

# SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad  
September 2017



**“Courgette” causes a stir:  
the success of the Swiss animated film**

**2017 elections in the diaspora:  
the new Council of the Swiss Abroad**

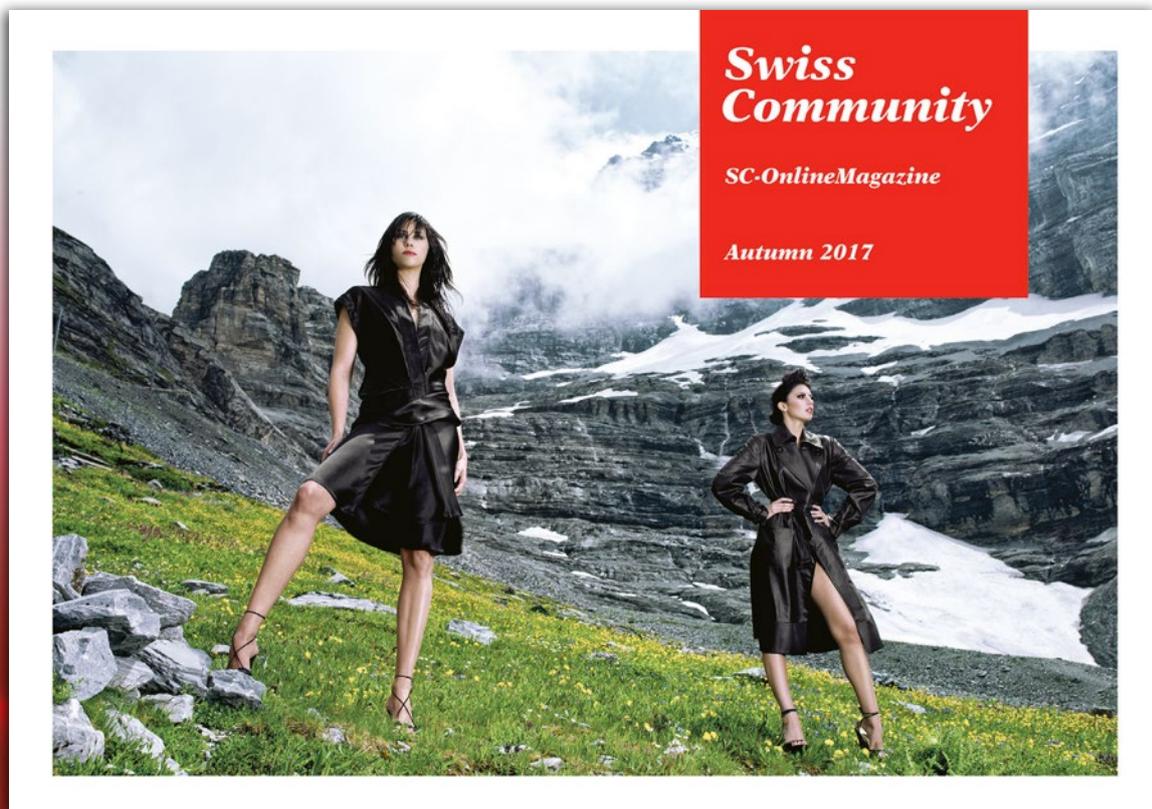
**The Jura conflict:  
Has it now been laid to rest?**



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## A commitment to "Swiss Review"



The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad has extended its "Swiss Review" contract with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) by four years. The FDFA's funding of the magazine for the diaspora has been secured for 2018.

This may sound like a formality, but it represents an important commitment to "Swiss Review" by the FDFA. In an era in which the Federal Government is

having to tighten its belt and the FDFA's budget is also being cut, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad can be proud to have ensured that its magazine will remain in its present form.

We can therefore continue fulfilling our core duty: supplying the Swiss Abroad with information to help them form an opinion in advance of referendums and elections. As always, we will supplement this with the most important news from the worlds of business, culture, sport and society. The middle of the magazine will continue to contain regional pages and news from the Swiss diaspora.

So, no change, then? Not quite. We who are the publishers of the magazine can't just sit back and relax now. Rather, we have a duty to look beyond the period up to the end of 2021. And many challenges lie ahead. The financial pressures will not diminish. We must therefore constantly ask ourselves how we can optimise our expenditure, especially with regard to sales and printing – without sacrificing quality, of course. And the reading habits of the diaspora too will constantly evolve. The subject of paper versus online issues as well as the opportunities presented by social media will continue to occupy our minds.

Our objective is to be able to meet the needs of the Swiss Abroad not just today, but also in the future. At the same time, we mustn't ignore the changes and developments that are afoot. With all this in mind, we will endeavour to keep you and all our other readers around the globe happy for many more years.

MARKO LEHTINEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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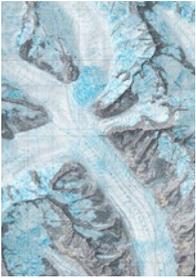


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## Swiss cartography – In the land of razor-sharp contours



Wonderful to read, learnt a lot! I have just one thing to add. Marc Lettau wrote the following about an imaginary sun casting its shadow from a north-westerly direction: “The advantage of the misplaced sun is that it allows the cartographical reality to be presented extremely vividly and therefore realistically.” I think that’s simply because we’ve got used to it. To me, it

makes more sense that the first creators of these artworks placed the imaginary sun in the top left, where their table lamp was, in order to get an idea of the relief. It’s quite possible that most of them were right-handed. The aerial and satellite pictures that we are accustomed to today tend to have the shadow coming from the sun in the east because the pictures are often taken in the morning. That’s why we sometimes see the relief the wrong way round, with the mountains as holes and the rivers flowing up on a ridge.

HANS HURNI, SWITZERLAND

The little cartographic jokes hidden in the rocks and lakes are just wonderful! Who says the Swiss don’t have a sense of humour? And such cartographic jokes transcend national boundaries. The UK’s Ordnance Survey has a few as well.

ROBERT CAMPBELL, ENGLAND

Excellent! I’m reminded of just how good our maps are whenever I look for their equivalents abroad...

FRÉDÉRIC VOGT, CHILE

## An icon of Swiss wine – The wine-grower Marie Thérèse Chappaz



Well done and thank you! Fully is a legendary fruit-growing paradise for people living in the three valleys where I spent my childhood. I fondly remember the days when donkeys reigned supreme and the splendid great Troillet

chalet in La Neuvez, now gone up in smoke, back in the 60s. What Val Ferret has lost in authenticity, it has gained in regrettable developments! My next glass of Petite Arvine will be drunk to the health of the Troillet family.

CHARLES ROCHAT, SWITZERLAND

## Editorial – Accounts on the same terms

Why do Swiss banks always justify their high account fees by pointing to the huge cost of collaborating with other countries? I know people from England and Germany who live here in Spain and have accounts in their home countries – without such horrendous fees! If you’re living on a basic Swiss state pension and have to pay out 300 francs of it per year to have an account in Switzerland, that’s outrageous.

RENATO BESOMI, SPAIN

The behaviour of our banks hits many Swiss Abroad hard. Reasons such as security or risk almost label ordinary people like us criminals, while the bigwigs in the upper echelons of the banks remain unpunished for the adventures they have with their customers’ money. An account costs me 360 francs a year, compared with interest of less than 100 francs a year. Is that justifiable? Can our MPs really do nothing about these financial institutions, whose reputations have been so severely tarnished?

PIERRE STACHER, AUSTRALIA

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# The last hurdle to solving the conflict?

The small town of Moutier has switched from the canton of Bern to Jura, drawing a line under an age-old and intractable territorial dispute. That is the hope at least.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Suddenly, it just stopped: The drilling head of a tunnel boring machine got stuck in a tricky geological zone near Moutier. It took two years until the behemoth could be dug free again in 2005, at great expense. The additional cost amounted to 158 million francs. Last April, construction work was finally completed on the Transjurane, the A16 motorway from Biel to the canton of Jura. It had taken almost 30 years and cost 6.6 billion francs. The road not only connects the canton of Jura with Bernese Jura and central Switzerland, it also links the Swiss and the French motorway networks.

In this region, however, what separates is sometimes stronger than what connects. And the small town of Moutier was not just a hard geological nut in 2005, it was an epicentre of the Jura conflict. Even though the conditions in Moutier in the 1970s cannot be compared to those of Belfast in Northern Ireland, the situation in many parts of the small town in Bernese Jura was extremely tense.

It is there that one of the last significant chapters of the Bernese-Jura conflict has now been written, in a civilised manner without violence. In a historic referendum, the community decided on 18 June to turn its back on the canton of Bern, and join the canton of Jura. Nevertheless, the coming years will still see wrangling over organisational and administrative matters, in issues regarding division of property for example. This process could take years. And thereafter, the voters of the cantons of Jura and Bern as well as the National Council and Council of States must give their blessing to the change of canton.

## Laborious, multi-stage process

The Moutier referendum is a key part of – what is intended to be – the definitive solution to the most difficult territorial conflict in Switzerland of the 20th century. After the creation of the canton of Jura in 1979, the situation in the divided region did not calm down completely, rather, it was seriously strained. The separatists were not satisfied because only the three northern districts of Porrentruy, Delémont and Franches-Montagnes were to form the canton of Jura; the three districts of Moutier, Courtelary and La Neuveville in the south wanted to stay in the canton of Bern. This led to the establishment in 1994 of the Inter-Jura Assembly (AIJ). The work of the AIJ resulted in an agreement between the cantons of Bern and Jura in 2012. This provided for a multi-stage procedure with regional and local referendums. First of all, voters in the cantons of Jura and Bernese Jura were able to decide whether they wanted to establish a



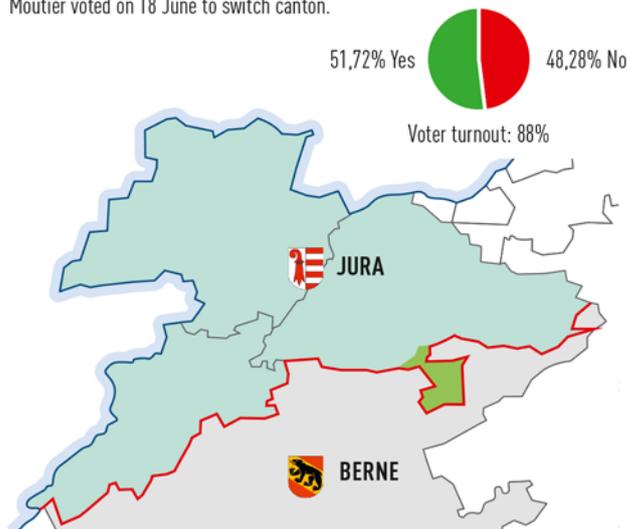
Greater Canton of Jura. The Bernese-Jura voters said no in 2013, those in the canton of Jura said yes. As there was no consensus between the sides, the project could not be pursued. The second stage enabled individual communities, if they wished, to decide about switching to the canton of Jura.

## New oil on the fire or new pragmatism?

Following the municipal referendums in Bernese Jura, will this really spell a definitive end to the Jura conflict? The answer is yes, at least from an institutional perspective. This is because the cantons of Bern and Jura undertook in the 2012 Jura Agreement to consider the issue solved as soon as the multi-stage referendum procedure is completed. It is another question altogether whether all politicians see things the same way. In a democracy, any topic can be rolled out again. Just after the Moutier referendum, for example, the Mouvement autonomiste jurassien (MAJ) announced it was

### Canton switch: Moutier joins Jura

Moutier voted on 18 June to switch canton.





time to seek “new ways” of restoring Jurassian sovereignty across the whole of the territory. In other words, the separatists want the whole of Bernese Jura. In the Grand Council of Bern, more and more voices are being heard questioning the guaranteed position of Bernese Jura in the cantonal government, or at least wanting to dilute it. There is also talk of reducing the twelve Bernese-Jura seats in the Grand Council since this part of the country has become smaller. This all bears potential for new conflict.

But Sean Müller, an authority on the Jura issue and lecturer at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Bern, is convinced that “nobody really wants to rekindle the conflict”. In terms of cantonal borders, the issue is resolved. In Bernese Jura all the referendums have demonstrated that there is no majority support for a complete switch of canton. “And all parties, including the separatists and the militants loyal to Bern, have become pragmatic and got used to the dialogue as part of the Inter-Jura Assem-

bly and other bodies,” Müller, tells the “Swiss Review”.

Dick Marty, former state prosecutor in Ticino, former FDP member of the Council of States, and a man in demand internationally for delicate missions, played a significant role in resolving the problem. He has chaired the Inter-Jura Assembly since 2010. To “swissinfo” he said: “We used the full range of Swiss democratic means at our disposal to resolve this conflict,” primarily the various referendums at all levels of the country. Marty is convinced that the time-consuming process was a helping factor in “solving a problem that elsewhere under the same conditions could suddenly have slipped into armed conflict”.

