! The anniversary year of 2008 will be marked by various events and activities. Join in the celebrations and win!

Founded on 29 August 1958 by a few emigrants with a gold coin ("Goldvreneli"), this self-help organisation has developed into an established organisation for Swiss nationals living abroad. It offers support in the event of loss of livelihood due to war, internal unrest or general political coercion. And it helps its members to secure their health and financial well-being. Soliswiss operates in conjunction with strong partner organisations.

Welcome to the competition. Select one answer for each question. If you answer all the competition questions correctly, you will then automatically be entered into our prize draw. With a bit of luck, you may win one of the following prizes:

### ! Two air tickets into or out of Switzerland

Donated by Swiss International Airlines

### ! Three nights in a hotel in Valais Canton for two persons

Donated by Switzerland Tourism

### ! One of twelve commemorative gold coins stamped with the image of Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler

Donated by the Swiss National Bank

We shall distribute the prize coins around the world as follows: five coins will go to Europe, three to America, two to Asia/Oceania, one to Africa and one to Switzerland. This distribution reflects the composition of the Council of Swiss Nationals Abroad.

All Swiss nationals are entitled to participate in the competition. The employees of Soliswiss and their family members are barred from entering the competition. The winners will be notified in writing. It is not possible for the prizes to be paid out in cash. No correspondence will be entered into regarding the competition. Any legal recourse is ruled out.

The closing date for entries is 18 August 2008. Prize winners will be announced on 23 August 2008 as part of the Swiss Abroad Congress.

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