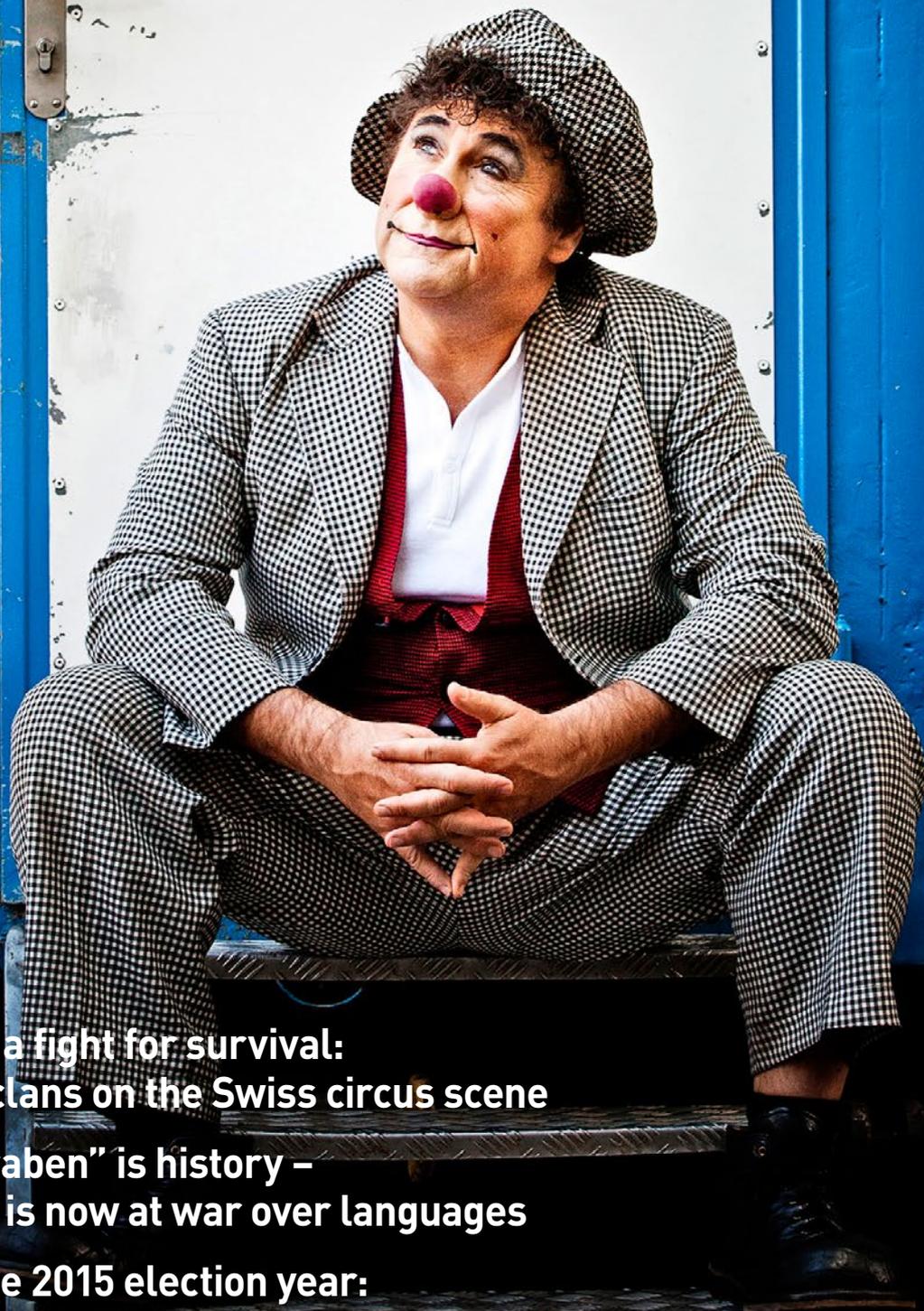


# SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad  
December 2014



**Spotlight on a fight for survival:  
Artists and clans on the Swiss circus scene**

**The “Röstigraben” is history –  
Switzerland is now at war over languages**

**All set for the 2015 election year:  
The SVP is calling the shots**

## Swiss Bank Account - is it a right?

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# Can the people also get it wrong?

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Since the Yes vote in the referendum on the initiative against mass immigration in February, there has been a dizzying flurry of activity amongst the Swiss government, Parliament, the political parties and various experts. The issue at the crux of it all: how can the initiative against mass immigration be implemented without causing significant damage to Switzerland’s economy and image? The response from the winners of the referendum on 9 February is that it must be implemented “systematically”. The

EU will yield to Switzerland’s diktat if the matter is handled skilfully enough, they are arguing. Rather than systematically, the initiative must be implemented “intelligently”, many people are saying, particularly those in the centre of the political spectrum. However, nobody will explain exactly what they mean by “intelligently”. It seems they are relying on hoping and praying. Finally, there is the group that is convinced that the SVP initiative cannot be implemented without the termination of the bilateral agreements with the EU. Two things are clear in this case: this would be extremely awkward for Switzerland and the decision would have to be made by the Swiss people.

The French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville warned in his analysis of American democracy in 1835 against the “tyranny of the majority”. The political and referendum situation in Switzerland increasingly points to a tyranny of the minority. This is because the majority at the ballot box does not represent the majority of the Swiss people by a long stretch when we take the turnout into account.

A survey conducted by the Bernese research institute GfS in September showed that 58 percent of Swiss people would prioritise the bilateral agreements over the mass immigration initiative. This result suggests that a majority of the people did not really understand what the consequences of the decision would be before the referendum. It can also be concluded from this that a party with plenty of funding and a well-oiled machine supporting it can exploit democracy for its own ends in a referendum campaign.

One thing is for sure and that is that Switzerland is facing a further referendum campaign along similar lines. “Swiss law takes precedence over foreign law” is the title of the popular initiative. This was agreed by the SVP delegates on 25 October. The objective is to put national law above international law and to pull out of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

As a result, Switzerland’s position in Europe and in the international community will undoubtedly be a key issue during the 2015 election year. This raises a number of questions. Is Switzerland a special case? Does it merit special treatment because it is so unique? But also: Are referendum decisions always prudent? Do the people never make mistakes?

An in-depth look at the election year, the top issues and the party positions can be found from page 12.

BARBARA ENGEL



Cover photo:  
The clown David Larible from Italy was a big hit on tour with the Knie circus in 2014  
Photo: Nicole Boekhaus



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## Swiss Solidarity

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## Fiscal justice?

When I saw that Schumacher was paying less tax than me, I left. I don't see why I should have to put in 60 hours of work a week, sometimes more, plus the army (yes, the army) and not start earning my living until August (the first seven months of the year going on tax) so that the wealthy can benefit almost scot-free. I now pay my taxes in California with the added bonus of the sunshine.

FABIEN HUG, USA

## Watchmaking internships

I was absolutely delighted to see an article about watchmaking in Switzerland. I was an employee of Piaget in the 1970s and now live in Lincoln, Nebraska, where I provide the official after-sales service for Maurice Lacroix, Louis Erard, Louis Chevrolet, Revue Thommen, Grovana, Charmex, Pilo Genève, David Van Heim and Ernest Borel. We have also set up an internship programme for Swiss watchmaking apprentices who have completed the 3rd or 4th year of their apprenticeship in the industry. We currently have six interns with us. This is an outstanding opportunity for them to leave Switzerland and practise their profession, study new calibres, learn English and learn how an after-sales service works.

SAMUEL GRANDJEAN, BY EMAIL

## Most things I learned in Switzerland

I am grateful for this detailed history of one of the industries Switzerland is most famed for, and I am very impressed with its tenacity to survive. It does not come as a surprise to me. I had the privilege myself to work in Switzerland (although in the heavy engineering industry) and have no qualms to state that most of the things that I have ever learned in my profession, I learned in Switzerland. Good on you!

EDWARD WECHNER, BY EMAIL

## Nation of sailors

In your article on Switzerland as a nation of sailors, you could perhaps have mentioned the fact that Switzerland has (or had?) a merchant navy on the high seas. It was established to ensure the supply of provisions to Switzerland during the 1939–1945 war. Using the port of Genoa and based in Basel, it carried out its mission to perfection and continued to exist after 1945. In 1974, I photographed the cargo ship “Zinal” (?) in the port of Lagos, as can be seen on my website of old photographs. I was even invited to dine there one evening with the Swiss consul. I believe this merchant fleet still existed until at least 10 years ago.

LUC SAUGY, BEZIERS, FRANCE

# A tale of illiberality and double standards



VERENA STEFAN:  
“Die Befragung der Zeit”.  
Verlag Nagel und  
Kimche, Munich 2014.  
224 pages.  
CHF 27.90, EUR 23

The author has spared no effort trawling through an 800-page file on the abortion cases of a village doctor at the Bernese state archive. The doctor was her grandfather, and the author is Verena Stefan. She lives in Canada today. In 1975, she wrote the book “Häutungen” (Shedding), which gained cult status among the feminist movement. It would be wrong to now conclude that her latest documentary novel entitled “Die Befragung der Zeit” (The Test of Time) is some kind of heroic epic about a doctor committed to female sexual self-determination. Julius Brunner, the main character, is neither an idealist nor an ideologically motivated criminal. However, he is not a villain seeking to exploit the desperation of women for personal enrichment either. He becomes involved in the affair rather reluctantly during the 1940s because he “simply gave in too easily” when the women “begged and pleaded”.

The book combines documentation and fiction in riveting storylines. It looks at an aspect of Swiss legal history when the courts still dealt with abortion with inquisition-like severity. Abortion only became legal in Switzerland in 2002. Verena Stefan quotes extensively from the case records which illustrate how demeaning the questioning was. Documentary material is woven into a largely fictitious and far from idyllic family story. The relationship between Julius Brunner and his wife Lina especially remains fraught throughout their lives.

Brunner’s bond with his little granddaughter Rosa is stronger. The way in which the four-year-old attempts to deal with the events she cannot understand involving her dearly loved grandfather is especially touching. The situation becomes complicated when the elderly doctor is arrested by the police one day and admitted to a psychiatric unit to assess his soundness of mind. A young waitress has set the judicial machinery rolling. She used the doctor’s services in her desperation but was unable to keep her secret after the procedure.

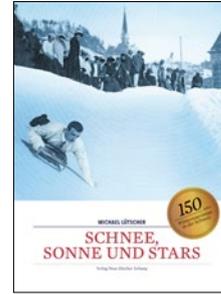
Verena Stefan has written a multi-layered book where she is more of an empathetic chronicler than an advocate of feminism. This leaves the reader with an even stronger impression of a narrow-minded society which practises double moral standards. In the words of Doctor Brunner: “Abortion remains the most reliable means of contraception, as those in authority well know. After all, they use it often enough for their wives and mistresses.”

JÜRIG MÜLLER

# Snow, sun and stars

The first winter sports tourists arrived in Switzerland 150 years ago. They came from Great Britain and spent their holidays in St. Moritz. To mark the anniversary, journalist Michael Lüscher has produced a book with informative and enjoyable articles and plenty of pictures.

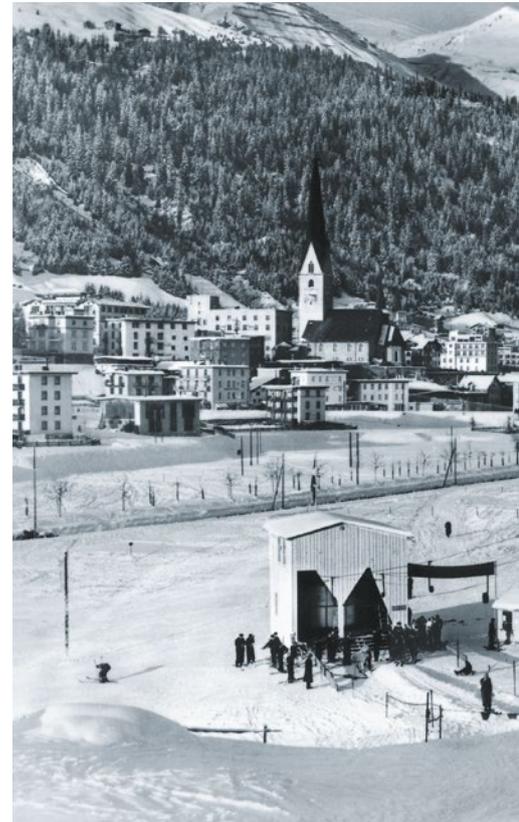
MICHAEL LÜSCHER: "SCHNEE, SONNE UND STARS";  
VERLAG NZZ LIBRO, ZÜRICH, 2014; 272 PAGES; CHF 88, EUR 88.  
ALSO AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH.