### “Foundling from olden times”

According to Sean Müller, the most important milestone was the willingness of the canton of Bern to launch the transition process with an open mind. That was back in 1970, when the voters in Bern agreed to a constitu-

tional amendment that paved the way for a multi-stage series of referendums in Jura. It led eventually to the establishment of the canton of Jura. “Giving a minority this opportunity was very generous and respectful,” says Müller. Yet before that, things happened “that were not always consistent with the normal picture of Swiss politics”, for instance, after voters in Bern in 1959 rejected an initiative from the political movement *Rassemblement jurassien* for a Jura plebiscite, the separatists in the 1960s resorted to increasingly radical methods. For example, the Bern Day at the 1964 Expo in Switzerland was disrupted, and the Bern Grand Council bricked up. There were also explosions and arson attacks. Street fighting broke out in Moutier in the middle of the 1970s between armed separatists and the Bern Cantonal Police.

Historian Jakob Tanner delves back even further and describes the Jura conflict in his book “History of Switzerland in the 20th Century”

**Joy among Pro-Jura residents: Moutier was at the heart of the Jura conflict for decades. Last June there was finally cause for celebration – at least for those in favour of switching canton.**

Photo: Keystone

Continued on page 8

## 200 years of the Jura conflict at a glance

**1815:** At the Congress of Vienna, the territory of the former Prince-Bishopric of Basel is given to the canton of Bern. This part of Jura had been a French département since 1793. The first conflicts between those loyal to Bern and the Jurassians took place after 1815.

**1947:** The Bern Grand Council refuses to let Jurassian state-council member Georges Moeckli head up the Department of Public Works and Railways, because he is a French native speaker. The Jura conflict begins to escalate.

**1950:** The canton introduces French as the second official language. The Jurassian districts also receive two guaranteed seats in the cantonal government.

**1963:** Establishment of the young separatists' organisation known as *Béliers*, which carries out various provocative actions. Explosions and arson attacks are attributed to the Jurassian Liberation Front (FLJ).

**1970:** The people of Bern agree to a constitutional amendment that paves the way to a multi-level series of plebiscites.

**1974:** The people of Jura vote for a separate canton. But this canton will only comprise the three northern districts, because the three southern districts of Jura want to stay with the canton of Bern.

**1978:** The people of Switzerland and all cantons agree to the establishment of the canton of Jura with an 82.3 percent majority. One year later, the *République et Canton du Jura* joins the Swiss Confederation as its newest entity.

**1994:** As the Jura conflict continues to smoulder, an Inter-Jura Assembly is set up to work out proposed solutions. This body recommends holding referendums on the reunification of Jura.

**2012:** The cantons of Bern and Jura reach an agreement to end the Jura conflict once and for all. The agreement provides for a multi-stage procedure with regional and local referendums.



**Violent times:** Jurassian separatists at an unauthorised demonstration in November 1969 in front of the Federal Palace of Switzerland in Bern. Photo: Keystone

Continued from page 7

(Geschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert) as a “political foundling from olden times”. When Jura was assigned to the canton of Bern at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, a French-speaking, Catholic area came under the control of a German-speaking Protestant canton. Thereafter, those in northern Jura felt short-changed by Bern, which invested little. Road and rail infrastructure was inadequate. At the same time, the Jurassians with their French-speaking culture sensed a lack of respect. Those in southern Jura, on the other hand, experienced increasing industrialisation coupled with significant immigration of German-speaking Swiss. This lent the conflict a linguistic/ethnic component alongside the historical, religious and economic causes.

What is more, for historian Clément Crévoisier, the Jura question had a significant symbolic influence on Swiss politics from the 1950s to 1980, according to an interview in “Der Bund” newspaper. “The Jura conflict reflected the discord between the progressive, forward-looking movement of the sixties and conservative Switzerland,” he says. Conversely, notes Crévoisier, “the separatists were able

to draw on the spirit of change that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s.”

### A non-conformist constituent state?

The canton of Jura also stems from a time in which political visions were accorded a different weighting than today. The Historical Dictionary of Switzerland still considers the youngest canton to be “a progressive and non-conformist constituent state”. For political scientist Sean Müller, however, the general voting behaviour in the canton of Jura paints an inconsistent picture. In socio-political issues, where religious attitudes play an important role, Jura is rather conservative. As regards their stance on openness, migration and foreign policy they are labelled “progressive” – but in this way they are no different to Romandy as a whole and the large Swiss-German cities. And the composition of the political authorities in the canton of Jura is now roughly the same as the Swiss average. Jura could be labelled non-conformist in the sense that the right of foreigners to vote was included in the constitution from the very beginning, for example.

## Two souls in Bernese Jura

Bern or Jura? On 18 June, after centuries of division, Moutier voted to switch canton. Just. Votes were also held in two small Bernese-Jura villages on 17 September.

From an economic perspective, however, the canton of Jura is not a growth driver. It regularly comes last in terms of competitiveness, and with regard to financial equalisation for the cantons it is one of the largest recipient cantons per capita. The expectations became much more ambitious upon the establishment of the canton, says Müller. But the starting situation as a peripheral region relatively far from the economic hubs was difficult from the outset. The newly completed Transjurane motorway does raise hopes of some economic impetus for the structurally weak region. However, says Sean Müller, a motorway can have the opposite effect that more people commute to work outside the canton.

Just like most similar cases, and generally speaking in politics, the Jura conflict was never just about strong rational arguments, there was always a lot of emotion. Even the somewhat anachronistic dispute today about the “right” cantonal affiliation hovers somewhere between a right to self-determination, identity issues and ethno-nationalism. And even if the canton of Jura will probably never stretch down as far as Lake Biel, and the conflict will someday be confined to history, the “Rauracienne”, the official anthem of the canton of Jura, will probably still say:

“From Lake Biel to the gates of France / Hope ripens in the darkness of the towns / From our hearts sounds a song of deliverance / Our flag waved on the mountains / You, who care about the fate of the fatherland / Break the chains of an unjust destiny!”

SIMON THÖNEN

For the small town of Moutier, the Sunday vote on 18 June was a day of decision – and great emotions. Even in the morning, hours before the much-awaited result of the local referendum on switching cantons was announced, the pro-Jura supporters with their red and white flags dominated the scene in the small industrial town. The jubilation was huge when it transpired that Moutier wants to switch canton, from Bern to Jura. “Bravo Moutier!”, called out a separatist in the crowd. “We did it!” A town party was held afterwards with a lot of beer, music and fireworks until late in the night.

Yet the result was tight, with 51.7 percent voting yes, the gap amounting to just 137 votes. So on this day of decision, the small town with 7,700 people remained divided. Those in favour of Bern, who had gathered in a hall on the edge of the town, also celebrated – albeit for a short time only. For a moment they mistakenly thought that victory was theirs. Then many broke into tears. And the disappointment of those who had lost did give pro-Jura Mayor of Moutier Marcel Winistoerfer (CVP) “some cause for concern”, he admitted, despite his delight about the outcome of the referendum. The town authorities now face a huge challenge to convince those who rejected a Jura future about its advantages.

In Moutier, the die has been cast. There was a fierce dispute in previous decades because the town on the border between north and south Jura was divided. Elsewhere, the situation is clearer. For the most part Bernese Jura wants to remain with the canton of Bern, as it transpired in a regional referendum in 2013. And only two other

municipalities in Bernese Jura voted on the canton switch after Moutier – on 17 September (after our copy deadline). The centre of Belprahon is a beautiful former farming village on the southern hillside of Mont Raimeux – and on the outskirts of Moutier with many detached houses. In this village of 300 residents, people were divided about the question of Bern or Jura – even within families. Commune mayor Michel Leuenberger was pro-Bern, while his brother Philippe was hoping for a vote in favour of Jura, “because Jura is more familiar, that’s where the best festivals and parties are”. Yet in contrast to before, both confirm that there are no wars within families because of the Jura question.

Sorvilier, the second village that voted on 17 September, does not border onto Moutier. A vote was held here because the majority of the municipal council is pro-Jura – but the mayor is pro-Bern. Just like many villagers, François Romy, president of the neutral civic community, has two souls in his chest. “In my heart, I am Jura-ssian,” he says. “But I am also a vociferous defender of bilingualism” – meaning the coexistence of French and German speakers in the canton of Bern.

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SIMON THÖNEN IS A JOURNALIST WITH “DER BUND”

# Left mourns Burkhalter's departure more than his own party

The resignation of Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter surprised even his own party, the FDP.

It's still not clear whether the Federal Councillor from Neuchâtel is leaving for personal or political reasons.

MARKUS BROTSCHI

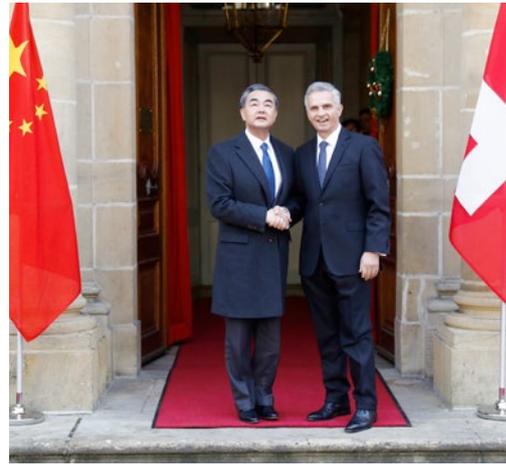
On 31 October, Didier Burkhalter will hand over the reins of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to his successor – exactly eight years to the day since he first took office. But it remains to be seen whether he will then return to private life or accept a position with some international organisation. Announcing his departure, Burkhalter expressed the wish to regain a little freedom after almost 30 years in politics. The 57-year-old said being a Federal Councillor was so demanding that he felt consumed by it.

However, most parliamentarians – including in Burkhalter's own party, the FDP – are convinced he resigned for different reasons. They think his European dossier had become a dead-end. After all, Burkhalter has for years doggedly pursued the aim of concluding a framework agreement with the European Union on institutional links with Switzerland. However, as a consequence of resistance from the SVP, such a framework agreement had begun to lose support within the FDP and CVP. Burkhalter faced ever louder claims that he was blind to reality and that such a treaty would be rejected were it put to a referendum. "Didier Burkhalter was allowed to work towards an institutional framework agreement even though this endeavour had not been capable of achieving majority support for some time," Ignazio Cassis, the head of the FDP parliamentary group and Burkhalter's possible successor on the Federal Council, said on the day of the resignation. Cassis believes the Federal Council was mainly to blame for this, and he called Burkhalter's resignation "evidence of a statesmanlike attitude".

## Consensus-builder

Burkhalter vehemently denied that his decision was based on a lack of support for his policies. He must have been pleased that the entire Federal Council largely stuck to its existing course at a closed-door meeting on European policy shortly after he announced his departure. It was an expression of precisely the policy Burkhalter had pursued throughout his term in office: that the Federal Council should present itself as a collegial body and that everyone should seek consensus at the committee level rather than block the efforts of individual members. However, some of his party colleagues in German-speaking Switzerland had wished that Burkhalter would back "conservative" policies more frequently on the Federal Council. Some accuse him of siding too often with Doris Leuthard (CVP) and the two SP representatives, thus helping produce centre-left majorities.

Representatives of the SP and the Greens deeply regretted his resignation. They praised Burkhalter as a symbol of a cosmopolitan



At home on the international stage: Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Neuchâtel in December 2016.

Photo: Keystone

Switzerland and blamed his departure on the CVP and FDP for failing to support his European policies.

## International respect

Burkhalter's departure sees the resignation of a Federal Councillor who felt more at home on the international stage than in domestic politics. In 2014, he achieved international recognition for his efforts as the chairman of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). He gained further respect as a mediator in the Ukraine/Crimea conflict, where he managed to wring concessions from both sides. At one time, Burkhalter was even being touted as a future UN Secretary-General.

He was less skilled and less energetic in his first two years as the head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA). As a result, just four months into his tenure, he suffered defeat at a referendum, when 73% of voters rejected a proposed reduction in the second-pillar conversion rate. Burkhalter had not presented the initiative himself, having inherited it from his predecessor, Pascal Couchepin.

After only two years at the FDHA, he snatched at the first opportunity to move to the FDFA, following the resignation of Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey. Some accuse him of shirking his responsibilities. But foreign affairs undoubtedly suited the worldly Free Democrat from Neuchâtel better than tough domestic wrangling over reforms to health and pension policy.

MARKUS BROTSCHI IS A FEDERAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS EDITOR WITH THE "TAGES-ANZEIGER" AND "DER BUND"

# An expensive naval adventure

Switzerland does not lie by the sea, it has no important port, no navy. And yet it is a seafaring nation. That costs the government 215 million francs.

CHRISTOPH LENZ

The Swiss federal government has been promoting the upkeep of a Swiss deep-sea fleet since the Second World War. The intention is that the ships, which are all in private hands, will help supply the country in an emergency. The idea is that the ships would be unloaded at a western European sea port. Their cargoes would then be transported to Switzerland by land with the approval of the relevant transit country.

