

SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
July 2019



Swiss young people are fuelling the climate debate

A surprise discovery in the Emmental region: Swiss cheese has musical taste

E-voting faces resistance: the number of sceptics is growing



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An ornithological observation



I am not an ornithologist. But I do like birds. Preferably those which are flying free, which are not stuck in a cage. I recently came across a bird I had never seen before, early one morning in the Bernese Alps. A strange, loud, rolling sound pierced the silence. What was that? A proud black grouse, *Lyrurus tetrix*, appeared on a nearby hill. Its magnificent blue-black plumage glistened, its tail feathers glowed white, and its crest red. Its call reverberated through the vast basin of the valley. Then it flew away. It was a stroke of luck for me. As a potentially endangered species, the animal is included on the Red List and has become so rare on the northern side of the Swiss Alps that I was highly unlikely to cross its path. This is nothing new: biodiversity is under extreme pressure in Switzerland too.

The Swiss parliament is also presently occupied with the topic of protected animals. It wants to permit the shooting of hitherto strictly protected animals. There is still disagreement about whether to now target wolves and beavers – or perhaps wolves and lynxes. It was further proposed that levels of protection of the grey heron, the goosander and the unremarkable woodcock should be relaxed. Our black grouse was also included in the debate. This raised the question in the Council of States as to why the Confederation puts endangered species – including the black grouse – on the Red List and then simultaneously permits their numbers to be depleted.

First protect, then decimate. That is clearly a dramatic change of position. Furthermore, the more contradictory established policy seems to be, the more incomprehensible it appears to outsiders. Perhaps this is why students are currently taking to the streets in their thousands. They are calling loudly for consistent climate policy, as this is the only way to avoid a potentially disastrous shift in the climate change process. They clearly have little confidence in policy to date.

From an ornithological perspective, the city centres on strike days can be compared to a noisy aviary. However, the old hands in the political establishment are increasingly responding to the youthful twittering: in light of the coming elections, the majority of Swiss parties are painting themselves green. This is reason enough for the "Swiss Review" to pay closer attention and explore the issue in depth. What makes the young people who are marching at the forefront of these demonstrations tick (Page 6)?

MARC LETTAU, CHIEF EDITOR

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Switzerland's civilian service is almost too successful



If someone chooses not to order the schnitzel in a restaurant because the pasta tastes better, the owner is definitely not going to try and make the pasta any less appealing. On the contrary, he or she needs to identify why the schnitzel is not being ordered – and improve it. So, the Swiss government should have already started reflecting on the current and future tasks of an army in

Switzerland decades ago, and then modified them accordingly to make them attractive once more. Yes, I also did civilian service more than twenty years ago, and precisely because I did not “want to guard a bridge with a gun”. Even then, I found military service to be very unattractive compared to the work of a ‘Zivi’ (civilian service worker). **TOBIAS MUNZ, HAMBURG, GERMANY**

I have seen both sides. I did my time in the military training school (RS) as a paramedic. Unfortunately, our commanding officer placed far more importance on keeping your room tidy and standing at attention or yelling at us for no reason than on the paramedic training itself. As a result, the majority of recruits could not even apply a half-decent dressing after the RS. This is why I switched to the civilian service afterwards. I undertook various civilian service deployments in different places. It allowed me to make a difference every day, and I learnt a great deal in the process. In light of the above, I truly believe that my time in the civilian service was actually service to my homeland; my time in the military was not. **MARCEL ELLENSTEIN, ZÜRICH**

Lucens, the Swiss reactor meltdown



I read in the “Swiss Review” that the Lucens nuclear reactor suffered a core meltdown in 1969. I was not aware that such a thing had happened, so thanks for the information! The case brings back memories of my own. Strenuous

political efforts were made to push through a nuclear power plant in Rütli, next to the Hirschsprung, in the St. Gallen-Rheintal region in 1964. The arguments at the time were as follows: there was a compelling need for it, sufficient cooling water was available from the Rhine, and damage limitation in the event of an accident as half of the affected area would be in neighbouring Austria. Those, like myself, who actively opposed such plans were vilified as traitors to their country, and accused of running it down and not being open to progress. That was no longer the Switzerland that I knew, and one of the reasons why I chose to emigrate.

HANSPETER WIDRIG, STEIN, GERMANY

Tighter Swiss gun laws



I noticed the similarities between the US and Switzerland. It occurred to me that we face many of the same issues: gun control, and trade. As in Switzerland our Constitution guarantees the right to own guns. There are many here

who want that right eliminated, or greatly controlled. Please remember that every country that took their citizens guns first registered them. I was amazed and disappointed you will align yourselves with the EU's wishes in this regard. I urge my Swiss friends to reject any further attempts by the EU to take away your sovereignty and independence. **TED GROB, GRAFTON, USA**

Voting rights for Swiss Abroad under pressure

I feel the same way as most letter writers, concerning the vote for Swiss Abroad. I have been living in Canada for 48 years, am a Canadian citizen; even if I would like to consider moving back to Switzerland (Geneva, where I grew up) I don't believe that I could afford it, considering the cost of living there and the pensions I have here.

As a result, while I follow closely news from Switzerland and go through the various voting papers I receive, I feel it would be wrong to have my voice heard on subjects that do not and never will affect me, nor can I claim that I would always have a full understanding of the issues, without living there.

WERNER HOHLER, WINNIPEG, CANADA

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“We can finally voice our concerns”

They are not entitled to vote. Nonetheless, Swiss school pupils will influence the outcome of the parliamentary elections in autumn. They are striking in their thousands for a consistent climate policy and to stir politicians to action. These young people are leading the way. But what makes them tick?



MARC LETTAU, REPORT
THEODORA PETER, PARTY SURVEY

Friday is once more upon us; a school day. Despite this, large numbers of noisy students are marching through the city centre. Passers-by now know the reason as such demonstrations have been taking place in many cities for months. The student body is striking. They are skipping school and loudly demanding a strong climate policy with immediate effect. The younger ones are barely twelve years old; the majority are teenagers. In the meantime, twenty-somethings from the universities have also joined in. There are increasing numbers of their grandparents' generation, but fewer from their parents' generation. Some 50,000 took part in the nationwide climate strike on 15 March 2019. Two months later, on 24 May, participants numbered in the tens of thousands, despite their university-entrance examinations. The movement cannot be overlooked or ignored.

"Things are not OK"

But what's motivating this movement of young strikers? We put this question to a trio of students from the canton of Bern. First up is Thun pupil Linus Dolder (16). He describes how much the power of images spurs him on. When he is on his winter holiday, 2,000 metres up and only wearing a T-shirt, and he sees brown landscapes sparsely streaked with white artificial snow, he realises, "that things are not OK, even without having lived on this earth for thirty or forty years".

Sophie Feuz (16), a pupil from Bern, is not focused on the "unknown future", but rather the untenable present. "People are already losing their livelihood, animal species are dying out and glaciers are disappearing in the Alps due to the current situation." It's depressing to experience so much decline during one's own short life, "and life is so very short".



Linus Dolder: "All you can do is change something. Become a vegetarian, don't fly any more, ride your bike more often."

Photo: Danielle Liniger

Lastly, Wirada Läderach (15) from Belp gives us three reasons for striking. Firstly, her fear of the "massive chaos" that awaits if those who are in crisis due to climate change come under even more pressure. Second, the frustrating experience, "that all those who hold our future in their hands don't want to act". And thirdly, the strike has given them an opportunity to, "finally voice our concern about something that has been worrying us for a long time".

Everything. Now.

The striking youth all sound rather bolshy but come across as amazingly well-behaved. The police who are escorting the large numbers of marchers are visibly relaxed. The list of de-



Wirada Läderach: "My parents are happy to see me taking part in the climate movement. We talk about it often and at length at the dinner table."

Photo: Danielle Liniger

mands is more cheeky than specific. First, the main concern becomes evident as twelve-year-olds proudly carry a banner before them that hasn't turned out so well, and that bears the inscription: "The climate is even worse than our banner". The main demand is for "a Switzerland with zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030". And the first step towards "climate equality" is to recognise the cri-



"We consume a great deal and also very cheaply," says Sophie Feuz. We should all make an effort to consume less and back true-cost pricing.

Photo: Danielle Liniger

sis situation and proclaim a "climate emergency".

This is having an impact on the political establishment. In February, the cantonal parliament of Basel-Stadt approved a climate resolution and actually proclaimed a "climate emergency". It remains unclear as to whether this is a symbolic act to placate the student body or the start of a new political agenda. In the meantime, cities including Olten (SO) and Delémont (JU), as well as the canton of Vaud have declared themselves climate "emergency areas".

The cantonal elections at the beginning of the year delivered signs of change in the political climate. In March, the pointedly climate-political Green Party and the Green Liberal Party increased their share of the vote from a joint 14.8 per cent (2015) to 24.8

per cent. By Swiss standards, this is an enormous shift. It also occurred at the expense of the right-wing SVP as well as the Liberals. The subsequent parliamentary elections in the cantons of Baselland and Lucerne delivered a similar picture. However, the Zurich elections are of particular interest as they have always been a reliable barometer for the national elections later on in the year. The majority of political scientists are therefore speculating that on 20 October the picture of a Green success and conservative right-wing slump could repeat itself.

What do the strikers think about the autumn elections? Sophie Feuz: “I firmly believe that we will have a significant effect on the elections.” She follows this with an “if”: “If young people don’t lose interest”. Some students of a similar age are satisfied with “just taking to the street once”. “On the other hand, more and more of us are joining in each time.” She would be even more confident in the movement if the voting age at national level was 16. Many are far more interested in political life at the age of 16 than at 20, she says: “School

helps us to mature. Many young people are very switched on.” However, as soon as they are out of school, they lack any “platforms” to develop their own maturity, she says. This quickly causes them to lose any motivation they may have had to participate in political life.

The FDP corrects; the SVP hopes

The two largest conservative parties, the SVP and the FDP, are reacting in very different ways to the climate strike phenomenon and its widespread impact. FDP party president Petra Gössi wants to give the party a splash of green based on a survey of the rank and file of the economic liberal party. Thus, the FDP is now also demanding a CO₂ levy on petrol and diesel. However, Gössi is meeting with some resistance. A member of the

FDP faces green policy change

78 per cent of FDP members want to see more commitment from the party on environmental and climate matters. This was the outcome of an internal survey commissioned by FDP president Petra Gössi. The rank and file are calling for a levy on air tickets, and also want to see Switzerland reduce its CO₂ emissions predominantly within the country. To date, the FDP fraction has blocked both issues in Parliament. The new approach is designed to initially lead to a position paper containing demands related to the areas of housing, transport, work/education and the environment, and serve as a guideline for FDP policy over the next few years. It remains unclear whether the party’s change of approach will lend a green momentum to the national elections.

Political representation: 33 seats in the National Council, 13 seats in the Council of States, 2 seats in the Federal Council.

