

JULY 2024

Swiss Review

The magazine
for the Swiss Abroad



**The burden on Swiss farmers:
they feel powerless – and are speaking out**

**Nemo wins the Eurovision Song Contest –
and fuels the gender debate in Switzerland**


**Looking back: the “Swiss Review” 50 years ago
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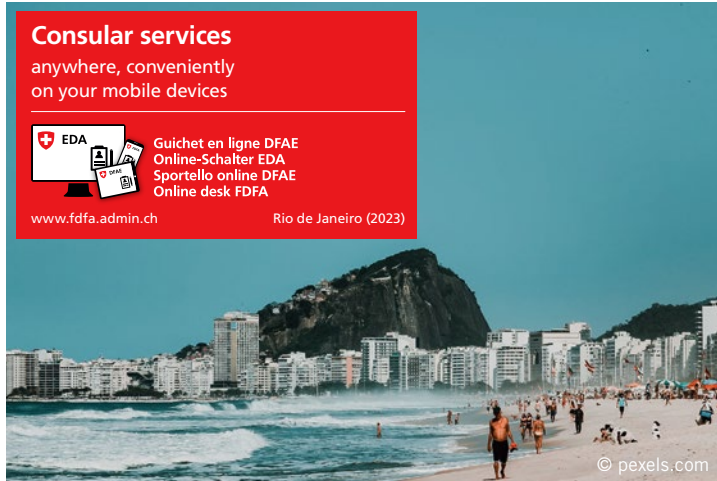
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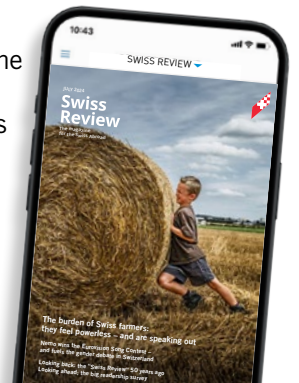
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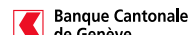
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Photo: Keystone

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Cover photo: taken from the book “Landwirtschaft Schweiz”, 2014, published by AS-Verlag, by Zurich photographer Markus Bühler.

We, the farmers



Copy deadline! Everything’s ready for this edition. Almost everything: the deadline’s looming, but we still need a cover picture. It has to be something to do with farmers. Something about the emotional well-being of Swiss farmers, since they are the focus of this issue. They drove their big, imposing tractors through the streets during the spring in protest. You could tell they were hopping mad.

So what shall we put on the cover? Angry Swiss tractor drivers at their admittedly very well-organised demonstrations? Or lush meadows and grazing cows? Or an agrarian theme: a tractor with a plough tracing a precise line through the field, with the Alpine mountain range as a backdrop? Or should we show farmers threatening to administer lethal injections? Perhaps the Alpine cattle drive with herds of cows adorned with flowers? Or an industrial pig-fattening farm?

Our struggles to find the right picture are symptomatic. In Switzerland, we all see ourselves a little bit as farmers. We are also very familiar with the beautiful landscapes of picture postcard Switzerland. Some of us even have our own personal four-wheel-drive vehicles packed with horsepower, as though we had to be able to drop everything and drive out to the fields at any moment. At the same time, we no longer have a clear image of who Swiss farmers actually are. Or what exactly they do. They might be the public face of Switzerland, but there are no longer very many of them. Barely two per cent of Swiss people today live on a farm. Our Focus on page 4 investigates the current mood amongst farmers.

We have made our decision: the “Review” cover will show a farm boy pushing determinedly to get a massive hay bale moving. On the one hand, it is a good illustration of the sheer hard work involved in farming. The picture also shows the extent to which the 98 percent of us who are not farmers romanticise the profession these days: we like to look at it that way, because it still reminds us a little of the way things once were. But today’s Swiss farmers no longer move their hay bales by hand. They drive powerful tractors. Through their fields. And sometimes, also – in protest – right through town.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Powerful farming lobby, powerless farmers



The farming lobby is one of the most influential pressure groups in parliament. Farmers in Switzerland are highly subsidised. And yet they have taken to the streets to attack Swiss farming policy. Why?

Frustrated heavy labourers: farmers demonstrating during the spring of 2024 in a field in Uster (ZH).

Photo: Keystone

JÜRIG STEINER

The village of Lohnstorf is barely a half-hour drive from the Federal Palace in Berne, but its surroundings are distinctly rural. On a clear day, you can see the iconic Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau mountains in the distance rising up majestically over a flat plain of neatly arranged arable fields. Lohnstorf is situated in the fertile Gürbe Valley, which is known throughout Switzerland for intensive cabbage farming, hence its nickname “Chabisland” (cabbage land).

Urs Haslebacher stands on the balcony of his farmhouse, which lies on the edge of the valley overlooking Lohnstorf. The route up to his farm is steep and winding. Haslebacher and his family run a large pig farm. They have around 3,000 pigs and employ 15 people. He has purchased a second farm on the valley floor and also rents out apartments in various buildings that he owns. Haslebacher is also involved in local politics, representing the SVP. In 2023, he became the mayor of Thurnen, the municipality that encompasses Lohnstorf.

Haslebacher radiates the energy of an entrepreneur who finds opportunity wherever he looks. And sees problems as a challenge. A new responsibility was added to his varied to-do list earlier this year – when he started organising a series of farmers’ protests.

Money pressures

Swiss farmers took to their tractors in their hundreds in February and March. On weekday evenings or at weekends, they would chug along to pre-arranged meeting points in fields,

park in formation and vent their feelings. With consumers unable to wean themselves off cheap imports, farmers say that their income is being squeezed. And that they are drowning in regulation. They feel underappreciated. The Swiss Farmers’ Union (SFU) put this deep sense of frustration into words, quickly collecting 65,000 signatures in a petition to the Federal Council and retailers Coop, Migros, Aldi and Lidl.

Farmers have a lot to worry about. There used to be 250,000 farms in Switzerland. Now there are 48,000. An average of ten farms are going out of business every week. Money pressures are real for Switzerland’s 150,000 or so remaining farmers.



“If the people vote for green initiatives at the weekend but buy cheap imported meat during the week, we farmers are the ones who lose out.”

Urs Haslebacher organised farmers’ protests.

Photo: Keystone

Haslebacher spent a lot of time on messaging apps coordinating protest rallies in his home patch, the canton of Berne. Unlike the demonstrations in France and Germany, none of the actions escalated in Switzerland. Time and again, Haslebacher reminded his colleagues that they should not block the traffic with their tractors. There are no protests at the moment, because farmers are out in their fields in summer.

Caught in the middle

Haslebacher is not one to moan. Neither is he hard up. And yet he knows from personal experience that there is a fundamental disconnect between economic reality and what society expects from its farmers. This explains why people like him have also decided to protest.

He gives us an example. Over 20 years ago, the federal government wanted farmers like Haslebacher to prioritise the well-being of their pigs by building pens with outdoor space. They gave him money for this purpose. The idea was that supermarkets would pay him an extra Swiss franc per kilo for the pork. He made the investment in good faith. But because the outdoor rearing systems for pigs are associated with higher ammonia emissions, Haslebacher soon attracted criticism from environmentalists. And before he had paid off the investment, the additional franc per kilo had been whittled down to a few centimes.

Consumers are often oblivious to these problems. “I am not blaming anyone,” says Haslebacher, “but how can we plan for the future if the people vote

for green initiatives at the weekend but buy cheap imported meat during the week? We are the ones who lose out.”

It is unacceptable for farms to be caught in the middle like this, he continues. And that is why farmers feel so strongly – that includes everyone in the disparate agricultural sector who

Farmers account for a good two per cent of the working population, but about a sixth of all parliamentarians in Berne come from the agricultural sector, i.e. they are farmers themselves or they represent farmers.

would normally otherwise agree to disagree: from big industrial farmers, to organic farmers, to Alpine farmers.

Nevertheless, you could be forgiven for wondering why Swiss farmers have taken their shiny tractors onto the streets in the first place. Because Swiss farmers enjoy considerable influence at the centre of political power compared to farmers in other countries. Very considerable indeed.

The farming lobby

Although agriculture plays a marginal role in the Swiss economy, accounting for just 0.6 per cent of GDP, no other sector is as supported, pro-



tected or nurtured. Billions of francs go into farming. Two key figures stand out in particular. Every year, 2.8 billion francs in environmental subsidies are paid directly to farmers from the public tax coffers. Secondly, import duties worth more than 3 billion francs a year protect the Swiss agricultural sector from foreign competition.

Protectionism is possible not least because the farming lobby has become an even greater force in national politics since the last elections in autumn 2023. This is quite the paradox given the continual decline in the number of farms. Farmers account for a good two per cent of the working population, but about a sixth of all parliamentarians in Berne come from the agricultural sector, i.e. they are farmers themselves or they represent farmers.

The head of the SFU, National Councillor Markus Ritter (The Centre), is one of the most influential parliamentarians. He pulled off a strategic coup in 2022 when he struck an alliance with Switzerland's main trade associations. This bolstered the SFU's efforts to op-

Whether on remote individual farms or industrial fattening farms, the average farmer works hard and earns little.

Photos: Keystone

Demanding consumers: are they also ready to pay fair prices?

Photo: Keystone

pose left-wing popular initiatives that would force farmers to adopt greener practices. The next showdown is on Sunday 22 September 2024, when an initiative by conservationist groups and the Greens to promote biodiversity is put to voters. The SFU has called the proposal “extremist”. Orchestrated by Ritter, the farming lobby has already blocked the Federal Council's counterproposal in parliament.

Mountain of bureaucracy

Yet farmers are under increasing pressure despite the SFU's lobbying. It is hard to gain an overall picture, given that the problems facing the big agriculture of the Central Plateau are not the same as those affecting small-holdings in the Alps, for example.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that farmers work a lot for relatively little. According to surveys, they put in well over 50 hours a week on average while earning under 20 francs an hour. Running a farm can, therefore, feel precarious for many families – who maybe just about cope because they live rent-free on the farm that they have inherited, but are unable to generate enough money to invest. If the farmhouse needs renovating, it can spell the end for the business.



Farmers are losing more and more hours to paperwork – time they could have otherwise spent farming. Even the SFU, the political force behind the multi-billion bankrolling of the agricultural sector, concedes that the financial support has spawned a mountain of bureaucracy that urgently needs to be trimmed. The federal acts and ordinances on funding run up to several thousands of pages. Approval and monitoring take an enormous amount of time.

At the mercy of suppliers and buyers

The loss in efficiency is obvious, but government funding continues to increase as more and more farms go under. What is going wrong? And why is Switzerland unable to achieve its goal of getting domestic production to cover more than 50 per cent of the country's food needs?

Patrick Dümmler, an economist at the liberal think tank Avenir Suisse, makes the important point that farmers are too dependent on subsidies. Essentially, he believes that there is too much money in the system as opposed to not enough. According to Dümmler, farmers are unfortunately at the mercy of suppliers and buyers. He says that



Alongside farmers, subsidies also benefit fertiliser and feed manufacturers as well as retailers.
Photos: Keystone

Intensive farming is highly mechanised and is a failed doctrine, according to Green agricultural politicians.
Photo: Keystone

farmers receive subsidies but then use the funds to buy things like seed, fertiliser, feed and equipment – from agricultural giant Fenaco, for example. Hence, Fenaco also benefits from the farming subsidy system in its supply role. The prices at which farmers sell to distributors or to supermarkets like Migros and Coop are, on the other hand, too low – and farms are forced to offset the shortfall with state funds earmarked for fulfilling environmental obligations.

Some of the more critical members of the farming lobby have identified the problematic role played by agribusiness and the supermarkets. One of them is Kilian Baumann, National Councillor for the Green Party and head of the national association of smallholder farmers, who often takes a different view to that of the SFU. Baumann laments the low prices and mounting bureaucracy – but he also criticises “decades of misguided farming policy” for which the SFU bears some responsibility.

The imperative – encouraged by the state – to produce more and to farm

bigger and more intensively is a failed doctrine, he writes, adding that intensive agriculture leads to nitrogen runoff into groundwater and drinking water, and harms biodiversity through its reliance on pesticides. According to

The Federal government is channelling more and more money through fewer and fewer farmers. In spite of this, their economic outlook is growing ever bleaker – and Switzerland's self-sufficiency targets are not being met.

Baumann, farmers cannot blame their problems on new green legislation. On the contrary, environmental standards are urgently needed.

Food production is subject to market forces. The Swiss state is addressing the environmental question, while subsidies are funding measures to correct the “wrongs” of the market. These are the decidedly muddy waters in which Swiss farmers find themselves. And they feel powerless to do anything about it – despite the powerful farming lobby.

“We will reassess in autumn,” says Haslebacher. If nothing improves, he and his colleagues will be back out on their tractors. The next protest could take them all the way to the Bundesplatz in Berne.



Mustafa Atici



He is the first cantonal councillor with a migration background in the canton of Basel-Stadt. Born in Türkiye in 1969, Mustafa Atici came to Switzerland as a 23-year-old student. The Turkish Kurd found a new home in Basel, started a family and set up as a culinary entrepreneur after completing his business studies. His kebab shops are known throughout the city, including at the St. Jakob football stadium, where the staunch FC Basel fan can be found on match days. Atici joined the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP) in 2001 and entered the cantonal parliament three years later, where he remained a member for almost 14 years. In 2019, he transferred to the National Council but he was not re-elected in 2023. This spring saw Atici gain a government mandate in his home canton. Atici referred to his election as “a success for diversity”. “People shouldn’t see a Mustafa in Basel as being somehow different anymore.” There is admittedly a particularly high number of people with a migration background in the city canton. Atici was never in any doubt about becoming naturalised. He encourages others to do the same: “We live here, we work here, we can play our part.” As director of education, he wants to do still more for integration. As a member of parliament, he also worked hard to ensure the children of migrants learned the national language before starting school. Atici speaks High German with an audible accent. He responds to criticism of his level of German with equanimity. He is more concerned with the hostility about his background that he encountered during the election. It was the first time he had encountered so much hate during 20 years in politics, he said when interviewed. It affected him, as he feels patriotic about his country: “I love Basel and Switzerland.”

