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Swiss Review

The magazine
for the Swiss Abroad




**Cooling towers, heated debate:
nuclear is back on the agenda**

**The civil engineering project restoring the Reuss Delta
into a haven for plants, animals – and people**

**One giant leap – how the Gotthard massif is
being used as a lunar training ground**

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Photo: seeschuetting.ch

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Cover photo: Cooling tower at the Leibstadt nuclear power plant (canton of Aargau). Photo: Keystone

Direct democracy



I suspect plenty of people living in Switzerland like to have a good grumble about their home country now and again, whereas they will often defend everything about Switzerland whenever they are on holiday abroad. Swiss expatriates probably also recognise this phenomenon. Yet, anyone who by definition has two homes – one in which they live, and another one to which they feel permanently attached – will tend to appreciate the benefits of both.

These thoughts have come to mind because I have been editing this edition of the magazine elsewhere for a change: not in Berne but far away in the stormy southern hemisphere springtime. As a temporary Swiss Abroad, you could say. One of the features of my time away has been the conversations I have had about what it means to be Swiss.

For starters, what is direct democracy? Let me give a careful answer: it is when voters, i.e. the people, not only elect parliament but also give their verdict on specific issues every few months. Every popular vote is a reality check for parliament and government, revealing the thoughts, hopes, fears and wishes of the electorate. What a wonderful concept.

But then the conversation turns to the topic of nuclear energy. Seven years ago, voters decided that Switzerland would not be building any new nuclear power stations, but despite that Energy Minister Albert Rösti now wants to construct new plants. This is a thorny issue. From the point of view of Swiss energy security, such an about-turn makes sense to some extent, if you discount the unresolved question of nuclear waste. From the point of view of democracy, however, circumventing the will of the people seems an audacious move. At least that is how it appears to those visiting far away places who are trying to explain the magic of 'direct democracy'.

But we can breathe a sigh of relief. Regardless of how far parliament and government want to plough ahead with new reactors, it is still the people who will ultimately decide. And maybe more cantons will have introduced e-voting by then, thereby allowing as many Swiss Abroad as possible to have their say on this crucial matter. Without further ado, our lead article in this new edition of "Swiss Review" delves into the nuclear debate that has divided opinion in Switzerland for over half a century.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Albert Rösti reignites the atomic debate

Seven years ago, Swiss voters decided to phase out nuclear power. The Federal Council is now looking to reverse that: it wants to approve the building of new nuclear power plants. This is a 180-degree shift in energy policy.

CHRISTOF FORSTER

Seven years ago, Swiss voters gave the green light to a Switzerland free of nuclear power. The last nuclear power plants were to be decommissioned by 2050 as the country moved to full reliance on renewable energies and imports. The Federal Council now wants to change that: it decided at the end of August it would allow the construction of new nuclear power plants again. For that to happen, the construction ban has to lose its legal status.

This has really shaken up the energy debate in Switzerland. The discussion on the pros and cons of nuclear power, once thought to be over, is back with a vengeance. Energy Minister Albert Rösti is talking about a “paradigm shift”. Whereas politics and the economy had been contemplating a future without nuclear power, all bets are now off the table.

Nuclear power has always been a polarising issue. The Fukushima nuclear catastrophe in 2011 gave a boost to the anti-nuclear lobby. Hundreds of

thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Europe’s cities to protest against nuclear power. In Switzerland, Energy Minister Doris Leuthard, known as a supporter of nuclear power, placed applications to build new reactors on ice three days following the seaquake.

That same year, the Federal Council decided to phase out nuclear energy over the long term. Nuclear power plants were to remain operational for as long as they were deemed safe by the supervisory authority. However, they would not be replaced. This deci-



The plan was to phase out Switzerland's nuclear power plants, not replace them (pictured here: Beznau I and Beznau II). But the Federal Council has now had second thoughts.

Photo: Keystone

sion was not as decisive as it could have been. If Fukushima had really caused people to question the safety of reactors, they should have moved to shut down the country's nuclear operations much faster. As happened in Germany, for example. Switzerland opted for a pragmatic path, not least due to the public mood. The people would most likely not have approved any new nuclear plants in the aftermath of Fukushima.

Energy minister and savvy tactician

Rösti is now working to undo Leuthard's move away from nuclear power. Rösti has always been a supporter of nuclear energy. On assuming the energy portfolio following his election to the Federal Council, he acquired the means to act on his convictions. However, being a smart operator, Rösti initially bided his time, making all the right noises about renewable energy and pouring cold water on a resumption of the nuclear power plant debate. It was at best a redundant discussion and possibly even counterproductive, he said in an interview with "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" in September 2023. He argued that a debate on new nuclear plants would torpedo efforts to expand the use of renewables.

That was before the popular vote on the revised Electricity Supply Act, which lays the foundations for a major expansion of renewable energies. He did not want to jeopardise this bill by reviving the nuclear debate. Rösti's tactic worked and the voters resoundingly backed the revised law – against opposition from Rösti's own party, the SVP.

Officially, the Federal Council decision is a counterproposal to the popular initiative "Stop the blackout", which aims to lift the construction ban on nuclear power plants. The main backers of the initiative are the SVP, the FDP and Energie Club Schweiz. It is a dis-

tinct possibility that the initiative will be withdrawn if parliament supports the Federal Council's counterproposal. This would play into the hands of the atomic lobby, in so far as a vote would only require the backing of a majority of the electorate and not of the cantons as well.

The left is accusing SVP Federal Councillor Rösti of misrepresenting the will of the people, which is somewhat ironic as he is a representative of the party that sees the will of the people as paramount. SP National Councillor Roger Nordmann argues that the government's position is diametrically opposed to the energy and climate policy favoured by the public. The voters have clearly and repeatedly shown that they back the phasing out of nuclear energy in favour of a secure energy supply sourced from renewables.

Reliability of supply is key

While the threat of nuclear catastrophe loomed over the decision to wind down atomic energy, reliability of supply has since become the issue dominating the debate. The pro-nuclear camp argue that decarbonisation will drive demand for electricity. Transport and heating will have to run on electricity in order to achieve net zero by 2050. Population growth will also drive electricity consump-

tion. At the same time, there aren't extensive reserves of power just waiting to be used. The energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine made that abundantly clear.

A winter energy shortfall in Switzerland became a realistic prospect and the authorities created crisis plans. Out of nowhere, the concept of a power shortage planted itself in the public consciousness. Simonetta Sommaruga, who was energy minister at the time, called for people to cook with the lid on the pot and take showers together. In the end, a serendipitous turn of events made the '22/'23 winter crisis planning redundant.

The gas power plants once seen as a viable alternative source are incompatible with the net-zero objective. They are now only considered as an emergency reserve, i.e. to bridge an electricity shortfall over a number of weeks, as heavy reliance on imports is excessively risky. Potential energy suppliers throughout the country all face the same issue: where will the power come from?

Switzerland is by no means alone in this regard. Several European countries have postponed their plans to wean themselves off nuclear power, or even abandoned them altogether, including Belgium and several eastern European countries. The United Kingdom and Slovakia are even expanding



Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard engineered the move away from nuclear power following the Fukushima disaster. On 25 May 2011, she declared that Switzerland was not prepared to replace its current nuclear power plants once they reached the end of their operating life.



Energy Minister Albert Rösti announcing the change in atomic energy policy at a media conference in August 2024.

Photos: Keystone



The damaged Fukushima site (2011): the realisation that even an advanced technological nation like Japan couldn't guarantee nuclear safety had a strong influence on public sentiment in Switzerland. Photo: Keystone



The nuclear energy paradox: on the one hand, the people have said yes to phasing out atomic energy; on the other hand Switzerland operates the world's oldest nuclear plant, Beznau I. Reactor operators doing inspection work in May 2024. Photo: Keystone

their respective capacities. The new government in the Netherlands plans to start construction on four new nuclear plants as soon as possible. And nuclear power is still the main energy source in France.

Dependency on Russia

The plot grows thicker. More nuclear power plants would reduce the dependency on coal or gas-powered energy. Some of the gas used to power plants in Switzerland still comes from Russia, as does some of the uranium for the nuclear plants. According to energy foundation Schweizerische Energie-Stiftung (SES), which opposes nuclear energy, 45 per cent of nuclear power and 15 per cent of Switzerland's entire energy are sourced from Russian uranium. At least 7.5 per cent of that comes from Russian state enterprise Rosatom.

Efforts are underway in the EU to change this situation. However, dependency has increased over the short term. Imports of Russian uranium to EU member states have increased markedly since the start of the Ukraine war.

Proponents of nuclear power also have something else in their favour besides the climate policy and geopolitical situation in Europe: Switzerland has finally located a site, Stadel in the canton of Zurich, where radioactive waste can be stored for good. The end storage site has not yet been finalised. However, the opposition in Stadel is considerably weaker than before as the storage site municipal and the canton have practically no more legal avenues to pursue in opposition to the siting ruling. The National Cooperative for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste (Nagra) will submit a planning application to the Confederation this year.

But the devil is, as always, in the detail. The planned deep geological

repository is only designed for waste from plants already in existence, as Nagra pointed out in a recent report. New nuclear power plants were not factored into the site's capacity. The anti-nuclear camp has been quick to point out the inherent absurdity of the situation: a second end storage site would be needed for the radioactive waste from new nuclear plants, while the first storage site still awaits approval. The nuclear lobby argues that the deep geological repository at the planned site would simply have to be much larger than originally thought.

Plans for a low waste reactor

Geneva company Transmutex is working on something that adds credence to the nuclear lobby's position. It is developing a nuclear plant that runs without uranium and significantly reduces the waste coming from the reactors. The technology is called transmutation and it involves the reactor burning thorium instead of uranium. Experts say transmutation would reduce the volume of long-lived, highly radioactive waste by a factor of 100. Instead, it would yield more short-lived fission products, which are also highly radioactive and need to be stored in an end storage site for several centuries at least. In other words, Switzerland needs its repository come what may, although the storage duration would be much shorter for the Transmutex reactors. Still, for the time being the system only exists on paper. Nuclear experts anticipate it will be fit for construction from 2035.

It would take much longer than that for a new nuclear plant to be connected to the Swiss grid. The Federal Council has in principle only decided to initiate its withdrawal from the previous withdrawal. The counterproposal will be submitted for consultation this year. The parliament will then

be able to advise on the matter from summer 2025. Even if the initiative is withdrawn, the last word will most likely remain with the electorate. The left may well call for a referendum against revoking the construction ban.

A successful outcome at the ballot-box would just create the legal conditions for new reactors. A new project would have to complete the process to obtain a general licence as well as gaining approval for building and operation. Each step in the approval process could take up to four years, so it would take 10-12 years until construction could actually begin.

Financing is another major hurdle to nuclear plant construction. The major Swiss energy companies have pointed out that the construction and operation of a new nuclear plant are not profitable under current conditions. It is practically impossible to build new reactors in other countries without state support. The pro-nuclear camp knows this and is already looking at funding programmes for renewable energies. They argue that the people and economy pay over a billion francs into the programmes every year and are thus entitled to a secure energy supply. The funds sup-

port climate-friendly energy sources, such as water, wind and solar. Atomic energy should also benefit from this funding, argue conservative energy politicians, much to the chagrin of the left, which fought for these subsidies.

The withdrawal from nuclear energy proved a protracted and laborious process. The construction of new nuclear plants, if it even happens, also looks like being far from straightforward.