More on the FDP’s climate policy: ogy.de/fdp-klima

SVP warns against “climate hype”



Climate and environmental policy are not at the top of the SVP’s list of priorities. Instead, the party is positioning itself as an opponent of the “climate hype” that is causing “ban mania” among the left wing. The People’s Party is focusing on freedom and individual responsibility. It opposes any new levies and fees but is supportive of tax incentives in climate and environmental policy, such as for building refurbishments. The SVP is particularly critical of Switzerland’s proposal to go it alone on halving CO₂ emissions by 2030 without internationally binding resolutions from all countries. With regard to the national elections on 20 October, the SVP is banking on non-Green voters, and positioning itself as a lobby for motorists and against restrictions on mobility in the process.

Political representation: 66 seats in the National Council, 5 seats in the Council of States, 2 seats in the Federal Council.

More on the SVP’s climate policy: ogy.de/svp-klima



BDP banks on Glacier Initiative

Like the CVP, the BDP supports a tough CO₂ Act. After the failure of the bill in the National Council, the party originally wanted to launch its own popular initiative with the objective of not allowing any more new cars with combustion engines in Switzerland from 2040. The party later dropped the idea of such a mobility initiative and instead supported the broad-based Glacier Initiative, which aims to incorporate the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement in the constitution. The BDP is consolidating its strengths and presenting itself as a pragmatic and solution-oriented party – true to the election motto of “Boring, but good”. By dispensing with its own initiative, it may not be easy for the BDP to make ground on the climate issue in the autumn elections.

Political representation: 7 seats in the National Council, 1 seat in the Council of States

More on the BDP’s climate policy: ogy.de/bdp-klima

party leadership, Christian Wasserfallen, argued that it is a waste of time for a party to “change its colour”. If you want to vote “green”, it is better to give your vote to “the originals”, that is the Greens.

The SVP’s situation is far more precarious. Nobody would buy a sudden change of colour from them. So, they are initially banking on the principle of hope. They will stick to their course as SVP figures asserted following heavy losses in the cantonal elections that the climate issue may be off the table again by the autumn. However, a section of the traditional rank and file – the farmers challenged by climate change – do not believe that. The SVP leadership have therefore begun to overtly work against the youth and, for the first time, to present the party as the last bastion of motorists’ interests. Since then, party president, Albert Rösti, has diag-

CVP as a majority creator



The CVP was the only centre-right party in the Federal Council to support the far-reaching measures in the CO₂ Act in the National Council last year. The party committed itself to green concerns early on – most recently by supporting the energy transition. After the failure of the bill in the National Council, the party wants to play a key role for a new bill that is capable of gaining majority support. With regard to the autumn elections, the CVP wants to make ground as the “sole conservative party to consistently stand for environmental protection”. By doing so, it will disassociate itself from the SVP and the FDP, who have shown no interest in domestic CO₂ reduction goals to date. The CVP also supports the levy on air tickets as well as financial incentives for home insulation and to replace oil heaters to reach the climate goals.

Political representation: 41 seats in the National Council, 13 seats in the Council of States, 1 seat in the Federal Council.

More on the CVP's climate policy: ogy.de/cvp-klima

First, they accuse the youth of today of not being interested in politics and being rather apathetic about it. “And now, when the youth have found a topic that means a lot to them, they are accused of being controlled by others.” Perhaps the movement is deemed so provocative “because it is thinking for itself”, she says.

“More than just a family hobby”

There is also another side to the picture: striking teenagers with a climate-unfriendly beef-burger in one hand and Coca-Cola in a throwaway can in another. Where is the consistency here? He is well aware of such objections, says Linus Dolder. However: “You shouldn't have to be perfect to have a voice.” Anyone who stands up



The SP supports ecological restructuring

The SP wants to speed up the energy transition so that Switzerland is climate-neutral by 2045. Therefore, it is calling for a fast and socially responsible shift away from fossil energies. The financial centre should also become climate-friendly. “No more investments in oil and gas should be approved.” The demand for renewable energies should enable the ecological restructuring to create around 40,000 new jobs. The party wants to achieve these goals in Parliament through numerous initiatives. The SP also supports the Glacier Initiative, which aims to incorporate climate protection in the constitution and demands the implementation of the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement. With regard to the national elections, it will be difficult for the SP to make ground on the climate issue as the Greens are flying high.

Political representation: 43 seats in the National Council, 12 seats in the Council of States, 2 seats in the Federal Council

More on the SP's climate policy: ogy.de/sp-klima

for the climate movement is doing something: “That is what is important.” But ultimately, one's own authenticity is what matters: “I cannot take part in the climate strike on Friday and then fly off on holiday on Saturday”.

His approach: demand change and make changes himself. He has become a vegetarian for ecological reasons, says Dolder: “Now, my mother only cooks vegetarian food.” Läderach also



GLP banks on cleantech

As a traditional environmental party, members of the green-liberal GLP also see themselves on the rise. The party wants to make Switzerland a pioneer through innovation and competition in the area of climate protection. Swiss industry should bank on cleantech. This could generate a “massive export branch” as the Paris Climate Agreement also needs to be implemented in other countries. With regard to the CO₂ Act, the party is campaigning for a large percentage of the emissions to be offset in Switzerland. The GLP argues that measures are not just needed for building refurbishments but also for road and aviation traffic, which have not been touched to date. Like the Greens, the Green Liberals view the autumn national elections as key – under the campaign motto: “It is time”.

Political representation: 7 seats in the National Council.

More on the GLP's climate policy: ogy.de/glp-klima



Greens have a Greta tailwind

Environmental and climate protection are traditionally at the heart of Green policy. The Greens continue to prioritise a tough CO₂ Act. They are demanding more building refurbishments and an increase in the CO₂ levy. The agricultural and financial sector should also contribute to climate protection. Moreover, the Greens want to see worldwide climate equality. Switzerland should ensure that climate change-induced damage is financed according to a causation principle. During previous cantonal elections, the Greens have benefited the most from the ‘Greta Thunberg effect’. Whether they do well at a national level in the autumn depends to some extent on the climate issue remaining high on the political agenda. The Greens have pinned their colours to the climate mast by declaring the 2019 elections the “Climate Elections”.

Political representation: 11 seats in the National Council, 1 seat in the Council of States.

More on the Greens' climate policy: ogy.de/gps-klima

nosed “pseudoreligious dimensions” among the young climate protesters. And the Zurich national councillor Roger Köppel expressed his compassion for the young people in an interview, saying they are being used by “left-wing climate ideologues” and are serving a “red-green environmental dictatorship” which threatens social freedoms. According to Köppel: “It's a scandal that our teachers are dragging their students to these politically controlled climate demonstrations”.

Is Wirada Läderach being controlled by others and pseudoreligiously blind? She says that such attacks leave her speechless: “We definitely need to act now; otherwise we run the risk of something truly terrible happening.” From her perspective, the accusations are rather suspect.



CO₂ emissions in Switzerland are falling

The analyses presented in April reveal that between 1990 and 2015 the emission of climate-damaging CO₂ decreased by a good 10 per cent despite a simultaneous increase in the population. CO₂ emissions per head are less than half as high as those in the other industrial states. This is the good news. The bad news is that upon closer inspection, Switzerland's ecological footprint is well above the global average. As the Swiss economy imports a lot of CO₂-intensive products from abroad, around 80 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions caused by Swiss consumers occur outside Switzerland.

The struggle for a full revision of the Swiss CO₂ law is in full swing in Switzerland. This should result in substantial decreases in CO₂ emissions. There are disputes as to how Switzerland will contribute to future CO₂ reductions: mainly abroad or predominantly in Switzerland. While the National Council has avoided setting a domestic goal to date, the Council of States has been able to agree that at least 60 per cent of the reduction should be in Switzerland. At least, that is what the advisory committee suggests. (MUL)

declares herself a vegetarian. At the same time, Dolder sees the limitations of individual action: "It is not enough for individuals to act alone. Policy definitely needs to play a part." Politicians must lead the way so that pre-defined goals can be achieved together: "We need to ensure that climate protection is afforded far more importance than it is now in order for it to be more than just a family hobby."

Wide debate, new perspective

Some are embracing the climate youth movement, while others are punishing them by setting boundaries. Both reactions originate from the same reference point – the climate issue. This is why the topic is becoming more and more prominent in the political debate, and is increasingly being regarded from new angles. For example, the progressive and business-friendly "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" (NZZ) recently explained on its front page that digitalisation is incorrectly understood as being part of the solution to the climate problem. On the contrary, it is part of the problem. Due to increasing streaming volumes, communication technology is now responsible for 3.7 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. That is

around twice as much as civil aviation. With a sidelong glance at the youth, the NZZ lectures that: "Streaming is the new flying." Anyone who streams a video multiplies the energy consumption of their smartphone by a factor of 1,500, it says.

"We all consume a huge amount"

Wirada Läderach always has her smartphone with her. Yes, many of today's young people are actually "comfortable, complacent children of a consumer society". However, at the same time, they are a generation which moves around and looks for new insights. For her that means something along the lines of: "Flying is great; however, it is just not an option for the next trip." The terms 'consumer' and 'consumer society' are also part of the repertoire of Sophie Feuz. Her protest banner, which bears the marks of regular use, reads "Revolution instead of consumerism". By that she means that consumption, which is often thoughtless, is an enormous driver of climate change: "We all consume a huge amount and so cheaply." The challenge is therefore to question one's own consumption and to stand for true-cost pricing, i.e. to pay a price that covers the real costs of a particular product.

When it comes to truth isn't it a little too easy just to wag school and sell it as a political act? Sophie Feuz's reply is to the point. It is "rather embarrassing" and "above all incorrect" to spread such a picture. Anyone who wants to strike must submit a proper dispensation application and also receives a lot of additional homework to do. It is really easier not to strike. She had to write a presentation on "anthropogenic climate change" on top of her usual work. That was a challenge as her class teacher is a geologist and an expert on the topic: "There is no way I can just write a load of rubbish."

The following small parties represented in the National Council were not included in the party survey: Swiss Evangelical People's Party, EVP (2 seats), Ticino League (2 seats), Geneva Citizens' Movement, MCG (1 seat), Partei der Arbeit, PdA (1 seat) as well as the Independents (2 seats). (TP)

Out and about with Linus, Sophie and Wirada

Further pictures of the young people portrayed in this edition, Linus Dolder, Sophie Feuz and Wirada Läderach are available online at www.revue.ch. The gallery is supplemented with images of the last Swiss school climate strike.

Musical Swiss cheese

Ripening cheeses were exposed to music for months on end in the Emmental region. As a result of this experiment, we now know that cheese develops different flavours depending on the musical genre. And hip-hop makes for the biggest holes.