THEODORA PETER

Ukraine conference in Switzerland concludes with an underwhelming outcome

The Ukraine conference of 15 and 16 June 2024, in the Bürgenstock luxury resort high above Lake Lucerne, is considered the largest diplomatic event ever hosted in Switzerland. At Switzerland’s invitation, delegations from over 90 countries, including the heads of state of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, Spain and the vice president of the United States, Kamala Harris, convened at the location. In the run-up to the conference, President of the Swiss Confederation Viola Amherd and Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis sought, in their role of conference hosts, to manage expectations, changing the name of the event from “Peace Summit” to “Summit on Peace in Ukraine”. The closing declaration at least adopted a clear position by referring to “Russia’s war against Ukraine”, thus expressly naming Russia as the aggressor. The final document also demanded the observance of Ukraine’s sovereignty and the securing of the war-damaged Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. It further stated that attacks on Ukrainian wheat exports are not acceptable, as food security “must not be weaponised in any way”. President of the Swiss Confederation Viola Amherd concluded: “We have achieved what could be achieved.” In the immediate aftermath, political commentators claimed Switzerland suffered something of a setback as a host and diplomatic actor, as not all delegations were prepared to sign the final document. Twelve of the participating countries withheld their signature. Notable non-signatories included India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Some of these countries may be able to assume the role of intermediary, given their intact ties to Russia. In fact, there was speculation just before the meeting that Saudi Arabia might host a follow-up conference – and include Russia. The closing declarations and the official final Bürgenstock document, however, did not include any reference to this.

(MUL)

The final document from the Bürgenstock conference (available only in English): www.revue.link/summit

Switzerland increases its defence expenditure

Mindful of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the Federal Council decided in favour of increasing the budget of the armed forces. In February, it presented a package totalling in excess of 30 billion francs for the next four years. In June, the Council of States declared its intention to increase the budget more quickly and by more, to the tune of about four billion francs. In addition, it wants to commit more funds to expedite the purchase of air defence systems. A majority of the Council of States wants a large part of the extra expenditure to come from cuts in development aid. However, nothing has been decided as yet, as the matter still has to be submitted to the National Council.

(MUL)

Triumphant ‘climate seniors’ cause a stir

A group of older Swiss women have won their climate case at the European Court of Human Rights. Not everyone in Switzerland is happy with the verdict. The ruling will encourage environmental groups across Europe to bring similar actions against their own governments.

CHRISTOF FORSTER

A group of older Swiss women triumphed in Strasbourg at the beginning of April when their landmark climate case was largely upheld by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). “It is the biggest victory possible for us. We still can’t really believe it,” Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti told Swiss public television (SRF) immediately after the verdict. The group of ‘climate seniors’, or Senior Women for Climate Protection (Klimaseniorinnen), received moral and financial support from Greenpeace during the proceedings.

The judges in Strasbourg ruled that Switzerland had violated the women’s human rights by not doing enough to combat global warming. This relates specifically to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which guarantees “the right to respect for private and family life”. The court expanded on Article 8 in reference to climate change, saying that states must take appropriate steps to prevent global temperatures from

reaching levels that would do serious and irreparable harm to human rights.

The court found that there had been “critical gaps” in the process of putting in place the relevant domestic regulatory framework, and that the Swiss authorities had failed to quantify national limits on greenhouse gas emissions. The judges also stated that Switzerland had failed to meet its past CO₂ reduction targets.

European precedent

The verdict sets a European precedent as it is the first time an international court has tied human rights directly to climate change. The 46 states of the Council of Europe could now be required by their citizens to rethink climate policy and, where necessary, ramp up climate action to protect human rights.

The judges made no specific reference to what steps Switzerland should take, saying that it was not their re-

According to Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti, photographed here with Greta Thunberg, the ECtHR ruling is the “biggest victory possible”. But the verdict has caused a stir in Berne. Photo: Keystone





“The ECtHR oversteps its authority by overriding domestic legislation as well as direct democracy.”

Former federal judge Brigitte Pfiffner

sponsibility to prescribe to Switzerland how it should achieve its climate goals. They considered that the Swiss Confederation itself should assess the specific measures to be taken, and present these to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. Essentially, it is the job of the Committee of Ministers to supervise the adoption of measures aimed at ensuring that individual member states comply with the ECHR.

As a first step, the Klimaseniorinnen group now wants the Federal Council to order an expert-led review of Switzerland’s climate goals, taking the national carbon budget and the remaining global carbon budget into account.

Ruling attracts criticism

Wydler-Wälti and her fellow plaintiffs were jubilant and relieved after the ECtHR ruling. But the reaction from other quarters was less complimentary, including from those who are actually in favour of doing more to fight climate change. Green Party member and former federal judge Brigitte Pfiffner told the “SonntagsZeitung” that the ECtHR had overstepped its authority by overriding domestic legislation as well as direct democracy. Pfiffner is alluding to the referendum in 2021, when voters rejected a beefed-up CO₂ Act that would have introduced an air ticket levy. She believes the ECtHR is interfering in domestic politics instead of following the wording of the Convention.

Pfiffner also said that the judges failed to adequately explain why a civil society group (the KlimaSeniorinnen) was suddenly entitled to sue, and which human rights were specifically violated. Furthermore, the judges failed to convincingly demonstrate how Swiss climate policy had impaired the group’s right to privacy and family life under Article 8 of the ECHR.

The court took a relatively straightforward line as to whether there is a causal link between gaps in Swiss regulations and the higher temperatures and heatwaves referred to in the case. It said that a state is liable if its relevant authorities would have had a realistic chance of changing the outcome or mitigating adverse effects by taking reasonable measures. But even if Switzerland had cut

greenhouse emissions to zero, this would not have curbed the global rise in temperatures – because the amount that Switzerland contributes to global carbon emissions is a relative drop in the ocean.

Critics fear the ruling will lead to human rights being trivialised and politicised. Applying legally binding human rights protections to controversial issues such as climate change also means using these protections as a political tool, they say. Others think differently. According to Markus Schefer, an expert in constitutional law at the University of Basel, the ruling is a “logical continuation” of existing provisions. Schefer told the “NZZ am Sonntag” that applying a broad wording in relation to fundamental rights had future-proofed the ECHR, and that courts have an important duty to take new threats and risks into account.

However, the ruling could also undermine climate action. There is a danger that some voters could reject future climate initiatives not because of the issues at stake, but because they want to send a message to Strasbourg rejecting the influence of ‘foreign judges’. And an altogether different side-effect: the verdict is likely to further dampen the already tricky prospects of Berne striking an institutional agreement with the EU.

Indeed, the ruling has caused a stir in Berne, with the legal affairs committees of both chambers of parliament, no less, urging the Federal Council not to implement the judgment – a remarkable thing for elected politicians to do in a country that follows the rule of law.

Looking ahead, there is a likelihood that other environmental organisations around Europe will be buoyed by the Strasbourg ruling and take their own climate cases to the ECtHR. For example, environmental group Deutsche Umwelthilfe now believes that its case against the German government, which it took to the ECtHR in 2022, has a realistic chance of success.

For further background information, read our piece on Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti at www.revue.link/climate

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Leaving everyone behind in a cloud of dust

12:50.9

The now 69-year-old middle-distance runner and Olympian Markus Ryffel is a legend in Switzerland. His Swiss record over 5,000 metres seemed unbreakable. But Dominic Lobalu bettered Ryffel's 40-year record by 16 seconds at the end of May, setting a new mark of 12:50.9 minutes. In other words: Lobalu shattered the record.



3,000

Only days after his feat over 5,000 metres, Lobalu, 25, also broke the Swiss 3,000-metre record. The story behind the story: Lobalu fled to Switzerland from South Sudan. “I grew up as a refugee,” he says. “This is my identity. And my goal is to win a medal. For all refugees.” www.dominiclobalu.ch

1.39

This begs the question: do people in Switzerland have any time left for family life? Switzerland's birth rate has fallen to 1.39 children per woman, the lowest it has been for over 20 years. A developed country's population will age and decline without a birth rate of at least 2.1 – unless it is supplemented by immigrants. Like Dominic Lobalu.

Source: Federal Statistical Office

65,274

As Lobalu breaks records on the running track, working people in Switzerland – most in rather more sedentary occupations – are responsible for superlatives of a completely different kind. They work an average of 65,274 hours over a lifetime – completely “outperforming” their counterparts in France (55,620), Germany (53,098) and Luxembourg (51,859). Source: Eurostat, OECD

3.7

Talking of work, Switzerland's unemployment rate of 3.7 per cent is really low. Look for work and you will normally find it. Labour shortages are the big issue at the moment, with companies struggling to find the right employees.

Source: Federal Statistical Office

180,000

With or without children, cleaning and other household chores are another fact of life. There is always somewhere to wipe down or Hoover. A plume containing 180,000 tonnes of Sahara dust blew over Switzerland on 30 March 2024. Swiss skies turned an eerie orange. Cue the next question in our editorial office: whose turn is it to do the spring cleaning?

www.revue.link/dust Source: SRF Meteo

What now for Nemo?

Switzerland's Nemo is the first non-binary act to win the Eurovision Song Contest. Is Nemo now set to become Europe's queer icon? And what are the Berlin-based singer's prospects for the global career that many have predicted?



MARKO LEHTINEN

Everyone is talking about Nemo. But Nemo has withdrawn from the limelight for the time being. It would be interesting to catch up with Nemo – who identifies as non-binary – to ask them what they feel (the artist uses they/them pronouns). We would love to hear from them about their momentous win in Malmö. What are the implications for Nemo's career and life in general? And in particular, what does it mean to non-binary people in Europe? Is this a game-changer for gender identity? Is Nemo the queer community's answer to Greta Thunberg?

Nemo is currently unavailable for interviews. According to record com-

pany Universal Music, the artist is focusing solely on the “next creative process and forthcoming live performances” – and asks for a little patience. We completely understand. Anyone doing what Nemo has just done would need time to adjust and let the dust settle. Nemo is lying low in Berlin. Born 25 years ago in Biel, this year's Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) winner Nemo Mettler, known professionally as Nemo, has chosen the German capital as their adopted home.

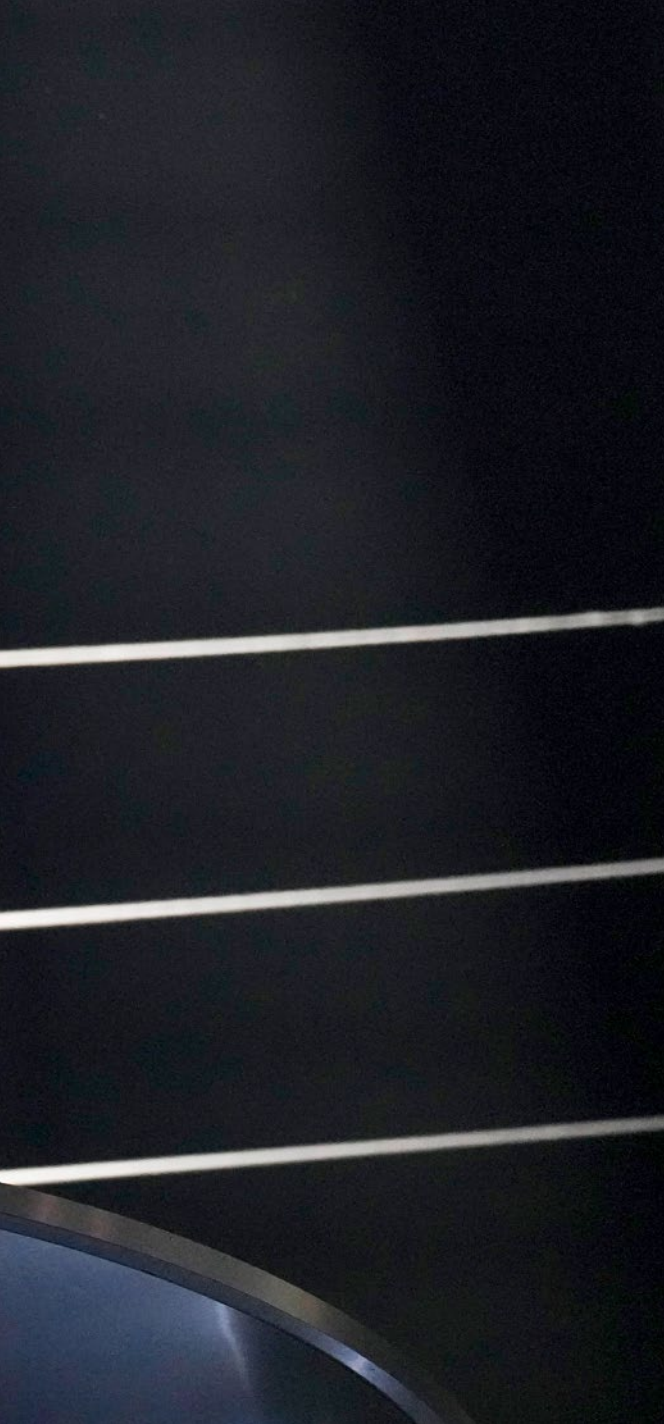
As a child, Nemo learned to play the violin, piano and drums, and had extensive singing lessons. Their first major performance came in Biel at the age of ten, in the role of Papageno

Nemo sang and danced on a revolving disc for their performance at this year's Eurovision Song Contest. All part of Nemo's smooth and rounded Malmö experience.

Photos: Keystone

in a children's opera version of “The Magic Flute”. Nemo got involved in musicals following this classical debut, appearing on stage at the age of 13 in “Ich war noch niemals in New York” – a German-language musical based on the songs of Udo Jürgens. But it was in hip-hop that Nemo found their true calling, winning four Swiss Music Awards after making their mark in 2017 with hit single “Du”. Back then, Nemo was still known as a male artist. Nemo then left Switzerland and moved to Berlin, where they would eventually come out as non-binary exactly six months before ESC.