For decades, demonstrations and Easter marches were part of the ongoing and impassioned debate about the pros and cons of nuclear power. Demonstration at the Gösgen (canton of Solothurn) plant on 25 January 1976. Photo: Keystone

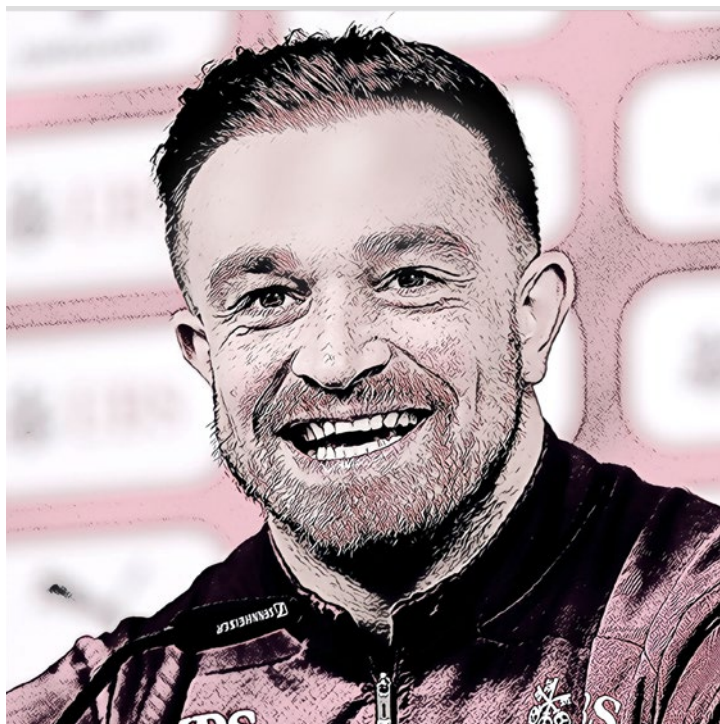
From Easter marches to opting out of nuclear energy

Opposition to atomic energy goes back a long way in Switzerland. It started at the end of the 1950s and culminated in the electorate approving the energy transition several decades later. The first protesters were pacifists and churchgoers opposing the Federal Council's call for the country to acquire nuclear weapons. The annual Easter marches spawned new types of protest. 1969 was something of a milestone

with the entry into operation of Switzerland's first nuclear power plant in Beznau (canton of Aargau) and the serious accident involving the Lucens reactor (canton of Vaud). This turned the opposition against atomic energy for peaceful purposes, albeit only to a limited extent initially. River water cooling was criticised for overheating the water, as was – by the landscape preservation lobby – the con-

struction of cooling towers. Resistance initially arose in the Basel region against the construction of the Kaiseraugst nuclear plant. After failing to prevent the reactor's construction by legal means, people started occupying the construction site. A mass rally in 1975 saw 15,000 people converge on the site. Taking the fight to the streets ultimately led to the abandonment of the Kaiseraugst project. Fierce opposition to nuclear power stations also emerged during the mid-1970s. A number of anti-atom initiatives were presented to the people but narrowly failed to pass at the ballot box. The non-nuclear camp did experience success in 1990 following the Chernobyl reactor accident, when the public voted for a ten-year moratorium on the construction of new nuclear plants. However, this was not long enough to bring about consensus on the nuclear energy issue. It was not until 2017 that 58 per cent of the electorate approved the phasing out of nuclear power and the energy transition. (CF)

Xherdan Shaqiri



He is like Odysseus returning home from his long voyage. Now that he is back in his home city of Basel, from Chicago, where he captained Fire FC, footballer Xherdan Shaqiri is once more planting his studs on home turf. The player has rejoined FC Basel, having first put on the team's shirt in 2001, at the age of ten. This comeback comes in the wake of his retirement from the Swiss national team in July 2024. "He won the hearts of the Swiss and gave us some unforgettable moments, thanks to the magic of his touch and his goals," in the words of Swiss football boss, Dominique Blanc. The footballer, born into a working-class family in Kosovo just before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, has received a number of nicknames from his fans over the years: XS, the Little Prince, Shaq... During the most recent European championship, the player, aged 33, gave the Swiss a performance to remember. Xherdan Shaqiri scored a blistering goal against Scotland. The player, who stands 1.70 m tall, ended his last competition in Swiss national colours by slamming the ball into the back of the net past English goalie Jordan Pickford, during a penalty shoot-out, in a match that Switzerland nonetheless ultimately lost. In Switzerland, football fans are now flocking to watch all of FC Basel's matches. One such match was the September encounter with Stade Nyonnais, a team recently promoted to the Challenge League, who held their own against the great FC Basel. XS's presence turned this Swiss Cup match into something of a national event attracting 4,000 spectators. It was the man himself, in the 123rd minute, who scored the winner for FC Basel! STÉPHANE HERZOG

Swiss sanctions decision sparks criticism

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, Switzerland has more or less matched all of the European Union's sanctions against Russia, not least to prevent itself from becoming a conduit for sanctions circumvention. The Federal Council made the first notable exception to this rule in October when it opted out of a measure requiring commodity traders to ensure that their foreign subsidiaries do not undermine the EU sanctions. The decision has sparked considerable criticism abroad, with the United States ambassador to Switzerland, Scott Miller, calling it "very disappointing" – which in itself shows that the Swiss policy of deciding on a case-by-case basis whether to adopt sanctions can have drawbacks. (MUL)

Marianne Jenni succeeds David Grichting

When it comes to representing the interests of the Swiss Abroad and providing Swiss consular services around the world, responsibility within the Federal Administration lies with the Consular Directorate (CD). The Federal Council has appointed Marianne Jenni as the CD's new director general. Jenni, currently serving as the Swiss ambassador to Ecuador, will start in her new post on 1 January 2025. She has previously worked in places including Paris, Lagos, Rome, London, Baghdad and Cape Town. Jenni succeeds David Grichting, who has headed the CD since April 2023 but is now taking on a new role within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). (MUL)

Basel to host the 2025 Eurovision Song Contest

Since Swiss singer Nemo won the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) in the Swedish city of Malmö (see "Swiss Review" 4/2024), Switzerland has been locked in as the next ESC host. We now know that the 2025 competition will take place in Basel, watched by an expected worldwide audience of well over 100 million. Basel eventually got the nod ahead of Geneva. Berne and Zurich had also been in contention. None of the four bids enjoyed unanimous political support, due to moral concerns or the financial challenge of hosting the event. See also: www.revue.link/escbasel (MUL)

A mountain changes shape

There was a spectacular rockfall on the Grosses Tschingelhorn (2,849 m) this October, when some 100,000 m³ of debris broke off the side of the mountain, which is located on the border between the cantons of Glarus and Grisons. The summit ridge now looks very different. The event made headlines not least because this is one of the more photographed mountain silhouettes. Situated just below the summit ridge is a famous gap in the rock called Martinsloch. Twice a year, the rising sun shines through the Martinsloch opening for just a few minutes. People come from far and wide to witness the spectacle. (MUL)

The cherry laurel can no longer enter Switzerland

A ban on the import of around 30 invasive plant species – including popular plants like cherry laurel, butterfly bush and mimosa – came into force in Switzerland on 1 September. Its aim is to safeguard biodiversity and protect native species and habitats.

LISA STALDER

Planning to visit Switzerland soon and wondering what to take as a gift to your relatives? Unless you want to fall foul of customs, it is probably best not to pack any golden bamboo or large-leaved lupin seeds – two of the 30 or so plant species that have been banned in Switzerland since 1 September. This is according to the Swiss Release Ordinance, which governs the handling of invasive organisms, including non-native plant species, in the environment. The Federal Council revised the Release Ordinance last March, implementing a parliamentary motion.

Why is the ban necessary? It is because some invasive plant species are proliferating out of control, posing a threat not only to biodiversity but to the environment and public health. Certain species are spreading so quickly that they are crowding out native plants and even causing structural damage to buildings. It has been possible to sell and import many of these plants until now. But not anymore.

Popular plant also banned

The new regulations affect some 30 plant species – from ornamental plants like butterfly bush, to kudzu, a fast-growing perennial vine native to Asia. One particular banned plant is the cherry laurel, which has become a popular addition to Swiss gardens. The cherry laurel is very convenient because it is easy to grow and has dense evergreen foliage that fills out rapidly and is good for privacy. It is also very hardy. The good news for anyone with a cherry laurel in their garden is that there is no need to dig your hedge up despite the ban. Anything that has already been planted can stay. In future, there will still be other ways to protect your property from prying eyes –



garden and tree experts recommend alternatives like the Portuguese laurel or red-tip photinia. Many native shrubs also help to delineate gardens without screening them off entirely. Hawthorns, wayfaring trees, and barberry come to mind.

Basel Carnival in danger?

The crackdown was greeted with some consternation in Basel, because the list of banned species includes *Acacia dealbata*, or mimosa: a plant that is as synonymous with Basel Carnival as drums and piccolos. It is a well-known ritual to hand out 'Mimöseli' to the crowds lining the parade route. But Basel can breathe a sigh of relief. There is a ban on selling, importing and gifting potted mimosa or mimosa seeds, but the actual flowers can still be used provided they have been cut off without their roots. The next Basel Carnival will be the same as always.

Despite the ban on invasive species, yellow mimosa will continue to feature at Basel Carnival. Photo: Keystone

List of banned plants

The ban, which came into force on 1 September 2024, applies to the following plants: mimosa, bastard indigobush, Chinese mugwort, New York aster, water fern, paper mulberry, butterfly bush, Turkish warty cabbage, red osier, wall cotoneaster, wild cucumber/prickly cucumber, annual fleabane, goat's rue, fowl mannagrass, vine honeysuckle, Japanese honeysuckle, large-leaved lupin, Java waterdropwort/Japanese parsley, Virginia creeper/five-leaved ivy, princess tree, crimson fountaingrass, fishpole bamboo, cherry laurel, black cherry, arrow bamboo, Himalayan blackberry, Japanese wineberry, broadleaf arrowhead, Caucasian stonecrop, lesser-Caucasian stonecrop, Chinese windmill palm.

“Cows have a close affinity with humans”

Agronomist Martina Schmid specialises in interpreting cow signals. She is not a cow whisperer. Her rule of thumb: look after the cows properly, so both animal and farmer benefit.

JÜRIG STEINER

Martina Schmid (31) is a cow signal trainer. As she always has to point out when discussing her role, that has nothing to do with some sort of mysterious hocus pocus, the humanisation of animals or some unworldly romanticisation of farming life in the Swiss mountains. Quite the opposite, in fact.

The welfare of cows is Schmid's business. But she says she is always mindful of a farm's business situation. She is also quick to dismiss the myth that 'a high-yielding cow milked by robots can thrive.'

Martina Schmid's chosen area of expertise emerged 25 years ago in the Netherlands. Her role in a nutshell is to recognise the signals sent by cows: are they apathetic or do they want to make contact? Are they standing instead of lying, which is what they would normally prefer to do?

"You can often gain a lot from making small changes to how you work with the cows," says Schmid. She does not see herself as an activist for animal welfare or as anything resembling a cow whisperer. Instead, she calls herself an advisor who applies her scientific know-how to communicate the needs of the cows and how best to keep them to their owners.

Schmid's own two feet are planted firmly on the ground of agricultural reality. Having trained as a nurse, she then went on to complete vocational agricultural training followed by a degree in agronomy. She now works for the cantonal agricultural department in Zug and on the family farm in Menzingen. She has also built up her own business, i.e. her advisory work and instruction in cow signals.

Word of mouth is an effective marketing tool, says Schmid, as more farmers are requesting her services. The fact that there are hardly any other people with her know-how operating independently and free of product advertising also helps. There are people with the same expertise as Schmid; however, they tend to have an ulterior motive, i.e. to sell the farmers something.

Schmid, by contrast, is solely interested in delivering presentations, training or giving advice and she is prepared to travel from central Switzerland to the French-speaking part of the country to do that. Demand from outside Switzerland for online sessions is also increasing, she tells us.

How long does it take Martina Schmid to gauge the mood of the cows when she arrives at a farm? Before she enters the stall, she always takes the time to have a proper talk with the farmers who are in charge. She wants to know where any problem areas may be. Farmers in Switzerland are under a lot of pressure to be efficient (see



Martina Schmid understands our bovine friends, but a 'cow whisperer' she is not. Photo provided

"Swiss Review" 4/2024). They have a high workload, often have to contend with lost income or unmanageable bureaucracy, not to mention personal issues, planning whom to leave the farm to, for example.