Beat Wampfler is all ears when it comes to cheese. Here he is eavesdropping on a huge wheel of Emmental. Salter Markus Schneider looks on. Photo: Keystone

MARC LETTAU

First to the main issue at hand – how the Helvetic culinary heritage is doing. Well, Swiss cheese has never been better. The full liberalisation of the cheese trade between Switzerland and the EU in 2007 ultimately proved to be beneficial. Since then, Swiss cheese exports have been progressively increasing. Nowadays, this equates to well in excess of 70,000 tonnes a year.

However, one particular cheese news item this spring had a much stronger impact than all the export numbers: the news that Swiss cheese is musical. It even has sophisticated musical taste. It reacts differently to Mozart's "Magic Flute", Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven", Yello's "Monolith" and the track "Jazz" from the hip-hoppers A Tribe Called Quest. We know this thanks to Beat Wampfler, the innovative Burgdorf cheesemonger, and Michael Harenberg, a music and media scientist at Bern University of the Arts (HKB). The odd couple actually wondered whether sound waves influence the metabolism of cheese to an extent that can be proved and also tasted. Wampfler and Harenberg's team then subjected nine wheels of cheese to music over a period of six months. A "reference cheese" aged in silence.

At the beginning of the experiment, Wampfler hoped that the cheese exposed to hip-hop music would ripen particularly well: "That might lead young people to develop a taste for cheese". His hopes were realised when a specialist jury tasted his cheese. They gave the hip-hop cheese excellent marks. It differed the most from the reference

cheese, impressed due to its "noticeable fruity aroma" and had the largest holes.

When asked by "Swiss Review", HKB spokesperson Christian Pauli said that the "sensational research" would now be continued. That leads us to ask how we should actually view the cheese-sound experiment. Is it art, commerce or just a bit of fun? Pauli: "It's actually somewhere between art and commerce. It was never just about a bit of fun." Pauli refers to the analysis of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) to refute any such allegations. This proves that exposure to sonic waves changed important flavour compounds in the cheese. Now it is a proven fact that the cheese sample exposed to deep frequencies of music contained higher concentrations of the flavour compounds 2-Methylbutanal, 3-Methylbutanal, Methional, Phenylacetaldehyde, 2-Ethyl-3,5-Dimethylpyrazine and propionic acid than the other samples.

Inexperienced cheese consumers who have unwittingly assimilated all these flavour compounds will surely welcome the continuation of this research. Perhaps everyone will fall in love with cheeses that have their very own flavour. A small survey of the "Review" editorial team shows the breadth of musical requests: front-runners are "Atom Heart Mother" (Pink Floyd), "Casta Diva" (Bellini), "We will rock you" (Queen), "Ha ke Ahnig" (Steff la Cheffe), the mellifluous "Boleros Inolvidables" (Tito Rodríguez) and – most importantly – Katja Ebstein's "Wunder gibt es immer wieder" ("Miracles keep happening").

A public beach brings Geneva closer to its lake

Geneva's new point of access to its lake is a response to both social and climatic requirements. It has also brought a more relaxed feel to the Calvinist city's relationship with the water, as has long since been the case in Berne and Zurich.



STÉPHANE HERZOG

The Genevan people want to make the most of their waterfronts. For the last decade or so, they have been pouring onto the banks of the Rhône to bathe as they did in the Middle Ages, or indeed, as people have been doing in the Aare and the Rhine, in Berne and Basel, for some time now. As of 22 June, the people have a new beach to enjoy: the Plage des Eaux-Vives.

A ten-minute walk from the city centre, this free public area, measuring a total of 500 metres in width, is due for completion in spring 2020. Set between land and lake, it will contain a water garden with rare plants, as requested by WWF, and a park. Built on stilts, this leisure hub will include a large esplanade for dinghies, a fishing village and a restaurant facing the Jet d'eau. The Port de la Nautique and its club will be expanded from 600 moor-

Geneva, in the background behind the Jet d'Eau, is building a new beach on a section of its lake in response to its changing needs.
Photo: Serge Fruehauf

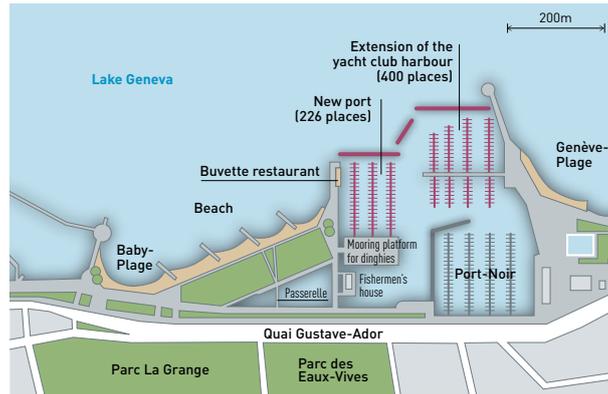
ing spaces to 1,000. A long embankment will be constructed heading away from the shore to protect the site. The embankment has led some to fear that the water will not remain sufficiently fresh for swimmers. The canton denies this claim, however. "You have to take risks and move forward," states architect Marcellin Barthassat who took part in the renovation of the Bains des Pâquis on the other side of the lake in the 1990s.

Yverdon and Zurich have their eyes on Geneva

“The bay view will be extraordinary, and we’ll be away from the traffic, in peace and quiet,” explained project manager Franck Pidoux in May. The civil servant, who directs the sector for the renaturation of water courses for the canton, recalls that petitions requesting improved access to the lake have existed for some time. “We had the most limited offer in the Lake Geneva area, in contrast with Berne or Zurich, for example, where they have never cut themselves off from their rivers,” he says. But can a lake be modified? For this project manager, the process is possible, but controversial: “representatives from Yverdon and Zurich have come to see the project to understand Geneva’s approach to building on a lake, which remains an exceptional action under law.”

Lake Geneva: from steam rooms to bathing

The city has had a historically tumultuous relationship with its waterfronts. “In the Middle Ages, people weren’t afraid of the water. Geneva had steam rooms, warm baths, on the Rhône. These were meeting places, but they were banned during the Reformation. Then, over the centuries, the people of Geneva began bathing naked in the Rhône, despite the bans,” recounts historian Bernard Lescaze. “As for Lake Geneva, it served as a port and a place of industry until the 18th century, when the first lake-based baths were installed. From 1850 it lost its commercial value, and from 1900 onwards it became a place for recreational boating and regattas.” Yet, a movement in the opposite direction saw a ban on bathing in the Rhône. “Before the war, the working classes would meet at the Bain des Pâquis, and beauty contests were held on Geneva Plage on the left



A beach that will completely transform the bay

Launched by former ecologist State Councillor Robert Cramer, and delayed by an appeal by WWF, the Plage des Eaux-Vives project finds its source in a study which began in the 1990s. Entitled “Le Fil du Rhone” [the Route of the Rhone], the study “considered the riverbanks from the point of view of a public space, with interventions from architects, engineers and artists”, explains Marcellin Barthassat. For this green politician, it was about reacting to the private Nautical Society, which was looking to expand; the creation of a point of access to the water that would be open to everyone, and the redevelopment of the bay’s merchant quays downstream from the Jet d’eau, which had developed in an uncontrolled way. This project then led to a competition for ideas for the bay. The first winner suggested organising mini islands of activity around the bay, in the style of the Bains des Paquis development, facilitating access to the water. The second envisaged pedestrianised access to the lake. Whatever the outcome, the historic fishery and shipyard activities of this part of the quay, a former port, are set to disappear, much to the dismay of certain Genevans. “How will we fill this space? Will we have to call in social workers to bring the quays to life? It’s not been decided,” comments Barthassat. (SH)

bank,” recounts Lescaze, who describes the development of a “civilisation of leisure and water”.

Bathing at home in place of air travel

The opening of the Plage des Eaux-Vives, the original plans for which were launched prior to the state of climate emergency, comes at a key moment in the city’s development. “In fact, another beach will have to be built elsewhere to meet issues of social inequality and global warming,” predicts architect Marcellin Barthassat, underlining the importance of developing public areas in cities in order

to reduce long-distance journeys across the world. “Urban redevelopment is one of the major challenges involved in city expansion. Indeed, there has been a drop observed in the number of young people obtaining driving licenses and we can see digital tools leading to changes in mobility.”

In fact, Geneva has come a long way, reasons Franck Pidoux, who believes that the situation began to turn after a referendum launched in 1987 to save the Bains des Pâquis, which had been earmarked for demolition. “In the sixties, seventies and eighties, the lake was very unclean. People bathed in swimming pools. The situation has progressed to the point that the lake water is of very high quality. The lake attracts an increasingly tightly-packed crowd and the city must meet the public demand.”

A more relaxed connection to the water in the north

In German-speaking Switzerland, the relationship with water would be considered “more direct and more relaxed”, believes Barthassat. The architect refers to the renaturation works completed in Zurich along the Limmat and the unrestricted access to the lake via gardens, as well as the outdoor baths on the Aare in Berne. In Geneva, hundreds of metres of the quay are blocked by rock fill or walls.

Yet, some Genevans consider the construction of the Plage des Eaux-Vives a sacrilege, in that it will essentially remove two hectares of lake – at an estimated overall cost of 67 million Swiss francs. “For a bathing season that runs from June to September”, criticises Lescaze. “Yes, we will lose a piece of the lake, but the canton is making up for this by improving the richness of the fauna with the beach’s water garden and with other examples of renaturation elsewhere in the canton,” responds Pidoux.

A clear judgement with unclear consequences

A popular vote has been annulled by the courts in Switzerland for the very first time. Is this a slap in the face for the Federal Council, or proof of the power of democracy? Opinions are divided, and the consequences of the judgement are unclear.

MARC LETTAU

The vote was on an issue that affects high-earning married couples. They pay more federal tax than unmarried couples who earn exactly the same income. This ‘marriage penalty’ has been a political issue for years. The Christian Democrat People’s Party (CVP) attempted to abolish the marriage penalty with their rather clumsily-named referendum “For marriage and family – against the marriage penalty”. But the initiative failed at the ballot box in 2016 when 50.8 percent voted against it.

More than close

Just 55,000 votes divided the yes and no camps, so it was a narrow defeat. However, the figures that the Federal Council quoted before the vote were incorrect. It claimed that the marriage penalty affected only 80,000 double-income married couples. Later it conceded that it had fundamentally miscalculated – by a factor of five. It turned out that 450,000 married couples are fiscally disadvan-

After the sweetness of the wedding cake comes the bitter taste of the fiscal marriage penalty for solvent double-income married couples.

Photo: Keystone



taged. On the basis of this admission, the CVP eventually submitted a voting complaint.

Historical significance

The Federal Supreme Court judgement on this matter on 10 April 2019 is of historical significance. The court upheld the complaint and annulled the referendum decision. This is ground-breaking – the first annulment of a national referendum result since the foundation of the modern Swiss federal state in 1848. The federal judges deemed the misinformation of the Federal Council to be “grave”, and a “shocking infringement” of the freedom of vote. In light of this, it was “probable” that the voting results had been distorted, they ruled.