The "wild tob"



Switzerland's first cable car in Crans-Montana, 1950



The "Bolgenlift" in Davos was the world's first t-bar ski



The Shah of Persia with his family in St. Moritz, 1975



Gunter Sachs with his future wife Mirja and Gita Wranding, 1969



toboggan run" in Crans-Montana



Ice games (gymkhanas) in Grindelwald



lift, photo from winter 1934/35



The "Village Run" toboggan race in Grindelwald



James Bond curling, 1968



Photographer Elizabeth Main and architect Frederick Bligh in St. Moritz

## “Early French” divides the nation

Switzerland is currently engaged in a row over the delicate issue of languages. Several German-speaking cantons no longer wish to teach French in their primary schools. The French-speaking Swiss see this as an attack on national unity.

MARC LETTAU

The lady on the local Biel bus speaks to her neighbour in German. Her neighbour replies eloquently in French. This does not detract from the two women's ability to understand one another. The lively conversation becomes a melange of German and French. Some sentences are even spoken half in German and half in French. This type of exchange is very much the norm in Biel. The two women represent a majority as 63 % of Biel's population speak two or more languages.

### Four languages – a multilingual society

But not everywhere is like Biel. The fact that Switzerland has four official languages does not mean that the country is teeming with quadrilingual polyglots. There are very few people who speak all four national languages – German, French, Italian and Romansh. However, in this linguistically divided nation, many people speak a different language at home to the one they use at their place of work or education. In everyday life, more people speak French than there are French-speaking Swiss and far more use Swiss German or High German

outside of the home than those whose mother tongue is German. The four national languages are gaining in stature as a result and are becoming bridges of understanding in an increasingly mobile society. Heavy with meaning, the Swiss Languages Act states that “the status of the four official languages should be strengthened as a fundamental characteristic of Switzerland” and “the inner unity of the nation should be consolidated” by fostering these languages. This stands to reason for most Swiss people. The more people who speak or at least understand more than just one national language, the better it is for the notion of Switzerland as a nation forged by the will of the people.

### Urgent action required

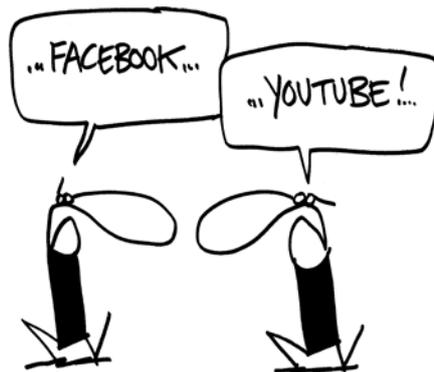
Urgent action is nonetheless now needed. French-speaking Switzerland is accusing German-speaking Switzerland of jeopardising linguistic harmony in the nation. “La guerre des langues est déclarée” – linguistic war has been declared – was the headline in the weekly magazine “l'Hébdô” in May. What has happened? The bone of contention is the early teaching of French in primary schools. While German is taught as the first foreign language at primary school in all French-speaking cantons, an increasing number of German-speaking cantons are setting about getting rid of French in primary schools. In the course of the year,

the Cantonal Parliament in Thurgau decided to axe French as a primary school subject. Close on its heels, the Cantonal Parliament in Schaffhausen decided to follow suit. The government in Nidwalden then moved to abolish French teaching in primary education. Popular initiatives calling for an end to early French teaching have also been submitted in the cantons of Grisons and Lucerne. The cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden and Aargau decided to abandon early French in primary schools years ago. The list of those opting out could grow longer still as discussions are also being held in other cantons about restructuring language teaching. The arguments most frequently raised in the debate are that people overlook the fact that, strictly speaking, High German is the first foreign language that German-speaking Swiss children have to work hard to acquire, and that learning two foreign languages at the same time is ill-advised from an educational point of view.

### French versus English

Cantons opposing early French teaching at primary schools are not actually abolishing the teaching of French. It is instead being shifted to senior school level and thus shortened. This means that more and more children are learning a second national language significantly later and for a much shorter period of time. Genuine outrage has now been sparked in French-speaking Switzerland as the demotion of French is going hand in hand with enhanced status for English. English is already taught as the first foreign language in 14 Ger-

LES JEUNES  
PARLENT  
COURAMMENT  
L'ANGLAIS



These youngsters speak English fluently



The cover photo of the magazine "L'Hébdó" from May shows the strength of feeling in French-speaking Switzerland over the language row

man-speaking cantons today. "Early French" generally begins two years after the first English lessons in these cantons.

Foreign language versus national language

The canton of Zurich set the ball rolling. It introduced "early English" into its primary schools in 1998. When taking the decision, the then Director of Education in Zurich, Ernst Buschor (CVP), expressed the view that the principle of giving French priority over English in schools was outdated. Buschor was keen on early English as

he saw it as the pivotal language in IT and business for the future. His decision put Switzerland on course for the language row today. It soon became apparent that the French-speaking Swiss saw Buschor's views as an affront. José Ribeaud, a publicist from French-speaking Switzerland, who has proven himself a knowledgeable diagnostician of the Swiss linguistic landscape with his book "Vier Sprachen, ein Zerfall" ("Swiss Review" 1/2014), became a harsh critic of the Zurich Director of Education. Remark- ing on Buschor's English cam-

paign, Ribeaud still says today: "That was the worst signal that could have been sent out for Switzerland." He stopped short of accusing the German-speaking Swiss of hostility, referring instead to "a serious lack of consideration and respect that has previously been shown to the minority groups". But Buschor and Ribeaud are not talking about the same thing. Buschor is talking about the right to give appropriate weighting to the most important foreign language when structuring the curriculum. In contrast, Ribeaud is talking about the duty to award the necessary status to the most important *national languages*.

Humiliating abandonment

The politicians responsible for education in German-speaking Switzerland were not short of arguments. They contend that early French teaching places too many demands on both pupils and teachers. It is essential that language teaching is primarily measured against results. What matters is whether young people can communicate in a second national language after completing mandatory education. That is the actual objective. From when and for how long the second national language is taught is of secondary importance, they say. However, these arguments have little currency in French-speaking Switzerland.

There, the conduct of their German-speaking compatriots is interpreted as a humiliating abandonment. French-speaking politicians from across the political spectrum are warning that a key link in the chain of Swiss solidarity is at risk of breaking. The Free Democrat former Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin jibes that German-speaking Switzerland is running the risk of marginalising itself: “What would Switzerland be without the French and Italian speakers? It would just be a province of Germany in some ways.” Others outline the

decide on English as a language of communication, the previously inconceivable would happen – language would be reduced to its utilitarian significance. But language is imbued with cultural aspects: “It reflects the world of all those who speak it, their outlook on the world, their way of thinking and their traditions.” French-speaking Swiss expect to be able to speak their own language and to be understood, argues Chassot. They want to be perceived as fully fledged, French-speaking Swiss citizens: “But they do not demand that

French is spoken to them. There is an agreement in the best Swiss tradition that everyone speaks their own language in multilingual environments.”

#### Pressure from above

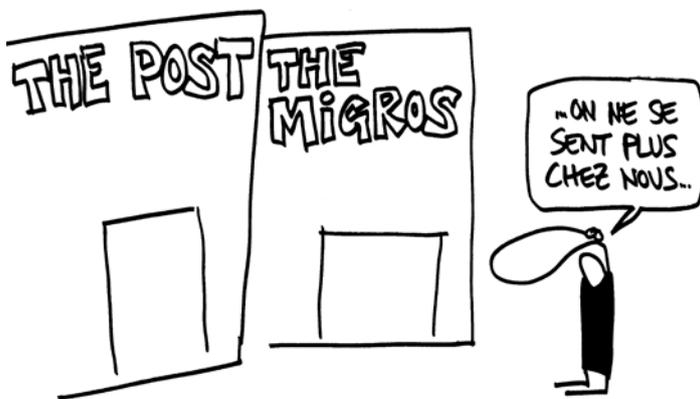
The cantons are responsible for school education in Switzerland, and intervention in the feder-

alist structure is against Swiss principles. In late summer, the Federal Councillor Alain Berset (SP), from bilingual Fribourg, nevertheless felt compelled to make it clear that federal government was fully entitled to intervene if the nation’s general interests were jeopardised. The school system is a key element of the Swiss federalist ideology. But federalism does not work without responsibility towards Switzerland as a whole:

“Federalism does not mean that everyone simply does what they want in their own region irrespective of what this might mean for Switzerland,” remarked Berset in an interview with the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”. After Berset, the National Council’s Education Committee also stepped up the pressure. Its President, Na-

tional Councillor Matthias Aebischer (Berne, SP), said on the record at the beginning of October that it was no longer willing to look on “while one canton after the next abandoned early French teaching”. At the same time, the committee deliberated over a proposal to oblige the cantons, by means of federal legislation, to teach a second national language in primary schools. With these mind games, the Education Committee essentially sought to put pressure on the cantonal Directors of Education. These met at the end of October in Basel and found themselves obliged to respond to the emotional turmoil. They put their foot down: the principle of teaching two languages at primary schools should not be altered. However, whether English or French was taught first should still be a matter for the cantons to decide.

There was one snag, however, as their statement carried no authority. The Directors of Education cannot dictate to the cantons. They can only make recommendations. So, it is still open for debate whether Berset’s concerns will be alleviated, Chassot’s wishes met and the proposal of Aebischer’s committee averted. Federal Councillor Berset therefore further increased the pressure after the meeting of the Directors of Education. He threatened that federal government would not hesitate to intervene if a canton definitively decided to get rid of French from the primary school curriculum over the coming months.



...I don't feel at home anymore ...

nightmarish scenario that young German-speaking Swiss might one day have to speak English to communicate with their French-speaking compatriots. The identity-shaping impact of the national languages would be lost.

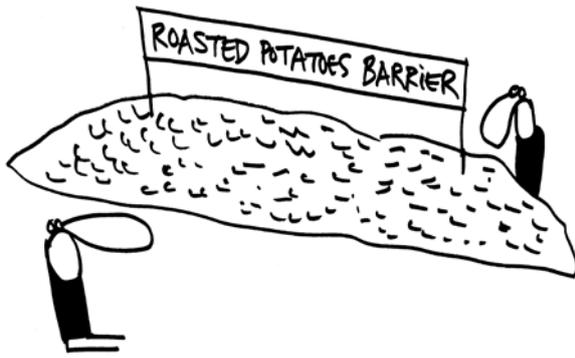
#### Linguistic knowledge fosters respect

Switzerland’s most senior custodian of languages, the bilingual Isabelle Chassot, also focuses on identity in her reflections. Without linguistic harmony, Switzerland would lose a great deal, remarked the head of the Federal Office of Culture and former education politician during the debate this summer: “It would lose everything that makes up this nation’s identity today: respect for minorities, understanding of diversity, the search for compromise and the importance of equilibrium.” If Switzerland were to



German-speaking Swiss show interest in the culture

# VIVE L'ANGLAIS!...



Long live English ...!

In spite of all the anger, education politicians from all parties hope that federal government does not ultimately have to intervene. The rationale behind this is that if federal government were to tighten up the legal basis, a referendum could be called against this in German-speaking Switzerland. If a referendum were held, Switzerland would have to decide on Swiss linguistic harmony at the ballot box, and when a nation votes on linguistic issues the outcome is rarely an easing of tension. Nobody currently wants a national referendum for fear of the risks. The bilingual Fribourg National Councillor François Steiert (SP), himself a campaigner for the second national language in primary education, suspects that a referendum on the issue of languages “would confirm the disintegration of Switzerland into linguistic regions, put national unity in jeopardy and trigger turmoil on an unimaginable scale”.