For decades, the promotion of the deep-sea fleet was an unremarkable business administered by a handful of civil servants. All that changed this spring. The Swiss deep-sea fleet has come to represent a 215-million-franc hole in the federal budget and mismanagement at the Federal Office for National Economic Supply (FONES).

## Shipbuilding bonanza

What happened? The rise of the BRICS nations of Brazil, Russia, India, South Africa and China in particular in the 2000s boosted global trading and led to a boom in commercial shipping. Swiss shipowners were also keen to profit from this bonanza, so they began expanding their fleet. They found

**The Swiss deep-sea fleet has come to represent a 215-million-franc hole in the federal budget. Pictured: the freighter "SCL Bern".**

Photo: Stiftung Swiss-Ships



willing helpers at FONES, who facilitated ship purchases by offering generous federal guarantees. Bernese shipowner Hansjürg Grunder was particularly aggressive in this. Although originally a financial expert, he specialised in the construction of and trade in new ships. At one time, he owned more than a dozen ships backed up by state guarantees totaling far in excess of 100 million francs.

The Swiss shipowners were so expansionist that they had soon used up all the funds the Swiss government had earmarked for sureties. Between 2002 and 2008, the Swiss parliament twice extended its credit line: from 400 million to 1.1 billion francs. The risks, the then Economics Minister Doris Leuthard said in the National Council, were “minimal and acceptable”.

But it soon became apparent how mistaken the federal authorities in Berne were. When the financial crisis in 2008 put an abrupt end to the global boom years, freight prices also plummeted. Since then, commercial shipping has witnessed an unprecedented crisis. Numerous wharves and major shipyards have gone bankrupt in recent years. Swiss ships secured with state guarantees also found themselves in difficulties. Shipowner Hansjürg Grunder was hit particularly hard. His Swiss Cargo Line Group began fighting for survival in late 2014. From 2015, the Department of Economic Affairs headed by Johann Schneider-Ammann kept the ships afloat with cash injections – but all to no avail, as became clear at the end of 2016.

The Federal Council decided to sell off the 12 heavily indebted ships se-

cured with federal guarantees, even though this meant that Swiss federal guarantees effectively matured for the first time since the 1950s. In all, the federal coffers now appear to have lost almost 215 million francs. “Unwillingly, extremely unwillingly!” was how the FDP Federal Councillor described his defence of this loan application in the National Council in June.

## CHF 500m still unsettled

Parliament grudgingly agreed to the loan. However, the deep-sea affair will have political ramifications. The Control Committees want to take a close look at the case, partly because internal investigations unearthed suggestions of mismanagement and even punishable conduct at the responsible federal office, and partly because the risks associated with deep-sea sureties are in no way covered by the 215 million francs already written off. Sureties totalling more than 500 million are still open at other Swiss shipyards. Thirty ships continue to sail under a state guarantee.

But the Swiss fleet is beginning to be wound up. Several of Hansjürg Grunder’s ships have been sold, including the “SCL Bern”, a stately 140-metre-long freighter with a loading capacity of 12,500 tons. Recently rechristened, it’s now called the “Angelo Maria”. Its bow no longer bears the Swiss cross. The flag of Barbados flutters in its place.

CHRISTOPH LENZ IS A FEDERAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS EDITOR WITH THE “TAGES-ANZEIGER” AND “DER BUND”

# Different approaches to cross-border travel in Basel and Geneva

The most westerly canton hopes the CEVA rail link will ease its congestion. Meanwhile, Basel also experiences gridlocks, but has a modern mobility system spanning three countries.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Regarding the way Geneva is laid out on each side of these two borders, there is a local joke that goes, “it’s a miracle that the roads between France and the canton join up”. In comparison, the Basel region, another area which is part of a route used by tens of thousands of cross-border commuters, “is often cited as a cross-border cooperation success story, both at a political level and in terms of transport management”, according to the geographer Yann Dubois, in his doctoral work at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL). To back up his claim, he adds that there are cross-border RER commuter trains, trams and buses in the area.

Straddling two French departments and the cantons of Vaud and Geneva, Greater Geneva sometimes gives the impression that it is flourishing regardless of its situation as a region. This economic area with almost a million inhabitants is experiencing high levels of car traffic and the vacancy rate for housing in the centre is almost zero (0.45% in Geneva). “More than 90% of housing construction in the urban area covering France, Vaud and Geneva is carried out in France, where it is easier to build. In the canton of Geneva, the city of Geneva is home to 42% of the population, but provides 54% of jobs,” French geographer Jean-Baptiste Delaugerre said in 2012. In 2017, several French politicians have criticised the new cantonal structure plan, accusing Geneva of not shouldering its responsibilities. In 2015, it managed to build a record number of 2,000 homes, giving a ten-year average of 1,500. However, the French believe that there needs to be around 3,500 built every year.

## Cross-border commuters attracted by the services sector

In Basel and Geneva, industry and services in particular attract a record number of cross-border commuters: 60,000 people from the industrial sector have a permis g cross-border work permit, as do 86,000 from the services sector. On top of this second figure, there are around 20,000 Swiss cross-border commuters and 8,000 international public officials. In the lakeside city, almost 30% of jobs are held by cross-border commuters – the middle classes move to France to find housing at affordable prices.

This exodus is taking place in a canton that has wanted to keep its countryside and villas in the suburban area, and has not built enough housing to cope with the jobs being created there (an increase of 20% between 2000 and 2015).

French transport infrastructure (and that of Geneva itself) has experienced times of real scaling back. Between 1969 and 1995, just one tram operated in Geneva. Meanwhile, “Basel is often considered a good model in terms of public transport,” writes Yves Dubois. “It has achieved this thanks to its dense networks and its cross-border links, in addition to its pioneering role in integrating the different networks”, he says.

In Geneva, there was significant growth in the tram network at the start of the 2000s, but this momentum has not been sustained. The (re)construction of lines to the towns of Annemasse and Saint-ÉJulien is expected for 2021 and 2023. Furthermore, Geneva Public Transport (TPG) has seen its provision reduced by the State following a series of votes in favour of cheaper transport. The commercial speed of buses and trams was 16.5 km/h in 2016 (+0.09 km/h), compared to 19.7 km/h in Basel. Yet the law states that their speed must be at least 18 km/h on the main lines.

All the same, the Geneva region is developing its public transport. TPG is proposing 13 cross-border lines, covering 66 kilometres of French territory. In 2016, 5.5 million journeys were made on these bus routes in France. In Basel, 8 km of the routes for the two BVB (Basel-City) cross-border train lines, tram 8 (1.5 million passengers in 2016) and bus 38 are on German territory. The Geneva region is pinning its hopes on the CEVA rail connection. This 16-kilometre line should come into service in 2019, linking the town of Annemasse (F) with Cornavin railway station. In particular, it will service the Champel district, located near to the canton’s hospital, where two thirds of the nursing staff are French. The CEVA will offer an alternative to cross-border commuters, more than 80% of whom travel to work by car. A new network will be put into operation when it is launched, which will boast proper railway stations. French regional councillor Christian Dupessey has promised in the press that between 4 and 5 million passengers will pass through Annemasse.

Lisa Mazzone, President of the Association for Transport and the Environment (ATE) in Geneva, and a Green Party national councillor, welcomed the arrival of the CEVA, but is worried that it was being undertaken in a climate where public transport was not being supported enough. She is disappointed that there has been “a lack of political will from the State Council in a canton where people continue to use cars heavily, which is epitomised by the Mont-Blanc Bridge, practically a motorway right in the city



Many cross-border commuters from Germany travel to their workplace in Basel by car. Photo: Keystone

centre". She described Basel as having greater political will. "Choices have been made there. The system works and the people are happy," she says.

### Basel has had its missteps too

The German-speaking city-canton can boast of its pedestrian zones, which are almost non-existent in Geneva. However, things are not perfect. Jérôme Giovannoni, a chemical engineer who lives in Village-Neuf (F), works on the Novartis Campus. He says that Basel has traffic that is "heavy in the city and on the motorway, mainly as a result of heavy-goods vehicles in transit", and describes "trains that are very reliable on the Swiss side, but less so on the French side, due to strikes and delays". This cross-border commuter thinks that trams are very useful for moving about in the region, but his main problem is being able to park his car close to the border. "This will change when tram line 3 comes into service, which will link Saint-Louis (F) to Basel through a Park and Ride near to the railway station," he says.

The ATE in Basel still believes that the cross-border network is "inadequate". Stephanie Fuchs, its spokesperson, is disappointed that there is no three-country fare and that it has not been possible to put in place a general season ticket for Swiss Federal Railways outside Switzerland, among other things. She also notes that information about whether tickets are valid outside Switzerland

is unclear. The association additionally points out that there has been a change imposed upon Basel for the S-Bahn train that links Rheinfelden (S) to Mulhouse (F), and that there is a bad connection between the two railway stations in Basel. However, the ATE welcomes the introduction of the new tram line 3 and the regular transport provided on the bus and train lines.

Nevertheless, the Basel conurbation is experiencing a problem with traffic congestion, notes geographer Yann Dubois. According to his study, 42% of the region's inhabitants use a car every day. In Basel, the percentage of people driving their car every day is 11%, while this figure is 80% in the suburban French area. The researcher shows that the strong drive in Basel to use public transport has not been greatly noticed by commuters. On the Swiss side, "hardly anyone uses cars exclusively, while public transport has an important place in the lives of people in Basel".

In Geneva, the canton where the constitution establishes that all forms of transport are equal, 180,000 cars enter at the borders each day. A recent law provides for priority areas for public transport, but the State Council "chooses to increase traffic flow with green waves, which means even more cars", says the Green Party councillor Lisa Mazzone. The canton also decided to allow motor vehicles with two wheels to travel in bus lanes. However, the project was blocked by legal action by the City of Geneva "to protect its inhabitants from air and noise pollution".

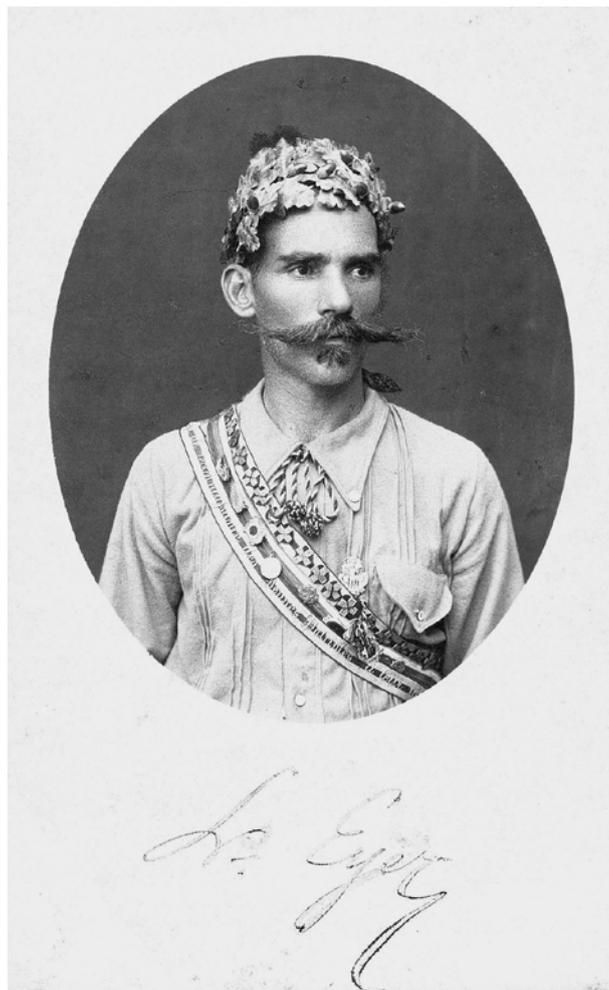
## From hero to nobody

A Swiss blue-collar worker emigrates. Far away, he becomes a hero. A hero's son – his son – emigrates back to Switzerland. But he is unwelcome, and becomes a blue-collar worker. A short Swiss story of migration and remigration.

MARC LETTAU

2 September 1916 ended horribly for him. A strong Swiss gymnast, at the Greek-Bulgarian border area amidst the turmoil of World War One, he heard the thundering of the guns and the whipping sound of the rifle volleys. But he heard this from afar. Because Louis-Emil Eyer from Vevey, a former officer in the Royal Bulgarian Army with a Swiss passport, was not in the trenches. He lay in the military hospital. He had not been hit by a projectile, had not been stabbed with a bayonet. He had been fatally weakened by an internal infection. In the end, he did not make it. A memorial was erected in haste. Other fallen comrades were subsequently photographed in open coffins in front of Eyer's memorial for the benefit of their relatives. This was to lend some historical meaning to their deaths. Because Eyer was a hero, whose glory continued even after his death.