"Cows have a close affinity with humans," says Schmid. They react to whether the people who work with them in the stall everyday are upbeat or weighed down by worries. And it also works the other way round, she says: "If the cows are thriving, it also benefits the farmers." And that includes financially: advice based on cow signals also has a pre-emptive effect, so the animals don't need antibiotics when they fall ill.

Cows usually feel at their best when they can behave the same way in the stall as they would when out in the fields. Regardless of whether they are in large cowsheds or tie-up stalls, both of which are allowed in Switzerland. The cow signalling trainer works on the basis of this fundamental principle.

"If I see cows in the stall who are lying down and chewing the cud, that is a very positive sign in itself," says Schmid. That after all is what they spend most of their time doing. One could say that cows love nothing more than a quiet and consistent routine without too much variety. Martina Schmid says that cows like to lie down for 14 hours a day and graze for seven hours. Two hours



are for milking, leaving some time for social contact. That more or less equates to an ideal day's work for a cow.

By the same token, that means when cows are standing when she enters the stall, or if they are unsettled with a rough coat or dry muzzle, "these are all signs that something is wrong," says Schmid. Her job is to make suggestions as to how conditions in the stall could be improved to give the cows a better quality of life.

"It is not trivial: the small things can make a big difference," explains Schmid. The last thing she wants to do is suggest that the farmers make improvements for the cows and, in doing so, make their work more complicated and time-consuming. That just increases stress, which would in turn impact the cows' well-being.

When working with their cows, farmers perform individual actions again and again. If these actions suddenly become even slightly more cumbersome, it will take so much longer to do everything. That is why farmers who plan ahead involve Schmid to advise them when renovating or building new stalls. In older, narrow buildings it can be challenging but not impossible to find solutions. "It is just a fact that healthy, happy cows are more productive and give more milk," says Schmid. So, a farmer could benefit from her input by perhaps keeping one cow less and saving effort without losing money. On average 20 cows

are kept on each farm in Switzerland, which is small by international standards. It's logical, says Schmid, that smaller farms often have a closer connection to each individual cow. However, that does not mean that her work revolves around cow welfare for average-sized farms by Swiss standards.

Her customers also include large holdings, "which aim to get the best from their cows". It's very important for them to have healthy and productive cows: "Cows bred for milk production can really prosper if they have light and air and a nice spot to graze and lie down."

Technical innovations, which don't really fit the traditional image of manual farm labour, can be good for cows. Take milking robots as an example, which enable the cows to decide when and how often they want to be milked during the day. There are cows that prefer to be milked three or four times a day rather than just two times, which is what farmers normally do. This helps them ease the burden on their udders and avoid the stress of having to wait for milking every day.

At the same time, Martina Schmid is keen to stress that this doesn't mean robots are suited to every stall. Observing the cows' signals is what really matters.

Cows that feel comfortable spend 70 percent of their time lying down. They don't like excitement and change. Here a herd of cows in the Swiss Jura.
Photo: Joseph Haas

The Reuss Delta, where nature and the economy exist in harmony

The Reuss Delta, south of Lake Lucerne, used to be dying. It has now been given a new lease of life using rubble from the Gotthard Base Tunnel. This pioneering project has enabled the creation of islands and shallows conducive to animal and plant life.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

There is a small island a stone's throw from the shores of Lake Uri, the southernmost part of Lake Lucerne. On this gorgeous autumn day, we swim across to the little cluster of islands known as Lorelei. When we reach land, our feet touch a layer of moss of almost fluorescent green. The ground on which we are walking is actually a landfill site! The islets in question are man-made from by-products from the excavation of the Gotthard Base Tunnel. Between 2001 and 2008, 27 million tonnes of granite, gneiss and limestone were dug out, one-tenth of which was used in the lake.

The original plan was for all of it to end up in the lake, according to engineer Giovanni De Cesare, a hydrology specialist at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL). This solution – prohibited since 2011 – was abandoned, as another serious problem was emerging: this “Swiss Camargue” was at risk of disappearing, as its soil was being eroded by the current and the waves, and gravel was being dredged from the lakebed. The canton of Uri then took the unprecedented step of passing a law to preserve the Reuss Delta. The first step in the revitalisation process was to use diggers to scoop out a broader angle for the delta. The rescue campaign was thanks to Martin Jaeggi, a pioneering engineer (now retired) specialising in transporting solids down rivers. It was his idea to revitalise the delta using backfill from the Gotthard.

A park for both people and animals

Today, the location is a park where people and animals can roam and play. During the summer, thousands

of visitors flock to the delta to top up their tans on the little islands. “The park is not reserved for bears,” jokes De Cesare. Only one section of the site, including the Neptune archipelago (which comprises three other islands), is off-limits to the public. Elsewhere in the park, barbecue enthusiasts can grill their sausages. There are even logs available for the fire, stored in purpose-built cabins. People out for a Sunday stroll can be spotted along the paths running through this lush, almost tropical place. You can also discover the reserve by bicycle. Birdwatchers have several hides to choose from, including one overlooking the entire delta. On the left bank of the Reuss, visitors can enjoy the dish of the day at the Seerestaurant for only 21 Swiss francs, including salad and a drink. “This establishment was opened thanks to a legal exemption,” says Rico Vanoli, general secretary of the municipality of Flüelen, the town on the right bank of the lake.

The challenge for the Reuss Delta is to attempt to reconcile economic, social and environmental objectives. “If there had been no renaturing, the local farmers would have lost land to erosion, which had already encroached over 100 metres inland,” explains De Cesare. The farmers themselves are actually involved in helping to maintain the reserve, as they let their Highland cattle graze on invasive species of plant. Then, there is industry. Since 1905, the Arnold quarry workers have been extracting the silt borne downstream by the Reuss. It now forms part of the project's economic cycle, Vanoli says, by paying a concession to the canton. Its remit is to create islands and shallows in the middle of the delta. This achieves two goals: it protects the delta against erosion and provides a

habitat for animals. Granted, the Arnold machines digging up the lakebed in the port town of Flüelen do make a bit of noise. In addition, the delta is accessible solely via the shores of the lake, as the company prevents anyone accessing the reserve directly. This is a pity, but the trade-off is that the firm employs 45 people, some of whom live in the town. “The company is appreciated and accepted here,” says the municipality's general secretary.

New shallows for fish

This autumn, Seeschüttung, the organisation spearheading this operation on behalf of the canton of Uri, launched the latest phase of renaturing the Reuss. This work, performed by barges operated by Arnold, is intended to create new shallows close to the banks of the lake. These seven-hectare shallows are being created using 4.9 million cubic metres of material taken from the new tunnel at the Gotthard and the work on the Axenstrasse road connecting Brunnen (Schwyz) to Flüelen (Uri). The project will cost 62 million francs and is being fully financed by the two materials suppliers, the Confederation and the cantons of Schwyz and Uri.

The shallows will be no more than ten metres deep, so as to allow light to reach the bottom. The end result will resemble how the site used to look prior to industrial gravel mining. Above all, this new sublacustrine land will protect the delta against erosion. On the other hand, there is a risk of it damaging the lakebed. “The operation may affect aquatic life, but the pros and cons of each procedure are weighed up against each other,” says De Cesare. The clean-up of the Reuss Delta is scheduled for completion by 2029. Observations are already show-



The Reuss flows into Lake Uri, as the southern finger of Lake Lucerne is called.

Map: Landestopo



ing that the project is bearing fruit. The Reuss has got its meanders back, and the return of nature has benefited both plant and animal life.

The delta boasts around 500 different species of plant. These include rare or protected species like marsh gentian, the subterranean clover and the Siberian iris. The wetlands are also home to reptiles. The marsh beds have been colonised by mussels and snails. Around 225 species of bird nest or stop over in this oasis. In the water itself, 30 species of fish have been identified, including river lampreys and lake trout, both highly endangered.

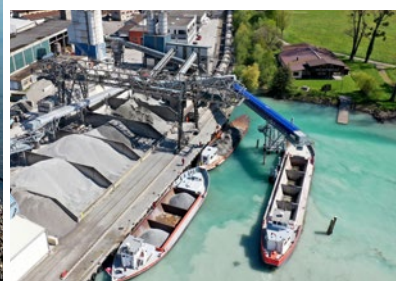
Great diversity of wildlife

The wildlife in the delta is drawing in many nature-lovers, says Bruno Imhof, the former sacristan at Altdorf and a visitor to the delta for 25 years. He has spotted some extremely rare birds here. In May 2023, he tells us, he saw a cattle egret, a migratory wader from Africa listed as endangered.

In April of this year, he came across a damp, exhausted hoopoe on one of the islands of Lorelei. “It stayed on the island for three days to get its strength back,” says the Uri native, who is nonetheless concerned about the excessive numbers of visitors in summer. Renaturing has restored the delta to its historic role. As for the Reuss’s legendary floods, they will not destroy the delta, “since it will function as a submersible dam”, Giovanni De Cesare explains. A bit like the fable of the oak and the willow.



Excavated material has been used to restore the Reuss delta, creating new habitats for plants and wildlife – as well as recreational space for people. Barges are now offloading the same material to create new shallow-water zones that are of particular benefit to fish. Photos: Keystone, Stéphane Herzog, seeschuettung.ch



“We need to talk”: about inheritance and what it entails

On finishing their political careers in Switzerland, Stephanie and Ruedi Baumann moved to France over 20 years ago to live their dream of working the land and being close to nature. Now it's up to the sons to take over their parents' life work. But do they really want to? In the documentary film “We, the Inheritors”, their son and film director Simon Baumann examines how inheriting can mean different things to different people.

THEODORA PETER

Fields and meadows as far as the eye can see. When there are no clouds, the Pyrenees appear on the distant horizon. It was here, in Gascony, a thousand kilometres from Switzerland, that farming couple Stephanie und Ruedi Baumann created their own ecological paradise on a remote farm. They left their organic farm in Suberg in the canton of Berne to their younger son Kilian in the early noughties. As a small-holder and National Councillor for the Greens, he has taken over his parents' farm and political campaigning. Stephanie and Ruedi Baumann came to national prominence in the 1990s as the first married couple in the Swiss Parliament. She was a social democrat committed to social justice; he was a dyed-in-the-wool member of the Greens, which squared up to the powerful agricultural lobby. The older son Simon chose another path: he was much more interested in music and art than agriculture and politics: “Filmmaking allowed me to keep a certain distance while still staying close to my parents.”

The 45-year-old had been mulling over the idea of making a film about inheriting ever since he became a father nine years ago. “My partner and I asked ourselves what values and outlooks we would pass on to our own children,” the film director told “Swiss Review”. His film idea waited patiently until Baumann's parents – who are now 73 and 77 years old – wanted to talk to their sons about the future of their farm in France. “I said: okay, let's talk, but I'll make a film about it.”

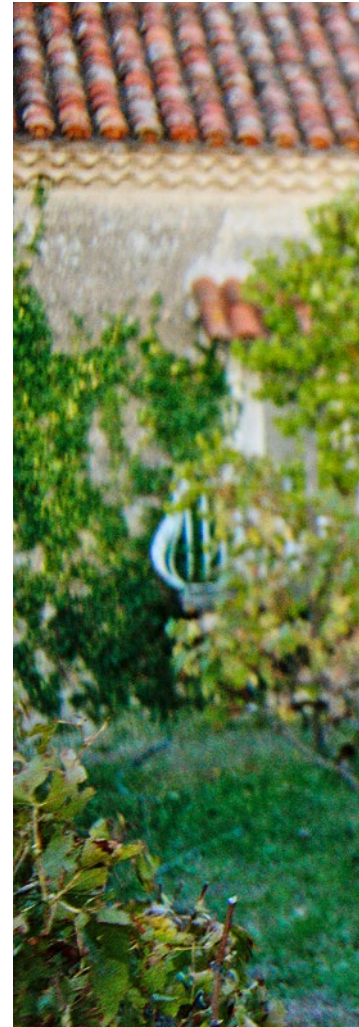
Simon Baumann packed his camera and sound equipment and paid several visits to his parents to film them going about their daily routine while working at home and on the farm. He repeatedly contrasted their perception with his own view. As the camera moves over the land, the author comments in the background: “I see arable land, loneliness and boredom. My parents see biodiversity, ecological hedges and pesticide-free soil.”