## The “Swiss German” campaign

A change of scene. Another dispute over languages is currently being ad-



of French-speaking Switzerland ...

dressed in preschools in Aargau. Only dialect has been spoken here since the beginning of the new school year. Previous plans to introduce youngsters to High German at preschool have been shelved. “Standard German”, as High German or written German is called in Switzerland, can no longer be used as a medium of instruction because the electorate in Aargau approved an initiative by the Swiss Democrats (SD) in May, against the will of the government, which prescribes the use of dialect as the teaching language in preschools. In 2011, voters in the cantons of Basel-Stadt and Zurich supported enhancing the status of dialect in preschools. In the canton of Zug, the SVP recently launched an initiative stipulating the use of “Swiss German” at preschool level and in some subjects at primary school level.

It is not clear why German-speaking Switzerland is now engaging in a seemingly peculiar dispute over the German language in addition to the row over languages with French-speaking Switzerland. Observers suspect that there is a desire for dialect that is difficult to justify rationally and it is most likely an expression of “a search for a sense of homeland” in an increasingly globalised world. It is just that the cantons which explicitly require dialect instead of German are not making it easy for themselves. What is dialect? Do the teachers who have emigrated from Germany to Aargau now have to learn to speak High Alemannic with an Aargau accent? Does the lo-

## Straight up – languages five and six

Besides its official national languages, Switzerland also recognises two other languages. Yeniche (see “Swiss Review” 2/2014) has been granted the status of a “non-territorial” language and is also promoted accordingly. The second minority “non-territorial” language in Switzerland is Yiddish. This linguistic minority is actually growing and entirely without state support. However, the actual, original Swiss Yiddish, Surbtal or Endingen Yiddish, has died out. Some expressions have nevertheless entered colloquial Swiss German, such as the term “Stuss” meaning “nonsense”. [www.bilinguisme.ch](http://www.bilinguisme.ch)

cal Valais German of a preschool teacher from Visp, who stands in front of a class in Aarau, also count as dialect despite the fact that children in Aargau would barely understand this vernacular? And how will the canton deal with the fact that there is no Aargau German in the proper sense for historical reasons?

Some French-speaking Swiss are amused by the language policy tensions within German-speaking Switzerland. But for critics like José Ribeaud this, too, is a matter of serious concern. In his view, the German-speaking Swiss are jeopardising linguistic harmony in two ways. They are firstly discarding French. Then, by neglecting High German, they are snubbing all the French-speaking Swiss who have diligently learned to speak it but do not understand “Swiss German” as a result.

## The counterpoint of Ticino

However, in the midst of this row, Switzerland is also entitled to marvel at itself. While German and French-speaking Swiss are arguing over from when and how youngsters are to be taught a second national language, in Ticino they are asking school pupils to learn three national languages in their curriculum – Italian, French and German. Nine-year-olds learn the language of Voltaire. Four years later, German becomes a mandatory subject. Learning three national languages at the same time: “Ce n’est pas la mer à boire”, it’s hardly asking too much, is the message from Ticino. The people of Ticino are not more linguistically gifted than the rest of the Swiss. It is just that they understand, as a small minority language group, they would become voiceless within the nation without knowledge of other national languages.

# The Swiss People's Party's top issues dominate election year

Switzerland's now awkward relationship with the European Union and immigration will be the major issues over the coming months. They will also shape the 2015 election campaign. An overview of the position of the parties at the outset.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Two party presidents attempted to draw comparisons with the Nazis in late summer 2014. Firstly, Martin Landolt, leader of the Conservative Democratic Party (BDP), asked: "How brown must a policy be before everyone realises that it stinks to high heaven?" He was referring to the policies of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) from which the BDP splintered off in 2008. Christian Levrat, President of the Social Democratic Party (SP), followed suit shortly afterwards, remarking: "SVP policy in recent months has clearly shown fascist tendencies." The fact that such comparisons usually overstep the mark or are completely inappropriate is not the issue here. However, the harsh rhetoric is a clear indication of how charged the political mood is already a year before the federal elections on 18 October 2015.

There are good reasons why various parties are using their heavy artillery on the SVP. The predominant election campaign issues in 2015 are highly likely to be the SVP's major political concerns: Europe, immigration, foreign policy and defence against anything "foreign". Whichever way Switzerland's relationship with the European Union (EU) develops after the approval of the SVP initiative against mass immigration on 9 February 2014, the SVP will be at the centre of the debate.

## All the others face a problem

The SVP is therefore entering election year 2015 with an invaluable advantage. It does not have to "come up with" its election campaign issues, they have

long been on the table and are matters of genuine concern to people. According to the election barometer of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG) in October 2014, immigration-related issues are the most pressing for the electorate. And the SVP is thought most likely to provide solutions here. The party lost more than two percentage points in the 2011 elections but has since made significant headway. It has increased its share of the vote in 14 of 19 cantonal elections. Whether this success will be continued at the federal elections depends heavily on how policies on Europe and immigration develop. According to the election barometer mentioned, maintaining the bilateral treaties with the EU is actually more important to the electorate than the implementation of the initiative against mass immigration. If a straight decision had to be made between these two options, 58 % would favour the set of agreements with the EU. The implementation of the initiative clearly jeopardises the agreement on the free movement of persons and therefore the bilateral treaties. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent this position on the bilateral treaties takes the wind out of the SVP sails.

The fact that the SVP is comfortable with the key issues at the outset presents a problem for the other parties. They will find it hard to bring other issues into play. That said, election years can take unpredictable turns. In 2011, the Fukushima nuclear disaster in the spring of the election year suddenly made energy a key issue. However, it is more likely that all the parties will attempt to provide their own answers to the EU and im-

migration issues which will inevitably see them enter SVP territory. The SVP is able to clearly differentiate itself not just from the left over these issues but also from the other conservative parties. These want well-structured relations with the EU and are keen to save the bilateral approach, an objective which the SVP now openly questions.

In light of widespread EU scepticism, the EU-friendly SP may face a particularly challenging task over the issues of immigration and EU relations. It is therefore focusing on its key political issue of social justice. It can also make headway here, according to the electoral barometer. The party keeps debate alive with some bold proposals, but the last three popular initiatives it supported – 1:12, the minimum wage and the single health insurance fund – have failed. Its opposition to flat-rate taxation for wealthy foreigners and its support for the introduction of inheritance tax are in line with the party slogan of "for everyone rather than the few". At the 2011 elections, the SP won three addi-

## New formula for the Federal Council?

The parliamentary elections also always indirectly impact on the complete re-election of the Federal Council, which takes place shortly afterwards. The current composition (2 SP, 2 FDP, 1 CVP, 1 SVP and 1 BDP) is certainly

not guaranteed in 2015 although no Federal Councillors are stepping down.

There will in any event be a lively debate about how the will of the electorate is reflected in the nation's most senior body. The SVP, as the strongest faction, is actually entitled to a second seat. If it does not lose ground or

even gains votes at the elections, Parliament will probably no longer be able to ignore its claims. The seat of the BDP, a minor party, or one of the two FDP seats will be targeted in such circumstances. But it is well known that Federal Council elections can always produce very surprising results.



tional National Council seats despite a slight 0.8 % fall in its share of the vote thanks to good fortune with the system of proportional representation. It would appear to have little chance of defending these seats without significant electoral gains. However, its performance in the cantonal elections since 2011 has been reasonably good: the SP has made ground in 12 of 19 cantons.

### The traditional parties are faltering

The two other once strong conservative parties on the Federal Council are underperforming - FDP. The Liberals (FDP) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP). Both lost support at the 2011 elections. The FDP's performance at the cantonal elections in recent years has failed to impress, and the CVP has performed very poorly. The FDP as a business-friendly party is suffering from the political fallout of the financial and banking crises. Even if the party leadership is going to great lengths to distance itself from the excessive salaries and bonus culture and to position itself less as a party focused purely on representing economic interests – the reputational damage suffered by parts of the economy is tarnishing the party. The down-to-earth liberalism embodied by party leader Philipp Müller is nevertheless proving increasingly popu-

lar. The party is accredited with great expertise in policy on Europe in particular, not least thanks to the work of the free democrat President of the Swiss Confederation and Foreign Minister, Didier Burkhalter.

The CVP faces major challenges. Its support fell by over two percentage points at the 2011 elections and the downward trend has continued on a similar scale in many cantons. The CVP is steadfastly attempting to position itself as a traditional centre party which plays a vital role in Switzerland's political culture as a mediator between the two ends of the political spectrum. However, it is often difficult to predict the approach the CVP will adopt on political issues. It sometimes enters into pacts with the left and sometimes with the right. This can be seen in a positive light as a genuine willingness to compromise, but voters often have problems knowing what the CVP stands for. There is also great divergence within the party between social, business-oriented and rural-conservative factions. In the legislative period prior to 2011, the CVP worked closely with the Green Liberal Party (GLP) and the Evangelical People's Party (EVP), and then after the elections with the BDP. This reflects the CVP's perhaps somewhat excessive flexibility or maybe also its well-honed instinct for power since, despite being a small party, the BDP,

**Relations between Switzerland and the EU will be a key issue in election year**

with Finance Minister Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, still contributes a Federal Council seat to the partnership of convenience.

### "New centre" unsteady

The BDP, which sees itself as a new centre party after breaking away from the SVP, is nevertheless not on very solid foundations itself. The BDP suffered a huge setback in one of its strongholds, the canton of Berne, at the elections last March. The diagnosis here is also a rather indistinct profile.

The same cannot be said of the GLP, also a relatively new centre party. Not only was it one of the winners during the last federal elections, it has also since recorded gains in almost all cantonal elections. The combination of liberalism and ecology makes the party an attractive alternative for many people. Its ethos of a sustainable energy and environmental policy and a liberal economic and social policy captures the spirit of the times.

The "original" greens, the Green Party (GPS), have never really recovered from their election defeat in 2011. Their key concerns are very much overshadowed by the predominant issues of policy on Europe and immigration.

JÜRIG MÜLLER IS AN EDITOR WITH THE "SWISS REVIEW"



## The President of the Swiss Confederation and the world of young people

Contact with youth is a key part of Swiss President Didier Burkhalter's presidential year. One young person was therefore allowed to accompany him to the UN General Assembly. A report on his experience.

DAMIAN VOGT

The high-level week at the 69th UN General Assembly in New York took place from 22 to 26 September. One of the highlights for me was the general debate with speeches by heads of state and government and other high-level state representatives. The since re-elected Brazilian President, Dilma Rousseff, obviously spoke in her address about the forthcoming elections and democracy in her country. The President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, on the other hand, focussed on the conflicts in Ukraine, Syria and Iraq.

Didier Burkhalter, the Swiss President, entitled his speech "Genuinely united nations inspired by and for young people". In his introduction, he mentioned a youngster from Switzerland who, when asked by the Swiss President what kind of world he would like or dreamt of, replied: "A world where people resolve their differences peacefully and without violence. A world of freedom and mutual respect. A world where all young people have the opportunity to find employment that enables them to live a happy life."

It is fantastic for us as young people to see the interest and acknowledge-

ment shown by the Swiss President. He told the other state representatives: "Young people rightly expect the representatives of nations to endeavour, with genuinely united efforts, to hand over to the next generation a world and a humankind where security, freedom and prosperity are not empty words." The Swiss President also declared that he sees young people with their great abilities as a source of inspiration. At the same time – and he also made this point clear – he expects young people to be aware of their responsibility and to show commitment to shaping the world they want.

**Swiss President  
Burkhalter and Damian  
Vogt observed by UN  
Ambassador Peter  
Maurer in New York**

## Problems are resolved together

At the end, I was able to outline my vision, sitting beside the Swiss President at the press conference. It was important to me to set out my belief that sustainable development is only possible if people from all sections of society are involved in the decision-making process. That also includes young people. We are often faced with issues of a transversal nature, which also means that it is difficult for an individual group to achieve sustainable development. Viable results can only be attained in dialogue between the various age and interest groups.