But who was this Eyer? He is one of the historical figures consistently ignored in Switzerland. Louis-Emil Eyer (1865–1916) worked in a foundry and was a passionate gymnast. This was at a time in Switzerland when gymnastics enjoyed its golden age – to such an extent that even foreign governments took note. This is why the Kingdom of Bulgaria asked Switzerland to support the emergence of this newly independent state by sending gym teachers. Ten emissaries from the German-speaking and French-speaking regions of Switzerland, including Eyer, thus ventured to Bulgaria in 1894 by train – taking with them boxing gloves, sabres, spe-



cialist books and leather balls for the emerging sport that had been invented in England.

### Marching in circles

Sport back then was first and foremost a way of strengthening your body and developing a fighting spirit. Eyer, too, allowed plenty of scope for military-type exercises: disciplined marching, in rows, in columns, in circles. But, at the same time, his old passions rubbed off on his new homeland, so much so that the gym-

Early version of an autograph card: a photo signed by Louis-Emil Eyer

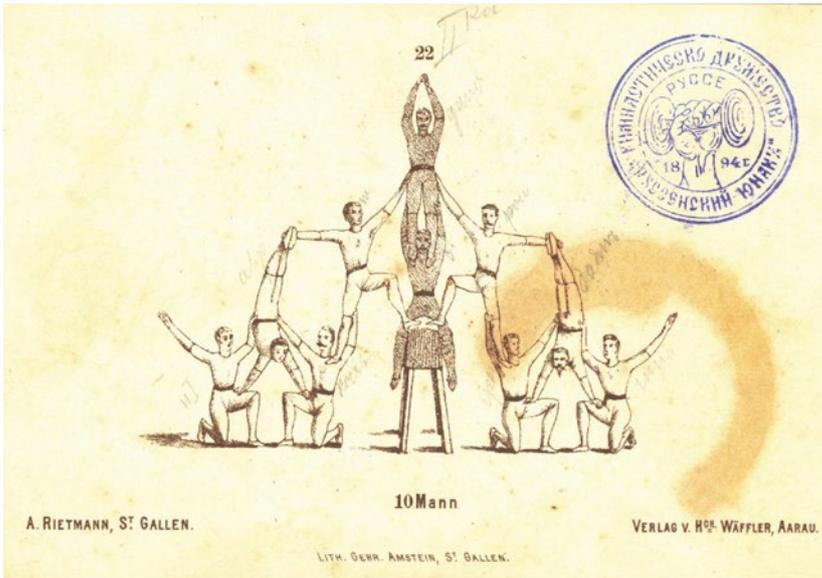
nastics association in the Danube town of Lom had a stone putter on its banner.

The two-year contract of the Swiss gymnasts came to an end. But Eyer stayed. Tireless, he had young people working up a sweat all across the country. He helped set up a nationwide youth gymnastics association. In Varna, in 1900, he organised the first “Fête Fédéral” based on the Swiss model. In short, he was the catalyst behind mass gymnastic movements. And he repeatedly took up arms for his adopted country.

There is no doubt that Eyer was not in favour of gentle education. He faced the youngsters with a willow rod. His penchant for discipline brought him additional respect. And he survived every re-write of the history books. He was praised by the royalists because he brought the country closer to Western values. He was later acclaimed by the socialists because he was the genuine, early internationalist who educated honest workers' and farmers' sons. And the democratic Bulgaria of the post-transformation period also considers the Swiss man a sound historical figure too. Coming from the self-ruling gymnast nation in the Alps he was the ideal role model.

### Back “home”

In principle, this portrayal could end here. But the migration story feeds into a remigration story. Bulgaria did provide Eyer's widow Pauline with an ample pension, but there was a lack of prospects for those left be-



hind. “The Swiss with a Bulgarian heart” – so read the title of a Bulgarian film – was dead, and his descendants had very close links with Switzerland. Marcel in particular, Eyer’s son who had grown up in Bulgaria, really wanted to move home. In 1920, four years after the death of the decorated officer and revered sports educator, he departed for “his country” beside his mother. A country he did not know. A country that was not waiting for him.

Then 18 years old, he thought the most difficult thing for him would be choosing the best of all the options that would be open for him in Switzerland. Yet, while the story of his gymnast father Louis-Emil is representative of the wave of emigration in the 19th century, the story of his

son Marcel illustrates the reserved attitude of the Swiss people towards Swiss living abroad. Although he spoke French perfectly, he was simply not considered Swiss on his return. The begging letters of the young man dreaming of an education, sent to the Cantonal Council in Vaud, came to nothing. Based on the understanding of the authorities at that time, there was no reason to extend him a hand into everyday Swiss life. The son of the hero, who still had the smell of freshly polished officer boots in his nostrils, slipped back into the dusty factory environment that his father had escaped from in his time. Essentially a refugee, he lived on the premises of a run-down cigar factory in Vevey. For years he remained trapped between his own self-perception (son of a Swiss hero) and the perception of others (economic migrant from Bulgaria). In his humble factory home he set up a shrine to his own story – a polished home-made museum with an oil painting of the hero, the officer’s sabre of the fallen man, and the medals. This was his “proof” of just how much the Swiss were ignoring the “real story”.

The children of this unfortunate man, namely the grandchildren of the hero, increasingly found the weight of this story to be a burden

**Introduced by Eyer and tested in the Bulgarian city of Ruse: instructions on how to build a human pyramid**

and source of lasting disaffection. Marcel Eyer’s son, Louis Kosta, recalls: “The way my father worshipped my grandfather was rather alarming. Even my father only really knew him from a distance.” This is because Bulgaria’s senior gymnast was always on the move. His mission drove him on. For his family, he was always absent.

The grandchildren eventually wrote a small additional chapter about emancipation from an “overbearance of history”: they handed over all the memorabilia to the Bulgarian state. Louis Kosta Eyer says: “Louis-Emil’s ‘big’ story began in Bulgaria. And it ended in Bulgaria.” All that remains is the realisation that it does no good to take credit yourself for your forefathers’ achievements:



**Louis Eyer with his fellow gymnasts in Bulgaria**

“I read the story of Louis-Emil like I read the stories of other historical figures in books: with interest, but in the knowledge that it is his story, not mine. Everyone is responsible for their own story.” Looking back though, the grandson does permit himself one positive thought: “Today in Europe we are seeing a rise in nationalism. Today, people are increasingly viewing the world from their own national perspectives. Louis-Emil reminds us at least of a Europe that was more open and penetrable than it is today.”

### Detective work

Marc Lettau, an editor with “Swiss Review”, and two Bulgarian historians spent two years researching the story. The resulting book, “The Three Lives of Louis Eyer” (ISBN 978-619-01-0041-6), is available in book stores in both German (“Die drei Leben des Louis Eyer”) and Bulgarian («Трите живота на Луи Айер») It can also be ordered from Variant 5 (info@variant5.ch, ogy.de/buchtippl).

# Vienna and the yearning for erotic fulfilment

Max Pulver set his only novel, "Himmelfortgasse", in Vienna and it was panned by the critics.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

Virtually no other Swiss novel has been so underrated as "Himmelfortgasse", which was published in 1927 by the then 38-year-old Bernese dramatist and psychologist Max Pulver. The book was derided by the critics as a revolting example of "unbridled sensualism". Pulver was even criticised as late as 1968 by the German language scholar Werner Günther for having "wasted the power of his writing style on a hopeless subject".

The novel was created in 1924 in Zurich and seems to have been set down in writing in one go during major emotional distress. Pulver had finally separated from his wife, from whom he had long since been estranged. And he must have had an encounter with a young woman shortly beforehand in Munich, which put him first into extreme euphoria and then into a deadly depression. Into a state, in any case, in which Pulver – who was considered a student of Hofmannsthal and counted by Oskar Walzel as a "new proponent of the classic style" – cast off the burden of learning and became what is known as an expressionist: someone driven who directly translates experience into language, without filtering it down.

Pulver appears in the novel, poorly disguised as a Dutch psychologist and author named Alexander Moonboom, while his wife Berta Feldmann appears as Ruth. He also brings a young painter called Mariquita into play with whom Moonboom is completely in love. He meets her in Munich, follows her to Vienna, and in that city, which for Pulver had already become "the embodiment of a yearning for erotic fulfilment", experiences an ecstasy in which cocaine plays a major role.

## Ecstasy and disillusionment

The central settings are the Viennese hotels and restaurants of Klomser, Ronacher and Kobenzl, and especially the narrow Himmelfortgasse, where Mariquita's atelier is located and which the novel obliquely stylises as a symbol of a vagina: "My kingdom. The heavenly kingdom. Paradise. A dark blaze of hair leaps up in the mind's eye. Lust overwhelms me. The door to paradise must be narrow." The ecstasy ends in disillusionment; Mariquita announces her marriage to a conservative Viennese gentleman and at the end it emerges what was intended from the beginning of the novel: that the Viennese ecstasy is the last phase of a deep existential crisis from which Moonboom, brilliant

psychologist that he is, is working his way out, teetering between the will to live and a longing for death. With all the urges and desires of his character, he wants to wrestle his secret, the meaning, from his life in a Faustian manner. And on this search for meaning nothing is taboo, there is nothing he rules out until he is finally thrown back to himself, to encounter his own ego. "This is recovery: Meeting myself. My oldest and, God knows, rather unknown friend."

## Cocaine as a stimulant

And what of the cocaine that disturbed the critics in 1927 apparently even more than the openly portrayed eroticism? It is used in the novel neither to obtain desire nor to suppress reality. Right at the beginning, Pulver makes it clear that he does not recommend using it for those "travelling for pleasure". "Taking it alone is suicide." Yet the drug plays a stimulating role in the lovers' encounters, as it lifts them to a surreal ecstasy: "Surges of blood joyfully eddied from our hearts and lashed in a swirling vortex with an alien drive; this first impact blasts all the locks, no discretion will halt this skeleton key that is more effective than any key, crowbar or soldering flame; which gently but irresistibly unlocks what is protected."

After "Himmelfortgasse", which Pulver later described as his worst book, he then turned back to respectable classical poetry before writing "Symbolism of Handwriting", and becoming the founder of the science of graphology. He died in 1952 in Zurich as a highly respected handwriting expert and scholar. But in 1981, on the occasion of the re-issue of "Himmelfortgasse" after 55 years, the New York "Aufbau" described it as "a masterpiece of Swiss Expressionism, which was once again becoming more widely available and whose importance is still to be discovered."

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZURICH



"Camped side by side, we speed apart like stars zooming fatally close to one another. Time stands still and listens in. There's a quiet crackling in the walls. Nothing shatters the excitement."

(From Max Pulver, "Himmelfortgasse". Novel, Frühling der Gegenwart Bd. 13, ex Libris, Zurich, 1981.)

## “We are providing an alternative to massive stagings”

Hans Stöckli is an enthusiastic campaigner for more modest and honest Olympic Games. But in bidding to host the Sion 2026 Winter Olympics, one thing is clear for the Berne politician: anyone wishing to kindle the Olympic flame in Switzerland needs very good arguments.

INTERVIEW: MARC LETTAU

**Hans Stöckli, we have known you until now as a passionate politician, but not as an enthusiastic sports fan. Are we doing you an injustice?**

Well you have at least overlooked something important. As mayor of Biel I pushed through what is currently the most modern ice hockey and football stadium in Switzerland, the Tissot Arena, and brought the country's largest sports event to the city, the 2013 Swiss Gymnastics Festival. What's more, together with my wife I have completed the Biel 100-kilometre run eight times. And lastly, I'm the proud holder of a season ticket for the winter sports facilities in Saas-Fee until the 2030/2031 season. So you'll find me on the pistes until I'm at least 80.

**But a standing subscription for the ski lifts doesn't explain why you are pushing for the Winter Olympics.**

It wasn't the pistes that got me enthusiastic about the Olympics, but Fränk Hofer, the Director of the Swiss Gymnastics Festival. The basic idea he convinced me of was that if Switzerland wants to bid for the Winter Olympics at all, it has to do so with a project that takes the best existing infrastructure around the country into account – irrespective of cantonal borders. My first contribution was simply just to merge the Olympic plans of Valais and Vaud with those in the canton of Berne,

turning them into a national approach. This is what gave rise to Sion2026.

**Why are you doing this? As a social democrat you must certainly hear your comrades warn against the overblown nature of the Olympics?**

They're absolutely right! And Sion 2026 represents a clear rejection of the negative experiences associated with previous Olympics.

**We think we know what is coming next: can you do everything much better?**

We will be able to say quite specifically what will be different – and better – if Sion 2026 is awarded the Games. We will be resolute in implementing the objectives that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) formulated in its Agenda 2020: games that are decentralised and more modest, games that primarily use existing facilities, Winter Olympics held where snow actually falls.