“A slap in the face for the Federal Council” was the title of the article published by the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” after the judgement. In contrast, the newspapers of the Tamedia Group viewed the judgement as a seal of approval for Swiss democracy, as it has strengthened the rights of committed citizens vis-à-vis the administrative apparatus.

What now?

Will this initiative be placed before the people once more? That is by no means mandatory. The CVP itself is not interested in a further referendum. Opinions are divided within the party on the text of the initiative, as it dictates a very narrowly formulated definition of marriage as “legally regulated cohabitation between a man and a woman”. That goes too far for the CVP members who are open to same-sex marriage.

Against this backdrop, the initiators hope to abolish the marriage penalty through legal channels. That would make a second referendum on the initiative obsolete. This hope is not unfounded as one month after the judgement, the National Council approved a cantonal initiative from the canton of Aargau. It demanded that the discrimination against married couples not only be ended with regard to taxes but also for social insurance. Upon retirement, they receive a married couples’ pension which is lower than two individual pensions for a couple that lives together without a marriage licence. That is just as disturbing as the fiscal marriage penalty.



The tug of war around Europe continues

The electorate voted resoundingly in favour of stricter gun laws on 19 May. In doing so, it also showed its commitment to Switzerland remaining part of the European Schengen Area. However, the major European political disputes are still to come.

THEODORA PETER

In the future, semi-automatic weapons with large magazines can only be bought in Switzerland with an exemption permit. Gun dealers must report all transactions and amateur gun enthusiasts must register their assault rifles at the cantonal weapons' office. With 63.7 per cent in favour, the public's consent to adopting a corresponding EU weapons' directive into Swiss law was resounding.

The rifle clubs and the SVP were unsuccessful in their opposition to the "EU diktat". The majority of voters did not want to endanger Switzerland's membership of the Schengen Agreement. If the electorate had voted against stricter gun laws, Switzerland would have faced being excluded – with far-reaching consequences for border control and security. The Weapons Directive will improve the police information exchange between the 26 Schengen states. In future, the information system will show whether another Schengen country

has denied someone the right to bear a weapon.

New SVP initiative takes aim at the free movement of persons

Political observers interpret the vote in favour of the gun law as a clear commitment to the bilateral path with the European Union (EU). However, there is a veritable acid test ahead. Next year, the initiative "For moderate immigration" will be put forward for a popular vote. With this "restriction initiative", the SVP and the group Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (AUNS) aim to end the free movement of persons. According to the Federal Council, this would probably jeopardise all the bilateral agreements and fundamentally challenge the bilateral path.

Switzerland must clarify the nature of its relationship with the EU anyway. An institutional framework agreement should enable further development of the five existing bilat-

eral agreements and smooth the way for new agreements. However, the negotiated framework agreement does not have a majority in Switzerland ("Swiss Review" 2/2019). The stumbling blocks include the concessions on salary protection, which have weakened the flanking measures against wage dumping. This is why the unions are not supporting the framework agreement. On the other hand, the SVP sees it as a threat to Swiss sovereignty. The Federal Council must find a way to effect subsequent improvements in Brussels. At the time of going to press, the government had not come a decision on how it would proceed. However, the EU has categorically ruled out any renegotiations to date.

Improving the position of older people in the labour market

However, the Federal Council has already made a move domestically that should work in favour of the freedom of movement of persons agreement with the EU. It aims to improve the situation of older Swiss employees on the job market with an impulse programme. Many over 50s had voted in favour of the immigration initiative in 2014 out of fear that they would be threatened by immigrants on the job market. The Federal Council has eased their livelihood concerns by expanding social insurance cover: any jobless person who no longer qualifies for unemployment benefits at the age of 60 will receive a bridging pension until the normal retirement age.

The gun lobby had no chance of success. However, the real test of the country's relationship with the EU is just beginning.

Photo: Keystone





Raising the pension age to be debated next after corporate tax reform was approved

After years of struggle, there was a political breakthrough on 19 May. Swiss voters gave the green light for corporate tax reform combined with a financial injection for the AHV. Despite gaining some breathing space, the social institutions face new reform.



Success for Finance Minister Ueli Maurer (SVP) who defended the “horse trading” deal against strong objections from his party.
Photo: Keystone

THEODORA PETER

It was considered one of the more important pieces of parliamentary business in the legislative period drawing to a close: the Federal Act on Tax Reform and AHV Financing (Staf). Critics balked at the “horse trading” because the submission was tied to two topics that did not belong together: taxes and AHV. However, Finance Minister Ueli Maurer (SVP) praised the package as a typical Swiss compromise. The expected fiscal shortfalls will be compensated for by the transfer of 2 billion Swiss francs to the AHV in the interests of social equality. The public was also finally won over by this parliamentary “deal”. With a Yes percentage of two thirds (66.4 per cent), the ballot box approval was stronger than expected. Apparently, the electorate wanted to end the longstanding stalemate. Keep

in mind: the third series of corporate tax reforms (CTR III) and the retirement provision reform (2020 retirement provision) were rejected by voters in 2017.

Internationally frowned upon tax regime has had its day

With the reform of company taxes, Switzerland has abolished a tax regime that was unpopular among the international community. If it had not done so, the country would have landed on an EU blacklist in 2020. In specific terms, it relates to doing away with tax privileges for around 24,000 holdings and other special businesses based in Switzerland. In the future, all companies will be taxed on an equal basis. This eases the burden for Swiss companies, while the previously privileged few can expect

higher taxes. To encourage these companies to remain in Switzerland, the law creates new internationally accepted inducements, such as the patent box. This will allow a portion of the profits from inventions to be taxed at a reduced rate. In total, the reform will lower tax revenue at federal and cantonal level by about 2 billion francs.

New reform to increase the pension age for women

In return, the AHV will receive an urgently required cash injection – financed by the federal treasury, as well as higher AHV contributions from employees and employers. However, the contribution of 2 billion francs has only provided a bit of breathing space. According to the Federal Council, the social institution’s account will have a shortfall of 23 billion francs by 2030. That is due to demographic development. In the next ten years, the babyboomer generation will reach retirement age.

Therefore, the Federal Council had already put a further AHV reform in motion before the Staf vote. Social insurance should be financially stabilised with an increase in VAT of 0.7 percentage points. A plan to increase the pension age for women from 64 to 65 years is also in the pipeline. The unions intend to oppose this. The Federal Council will present the details of the new reform after the summer holidays. The conservative camp is currently demanding extensive reforms including a universal increase in the pension age to 66.

“Powerful songs that reflect our desires”

Hitler's brownshirt hordes moved into the German cities in 1933 to the sounds of battle songs composed by Heinrich Anacker, the son of an Aarau factory owner.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

“If only Mr Anacker had been modest enough to simply commit his verses to a private album, he would have been the perfect poet.” This was journalist and poet Siegfried Lang's opinion of the book of poems entitled “Auf Wanderwegen” published by Sauerländer in Aarau in 1924. Moreover, he could never have imagined that the renowned Grote publishing house in Berlin would edit a volume entitled “Von Klopstock bis Anacker. Deutsche Gedichte aus zwei Jahrhunderten” (From Klopstock to Anacker. Two centuries of German poems) in 1937, that more than 180,000 copies would be sold of Anacker's eleven collections of poetry published between 1932 and 1943, and that their author would eventually become the most successful Swiss poet of the 20th century based on circulation numbers.

Brownshirt and poet

The solution for him was National Socialism. Frustrated by the harsh criticism of his six volumes of poetry published up to 1931 – formal, conventional verse about youth, love, nature and hiking – the factory owner's son born on 29 January 1901 in Aarau discovered that he only had to set Adolf Hitler's message to a marching rhythm to find thousands of enthusiastic fans, and commit himself to their reactionary ideology to obtain every possible advancement from the Nazi bigwigs as a neutral Swiss citizen. Bound in red linen, Anacker's verses were published by the party's Eher publishing house, and from 1932 onwards, Hitler Youth and SA associations moved into the cities and villages to the sound of Anacker battle songs, such as “Die Strasse dröhnt vom Eisentritt” (The street roars from the iron step) or “Nun erst recht!” (Now more than ever!). A highlight for Anacker was receiving the NSDAP Prize for Art during the Nuremberg Reich Party Day in 1936 and the laudatory speech given by Alfred Rosenberg, who announced: “As a singer of our time, Anacker has fired the soul time and again and never failed to sing powerful songs that reflect our desires.”

In light of such protection, Anacker's critics in Switzerland, who resented the sentimental origins of the nature lover, remained silent, and the embarrassing problem finally resolved itself when Heinrich Anacker and his wife Emmy, née Bofinger, voluntarily renounced their Aarau and Swiss citizenship on 11 December 1939.

The political lyricist imported from Switzerland retained Adolf Hitler's favour almost to the very end. When the war began, Anacker took part in campaigns in France, Belgium and Norway in uniform, later also in Russia: his only task was to publish his observations in verse form. It was only when the victories came to an end that the Wehrmacht destroyed the absurd lyricist idyll and placed Anacker on the wounded transports. However, the leopard did not change its spots. Anacker survived his protectors, kept on producing poems in the detention centre in Ansbach, and experienced a real triumph when the American guards requested handwritten poems from him to send as samples of German poetry to America. Anacker lived with his wife Emmy, a baker's daughter from Zurich, in Wasserburg bei Lindau until his death on 14 January 1971 – ever the faithful national socialist with his gaze directed towards Switzerland on the other side of Lake Constance.

He wrote poetry tirelessly and just as he did from 1933 to 1943 dictated his lyrics to a secretary, who stored the completed, typed verses in DIN A5 format separately in a total of twelve self-manufactured wooden boxes, where they were to be stored for eternity. It was enough to read just one or two pages to appreciate the absolute worthlessness of the banal rhymes, which followed the same tired, antiquated schemata. However, out of a strange sense of shame the “Poet of the Nazi Front” made Switzerland a taboo subject for the rest of his life. Anacker did not align himself with the Swiss frontists and their annexation ideas, according to his wife who passed away in 1984, as Switzerland had long since been for him: “something separate that should remain untouched”.



“I have wandered through cities,
large and small.
None of them gave me, oh
Zurich, a home such as you,
None of them showed me the
divine gift of peace that is the
lake's blue bay.
Many foreign cities still beckon
me, I will still quench my thirst
in foreign wells.
However, in my heart I will miss
you City of my soul, oh beautiful
Zurich!”
(Heinrich Anacker: “Zurich”,
from “Bunter Reigen”,
Aarau 1931, out of print)

E-voting encounters a headwind

Electronic voting is important for Swiss Abroad. However, concerns about the digital voting channel are growing in Switzerland.