“We, the Inheritors” is very much a personal account, but it raises universal questions: what shapes us and how? How do we deal with expectations? And how fair is it to inherit property? The author invites the audience to take part in the family discussions on what is to happen with the property in France if the parents are one day no longer able to run it. While the father Ruedi wants the farm to stay in the family, his son Simon sees this as a burden. And he asks himself fundamental questions in the film: “I have inherited property and a sense of justice from my parents. But the two things aren't compatible. Where is the justice if I inherit property and others do not?”

This dilemma remains unresolved and is the key theme of the film. Simon wants to launch a debate with his production. “If we had more transparency on who owns land and who can afford land in Switzerland in the first place, people would also talk more about justice.”

Simon Baumann also shares extensive background information on his family in “We, the Inheritors”. He talks about how his parents developed their own identities and – as part of the 1968 generation – were able to break free of middle-class convention. Labourer's daughter Stephanie Bieri and farmer's son Ruedi Baumann married in secret in 1974 – “a traditional wedding would have been too bourgeois for them” – and hitchhiked all the way to Africa without any money. Two young people who wanted to change the world while also progressing professionally and in society: “Doors opened for them that had been closed to their forebears.” As a child, Simon experienced mixed feelings as he watched his parent's political careers unfold, first in the cantonal parliament, then in the National Council: “I was ashamed for them, in awe of them, and suffered with them.”

The Baumanns retired from politics when they moved to France in the early noughties. They are still critical of Switzerland, as they re-



Stephanie and Ruedi Baumann have lived in the south of France for more than 20 years.



The remote farm in Gascony is not suitable for the elderly.

“We, the Inheritors” is very much a personal account, but it raises universal questions: what shapes us and how? How do we deal with expectations?



Ruedi Baumann – pictured in his workshop – wants the farm to stay in the family.

vealed when talking to “Swiss Review”. “I’d like to see Switzerland play an active role in solving problems within Europe instead of seeking to profit from it,” says Ruedi Baumann. Stephanie Baumann also believes Switzerland should “fulfil a role in the world instead of cutting itself off”. They feel well integrated in France, where they were both naturalised after five years’ residence. They were welcomed to the village with

“Filmmaking allowed me to keep a certain distance while still staying close to my parents.”

Film director Simon Baumann

open arms – and then wondered “whether new arrivals to Switzerland would also be made to feel so welcome”.

The two Swiss Abroad have made many friendships over the years. At the same time, growing old has seen illness and death visit their social circle. The matter of their own future is becoming more pressing – and it weighs on Stephanie Baumann: “What would happen if one of us were to fall ill or to require care?” The isolated farm, accessible only by car, is not really made for older people: “When we lose our mobility, we won’t be able to live here anymore.” Maybe the Baumanns will return to Switzerland to be near their sons and five grandchildren. And they’ll think of something for the farm.

“We, the Inheritors” will screen in Swiss cinemas from January 2025. www.wirerben.ch



Simon Baumann (*1979) studied media art and works as a freelance filmmaker and producer. He lives with his family in Suberg in the canton of Berne.

Picture credits for all pictures: Ton und Bild GmbH



Stephanie Baumann is worried about the future: “What would happen if one of us were to fall ill or to require care?”



Where to grow old? The Baumanns are thinking of returning to Switzerland – pictured here visiting an apartment.

“Help, I’m inheriting!”

We are what we are born into and that is what helps determine whether we live on the right or the wrong side of the tracks. Whatever we inherit, whether money, genes or values, it can be a blessing or a curse, a privilege or a burden. And it can trigger a feeling of deep association or the desire to make a clean break from the past.

The “Hilfe, ich erbe!” (Help, I’m inheriting!) exhibition in the Generationenhaus in Berne addresses the different aspects of dealing with a legacy and invites the public to look at their own roots and defining features. There are also a number of video portraits shot for the exhibition by filmmaker Simon Baumann.

The exhibition in the Generationenhaus Berne runs until 26 October 2025. www.begh.ch/erben

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS
Please advise your local embassy or consulate. The editorial team cannot access your address and administrative data. Thank you.

Figures: happy or otherwise

40,000

A round of applause for Switzerland’s latest supercomputer inaugurated in Lugano in September. It is called Alps and is one of the fastest computers in the world. Alps can perform calculations in one day that would take a regular laptop about 40,000 years to process. It will be used for weather and climate forecasts.

71

The number of carefree people in Switzerland has fallen significantly compared to last year. That is the conclusion of an SRG survey. It documents growing fear of loss. Some 71 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement, “Our carefree days are behind us.” And only 26 per cent thought that children growing up in Switzerland today have fewer worries than any generation before them. Source: SRG

18,000

Swiss Animal Protection (SAP) is familiar with the temporary happiness experienced by dog and cat owners, but it has also become aware of a “worrying situation” regarding fish. Fish have become the country’s most discarded pet. About 18,000 were handed in to SAP shelters. Source: SAP animal protection statistics

1,006

The weather was on their side at the end of August when 1,006 alpine players gathered on the Klewenalp mountainside to play “Uf de Bänklialp” by Jost Aregger. The reason for the serenade was to enter the Guinness Book of World Records for the world’s largest alpine ensemble. The huge group played for five minutes and entered the record books in style.

31,000

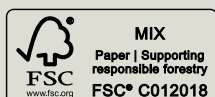
Pets make people happy, but often only temporarily. This has not gone unnoticed by the Swiss Animal Protection (SAP) shelters. In 2023, 31,000 dogs, cats and other domestic pets were delivered to SAP shelters and rehomed whenever possible.

Source: SAP animal protection statistics



1

The apron or “Roi du Doubs”, zingel asper, is an exceedingly rare fish that can only be found in the Doubs river. The Confederation and nature conservation organisations had almost despaired of ever finding one despite their best efforts, and then... 1 apron was found. According to the prevailing wisdom, that is not enough to breed the fish and return them to the wild.



Pushing the limits

Anna Zimmermann dreams of becoming an astronaut. Or working in a research station in Antarctica. The medical student is fascinated by living in hostile environments.

DÖLF BARBEN

She does not parachute off cliff edges. Nor does she spend ten days cycling across America. She wants more than that: if Anna Zimmermann could fulfil her dreams, she would experience things beyond the realm of extreme sports.

Where she wants to go, “staying outside would mean fairly rapid death”, as she puts it. The places Zimmermann is referring to are the International Space Station, circling the Earth at an altitude of 400 kilometres, and a research station in Antarctica.

Living in extreme conditions, surviving in the most inhospitable places, is a long-held fascination for the 29-year-old medical student from Aargau, who lives in Berne.

Keep dreaming bigger

Where does this interest come from? It is more of a fascination, says Zimmermann as she talks about “people”, who have evolved over millions of years within a “very narrow set of environmental conditions”. She is consumed by the thought that people have always tried to leave “our ecological bubble” to venture “into the unknown”. This desire drives technological development, she says, “allowing us to keep dreaming bigger”.

She is particularly fascinated by the power of the mind. You can train your mind to overcome physical boundaries. “Nonetheless”, she says: “the human psyche is extremely fragile. As people we are irrevocably bound to other people – and dependent on them.”

From a young age, Zimmermann has been keen to push her own boundaries. She signed up for military service, completed her officer training, and participated in endur-



“My philosophy for life is to remain interested and open and see what opportunities arise.”

Anna Zimmermann

ance exercises. She has also been adventurous as a civilian. She spent 19 days trekking in Nepal, for example, mostly at an altitude of over 4,000 metres in the biting cold and without a change of clothes. This February, she also attended a polar medicine course in Norway on first aid for cold injuries.

The driver: curiosity

She has learned a lot through her adventures, both about herself and others. For example, Zimmermann now realises that she likes it “when the daily routine is stripped to the basics, when things are simple. It’s liberating”. She is also keen to point out that she does not do all these things “to

tick the right boxes – it’s curiosity that drives me”. This curiosity keeps her pushing the boundaries, including in the direction of space travel over the past few months. “That’s where all my interests converge,” she says. Zimmermann realised this on a visit to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida almost a year ago.

Following this realisation, she began to seek out possible touch points. She came across Concordia research station in Antarctica, which is run by the European Space Agency (ESA), where researchers work in one of the world’s most remote locations. It is almost as if they were in a spaceship. Swiss doctor Jessica Kehala Studer is currently there.

On the ‘Moon’ near the Gotthard Pass

And then came Asclepius, the organisation founded a few years ago by students for students at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL), which simulates missions to the Moon. The fourth Asclepius mission started this summer in the Gotthard area of the Swiss Alps with over two dozen participants from all over the world – including Anna Zimmermann.

As a medical student, she was placed in the Mission Control Centre, which was in a bunker deep underground. Her blue, short-sleeved shirt sported a round mission badge near her name tag. Zimmermann was responsible for the physical and mental well-being of the six astronauts.

They lived in an isolated area of the complex during the 14-day mission. They conducted experiments, did strength training and were only allowed to shower twice before “returning” to Earth. They were occasionally allowed to walk on the “sur-



Higher, farther, faster, more beautiful?
In search of somewhat unconventional Swiss records
This edition: living and learning on the ‘Moon’ – in the Swiss Alps



face of the Moon". They changed into special suits and left the bunker located near the Gotthard Pass. The pictures of these simulated lunar walks look funny and unreal. Figures clad in orange with big humps on their backs stomping around among the rocks and cliff edges as they operate their devices. They look like characters from a children's television programme.

Are the simulated Moon missions really the way they appear from the

pictures, i.e. just a game? A bit of fun during the holidays for young people who enjoy indulging in fantasy and who dream of flying to Mars?

Insights for the real thing: space travel

"Definitely not", says Claude Nicollier, one of Switzerland's most famous space travel experts. He is the only Swiss astronaut to date to have gone into space (see interview on page 20).

The astrophysicist and honorary professor at the EPFL mentors the Asclepios project.

The students spent months undergoing intensive preparation, he says. "They have to be disciplined and work hard." There is cooperation with the scientific and business communities. Asclepios is more than capable of providing valuable insights for real space travel. Many of these students aim to become astronauts. Having participated in a mis-

Students at the Asclepios control centre simulating a mission to the moon. Still from the documentary "To The Moon and Back" by Elisa Gomez Alvarez, Rita Productions/RTS



An Asclepios astronaut with a robot negotiating the 'lunar' landscape of the Gotthard massif. Photo: Asclepios IV Mission

sion like this one, says Nicollier, will help their application stand out, whether for the position of astronaut or for other jobs in aerospace, of which there are many.

Zimmermann found the Asclepios mission enriching and “a very rewarding communal experience”. Becoming an astronaut remains an “absolute” dream for her. A dream or an objective? She is under no illusions about her future: “It’s a job with so many incredibly interesting aspects,” she says. Unfortunately, very few peo-

“It’s harder to come back from Antarctica than from the International Space Station, even though it’s on the same planet.”

Anna Zimmermann

ple get to become astronauts. There is no way of knowing whether there will soon be a selection process. That’s why she prefers to describe her ambition as a dream.

A more realistic goal for her is to conduct research into space travel, as a space doctor, for example. She is

considering such a career path but is not necessarily set on it: “My philosophy for life is to remain interested and open and see what opportunities arise.”

The research centre dream

And what if a job were to come up in the Antarctica station? “Yes, that would be my dream research position,” she says – explaining in the same breath how she would have to

A loose screw in space

Claude Nicollier is still the only Swiss person to have been in space. What was it like to be weightless? And what does he think now about expeditions to the Moon and Mars?