**So you are taking the IOC at their word and focusing wholly on their sustainability policy?**

Yes, we will be insisting on sustainability, also in terms of costs. We have been saying from the very beginning that we will not bend. Our candidacy is very much a take it or leave it option! There is no reason to bend anyway. If the IOC follows its own new policy, then our candidacy is an excellent one. If the IOC capitulates and succumbs once more to the tempta-



Hans Stöckli is a social democrat and Council of States member for Berne. A lawyer and former mayor of Biel, he is also Vice-President of the Sion 2026 Association and as such is responsible for the sustainability agenda of the Olympic candidacy. Photos: Keystone

tion of organising Games at tremendous cost in the large capitals of the world, we don't stand a chance anyway.

**It sounds like a cheap novel: the noble knights from Switzerland clean up the Olympic ideal...**

It's not a case of us dictating to the IOC how they should proceed. Rather, the IOC knows very well that our candidacy is capable of returning sense and integrity to the Olympic move-

Continued on page 18



Sion 2026 will create spectacular images broadcast throughout the world, but will also stimulate the debate as to how tourism and everyday life in the Alpine region can develop sustainably. In the photo: Didier Defago at the Olympic downhill in Vancouver 2010

Continued from page 17

ment. In other words: Sion 2026 shows how the sustainability agenda formulated by the IOC itself can actually be implemented. Were Sion 2026 to fail, this would also be a resounding slap in the face for the IOC – which is obviously based in Lausanne and therefore close to our project – and difficult to digest.

**Filling the Olympics with sense and integrity again: in specific terms, how does Sion 2026 intend to live up to this bold declaration?**

By not just talking about an Olympic candidacy, but about a project for the next generation. We need to think over a period of 20 years, from today until 2036. During this period we need to organise the Games on a sustainable and successful basis, while at the same time doing everything we

can so that the impact before, during and especially after the Games remains productive. Specifically, this means that we are planning solutions that are excellent in terms of their energy footprint and that are practically CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral. It also means that we envisage traffic solutions with the railways as the main means of transportation. And, it means, almost exclusively, using existing infrastructure for sports and leisure activities.

**Yet energy and environmental considerations before a large-scale event are self-evident, and not a “project for the next generation”.**

We are striving to do much more, and can only defend our candidacy if it has a positive impact in numerous areas. With our Olympic candidacy we have to help drive a fundamental, positive development

forward in Switzerland. So in no way are we just talking about sport. Our questions are: How can life in the Alpine region be safeguarded? How will all-year tourism develop? How can innovation boost our economic strength? How can our long-term project impact on healthcare, energy strategy and culture? How can the Games contribute to integration?

**So you care about renewal and change. But why do you need the cumbersome Olympic vehicle to achieve this?**

A very interesting question. A past experience influenced me in this context. During the Swiss national exhibition Expo.02, I was part of another such boost to development. Since then I have remained firmly convinced that many developments and forms of cooperation can be cre-

ated, accelerated and strengthened thanks only to such large projects. The Sion 2026 candidacy involves five cantons and 22 cities and municipalities. This is really demanding in terms of organisation. But it also offers a great chance because large events have a unifying power. It also means, however, that organising Olympic Games in Valais alone is not

in Switzerland, which is a shame: it's easy to win medals there.

**And if Sion 2026 is awarded the Games, will the inevitable not happen: the noble principles are forgotten under pressure, and normal, i.e. unsustainable, Games are organised?**

When decisions have been made by Parliament and the people, one is

land we can organise affordable Winter Olympics that are simple, modest but also very sporting. We have to deliver an alternative to the massive, excessively expensive stagings of the Games.

**Looking ahead, we assume that if Sion 2026 is awarded the Games, Switzerland will still win no medals in speed skating. What will it win?**

It will win a reputation as a nation that can be the perfect host. It will win trust, because it kept its promises regarding sustainability in the Games. And it will win recognition for doing so without exceeding its budget.

[www.sion2026.ch](http://www.sion2026.ch)

## Between vision and opposition

Sion 2026 presents a concept for a more modest Winter Olympic Games. Instead of concentrating everything at one venue and erecting new infrastructure used only for a short period, Sion 2026 wants to use existing sports facilities in the cantons of Valais, Vaud, Freiburg, Bern and Graubünden, linking them into an overall concept and a comprehensive sustainability project. The chances of Sion 2026 succeeding are still up in the air, especially since there will be various referendums and the scepticism of Swiss people regarding Olympic Games in their own country is sometimes considerable.

In the spring of this year, the citizens of Graubünden firmly rejected the plans for the canton's own Olympic candidacy at the ballot box, adding to the list of failed candidacies in the country. Olympic plans previously rejected by the people include Zurich (referendum in 1969), Bern (1969, 2002), Valais (1963), Vaud (1986) and – before this latest rejection – in Graubünden (1985, 2013). So Sion 2026 will have to negotiate at least two hurdles: one in its own country, and the other in the contest with its rival bidders. (MUL)

enough, an event involving the whole of Switzerland is required.

**There is only support for Olympic Games in Switzerland if the ecological concerns are dealt with. Nobody wants to see a repeat of Sochi in the Alps.**

Examples like Sochi are a huge handicap for us. However, we have very good arguments and can already present convincing facts. Up to 80 percent of our project can be implemented on existing facilities, and the exceptions are listed: in Kandersteg we will need to build a temporary big hill for ski-jumping. We will also need a facility for speed skating, because this sport does not have any real tradition

much more resistant to attempts to exert pressure – even from the IOC. This is why such democratic decisions are so important. Above all though, there will be a fat red line drawn with our project that we may not cross, as otherwise we would lose our credibility.

**Voters have already torpedoed many Olympic projects in Switzerland. Does that not unsettle you?**

No. Voters in Valais have already voted yes to Olympic Games on three occasions. What is more, the whole of Switzerland loves Olympic medals. So we are showing the world that in a democratic country like Switzer-



Olympic Games have been held twice in Switzerland before – in 1928 and 1948, both times in St. Moritz.

## Swiss animated films on the crest of a wave

Early this year, “My Life as a Courgette”, an animated film by the Swiss director Claude Barras, won two Césars and two Swiss Film Awards to add to its other European prizes and two Oscar nominations. The history of Swiss animated film goes back several decades further, though.

STEPHAN WINKLER

Swiss animated film has taken more than five decades to become a genre with potential to have an impact. Animated films of a high artistic standard, termed auteur films, are recognised as an artform with full status in Switzerland as they are everywhere else, and those produced domestically can now hold their own outside the country’s borders.

It wasn’t until the 1960s that Switzerland had much ground in which the animated film genre might put down roots. Such works were rather scarce, and tended to be the hobby projects of makers of commercials and educational and corporate films. Then, though, younger Swiss film-makers started to get themselves noticed. Their ambition was to create works in their own free style. They were self-taught, built their own equipment, loved experimenting and brought their projects to completion without budgeting or receiving any funding. Three representatives of this generation in particular ended up bringing Swiss film animation a long way forwards. They were all from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, which can, then, rightly be called pioneer country.

### Moving pictures in the sand

Gisèle and Ernest (“Nag”) Ansonge – she a pharmacist, he an engineer – started it off. Their short films attracted attention in both Switzerland and abroad towards the end of the 1950s. They are films of an artistic standard, which saw the light of day while their creators wrote and worked as contractors on a variety of film pro-

jects. By experimenting, the couple soon found a technique of their own, and one to which they remained faithful in the ten auteur films they produced between 1967 and 1990: sand, laid upon a light table. For each shot, Gisèle’s hand formed the sand into a shape before rearranging it for the next, and so it went on: This process, known as “stop-motion” produced one second of film for every 24 images taken.

In the films, Gisèle and Ernest Ansonge invited the viewer to step into various dream worlds in which surreal figures transformed themselves incessantly. In them, the authors told

stories they had thought up and came up with disturbing metaphors for what it means to be human. The films also, in keeping with the spirit of the time, gave expression to the desire to liberate the creative will from the conventions that constrained it. Most of these short films were in black and white and conveyed a predominantly bleak and restless atmosphere, something to which their sand technique was ideally suited.

### Well-composed images

For some insiders, the leading figure among Swiss animation auteurs was

**Forerunners at work: Gisèle and Ernest “Nag” Ansonge in their studio in the 1980s**  
Photo: GSFA





An oppressively beautiful atmosphere: a scene from Georges Schwizgebel's film "Jeu" (2006)  
Photo: Schwizgebel

someone else – Georges Schwizgebel. Schwizgebel trained as a graphic artist, and his oeuvre comprises 18 short films, likewise produced using the stop-motion process. His style, featuring the use of acrylic or gouache paint on cellophane, nonchalant brush strokes and luminous renderings of such colours as olive green, brick red and ochre, is unmistakable. He also relies on music rather than on language, and aims for flowing sequences without the use of editing.

Schwizgebel, too, is given to telling stories, and used the tale of Dr Faust as subject matter on more than one occasion. His primary concern, though, is not with narration in the conventional sense of the word, but rather with the communication of a theme through visual concepts. In each of his films, the artist explores a way of creating form, and this makes for a remarkable consistency throughout his work. The concept for each film is worked through conscientiously. Schwizgebel is fond, for example, of building in invisible mathematical structures, because he is convinced that the animation is made even more magical by conformity to laws that remain hidden while giving the flow of images a natural and compelling logic. Like the pioneering Ansorge couple, Schwizgebel's making of his films was always a matter of patient craftsmanship.

### A living scene

Today's animators, though, have a wider range of methods to hand in the shape of the various technologies and modes of expression developed in the course of the digital revolution. In consequence, contemporary Swiss animated film-making is characterised by an intensive approach to production. And ever since the pioneer era, the scene has kept on bringing forth out-

The success of "My Life as a Courgette" has given animated films in Switzerland a boost.  
Photo: Keystone



standing and stunning achievements. One of the most talented representatives of its younger generations is the director of "My Life as a Courgette". The Ansorges had already started collecting their awards by the time Claude Barras was born, in 1973. At that time, Schwizgebel was working on the first of his films to win an award.

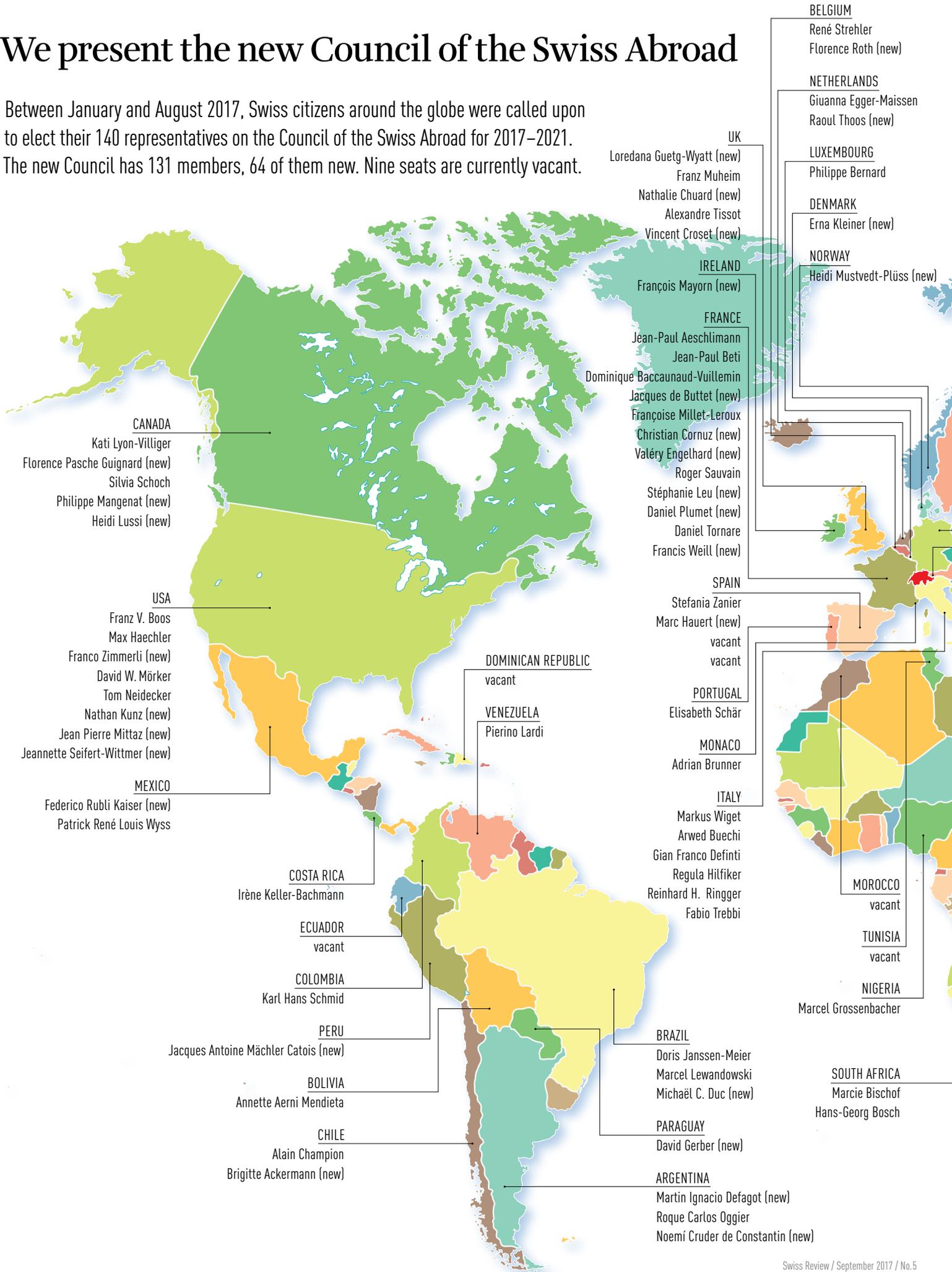
The auteur animated film as a genre owes its present vitality to the doggedly persistent work done over decades to establish it. One contributor to this was the Trickfilmgruppe Schweiz/Groupement Suisse du Film d'Animation (GSFA), a professional association founded in 1969, in which Ernest Ansorge in particular was involved. Other work was done by the three Swiss festivals that were dedicated to or featured animations, and strong partnerships were established with television companies and effective sources of public funding for film-making. There is now a degree course in animation filming, offered by the University of Lucerne.