SUSANNE WENGER

This way of voting opens the door to manipulation, said the sceptics. Not to mention the possible negative effects on the democratic process. The opposite is the case, responded the supporters: the new voting channel makes it easier to take part and will increase voter turnout. These arguments did not come from the current debate on e-voting. They are from 25 years ago. At that time, Switzerland introduced voting by mail. In the meantime, this process has become established: 80 to 90 per cent of voters still use it. Only a minority venture out to their local polling booth in person to put their completed ballot paper in the ballot box.

The arguments about a third channel – computer voting – are just as passionate now. Electronic voting is of particular concern for the “Fifth Switzerland” in particular. 174,000 Swiss abroad are currently registered on the electoral roll. In its petition submitted in 2018, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) demanded that they all have access to e-voting by 2021. Preparations have already been underway in the Federal Government and in the cantons for fifteen years. Until recently, it was possible to vote with the click of a mouse in ten cantons. But only a test mode is permitted at present, and it is also temporary, which the “Swiss Review” discovered shortly before going to print. The Federal Council has currently shelved its original plan for a law change that could have introduced e-voting for all eligible voters in Switzerland and abroad. The growing concerns among the political parties are the reason for the policy change. And several developments have seen the discussion become quite heated recently.

Safety before speed

The advantages of e-voting are obvious to the government: Swiss abroad can safely take part in voting and elections; and voters with a disability can submit their vote themselves. However, the sceptics and some of the proponents of e-voting believe that the system, security and financial questions must be clarified beforehand.

It is concerning that the pioneer canton of Geneva stopped using its independently developed e-voting system due to cost considerations. Six cantons did use it. Now they need to find another solution. Moreover, with the pro-



ject being abandoned in Geneva, the last state provider disappears. However, even many supporters of e-voting believe that it should be in state hands. This demand has not been fulfilled by the only remaining e-voting system of the Swiss Post. It is programmed by a Spanish company, among others. The Swiss Post’s system was also withdrawn from service for the voting on 19 May. External experts discovered security weaknesses during testing.

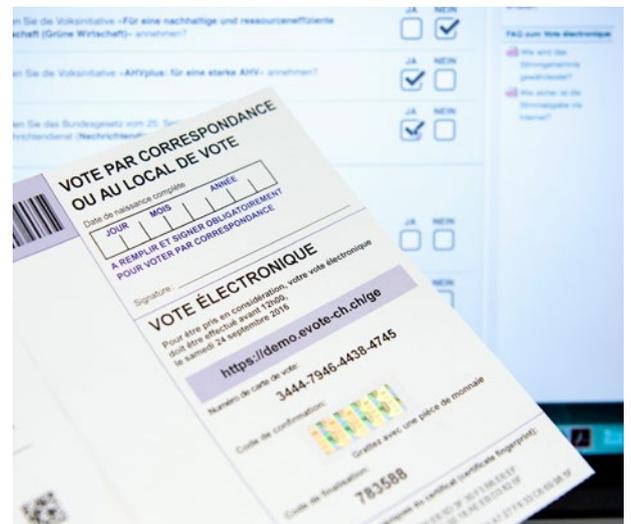
“Risk for democracy”

Now various parties are requesting that the process be stopped for now. Since spring, a broad alliance made up of the left-wing Greens through to the right-wing conservative Swiss People’s Party (SVP) has been collecting signatures for a popular initiative. They want to ban e-voting for five years. According to the text of the initiative, a later introduction would be possible but only with strict technical requirements. It is not only a matter of guaranteeing the same level of protection from manipulation as with the handwritten procedure. The initiators are also demanding that voters be able to monitor the major steps of electronic voting “without the need for any particular expertise”.

“Everyone understands ballot box and postal voting,” says the Lucerne Young Liberal Nicolas Rimoldi, Campaign Head of the Initiative, “however, e-voting is only understood by a few specialists”. This is undemocratic, Rimoldi says. He is a fan of digitalisation, however, the issue in ques-

The Geneva e-voting system: it was not entirely paper-free as the voting code came by post.

Photo: Keystone





tion is the most precious commodity of all: democracy. In this case, Switzerland cannot be too careful: “E-voting constitutes an unprecedented risk to security and trust for our direct democracy,” he says. To strengthen the political participation of the “Fifth Switzerland”, Rimoldi recommends solutions such as decentralised voting at the embassies. Or electronic dispatch of the voting papers, which is being demanded by his co-initiator and SVP National Councillor Claudio Zanetti (ZH).

“E-dispatch” instead of e-voting?

Zanetti is a vehement opponent of e-voting, and at the same time a member of the Council of the Swiss Abroad. He acknowledges: “For many Swiss Abroad, the inadequate postal services in their countries of residence do not make it easy for them to exercise their right to vote. With “e-dispatch”, the post could at least be circumvented in one direction, says Zanetti. On the other hand, Liberal

The defects uncovered in Swiss Post’s e-voting system are a bitter setback for the digital voting channel.

Photo: Keystone

Online voting?

The National Council and Council of States’ elections will take place in Switzerland on 20 October. By the time the “Swiss Review” went to press, it was still unclear whether the cantons will be allowed to offer electronic voting. The Federal Council will decide in August. The cantons must submit separate applications for the elections. The permit that they have for the e-voting test mode does not automatically apply for all votes. During the last national elections in 2015, four cantons offered Internet voting.

(SWE)

National Councillor Doris Fiala (ZH) fundamentally supports e-voting. “E-voting would be an enormous improvement and far easier for voters living abroad,” says Fiala, who is a member of the Swiss Abroad parliamentary group.

It makes absolute sense to “bring democracy into the 21st century”, says Fiala. The population is using digital services more often in their daily life. However, e-voting presents some of the most complex IT problems for the developers: “On the one hand, every vote must be counted correctly; on the other hand, voting secrecy must still be guaranteed.” The national councillor deems the weaknesses detected in the system of Swiss Post “considerable”. She also advised against a revision of the law at this stage: “The issue is trust,” she says.

More than just technology

It is interesting to note that age or attitude towards digitalisation do not determine whether people are for or against e-voting. There are many IT experts among its opponents. The usual left-right divide does not feature either. It has to do with the dimensions of the topic, explains observer Adrienne Fichter, a tech journalist at the online magazine “Republik”: “With the advent of e-voting, there is political discussion about digital technology for the first time.” Even if similar arguments came up during postal voting, e-voting is more about the fact that “an insider can manipulate ten thousand votes without being detected”. This was shown during the security testing of Swiss Post’s system. Fichter, author of the book “Smartphone-Demokratie” [Smartphone Democracy] welcomes the resulting debate as the beginning of an “enlightening discourse” on the opportunities and risks of digital democracy. It is high time that other countries saw Switzerland as an example, she says.

Is e-voting still something for the future? The security aspects are also important to the Swiss abroad, emphasises OSA Director Ariane Rustichelli: “As the project coordinator, the Federal Chancellery is responsible for e-voting.” For Swiss voters living abroad, one thing counts above all: that they can exercise their political rights.

Political campaign financing secrecy stirs jealousy

Switzerland is regularly criticised by the Council of Europe for its lack of transparency surrounding campaign financing. Unevenly distributed resources are at the heart of the problem.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Could Switzerland soon disclose the financing system for political parties and campaigns? This is the aim of the popular initiative on transparency supported by the Swiss Social Democratic Party, the Swiss Green Party and the Conservative Democratic Party (BDP). This initiative reflects texts already adopted by Geneva, Ticino and Neuchâtel, and more recently, Fribourg and Schwyz. Under this new approach, parties would have to communicate their campaign accounts and declare the source of donations worth over 10,000 Swiss francs.

The current system does not allow access to the details of amounts spent in campaigns or for election purposes. “There is a complete lack of transparency,” says Georg Lutz, director of the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences. For this reason, Switzerland is regularly singled out by the Council of Europe’s Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO). “This group was originally set up to tackle corruption in Eastern European countries,” explains Andreas Ladner, director of the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration.

In Switzerland politics is a private affair

As successive GRECO reports lament, “there are no restrictions on contributions” and “accounting documents of political parties are... never subject to publication”. Indeed, in Switzerland, where there is no law governing political parties, this activity remains a private affair. “The parties often take the form of small, or even very small, associations at cantonal and local level,” states GRECO. As a result, the party machinery at federal level tends to have very limited resources. The Federal Council judges that “legislation applicable to all actors across the political sphere would generate a considerable administrative task and significant costs”. At the beginning of May, the Political Institutions Committee of the Council of States decided to support a counter proposal to the initiative, raising the cap for non-anonymous contributions to 25,000 Swiss francs.



Political advertising, such as for the Sovereign Money Initiative, costs money – lots of money. But the Council of Europe says effective, transparent rules are lacking in Switzerland. Photo: Keystone

Those in favour of a law on transparency have their eye on right-wing parties, and particularly the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), whose high-impact campaigns on subjects ranging from the entry of Switzerland to the European Economic Area to the banning of minarets, regularly receive substantial financial support from their leaders, and not least from Christoph Blocher. “How much money do I invest in an election campaign; what proportion of this amount is made up of contributions and of personal resources? This is my own

Ever-more expensive elections?

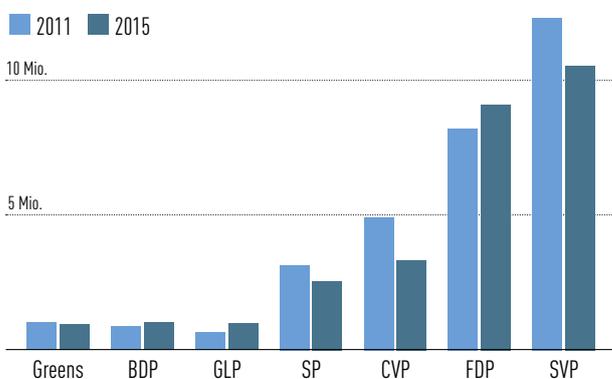
These elections will be the costliest yet. “We hear this same statement at every election, but there is a lack of detailed data and the way expenses are expressed also depends on the methodology,” explains Andreas Ladner. In 2018, the agency Media Focus estimated the advertising costs for the federal campaigns at 55.5 million francs, an increase of 18.8 per cent compared to 2017. In 2015, the Selects study asked candidates how much they spent during their campaign. The answer was 29 million francs. The FDP spent the most, followed by the CVP, SVP and SP in that order. If the spending of national, cantonal and local parties as well as associations were to be factored in, this figure would be doubled. In 2015, close to 2.5 million francs in individual contributions for parties was declared as tax deductible in Geneva (50 million francs throughout Switzerland as a whole). These contributions were made by 3,200 donors in a canton where donations are capped at 10,000 francs. The same research highlighted that the amount spent per voter was comparable to the figures from elections in the USA. (SH)

business,” Council of States candidate, Roger Köppel (ZH), told the press recently. Köppel considers that the “secrecy of voting and elections in Switzerland is essential for the rule of law and democracy”.