As a former president of the organisational committee for the Federal Youth Session, I am aware that engaging young people in national politics represents a challenge. As a representative of Youth Rep, I have discovered that the challenge is even greater at international level. I am therefore pleased that Switzerland appoints three UN youth delegates each year. This gives us as young people a real voice at the UN. My aim during this week in New York was to ensure that this voice is also heard and respected.

## Looking at the past and to the future

At a special session of the UN General Assembly during the high-level week,

## What is a Youth Rep?

The Youth Rep (Youth Representatives) project is organised by the Swiss National Youth Council (SNYC) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). As part of Youth Rep, young delegates can participate in various international conferences with the official Swiss delegation. Each autumn, a representative of the team travels to the UN General Assembly in New York. Participation in Youth Rep is voluntary and limited to a period of two years. The participants represent Switzerland's young people for a year and spend the following year coaching their successors.

Team member Damian Vogt was born in 1991 and grew up in Vaduz (Liechtenstein) and Hinwil. He studied International Relations in Geneva and was a member and president of the organisational committee for the Federal Youth Session for several years. From January 2015, he will work at the Diplomatic Representation of the Principality of Liechtenstein in New York.

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

## Free & Equal Campaign

The first public meeting on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights also took place during the high-level week. The first closed ministerial event on the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights had taken place in 2013. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed the ministers and the rest of the audience in a video message. He spoke out against the stigma, discrimination and violence that people have to suffer owing to their sexual orientation and sexual identity. The fight for human rights and against discrimination is a key part of the UN's mission.

The UN campaign Free & Equal aims to open people's hearts and minds, he said. The protection of human rights cannot be shied away from just because governments do not share the same view on this matter.

John Kerry, US Secretary of State, joined Mr Ban in emphasising the campaign's importance: Free & Equal is enabling obstacles to a fairer and more tolerant society to be overcome. People are still being vilified, attacked and even killed for being the person they are and because of the people they love. John Kerry was delighted that the event was public and had attracted such great interest as work towards a world without discrimination and for human rights begins not only in the General Assembly room but also in the hearts and minds of people.

young people were not just an important issue for the Swiss President. The session looked to the future but also at the past – back to 1994 when a Programme of Action was drawn up at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Young people are referred to over 50 times in this programme. The state representatives constantly pointed to the importance of the younger generation. The programme stated, for example, that investment in young people was not an option but an obligation. However, there was some dispute over which forms of investment are effective. The state delegates identified improvement potential, above all in health (particularly sexual and reproductive health), education and rights. After all, well-educated and healthy young people also have a positive impact on the economy.

## Meeting of members of parliament

On the evening prior to the special session, parliamentarians from various countries met with representatives of civil society. The most important item on the agenda was the International Parliamentary Conference on the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action, which took place last March. As nobody from the Swiss Parliament was present, I was able to represent Switzerland at this event. The pivotal role played by members of parliament in many developments was repeatedly underlined. They are, after all, responsible for the transposition of international resolutions into national law.

There was agreement, both at the UN General Assembly and at the fringe events, that major challenges exist and the Programme of Action is also of importance to the post-2014 period. Let us hope that youthful energy continues to be effective.

# Swiss oppose Ecopop's curbs on immigration

The Swiss population overwhelmingly rejected far-reaching immigration restrictions with environmental objectives on 30 November. Problems with the EU nevertheless remain unresolved.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

The Ecopop campaigners fought a lone battle. The Federal Council, all parties represented in Parliament, business associations, trade unions and environmental organisations all opposed it. There were nevertheless major fears that Swiss voters might also approve the much more radical Ecopop initiative after supporting the Swiss People's Party's (SVP) initiative against mass immigration on 9 February 2014. Entitled "Stop overpopulation – safeguard our natural environment", the popular initiative addressed very different matters. It focussed on environmental issues, promised to deal with immigration concerns and growth stress and found favour amongst xenophobic groups.

The surprisingly overwhelming rejection of the proposal, with 74.1 % of voters opposing it, indicates that the majority of the Swiss population does not wish to completely jeopardise European ties after the narrow yes vote on 9 February. Ecopop's rigid immigration restrictions would have made the bilateral agreements with the EU untenable. The Swiss are very

much aware of how important stable relations with Brussels are to the Swiss economy.

However, the rejection of Ecopop cannot be interpreted as a correction of the decision of 9 February. The electorate wants to apply the brake on immigration but not at any cost. An element of good old Swiss pragmatism has returned to the immigration debate. The rejection of Ecopop only allows a brief respite as it remains unclear how the mass immigration initiative is to be implemented without infringing upon the agreement on the free movement of persons and jeopardising the bilateral approach. There remains little room for manoeuvre in negotiations with Brussels, and the next referendum on European policy will weigh more heavily than all previous ones. And if no solution can be found with Brussels that satisfies all parties, Switzerland will soon have to answer the question of what is more important – the implementation to the letter of the constitutional article of 9 February or maintaining the economically ideal approach of the bilateral treaties.

## Tax privileges maintained

Wealthy foreigners can continue benefiting from favourable flat-rate tax arrangements if they reside in Switzerland but do not work there. 59.2% of voters rejected the popular initiative entitled "An end to tax privileges for millionaires" on 30 November. The campaigners argued that flat-rate taxation was unfair because it infringed upon the constitutional principle whereby everyone pays tax according to their financial capacity. The victorious opponents warned that many flat-rate taxpayers could leave Switzerland, causing economic damage.

## Gold initiative fails to gleam

The gold initiative launched by conservative groups on the right set out three requirements: 20 % gold on the balance sheet of the Swiss National Bank (SNB), the total gold holdings should be inalienable and they should be kept in Switzerland. The proposal was overwhelmingly defeated with 77.3% voting against it. The initiative's proponents argued that gold was a secure investment and would never lose its full value, in contrast to paper currency and securities. Opponents contended that the SNB would lose its independence and flexibility and would no longer be able to effectively defend the euro exchange rate floor of CHF 1.20. (JM)

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# “He dared to say the words freedom and equality” – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The brilliant progressive thinker was ostracised during his lifetime but inspired the modern understanding of the world like nobody else.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

He appeared twice – in 1938 and 1990 – in the splendid coffee-table books of the “great Swiss figures”. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born on 28 June 1712 in Geneva and died on 2 July 1778 in Ermenonville near Paris. However, the country which takes a pride in him today showed a very unwelcoming, even hostile, attitude towards the man who first made democratic freedom possible as a figure who paved the way for the French Revolution. He was only able to spend 19 of the 66 years of his life on the soil of modern-day Switzerland, while the rest of the time he was what would be referred to today as a Swiss citizen abroad had he not constantly been persecuted or sought by warrant.

At the age of 16, he fled from Geneva to Savoy and spent 14 years as the charge of Madame de Warens in Annecy. Mainly musically trained, he moved to Paris in 1742 where he presented a new system of musical notation to the academy. As the secretary of the French ambassador, he lived in Venice for two years and then returned to Paris, where he was a private tutor and music copyist and began a lifelong relationship with the laundress Thérèse Levasseur, who bore him five children.

His path to success was paved by twice winning the Academy of Dijon’s prize competition, in 1749 with his “Discours sur les sciences et les arts” and in 1755 with the “Discours sur l’inégalité”. However, it was his “Contrat social” (Social Contract) in 1762 that had the longest-lasting impact. He begins with the words: “Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.” The text was immediately banned because of its criticism of all religion, as was the educational novel “Émile”, published in the same year, which had been produced over the previous six years at aristocratic estates around Paris. Only the novel “Julie, or the New Heloise”, published in 1761, was able to circulate freely. This was met with widespread acclaim and inspired Goethe’s “Werther”. “Émile” was publicly burned in both Paris and Geneva while Geneva also set ablaze the “Contrat social” and issued an arrest warrant for the godless author.

Rousseau fled to Yverdon and then to Môtiers, where Frederick the Great granted him asylum. Before he was expelled by Berne, he spent autumn 1765 on St. Peter’s Island in Lake Biel, studying its flora. In 1766, he fled to England where he began to write his radically honest autobiography “Confessions”. From 1768, he lived in France again, sometimes under the alias Jean-Joseph Renou, and he even returned to Paris from 1770 where he was tolerated by the authorities owing to his growing fame. Here he worked until 1775 on the autobiographical dialogue “Rousseau Judge of Jean-Jacques”, which he then tried to deposit at the altar of Notre Dame, because he feared fresh persecution, but he was denied entry. His final work, before he died in 1778 in Ermenonville, was the “Reveries of a Solitary Walker”, in which he once again looked back at his eventful life.

In 1794, sixteen years after his death, the revolutionaries transferred his mortal remains in triumph to the Panthéon, where the President of the National Convention declared: “It is to Rousseau that we owe this salubrious rebirth; he saw the people on their knees, bent crooked under sceptres and crowns, and he dared to say the words freedom and equality.”

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY  
SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH



“The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said ‘This is mine’, and found people naive enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.”

(From “Discourse on Inequality”, 1755)

Bibliography: Rousseau’s most important works are available in French, German and English in many editions.

# Assisted suicide for elderly people?

Switzerland already has a very liberal policy towards assisted suicide. A debate is now being conducted about facilitated suicide for the elderly. Facts and opinions on a sensitive issue.

SUSANNE WENGER

At the age of 91, Heinrich Oswald voluntarily ended his life with the help of the assisted suicide organisation Exit at home in the canton of Zurich and in the presence of his two sons. He had become increasingly frail in the year before his suicide. He still lived in his own home, but had suffered two serious falls, required care and the doctor had told him that he could not carry on living without a urinary catheter. "The second fall made up my father's mind that enough was enough," says Ueli Oswald, one of his sons. His father - a well-known company director and army reformer - greatly feared becoming dependent upon people. In 2009, Ueli Oswald wrote a book about the suicide of his elderly father. He had always emphasised that he was not tired of life but rather "had lived long enough".

It was a question of going when he had had enough. Switzerland's largest assisted suicide organisation, Exit Deutsche Schweiz, wants to facilitate such rational suicides. This spring, the general assembly accepted an amendment to the articles of association with the aim of assisting suicide in old age. Previously, Exit primarily provided assisted suicide for people with incurable, chronic illnesses, most commonly cancer. This requires a doctor's prescription for the lethal drug, a barbiturate.

However, one in five assisted suicides at Exit does not concern the terminally ill but instead elderly people with numerous age-related complaints. They no longer see and hear well, are in pain, are incontinent, are no longer mobile and are exhausted.

Elderly people who wish to die should in future be given "facilitated access" to means of dying. Self-determination is a human right "until the last", writes a group of elderly Exit campaigners who are extremely committed.

## Not begging for a "dignified death"

"The initiative for assisted suicide in old age comes from the Swiss people," remarks Bernhard Sutter, Vice-President and spokesperson for Exit. Many elderly people do not believe it is right that a 90-year-old should have to plead for a "dignified death". Exit does not say how exactly the threshold should be lowered: "That must be regulated by the legislator." Nor does Exit specify the age from which facilitated suicide should apply: "How someone feels in old age is specific to the individual," points out the Vice-President. There are fit 90-year-olds and 80-year-olds with already very restrictive illnesses. Dying cannot be governed by rigid categories: "Only those concerned can decide for themselves based on their subjective perceptions."

Switzerland has a liberal policy towards assisted suicide. It has been permitted for over 60 years as long as the assistance is not for self-serving reasons. Criticism has been and still is voiced by religious and medical groups who point to the possibility of pain-relieving, palliative care. There is nonetheless a broad consensus that it should be possible to take one's own life in a humane way in the event of unbearable suffering. In 2011, the Federal Council rejected its original plans to restrict or even prohibit or-

ganised assisted suicide. It said the applicable law was sufficient to combat any abuse. However, the debate has now been relaunched with an eye on assisted suicide for the elderly. The easing of regulations that Exit is aiming to secure is likely to require legal amendments. Cautionary voices at Exit therefore fear that the campaign will ultimately not result in further liberalisation but, on the contrary, lead to more restrictive regulation of assisted suicide.