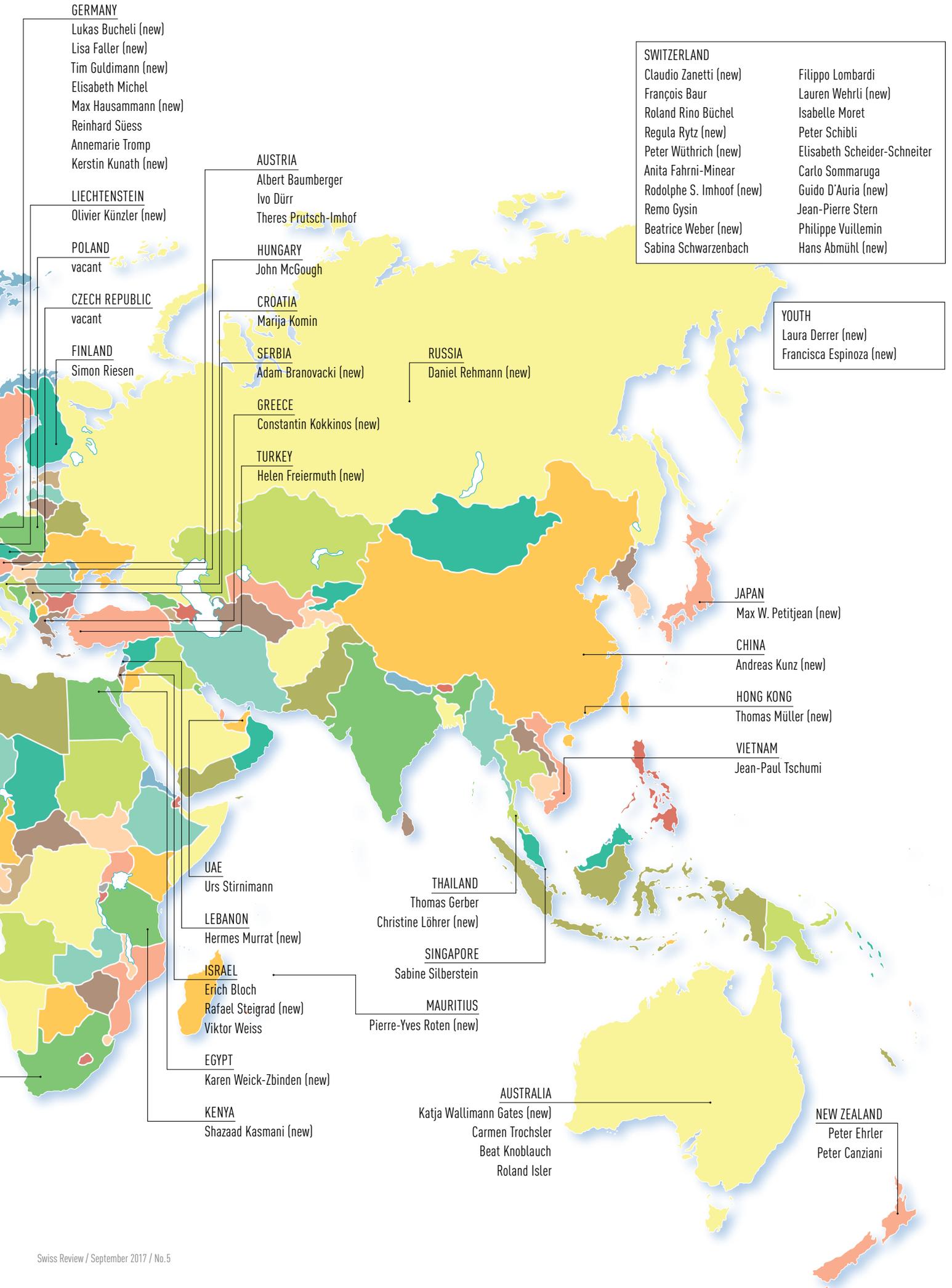
Swiss animated film-making has grown in self-confidence. For a decade now, some Swiss film-makers have been getting bolder, venturing to work on longer films as well as short ones. Long films entail lots of risks, and it was in this genre that Barras notched up his triumph. His film has a running time of 67 minutes, far longer than the 13 minutes of the Ansorges' longest sand animation or the 9.5 minutes of Schwizgebel's longest opus. Cost of production in this type of film is the highest per time-unit of any genre. So logic has dictated that longer films should be joint efforts involving input from abroad: It is no coincidence that it was a Franco-Swiss co-production that got the orphan boy "Courgette" on his feet and running.

STEPHAN WINKLER IS A HISTORIAN FROM BASEL AND A FORMER MAKER OF ANIMATED FILMS

# We present the new Council of the Swiss Abroad

Between January and August 2017, Swiss citizens around the globe were called upon to elect their 140 representatives on the Council of the Swiss Abroad for 2017–2021. The new Council has 131 members, 64 of them new. Nine seats are currently vacant.







## OSA offers for young people this winter:

Discover Switzerland together and enjoy sun and snow!

The OSA Youth Service offers young Swiss citizens abroad a wide variety of opportunities to visit Switzerland. This winter, it once again has three wonderful offers aimed at adolescents and young adults aged 15 and over.

### New Year's ski camp for young people in Les Diablerets (Vaud) from 27.12.2017 to 5.1.2018

A great and varied winter camp in Les Diablerets in the Vaud mountains – sun, snow and fun! Open to young Swiss Abroad aged 15–18. Motivated and trained camp leaders ensure participants have a memorable experience.

Registration and information:

[www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/leisure-offers](http://www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/leisure-offers)

### Winter sports camp for adults in Saas-Grund (Valais) from 27.12.2017 to 5.1.2018

The Valais Alps have some great skiing opportunities. The Youth Service is running its second winter camp with a programme perfectly suited to young Swiss Abroad aged 18 and over.

Registration and information:

[www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/leisure-offers](http://www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/leisure-offers)

### German course in Lucerne, 8–19 January 2018

Learn German, one of Switzerland's four national languages, or improve your German skills at our German course in Lucerne. Our joint activities in the afternoon will also acquaint you with Swiss towns, cities and mountains. Your host family will provide an insight into the life and culture of a Swiss family.

Registration and information:

[www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/training-offers](http://www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/training-offers)

### Subsidies

The Youth Service has funding available to provide support for financially disadvantaged participants. Applications can be made under the following link:

[www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/reduction-of-fees](http://www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/reduction-of-fees)

Youth Service contact details:

[youth@aso.ch](mailto:youth@aso.ch); +41 31 356 61 00; [www.facebook.com/ASOyouth](https://www.facebook.com/ASOyouth)

## educationsuisse: Conference of the Swiss Schools Abroad

This year's Conference of the Swiss Schools Abroad took place in Zurich on 10–12 July. The official part of the event, which was attended by more than 100 people, took place under the motto "Zurich and education abroad". High-calibre speakers – including Ivo Bischofberger, the President of the Council of States; Zurich Education Minister Silvia Steiner; economiesuisse Chair Monika Rühl; as well as the rectors of the University of Zurich and Zurich University of Teacher Education – addressed the issue of education both in Switzerland and abroad from a variety of perspectives. The canton of Zurich is the sponsor canton of the Swiss schools in Mexico, Catania, Madrid and the newly-opened Swiss school in Beijing. Sponsor cantons primarily support "their" schools educationally, in part because the Swiss Schools Act grants them educational supervision. Almost 8,000 children, about 980 of whom are Swiss nationals, are enrolled at the 18 Swiss schools worldwide that are recognised by the Swiss Federal Government.

Also in attendance at the conference were the school head teachers as well as the chairpersons of the school committees. In addition to the official event, the conference was an opportunity for further training and networking and to meet Isabelle Chassot, the Director of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC), which looks after the Swiss schools around the globe. The FOC runs federal support programmes and processes applications for Federal Council recognition of new Swiss schools. The network of existing Swiss schools reflects aspects of the history of Swiss migration. To this day, new schools are still founded at the initiative of local Swiss citizens.

The conference was organised by educationsuisse, an association that acts as the umbrella organisation of the Swiss schools abroad. Educationsuisse represents the interests of Swiss schools abroad towards the general public, companies and the authorities in Switzerland and provides these schools with a number of administrative, financial management and HR management services. It also supports and advises young Swiss citizens abroad and pupils at Swiss schools abroad who would like to study or undergo vocational training in Switzerland. Our employees speak German, French, English, Italian and Spanish.

The complete report on the Conference of the Swiss Schools Abroad can be found on the [www.educationsuisse.ch](http://www.educationsuisse.ch) website.

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

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



#### Our partners:

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Tel. +41 31 356 61 04  
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[www.educationsuisse.ch](http://www.educationsuisse.ch)



Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad  
Tel. +41 31 356 61 16  
Fax +41 31 356 61 01  
[info@sjas](mailto:info@sjas)  
[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 i giovani svizzeri a l'estero

# FYSA: Winter camp for children

Whether skiers or snowboarders, novices or at an advanced level, 8 to 14-year-old Swiss children abroad will have a great time at our winter camp.

## Winter camp in Valbella (Grisons)

**Date:** Wednesday, 27 December 2017

to Friday, 5 January 2018

**Number of participants:** 42

**Fee:** CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

**Ski or snowboard hire:** approx. CHF 150

**Registration deadline:** 15 October 2017

## Registration:

The exact details of the winter camp and the registration form will be available at <http://sjas.ch/en/camps> from 15 September. Reduced rates are offered in justified cases. The required form can be requested on the registration form. We would also be pleased to post you our information brochure on request.

## Free participation in young people's ski camp!

Six hundred children aged 13–14 will enjoy a winter sports week free of charge in Lenk in the Bernese Oberland on 2–8 January 2018 for the 77th time. The 600 winners of the prize draw will include 25 Swiss Abroad.

A further chapter in the history of ski camps for young people (Juskila) will begin on 2 January 2018, when 600 girls and boys aged 13 and 14 will travel from all over Switzerland to Lenk in Simmental by special train. For the 77th time, Swiss-Ski and its partners are holding Switzerland's largest winter sports camp. This time it is the turn of children born in 2002 and 2003.

Anyone wishing to take part in the ski camp for young people (Juskila) must be able to speak at least one of Switzerland's three national languages (German, French or Italian). The camp places will be awarded through a prize draw, with the prize being participation in the camp that includes winter sports lessons, food and accommodation. Parents are responsible for organising and funding the outbound and return journeys. The 25 Swiss Abroad who have won a place will be announced at the end of September.

## Form for the prize draw for the JUSKILA camp in Lenk (2 to 8 January 2018)

Please complete in clearly legible block letters.

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

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode, place: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of parent/legal guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Girl  Boy

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

Email address of parents: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. no. of parents: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of sport:  Alpine skiing  Cross-country skiing  Snowboarding

Only tick one! The type of sport cannot be changed once the draw has taken place.

Language of child:  German  French  Italian

Signature of parent/legal guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Send the coupon and a copy of the Swiss passport of one parent or the child by 15 October 2017 (date of receipt) to: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND

### Information:

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

# OSA advice

*Acquaintances tell me that the divorced former wives of Swiss citizens can receive a widows' pension after the death of their ex-husband. I'm 80 and living abroad. If I'm in this situation, can I apply for a widows' pension?*

Yes, if you haven't remarried in the meantime, you may be entitled to a widows' pension under certain conditions. These conditions are laid down in law as follows: If you are divorced and your former spouse dies, you are entitled to receive a widows' pension if you have children and you were married for at least ten years, or if you were over 45 when you divorced and you were married for at least ten years, or if your youngest child will turn 18 after you have reached the age of 45. If you satisfy none of these require-

ments, you are entitled to a widows' pension until your youngest child turns 18.