Transparency would impact donations

What problems are caused by this lack of transparency? The political scientists contacted by “Swiss Review” say it is above all a question of ethics. “A basic level of inequality already exists as interest groups do not all exert the same influence. So, at the very least, it would seem rea-

2011 and 2015 National Council and Council of States elections: the parties' total outlay for print, internet and billboard advertising



In 2015, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) ran the most expensive election campaign of all the parties. It invested CHF10.6 million in print, internet and billboard advertising. In contrast to the The Liberals (FDP), which increased its advertising expenses, the SVP actually spent almost 2 million francs less than in 2011. Nevertheless, it succeeded in increasing its share of the vote (+2.8%) significantly more than the Liberals.

sonable that the public should know who is financing what,” believes Lutz. In the researcher's opinion, transparency could result in changes in the behaviour of major contributors – a concern for right-wing parties in particular – but it would at least make political intention clearer. “Because if legal entities are investing in campaigns, it's obviously because they expect something in return,” he points out. “If the head of Ricola invests in a campaign, he doesn't want the brand to be associated with a particular party, because he wants to sell to everyone,” says Ladner, for whom the source of significant contributions is in fact no great secret. He emphasises that there is a “tendency on the right towards personal investments, whereas left-wing parties tend to centralise contributions.”

However, money is no guarantee of campaign success, and the secret of power is the ability of a group to bring together majorities. As such, in 2011, the SVP spent over six times more per parliamentary seat than the Green Liberal party, who were amongst the key winners of the 2011 elections, according to a study by the Sotomo institute. An increase in transparency would perhaps lead to a reduction in resources. For some, the solution to this problem would be to turn to a State-financing system. But, as Andreas Ladner comments: “this idea is not well received by right-wing parties as taxes would have to be raised to finance it. The left-wing would be in favour, but not necessarily the voters.” The researcher points out that the cantons of Geneva and Ticino have legislation on transparency but do not appear to have a more peaceful political climate. Rather, well-financed populist parties are thriving.

The question of inequality between parties

The political scientist points out that the desire for greater transparency has come first and foremost from left-wing parties in Switzerland and at the European level from a coalition of parties that tend to have fewer resources at their disposal. “Do we have more corruption in Switzerland? Do other countries with such a system, like France and Germany, have any less, he says. “If there really is a problem, it is more that the imbalance of resources creates injustices as money enables the arguments put forward by a party rich in resources to be more widely diffused than those of the other parties.” So, what can be done? Ladner considers that “transparency could be presented as a campaign argument which could work in favour of those parties which choose to play this card, like the Green party”. He argues for practical and logistical support for small parties, “so they can make themselves better heard”.



Valais wine from the foothills of the Himalayas

The spotlight is on the “Fifth Switzerland” this year at the Fête des Vignerons winegrowers’ festival in Vevey – the largest wine festival in Switzerland.



The Swiss winegrowing tradition is going from strength to strength, even on the steep flanks of the Yangtze Valley.

Photo: donated

Yves Roduit emigrated to Tibet in 2014, not to become a Buddhist but rather to continue the viticulture originally brought to the region by Christian missionaries. It is a very poor area that has experienced little of China’s economic boom, says Roduit. He also views his involvement as a way to strengthen the local village community in the Yangtze Valley (Yunnan province). Roduit does not believe that he is anywhere near the end of his journey, and he is looking for investors to help him expand in stages. In his eyes, the terraced slopes in the Yangtze Valley are made for winegrowing. He wants to win over the people with his calling card: his wine.

Chinese wine is actually not as exotic as it may seem from a Swiss perspective. The country has long since been among the top-ten wine-producing nations in the world. The People’s Republic of China ranks sixth behind the leaders Italy, France, USA, Spain and Argentina in terms of the volume of wine produced (2018). With over one million hectolitres, Switzerland is in position 20. (MUL)

The Fête des Vignerons is a unique festival. It only takes place every 25 years or so, but has been in existence since the 17th century. And the festival has long since been about more than just wine – it is a cultural highlight for the entire region. Since 2016, the Fête des Vignerons has featured on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and it was the first “living tradition” of Switzerland to even be included on this list.

This year, the festival organised by the local Confrérie des Vignerons (Winegrowers fraternity) is also placing the spotlight on the “Fifth Switzerland” by dedicating 25 July to the Swiss Abroad. Vevey is to become their capital for the day.

At the same time, people in Switzerland will learn more about Swiss citizens working abroad, such as

winegrowers who press superb wine in their second homelands. Thanks to a collaboration between the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) and Swiss Wine Promotion AG, Swiss winegrowers can present their creations on the lake platform.

Swiss winemakers from the traditional viticulture countries and regions of Australia, Argentina, Bulgaria, France, Italy, California and South Africa will travel to Vevey. However, the oenologist Yves Roduit is also looking for a way into the huge festival. Roduit, who was born in Valais, now produces around 15,000 bottles of wine a year in Tibet. He believes that the local environment – 2,200 metres above sea level – is so perfect that the grape variety Petite Arvine, which is native to canton Valais, could be planted there.

- “Fête des Vignerons”, 18 July to 11 August 2019: www.fetedesvignerons.ch
- Day of the Swiss Abroad: ogy.de/aso-vevey

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Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundazion per giuovens svizzers a l'ester

From Switzerland out into the great wide world

The Swiss National Museum in Schwyz invites visitors to reflect on the topic of emigration with its exhibition "Switzerland elsewhere".



Let's start by taking a look at this photo. We see a young couple with a child sitting on top of a bulging suitcase. He is wearing high lace-up boots and a rather crumpled-looking hat; however, his tie knot is sitting perfectly. She in turn seems to be dressed for a fun Sunday outing. They both have a look of expectation. Or is it tension and insecurity? A number of things are not immediately apparent in the photo. We are in Zurich Main Station, around 1930, in front of the smoking section of a third-class SBB carriage – and the couple are part of a contingent of 40 destitute Swiss unemployed who are travelling to Brazil to start a new life as planters in the back country. It was in essence state-subsidised export of poverty. The Emergency Association for

Waiting to depart at Zurich Main Station, around 1930
Photo: Keystone

Settlement and Emigration (ANSA) agency was subsidised by the Confederation to support willing emigrants.

The remarkable exhibition "Switzerland elsewhere" in Schwyz touches on memories such as these of Switzerland as a land of emigration. The exhibition recounts the stories of past and present migrants, explores their reasons for leaving and their hopes and dreams, discusses the foundation of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA), and finally also reveals just how much migrant movements are the historical norm.

The exhibition is of particular value for visitors from "The Fifth Switzerland" who are on holiday in Switzerland, especially as they are directly addressed at various supporting events. To this end, the exhibition will transform itself into an "Office for Migration Stories" from 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm on 11 and 22 September 2019. Visitors will be invited to share their family's migration stories and have them written down.

A new book lends additional depth to the exhibition. Leo Schelbert's work "Switzerland elsewhere" uses the examples of hundreds of Swiss men and women to show the diverse ways that a nation can make its mark in the world. With soldiers and missionaries, professional people and emigrants in search of the proverbial pot of gold and a better life. In this way, the book also underscores that nations have never been self-contained structures; rather, they have always been and will continue to be interconnected with the world.

(MUL)

■ "Switzerland elsewhere" exhibition, Swiss National Museum, Forum of Swiss History Schwyz, Zeughausstrasse 5, 6431 Schwyz. The exhibition runs until 29 September 2019. www.nationalmuseum.ch/e/schwyz/

■ Leo Schelbert: "Von der Schweiz anderswo. Historische Skizze der globalen Präsenz einer Nation." (German edition) / "Switzerland elsewhere. Historical sketch of the Global Presence of a Nation" (English edition); 320 pages, hardcover, Limmat Verlag, 8031 Zurich; 38 francs / 40 euros.

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





The future is in sight

The Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Montreux from 16 to 18 August 2019 will address major questions about the future, together with leading experts.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has lined up prominent speakers on the core topic of the Congress – “What will tomorrow’s world hold”. Francesco Pisano intends to focus on the big picture in Montreux. The Director of the Library of the United Nations will address Agenda 2030, or rather the “programme to safeguard the future of the planet”. And renowned Professor in Applied Climatology at the University of Neuchâtel, Martine Rebetez, will give a talk on the globally relevant topic of climate change.

What will tomorrow’s working world hold? That is also part of the big question about the future. Pierre-Yves Maillard, the president of the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions, will address it in his capacity as the top representative of employees in Switzerland. Other speakers will include Cristina Gaggini, the Director of the Western Switzerland branch of the federation of Swiss business, *économie-suisse*.

What will the politics of the future be like? It will be shaped and above all challenged by digitalisation, a topic that Matthias Stürmer knows extremely well. He is the head of the Research Centre for Digital Sustainability at the University of Bern. The politics of the future will also probably be more influenced by think tanks than by the established parties. Salomé Vogt (Think Tank Foraus) und Laura Zimmermann (Operation Libero), will talk about this vision of politically-minded young people at the Congress. (OSA)

Further information on the Congress: ogy.de/montreux2019

Registration deadline: 26 July 2019.

A Swiss Abroad talks about studying medicine in Switzerland

educationsuisse advises young Swiss Abroad who come to Switzerland to study. Katia Steinfeld is one of them. She recounts her experience of studying at the University of Lausanne.

“I have Swiss and Brazilian roots, and I grew up in Rio de Janeiro. I began my medical studies there. I contacted *educationsuisse* because I was looking for a way to continue my studies outside Brazil. The organisation supplied me with information about studying medicine in Switzerland and assisted me with my grant application in my canton of origin. The University of Lausanne (UNIL) partially recognised my study time in Brazil, which meant I could continue my studies in Switzerland in 2016.

The first six months in Switzerland were difficult. I first had to get used to the lifestyle, cli-



Katia Steinfeld. Photo zvg

mate and being alone. I was also worried about the requirements of the university and my financial resources.

However, the quality of the teaching and the feeling of freedom motivated me anew every day. I enjoyed exploring the culture and country that is also mine, and building new relationships and strong friendships, which gave me the support that I needed.

I also threw myself into extracurricular activities that were important to me. For example, I took part in a competition advertised by the UNIL and the Clinton Foundation in 2017. I was selected to represent the University at the Clinton Global Initiative University in Boston (USA). Thanks to this competition, I was able to get my project *Escolhares* off the ground. It has now

grown into an association that has organised ophthalmological screenings and supplied more than 2,000 students in deprived districts of Rio de Janeiro with spectacles between 2016 and 2019.

Recently, I took part in the UNIL World’s Challenge Challenge competition. My team’s project, *EcoBlock* in Burkina Faso, won the first internal selection phase.

On an academic level, I am continuously astounded by the wide variety of courses and internships on offer at UNIL. I had the opportunity to discover the world of research, primarily during my Master’s degree in the field of fundamental neuroscience. These experiences changed my future plans and led me to where I am today: planning a PhD.