And what now for Nemo? After Malmö, the initial reaction among reporters was that the ESC winner is set



Another factor is that few past ESC winners have gone on to international stardom. There are prominent exceptions to this rule. Abba won the then Grand Prix Eurovision de la Chanson 50 years ago, representing Sweden, while a certain Canadian woman called Céline Dion flew the flag for Switzerland, winning in 1988. Otherwise, acts have tended to disappear as quickly as you can say “douze points”. Some have enjoyed domestic success, but no more than that. Furthermore, previous winners have often benefited from some sort of political or social groundswell – which never bodes well for an act’s musical prospects. Neither Israel in 1978 and 1979, nor Ukraine following the Russian invasion in 2022, won with the best song. Even Nemo’s spiritual predecessor in 2014, Austria’s bearded drag queen Conchita Wurst, will be remembered for raising awareness about discrimination based on sexuality. It is fair to ask whether Nemo would have won ESC if Nemo had identified as a man or a woman and the song had not specifically been

about their coming out as a non-binary person.

Nemo is unlikely to have lasting international success. But will Nemo prove to be a linchpin for the queer community? Nemo’s victory has opened a heated debate about non-binary people in Switzerland. Since Malmö, the ESC winner has repeatedly called for the Swiss authorities to allow third-gender designations on official documents, turning this into a political matter. Plans are even afoot for Nemo to meet Federal Councillor Beat Jans. Politicians across the spectrum recently thrashed out the issue on the prime-time current affairs show “Arena”.

It would be interesting to know whether Nemo considers themselves to be the queer community’s new icon. And whether Nemo wants to carry this mantle or just focus on music. Time – or maybe Nemo’s next interview – will tell.

Video: www.revue.link/nemo

for a global career. But this is unlikely. “The Code” was certainly a good song – an original combination of drum ‘n’ bass, hip-hop, pop and classical showcasing of Nemo’s impressive singing voice in the chorus plus a very personal autobiographical message (“I went to hell and back, to find myself on track”). Yet it was also quite formulaic; the unmistakable product of an experienced songwriting think-tank and hit factory consisting of Benjamin Alasu, Lasse Nymann and Linda Dale, trimmed from the outset into a suitable format. A song written by Nemo, but also slightly manufactured. We won’t be humming it like “Waterloo” in 50 years’ time.

The winning song is politically charged: Nemo identifies as non-binary.





1924 saw the first open-air performances at the "World Theatre" in Einsiedeln, featuring a world figure surrounded by earth spirits.
Photo: Welttheater Einsiedeln



In 1981, the stage took the form of a massive "P" for "pax". Photo: Welttheater Einsiedeln



Amateur actors form the troupe and continue to play the roles today. Top: production design from 1960. Bottom: auditions for the 1981 performances
Photos: Welttheater Einsiedeln, Keystone



To mark the new millennium, contemporary Swiss authors were commissioned to write a fresh interpretation. The version by Thomas Hürlimann, first performed in 2000, returned to the monastery stage in 2007. Top: the "world" dressed in red

Left: the figure cabinet with the main characters
Photos: Welttheater Einsiedeln, Keystone

100 years of Einsiedeln World Theatre: stage fever in a monastery village

Since 1924, the “World Theatre” by Spanish baroque poet Pedro Calderón de la Barca has been performed every few years in front of Einsiedeln monastery. In recent decades, contemporary authors have reinterpreted the four-hundred-year-old mystery play. This year, a version by Swiss author Lukas Bärfuss takes to the stage. Some 500 theatre lovers from Einsiedeln will participate in the open-air spectacle.

Continued on page 16



In 2013, author Tim Krohn illustrated man's greed and interference with creation using the example of genetic engineering. Photos: Welttheater Einsiedeln, Keystone

In 2024, women took the main roles in “The Great Theatre of the World”. Author Lukas Bärfuss elaborates on the existential questions of Calderón's mystery play: what is my role in life? What is a good life? Photos: Welttheater Einsiedeln

From religious mystery to modern didactic theatre

THEODORA PETER

The Einsiedeln backdrop is unique. The monastery square bordered by arcades – Europe’s second-largest church forecourt after St Peter’s Square in Rome – provides the setting for the “World Theatre”. The imposing facade of the baroque church looms in the background. Einsiedeln monastery is Switzerland’s top pilgrimage site: hundreds of thousands of visitors come every year to marvel at the black Madonna in the Chapel of Grace.

In 1917, a local scientist discovered that the square in front of the monastery was acoustically very well suited to theatre performances. The abbot of the Benedictine abbey then gave his blessing for “spiritual plays”, which led to the selection of a Spanish mystery play. Baroque poet Pedro Calderón de la Barca wrote “The Great Theatre of the World” (El gran teatro del mundo) in the 1630s. The work portrays human existence in the form of a play. A ‘creator’ allocates the roles and the ‘world’ is the stage where the story unfolds. The allegorical characters include the rich man, the beggar, the king and farmer, as well as beauty, wisdom and grace. For 50 years, the “World Theatre” in Einsiedeln stayed true to the original, through the German translation by Joseph von Eichendorff. However, in 1970, people started to express their disapproval of the outdated image of a societal order determined by a divine being, where power structures are confirmed instead of being called into question.

Existential life questions

It took another 30 years for the organisers to come up with a contemporary version. Swiss author Thomas Hürlimann, a former pupil at the Klosterschule in Einsiedeln, was commissioned to come up with a new interpretation for the 2000 and 2007 seasons. From then, “Einsiedeln World Theatre” has integrated current issues. For example, in 2013, author Tim Krohn used the example of gene technology to focus on interventions in creation and the human pursuit of perfection.

The most recent version – postponed from 2020 to 2024 due to the corona pandemic – was penned by Lukas Bärfuss. The award-winning author is one of the most incisive exponents of contemporary Swiss literature and a keen-eyed observer of societal developments. Bärfuss also addresses the existential questions posed by Calderón’s mystery play: “What is my role in life? What am I prepared to die for? What is a good life?” These questions are eternally relevant, although the social resonance of these themes has changed. Four hundred years ago, a per-



Spanish baroque poet Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681) wrote “The Great Theatre of the World” as a spiritual play for Corpus Christi.



Swiss author Lukas Bärfuss (*1971) will present a contemporary interpretation of Calderón’s “World Theatre” in Einsiedeln in 2024.

son’s fate was more or less set at birth. Someone born as a beggar remained poor – and hoped for a better life in heaven. “Today, the enlightened person faces the challenge of plotting their own course in life.” In Bärfuss’s version, a woman – Emanuela – embodies all the roles in Calderón’s play. As a farmer, she succeeds in becoming queen, loses power and falls into poverty, before she turns her fortunes around and finally leaves the world as an old woman.

A major village undertaking

The locals make up the cast for the Einsiedeln production, with roughly 250 amateur thespians playing major and minor roles. A further 250 people also work behind the scenes. “The whole of Einsiedeln is involved in one way or other,” says James Kälin, president of the organising committee. Kälin himself fell in love with the theatre at his mother’s knee, as he once explained in a radio interview. As a youngster, he was one of the singing angels on the monastery square while his father played the main role of the beggar. His mother worked behind the scenes in the cloakroom – as his grandfather had done before. Other families from the village have also been involved with the open-air performance for generations. Producer Livio Andreina, who set up “World Theatre” 2024 with Lukas Bärfuss, raves about the “incredible enthusiasm of the participants”. Andreina told the local paper that the Einsiedeln theatre performance is unique in Switzerland. “It’s a lot more than just a play; it’s a social project involving the entire village.”

The Benedictine monastery is also represented on the theatre company’s managing committee. The production has relied on its goodwill for 100 years. In the early days, the monks composed the music for Calderón’s “World Theatre”, before secular musicians took over from the turn of the century. In the 2000 and 2007 performances, a monk took to the stage. Father Kassian Etter, who died in 2009, remains the only monk from the monastery to have acted in the play to date.

The “Einsiedeln World Theatre” runs until 7 September. www.welttheatereinsiedeln.ch

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Einsiedler Welttheater. Lukas Bärfuss. Rowohlt Verlag, 2024.
100 Jahre Welttheater in 100 Geschichten. Walter Kälin. Schweizer Heft Nr. 115, 2024.

“In the worst case, people can be refused treatment”

Anyone who moves to a country outside the EU/EFTA is no longer entitled to health insurance in Switzerland – and risks falling through the net.

EVELINE RUTZ

A person's place of residence dictates whether they are subject to mandatory health insurance – not their nationality. If you live in Switzerland, you must have health insurance in Switzerland. If you leave Switzerland, you must arrange healthcare in your new home country.

Thanks to bilateral treaties, this rule does not apply to people who move from Switzerland to an EU or EFTA country. Civil servants posted abroad are also exempt. But people who move to countries outside the EU/EFTA (e.g. in South America or Asia) are affected.

Swiss Abroad outside the EU/EFTA must either access public healthcare in their host country or take out private insurance. “This is unfair,” says National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter. “A lot of these expats have paid health insurance in Switzerland for many years and, in some cases, barely claimed on it.”

It is expensive and not always possible for Swiss Abroad to take out basic health insurance in their new place of residence, Schneider-Schneiter explains. Older people or people with existing health conditions have a particularly raw deal. Their policies are often subject to exceptions and limitations – even for private care. This can have serious consequences. “In the worst case, people can be refused treatment.”

Some countries only provide healthcare if you have an insurance card, says Ariane Rustichelli, Director of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). “This is unacceptable and can have dramatic consequences.” It is not uncommon for expats seeking treatment to return to Switzerland, provided they can undertake the journey. As soon as they are officially residing in Switzerland again, they can receive care through the Swiss system.

Many of the 290,000 or so Swiss Abroad who live outside the EU/EFTA are already of an advanced age, when health problems become more of an issue. Finances have not been rosy for many of them. “They emigrated because the cost of living in Switzerland was too high,” says Rustichelli, adding that life in a new country can be a challenge at first, not least for older people. The vagaries of health insurance can make settling in even harder. But the outcome is good from a domestic perspective, “because when someone entitled to Swiss healthcare subsidies leaves the country, that's one less person to worry about.”

The idea that entitlement to healthcare ends at the national border has drawbacks, confirms health economist Willy Oggier. Swiss Abroad are excluded from basic state health insurance in places like Brazil or Thailand. And they have less scope for switching to private healthcare. Private options are often limited, with



some policies only reserved for the under-70s and normally subject to a medical examination. Existing health conditions are, therefore, an impediment to getting adequate insurance cover. Health insurers are usually less keen to offer policies to older people. “It makes little economic sense to them.”

Centre politician Schneider-Schneiter wants the Federal Council to look into the matter and provide solu-

The current situation is unfair, says National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter, adding that lots of expats have “paid health insurance in Switzerland for many years”.



tions. She has submitted a motion to this effect. Expats should be able to receive healthcare where they live, in her opinion. “Health insurers benefit from fewer people returning to Switzerland. They save money.”

Rustichelli also wants parliament to discuss the issue. “Analysing the current situation would be a good start,” she says. Meanwhile, the OSA is in the process of talking to several health insurers in order to secure a wider range of private packages offering better conditions. According to

Oggier, policymakers should consider collective solutions in relation to individual countries or regions. Insurers could draw up standardised guidelines in the form of framework contracts and, for example, specify additional costs for policyholders with existing health conditions. “This would immediately improve insurance cover, at least to a degree,” he says.

Effecting changes in legislation through political means is much more complicated, with the government still happy with the status quo. But Schneider-Schneiter is quietly confident. “My motion enjoys broad-based support and has a good chance of being accepted.”

OSA Director Ariane Rustichelli believes that Switzerland benefits from expats receiving good healthcare abroad, “because when someone entitled to Swiss healthcare subsidies leaves the country, that's one less person to worry about”.

The motion in full: www.revue.link/ess

Initiatives fail but problems remain

On 9 June 2024, Swiss voters rejected two popular initiatives putting forward various solutions for Switzerland’s very high healthcare costs. This unresolved problem will remain something of a political hot potato.

THEODORA PETER



Three months after the surprise public decision in favour of a 13th month of OASI (old-age and survivors’ pension) payments, a second sociopolitical shock failed to materialise. Even though many households are creaking under the strain of high health insurance premiums (see “Review” 3/2024), a majority of voters rejected the idea of extending further reductions. The SP’s premium relief initiative would have primarily benefited low-income earners, who currently spend over ten per cent of their income on health insurance. The initiative received widespread support in French-speaking Switzerland and in Ticino, where premiums are higher than in other regions. The German-speaking cantons, however, and thus the majority of voters (55.5 per cent) vetoed the proposal. Opponents of the initiative had stressed during the campaign that the measure would cost billions. The Swiss Abroad supported the Yes camp in vain: they narrowly approved the proposal.

The second proposal on healthcare costs submitted to the vote of the people was an even bigger failure. The so-called “Cost brake in the healthcare system” measure was rejected by 62.8 per cent of voters; even the Swiss Abroad were against it. Only five cantons approved the Centre Party’s initiative. The Centre had hoped that these cost brakes would create more pressure to lower costs in reality. A majority of voters were nonetheless concerned that adopting such a scheme could lead to a two-tier healthcare system.