Past meets future – astronaut Claude Nicollier taking a selfie with one of the Asclepios project participants

Photo: Asclepios IV Mission



INTERVIEW: DÖLF BARBEN

Claude Nicollier, the astronaut from Vevey, is one of Switzerland’s most famous sons. He left the Earth four times between 1992 and 1999 to spend a total of 42 days, 12 hours and five minutes in space. He impressed experts with his calmness while helping repair the Hubble Space Telescope. Nicollier celebrated his 80th birthday on 2 September 2024.

There is another Swiss astronaut: Marco Sieber from Berne (see “Swiss Review” 2/2023). But he has yet to visit space. Nicollier is thus still the only Swiss person to have experienced weightlessness, for example. It’s not usually the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about space travel. Still, as simulations of space missions (see report on page 18) show, prolonged weightlessness cannot be replicated here on Earth.

Claude Nicollier, when and how does weightlessness kick in when going into space?

When the space shuttle reaches orbit and the engine cuts off, you become weightless all of a sudden. Many people don’t feel well during the first few hours, like being seasick. Once your body adjusts, you can enjoy it.

How do you enjoy it?

You can walk wherever you want instead of having to stay on the floor. You can walk on the ceiling or the wall. It’s a wonderful feeling.

Astronauts Michael Foale (left) and Claude Nicollier replacing sensors on the Hubble Space Telescope (1999). Nicollier is securely attached to the space shuttle's robotic arm.

Photo: Keystone/NASA



prepare for it. This shows that she has done her homework. She says that being completely cut off for months is a big problem. You can't just go home – not even if someone close to you falls ill or dies. "It's harder to come back from Antarctica than from the International Space Station, even though it's on the same planet," she says, adding: "I could see myself doing it."

<https://asclepios.ch>

And what's sleeping like?

The space shuttle had sleeping bags, which you could attach to a wall or the ceiling. You can't just float around while sleeping.

Why not?

You need a certain stability to sleep. Especially for the head. You attach your head to the pillow with a fabric band. It's the same on Earth: if your head is sticking out over the end of the bed, you won't sleep.

While repairing the Hubble Space Telescope, you worked with a battery-powered screwdriver. Were you not at risk of suddenly turning yourself instead of the screw?

Yes, that is a risk. That's why you have to hold onto something with your other hand before using a screwdriver. If you are using both hands, you need to anchor yourself with your feet. As soon as you start expending energy in a state of weightlessness, there is an action and a reaction. You have to practise for that.

How do you do that? You can't simulate weightlessness.

You have to differentiate. If you move around slowly in a water tank, the sensation is similar to weightlessness. So, that's a good way to practise working with tools. But it only works for slow movements. You can also use your arms and feet to push off when underwater, and that doesn't work when you're weightless.

If you could have your time again, would you still want to be an astronaut?

Most definitely.

And would you fly to the Moon? Or even to Mars?

I would love to fly to the Moon, for sure. It's not even that far, just a few days; it's almost a suburb of the Earth. Mars is a different proposition. If I were 30, I probably would go for it – in the knowledge that it would be very draining, both mentally and physically.

Why?

Mars is very far away. The Earth would just be a small blue dot surrounded by blackness. It would take up to 20 minutes for radio signals to reach it. It would be a very isolating experience for a person. That would be extremely challenging psychologically.

What does that mean for the gradual colonisation of Mars?

People who are born to explore could take on a journey like that with all the huge difficulties it entails. That's why I see the exploration of Mars as feasible. But I don't see millions of people moving there.

You can find more pictures of Nicollier's space missions in our online version of this article at www.revue.link/nic

Switzerland's new suicide assistants question the status quo

A suicide capsule has been used in Switzerland for the first time, despite the authorities considering them illegal. This has caused considerable consternation – given that the country has long maintained a liberal approach to assisted suicide. What does this mean for the future?



SUSANNE WENGER

The media normally prefer not to report on suicide, as it can trigger copycat behaviour. However, they made an exception at the end of September as the Swiss and international media printed extensive, illustrated coverage of the suicide of a 64-year-old citizen of the United States at a private forest retreat in the canton of Schaffhausen. This unusual media interest was prompted by the way in which the suicide took place, as it went against what has hitherto counted as standard procedure in Switzerland. Arrests have been made and criminal proceedings launched against the people who helped the deceased to commit suicide. There is also consternation in political circles.

The woman travelled to Switzerland to die in the new suicide capsule,

known as Sarco. It is activated by the person lying in the capsule pressing a button, which releases nitrogen. Death then results from oxygen deprivation. “Quick and peaceful”, claims The Last Resort, the organisation that provided the capsule. It is Switzerland’s latest assisted-suicide organisation and has ties to Philip Nitschke, who invented the capsule. The Australian doctor, who lives in the Netherlands, has long campaigned internationally for the right to die by assisted suicide, which is banned in many countries. The combative 77-year-old claims this is a human right.

Bypassing the authorities

Nitschke followed the first ever use of his suicide device remotely, via an

The inventor and activist Philip Nitschke trying out the death capsule: The Australian’s method and approach are controversial. Photo: Keystone

oxygen- and heartbeat-measuring device and a camera in the capsule. That is what he told Dutch newspaper “De Volkskrant”, which had a photographer on site in Schaffhauserland. The deceased’s personal decisions were respected, but the Sarco capsule providers ignored months of warnings by the cantonal authorities and even the word of a Federal Councillor. Two hours before the deed, the Swiss home affairs minister declared Sarco to be an illegal device.

It does not meet the requirements of product safety legislation, nor is it compatible with the objective of the law on chemical products, Federal Councillor Elisabeth Baume-Schneider told parliament. The Nitschke camp countered that the capsule does meet the legal criteria and that this has been confirmed by legal ex-

perts. The matter will now go to the courts. Public reaction in Switzerland has been mostly negative. The newspaper “Schaffhauser Zeitung” spoke of a “perverse PR stunt” in the region and the national media were similarly disapproving. The country’s more established assisted-suicide organisations distanced themselves emphatically from the episode.

Misgivings about the method

Switzerland is known for its liberal approach to assisted suicide, which is why it was chosen for the first Sarco death. So, why the uproar? It stems to an extent from questions about the organisation behind the operation. The newspaper “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” reported that a planned Sarco suicide did not go ahead in the summer after the woman in question cancelled amid allegations against The Last Resort. She criticised them for allegedly exploiting her financially and subjecting her to a media circus. The organisation rejected her claims. The woman, who was also a US citizen, enlisted the services of another assisted-suicide organisation to end her life.

There are also questions about the new technique: dying alone in a capsule, cut off from human contact. And the use of nitrogen is not really an established suicide method. What if death is not “quick and peaceful”? In Switzerland, sodium pentobarbital, a prescribed medicine, is normally used for assisted suicide. Sarco has effectively forced Switzerland to de-

cide whether the time for its hands-off approach to assisted suicide has finally passed after more than 40 years. This is an issue that politicians have hitherto preferred to avoid.

Ethical guidelines in medicine

Assisted suicide, i.e. the procuring of deadly medicine for consumption by a person who wants to die and who self-administers the medicine, is largely unregulated. Criminal law merely states that assistance for “selfish motives” is an offence. So, by that logic: assisted suicide for non-selfish motives is allowed. The country’s liberal approach has been based on that principle since its first and currently biggest assisted-suicide organisation Exit was founded in the 1980s. Swit-



zerland’s highest judicial authority, the Federal Supreme Court, has ruled in favour of Exit on a number of occasions.

The Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences has issued ethical guidelines: assisted suicide is justifiable for unbearable, medically diagnosed suffering and if a person capable of judgement expresses a carefully considered and consistent wish to die. In 2022, 1,600 people resident in Switzerland committed assisted suicide, according to the latest statistics issued by the Confederation. That does not include people coming from abroad, whose total number is unknown. In 2023, Dignitas, which, unlike Exit, also accepts people who do not hold a

Federal Councillor Elisabeth Baume-Schneider described the suicide capsule in parliament as illegal. But the promoters of Sarco ignored the ruling.
Photo: Keystone

Swiss passport or are not resident in the country, assisted 235 people from outside the country on their final journey.

Is it time to pass a law?

Despite criticism of suicide tourism, Switzerland’s liberal policy is supported by the people. Cantonal votes, often on whether assisted suicide should be allowed in public-sector care homes, show this. The most recent vote in favour was in June in the canton of Geneva. Swiss suicide assistants have also broadened the scope of what is allowed, for example when deciding whether an old person who is not seriously ill is eligible for their final prescription. However, the Sarco providers took one step further than that by omitting medical supervision entirely from the process.

Political attempts to tighten regulation have so far come to nothing; the most recent attempt was 15 years ago. However, new motions have now been submitted to parliament. Zurich SVP National Councillor Nina Fehr Düsel is calling for the Confederation to issue a ban on Sarco capsules. Zurich National Councillor Patrick Hässig of the Green Liberals opposes banning orders; he has asked the government for a national assisted suicide law instead. He says a legal framework is needed for the protection of everyone involved: the people thinking of assisted suicide, their relatives and the people who assist with the suicide.

Is it time for a standalone law on assisted suicide instead of relying on criminal law, product safety or the law on chemicals or narcotics? The debate on this sensitive issue has been revived in Switzerland having long lain dormant. One thing is certain: assisted suicides have consistently increased. In 2003, 187 people chose to end their life in this way. At 1,600 today, that figure has increased almost ninefold over the past 20 years.

Suicide prevention

The www.143.ch website offers help to anyone contemplating suicide – including chat and email support. However, please note that the 143 emergency phone number only takes calls from within Switzerland.

Help for anyone affected, including relatives: www.reden-kann-retten.ch

Switzerland gets the travel bug

Covid brought tourist traffic to a virtual standstill, but now travel has bounced back to record-breaking levels. Demand for plane and train travel in Switzerland is high.

DENISE LACHAT

Now that the Covid blip is behind us, the Swiss are keen to get back to flying. During the first half of 2024, over 14.5 million people travelled via Zurich Airport, the largest airport in the country, dwarfing Geneva and Basel-Mülhausen. That is 11 per cent more people than in the same period last year and almost as many as in the first half of 2019, before the Covid pandemic. Zurich expects to see 31 million travellers pass through by the end of 2024, and Zurich Airport was already reporting record profits at the end of August.

The airline Swiss is also showing record results, with demand for flights up by 12 per cent in the first half of this year (8.5 million passengers). Making up for the mandatory break imposed by Covid? Markus

year, however, long-haul flights were more in demand; the Swiss are drawn to warmer climes. Kuoni media spokesperson Flick knows their favourite destinations: Phuket, the Maldives and Mauritius. The Dominican Republic, South Africa and – a little closer to home – Gran Canaria are also popular. Fortunately for travel agents, airlines have beefed their offer up again after having had to pare it down during the pandemic, says Flick. The winter half of 2024 could prove even better for Kuoni than 2023.

Higher flight prices being accepted

This newly awakened passion for travel is not unique to Switzerland: it is being observed all around the

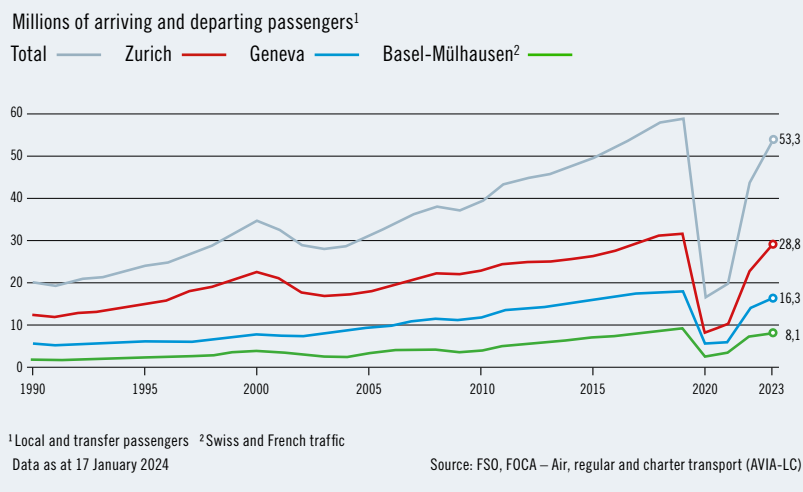
measure was rejected by Swiss voters in summer 2021, along with the rest of the CO₂ Act – but because airlines have raised prices for the diminished offer available. Kerosene has also become more expensive, leading to air travel costing up to 30 per cent more in 2023. Prices in 2024 were still slightly higher than before the pandemic, in spite of a slight decrease.