## "Problematic signal"

Doctors face a critical test. According to their professional standards, they can only administer lethal drugs to patients in the last stage of a serious illness. "Exit is now pursuing a path whereby any kind of world-weariness and wish to die would justify medical assistance with suicide. I am sceptical about that," says the Zurich-based geriatrician Daniel Grob in an interview with the "Tages-Anzeiger". Instead of just pulling out the prescription pad for lethal drugs, the approach should be to listen to exactly what lies behind the elderly person's wish to die. Various geriatricians point out that it could be a manifestation of depression. Those around the person then wrongly attribute social withdrawal and lethargy to old age. But if the depression were treated, the person concerned could recover, they say.

Gerontologist and theologian Heinz Rügger from the Diakoniewerk Neumünster – Schweizerische Pflegerinnenschule foundation, which runs a hospital and several care homes in the canton of Zurich, fears adverse social consequences.

**My will be done!**  
Elderly people are increasingly adopting this attitude when it comes to death





### Assisted suicide in Switzerland

There are several assisted suicide organisations in Switzerland. With around 75,000 members, Exit Deutsche Schweiz is the largest. It restricts its activity to persons residing in Switzerland or with Swiss citizenship. In rare cases, Exit provides assisted suicide for Swiss citizens abroad, as spokesperson Bernhard Sutter explains. These are primarily Exit members who have emigrated after retirement and suddenly fall ill with cancer. In 2013, Exit Deutsche Schweiz carried out 459 assisted suicides. In 2012 the number was 356. Every case is investigated by the police and the office of the public prosecutor. In contrast to Exit, the Swiss organisation Dignitas also provides assisted suicide for foreigners wishing to die. According to a study by the University of Zurich, suicide tourism is growing in Switzerland. (swe)

Rüegger, himself a member of Exit, actually supports the right of individuals to end their life. “Facilitating suicide for the elderly could, however, put subtle pressure on the older generation not to become a burden to anyone,” says the ethics expert. The

need for care is already primarily perceived as a cost factor. And people fear losing their autonomy in old age and suffering from dementia. Old age has negative connotations. In this climate, Exit is sending out “a problematic signal”, according to Rüegger.

### A “long-life” society

The Swiss population is becoming increasingly aged. Statisticians are predicting a particularly sharp rise among the over-80s. In this “long-life society” a different ageing culture is required in Rüegger’s view. “Being often dependent upon others is part of life.” That is not insulting but normal. Enjoying life to the full until there is no more left and then deciding for oneself to voluntarily end one’s own life in a clinical way – this positive image painted by some advocates of suicide in old age does not convince the academic. Suicide here becomes “almost the final part of a wellness treatment”. Rüegger believes that dying in a different way is also a dignified death. Trials, tribulations and debil-

itating experiences should be incorporated into life plans once more, he thinks.

The question is whether Exit cultivates fear of ageing. Are the elderly being put under pressure to end their own lives in due time and in a socially acceptable way? Vice-President Bernhard Sutter counters: “A 90-year-old long-suffering patient does not fear old age, he has been old for years. But he wants to end his suffering which could go on for months or years.” Exit is not planning to extend assisted suicide or to change the criteria for it: “It is about someone who is very elderly having to provide less justification, for example, to a doctor than a 65-year-old does.” Careful checks will continue to be made to determine whether the person wishing to die is under any pressure. If this turns out to be the case, assistance from Exit will be out of the question because the party assisting the suicide would then become liable to prosecution.

The risks of extending the grounds for assisted suicide should be taken seriously, according to the author Ueli Oswald, whose father voluntarily ended his life with Exit. However, the decision must ultimately lie with the individual: “Death was what my father wanted in his heart.” The family shared his last moments and were able to say goodbye. This would have been different if his father had secretly planned to throw himself in front of a train or to shoot himself: “But this way he went peacefully. I could see that.”

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SUSANNE WENGER IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST. SHE LIVES IN BERNE.

## Tobogganing makes a comeback

Less expensive than skiing, great fun and easy to do, tobogganing is an activity that is enjoying great success at Swiss resorts.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

In a famous scene from *The Fearless Vampire Killers* by Roman Polanski, the visitors to a castle inhabited by undead escape on a sledge. The group hurtle across the winter landscape at full speed in a spray of snow, unaware that their beautiful companion Sarah has already been turned into a vampire... It is a cinematographic moment that deliciously combines joy and fear and it springs to mind every time I have the chance to do some tobogganing in the Alps.

"Tobogganing is fantastic," confirms Edith Zweifel, Head of Communications at Zermatt Tourism. The resort showcases the Gornergrat run, a ten-minute descent that takes tobogganists back down into the valley with a stunning view of the Matterhorn en route. "It's very beautiful at sunset, in the shadow and the cold," remarks the native of Valais, finding the words to describe this activity originally intended for work purposes – the transport of wood – and which has developed into a leisure pursuit. "The wooden toboggan, which is very simple, is rooted in tradition and reminds us of our childhood. You can go down the run as a family or with friends, and the rides offer a great opportunity to have a laugh together. You can also use toboggans as a bench to admire the view or to enjoy a picnic," sums up Edith Zweifel.

In the adjacent valley of Saas Fee, Chantal Imseng, the resort's Head of Marketing, recounts her descents on the run linking Kreuzboden and Saas-Grund. This time it is an 11-kilometre descent! "It's near to

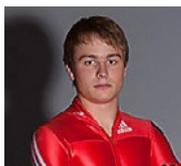
where I live. I often go there alone with my dog, who runs in front. When we are in a group, we wait for each other after the big turns. There are falls, and when you brake with your feet, snow sprays everywhere. It is this element of fun and relaxation that appeals to people about this sport," explains this tobogganing enthusiast.

The decline in the use of ski lifts is also forcing resorts to diversify the activities they offer. "People love winter but not everybody skies," points out Chantal Imseng. The toboggan runs are part of the efforts being made to attract visitors to the mountains. Tobogganing is also much less expensive than skiing, with daily hire costing from 6 to 15 francs, plus the cost of the train or ski lift. Some runs can also be reached by foot and are therefore free. In Kreuzboden, for example, the ski lift costs 12 francs (with a half-fare card) and toboggan hire half of that. Sledging on a Davos-type toboggan is within everyone's reach.

In Zermatt, the customers are mainly Europeans and Scandinavians (Father Christmas does not come from China after all!), but according to Edith Zweifel, Indian tourists - for example - are starting to take up the sport. The simplicity of tobogganing is attracting more and more day visitors, observes Luc Pignat, Director of Tourism at La Tzoumaz, a resort located in the Verbier ski area. General demand is increasing explains Martin Hannar, Director of Marketing in Sierre-Anniviers. "In Chandolin, for example, there are around sixty toboggans available for hire compared with just ten around ten years

## Every year, the first run generates a bit of fear

Ronald Auderset, 24 years old, from Fribourg is the Swiss number one in the skeleton.



track. The luge is slightly faster than the skeleton. Lugers set off on the same track but from the top of a tower. In the skeleton, we run for about 30 metres before jumping on and the starting point is 10 metres lower than in the luge.

**What emotions do you feel during a skeleton run?**

It's high-octane stuff. It's extremely enjoyable.

**Isn't racing at this speed with your head in front dangerous?**

On my first descent, I wanted to put my feet in front to protect my head. But the skeleton is actually less

dangerous than the luge. This is because if you lose control, you can't hit the wall at a right angle. I've done around 450 runs and I've only injured myself twice, in St. Moritz. I've had a broken collar bone and once hit my head.

**What attributes does a good skeleton racer need?**

It is easier to learn how to steer well than to push well which explains why quite a few sprint athletes participate in this sport. You have to work hard at the start. Once you are on the track, you quickly have to gain composure to retain precision. Mental strength matters because the more



The skeleton at the Olympic

**"SWISS REVIEW": What is the difference between the luge and the skeleton?**

RONALD AUDERSET: The head is positioned in front with the skeleton. The face is therefore closer to the ice than in the luge: 2 or 3 cm from the

ago.” There are now enough tobogganists to divide the run according to styles. “Tourists often toboggan after a morning or a long half-day of skiing,” explains Martin Hannart. “The pros practice in the morning when the snow is quite hard. Finally, the families mainly come in the afternoon.” Even those who enjoy freeride skiing are accommodated here. “When the conditions for powder snow are poor, they are often good for tobogganing and vice-versa,” explains the Siere-Anniviers Marketing Director. In Zermatt, the Gornergrat tobogganing run alone generated 3,000 train tickets last season, according to Edith Zweifel. With night-time runs (after a fondue), family descents and sporting events, the toboggan’s days are far from over. Happy Christmas!

## Luge, “Rodel”, Skeleton

Sliding along an icy path or track, alone or in twos, with your head facing forwards or backwards on a fixed or dynamic toboggan - the world of tobogganing is vast!



Tobogganing as a fun pursuit for young and old is being heavily promoted by winter sports resorts and mountain railways

In German-speaking Switzerland, the toboggan has two names: “Schlitten” or “Rodel”, which is not the case in French. The first is a basic version, the Davos model, which costs around 200 Swiss francs. It is the toboggan of our memories. You sit or lie on it and off you go. Anyone who has used this timeless classic will testify to its annoying tendency to go straight on despite the bends in the run.

A “Rodel” requires greater finesse and allows more manoeuvrability. Its two runners are movable enabling the toboggan to be steered with a push of the feet. A kind of hand-held rein allows tobogganists to hold on securely and to accentuate the gyratory movement. In the bends, tobogganists use one arm for balance and the other to pull on the rein. To brake, they place their feet flat on the snow. “You don’t use your heels,” explains Albert Steffen, a tobogganing instructor in Grindelwald in the canton of Berne, in a video. This top-of-the-range toboggan, which can reach speeds of up to 50 km/h, can cost as much as 1,000 Swiss francs, explains Martin Hannart, Director at Siere-Anniviers. “Tobogganing is very ‘German Swiss’ and they make up 75 % of those registered for competitions,” he remarks.

“But French-speaking Swiss and foreigners use them for fun.”

He also points out that toboggans are travelling increasingly fast. “Even the Davos models are faster because all of the wooden runner is now covered in steel, whereas before only part of it was,” concludes the expert.

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STÉPHANE HERZOG IS AN EDITOR WITH THE  
“SWISS REVIEW”



Games in Sochi: Gold medal winner Elizabeth Yarnold (GB)

nervous a competitor is, the more they move and the more time is lost.

### Is the skeleton a Swiss invention?

It was British tourists who attempted to descend head first in Grisons, which means it is part of our history.

### How does Switzerland fare in competition?

It remains a minor sport but we have had some great athletes. First of all, there was Gregor Stähli. The luger Gregory Carigiet (editor’s note: he announced his retirement in April 2014

citing a lack of funds to compete at the top level as his reason) and Maya Pedersen-Bieri, gold medallist in the skeleton in Turin in 2006, have achieved a great deal. Unfortunately, there is a major lack of sponsorship.

### What is your supreme goal in this sport?

The Olympic Games in South Korea in 2018. In order to participate, I have to remain number one here to get into the World Cup. There is only one place in the skeleton to go to the Olympics.

INTERVIEW BY STÉPHANE HERZOG

# The magic of the circus ring

There are lots of major and even more minor players on the circus scene in Switzerland. A history of artists bitten by the circus bug and glamorous families.

MARKUS DÜTSCHLER

If you ask people in Switzerland which Swiss circuses they know, one answer is guaranteed – Knie. The Knie family circus is the most famous and largest in the industry and is also referred to as the national circus. The number of its competitors could be counted on the fingers of one hand for a long period, but the scene has expanded since the 1980s. Around two dozen circuses perform across the country today. Creative projects are very much in vogue, be it alternative theatres, cellar cinemas, cabarets or even circuses.

While the offering has increased, audiences have only grown to a limited extent. Many of the small circuses live from hand to mouth. The competition is intense, and those in the industry endeavour to take the bread from one another's mouths. The upshot of this is circuses continually facing bankruptcy. Soon afterwards the very same people are often touring again with freshly painted wagons and under a new name. "The show must go on," as the mantra goes. That also applies to the troupe of artists: If someone sprains an ankle, the troupe performs the slightly modified routine with fewer people in the next show.