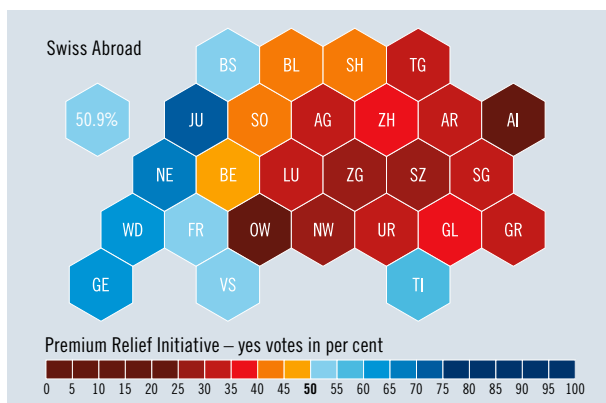
Federal Council to state cost targets

The failed initiatives have not been entirely for nothing. In both cases, indirect counter-proposals that had previously been approved by parliament come into effect. Cantons that until now had invested only a little in reducing premiums will now have to devote more money to the issue, although considerably less than the initiative would have required. Instead of cutting costs, the Federal Council will now set cost and quality targets every four years for the healthcare sector. This is intended not least to clarify which costs are medically justified. From the perspective of the healthcare economy, this is a step in the right direction, but demographic trends are posing further challenges. The baby boomer generation is now of retirement age, and an ageing population means more costs for doctor’s visits and hospital stays.

The people want the best possible care

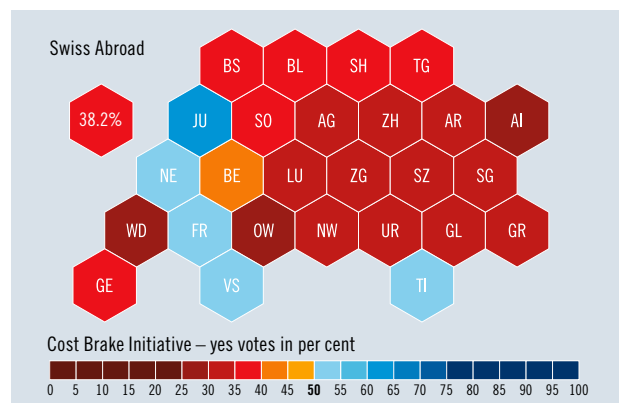
Expensive healthcare remains one of the major financial concerns for the Swiss population. Health insurance premiums have more than doubled in the past 20 years, and a further increase is looming in 2025. The various stakeholders involved were previously unable to agree on which reforms would curb this trend. A new financing model, which would provide greater incentives for outpatient treatment instead of costly hospital stays, is expected

Premium relief initiative



The initiative brought by the SP failed to reach a majority: 55.5 per cent of voters and the majority of the cantons said no. A language divide emerged during the vote. Only the French and Italian-speaking cantons supported the drive to cap premiums. The Swiss Abroad also voted yes.

Cost reduction initiative



The Centre’s initiative that aimed at cutting healthcare costs was rejected by a majority of 62.8 per cent. Only five cantons came out in favour of the proposed instrument for regulating rising costs. The Swiss Abroad also rejected the proposal.

to ease the financial burden. The people will have the final word on this decision as well.

A single health insurance, coordination or streamlining?

The political parties are backing various solutions: the SP is once again raising the idea of a single public health insurance fund. This would end the pseudo-competition between the 45 private health insurance funds and thus save money. The Centre wants to force cantons to coordinate with each other on hospital planning. The FDP and SVP, on the other hand, are arguing for a reduction in the catalogue of treatments covered by health insurance. Until now, however, voters have always rejected any proposals that might have limited insurance coverage. In an emergency, everyone wants the best possible medical care for them and their loved ones.

Antivaxxers out of luck

On 9 June, two additional proposals were put to the vote. By giving a clear Yes (68.7 per cent) to the Electricity Supply Act, the Swiss paved the way to bolstering domestic energy production from renewable sources like water, sunlight and wind. The initiative against “mandatory vaccinations” had no such luck, however. Critics of the anti-Covid measures sought to have a corresponding ban entered into the constitution. But 73.7 per cent of voters saw this as unnecessary: it is already the case that people cannot be vaccinated against their will.

Overview of the ballots on 22 September 2024

Biodiversity initiative

In the view of nature and environmental organisations, Switzerland is doing too little to preserve diverse habitats. One-third of all species of animals and plants in Switzerland are endangered or already extinct. The biodiversity initiative would enshrine stronger protection for natural habitats in the constitution. The government would provide more land and greater funding for this purpose. The Federal Council initially wanted to amend legislation in order to accommodate the aims of the initiative. However, this indirect counter-proposal was shot down in the Council of States – not least due to resistance from farmers (more on the farming lobby in the Focus on pages 4-7). Opponents of the biodiversity initiative feel that its demands go too far. They are concerned that the restrictions placed on using land for farming, electricity production or tourism will be excessive.

Link to the initiative:

www.biodiversitaetsinitiative.ch

“No” movement:

www.biodiversitaetsinitiative-nein.ch

Occupational pension reform

Pensions from pension funds – the 2nd pillar of old-age pensions after the OASI – have been under pressure for a while. The main reason is the increasing life expectancy of the population. The reform of occupational pensions (OPA) approved by parliament should secure financing for the OPA, including by lowering the conversion rate from 6.8 per cent to 6.0 per cent. This will lead to lower benefits, which are to be offset via pension supplements for the transitional generation. The Swiss Federation of Trade Unions has launched a referendum against the proposal. In its view, the compensation for lower pensions is insufficient. In addition, workers will have to pay more, in the form of higher wage deductions. Centre-right supporters of the initiative, however, feel that the reform will strike a fair balance between the young and the elderly. They also point out that part-time workers on low incomes will be insured under the second pillar for the first time.

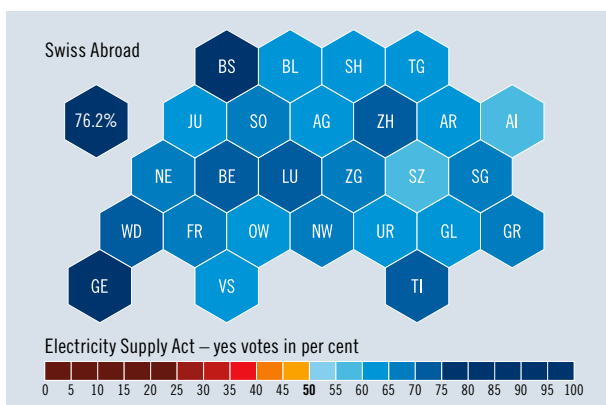
Link to the referendum:

www.rentenabbau.ch

“Yes” movement:

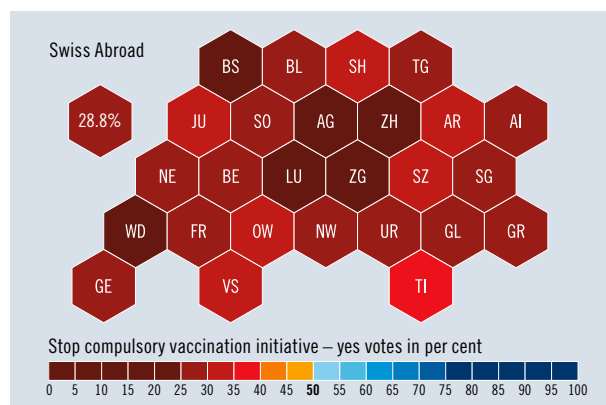
www.ja-bvg.ch

Electricity Supply Act



With a clear majority of 68.7 per cent across the country, Swiss voters expressed their unequivocal support for the rapid development of renewable energies in Switzerland. Support was also unanimous among the cantons. The Swiss Abroad furthermore gave a decisive vote in favour.

Initiative against “mandatory vaccinations”



Almost three-quarters of voters (73.7%) and all cantons rejected the initiative “For freedom and physical integrity”. Critics of the anti-Covid measures wanted to have a ban on “mandatory vaccination” added to the constitution. The Swiss Abroad also voted no.

Tell us what you think

The “Swiss Review” is the highest-circulation media publication dedicated to Swiss Abroad. Does the magazine meet your expectations? Our comprehensive survey aims to get answers – to deliver the magazine that you want.

What content does the “Swiss Review” need to ensure it is as relevant to readers in Switzerland’s neighbouring countries as it is to those Swiss who live 20,000 kilometres away? What topics interest and impact the extremely diverse “Fifth Switzerland”? What should tomorrow’s “Swiss Review” look like?

Questions such as these are all part of a day’s work for the editorial team. But it is our readers who are best placed to provide answers. This is why the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Swiss-Community, now wishes to conduct a comprehensive readership survey in its role as the producer of “Swiss Review”. Another reason for having a survey is that our magazine is about to turn 50, and celebrating this anniversary is not just about looking back but forward.

js_studien+analysen (Zurich), a company specialising in empirical market and social research, will conduct the

survey and evaluate its results. We intend to publish the key findings of the survey in January 2025.

Do the survey online

We recommend completing the survey online to avoid paying return postage. It also saves us time and money, because every returned copy of the printed questionnaire attached to this edition of the magazine has to be manually scanned into our system.

Say what you think of “Swiss Review” in its current form, tell us how you like to read the magazine and what your expectations are, and feel free to submit any general feedback or suggestions that you may have. You can access the survey directly via the following link:

www.revue.link/survey2024



Participating in the survey is certainly worth a few minutes of your time.

Not only will your input help us to improve “Swiss Review”, but you also have the chance to win a fantastic prize: 50 quintessentially Swiss prizes are up for grabs for all those who take part in our survey. The total value of all these prizes is over 6,000 Swiss francs.

Your opinion matters

Every carefully completed readership survey matters. For example, our last survey in 2020 helped to improve the layout of our magazine. Since 2020, we have been complementing our articles with a more diverse range of photos and other visual content. Furthermore, we now address issues that are even more reflective of what our readers want to see.

ARIANE RUSTICHELLI, OSA DIRECTOR
MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Quintessentially Swiss prizes up for grabs

The more readers participate in our survey, the better for us. There are also many prizes from our gift table on offer for our readers – you just need the luck of the draw.

“Swiss Review” is looking to the future with its 2024 readership survey. We would like you to tell us: in what way should the magazine change? How should it look a few years from now? A look to the future is always a good time to remember the past. In late autumn, “Swiss Review” celebrates its 50-year anniversary (see page 22). The editorial team believe this calls for celebration in a way that includes our readers: we are combining participation in the readership survey with a prize draw. The gift table is replete with quintessentially Swiss prizes – exclusive items donated by Swiss companies:

- A knife with sharp points reflecting Swiss alpine panoramas? The idea of combining the sharp points and alpine skylines comes from PanoramaKnife. Their knives on our gift table are among the finest available. www.revue.link/panorama
- An alpine oasis in the form of Hotel Sarain in Lantsch/Lenz (GR): a two-night stay for two people in the Grisons mountains, rising to heights of almost 3,000 metres (Lenzer Horn). www.revue.link/sarain
- History, workmanship and fashion all in one: hand-made silk scarves from leFoulard in Schwanden Glarus, printed in Switzerland’s last silk printing mill. www.revue.link/lefoulard
- Immerse yourself in another world at Trauffer Bretterhotel in Hofstetten near Brienz (BE). The hotel offers a world of experiences and is also the home of the cult wooden cow with the red spots. On the gift table: an overnight stay for two persons. www.revue.link/trauffer
- Renowned knife maker Klötzli from Burgdorf (BE) provides the razor-sharp kitchen utensil that would benefit every Swiss Abroad household. www.revue.link/klotzli
- A mountain of games and books connected to Switzerland – in German, French and English – from Lausanne publishing house Helvetiq. www.revue.link/helvetiq
- Betty Bossi is basically synonymous with Swiss cookery. The company, known for its legendary recipe books, is providing all types of useful kitchen aids for our gift table. www.revue.link/bb and the “Review” article on Betty Bossi: www.revue.link/bbtext
- Appenzell belts have cult status: fine leather wear with traditional metal embellishments. We have two belts fresh off the production line to offer – plus many other surprises. www.revue.link/appenzell
- Swiss Koo is providing a wall clock to a lucky member of the “Fifth Switzerland”. Swiss Koo reinterprets the cuckoo clock in a new, modern and firmly tongue in cheek way. www.revue.link/swisskoo
- Looking for a bit of bedtime reading? Bergli Books has been synonymous with accounts of daily life in Switzerland for many years. Books like “How to be Swiss” became best-sellers. Now our gift table has the latest book, “Swisstory”. www.revue.link/bergli
- Who prints “Swiss Review”? It’s the printing company Vogt-Schild in Derendingen (SO). Vogt-Schild also produces fine books. We even have some in our prize draw. Take “Lost in the Alps”, for example, a richly illustrated book on hiking and the mountains. www.revue.link/vsd
- Tea for two: Sirocco has been producing fine coffee and high-quality tea for over 100 years. They also offer tea sets for special occasions. www.revue.link/sirocco
- Finally, something special for cinema lovers and collectors: historic original advertisements for Swiss film classic “Gilberte de Courgenay” (1941), provided by filmo.ch, the film platform that brings extra exposure to Swiss film classics in the digital space. www.revue.link/filmo

And there’s more, as new prizes keep being added. You will find the full list at www.revue.ch. By the editorial deadline, we had prizes to the value of 6,000 francs. You’ve got to be in it to win it! Complete the survey, ideally online at www.revue.link/survey2024

(MUL)



Hotel Sarain in Lantsch/Lenz (GR)



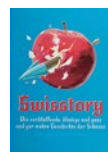
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“Strengthening people’s attachment to Switzerland”

Why did the first “Swiss Review” appear in 1974? And what about its journey since then? We look at the magazine’s evolution over the years – on its 50th birthday.

SUSANNE WENGER

The cover of the first-ever “Swiss Review” in 1974 promised “fresh impetus” – albeit with regard to the revised statutes of the Solidarity Fund for the Swiss Abroad, and not the magazine’s own debut. Only towards the end of this inaugural publication did it become apparent to readers that this was the moment when all expats were now receiving the same information from the mother country. The launch of the “Swiss Review” was a pragmatic undertaking by its publisher, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), and by the federal government, which

news via the existing regional expatriate publications. Firstly, a large print run saw all Swiss living in France receiving an expanded edition of the “Messenger suisse de France” free of charge. Around a dozen other publications gradually followed in other parts of the world, “and this new global information network was up and running within four years”, says Wyder. It was before the internet – at a time when Mother Helvetia became increasingly aware of her children scattered around the globe.