Many Swiss are willing and able to afford these prices. This is shown not least by the growing trend for independent travel, as travel agency Hotelplan has reported. Clients are looking for something special, whether they are travelling to the seaside or on city breaks. Package tours are also increasingly being tailored to meet clients' needs, according to media spokesperson Muriel Wolf. However, this is true only to a certain extent for families: their holiday budget in 2024 is feeling the pressure of higher prices for accommodation and activities. Families are therefore often opting for travel with a set upper budget limit or for destinations that have not raised their prices since the pandemic. Somewhere like Tunisia, for example, where Hotelplan Suisse has witnessed a “two-digit increase in bookings”.

The train as an alternative: beloved and beleaguered

Flying is not the only mode of transport on the up. Rail travel is also popular. The record figures from 2019 were repeated last year. Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) transported 1.32 million passengers... every day. Rail travel across borders even witnessed a new record: 12.3 million people travelled internationally by train in 2023 (2022: 10.7 million). 600,000 people took night trains. The SBB and its European partners are struggling to organise enough departures to meet the

Airline passengers travelling on regular and charter flights



Flick, media spokesperson for traditional Swiss travel agency Kuoni, calls it a “normalisation”, since Covid was a few years ago now.

Just as before, the most frequent destination for Swiss travellers is Europe. This is shown by the latest figures from the Federal Statistical Office. In December and over the new

world. According to figures from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), flight traffic over the past year reached 94 per cent of pre-Covid levels and achieved an all-time high in July 2024. At the same time, flying has become more expensive, including in Switzerland. This is not due to any Swiss aeroplane ticket tax – that



massive demand. Now, ironically, they have had the brakes slammed on by the Swiss transport minister: Federal Councillor Albert Rösti (SVP) has blocked the 30 million Swiss francs that was to have subsidised night trains from 2025 onwards. This meas-

Flying is not the only mode of transport on the up. Rail travel is also popular.

Financing, however, for night trains in particular, is proving a challenge.

ure is part of the extensive savings programme planned by the Federal Council to restructure the national budget (see also the “Review” of October 2024). Left-wing, Green and centrist federal parliamentarians reacted

sharply to this “undermining of rail transport as a sustainable alternative”, and an attempt was made to question the legality of the decision. In the end, parliament adopted the new CO₂ Act, which includes the subsidy for night trains. This Act will come into force in January and governs climate policy until 2030. However, if Rösti’s decision is upheld, the new night train connections from Switzerland to Rome and Barcelona will remain, at least for the time being, wishful thinking.

Switzerland as a destination

Switzerland itself is a popular travel destination. Industry organisation Switzerland Tourism has described the almost 42 million overnight hotel stays in 2023 as an “all-time high” and is relieved to report that Swiss tourism has recovered since the Covid pandemic.

A glance at the countries of origin of these travellers shows that, alongside South-East Asia, it was primarily guests from the United States who contributed to this record. They spent over 3 million nights staying in

hotels in Switzerland, a 33 per cent increase over the previous year. Travellers from Great Britain were also numerous once again (+ 23.6 per cent). Visitor numbers from the Gulf states have been rising steadily for years. Travel from China witnessed another dramatic surge, rising by over 300 percent between 2022 and 2023.

The growing numbers of visitors to Switzerland have reignited discussions of “overtourism”. A study published in summer 2024 by Switzerland Tourism and the Conference of Regional Tourism Directors of Switzerland showed that tourism centres in particular were taking the problematic aspect of (mass) tourism seriously: littering, harm to wildlife and the environment, shortages of accommodation, traffic disruptions and a certain lack of respect from tourists were all evoked. However, according to Switzerland Tourism, international tour operators are already warning of a cooldown. Apparently, the money that guests from the US had put aside during the pandemic for overseas travel is gradually running out.

As though nothing had happened: the throng at the Swiss airline check-in counter (2023).

Photo: Keystone

IT experts warn against digitisation for the sake of digitisation

Switzerland needs to go digital to keep up with the times. Critics are warning against doing so at the expense of users' rights and requirements. People must still be able to do things offline, they argue.

EVELINE RUTZ

Many people buy books, groceries, clothes and theatre tickets online now. Even moving house, requesting planning permission or paying taxes increasingly entails digital contact with the relevant offices. All sorts of business can now be done conveniently by phone or computer. There is considerable potential for official services to run online – potential that Switzerland has not really tapped into yet. Currently placed 31 in the annual European Union rankings, it lies below the EU average.

The number of online services is quite small. There is no national E-ID (see “Swiss Review” 6/2022). Many of the current IT systems are mutually incompatible; data is rarely gathered in line with set standards. That complicates the seamless exchange of information as well as the use of information for planning, administration and research. The general public realised this when the Confederation had trouble acquiring a real-time overview of the spread of infection during the coronavirus pandemic. It wasn't unusual for medical practices to fax infection numbers to Berne. This provoked a major outcry: administration, politics and the economy pressed for more commitment and urgency. Switzerland had to accelerate its digital conversion to keep up, so they said.

Public administration is coming under pressure to make up the lost ground. “We have no more time to lose,” said Anne Lévy, Director-General of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), when she announced a national funding programme for early 2025. The question is not whether we need to push digitisation in the health sector, “but how quickly we can progress with it and how we can get everyone on the same page”. The Confederation plans to invest 392 million Swiss francs by 2034 solely for digitisation. Other projects are ongoing. The principle “digital first and digital only” is to be implemented consistently at all three state levels.

The smartphone must remain a tool, and not become the only option

However, as calls grow to pick up the pace, other voices are calling for restraint. For example, plans by public transport bosses to make bus and rail ticket sales exclusively digital from 2035 have met with resistance. Many older people do not have a smartphone, as the association of active senior citizens and self-help organisations in Switzerland (Vasos) points out. They need to be able to buy non-digital tickets, with cash. There are also the



hearing and visually impaired to think about. The needs of children and young people must not be forgotten either, asserts youth organisation Pro Juventute. The youngest public transport users need to have the option of buying single journeys offline.

Monica Amgwerd, General Secretary of the Zurich Pirate Party, agrees. “It’s not right to force children to buy tickets by smartphone.” The cash option must not be abolished. After all, people may also not want to give out their data all over the place. “Unlike analogue data, digital data can be gathered, evaluated and misused on a large scale,” argues Amgwerd. People need protection against that.

The Zurich Pirate Party wants to enshrine the right to live offline in the cantonal constitution. In August, it put forward the popular initiative “for a basic right to digital integrity”. People in the digital space must be informed and able to act with self-determination. They must not be

Pay for a rail ticket in cash without leaving a data trail? Even the IT savvy are arguing that this should still be possible.

Photo: Keystone

monitored and analysed without their consent. They must not be evaluated by machines and they must be able to count on their online activity being forgotten at some point.

Balancing the pros and cons

It may initially seem surprising that the call for the right to live offline comes from a party with many IT experts in its ranks and that is seen as having a close affinity with technology. “We want people-centric digitisation, which is why we base our approach on fundamental rights – not trends or hype,” says Amgwerd: “It’s in our DNA.” The aim is not to stop digitisation, but it must follow democratic principles. It must serve the people and not individual companies. It takes rules to do that. “We aren’t applying the brakes,” stresses the party general secretary. “We are intervening to raise awareness of human rights.”

Upholding these rights while making digital progress is not impossible, confirms Erik Schönenberger, executive director of the Digital Society. “You can use and protect data – the two are not mutually exclusive.” The idea is to consider all population groups when planning digital projects. As a positive example, Schönenberger recalls how a new concept for an electronic identity was created after the people rejected the original proposal in 2021. The responsible federal office conducted a participatory process to define the new concept. “All perspectives were taken into consideration, so individual actors would not profit financially or assume too much influence.” If everything goes to plan, the E-ID will be introduced in

“We want the people to engage with the issue and recognise its significance.”

Monica Amgwerd, General Secretary of the Zurich Pirate Party



2026. Erik Schönenberger approves of digital projects going to a vote in Switzerland. Fundamentally, it is parliament’s job to meet the needs of the people. But a popular vote triggers important debates and carries more weight: “It has another impact when the people can decide.”

Geneva is the first canton to introduce regulation

Voters in the canton of Geneva have already come out strongly in favour of “constitutional protection in the digital space”. The proposal won 94 per cent of the vote. Digital integrity has also come up in the Federal Palace, with Samuel Bendahan backing national regulation. The aim is to uphold basic rights in the digital sphere, stressed the SP national councillor from the canton of Vaud. It is often unclear how artificial intelligence works and handles sensitive data. It enables new forms of control, monitoring and influence. “People need protection against the different applications of the new technologies.” The federal parliament turned down Bendahan’s motion, but it is still working towards digital integrity. The aim is to enshrine digital integrity in law sooner rather than later.

Monica Amgwerd hopes the Zurich initiative will make its presence felt beyond the canton: “We want the people to engage with the issue and recognise its significance.” In addition, companies, authorities and organisations have to rethink their digitisation strategies, she says. Ultimately, solutions are needed at a national level, “in order to progress digitally in a way that benefits the people first and foremost”.

A delegation from Zurich’s Pirate Party submits their initiative, which calls for the right to live offline to be enshrined in the constitution.

Photo: Keystone

Farmers' resistance sinks nature protection initiative

The Swiss electorate rejected a constitutional article providing greater protection for biodiversity. The No vote was a surprisingly emphatic 63 per cent. A majority of voters in the “Fifth Switzerland” said Yes to the measure on 22 September.

THEODORA PETER

The issue seems pretty indisputable: who, in light of the rise in the number of endangered plant and animal species, could be against more biodiversity? Nonetheless, the people behind the initiative were increasingly forced onto the defensive during the voting campaign. The main source of resistance was from agriculture. The farmers' association warned that greater protection for nature could come at the expense of agricultural land: “30 per cent less land? Say goodbye to Swiss food production!” was the pointed slogan on the No posters. The Swiss electricity industry also came out against the initiative, fearing its own restrictions, such as on building wind turbines and solar facilities.

On the other side, the nature protection associations failed to counter accusations of ‘fear-mongering’. The term ‘biodiversity’ was apparently too nebulous to stir up any feelings of concern or awareness of the need for urgent action among the people. There is a consensus in the scientific community that rapid, effective measures are needed to protect and promote biodiversity in Switzerland. Over 400 researchers have signed a statement to this effect. They have identified a “continuous deterioration in living conditions and ecological quality” for many species and habitats. In their view, efforts made to date have not gone far enough. Even the Federal Council admitted that the Confederation had not met all its biodiver-

sity goals. The government intends to use action plans to promote species diversity in a targeted manner. It is not prepared to provide much more funding for this, however.