To sum up, I can honestly say that my move to Switzerland contributed significantly to my personal development. I have rediscovered my roots and now understand a part of my identity better as a result. I have also gained in confidence. I have become more independent, been able to establish relationships and develop new prospects for the future – all the while completing first-class medical training. Therefore, I would like to encourage other young Swiss Abroad to take up such opportunities.”

Experience reports from young Swiss Abroad are regularly published on the Facebook page of *educationsuisse*, and on www.educationsuisse.ch.

(RG)

educationsuisse, Studying in Switzerland, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, Switzerland. Telephone: +41 31 356 61 04, E-mail: info@educationsuisse.ch, www.educationsuisse.ch

Discover the slopes and the Swiss mountains

Snowy landscapes, winter sports and camping – all that is on the programme for teens and young adults this winter.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's Youth Service is organising two sports camps in the Vaud Alps and the Pennine Alps in Valais. Participants will be able to see in the new year with young people from all over the world, whilst discovering and exploring the joys of the slopes.



New Year Ski camp in Les Diablerets (VD)

27.12.2019 – 4.1.2020

Participants will be met with a varied programme at the heart of the Vaud Alps. As well as ski or snowboard lessons in small groups and a rich programme of accompanying events, there will also be time for meeting new faces. Camp members will be looked after by a team of trained and enthusiastic instructors. This programme is intended for teenagers aged 15–18.

www.lesbosquets.ch and www.villars-dialberets.ch/en/

Winter sports camp in Anzère (VS)

27.12.2019 – 4.1.2020

This winter, we are also offering a winter sports camp in the Pennine Alps for young adults aged 18 and over. The ski and snowboard camp will take place in Anzère. For a look at the ski resort, see: www.anzere.ch

Registration opening date

The registration form for the winter camps will be available online from 2 September 2019. More detailed information on the camps and the registration forms are on our websites: www.aso.ch und www.swisscommunity.org (MB)

Contact the Youth Service

Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSE),
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne;

tel. +41 31 356 61 00, email: youth@aso.ch

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ASOyouth

Travel there with ease by public transport

The Swiss Travel Pass Youth enables young Swiss Abroad to travel independently to their winter destinations – and throughout the whole country.
www.myswitzerland.com/swisstravelsystem

Winter camp for children aged 8 to 14 years old

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

Winter camp in Valbella (GR)

Date: Thursday, 26 December 2019 to Saturday, 4 January 2020

Number of participants: 42

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline: 30 September 2019

Registration

The exact details of the winter camp and the registration form will be available from Monday 2 September 2019 at <https://sjas.ch/en>.

Reduced contribution rates will be granted in exceptional cases. The form required for that can be requested on the registration form. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request.

For more information, please contact:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, SWITZERLAND

Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01

Email: info@sjas.ch, www.sjas.ch

Let's go to JUSKILA!

Six hundred 13-14-year-olds will attend a week-long snow sports camp in Lenk in the Bernese Oberland from 2 to 8 January 2020, marking the 79th edition of the event. The 600 draw winners will include 25 Swiss Abroad.

A further chapter in the history of JUSKILA will begin on 2 January 2020 when 600 boys and girls aged 13 and 14 travel from all over Switzerland by special train to Lenk in Simmental. It is the 79th time that Swiss Ski and its partners are holding the largest snow sports camp in Switzerland. This time it is the turn of children born in 2005 and 2006.

Swiss children abroad who would like to take part in the winter camp for young people (JUSKILA) must be able to communicate in at least one of Switzerland's three national languages (German, French or Italian). A draw will be held for the camp spots. The prize includes participation in the camp, including snow sports lessons, food and accommodation. Parents are responsible for organising

and funding the outbound and return journeys. The winners of the 25 places for the Swiss Abroad will be announced at the end of September.

Camp costs

The prize includes train tickets that are valid within Switzerland, food, accommodation, ski pass, snow sports lessons, etc. **CHF 120**

Rental costs for the winter sports equipment

Skis, poles and ski shoes **CHF 50**

or Snowboard and snowboard boots **CHF 150**

Registration form for the draw – JUSKILA Lenk (2 to 8 January 2020)

Please fill out clearly in block letters.

First name: _____

Surname: _____

Street: _____

Postcode, City: _____

Country: _____

Date of birth: _____

Legal guardian's name: _____

Girl Boy

Municipality of origin in Switzerland (See passport/ID): _____

Parents' email: _____

Parents' telephone number: _____

Type of sport: Alpine skiing Snowboarding

Just tick one box! After the draw, it will no longer be possible to change sport.

Child's language: German French Italian

Guardian's signature: _____

Child's signature: _____

Please send in the registration form with a copy of the Swiss passport of one parent or of the child by 15 September 2019 (date of receipt) to:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA),
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, SWITZERLAND

Information: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA),

Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01,

Email: info@sjas.ch, www.sjas.ch



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Parliamentary elections 2019: electoral assistance for citizens

The parliamentary elections are drawing closer: on 20 October 2019, the Swiss people will elect the members of the National Council and the Council of States for the legislative period 2019–2023.

Can Swiss Abroad also vote? What do I need to do to participate in the elections? The answers are to be found alongside other voting information at [ch.ch/en/elections2019](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019).

On 20 October 2019, the Swiss people will elect the 200 members of the National Council as well as 45 members of the Council of States. Whether you are a newbie or an old hand, the official platform [ch.ch/en/elections2019](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019) provides detailed information and explanations to help you fill out your ballot paper.

All the graphics, illustrations, interactive cards and explanatory videos at [ch.ch/en/elections2019](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019) take the guesswork out of voting. Terms such

as accumulating, splitting the vote, deleting a name and blank ballot paper are not only explained in the texts but also in the films and the election glossary.

The portal has dedicated a separate section to the Swiss Abroad, which makes it even easier for the “Fifth Switzerland” to access the necessary information to exercise their voting rights.

The official explanations of the Federal Chancellery that are available on the portal [ch.ch/en/elections2019](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019) supplement the information from the public authorities that voters receive together with their voting papers. The lists of all the can-

didates who are standing for the Federal Assembly will be published several weeks before the elections.

All the results of the federal elections plus the information on the strengths of the parties and voter turnout will be published on 20 October 2019 at [ch.ch/en/elections2019](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019). The voting results will also be posted on the [ch.ch](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019) twitter account.

The portal is available in five languages: German, French, Italian, Romansh and English. All the explanatory videos are also available in sign language, which allows deaf and hearing-impaired people to follow the election explanations. The content is also adapted to the needs of blind and visually impaired people. [ch.ch/en/elections2019](https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019) is an official website of the Federal Chancellery, and was jointly created together with the cantons and the Federal Office for Statistics.

<https://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019/>

What do I need to do after Brexit?

What does Brexit mean for me if I'm already living and working in the United Kingdom (UK)? What do I need to do if I want to live and work there after Brexit? What entry requirements will apply after Brexit? – The new publication “Swiss citizens in the UK after Brexit”, available in German, French and Italian, answers these questions. The publication issued by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) combines the existing information on the topic of Brexit and migration in one place. The main sources used are the websites of the Swiss Embassy in London, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the relevant pages of the UK Home Office.



Short link to the Brexit publication: ogyl.de/flyer-brexit

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itineris

Online registration for Swiss citizens travelling abroad
www.fdfa.admin.ch/itineris



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App available for free for iOS and Android

Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date. National Council elections take place on 20 October 2019.

For information about the National Council elections, visit www.ch.ch/en/elections2019. Everything you need to know about voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's VoteInfo app.

The Federal Council has decided not to hold a federal popular vote on 24 November 2019. The next voting date is 9 February 2020.

Popular initiatives

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

- 'For a pensions system that respects all generations (Yes to pensions – but make the system fair)' (02.10.2020)
- 'Yes to ending seasonal time changes' (09.10.2020)
- 'For a healthy climate (Glacier Initiative)' (30.10.2020)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in German at www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



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THE SWISS ABROAD ON INSTAGRAM



'No worries' for Swiss family in New Zealand

Even though she'd never been there before, Eva Hefti took the chance and moved with her family to New Zealand. It's the pleasant climate the 39-year-old from Bern loves most about New Zealand.

My job: I don't have a paid job, I spend most of my time with our children. However, together with some of my friends, I am still working on our online family magazine Kleinstadt.ch which helps me find a good balance.

My New Zealand: Our everyday life is not that different from in Switzerland, apart from the fact that my husband's working hours are much shorter. This enables us to spend more time together and go to the beach or venture out into the outdoors. We really like the vastness and the empty beautiful beaches as well as the pleasant climate. The mentality of the people is generally more relaxed than in Switzerland. 'No worries' is a typical Kiwi saying.

My Switzerland: We are planning to stay here for about two years and then go back to Switzerland. The low population density, the lack of public transport and the remoteness are probably the biggest differences to Switzerland. I have realized that the Swiss are often too perfectionist and that some things could also be done with less effort.

My heart: Although I speak English fluently, I have noticed that especially deep and meaningful conversations are not as easy for me as in my mother tongue, which I find sometimes inhibiting. And even though we have made friends, it's somewhat different to spend time with people who have only known you for a short period of time.

The original interview was published on swissinfo.ch, the online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Company, which is available in ten languages. Do you live abroad too? Then tag your Instagram photos [#WeAreSwissAbroad](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/weareswissabroad/).

Monumental, compelling formats

Franz Gertsch's photorealist paintings count among the masterpieces of his work. To mark the occasion of the Swiss artist's 89th birthday, the Museum Franz Gertsch in Burgdorf, in the canton of Berne has opened an extension this year. The "Four Seasons" group of works now has a custom-made space in which to exert its magnetic pull on a permanent basis.