Source: The AHV/IV information centre in association with the Federal Social Insurance Office

Applications should be made directly to the Swiss Compensation Office in Geneva: Swiss Compensation Office (SCO); OASI Benefits, Av. Edmond-Vaucher 18, P.O. Box 3100, CH-1211 Genf 2, Switzerland. Tel.: +41 58 461 91 11; Fax: +41 58 461 97 05

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.

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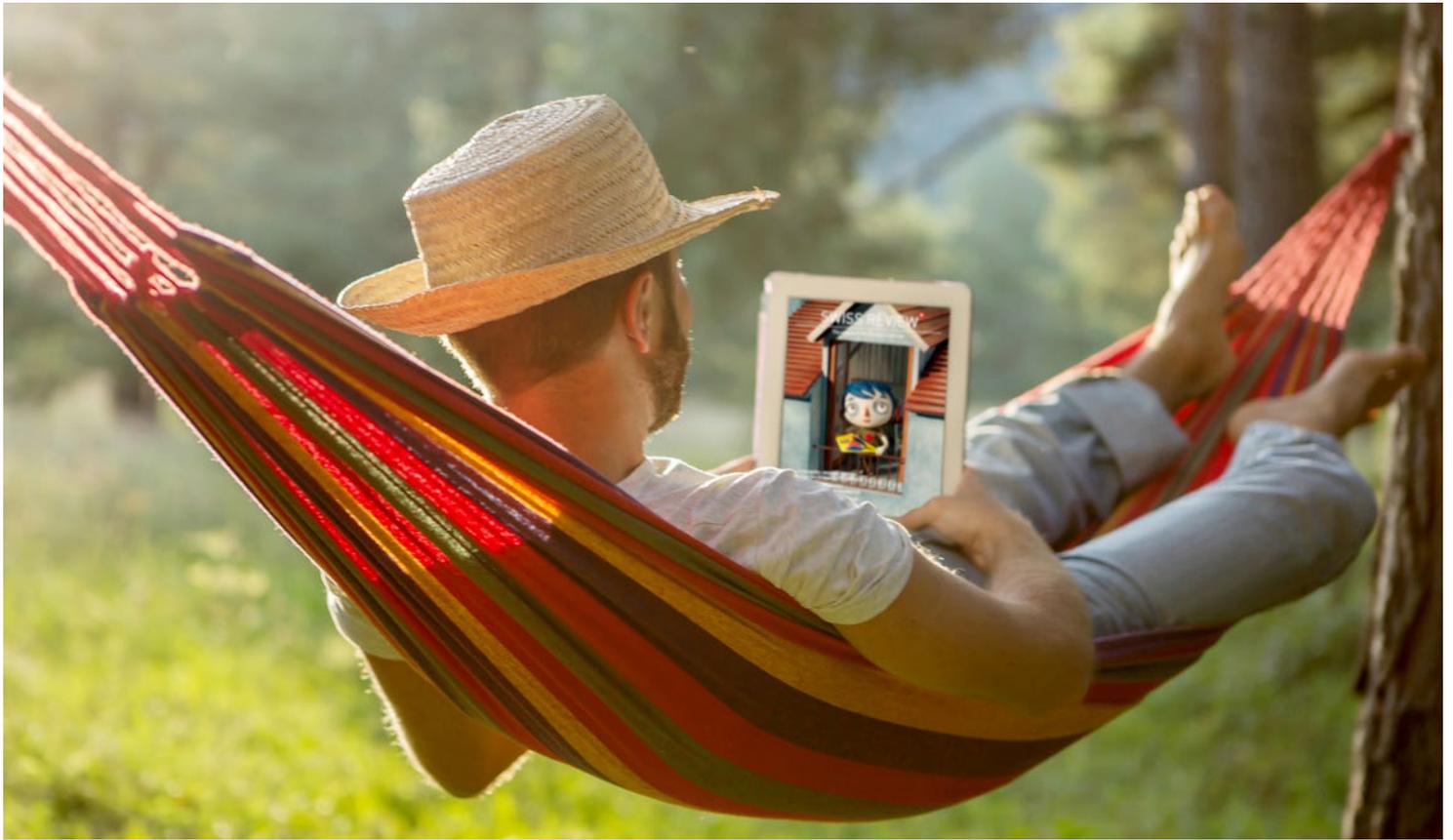
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More and more readers are learning to appreciate the digital “Swiss Review”. Indeed, more than 60 percent of our readers already receive the e-Review. Here’s how:

- Simply download the updated Review app for smartphones and tablets (iOS and Android) and read the Review offline wherever you want.
- Go to [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch). There you’ll find the entire Review in PDF format, with the same layout as the print issue. Many articles can also be clicked on as user-friendly HTML text on the website.



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Online-Registrierung für Schweizerinnen und Schweizer auf Auslandsreisen  
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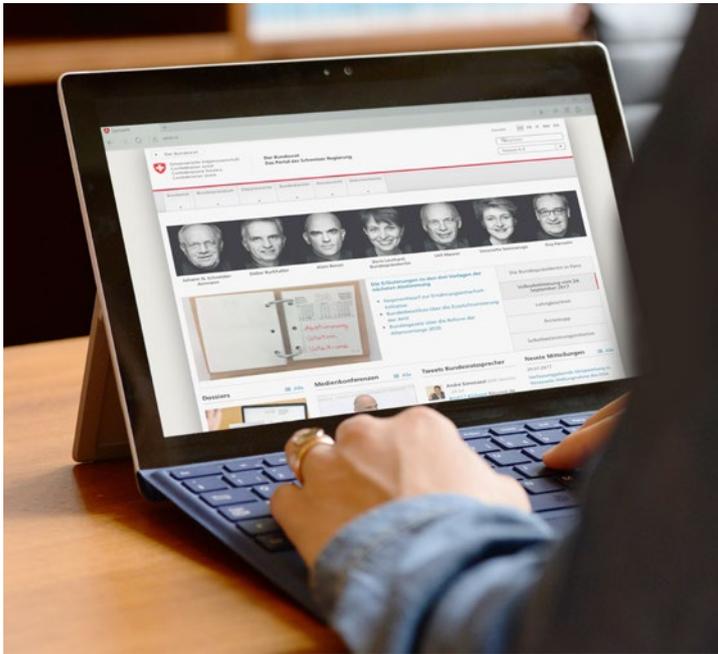
Plane gut.  
Reise gut.

Die kostenlose App für iOS und Android

## Official Switzerland online

Ever since the Swiss Confederation made its way onto the internet, it has provided up-to-date information there about polls, initiatives and referendums. The Federal Chancellery and Parliamentary Services together were the first bodies in the Federal Administration to have an online presence. Legislative documents have also been available online since the launch in the autumn of 1995. At the time, the producers of the platform stressed: “We’re not starting with a Rolls Royce.”

Official Switzerland has therefore been present online since the early days. Indeed, only about a quarter of the Swiss population had



internet access at that time. The Swiss Confederation was extremely keen to have a multilingual website from the very outset. This is also reflected in the fact that the domain name – [www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch) – includes an abbreviation that is recognisable in all the country’s national languages.

The Swiss Confederation’s website has been expanded and modernised constantly since 1995. Today it boasts a uniform online image and includes the portals of all the major authorities, providing access to a wealth of useful information.

## Federal referendums

Voting proposals are determined by the Federal Council at least four months before the voting date. No proposals will be put to the vote on 26 November 2017.

Voting dates in 2018:

4 March, 10 June, 23 September and 25 November

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at [www.admin.ch/votes](http://www.admin.ch/votes).

## Popular initiatives

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

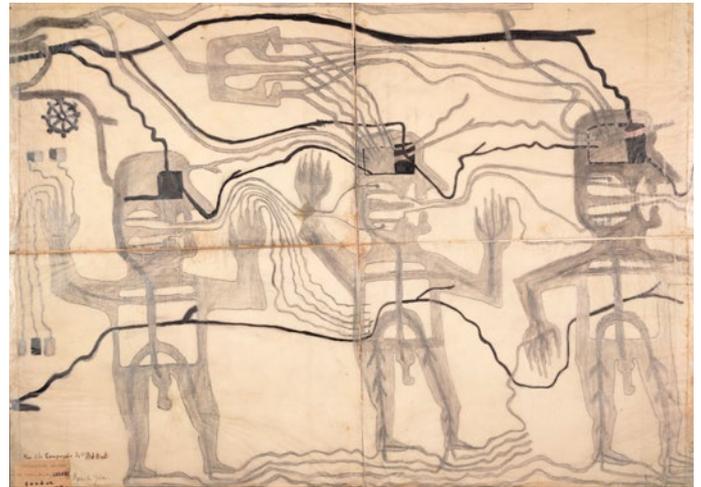
The Swiss Confederation’s webpages can also help Swiss people abroad in many ways. Travellers can consult the FDFA’s travel advice and register on Itineris. The “Living abroad” tab on the FDFA’s site provides the Swiss Abroad with legal regulations about their rights and obligations, practical tips – for instance, about electronic voting – and interesting information about the Swiss political system and political developments. Since 2016, the Swiss Abroad have also had access to an online desk on the homepage of the FDFA’s site. This enables you to take advantage of numerous consular services such as registering with Swiss embassies and consulates, and providing notice of changes in address and marital status, etc. independently and from anywhere around the globe.

Responsible for the FDFA official communications:  
Simone Flubacher, Relations with the Swiss Abroad  
Effingerstrasse 27, 3003 Berne, Switzerland  
Tel. +41 800 24 7 365 or +41 58 465 33 33  
[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch), email: [helpline@eda.admin.ch](mailto:helpline@eda.admin.ch)





Hans Krüsi, from Appenzell, grew up in an orphanage and became a farmhand and flower seller. He didn't start painting until he was 55. (Untitled, 1982, paint on cardboard)



Robert Gie's hallucinations meant that he spent much of his life in a psychiatric clinic in Rosegg, where he made his complex drawings on the walls, on scraps of paper and on pieces of packaging material (Untitled, 1916, pencil on cardboard)

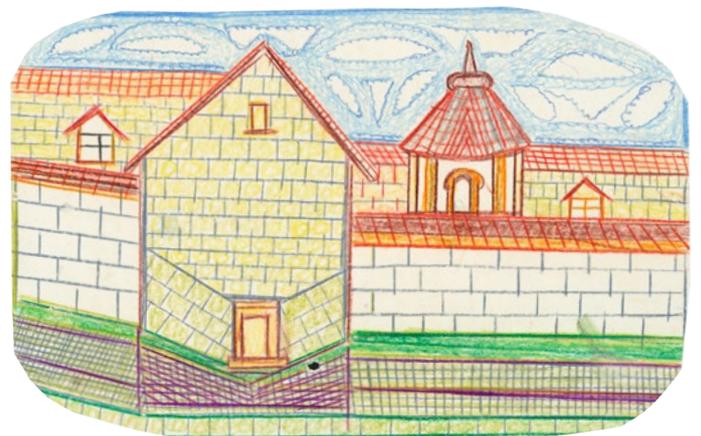
## Art by outsiders

Art Brut is the collective term for autodidactic art, produced by artists who have never been taught and who not infrequently have a learning disability. The world's first ever collection of Art Brut, and perhaps its most important, is in Switzerland. The Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne displays works by some 1,000 extraordinary artists.