An article of the constitution was created in 1966, stating that the Confederation “shall encourage relations among the Swiss Abroad and their relations with Switzerland”. The aim of the “Swiss Review” would be to “strengthen people’s attachment to Switzerland”, it said in the first-ever publisher notes.

The magazine would contain official communications and Swiss-related articles of general interest. A piece on the successful Valais ski racer Roland Collombin fulfilled this remit in the first edition of the “Swiss Review”. The journalist described Collombin as a “straightforward, happy-go-lucky sort of guy”.



provided the magazine with funding from the outset. “Both parties wanted to keep all Swiss Abroad up to date with news,” says Berne-based historian Rudolf Wyder, who was responsible for the “Swiss Review” in his role as OSA director from 1987 to 2013. Wyder also looks back at those early days of the “Swiss Review” in his 2016 book “Globale Schweiz”. He explains that the magazine was a federalist project.

It started in France

In 1970, the OSA and the federal government began disseminating



Edition 1/1987: ▶
In colour for the first time



Colour and substance

This mixture of information and articles, supplemented by local news from expatriate associations, would continue for the next 50 years. Nevertheless, the magazine has changed a lot in the intervening time between its first edition and this, the 259th edition – as anyone can see who delves into old editions that are now available online (see box). Not only did the magazine eventually switch from black and white to colour, but its contents also gained substance.

Launched as a way to disseminate information to the Swiss Abroad, it initially came across as a very official

◀ The inaugural edition, 1/1974

◀ Edition 1/1979: Federal Councillor Hans Hürlimann lends a distinguished touch to the cover of the “Review”

Edition 2/1992: ▶
Strengthening the political rights of the “Fifth Switzerland” was the main theme



publication. Photos of Federal Councillors often adorned the cover. Over time, the “Swiss Review” became a journalistic product that differentiates between official and editorial material, offers a range of views, provides analysis, moderates debates and covers diverse issues. “The ‘Swiss Review’ began to rely more on attractive content to appeal to readers,” says Wyder, who helped shape this evolution.

Independent journalism

In 1992, the Swiss Abroad were able to vote at federal level by post for the first time instead of having to travel to Switzerland to cast their vote in person. This boosted their political rights and, from the point of view of the Federal Council and parliament,

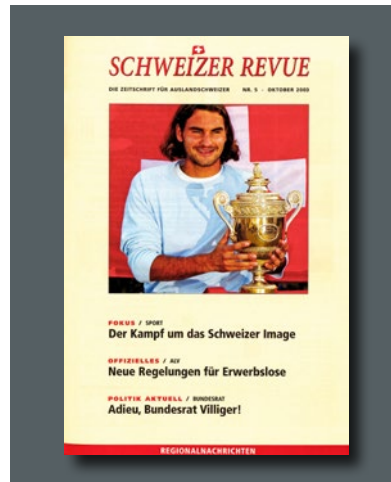


◀ Edition 4/1993: Focus on multicultural Switzerland, with some imagery that today seems a little stereotypical

afforded the “Swiss Review” greater scope in terms of giving expatriate voters the information they needed to form their own opinions. Reporting had to be balanced and unbiased. The OSA and Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) set out this requirement in writing.

According to a recommendation by the Federal Council, the frequency of publication was to be doubled from four to eight issues a year. In the end, there was only enough funding for six issues. The magazine would also enjoy editorial independence. A com-

Edition 5/2003: ▶
Edition 4/2014: ▶▶
Roger Federer – the only star to make it onto the cover more than once



mittee was established as a supervisory body and as a point of contact in the event of complaints. This set-up has continued to the present day. It goes without saying that Swiss politics has always been one of the magazine’s key preoccupations, but the “Swiss Review” has never neglected issues related to culture, business, society or sport either.

Glacier Express or “Needle Park”?

Readers’ letters and the editorial piece have often reflected a significant push and pull with regard to

Take a trip back in time

To mark our 50th anniversary, all the editions of the “Swiss Review” from 1974 to the end of 2023 are now available to view online. At the end of the year, our editions in 2024 will be added to this collection, which has been made possible by the Swiss National Library in cooperation with E-Periodica, the ETH Library’s platform for digitised Swiss journals (e-periodica.ch).

All editions of the “Swiss Review” were converted into digital format in all the relevant publication languages: www.revue.link/review50

(MUL)



how Switzerland is portrayed to the magazine’s expatriate readership. Should the “Swiss Review” focus on the beautiful, traditional and successful aspects of Switzerland – like articles about fondue, the Glacier Express, or tennis legend Roger Federer who has appeared twice on the front page? Expats are our country’s living and breathing ambassadors. We should give them feel-good stories, shouldn’t we?

Or should the magazine also address darker issues – like it did when covering Switzerland’s urban drug crisis in the mid-1980s (e.g. ‘Needle Park’ in Zurich), or the Sandoz chemical disaster at Schweizerhalle in 1986, which killed the fish in the Rhine? Wyder remembers the angry response from readers and the Council of the Swiss Abroad to these spe-



cific articles. He and his editorial team were told to stop publishing such negative stories. But Wyder always wanted to give a truthful, not a sanitised account of reality, because he believed this was the best way to serve the Swiss Abroad.

A pillar of information

It is good that the Swiss Abroad learn about the huge changes that are occurring within Swiss society,



Edition 6/2018: ▶ A printed book on the title page of the printed “Review”. No mere coincidence – this is a statement



▶ Edition 6/2019: House cartoonist Max Spring’s work periodically embellishes the “Review”

Edition 4/2024: ▶ Farmers are protesting, and the “Review” puts their woes in context

says Tim Guldemann, who reads the magazine and has lived abroad for many years. Guldemann, a former diplomat who lives in Berlin, is to date the only Swiss Abroad to have served on the National Council (2015–18). He is the president of the Museum Council of the Swiss Na-



▶ Edition 6/2021: The colourful music of Priya Ragu

tional Museum, an institution also familiar with questions of identity. “More Kurds live in our country with its four official languages than people who speak Romansch,” he says. “Yet we still find it hard to admit how much Switzerland has itself become a nation of immigrants.” This applies to Swiss both in and outside Switzerland, he adds.

According to the erstwhile Swiss ambassador to Iran and Germany, the “Swiss Review” is a pillar of information for expatriate voters and a regular point of reference helping to fos-

ter a sense of community among the Swiss Abroad. This is important in his opinion, given that most Swiss Abroad have no affiliation to any expatriate associations. Guldemann has brought out a number of studies and is currently producing a podcast called “Debatte zu Dritt”.

Asked how the “Swiss Review” could improve, he says that the magazine could focus more on specific issues related to the Swiss Abroad, such as health insurance or Swiss bank accounts.

Magazine in hand

Former OSA Director Rudolf Wyder reports that Swiss living abroad have often held a copy of the “Swiss Review” in their hand when greeting him. “They want to show that the magazine means something to them, even if they don’t always read it from cover to cover.” Wyder has remained a loyal reader since retiring. He is in-

The “Swiss Review” – then and now

■ The magazine was first published in 1974 for all 320,000 Swiss living abroad at the time, initially appearing four times a year in five languages and under 13 different titles. It was printed in 15 places around the world.

■ The “Swiss Review” will account for a print run of 430,000 in 2024, reaching almost all 813,400 Swiss nationals living abroad. This, the standardised magazine produced in Switzerland, appears six times a year as print and online editions in four languages.



involved in the Swiss Foreign Policy Society, which is why articles on foreign policy are of particular interest to him. Getting government funding for the “Swiss Review” was often hard work, he says. “And yet the magazine is still running, and I hope it keeps going for many years to come.”

“Robert de Traz created the myth of the Swiss Abroad”

Not only was the author of the novel “La Puritaine et l’Amour” an avowed patriot, he was also one of the major post-World War I bridge builders.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

In 1911, discontent with the Gotthard Treaty was building in Switzerland. The agreement gave the Axis powers unrestricted use of the railway tunnel. A Franco-German war seemed imminent.

Against this backdrop, linguist Alexis François and writers Gonzague de Reynold and Robert de Traz convened a meeting in Geneva, the outcome of which was the New Helvetic Society (Neue Helvetische Gesellschaft, NHG), which still exists today. Its objective: “to manage the national heritage, strengthen patriotic sentiment, and ensure a worthy future for Switzerland”. The movement quickly gained traction, formed many chapters and experienced initial highlights, as in 1914 for example, when Carl Spitteler gave his “Unser Schweizer Standpunkt” (our Swiss position) speech in Zurich, arguing that the German and French-speaking areas of the country were not so different after all. The NHG also played a big part in Switzerland’s accession to the League of Nations in 1920.

First Swiss Abroad secretary

However, shortly before then, in September 1919, one of the founding members, Robert de Traz, was selected by the NHG central committee as the first secretary of the Swiss Abroad. Within 24 months, de Traz had set up a functional organisation, which was well equipped for the future with its logistical and propagandistic platform. “Robert de Traz created the myth of the Swiss Abroad,” acknowledged Agénor Kraft, one of his successors, after de Traz died in 1951: “He was the architect of the doctrine that Switzerland had responsi-

bilities towards him. It took a poet, a visionary to do that as the idea was completely new at the time and almost laughable to many people.”

Who was Robert de Traz, this man who created a bridge for expatriate Swiss to their homeland, the like of which doesn’t exist anywhere else?

Journalist, military author, novelist

Like Gonzague de Reynold, he was influenced in Paris by Maurice Barrès’ argument that regional roots were an existential dimension. However, whereas de Reynold became a pioneer of right-wing movements with his authoritarian conservatism, the love of de Traz for his homeland of Switzerland, which he initially only knew from having spent holidays there, was always coupled with a distinct international sentiment. As editor of the magazines “Voile latine” and “Feuillets” he argued strongly for a Swiss culture, in stark contrast to leading intellectuals from the French-speaking part of the country, and printed the first chapter of “L’Homme dans le rang” (the man in the ranks) in “Feuillets” in 1913. That was the book he used to make Swiss youth interested in military service and which became a bestseller in 1914 for obvious reasons.

“Offensive insolence”

However, in 1917 when the war was raging, the celebrated officer and son-in-law of the banker Pictet published the novel “La Puritaine et l’Amour” (the puritan and the love affair) about the secret romance between a Geneva banker’s wife and a bank trainee. Not only was this book condemned as immoral from the pulpit of Geneva cathedral, it was also

described in the Swiss press as “offensive insolence”, (“Der Bund”) or “Madame Bovary Geneva-style” (“Revue de Lausanne”). It took the new Paris edition of 1928 and the voice of François Mauriac to give the book its due as one of the great love stories of the time.

Publisher of “Revue de Genève”

De Traz was not only atypically Swiss in his writing; he also established a position through his commitment to the Swiss armed forces and the “Fifth Switzerland”, which made him one of the main intellectual bridge builders and conciliators following the First World War. On 1 July 1920, four months following Switzerland’s accession to the League of Nations, de Traz published the first edition of “Revue de Genève”, which covered the League of Nations and of which there were to be 127 editions, going up to the end of 1930. A European institution in which Cocteau, Gide, Ramuz and Proust as well as Sigmund Freud and Virginia Woolf were able to have their say and in which, even if they were ultimately disappointed, the hope is touchingly documented that the generation that lived through the First World War would strive for a more peaceful world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “La Puritaine et l’Amour” or in German “Genfer Liebe 1913” with a detailed biography of de Traz by Charles Linsmayer as Vol. 5 of “Reprinted by Huber” in Th.Gut, Zurich, publishing house. The French edition is out of print.

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST BASED IN ZURICH



Robert de Traz
(1884 – 1951)

Campo – once a flourishing location, now a ghost village

The village of Campo, in Ticino, was once home to fabulously wealthy merchants who travelled to Italy and Germany from 1670. In the 1960s, the remaining families moved down to the plain. Today, fewer than one-tenth of homes in the village are inhabited all year round. Report by Stéphane Herzog.

STEPHANE HERZOG

On the post bus from Cevio to Campo, a boy is playing with his smartphone. He alights at Niva, a small village in Val Rovana. This Ticino valley is nestled in the heart of Val Maggia, north of Locarno. He is the only child of school age in the village of Campo. “I’d be happy to pay for a school bus if only there were 20 children here,” says mayor Mauro Gobbi. He tots up the number of permanent residents in the four villages that make up the municipality. Today, there are 35 of them, down from 250 in the 1950s and from around a thousand at the beginning of the 20th century. Campo has the highest percentage of second homes in Switzerland - 90.3%. The municipality lists 312 homes, but only



Higher, farther, faster, more beautiful? In search of somewhat unconventional Swiss records

Today: We visit the municipality with the highest proportion of second homes in Switzerland.

around 30 are inhabited all year round. Just like other high-altitude valleys in Ticino, Val Rovana lost three-quarters of its population between 1860 and 1980.

The bus stops in the village of Campo, at an altitude of 1,300 metres. Lofty ‘palazzi’ adorned with frescoes loom from the mist. These structures used to house wealthy families, although the men of the households were often merchants who began to leave for Italy and Germany in the late 17th century to seek their fortune. Gaspare Pedrazzini (1643-1724) was one such merchant. He ran a colonial goods store in Kassel. Alongside its two chapels and its elegant Stations

of the Cross, Campo also had French-style gardens. Gentlemen would parade through the town on horseback. On our way through, we stop to admire some former barns converted into second homes. Not a soul in sight! The ambiance is surreal. Here we are at Fior di Campo, a small luxury hotel whose balconies look out over Val Romana. “The view is unusually open for Ticino,” says the hotel’s owner, Vincenzo Pedrazzini. In the distance, a herd of deer goes ambling by. Pedrazzini bought the property and converted it to a hotel 12 years ago, with the aim of bringing trade back to this spot in Ticino. His family has its roots here. In Campo, as in Ticino in general, the sur-



© Swissstopo

name of Pedrazzini is synonymous with wealth and success. “Some people think I’m a lord of the manor, but I’m first and foremost a kid from Campo,” says the master of the house, who used to run a law firm in Zurich and was vice-president of The Liberals (FDP). Most of the ‘palazzi’ in the village belong to this family, and the family name is to the fore in Campo’s cemetery. What was the secret of their success? “The efforts made by some of Campo’s residents to educate their children,” replies Vincenzo Pedrazzini. Most of the rich Ticino merchants who returned to Switzerland during the Napoleonic Wars chose to leave the country for good. They emigrated to the Americas and to Australia, as did tens of thousands of other Ticino residents. Most of these residents were driven to leave by poverty.