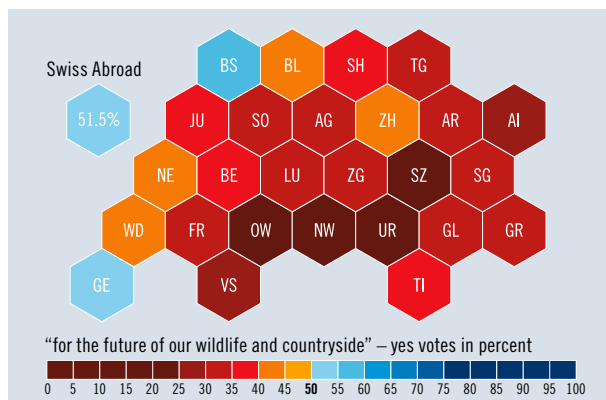
A resounding No to the pension fund reform

A government proposal also ran aground at the ballot box. The occupational pension reform motion recorded a 67.1 per cent No vote at the polls; the Swiss Abroad also narrowly voted the measure down, with 51 per cent against. This proposal was intended to safeguard the funding of retirement pensions over the long term – by reducing benefits, among other things. The trade unions successfully defeated the measure in the referendum. The resounding No from the people is a victory for the Left, which claimed another sociopolitical vote for itself, in the wake of the successful initiative to introduce a 13th month for the old-age and survivors' pension (OASI) (“Review” 3/2024). The big losers here are the conservative parties, who had pushed the proposal through parliament against the wishes of the Left. It did not help the Yes camp that contradictory statistics emerged during the voting campaign. This led to uncertainty and growing scepticism among the electorate.

A look back at the results of the 24 November popular vote (held after this issue went to press) will feature in the next “Review”.

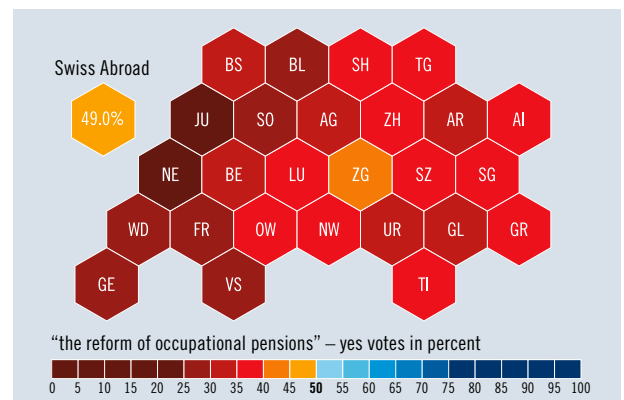


for the future of our wildlife and countryside



The initiative “for the future of our wildlife and countryside” was defeated nationally with 63 per cent against. The “Fifth Switzerland” was more sympathetic towards the issue: 51.5 per cent said Yes to the biodiversity initiative, as did the cantons of Geneva and Basel-Stadt.

the reform of occupational pensions



With 67.1 per cent of people across Switzerland voting No, the reform of occupational pensions met with a resounding defeat. The Swiss Abroad narrowly rejected the measure with 51 per cent against – the “Fifth Switzerland” took greater heed of the recommendations from the Federal Council and Parliament.

New attempt at strict climate protection

On 9 February 2025, the Swiss people will vote on the environmental responsibility initiative. This initiative calls for the Swiss economy to consume considerably fewer resources, in order to protect the climate and the environment. Opponents are warning of an “elimination of well-being”.

THEODORA PETER

The popular initiative “for a responsible economy within planetary limits” is going before voters at a politically unfortunate time for its authors. Only a few months ago, the biodiversity initiative was flatly rejected by the electorate (see article on the left). In a world filled with war and economic uncertainty, ecological issues are clearly facing an uphill struggle. “We’re under no illusions here: getting the measure approved is going to be a major challenge,” says Magdalena Erni, co-chair of the youth section of the Swiss Green Party and spokesperson for the Alliance for Environmental Responsibility. However, the devastating storms of the past summer have shown precisely how urgent it is that we commit to greater protection for the climate and the environment, she says. The idea behind the environmental responsibility initiative dates back to 2021, when Switzerland’s ambitions to fight climate change suffered a stinging setback: the people narrowly voted to reject the CO² Act (see “Review” 4/2021). The Young Greens then launched a fresh attempt in the wake of this defeat. This was prompted not by frustration, according to Erni, but by the awareness “that things really need to move forward now”.

The initiators based the attempt on the scientific concept of planetary limits. According to this principle, climate and biodiversity are two of several load limits that have already been exceeded. Water consumption and emissions of nitrogen and phosphorus are also higher than the levels the planet can bear. The environmental responsibility initiative is therefore calling for action from the Swiss economy: it should restrict the consumption of resources to covering basic needs. This objective is to be reached within ten years. “We have already lost too much time in reaching climate goals,” Erni says to justify this deadline.

Federal Council and parliament opposed

The Federal Council flatly rejects the initiative. It would cause “serious interference with freedom of decision”, according to Environment Minister Albert Rösti (SVP). The ‘antiliberal’ issue was also widely rejected in parliament. The conservative parties even referred to it as a potential “elimination of well-being”. Even the Green Liberals consider the implementation of the initiative “impossible” – particularly within ten years, which would result in “draconian regulation”. In the Left-Green camp, the SP pleaded in vain for a counterproposal without the contentious ten-year deadline. The parliamentary majority decided to put the initiative to a popular vote without



Swiss members of the Young Greens are seeking to have “planetary limits” respected with their initiative. Photo: Keystone

offering any alternative. As expected, the economy is also against the environmental responsibility initiative.

Alexander Keberle, head of the environment section at *economiesuisse*, described the proposal in a blog as “post-capitalistic pie in the sky”. Switzerland obviously needs to reduce its planetary footprint further, “but it should not turn itself into a developing nation in the process”. The “extremely low” consumption of resources required by the initiative is first and foremost a sign of “extreme poverty”, as Keberle wrote in allusion to countries like Afghanistan, Haiti and Madagascar, which do respect planetary limits.

In comparison, Switzerland achieves over 80 times the economic performance per capita, while its ecological footprint is “only” around five times larger. Growth does not necessarily lead to greater strain on the environment, argues the business representative: Switzerland has more than doubled its industrial value generation since 1990, while simultaneously lowering emissions by almost half.

The environmental responsibility initiative is the only proposal being put to the vote on 9 February.

“We are magicians! We have the sixth sense! Victory will still be ours!”

Gertrud Pfander never gained international renown, but the Basel-born poet who died in 1898 at the age of 24 left behind a heartbreaking testimony to the many victims of tuberculosis.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

*«Ich wollte weisse Adler senden
Und liess ein Schwalbenpärchen raus.
Ich wollte mächtige Worte wenden,
Ich wollte weisse Lilien spenden
Und nun ist's nur ein Heidestrauss.»*

[I wanted to send white eagles on their way / And a pair of swallows flew away. / I wanted to use powerful words, / I wanted to dole out white lilies, / But all I have left now is a bouquet of heather.] This verse, which Gertrud Pfander used to preface her last poems in 1898, tells of her resistance finally withering away in the face of illness. According to a résumé of her brief life, written in 1896, she was still waiting for “that ray of sunshine” because her “flame [had] not yet been extinguished”. Pfander, who was born out of wedlock on 1 May 1874 in Basel, had grown up feeling almost intolerably neglected and lost. Short stays abroad had helped her overcome her most wretched feelings. She had just begun to find her inner peace working as a switchboard operator when she contracted tuberculosis and her world came crashing down. Pfander, who had inherited a small fortune, was now 20. But life was about to end before it had even started. She would move from sanatorium to sanatorium like an outcast, suffering more from an insatiable, acute yearning for love and security than from her illness.

An existential need to write

It was certainly no surprise when she picked up a pen and paper, as she had previously done as a child. Yet it seems a wonderful act of providence that Pfander was so remarkably adept at channelling the sense of im-

pending doom or any scintilla of joy that remained in her life, relying on a conventional, almost naive rhyming poetry style reminiscent of a Heinrich Heine or an Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. But it was not the style itself that mattered; rather, the radicalism with which Pfander recounted only her own intimate experiences, the openness with which she

“I was always left alone but always managed to find myself in new places when no one was looking. So I became all the more familiar with big mountains and big clouds. But I am still waiting for that ray of sunshine.

Because my flame has not yet been extinguished. And because I have recounted this to my dear friends in verse, I have become a poet. My teacher is life, most of this an unhappy life. It is impossible to explain through cogent reasoning or philosophy. I would like to ask my readers to believe that my poems owe less to ingenuity and more to the absolute need to be truthful.”

(Gertrud Pfander, preface to the “Passifloren” anthology of poems, Zurich 1896; out of print)

expressed her feelings, and the way in which she placed a woman’s perspective of love front and centre as the subject and the man as the object of her narrative, as if this were the most natural thing in the world, which it certainly was not at the time.

Poems fuelled by love

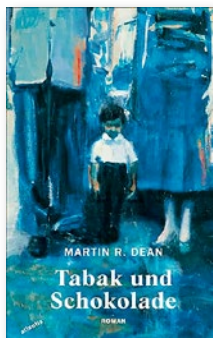
Although her muse wore a “black dress with a train”, it was also love that fuelled Pfander’s poetry to the end: undeclared love for the first violinist of the Montreux Casino Orchestra, (music was a core theme of her poetry in 1894); or love for a young man from Thuringia, who left Lake Geneva and moved to Cairo in 1896, fuelling in her a fascination for exotic lands (which was also reflected in the poems). But Pfander’s most poignant relationship was with 19-year-old sculptor Abraham Graf, who also had lung disease and died one month before her. She dedicated four heart-rending poems to Graf in 1897. Pfander died on 9 November 1898 in Davos at the age of 24, leaving behind a total of 80 poems. These works, some of which had already seen the light of day in 1896 (“Passifloren”), were published in full by Karl Henckell in 1908 (“Helldunkel”). Even well over a century later, it is hard to tell how many of Pfander’s beautiful poems were meant to endure. For the author herself, they were at any rate a wonderful source of comfort and fulfilment. “We are a people of poets!” she proclaimed in a letter written in the same year she died. “We are magicians! We have the sixth sense! Victory will still be ours! Te Deum laudamus!”



Gertrud Pfander
(1874–1898)

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST BASED IN ZÜRICH

Trinidad and Aargau



MARTIN R. DEAN:
«Tabak und Schokolade»
Novel. Atlantis Verlag,
Zurich 2024. 224 pages.
CHF 30.
Also available as an
e-book.

mother, his childhood, and the origins and history of his family. With old black-and-white photos providing him with clues about those years in Trinidad, Dean visits the island himself to discover a sizeable family tree. The author grew up in Aargau – in an era when Switzerland became an increasingly reluctant host of Italian guest workers.

Dean not only uncovers big family trees on both sides of the Atlantic, but also comes across varied colonial connections that heavily influenced his own life. Dean's grandmother immigrated to Switzerland from Rügen in Germany. She strove to maintain medium-class decorum in Aargau, keeping well away from the Italian migrants who worked in the local cigar factories. Meanwhile, Dean learns that his father Ralph was the offspring of two rival families in Trinidad – the Sinanans and the Ramkeesoons. Ralph's ancestors were originally from India and came to Trinidad to work on the plantations. Although Trinidad's ethnic Indian population has long been part of the island's fabric, Dean senses that the stigma of colonialism remains below the surface. He puts the violence perpetrated by his biological father down to being that of a "person who had no moral compass in a society robbed of its traditions".

Dean has always been particularly alert to racial discrimination and xenophobia, which he himself experienced as the child of a black father. "Tabak und Schokolade" is a lucid and cleverly crafted personal account of his own family experience within the colonial paradigm.

BEAT MAZENAUER

www.mrdean.ch

New versions of his own songs



BLIGG:
"Tavolata"
2024

This time last year, Bligg seemed to be talking an awful lot about growing old and being a dad. He said his priorities had changed. Withdrawing from the limelight, he had apparently developed a taste for travel – and for kicking back on the sofa. When the "Tradition" album dropped, it was rumoured that it was probably the final LP of the Zurich rapper's long career. But no sooner had the dust settled than Bligg's next record was out this autumn. And this one is different. On "Tavolata", the rapper looks back on his own music, presenting a body of work that spans over two decades. But "Tavolata" is not your usual best-of album. All the tracks are new versions of his old songs.

Bligg has covered his hits in collaboration with folk music combo Helen Maier & The Folks. Favourites like "Rosalie", "Musigg i dä Schwiiz" and "Legändä & Heldä" have now been put to accordion, keyboard and strings. They suddenly sound like tunes from Ireland, Scandinavia or the Balkans.