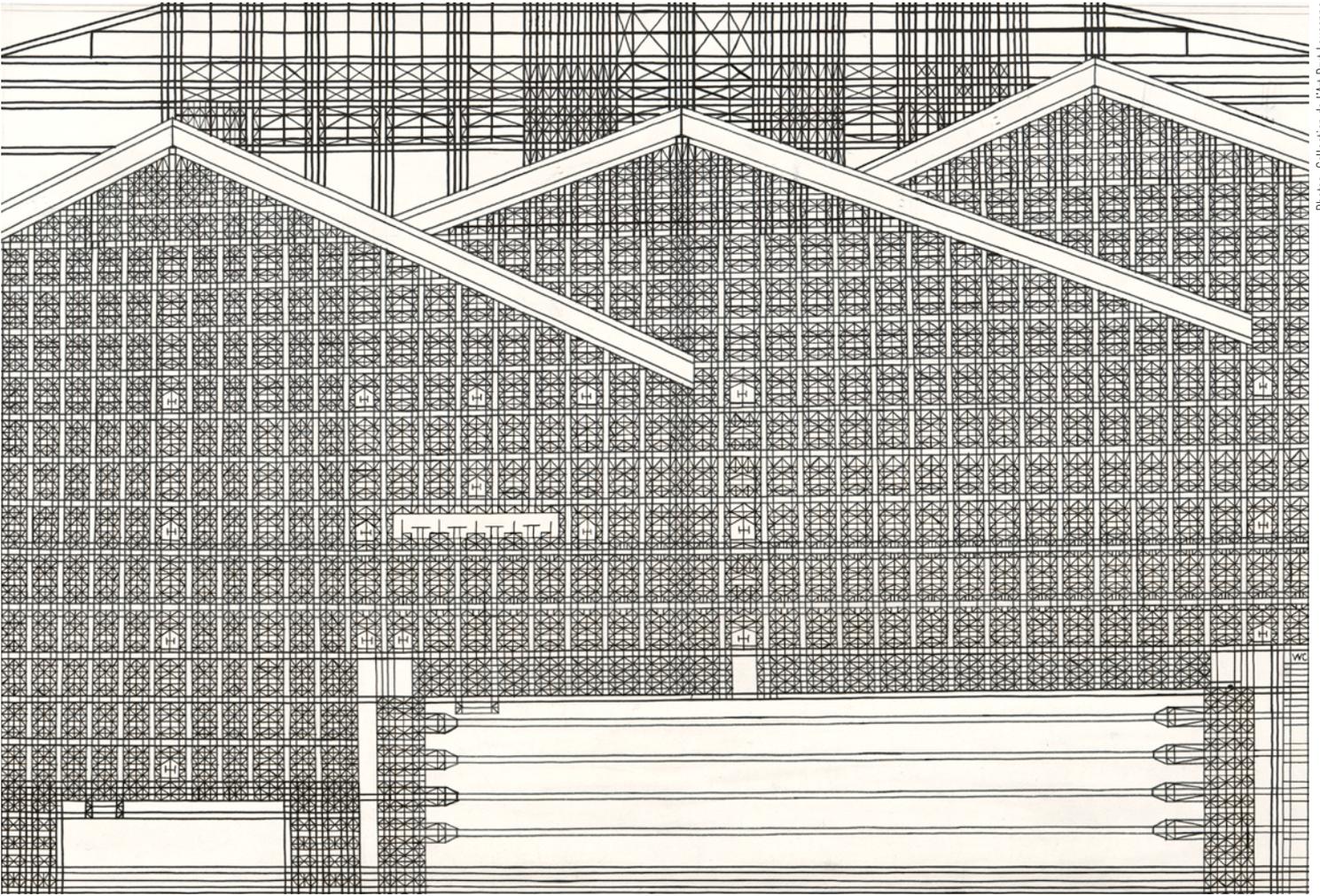
Collection de l'Art Brut Lausanne, Château de Beaulieu, 11 Avenue de Bergières, Lausanne  
[www.artbrut.ch](http://www.artbrut.ch)



The painter Benjamin Bonjour didn't have an easy life: Born in Bex, he lost his parents in childhood, and later meningitis left him disabled. He was cared for by his brother, who was killed in a road accident. Even so, the world of his art, executed in pastel shades, was a happy one. (Untitled, 1981, oil crayon on paper)



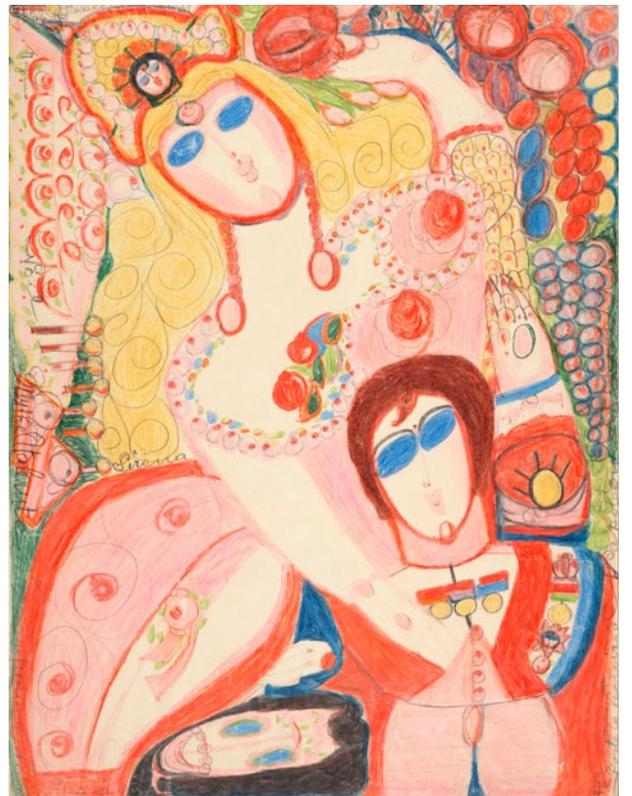
Edouard Boschey came to Switzerland after the Second World War as an orphan and spent his life working on a farm in the Jura. In his free time, he drew colourful worlds on paper – and liked cutting the corners to make them round. (Untitled, 1983, crayon on paper)



A native of Lausanne, he calls himself Diego and mainly paints pictures on architectural themes. As a child in the 1960s, he suffered a heart attack. Left disabled as a result of this, he nevertheless went on to learn to write, read and draw in extraordinary ways. (Untitled, undated, ink on paper)

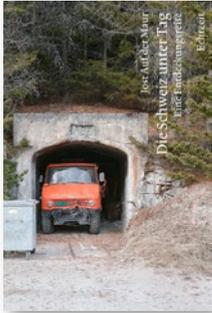


Gaston Savoy, from Fribourg, was deaf and had a minor learning disability. He didn't talk very much, but painted thousands of animals in serried ranks, thus creating his own kind of pop art. (Untitled, 2004, ballpoint pen on paper)



Aloise Corbaz from Lausanne was a brilliant personality, a creator of fashions and a governess at the court of Wilhelm II in Potsdam. Even so, she ended her days – painting right up to the end – in a sanatorium in Switzerland. (‘Mythe Atalante Lance des Pommes d’Or’, 1946, crayon on paper)

## Travelling to the lower levels of Switzerland



**JUST AUF DER MAUR:**  
"Die Schweiz unter Tag. Eine Entdeckungsreise". ("Switzerland underground. A journey of discovery") Echterzeit Verlag, Basel 2017, 139 pages, CHF 33.90.

reports from the underworld are enriched with facts boxes and a detailed information section for all those who also want to visit the lower levels of Switzerland. This is because an amazing number of facilities are open to the public.

The author takes a very close look, always retaining the sober view of a professional reporter, but never shying away from levelling criticism. At times he takes an historical perspective, before returning to talk in detail with contemporary witnesses. His discussions with miners in the Gotthard Base Tunnel that opened in 2016 are evocative, for example; this was a masterly technical achievement, but one with a dark side. Because, even today, building a tunnel is incredibly tough; the workers "all look older" than they actually are. "They wear themselves out down there," writes Auf der Maur. For him it is incomprehensible "that Switzerland today can still be so nonchalant over the truth about the mutilated, the invalids and the dead that the construction of underground Switzerland has claimed over the last 150 years". We should not just count those who died because of accidents, but also consider those who passed away because of silicosis or the hygiene conditions. Auf der Maur cites a figure of roughly 10,000 dead, and at least 50,000 scarred for life.

The highlights of the book include the report of the Swiss Federal Council bunker built during World War Two near Amsteg, but which was never used. And the depressing report from the bunker town of Sonnenberg near Lucerne, one of the world's largest civil defence facilities from the Cold War era, a building for 20,000 people that proved to be full of deficiencies during testing and ultimately considered useless.

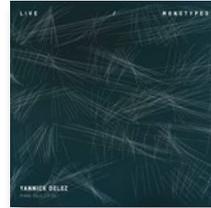
The book does make one thing clear: You cannot understand Switzerland completely if you do not know about its massive subterranean infrastructure.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

The territory of Switzerland is becoming steadily bigger – not on the surface, but underneath the earth. The nation continues to burrow below the ground, where there are now a record number of hollows: the tunnels, caverns, strongholds, shelters, bunkers, underground hospitals, railway stations, research centres and power plants would yield a 3,750-kilometre-long tube reaching from Zurich to Tehran. Compared to the surface area of the country, this is unrivalled throughout the world.

Journalist Jost Auf der Maur takes his readers on a journey to the secretive Swiss underground. Exciting reports give an insight into a world that many have an inkling of, but few really know much about. Auf der Maur's

## An all-round pianist



**YANNICK DELEZ:**  
"Live/Monotypes",  
Unit Records, 2017

Yannick Delez makes contemporary piano music that has its roots in jazz, but also manages to enthuse lovers of classical music and improvisation. The 44-year-old pianist from French-speaking Switzerland, who has been living in Berlin since 2011, has astonished people with his latest double album – a solo achievement. "Live/Monotypes" is a substantial solo work, which can be listened to again and again. The individual compositions and tracks are wide-ranging and powerful enough to get a sense of how masterfully and intuitively Delez moves in his music.

The musician, who was born in Martigny, fell in love with the piano at a young age and taught himself to play. In 1990, he began his professional training at the Ecole de Jazz de Lausanne, which he successfully completed, receiving his diploma for piano in the field of jazz/performance. He played with various bands on the Swiss jazz scene and was also a member of Piano Seven, an ensemble of seven pianists with whom he recorded four albums and toured Asia and Latin America. In 2003, he published his first solo album "Rouges"; a year later, he founded his own trio.

Since then, Yannick Delez has been fine-tuning his sophisticated piano skills. The critics agree that he is in a class of his own. "He has produced a stunning solo piano album, for which comparisons are hard to find," wrote the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung about his most recent work "Boréales". The Tages-Anzeiger newspaper characterises him as follows: "Delez offers a rare mixture – he takes a sense of trance from minimalism, of improvisation from jazz, and of harmony from romantic piano literature."

His latest double album is an impressive exhibition of his piano talent. The first CD is a live concert in which he weaves his own compositions and standards, showing off his skills as a first-class jazz pianist. CD 2 is dedicated to "Monotypes" – spontaneously improvised pieces which he recorded in the Beethoven House in Bonn. Here, Delez has selected 17 shorter pieces from his many hours of material, and carefully linked them.

In the opus, the genres blend weightlessly as virtuosity and precise motion are overlaid with impressionistic moods, jazzy flow, opulent outbursts and song-like moments. "When I make music, I want to take the listener by the hand and go with them to a place they wouldn't have gone to by themselves," Yannick Delez recently told the magazine "Jazz'n'More". There are plenty of such places to discover on "Live/Monotypes", and all are worth the trip.

PIRMIN BOSSART

# Polo Hofer



“Tschou zäme, es isch schön gsy!” (Bye, everyone, it’s been nice!) With these words, Polo Hofer bade us farewell in his official death notice. It was a fitting goodbye, regardless of whether Polo penned it or not. Despite all his passion and seriousness, this unconventional singer always took a laid-back attitude to life. Now he has fearlessly taken a step into the hereafter, whatever that may bring. “I’m not afraid of dying,” he said in one of his last interviews. “I’m curious to find out what’ll happen.”

Bernese-born Hofer started his career in the 60s as a singing drummer in a soul band. But his big breakthrough came in the following decade when he, his band Rumpelstilz and the classic song “Kiosk” introduced the world to dialect rock. He was the first to prove that you could break into the pop charts with Swiss-German texts. That may be taken for granted nowadays, but in the 70s it was a complete novelty.

Polo Hofer remained the undisputed authority on dialect rock for the rest of his life. He founded the Schmetterband, then Polo’s Schmetterding. His song “Alperose” became a timeless classic performed in dialect. In 2006, TV viewers voted it “the greatest Swiss hit of all time”.

It seemed Polo Hofer would always be around. But on 22 June, at the age of 72, the singer lost his long drawn-out battle with cancer. Switzerland mourned its national hero and was discomfited by the realisation that it must somehow get by without this pioneering spirit. That in itself will take some getting used to.

Yes, it really was nice. Tschou, Polo!

MARKO LEHTINEN

## CHF 100 for payments abroad

UBS has decided to charge transaction fees of 100 francs from 1 October onwards for certain types of payment orders from Switzerland to accounts abroad. This will affect non-standardised orders submitted by post, email or telephone. UBS charges 60 francs for such payments domestically. Consumer protection organisations say the bank wants to use the fee hike to increase its revenues in order to offset currently low interest rates.

## New exports record in the first six months

Swiss companies sold more abroad than ever between January and June of this year. Exports rose by 4.4%. The pharmaceutical and chemical sector was the main factor driving exports to a new record high of 109.6 billion francs. According to the Federal Customs Administration, chemical and pharmaceutical products accounted for two thirds of the increase. Exports of medicines and active ingredients climbed 7% to a new record high.

## No priority for Swiss nationals in Neuchâtel

The Neuchâtel section of the SVP has withdrawn its Swiss-first initiative “Les nôtres avant les autres”. This proposal by the cantonal section of the SVP was based on the “Prima i nostri” campaign in Ticino. The initiative, which was launched in February, was withdrawn before the 21 August deadline for the collection of signatures. The cantonal section realised it was very unlikely that it would gather enough signatures by the deadline.

## Happy retirement in Switzerland

Switzerland, Norway and Iceland are the countries offering the best quality of life worldwide for pensioners. These are the findings of the latest global retirement index drawn up by French bank Natixis. Switzerland has thus successfully defended its second place behind Norway. Eight of the top ten countries in the index are in western Europe. New Zealand, the best-placed non-European country, was ranked fifth behind Sweden.



Illustration Keystone/Peter Gut



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