Campo’s summer reawakening

As a child, Vincenzo made hay and milked cows with the other people of Campo. “We were rich, but the others weren’t poor,” he says. The local dignitary began his project of buying up, renovating and reselling almost ten houses and chalets in 2012. “No one will live there all year round, but at least it’ll get people to come to the village,” the former lawyer believes. Every summer, Campo reawakens as dozens of Ticino families arrive to make the most of the cool nights and the precious peace and quiet. “The women and children arrive in mid-June and stay until mid-August, while the men go back and forth between their jobs and Campo,” according to Vincenzo. “We are not talking about empty beds, here,” he insists. In his

view, the law proposed by ecologist Franz Weber to cap the number of second homes in Switzerland at 20 percent does not take account of the country’s diversity. It is true that not many local residents pop round to Fior di Campo for a drink. The fact that the bar is primarily intended for hotel customers has certainly rubbed some people up the wrong way.

No more cows and no more schools

Marco and his wife Olga set up home a stone’s throw from the hotel. They know it like the back of their hand, since she used to be the manager there and he was the chef. Olga was born in this area. Marco has a collection of village mementos. In an adjoining storage area, he shows us a piece of furniture dating from 1770. On the wall are two large boards fea-



Walking home alone in the rain: the only school pupil in Campo (far left).

The historic picturesque countryside of Campo, right beside a carefully renovated building that today serves as a second home.

A ‘Da vendere’ (For Sale) sign, a common sight in Campo (left).

Chapel in Campo: the coat of arms of the Pedrazzini family hangs above the main entrance (centre).

The house where the employees of the local village inn once lived (right).

Photos: Stéphane Herzog

turing dozens of photos, protected by glass, of Campo residents who emigrated to the US in the early 20th century. Olga remembers what the village was like when she was 20 years old, in the early 1960s. At that time, Campo still had a school, and its families still owned cows. The farmers passed on. Their children learned other trades in Locarno and got married. “I watched Campo die: its doors began to close, and they never reopened, except in summer,” she says. Olga cannot see a future for this valley. Its mayor, Mauro Gobbi, is doing what he can. He recalls the efforts to stem the ‘frana’, the potential landslide large enough to engulf the village. Work on a Herculean scale was done in the 1980s and 1990s to shore up the ground.

“Come and live here!”

The municipality decided to reduce its local taxes. It renovated some of

its buildings, such as the Cimalmotto School (above Campo). The school became apartments, three of which are currently rented as second homes. These measures drew in some retirees, but no families. In Niva, where Gobbi lives, the municipal council is pinning its hopes on restoring the former school, which closed in 1967, to solve the problem. The school could become two apartments where people could live “even in the winter”, the mayor hopes.

He too is up in arms against Weber’s law, which according to him has made renovating properties more difficult. Covid ushered in the era of remote working. A lawyer from Lugano, for example, spends part of the year working from Cimalmotto. Gobbi has also just launched a campaign to encourage people to come and live up here in the mountains. There is always the option of converting your second home into a permanent residence.

Mayor Mauro Gobbi (top left) is hoping to see some impetus; Olga speaks of the village she saw die (right); Vincenzo Pedrazzini (bottom), on the other hand, believes in the power of investment.

Photos: Stéphane Herzog



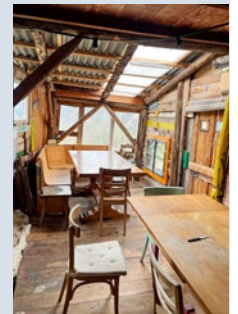
The Senn family get back to nature

Life in the vicinity of wolves, against a backdrop worthy of the “Lord of the Rings”. The Senn family, including their six children, have been enjoying this adventurous lifestyle since the 1980s. These “hippies” from the canton of Zurich settled on a plot of land in a place known as Munt la Reita. This remote pasture, which at the time featured only three small stables, is now home to an organic farm whose products include cheese and



Samuel Senn

meat. It hosts hikers, schoolchildren and voluntary workers. Visitors can choose between sleeping in a yurt on the side of the hill, in their tent or in small wood cabins. In the evening, the river Rovana lulls them to sleep. During the day, they can help gather aromatic herbs or hike up to the Magnello Alpine pasture, at an altitude of 1,800 metres. The lady of the house

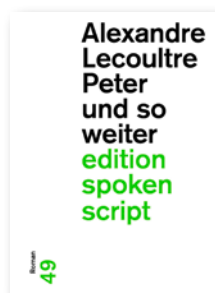


here is Verena. She used to be a librarian, and is now a farmer. Markus, who died in 2022, was a typographer. He built everything here with his own hands, and the help of friends and family. These pioneers made their dream come true: “We wanted to farm the land organically and show our children real life,” explains Verena. Their arrival drew scorn initially. The Senns originally stayed in the Campo church hall. “It was cold in there, but we’re resilient!” laughs Samuel Senn, who is still up in the mountains with his brothers Eli and Luca and his sister Gabriela. (SH)



Verena Senn

A tale of two languages



ALEXANDRE LECOULTRE: "Peter und so weiter". Translated into German by Ruth Gantert. Der gesunde Menschenversand, Lucerne, 2024

"Peter und so weiter" is a somewhat bizarre book with the same title in the German translation as in the French original. Geneva-born Berne resident Alexandre Lecoultré tells a tale of a lovable eccentric who loiters around town, occasionally helping out in a shop and being interrupted by the words "und so weiter" ("and so on") when talking in the pub. Some know him as Peter, to others he is Pietro, the author calls him "Peterli, du Fröschli" ("Peter the little frog").

Everyone knows him and Peter knows about everything going on in the village without really being a part of it himself. "For some time people have been wanting him to be somebody but Peter doesn't know who." He's always wandering "through all the streets" in all directions so as not to miss anything. He likes going to the wasteland most. It's a meaningless wilderness that Peter likes because the wasteland, like Peter, does not readily fit into the orderly world. Something "needs to be done with it", say the others.

Alexandre Lecoultré's novel, which won a Swiss literary prize in 2021, accompanies this drifter with empathy and wordplay on his way through the village, which is also an agglomeration and city and, in fact, Zurich. This fuzziness is a recurring feature in the restrained book. The author also creates a spatial buffer through the language. "Peter und so weiter" oscillates between the different ways of speaking. Use of Swiss German dialect, such as in words like "öppis" or "momoll", creates a surprise effect in the French original, as do the vestiges of French and dialectal phrases in the German version. On occasion, Peter's tongue is so tied up that an unintelligible hotch-potch comes out "glauche, roichts, lechts, rinks, drechts".

There is a familiarity about the language among all the agitation. And it sharpens Peter's awareness of the finer details on the periphery, while the big questions are no more than a distant echo in his world. The quality of this consistent, gentle book lies in its lack of intent. Peter does not conform to the smooth progression of a day at work. The significance of the wasteland is that the excavators and cranes will shortly move in. The "village" has no place for disorder, wasteland or tranquility. Lecoultré's jovial man about town drives that point home.

BEAT MAZENAUER

Songs of sorrow, longing and warmth



SOFT LOFT: "The Party And The Mess" (Soft Loft, 2024)

It's one of those rare records that jump out at you immediately, albeit in a subtle and gentle way. Imagine being in the record shop with music playing in the background. Normally you would take no notice and carry on browsing, but not this time. This fragile female voice emanating vulnerability and sorrow. This wonderful music rich in range and warmth. Who is it? The employee in the shop in Baden's old town says, "Soft Loft, a band from Aargau".

Hard to believe. The band sounds as if it were from Tucson, Arizona, or New York, maybe even somewhere in Ireland – but not Brugg. Nonetheless, that's where singer Jorina Stamm founded the band seven years ago with her school friend Sarina Schmid. The formation was initially called Ellas. Three musicians then came on board: Lukas Kuprecht on drums, Simon Boss on the guitar and Marius Meier on bass. Their debut album is called "The Party And The Mess".

There is something magical about the unvarnished beauty of their first album. The intimate songs sound melancholy with an infectious levity at the same time. They move between indie pop, folk and singer/songwriter. And the general mournfulness fails to mask the consistent optimistic undercurrent. One song, "Joni" is about Jorina Stamm's role model Joni Mitchell, which pretty much says it all.

The lyrics recount a longing for understanding and benevolence. They are touching and unrelentingly honest. They deal with depressive episodes, pain and separation. The album gives room to feelings, for example in the songs "Open House" and "Safe Space", and thus overcomes any negativity.

Crystal-clear guitar and warm synthesizers carry the sound produced by Gianluca Buccellati from the US. He had worked with Lana Del Rey previously and was nominated for a Grammy. Together, the band and their producer wrote song sketches, and in February 2022 Buccellati flew to Switzerland for a recording session. Soft Loft spent two weeks with their mentor in a house in Engelberg working on their music and distilling 30 ideas into the 12 songs on the album.

After Switzerland, the next step is to gain a following outside the country. And they may well achieve that. Soft Loft have a lot of potential and the new album is a bona fide gem. Watch this space: soon, "The Party And The Mess" will have spread from Baden old town to the record shops in the big cities.

MARKO LEHTINEN

The author sounding the alarm on the poor deal for farmers

Author and winemaker Blaise Hofmann paints a portrait of the hard life of agricultural workers in his work “Faire paysan”. He pleads in favour of keeping Swiss agriculture at a human scale.



STÉPHANE HERZOG

At the entrance to the village where the Hofmann family farm is located, the Villars-sous-Yens (VD) village nameplate is still upside down, a reminder of the demonstrations in February that stirred up Swiss farmers – who stand in solidarity with French farmers – to fight for greater recognition. “The world has gone topsy-turvy,” says writer and winemaker Blaise Hofmann, the author of “Faire paysan”, an essay published in 2023 about the living conditions of Swiss agricultural workers. Some 1,500 farms have disappeared every year in Switzerland for the past ten

years. That works out at four a day. “An entire facet of the world is vanishing – actions, smells, sounds, tastes, expertise, behavioural skills – and we’re acting as if nothing has changed,” says this farmer’s son and grandson, whose great-grandfather committed suicide. Other farmers have done the same in recent years.

We stop in at the family farm, located in the heights of Morges, to say hello to Hofmann’s parents. Walti and Anne-Lise greet us with a big smile. In their kitchen, a famous colour print hangs on the wall: “Le labour dans le Jorat”, by Eugène Burand. “A member of my family is in

Blaise Hofmann, writer, traveller and winemaker. This man of letters also worked as a journalist, shepherd, nurse and teacher at various points in his life.

Photos: Stéphane Herzog

this print,” remarks Hofmann. This man of letters and seasoned globe-trotter was born in 1978 and has worked as a journalist, shepherd, nursing assistant and teacher. The farm itself is still in operation. Patrick, one of Blaise’s cousins, cultivates its roughly 40 hectares. There is one thing missing from the picture: cows, and the manure that goes with them. “In the country, dowries used to be calculated based on the size of the manure heap outside the parents’ farm,” the Vaud native writes. He stresses that Switzerland has always had more cows per inhabitant than anywhere else. His cousin Patrick

didn't make more than four to six Swiss francs per hour from his milk. That was the end of his grandfather's inheritance.

A family profession

Most of the time, being a farmer is a family tradition. That's how it was for Blaise's grandfather, who arrived in Villars-sous-Yens in 1937 with his cows from Belpberg (BE), where "there were no free farms available". The Vaud village had only two tractors, including his one. "He helped with the farm work at a time when many of the farmers had been conscripted. This helped him to integrate among the locals," says Walti over a glass of wine made from the Chasselas grapes of his son's vineyard. "Faire paysan" gives urban readers an insight into the life of Swiss farmers. It makes you want to get to know the men and women who put food on our table. The essay describes the toughness of the job, the feeling of abandonment encountered by some in the farming sector, and the suicides. It speaks of some farmers' anger at the endless "organic" initiatives launched without consultation with anyone working in the industry. It describes a world in which many farmers feel stripped of their freedom and governed by forces beyond their control. These forces include the cooperatives, which favour large farms, the stakeholders in the food sector, who abuse their dominant position, and the Swiss Confederation, which insists that farmers let part of their land lie fallow. "The Swiss Farmers' Union is defending a broken system," Blaise Hofmann feels. The writer thinks that now is the time for Switzerland to stand up and preserve "agriculture on a human scale". The toxic trend arguing



The Hofmann family farm in Villars-sous-Yens (VD), above Morges. Blaise Hofmann's grandfather settled here in 1937.

for the "vertical integration" of farmers must be stopped. He cites the example of the National Federation of Consumer Cooperatives, which controls "half the national Swiss market for cereals..., UFA seeds [the most widely used seeds on the Swiss market], Landor fertilisers, Landi stores, Volg supermarkets, Ramseier beverages, Agrola petrol stations and dozens of other companies". These behemoths dictate not only prices but also the rules for farming, a fact explored by the Vaud author, who in this essay has strayed from his favourite subject: travel. That was the topic of "Billet aller simple", published in 2004, which tells the story of his 16-month expedition across Europe, Asia and Africa.