## The Gasser dynasty

Circus life is not just tough for smaller players who are relatively new to the business. The Nock circus founded in 1850, which - depending on the definition - is the oldest and second-largest in Switzerland, also has to fight hard for its audience. Nock is run by three women, Franziska, Alexandra and Verena, members of the seventh generation of the Nock family. Franz Nock,

now almost 80 years of age, also still travels with the company. As the boss, he often complained of adversity in circus life and, above all, about increasing site fees and tighter regulations. Second only to Knie as a circus, Nock promises audiences high-quality performances. It appointed a figure from the theatre world as its director a number of years ago, Eugene Chaplin, whose father paid homage to the circus world in the film "The Circus". The youngest son of the "greatest comic of them all" does not make any fuss about his surname, simply remarking: "We are all somebody's child."

Many Swiss circus folk are the sons and daughters of one and the same dynasty. The Gasser clan is probably the most widely extended circus family. They even have descendants in Australia and Canada. Heinrich, who started the dynasty, was born in Hallau, Schaffhausen, in 1880. Almost like cell division, one circus was created after another in his family.

Gasser circuses have gone under financially on more than one occasion. Gasser Olympia, which promoted itself with the grandiose claim to be "the world's only circus restaurant", had to file for bankruptcy. This will hardly come as a surprise to anyone who witnessed the sad scene of sometimes almost empty plastic tables in the tent. However, the stocky director with the moustache and riding whip then started travelling the country again, now as Circus GO. The offspring of the Gasser dynasty have been and are still able to put their passion into practice with Liliput, Starlight, the Conelli Christmas Circus and Geschwister Gasser. Joining the circus and travelling across the country like nomads is



Chanel Marie Knie performed her first routine in the circus ring this year at



The act with poodles at the Nock circus



Acrobatics on the tightrope at the Starlight circus

probably one of the last adventures that one can still experience today in highly organised and safety-conscious Switzerland.

### The outrage of animal welfare campaigners

Another Gasser enterprise is Connyland in Lipperswil, Thurgau. This is not a circus but a theme park. However, the excessive regulation much bemoaned by Franz Nock has also been applied here. Federal government has prohibited the keeping of dolphins. Animals are always a contentious issue. Animal welfare campaigners and animal rights activists are so concerned about lions, horses, seals and elephants that even wild cats are rarely seen. Even at the Knie circus, which well-established animal welfare organisations acknowledge as having good animal-keeping practices, militant animal welfare campaigners hand out pamphlets in which alleged abuses are attacked. One flyer this summer, for example, showed bears riding on a motorbike. This act is not performed at Knie.

At the circus, people are supposed to be transported from their everyday lives for two hours into a jolly, magical glitter world where the laws of physics seemingly cease to apply and slapstick comedy also has its place. However, the motley crew of circus performers are not immune to events in the outside world. At the Harlekin circus in Berne, for example, there was tension in spring during the Crimean crisis between members of the Ukrainian circus orchestra and a Russian clown duo. In the ring they were nevertheless all professional and worked impeccably together.

### The difficult art of being a clown

A good clown is multi-talented – acrobatic, musical and quick-witted, with a sense of self-irony and charm. Finding good clowns is therefore a hard task.

An almost tragically miscast performer was “Little Helmut”, who was with Gasser-Olympia for years. Helmut Werner, a man of small stature, appeared in the circus TV series “Salto Mortale” as a “Lilliputian”. At Olympia, he was shown charity, so to speak. He was not funny and to laugh at little people in the age of political correctness has become frowned upon. Even those not seeking a once-in-a-century phenomenon like Grock – the Swiss clown Charles Adrien Wettach (1880-1959) who achieved worldwide fame under this name – will have difficulty striking it lucky. Famous clowns include “Les Rosyann”, the Italian Rossi brothers. The virtuoso musical instrumentalists are cultivating a genre whose inspirations date back to the commedia dell’arte of the 16th century: the sly, stern and smug wise clown and the stupid clown who is loved more by the audience. Nock once employed this troupe for four successive seasons.

### Cabaret artists in the circus

Good fortune befell the Knie circus this year with the poetic clown Larible. But even the leading circus only manages to pull this off every few years. Early on Fredy Knie junior brought humorous (and other) star performers from the theatre scene to the circus ring: Dimitri in 1970, Emil (Steinberger) in 1977 and the Mummenschanz Troupe in 1988. Knie has since continually “poached” from the now rich cabaret scene. The announcement of the arrival of the Fischbach Duo at Knie had a tremendous impact in 1998. It subsequently became possible to transfer cabaret artists, who were often famous from TV, to the circus. Examples include the dawdling Bernese juggling duo Flügzüg, Gardi Hutter, Ursus and Nadeschkin, Massimo Rocchi and Viktor Giacobbo. Most successfully made the step from the stage to the circus ring. But hardly any really caught the

bug. They all returned to where they came from.

### Almost like the royal family

The circus is glamour, day-to-day. However, of all the clans only the Knies have achieved the “royal family” status required to appear in the glossy and people magazines. Géraldine Katharina Knie was the first to appear on all the cover pages. The daughter of Fredy jun. and Mary-José, she hooked one of the four Italian Pellegrini brothers during the 1999 tour. The marriage did not last but Fredy jun. was delighted with his grandson, Ivan Frédéric, attracting great media interest. The grandfather, accompanied by reporters, told the small boy, still in nappies and with a dummy in his mouth, to take his afternoon nap to be ready for the evening performance – “Be a good boy and go to sleep!” Ivan has now become a handsome teenager and an accomplished horse whisperer. Chanel Marie Knie became the new star in 2014. The three-year-old daughter of Géraldine Knie and her second husband, Maycol Erani, made her first appearance on horseback in the circus ring.

Franco Knie, Fredy’s cousin, is also already a grandfather. He has five children from three marriages – the two youngest are the five-year-old twins Maria Dora and Timothy Charles. The future of the company seems to be in safe hands. The tabloid press had a field day with Franco’s liaison with Princess Stéphanie of Monaco. The daughter of a prince even lived in a caravan in 2003 to be close to Franco during his performances. The relationship ended soon afterwards. However, republican Switzerland was delighted with the court gossip and association with the operetta monarchy on the Côte d’Azur. This is where the really big circus artists perform every year at the “Festival du Cirque”.

MARKUS DÜTSCHLER IS AN EDITOR AT THE NEWSPAPER “DER BUND”



the age of three



## OSA advice

*We intend to return to Switzerland in the foreseeable future and to take up residence there again. What is the situation with regard to paying customs duty on our goods?*

When entering Switzerland, household effects (household items, clothing, paintings, valuables, etc.) can be brought in duty-free if you are transferring your place of residence to Switzerland. This is subject to the requirement that the imported items have been used by you personally for at least six months and that you continue to use them after they have been brought into Switzerland.

Household effects also include cars, motor boats and aeroplanes. However, the duty-free importation of vehicles is subject to the condition that they continue to be used for at least a year after import. If a vehicle is sold before the end of this period, the customs duty must be paid retrospectively.

The customs exemption on household effects has to be applied for from the customs office with a special form. A detailed list of the imported items must be attached. You do not have to attend in person during the customs clearance process. This process can also be carried out by a third party, such as a forwarding agent.

Pets are a special case. Individual provisions apply here, for example, with regard to veterinary inspections, vaccinations and the prevention of epidemic diseases. Species protection regulations also apply to plants and animals. You will find full details and information sheets online.

OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Website of the Swiss Customs Administration:

[www.ezv.admin.ch](http://www.ezv.admin.ch) > Information individuals > Personal property or Animals and plants in the menu on the left

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

### Information on the right to participate in votes and elections

The Swiss Abroad can participate in elections and referenda in Switzerland provided they are registered on an electoral roll in Switzerland. Swiss citizens are not automatically enrolled when they register with a consulate or embassy abroad. They must explicitly request the right to vote. Swiss abroad are usually registered on the electoral roll at the commune where they last resided in Switzerland. This enrolment must be renewed regularly – at least every four years – with the commune (not the representation abroad). This does not take place automatically. Some communes regularly ask their eligible voters abroad to do this, while others do not. The forms for enrolment and renewal can be found at: [www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/doc/publi/ptrali/merkbl.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/doc/publi/ptrali/merkbl.html) “Political rights”

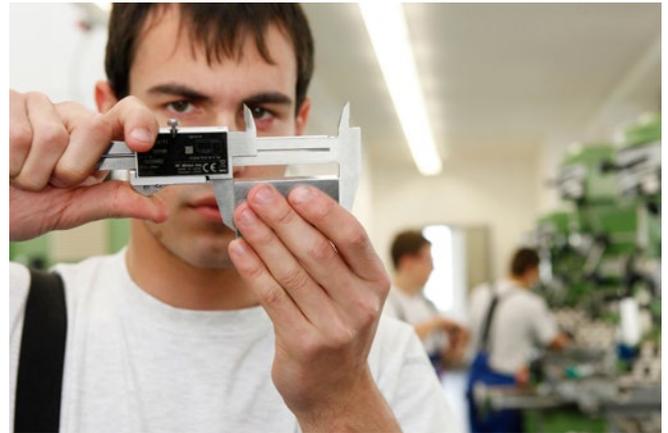
Direct link: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/doc/publi/ptrali/merkbl.html>

## Educational opportunities in Switzerland

The Formation in Switzerland department at [educationsuisse](http://www.educationsuisse.ch) once again received more enquiries this year than in the previous one. The option of returning to their native country for vocational training is increasingly attractive for young Swiss Abroad, especially for those from countries with weak economies.

The majority still set their sights on taking a university degree as this holds great prestige and presents good career opportunities in many countries of residence of the Swiss Abroad. However, there is also increasing interest in courses at universities of applied sciences and in the so-called dual system (apprenticeship in a company as well as educational courses).

Switzerland's educational landscape is very diverse and has changed over recent years. It is not always easy for parents who have lived abroad for many years and their children to find their way through this wide range of options.



### Traditional universities, universities of applied sciences and apprenticeships?

We are often asked what the main differences are between traditional universities, universities of applied sciences and apprenticeships. Whereas courses at traditional universities are highly academic or theory-oriented, the universities of applied sciences are more focussed on application and qualifying for a profession. However, the universities of applied sciences are also structured according to the Bologna system with bachelor and master degrees. They offer a wide range of courses in the specialist disciplines of engineering, economics, design, healthcare, social work and art, and they train sought-after specialists, men and women, as engineers, architects, computer scientists, translators, designers and care service professionals. The doctorate level (dissertation) is nevertheless currently restricted to traditional universities.

The dual vocational training system with an apprenticeship is often said to be one of the strengths of the Swiss economy. It does in fact play a significant role by integrating young people and making them marketable. The transition from an apprenticeship to working life is often easier than from education. Well-qualified professionals make a major contribution to boosting innovation, productivity and quality of

work. After an apprenticeship, young people immediately find themselves thrown into the world of work. They nevertheless still have many opportunities to undertake further training and to advance their careers, whether with a vocational school-leaving qualification, at a higher technical college or at other institutions of further education.

The Swiss education system boasts outstanding flexibility and generally enables open access to the various educational offerings.

Further information can be found on our website at [www.educationsuisse.ch](http://www.educationsuisse.ch), which now covers the topic of education and training in Switzerland.



*educationsuisse – Formation in Switzerland*

*Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND*

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## The offers for young people this winter

*The Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has organised a wide range of sporting and educational offers for the coming months.*

### **New Year ski camp in Sedrun from 27 December 2014 to 5 January 2015**

A highly varied programme awaits you in the mountains of Grisons. In addition to skiing or snowboarding lessons in small groups and a diverse fringe programme (snowblading, ski racing, hiking by torchlight, ball sports, climbing, ice skating, dancing, swimming and workshops, etc.), which will provide you with physical challenges, there is also time to make and enjoy new friendships. Start 2015 in the company of other young Swiss Abroad in the Swiss mountains! You will be looked after by a well-trained and highly motivated team of leaders.

### **Language course in Berne from 5 to 16 January 2015**

Four lessons of language teaching in the morning, joint activities in the afternoon and a welcoming host family. We will inspire you to learn German as one of the four national languages.