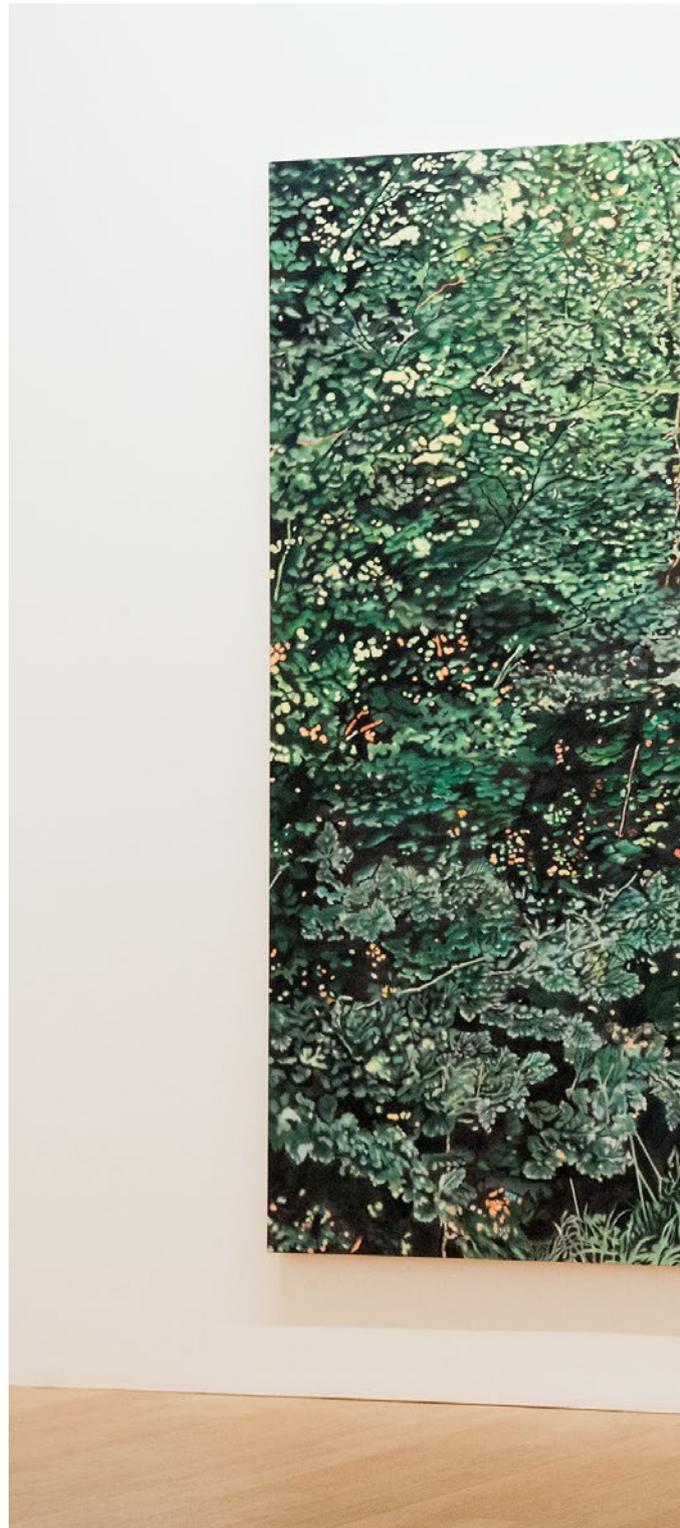
Knowing that there is a museum dedicated to him has inspired Gertsch to not only think in terms of exhibition spaces but also to create entire groups of works to fill them since the late 1990s. Franz Gertsch began the masterful "Four Seasons" cycle in 2007 with the painting "Autumn", and completed it in 2011 with "Spring".

Gertsch's portraits of women also number among the classics in his photorealist works. "Johanna I" (1983/84) is the penultimate in a series of women's portraits that followed a self-portrait of the artist in the 1980s. Gertsch's large-format woodcuts, which he printed on handmade Japanese paper, are also on display in Burgdorf.

THEODORA PETER

Museum Franz Gertsch, Platanenstrasse 3, 3400 Burgdorf
www.museum-franzgertsch.ch

© Museum Franz Gertsch, Photography: Bernhard Strahm, Gerlafingen 2019





Ava and Paul



Anna Stern:
 "Wild wie die Wellen
 des Meeres"
 Salis Verlag 2018
 320 pages; CHF 32.00,
 approx. € 24.00

The main character in the novel "Wild wie die Wellen des Meeres" (Wild like the waves of the sea) is the shy, but headstrong Ava. During her natural science studies, she travels to a nature reserve in Scotland for an internship. She needs time away from her partner, the policeman Paul, who remains behind at home in Switzerland. Ava wants to break free from the constraints of the relationship and recover from childhood trauma at the same time.

The story in the book plays out on two levels. On the one hand, Ava's stay in Scotland is reported in the narrative present with impressive descriptions of the nature and her passion for birds. She gets to know some of the locals and deep friendships develop. On the

other hand, the past is told retrospectively. The reader learns more about the trauma that she suffered, which is connected to the early death of her mother and then growing up in the same foster family as Paul. The two fall in love and move in together; however, Ava starts to feel trapped in the relationship. During her time abroad, Paul – who has remained behind – searches for the reasons behind her trauma.

When Ava has an accident during a solo hike through the Scottish mountains, Paul travels to be with her. She lies gravely injured in hospital, and he discovers that she is pregnant with his child. This is followed by anxious weeks as Ava lies in a coma.

The young author Anna Stern is an extremely talented newcomer on the Swiss literature scene. She has composed her novel with its two narrative levels very skilfully. The photos, sketches and handwritten entries scattered throughout illustrate the story and give it the feel of an authentic account. The book casts a spell over the reader. It is easy to read, despite the appearance of a large number of secondary characters. The narrative style is sober, but sometimes overly detailed during Ava's natural scientific excursions. On the other hand, the description of the landscape and nature in Scotland have a strong effect on the reader. And why shouldn't there be an unexpected, almost sentimental happy end for once?

Anna Stern, born in Rorschach in 1990, studied Environmental Sciences, and is currently working on her PhD at the Institute of Integrative Biology at ETH Zurich. She has already published two novels and a collection of short stories. In 2018, she received the advancement award of the St. Gallen Cultural Foundation and won the 3sat prize at the 42 Days of German literature in Klagenfurt. The author lives in Zurich.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

A chamber orchestra takes off



FOR SEASONS:
 DG 2017

BACH & SONS 2:
 Berlin Classics,
 2017

JOURNEY TO MOZART:
 DG 2018

Less than ten years ago, the past of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra (ZKO) was being cast in the best possible light. However, its future appeared to be unclear. Even in 2015, by which time Roger Norrington had been at the helm of the orchestra as principal conductor for four years and had spurred it on to outstanding performances, not many Zurich locals realised just how magnificent the orchestra really was.

It is difficult to understand as the ZKO was the contemporary 'straight-A student' among the Swiss orchestras of that time. And then when Norrington stepped into the hall one fine evening and said: "I'm done!", the ZKO indirectly experienced its big bang

event. Everything was set up; it just needed a new leadership to say, "Let's get going!" In autumn 2016, the orchestra found what it was looking for in the violinist Daniel Hope, a world-renowned, ambitious musician who communicated with the public via many different channels.

CD recordings were just as much a part of the business for this artist as taking a bow after the concert. The ZKO had barely tuned its instruments for the first time before the microphones stood ready. Accolades for its performances came thick and fast after this, such as for the CD "For Seasons". At first, it is just an extremely lively recording of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons". However, then the year begins anew for Hope and his orchestra, and you set out on a twelve-part journey through the twelve months with music that ranges from the early 1800s to the present, and is continued in photographs and pictures.

The CD "Bach & Sons 2" is more moderate. Under the leadership of German pianist Sebastian Knauer, the ZKO shows itself to be a motivated baroque formation. The piano concerts of J.S. Bach are combined with those of his sons, Johann Christian and the wonderfully playful Carl Philipp Emanuel. The most beautiful ZKO CD is "Journey to Mozart", in which Hope explores the world around Mozart. "This CD is a reflection of the age as I see and hear it," he says. Hope plays and conducts works by Gluck, Myslivecek, Solomon and Mozart. Even the great Haydn is included. "Haydn's concert in G major is a jewel," enthuses Hope; "however, Mozart's is a revelation. Haydn's work remains rooted in beauty, whereas Mozart's takes off". Like the Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS

Sven Epiney



On a Saturday evening in March, the final of the dance show “Darf ich bitten” is showing on Swiss German-speaking television. Excitement levels remain within reasonable limits. Then the live programme takes a surprising turn. The well-known TV and radio presenter, Sven Epiney, who is a contestant in the show, goes down on one knee and proposes to his dance/life partner. Michael says yes, they hug and then cry tears of joy. Someone brings them a bunch of red roses. “What an exciting moment,” cheer the media, “Epiney writes television and gender equality history!” Something like this was not really to be expected. The ever-pleasant 47-year-old from Valais, who presents quiz and lifestyle programmes, had never really stood out before. Declarations of love during a live broadcast can be viewed as touching or disconcerting, but one thing is clear: the private sphere moved into the political realm in this instance. Soon the Swiss Parliament will debate whether same-sex couples may marry. Nowadays they are able to register their partnership. It is a type of civil marriage, but not with the same rights and obligations as the traditional form. The legal change may find a majority, but that does not suit everyone. After Epiney’s appearance, the comment columns were flooded with shocking homophobic comments. Complaints were made to Swiss television. It was alleged that the TV star had used a fee-based programme for his own purposes. And also that it is “unnatural” when two men kiss each other. The television ombudsman firmly rejected all complaints. Meanwhile, the boulevard press has reported that the newly engaged couple are enjoying some quality time together. It remains to be seen when Epiney’s publicly initiated wedding will take place, or rather may take place.

SUSANNE WENGER

Insurance for the older unemployed is in the pipeline

The Federal Council is planning a new bridging pension for the older unemployed. Anyone who loses their job at 58 should no longer automatically have to live off welfare benefits. At present, bridging benefits are only an option for those who find themselves unemployed after their 60th birthday. This planned social welfare expansion is also intended as a response by the Federal Council to the freedom of movement of persons with the European Union. This is causing increased competition in certain industries on the Swiss employment market.

(MUL)

Donald Trump and Ueli Maurer in discussion

In the middle of May, an American president officially received a President of the Swiss Confederation in the White House for the first time. The discussion between Donald Trump and Federal President Ueli Maurer (SVP) included topics such as Switzerland’s role during political crises. It represents the diplomatic interests of the USA in different countries, such as in Iran, where the USA does not have an embassy. In the future, Switzerland is to take on the same role in Venezuela. The Swiss in turn hope that the dialogue with Trump has a positive impact on the trade discussions between Switzerland and the USA.

(MUL)

The heavens are full of fighter jets

In the last few months, an above-average number of fighter jets have crossed Swiss airspace. There is an explanation: the Swiss army is planning to purchase new jets, so it has been conducting more in-depth tests of five different models, namely the Eurofighter (Airbus, Germany), the F/A-18 Super Hornet (Boeing, USA), the Rafale (Dassault, France), the F-35A (Lockheed-Martin, USA) and the Gripen E (Saab, Sweden). The focus of the testing included the operational capability of the jets in Switzerland’s topographically small-scale, mountainous territory.

(MUL)

A football club in disarray faces relegation

It is a watershed for the Swiss football world: the Grasshopper Club Zurich (GC), founded in 1886, has been relegated from the top league, the Super League. The 27-time Swiss champions hopelessly crashed out of the top division in the 2018/2019 season, but they did not go quietly. Rowdy GC fans caused games to be abandoned and forfeited, and further damaged the image of the former flagship of Swiss football. Bern’s Young Boys finished the season as record winners at the top of the table. Never before has a team clinched the title so early.

(MUL)



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