"Cows aren't switched off at the weekend"

Blaise also has two daughters, and waxes lyrical on the enjoyable side of farming and his encyclopaedic knowledge of the land and its life cycles. "Cows aren't switched off at the weekend. They continue to exist, just like plants, insects, birds and farmers," the Vaud native says. "Faire paysan" makes city-dwellers regret the fact that they've been cut off from nature. "Even from behind the windcreens of their tractors, farmers are among the last modern people to be able to read the land," Blaise writes. Farmers' associations (to the left and right of the political centre) and

green organisations constantly request his services. In June, he was invited to act as a mediator at a round table with the boss of Migros Vaud. He describes the Migros-Coop duopoly as "one of the gravediggers of Swiss agriculture", but at the same time does not deny that the impact of agriculture over the past 60 years has been a catastrophe for the environment.

What should be done? The first change should be one of policy. Higher duties could be imposed on agricultural imports, particularly from Morocco and Spain, where the human and environmental cost is disastrous. The author calls for a system that would allow caps to be imposed on major retailers' profit margins, which can reach 57 percent on dairy products. Hofmann also reminds us that the solutions to the current agricultural crisis cannot lie solely in the establishment of micro-farms. At the end of the day, consumers can also affect the direction taken by agriculture. "If I insist on buying perfect apples..., that indirectly rules out three-quarters of the farmer's harvest," Hofmann concludes. In spite of it all, he still dreams of a world where children will say "Mum, Dad, I want to be a farmer!"

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"Die Kuh im Dorf lassen", Blaise Hofmann, Atlantis-Verlag, Zürich.

See also our article on agriculture, starting on page 4.

The Swiss Guard, a centuries-old community of Swiss Abroad in the Vatican

Did you know the pope has been guarded by young Swiss citizens for more than 500 years? Almost all the 160 Swiss Abroad in the Vatican are connected to the Swiss Guard.

Resplendently clad in a blue, red and yellow uniform, the colours of the Medici family, with head held high, the young men stand for several hours a day before the Domus Sanctae Marthae, to guard the head of the Roman Catholic church. The entire population of Vatican City is about 800 people, 135 of whom serve with the Swiss Guard. But why is it only Swiss citizens guarding the Holy See? What is it that sets the Swiss Guard apart as a community of Swiss Abroad?

The historical background

The Swiss Guard dates back to the 16th century, when Switzerland's brave soldiers were known throughout Europe. In a time when war and unrest was commonplace in Europe, Swiss mercenaries were very highly thought of and a valuable "export product". Although Switzerland didn't have a centralised military at the time, the foot soldiers knew exactly how to defend their areas from the unwelcome attention of neighbouring ruling houses. Swiss mercenaries were, for example, provided to foreign armies by the powerful Zurlauben family (Zug) from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

That is what made Pope Julius II seek the services of Swiss soldiers in 1505. He made a request to the Swiss Diet for a contingent of Swiss soldiers to protect the Vatican. On 22 January 1506, the first 150 guards entered Rome and received the pope's blessing. That was the day when the Pontifical Swiss Guard was founded, and it has been in charge of guarding the pope and the Papal Palace ever since.

The Pontificia Cohors Helvetica is the only military unit from those days to still be operational. It achieved great fame on 6 May 1527 when Rome was attacked and plundered by 24,000 German, Spanish and Italian mercenaries – known as the Sack of Rome. The Swiss Guard resisted the attackers and gave Pope Clemens VII the space and time to get away. Only 42 of the 189 guards survived. The Swiss Guard saved



Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis at the opening of the Swiss embassy at the Holy See in 2023. Cardinal Pietro Parolin is to his left, between them is Denis Knobel who was Swiss ambassador to the Holy See at the time.

Photo: Keystone

the pope's life. New recruits are still sworn in on 6 May, the anniversary of the Sack of Rome.

The current duties of the papal guard

Their role has not changed much over the years. Today's guards must be vigilant and protect the pope from new threats, terrorist attack for example. If the Holy See is vacant (sede vacante) the Swiss Guard also assumes responsibility for protecting the College of Cardinals. In addition, they secure the official entrances to Vatican City and perform formal and ceremonial duties. Their representative duties include forming a guard of honour for state visits.

The Swiss Guard's values are one reason why the pope has retained their services over the centuries despite diplomatic challenges in bilateral relations between Switzerland and the Holy See. The soldiers stand out through their respect, discipline, professionalism and high quality. Members of the Swiss Guard are trained in Switzerland

and in Vatican City. Their training includes regular shooting practice, combat sport and learning how to use the halberd.

A special community of Swiss Abroad

Not everyone can join the Swiss Guard. To be eligible, you must be a practising Catholic, a Swiss citizen, male, single, between 19 and 30 years old, at least 174 cm tall, in good health, the holder of a professional apprenticeship or Matura, have completed basic military training with the Swiss Armed Forces and have a category B driving licence, as well as being prepared to commit to 26 months of service. That makes the Swiss Guard the world's most homogeneous community of Swiss Abroad. There are also 25 other Swiss citizens living in the Vatican besides the 135 guards, mainly comprising the soldiers' family members plus a few members of the clergy. Another distinguishing feature of the Swiss Abroad in Vatican City



An officer in the Swiss Guard on a copper engraving by Francisco Villamena (1613): the guards have hardly changed since then. Photo: Keystone



The Swiss Guards' uniform is a splendid and colourful blue, red and yellow. It is based on Renaissance clothing and especially the frescoes of the painter Raphael. Photo: Keystone

is that anyone who works in or for the Vatican receives Vatican City citizenship for as long as their work lasts. That means the guards quickly gain citizenship in their country of emigration, albeit only for a limited period. Vatican City also has an unusual form of government as the only elective absolute monarchy. The Holy See has observer status in the UN. The Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with over 180 states, over 90 of which have a representation on site. With more than 1.3 billion believers plus a large, global network, the Holy See has political power as large as the territory itself is small.

Papal Guard as a symbol of Switzerland in the Vatican

Despite this political significance and the existence of the Swiss Guard, it was not until 2021 that the Swiss government decided to open an embassy at the Holy See in Rome. The Holy See, on the other hand, has been represented in Berne by a Nunciature ('papal envoy') since 1920. Due to complicated bilateral relations, not least domestic polit-

ical tension between the Protestant and Catholic camps, it took some time until Switzerland was ready to have its interests represented on Vatican City territory. In 2023, the new Swiss embassy at the Holy See was inaugurated by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis and Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin in Rome.

The Swiss Guard has existed for five centuries – 518 years to be precise. That makes it the oldest standing army in the world.

Up to the 1990s, bilateral relationships were covered unilaterally via the Nunciature in Berne. In 1991, the Federal Council nominated an ambassador to serve as special envoy and from 2004 designated a plenipoten-

tiary who resided in another state and dealt with the Holy See in multiple accreditation; the most recent residence was in Slovenia. The opening of the Swiss representation at the Holy See in Rome marked a new chapter in Switzerland's bilateral relations, as shown by the regular diplomatic visits. The president of the Swiss Confederation regularly attends the swearing-in ceremony for members of the Swiss Guard on 6 May in the Vatican. The high-ranking Vatican visit also provides an opportunity for official discussions at the highest level. Various popes have also visited Switzerland in the past: John Paul II, for example, went there three times. Pope Francis also visited Geneva in 2018. He attended the World Council of Churches and met with members of the Swiss government during his visit.

The Swiss Guard has been a cornerstone of our bilateral relations for over 500 years. They still open doors for Switzerland in the Vatican and thus contribute to consolidating ties. (FDFA)

www.schweizergarde.ch

The Swiss are in every continent, especially Europe

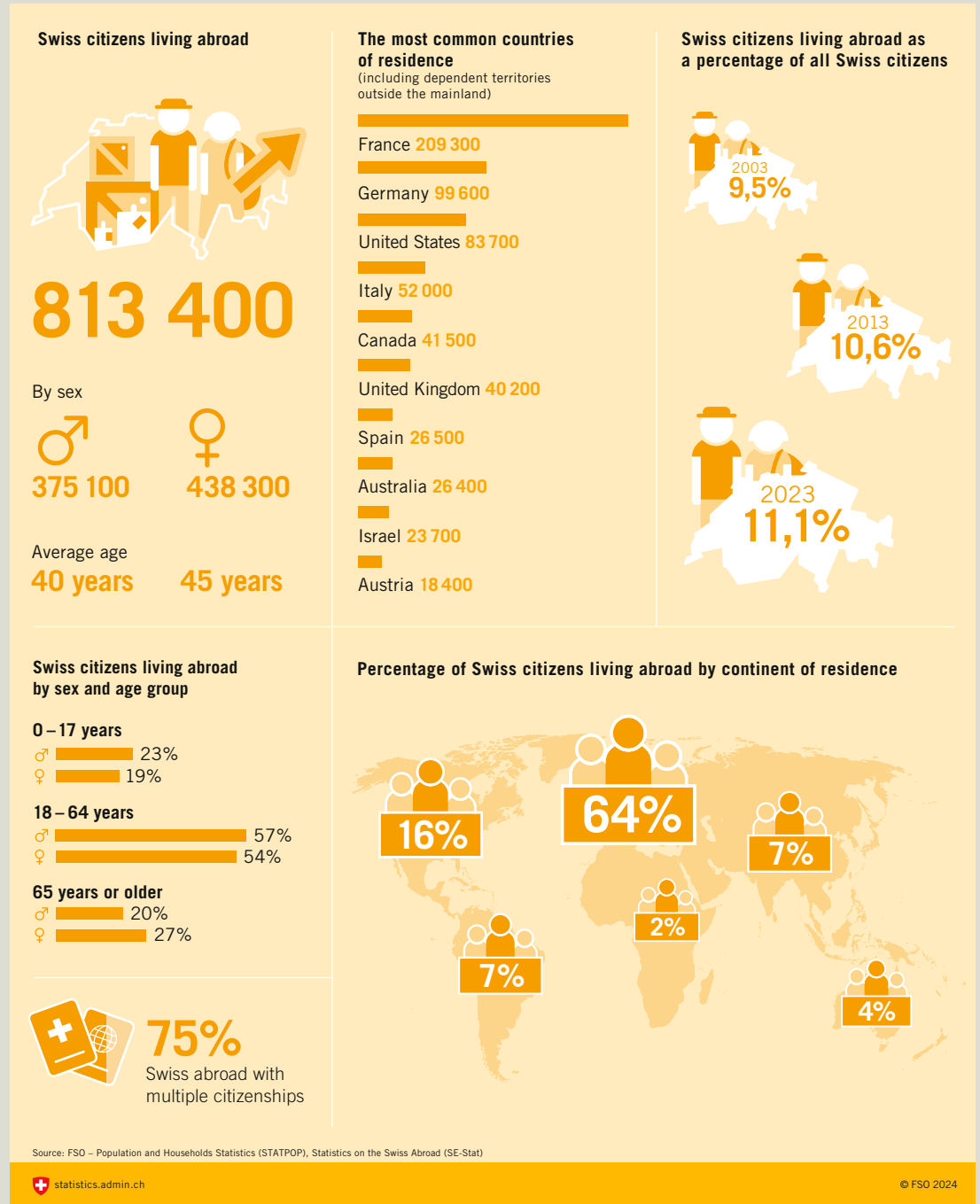
At the end of 2023, there were 813,400 Swiss nationals living abroad. Almost two-thirds of them were living in Europe and over a quarter were in France, but there are also plenty of Swiss on the other continents. The following statistics on the Swiss Abroad were published by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).

On 31 December 2023, 813,400 Swiss nationals were registered with a competent Swiss representation abroad: 1.7% more than in 2022. Numbers are on the rise in most continents: in Asia (up by 3.1%), in Europe (up by 1.9%), in Oceania (up by 1.2%), in North America (up by 1.0%) and in Latin America and the Caribbean (up by 0.4%). In Africa, the number was lower (down 0.2%).

Swiss expatriates' favourite countries on each continent

Of the 813,400 Swiss Abroad, 520,700 live in Europe (64%). The largest community of Swiss Abroad is in France (209,300). This community alone represents over one quarter of Swiss Abroad. Around 292,700 Swiss nationals are spread out over the other continents: 16% in North America, 7% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 7% in Asia, 4% in Oceania and 2% in Africa.

The largest community of the Swiss Abroad outside Europe is in North America, in the US to be precise, where 83,700 Swiss people or one in ten Swiss Abroad live. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, Argentina is the country with the most Swiss people (15,100, or 2% of all Swiss Abroad). Of Swiss people in Argentina 95% hold multiple nationalities (as against 75% of all Swiss Abroad). In Asia, Israel has the largest Swiss commu-



nity (23,700), representing 3% of Swiss Abroad. A breakdown of the community in Israel by age shows a very large proportion of young people: 46% of Swiss there are aged under 18 (as against 21% for all Swiss Abroad). In Oceania,

the Swiss community is mainly located in Australia (26,400, or 3% of Swiss Abroad), whereas in Africa they are mostly in South Africa (7,700, or 1% of the total number of Swiss Abroad). (FSO)

Further information:
www.revue.link/statistic



Switzerland and Mexico are like Yin and Yang

The Swiss Abroad Fabio Reyes grew up in Mexico and attended the Swiss school in Cuernavaca. At the age of 20, he decided to ‘emigrate’ to Switzerland. Here he talks about his experiences during his education, in the military and in his current job.

“In addition to the public schools, there are numerous private schools in Mexico, most of which offer a better and broader educational programme. I had the great privilege of attending the Swiss school, which also became my second family.

Various reasons led me to move to Switzerland in 2015: security, military service, personal and financial freedom, good educational opportunities... and my first love. At the beginning, I worked in customer service for a credit card company and then completed ten months of military service under the ‘Durchdiener’ model (service in one stretch). They were intensive months during which I learnt a lot – including about myself.