### **Sports holiday camp on the Belalp from 14 to 22 February 2015**

Take part in the first sports holiday camp in sun-kissed Valais. You will experience the wonderful winter landscape on the Belalp with sport and fun galore.

In addition to skiing and snowboarding lessons, a diverse indoor sports programme awaits you at the Olympica sport and wellness hotel with climbing, badminton, ball sports, swimming and aerobics. You will also take part in outdoor activities, such as snowshoeing, airboarding, tobogganing, ice skating and much more besides. You cannot miss the opportunity to visit probably the most famous of Swiss mountains, the Matterhorn in Zermatt. Our highly motivated team of leaders are waiting for you!

### **Easter camp in Davos from 4 to 12 April 2015**

Surrounded by mountains and 300 kilometres of piste spread across 85 runs, Davos-Klosters is one of the largest snow sport regions in the Alps. The alpine town is a spa and conference venue and also has plenty to offer culturally. This camp presents a unique opportunity to get to know this winter sports resort better and to see out the ski and snowboarding season. The OSA team provides skiing and snowboarding lessons as well as a diverse and enjoyable fringe programme.

### **Educational offers**

We will provide you with an insight into the Swiss educational landscape, tailored to your wishes. In cooperation with *educationsuisse – Formation in Switzerland*, you will acquire a better understanding of Switzerland's education system. You will receive the opportunity to obtain advice on your future educational path and we organise «taster days» at educational institutions. We also aim to provide contact with students in the specialist fields of interest to you.

*Further information on the offers can be found on our websites at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) and [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org).*

## Services provided by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and partner institutions

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), a foundation governed by private law, is a centre of expertise for safeguarding the interests of Swiss citizens living abroad. Besides the publication of "Swiss Review", it provides various services for Swiss citizens abroad in collaboration with its partner organisations.

■ **Legal advice.** Free advice on emigrating abroad and returning to Switzerland.

[www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) – "Consultation" section

■ **Network.** The website [SwissCommunity.org](http://SwissCommunity.org) provides the opportunity to network with Swiss citizens all over the world.

[www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org)

■ **Offers for children and young people.** Organisation of holiday camps and language courses, etc. for young

Swiss abroad seeking a better understanding of their native country.

[www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) > Offers

■ **Advice on education and training in Switzerland.** Young Swiss Abroad wishing to train or study in Switzerland receive support and guidance in selecting training and educational opportunities and making grant applications.

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



**Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)**

**Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND**

**Tel. +41 31 356 61 00**

**[info@aso.ch](mailto:info@aso.ch)**

## Young citizens' festivities with the President of the Swiss Confederation

On 22 October 2014, Swiss Abroad also took part for the first time in the young citizens' festivities in Berne at the invitation of Swiss President Didier Burkhalter. The Swiss Abroad now of full age were informed by the mayor Alexander Tschäppät and the Swiss President about their political rights but also about their associated obligations as Swiss citizens.

In the week before, at a seminar for young citizens, the emphasis had been placed on political participation and Swiss



history. In addition to workshops with the Umbrella Organisation of Swiss Youth Parliaments (DSJ) and the Swiss National Youth Council (SNYC), there was also time for excursions. They visited the Rütli, the "birthplace of Switzerland", the Museum of the Swiss Charters of Confederation in Schwyz and the Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen. There were, of course, also cultural trips, including visits to Cailler, Switzerland's oldest chocolate manufacturer, and the H.R. Giger Museum and a culinary stopover at the exhibition cheese dairy in Gruyère.

The young adults were also given an insight into what a possible course of education in Switzerland might be like and what requirements they would have to meet. Those who took part in this richly varied week were able to gain a closer understanding of their second home country, both politically and culturally.

## Summer camps for 8 to 14-year-olds

Are you between 8 and 14 years of age? Would you like to spend 14 days in Switzerland and get to know your homeland better? Then sign up for one of the holiday camps organised by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) that are held during July and August.

Interacting with participants from other countries beyond linguistic, cultural and national boundaries is a unique opportunity to make new friendships and enjoy unforgettable experiences.

### Camp language

Participants come from all over the world and speak different languages (E, G, F, S, I). The team of leaders conduct the programmes in English, German and French. The camp language is not dictated by the language spoken in the camp's location.

### Costs

The costs are set out in the list below. The camp fees can be reduced in certain circumstances. An application form may be requested with the registration form.

### Travel/meeting point

The meeting point is around lunchtime at Zurich airport. Travel to Zurich airport and the return journey home from there are organised and paid for by parents.

### Registration

Full details of the individual holiday camps and the registration form will be available from January 2015 at [www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch). We would also be pleased to post you our information brochure on request. The registration deadline is 15 March 2015.

### Summer camps in 2015 – Overview of dates, camp locations and age groups

Sat 27 June to Fri 10 July 2015:

Reckingen (VS) for 36 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900

Sat 27 June to Fri 10 July 2015:

Aurigeno (TI) for 40 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900

Wed 1 to Fri 10 July 2015:

Swiss Trip for 24 children aged 12 to 16, price: CHF 950

Sat 11 to Fri 24 July 2015:

Eggberge (UR) for 36 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900

Sat 11 to Fri 24 July 2015:

La Punt (GR) for 48 children aged 8 to 14, price: CHF 900

Sat 25 July to Fri 7 August 2015:

Diemtigtal (BE) for 36 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900

Sat 25 July to Fri 7 August 2015:

Charmey (FR) for 42 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900

Sat 8 to Fri 21 August 2015:

Prêles (BE) for 42 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900

Sat 8 to Fri 21 August 2015:

Sailing boat trip on Lake Geneva (VD) for 40 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 950

*Please contact our office for further information:*

*Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)  
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND  
Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 16, fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01  
Email: [info@sjas.ch](mailto:info@sjas.ch), [www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch)*



Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer  
Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger  
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero  
Fundazioni per iuvenis svizzeri a l'estero

# The Swiss Abroad Act has been adopted

*The most important law for the Swiss community abroad will soon become a reality unless a referendum is called contrary to expectations.*

On 26 September 2014, the Federal Assembly adopted the “Federal Act on Swiss Persons and Institutions Abroad”, in short the Swiss Abroad Act. The National Council approved the law by 160 votes to 18 with 18 abstentions. The Council of States passed it with no opposing votes and one abstention. It was published in the Federal Gazette (source texts in German, French and Italian see bottom of this article) on 7 October 2014, which means the three-month referendum deadline expires on 15 January 2015.

The law does not introduce any fundamentally new rights or obligations but brings together the most significant aspects for the over 730,000 Swiss Abroad in a single act so they are no longer distributed between various laws, ordinances and regulations. It covers the political rights of the Swiss Abroad, social welfare, consular protection and other consular services. The possibility of electronic voting in referenda and elections is also expressly incorporated into the act. The Federal Council can, in addition, take measures to encourage the exercising of political rights by our compatriots abroad.

The Swiss Abroad Act also forms the basis for federal government to support institutions which promote relations between the Swiss Abroad themselves and with Switzerland or provide them with assistance. The law specifically mentions the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA).

The Act explicitly states that Swiss citizens who reside or travel abroad bear personal responsibility for doing so. Personal responsibility involves, in particular, avoiding risks by considering alternative courses of action or overcoming difficulties by one’s own means in the event of danger. Personal responsibility also includes observing the laws of the country of residence or country visited. What is more, Switzerland should only act in a subsidiary capacity, particularly with regard to social welfare and consular protection. The law also defines a single point of contact which constitutes a significant part of the efforts towards a comprehensive policy on the Swiss Abroad referred to as “coherent” in the parliamentary proposal. With the central single point of contact for all matters concerning the Swiss Abroad, the FDFA will ensure the requirements-led provision of services as a public service.

Provided a referendum is not called, the law can enter into force on 1 November 2015 at the earliest. The drafting work on the ordinance on the Swiss Abroad Act will continue until then. The most significant changes for the Swiss Abroad will be explained in detail in “Swiss Review” over the course of 2015.

The Swiss Abroad Act goes back to the postulate submitted by Filippo Lombardi, Council of States member from Ticino, entitled “The Swiss Abroad – a link to the world”. In its requested report on policy on the Swiss Abroad, the Federal Council acknowledges the importance of the Swiss Abroad and comes to the conclusion that setting out a comprehensive policy on the Swiss Abroad would be beneficial. Following this report, on 15 June 2011 Filippo Lombardi submitted the parliamentary initiative “for a Swiss Abroad Act”, which was accepted by the Federal Assembly at the beginning of 2012. In close cooperation with the FDFA, the Council of States’ competent Political Institutions Committee drew up the bill and presented it to Parliament on 17 January 2014.

DIVISION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE SWISS ABROAD

*The text of the Swiss Abroad Act can be found at:*

*German: [www.admin.ch/opc/de/federal-gazette/2014/7229.pdf](http://www.admin.ch/opc/de/federal-gazette/2014/7229.pdf)*

*French: [www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2014/6965.pdf](http://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2014/6965.pdf)*

*Italian: [www.admin.ch/opc/it/federal-gazette/2014/6213.pdf](http://www.admin.ch/opc/it/federal-gazette/2014/6213.pdf)*



The Aletsch Arena in Bettmeralp, Valais

## At the turn of the year

The Consular Directorate wishes all “Swiss Review” readers a wonderful and peaceful festive period and every success and happiness in 2015. We look forward to continuing our successful relationship.

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“Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 41st year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 400,000, including 140,000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year. The ordering parties

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All Swiss Abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Berne. [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch)

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to the editorial office in Berne.



## New FDFA website

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) launched a new modern and well-structured website in mid-October 2014. At [www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch) you will find comprehensive coverage of political issues, information on the consular services of the Swiss representations abroad and on living abroad, country dossiers, FDFA travel information and much more.

The content of the FDFA webpages is now thematically focused on its target groups (Swiss Abroad, Swiss travelling abroad, foreign tourists in Switzerland, media, etc.). Visitors to the website can access the desired content directly via the section headings.

In addition to the FDFA homepage, there are linked websites for specific topics, such as European politics or development cooperation. The modern design is functional and well organised, and a clear visual style presents the FDFA's commitments in a contemporary way with specifically selected topics.

### A webpage for every country

The information on Switzerland's relations with other countries, emigration and living abroad has been restructured. The activities, responsibilities and services of the Swiss embassies, consulates general, regional consular centres and the development cooperation and humanitarian aid offices have been brought together on one webpage per country.

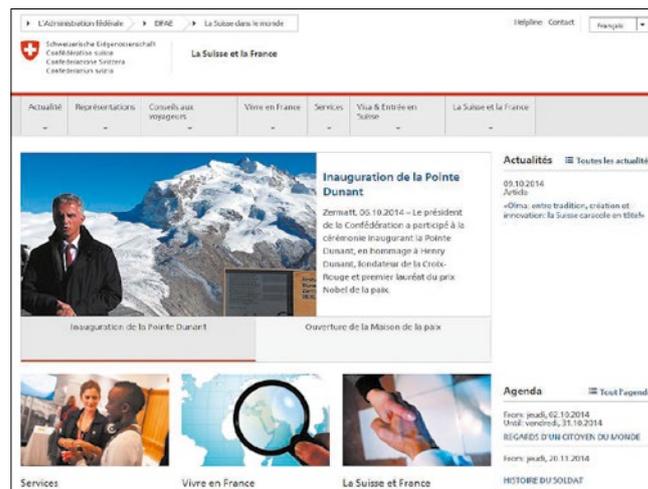
### The following topics appear on every country webpage:

- > News
- > Representations
- > Travel advice
- > Living in ...
- > Services
- > Visa and entry into Switzerland
- > Switzerland and ...

Users therefore obtain direct access to the topics and services of interest to them when visiting the country pages.

"News" contains information from the Swiss representation in the destination country and an agenda with details of events. The Swiss presence and its responsibilities are briefly described under "Representations". The "Living in ..." section is aimed at Swiss citizens residing in the country concerned as well as those who are planning to emigrate.

The wide range of consular "services" is set out in its own comprehensive section. General information is now available in four or five languages (German, French, Italian, English and sometimes Spanish). The "Visa and entry into Switzerland" section takes visitors to the relevant information of the responsible federal authority. "Switzerland and ..." provides an insight into the various aspects of bilateral relations between the two countries.

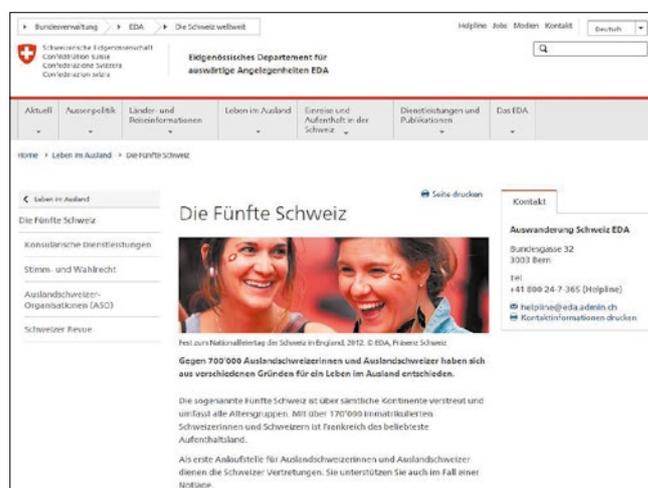


The information previously published in various places is now being provided in a user-friendly way on "country-specific websites" for 134 countries. Pictured is the country website for France: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/france/fr/home.html>

The details of the FDFA's helpline, which is available to Swiss citizens around the clock, are also easy to find. They are listed in the footer on every page and in the right-hand column on selected pages.

Website visitors can also explore the content using a high-performance search function. Every single webpage is searched in all languages for content-relevant keywords, and search results are displayed based on relevance. The search function is therefore a key tool for accessing the content sought even faster.

TEAM PROJECT-WEBEDA, GENERAL SECRETARIAT FDFA



The FDFA homepage: <https://www.eda.admin.ch> – Swiss abroad – "Living abroad"

## Publications

### Politorbis

Politorbis is a review of Switzerland's foreign policy published by the FDFA in German and French. The 58th edition entitled "Bei Not und Krise im Ausland" (Distress and Crisis Abroad) was produced by the Relations with the Swiss Abroad division at the FDFA's Consular Directorate. It outlines the development of Switzerland's consular protection and crisis management from the Luxor attack in 1997 to the present day. From issues faced by travellers to moving accounts of experiences from people involved in crisis management, this edition is a fascinating read with its wide-ranging topics.

Download the 58th edition here at [www.eda.admin.ch/publikationen](http://www.eda.admin.ch/publikationen)

Printed versions can be ordered from: [politorbis@eda.admin.ch](mailto:politorbis@eda.admin.ch) indicating the reference: "Ref. 58, 3/2014"

### Switzerland and the EU

The new "Switzerland and the European Union" brochure is now available. It provides an overview of how the EU works as well as its origins and development. It also contains information on Switzerland's relations with the EU, the bilateral agreements and the challenges facing Swiss policy on Europe over the coming years.

The brochure can be ordered free of charge in German, French, Italian and English (art. no. 201.335.D, 201.335.F, 201.335.I, 201.335.E) from FOBL, Federal Publication Sales, 3003 Berne, Switzerland. [www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch](http://www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch).

It is also available in electronic format on the website of the Directorate for European Affairs (DEA)

[www.eda.admin.ch/europa/publikationen](http://www.eda.admin.ch/europa/publikationen) or can be ordered there.



## Important notice

Please notify your Swiss representation of your email address(es) and mobile telephone number(s) and/or any changes to these and register at [www.swissabroad.ch](http://www.swissabroad.ch) to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters from your representation, etc.).

The latest issue of "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch). "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is sent free of charge to all households of Swiss abroad who are registered with an embassy or consulate general either in printed format or electronically (via email or as an iPad/Android app).

## Federal referenda

Two proposals will be put to the vote on 8 March 2015:

- Popular initiative of 5 November 2012 "Familien stärken! Steuerfreie Kinder- und Ausbildungszulagen" (Strengthen families! Tax-free child and educational allowances)
- Popular initiative of 17 December 2012 "Energie- statt Mehrwertsteuer" (Energy tax instead of VAT)

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlet, committees, party statements, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at [www.ch.ch/abstimmungen](http://www.ch.ch/abstimmungen).

Other referendum dates in 2015: 14 June, 18 October (federal elections), 29 November.

You will find details, instructions, useful information and further links relating to the federal elections on 18 October 2015 at [www.ch.ch/Wahlen2015](http://www.ch.ch/Wahlen2015). This is a joint website run by the Federal

Chancellery, Parliamentary Services, the Federal Statistical Office and [ch.ch](http://ch.ch).

## Popular initiatives

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

- "Für die Würde der landwirtschaftlichen Nutztiere (Hornkuh-Initiative)" (For the dignity of livestock (horned cow initiative)) (23.03.2016)
- "Für Ernährungssouveränität. Die Landwirtschaft betrifft uns alle" (For food sovereignty. Agriculture concerns us all) (30.03.2016)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found at [www.bk.admin.ch](http://www.bk.admin.ch) > Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

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Your Gateway to Switzerland



## Hooray! We lost!

Next year Switzerland will commemorate the Battle of Marignano. It is 500 years since the confederate forces suffered a devastating defeat by the French near Marignano, which is near Milan and is today called Melegnano. Between 12,000 and 14,000 people lost their lives, most of whom were Swiss. The defeat nevertheless had a positive outcome – Switzerland has never waged a war of expansion since. Marignano is therefore commonly accepted as the moment when Swiss neutrality was born, even if this is contested by many historians.



Numerous intellectuals and artists also dispute this myth. The “Kunst und Politik” (art and politics) network therefore launched the [www.marignano.ch](http://www.marignano.ch) website several months ago. Under the title “Hooray! We lost! 499 years since Marignano”, authors from all parts of the country publish articles on the battle and its consequences. The contributors include Daniel de Roulet, Alberto Nessi, Pedro Lenz and Gerhard Meister. There are reflective, defiant, enraged and amusing articles, making it a real treasure trove. Further contributions will almost certainly be added over the coming year. BE

[www.marignano.ch](http://www.marignano.ch); [www.kunst-und-politik.ch](http://www.kunst-und-politik.ch)

## Customised New York



Andreas Leuzinger and Simon Mingozzi, two young Swiss, have ventured

to undertake what many people actually dream of but do not ultimately dare do: they have made a career of something they are passionate about, which is travelling.

They moved to New York, a city that fascinates them, just under two years ago. They now provide tourists with customised advice on the place they have decided to make their home. LOCALIKE is based on the principle of “customised travelling”. Customers list their likes and interests, and LOCALIKE organises the ideal, individual travel itinerary based on these details. Customers must firstly complete a questionnaire on the homepage and create a profile. Here they are asked about their interests, likes, special requests and the duration of their visit. Three options can be booked: Selection, Smart and Personal. Selection comprises a recently researched itinerary of travel modules produced without individual consultation. It costs USD 49



a day. The cost of the other options depends upon the services provided. The positive feedback indicates that the quality of the offering is excellent. BE

[www.localike-newyork.com](http://www.localike-newyork.com)



## A hefty tome with exquisite contents

It is a weighty book in every sense. “Die Geschichte der Schweiz” (The History of Switzerland) weighs two and a half kilograms and is generally regarded as the reference work for the coming decades. Under the leadership of Basel historian Georg Kreis, a team of authors made up of leading academics from all over Switzerland presents the history of the nation, taking account of the latest developments in research. The outcome is a work (unfortunately only in German) that meets many requirements. It serves as a work of reference and teaching aid for teachers and students, but is also a very accessible book for a general readership which largely avoids specialist jargon and, where such terms are absolutely necessary, they are explained concisely in a glossary.

The book has a chronological structure and focuses on traditional political history without neglecting other approaches (social and eco-

nomie history, women’s history, etc.). Twenty-two transversal themes are also interspersed as essays, such as “family and relatives”, “foreigners in Switzerland”, “neutrality and neutralities”, “Alps and tourism” and “The Swiss army 1803 to 2011”. The design quality is outstanding: the illustrations, maps and graphics are first-class and provide a wealth of additional information. They also break up the text, give the comprehensive tome a light touch and invite readers to profitably plunge into the book at any page. JM

GEORG KREIS (ED.): “Die Geschichte der Schweiz”; Schwabe Verlag Basel 2014; 645 pages, CHF 139



## The Museum of Fine Arts Berne accepts inheritance

The Museum of Fine Arts in Berne will accept the artworks bequeathed to it by Cornelius Gurlitt (see also the August 2014 issue of “Swiss Review”). The board of trustees reached this decision on 24 November 2014. Under an agreement with Germany, paintings suspected to have been stolen by the Nazis will initially remain in Germany. The taskforce set up to deal with the Gurlitt case is to further investigate the origin of the stolen art. Germany has also undertaken to bear the costs for the restitution of paintings.

## Fight against pay inequality

Women in Switzerland still earn around 19 % less than men in the same position. The Federal Council now aims to tackle salary discrimination with a new set of measures. Employers with at least 50 staff will have to conduct an analysis of pay equality every three years and have this audited by an external body. This means that women will no longer have to provide evidence of discrimination in lawsuits over pay; the company must instead present proof of pay equality.

## Prestigious award for Swiss company

This year, the Leonardo Award, a prestigious educational prize, has been presented to a Swiss company, Bühler AG from Utzwil. It received the accolade for its multimedia teaching system “ClassUnlimited”. One of the reasons for the decision was that the virtual classroom was “exemplary and impressive”. It enables apprentices at Bühler AG to take part in a secondment abroad lasting several months in the final year of their apprenticeship without missing regular lessons with their class in Switzerland. Bühler AG has around 11,000 employees in over 140 countries and trains around 500 apprentices.

## Traditions on the UNESCO list

Eight Swiss traditions should be included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This decision was reached by the Federal Council in October. 167 traditions, ranging from the Aargau Bachfischet procession to bilingualism in Biel, are deemed intangible cultural heritage in Switzerland. The following should be included in the UNESCO list, according to the Federal Council: the approach to dealing with the avalanche risk, watchmaking, Swiss graphic design and typography, the Swiss alpine season, yodelling and the Basel carnival.

[www.lebendige-traditionen.ch](http://www.lebendige-traditionen.ch)

## René Burri

Che Guevara, in Havana in 1963, cigar in the corner of his mouth, haughtily looking past the photographer. Or Picasso, dressed in a striped shirt, a private moment in his studio. Such photographs made Swiss photographer René Burri famous worldwide. He took his first well-known photograph – Winston Churchill in Zurich – at the tender age of 13. After that he hardly ever put his “third eye”, his Leica, down. René Burri died on 20 October aged 81. “Swiss Review” published an article in homage to him in October 2013.



I wish I had my own cow. It is the finest animal. It provides milk, and you can talk to it.

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer  
when asked about his lifelong dream in a TV talk show

The donkey is a dozy brute, the elephant can but follow suit.

Wilhelm Busch (1823–1908), German poet and illustrator

I believe it is important that we reflect upon our actions to ensure we remain proud of this country.

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard in a speech on 1 August

The good I am convinced, for one, is but the bad one leaves undone.

Also Wilhelm Busch

Society is responsible for everyone, not just the young, healthy, childless and highly qualified senior executives.

Federal Councillor Alain Berset at the Conference of Swiss Publishers

Freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

George Orwell (1903–1950), British author

Fortunate events have put me at the head of the French government, but I would consider myself incapable of governing the Swiss.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), Emperor of France

In the event of an apocalypse, I would prefer to be in Switzerland as everything happens a bit later there.

Albert Einstein (1879–1955), Swiss and US citizen

Everything turns out well for the person who can wait.

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Russian author



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The best hotels.

Lodge Alpes et caetera, Vercorin, Valais

The good feeling you get of being in the right hotel doesn't have to be down to luck. Switzerland Tourism has put together for you a list of the approximately 500 best hotels in Switzerland. [MySwitzerland.com/besthotels](https://www.myswitzerland.com/besthotels)