Afterwards, I opted for the two-year post-baccalaureate business training programme (Postmaturitäre Wirtschaftsausbildung PWA), which is aimed at high school graduates or students who are interested in business and are looking for a quicker entry into practice. The programme, during which you also receive a salary, consists of school and a long internship in a company. For me, this training was very instructive, but I wanted to improve my language skills.

So, I enrolled on the three-year Bachelor’s degree programme in Applied Languages at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). I believed that the wide range of modules such as project and event management, marketing, research, social media communication, intercultural competence, editing and regional and cultural studies would provide me with a very useful and efficient foundation and thus open many doors for my future career. In order to be able to devote myself fully to my studies, I had saved a little and calculated well. And thanks to the scholarship from my home canton of St. Gallen, whose application process educationsuisse supported me with, my plan worked out pretty well. As I couldn’t find a suitable Master’s programme, the idea of a ‘study break’ and a change of perspective in general was attractive to me. So, I applied for a six-month internship in project management and communication at the can-



He first attended the Swiss school in Mexico, then as a young adult, he moved to Switzerland to continue his education. Photo provided

ton of Zurich’s Department of Justice. I was then able to continue working there as a project employee on a major cantonal project. I find this project work very exciting and challenging, and you learn a lot in a short space of time. However, I have to admit that I miss the multilingualism and multicultural aspect of my degree programme in everyday life. Nevertheless, I can use some of the things I

learnt during my studies in my day-to-day work, such as my knowledge of project and event management, my understanding of communication in a company and the application of my editorial skills.

People often ask me if I don’t miss Mexico. I’ve been living in Switzerland for almost nine years now and I like it here. I keep realising what a privilege it is to be able to study, work and build a life in Switzerland. Nevertheless, I miss other things that make life a

“My strategy is to get the best out of both worlds and make the most of it.”

Fabio Reyes

little more colourful. I miss the sunny weather, the culinary delights, the warm openness, serenity and spontaneity of the people, the traditions, the desire to celebrate, not only life but also death, and sometimes the loud music and the passionate telenovelas.

I think Switzerland and Mexico are like Yin and Yang; they are opposite poles and complement each other wonderfully. To be happy and not be overwhelmed by nostalgia, my strategy is to get the best out of both worlds and make the most of it.”

Educationsuisse offers counselling to all young Swiss Abroad on all matters related to education in Switzerland.

educationsuisse

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info@educationsuisse.ch;
www.educationsuisse.ch



Complex politics made simple

To explain complex proposals submitted to the vote of the people in a straightforward way: that is the aim of the new webinar series set up by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) and its partner easyvote. The first webinar was on 14 May. There were two sessions – one in French and one in German – to present the voting papers for 9 June in a neutral way. The new programme is designed to help increase participation by Swiss Abroad in federal popular votes. The first webinar was recorded and can be viewed on our website. The next webinars in cooperation with easyvote on federal proposals submitted to the vote of the people are on 27 August and 29 October 2024. Furthermore, the 4th Congress for young Swiss Abroad is scheduled for Tuesday, 17 September.

YANNICK ACTIS, YOUTH SERVICE

www.revue.link/easyd, www.easyvote.ch

Whitsun holiday camp for children aged eight to 14

The Jublasurium national camping event run by Jungwacht Blauring – a children's and youth organisation similar to the Swiss Guide and Scout Movement – takes place next year from 7 to 9 June 2025 over the long Whitsun holiday weekend. A delegation from the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (SJAS) visited the Swiss National Jamboree (mova) two years ago. As was the case at mova, 25 young Swiss Abroad aged eight to 14 will also represent the SJAS at the three-day Jublasurium. Participants will be able to meet many children from Switzerland and take unforgettable memories home with them. Visit www.sjas.ch to sign up for the camp. It is recommended that participants have at least a basic knowledge of German, because Jungwacht Blauring is only active in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

Further details about the Jublasurium: www.jublasurium.ch
More information on Jungwacht Blauring: www.jubla.ch

Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
The foundation for young swiss abroad
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)
Email: info@sjas.ch / www.sjas.ch



Excitement and anticipation

You have signed up for one of this summer's youth camps run by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. What are your thoughts? And what do you want to get out of your trip to Switzerland? Here are some of the answers you gave us.

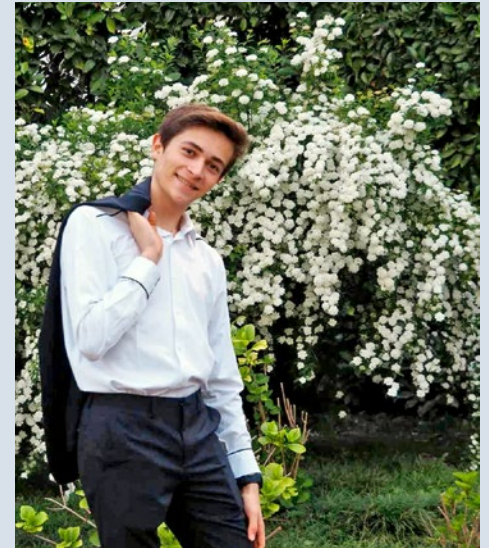
Why did you choose to go on one of this summer's camps in the first place? This year's participants gave us a variety of answers. One of our respondents, Luna, has good memories of her last camp. "My first camp was the Swiss Trip 2022. I enjoyed it so much that I just had to go on a youth camp as well," she says. Charles-Antoine, meanwhile, has his own future plans in mind: "The camp I chose gives me the chance take part in the 100th Congress of the Swiss Abroad, which is a key event for me ahead of my degree course in politics." For Aurelio and Sanja, on the other hand, the camp dates, the travel route and the number of participants were the main considerations.

How did participants feel when they heard they had been accepted? Aurelio, for one, was delighted. "I couldn't sleep for a few nights," he says. "We only have 24 participants in our Swiss Challenge 1 camp, which is perfect. I am looking forward to getting to know the culture and languages of my native country. It's really exciting." Luna was just as euphoric: "I'm so grateful for the opportunity. And so happy and relieved that my friends will also be at the camp with me!"

"It's all about diving into our Swiss culture and the languages of Switzerland."

The response from a participant as to what she was expecting from the 2024 summer camp.

And finally, what expectations, experiences or thoughts do they want to share with future camp participants? Here are a few examples from our mixed bag of answers. "It's about immersing yourself in Switzerland's culture and language. I now want to continue learning French and also start learning Italian." – "I would like to learn how to cook a traditional Swiss dish so that I can make it for my friends in Thailand." – "I'm grateful



For Charles-Antoine, the Youth Service's summer camp is synonymous with intercultural encounters and experiencing the diversity of Switzerland. Photo provided

for this amazing opportunity and can hardly wait to go! À bientôt!" We'll leave the last word to Charles-Antoine: "I cannot stress enough how important it is to meet people from other cultures and explore your own country. Taking part in a camp like this offers us a valuable opportunity to celebrate our Swiss identity while widening our horizons and developing a deeper appreciation of our country's rich heritage and cultural diversity. The experience promises to be both enriching and unforgettable."

YANNICK ACTIS, YOUTH SERVICE

www.revue.link/youthoffers

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Back in Switzerland and no job. How do I find work?

Question: I plan to return to Switzerland shortly. I don't have a job at the moment and I haven't started looking yet. What do I need to know regarding my job search in Switzerland?

Answer: As a Swiss Abroad, you don't need a work permit to seek employment in Switzerland. You can start the job search directly, even before you return to the country.

The first thing is to apply. So you need to access the right job adverts. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) is the Swiss labour market authority and it hosts a good platform for job seekers, www.arbeit.swiss, including a jobs portal and practical tips for applying.

When looking for a job, it's important to use as many channels as possible. Use your personal network or ask other contacts in Switzerland, and look at online job portals and newspaper adverts. You can also send speculative applications to companies and organisations that interest you. A further option would be to enlist the services of a professional HR consultant.

From outside Switzerland, the easiest way to see what jobs are available is via online job portals by creating a job search subscription, or via an employment or temping agency (subject to a fee). We have compiled a useful overview on our website.

Remember when applying that Swiss employers expect a full dossier. That includes your CV with a photo, a covering letter explaining your motivation for applying, plus copies of your employment references and qualifications, in-

Webinar on finding work

Tip for job applicants: take part in our webinar on "Work and the labour market in Switzerland" on 10 December 2024 held in cooperation with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Soliswiss cooperative. You can find further information on this and other webinars at www.revue.link/webinare. The next webinar is on 15 October 2024. It is on the topic of "The challenge of returning to Switzerland at retirement age". (SL)

www.revue.link/webinars



The employment situation in Switzerland is good. This is shown by the commuter flows, as in Berne main station for example. Photo: Keystone

If you are returning to Switzerland and looking for a job, it is important to use as many channels as possible.

cluding any additional education and training. You may need to clarify whether your professional qualifications gained outside Switzerland are recognised in the country (e.g. school-leaving certificates as well as additional education and training). Our partner organisation [educationsuisse](http://www.educationsuisse.ch) can help you with that.

In any case, you should contact the regional employment centre (RAV) in your area on your return. The agency responsible for you depends on your new place of residence. The RAV will also provide you with professional and personal advice relating to your job search.

STEPHANIE LEBER, OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT

www.revue.link/jobsearch
www.revue.link/rec
www.work.swiss
www.educationsuisse.ch

A secure e-voting system for the 2025 CSA election

Many countries are using the UniVote e-voting system for the 2025 election to the Council of the Swiss Abroad. How secure and verifiable is its voting process? Professor Eric Dubuis, an e-voting expert, shares some insights on the complex subject.

ERIC DUBUIS

UniVote is a modern e-voting system that is secure, transparent and verifiable. It was developed in 2017 to ensure a secure and transparent procedure for electronic votes and elections – such as the election of the Council of the Swiss Abroad members. To that end, UniVote uses advanced cryptographic techniques and a dispersed infrastructure.

The votes posted by the voters are encrypted directly in their browser. That way no unencrypted data is transferred to UniVote. When the election is over, the encrypted votes are mixed up by UniVote via a cryptographic process, without their having to be encrypted in advance. This mixing ensures the votes cannot be connected with the identities of the voters. It is also possible to check that the process was performed correctly in accordance with voting secrecy requirements.

At the start of the voting process, Univote generates a pair of keys, consisting of a private and an anonymous public key. This is

About the author

Eric Dubuis is an established e-voting expert. In his more than 30 years at Bern University of Applied Sciences, his main interest was in cybersecurity and verifiable e-voting systems. Eric Dubuis is also a founding member of the Swiss E-Voting Competence Center.

done via a personal identification number (PIN) entered in the browser by the eligible voter. The private key stays with the voter while the public key is used anonymously in the system to validate the vote and ensure the integrity of the process.

UniVote uses a decentralised infrastructure whereby different independent components distribute the tasks among themselves according to the rules of an e-voting protocol. At the end of this process, no component



Eric Dubuis says that e-voting systems must always be “transparent, secure and verifiable”. Photo: Marc Lettau

can determine which vote comes from which person. After the mixing, the components jointly decrypt the votes and publish the result on the UniVote public bulletin board. The bulletin board is a transparent platform where all the important information on verifying the voting process is displayed. Voters and independent auditors can review the

entire voting process there. That includes both reviewing all the votes cast and allowing every eligible voter to confirm that their vote was correctly registered and counted.

UniVote ensures via these confidence-building measures that the entire voting process is transparent, secure and verifiable. The system enables voters to place their vote in an electronically secure manner, in the knowledge that the process conforms to exacting data protection and security standards.



Eric Dubuis at the March 2024 exchange with CSA delegates at the Federal Palace. Photo: Marc Lettau

Discussion



Cartoon: Max Spring

Discussion: “Rich Switzerland and its cost-of-living crisis” (edition 3/2024)

RUDOLF MEGERT, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

From an international perspective, it is not only the Swiss who are increasingly struggling to make ends meet. The same applies to people in places like Canada, Germany and Brazil. No great surprise, but it shows one important thing: that broad sections of the population are now reaping the grim consequences of what the powers that be

have sown over the last couple of decades. And the latest people in the corridors of power are still doing nothing to correct those serious mistakes of the 2000s and 2010s.

VERENA SCHNEEMANN, LANGEAC, FRANCE

Cost-of-living crisis in Switzerland? Talk about first-world problems.

ARYE OPHIR, ISRAEL

Does that mean the Swiss are struggling to make ends meet because Switzerland is a wealthy country? Or have I missed something?

JOACHIM HEIDRICH, PHILIPPINES

You omitted to talk about the pensioners with considerably lower pensions than you mention in your article. Who, in the end, have to choose to emigrate to a lower-cost country to live a decent life.

Circus tent to host Nat Cartier’s final performance

Multi-instrumentalist Nathaniel “Nat” Cartier from Edinburgh is currently in Switzerland, or Brunnen (canton of Schwyz) to be precise, courtesy of the Area for the Swiss Abroad Foundation, which appointed Cartier as its Artist in Residence for 2024. His five-week residency ends in August. Following a number of appearances in July, the musician, who has Swiss roots, is also due to perform live in August. Cartier will appear on the main stage in Brunnen at an event celebrating Swiss National Day on 1 August. He makes his final bow on 18 August from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Circus Monti tent, also in Brunnen, as part of the annual “Spettacolo” street performance

festival (www.revue.link/spettacolo), where he will present the results of his creative sojourn in Switzerland. As Artist in Residence, Cartier has been commissioned by the Area for the Swiss Abroad Foundation to produce three songs. He has also been asked to do four paintings – with help from people attending his act. The pictures will be auctioned as part of Cartier’s final curtain call. The proceeds will help to fund the next Artist in Residence project.

(PD/MUL)

www.auslandschweizerplatz.ch

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MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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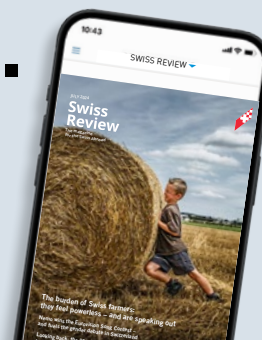
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