"Weisch no euses erschte Mol Sex zu Barry White?" ["Remember the first time we made out to Barry White?"] Bligg sings raspily in his remake of the 2008 song "Signal", sipping a glass of red wine in the video. Acoustic instruments give a tastefully stripped down, direct feel to the composition. Bligg's reworking of 2001 dance rap single "Alles scho mal ghört" [Heard it all before] features a drum machine but is again inspired by folk music. The same applies to the erstwhile hip-hop of "Mosaik" with unplugged sound replacing the airy keyboard arrangements of the original. Violins, mandolins, double bass, and more violins – this is the essence of "Tavolata".

Bligg's old hits work really well as folk songs, you have to give the 48-year-old vocalist that. But it is probably not the most original album. It would be more interesting to know whether Bligg has now hung up his microphone for good. As a playful retrospective, "Tavolata" is actually a fitting way to round off an impressive career and say farewell.

MARKO LEHTINEN

www.bligg.ch

Few have heard of the “Rütli of the Fifth Switzerland”

Brunnen is home to a special patch of land, the Area for the Swiss Abroad, which was inaugurated in 1991 to mark the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation. Today, the site is of symbolic importance to 800,000-plus Swiss Abroad around the world.

LISA STALDER

The Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen (canton of Schwyz) is a spacious and inviting grassy area offering stunning views of Lake Lucerne and the surrounding mountains. It also has symbolic significance. This 5,400-square-metre site situated adjacent to Brunnen’s Föhn harbour is a reminder of the 820,000 or so Swiss who currently live abroad, and of the sense of attachment that many expatriates feel to their native country. Some also call it the “Rütli of the Fifth Switzerland” – a fitting title given that Rütli itself, the legendary birthplace of Switzerland, is situated within viewing distance on the opposite side of the lake. Furthermore, the location marks the end point of the “Swiss Path” hiking route, which winds around Lake Uri and features stone markers indicating in chronological order the year in which each canton joined the Confederation. The Area for the Swiss Abroad hosts sporting and cultural events and is occasionally repurposed as a fan zone to screen big football matches. The Swiss Armed Forces use it for parades and flag ceremonies, while a number of Swiss National Day celebrations have also taken place there.

Remembering Switzerland’s 700th anniversary

Despite the site’s symbolic importance to the Swiss diaspora, surprisingly few people in Switzerland have heard of the Area for the Swiss Abroad. But when the Area for the Swiss Abroad was inaugurated, the circumstances were anything but low-key, explains Alex Hauenstein, who chairs the Area for the Swiss Abroad foundation. “The Area for the Swiss Abroad is one of the few surviving installations that were created to celebrate 700 years of the Swiss Confederation in 1991,” he says.

Let us start at the beginning. The Area for the Swiss Abroad Brunnen foundation was established in 1988 and belongs to the Swiss Confederation, the canton and the district of Schwyz, the municipality of Ingenbohl, Schwyzer Kantonalbank, and the



Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. Thanks to fundraising from Swiss Abroad around the world as well as a sizeable donation by the federal government, the foundation was able to acquire the site on the shores of Lake Lucerne ahead of the 700th-anniversary festivities. The Area for the Swiss Abroad was officially handed over to the public by then President of the Swiss Confederation Jean-Pascal Delamuraz on 4 May 1991. It was one of the main event hubs during the celebrations that year. On 1 August 1991, all seven members of the Swiss government gathered at the site to pay the “Fifth Switzerland” what could be classed as a state visit.

Opposition to “Springboard” project

Despite its spectacular location, the Area for the Swiss Abroad never quite captured the imagination as a venue thereafter. “Many hadn’t even heard of it,” says Hauenstein, who lived and worked for many years in Germany and only learned of the site’s existence in 2009 – just before joining the foundation in 2010 which he has chaired since 2014. He and other members of the foundation board wanted to turn the site into a meaningful

venue and make more people aware of it. They therefore commissioned the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) to suggest ideas. The foundation eventually decided to hold a competition to come up with an installation that would enhance the site. Called “Springboard”, the winning project envisaged building a pedestrian jetty rising above the lake – a springboard into the big wide world beyond, so to speak. But it was dead in the water before it could get off the ground. “The conservationist lobby scuppered planning permission,” Hauenstein says drily.

Various uses

Despite this setback, it was obvious that the Area for the Swiss Abroad needed to become more of a draw, he adds. People were using the space for sunbathing, picnics and plenty of other activities, but the site rarely hosted major events. And such big gatherings were precisely what was necessary, because the foundation relied on revenue to fund the site’s upkeep. Hauenstein and friends therefore entrusted the Brunnen tourist board with responsibility for hiring out the Area



Boasting a jetty as well as stunning mountain views, the Area for the Swiss Abroad is situated at a prime location in Brunnen (canton of Schwyz). The many Swiss Abroad who come to visit the site range from expats visiting Switzerland for the first time to those reliving past memories.

Photos: provided (1) / Keystone (3)

for the Swiss Abroad. The Spettacolo international street artist festival, the Windweek Brunnen water sports event, and the European Championship in the International Six Metre class (a former Olympic sailing class) are some of the more prominent events hosted in Brunnen since then.

The foundation has also had to turn down certain requests. For example, the relatives of one of its deceased co-founders wanted to bury their loved one's ashes at the lakeside. Hauenstein says he understood the relatives' wishes. "But we don't want the site to become a cemetery."

Swiss artistic talent from around the world

Several years ago, the foundation started using the Area for the Swiss Abroad as a venue for its "Artist in Residence" project. This summer, Edinburgh-based Swiss musician Nathaniel "Nat" Cartier was invited to Brunnen for a five-week residency. This creative sojourn was funded by the foundation, which in turn commissioned Cartier to produce three songs and four paintings for the foundation to use at its discretion. Hauen-

stein says the 24-year-old musician made the most of his stay. Cartier teamed up with Brunnen's yodellers and had a go at playing the Alpine horn and the Swiss accordion. In one of the commissioned songs, he plays the saxophone with Fredy Fuchs joining him on the Alpine horn. At the end of his residency, Cartier was able to showcase his work in front of a sizeable audience at Brunnen lakeside.



Brunnen was a temporary home to musician and "Artist in Residence" Nat Cartier in summer 2024. Photo provided

After residencies in 2016 and 2017, this was the third time that the foundation had hosted a Swiss artist who is based abroad. The next time it plans to invite an artist to Brunnen is summer 2026, which coincides with the 35th anniversary of the Area for the Swiss Abroad. "We certainly want to celebrate this milestone," says Hauenstein.

A place to come home to

Overseeing the anniversary celebrations will also be the foundation chairman's last act of office before stepping down. After 16 years, he believes it is time to pass on the baton to someone younger. And it is now a long time since he was a Swiss Abroad himself anyway. He hopes that the Area for the Swiss Abroad continues to move with the times and adapts to the needs of Swiss Abroad. But the main thing is that the site is preserved, he adds. For many expatriates, the attachment to Switzerland remains as close as ever, as it has been for generations. The Area for the Swiss Abroad means a great deal to them. "It is a place they can always come home to."

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Federal votes

The proposals submitted to the people are set by the Federal Council at least four months prior to the voting date.

The Federal Council decided at its session on 9 October 2024 to submit the following proposals to the people on 9 February 2024:

- Federal Popular Initiative “For a responsible economy within our planet’s limits (Environmental Responsibility Initiative)” (BBI 2024 2488)

All information on proposals submitted to the people (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by parliament, the Federal Council etc.) can be found at www.admin.ch/abstimmungen or in the Federal Chancellery Votelnfo app.



Popular initiatives

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

- Federal Popular Initiative “For food that is not genetically modified (Food Protection Initiative)” (3 March 2026)
- Federal Popular Initiative “For a direct democratic and competitive Switzerland – No to passive EU membership (Compass Initiative)” (1 April 2026)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in French, German and Italian at <https://www.bk.admin.ch/> > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



Please note

Provide your Swiss representation **with your email address(es) and mobile phone number(s)** and/or any changes thereto and register at the online counter (link on FDFA homepage www.eda.admin.ch or via www.swissabroad.ch), to select your order of “Swiss Review” and other publications. If you encounter any problems registering, please contact your representation.

You can read and/or print the current edition of “Swiss Review” as well as back copies since 2006 at www.revue.ch. “Swiss Review” (or “Gazzetta Svizzera” in Italian) is available electronically (via email, free of charge) or in print for all Swiss Abroad households, or through the iOS-/Android app.

Growing up in Canada, education in Switzerland

The Swiss Abroad Cyril Dittli talks about his "try-out" days and subsequent apprenticeship in a Swiss specialist bicycle shop.

"My name is Cyril Dittli and I come from St-Isidore, a village near Ottawa, Canada. I grew up on a farm there and successfully completed high school. My parents emigrated from Lucerne to Canada 35 years ago for a new adventure. At that time, many Swiss emigrants moved to this region. So, I always had contact with other Swiss families and my parents only spoke to me in German, while I spoke English and French at school. Every Saturday, I went to the German language school. At the time, I didn't like having to go to school on Saturdays, but now I'm grateful.

Every summer I was able to spend my holidays at my grandparents' home in Switzerland and in the tenth grade I attended the Kanti Sursee for six months as an exchange student. During this exchange semester, I had the opportunity to do a 'try-out' week in a specialist bike and bicycle shop. So later, when I applied by phone from Canada for an apprenticeship as a bicycle mechanic, the company took me on as an apprentice with

open arms. A month later, I packed my bags and moved to Meggen, Lucerne. It's the perfect location. I can cycle to the shop in ten minutes or to school in 20 minutes. That would be unimaginable in Canada!

It wasn't that difficult to get used to vocational school here in Switzerland. Life in Switzerland is certainly different from Canada, but I find it interesting to get to know the Swiss culture better. Everything is very close in Switzerland.

The hardest thing for me was not being able to see my friends from high school so often. But we managed to keep in touch and some of them even came to Switzerland to visit me on holiday. What I like most is how independent I have become. After I finish my apprenticeship, I will continue to work here because I appreciate the discipline and the joy of good work.

As the high cost of living in Switzerland is not a myth, I would never have been able to start an apprenticeship in Switzerland without the financial support of my home



Cyril Dittli loves winter and summer sports. Photo provided



Cyril Dittli: "It's so brilliant that you can go skiing here in the morning and in the afternoon, you can blast down the trails on your bike in a T-shirt, almost like in summer." Photo provided

canton of Uri. I would also like to thank *educationsuisse* and its staff, who supported me with my scholarship application and helped me with any questions I had. I was able to have lunch with my grandparents every day and my parents helped me with administrative tasks and often gave me emotional support over the phone. It wasn't always easy living alone and so far away from home for the first time. A big thank you also goes to my training company, which gave me the opportunity to do an apprenticeship in Switzerland."



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Democracy in action: improving the CSA election process

The 2025 elections to the Council of the Swiss Abroad will see fundamental changes to the way votes are cast around the world. Two delegates currently serving on the Council talked about these developments.

INTERVIEW: ANDREAS FELLER

In 2025, the Swiss Abroad will elect the people to represent them on the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA), the de facto “Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland”, for another four-year mandate. Once they are elected, CSA delegates will represent the interests of the Swiss expatriate community vis-à-vis the Swiss authorities. As we explained in the last edition of “Swiss Review”, a working group has been entrusted with the job of making the CSA elections more transparent and democratic. It believes that the introduction of direct elections, focusing particularly on a reliable e-voting system, is the way forward. Provided they are registered with their local embassy or consulate, any Swiss citizen aged 18 or over will be entitled to



“We want the CSA to have greater legitimacy and to better reflect the diversity of the Swiss expatriate community.”

Stephan Frei, Germany. Photo provided

vote in the direct elections due to take place next year in 13 electoral constituencies (countries or groups of countries). In addition to voting, people can stand for election to the CSA within these 13 electoral constituencies.

Modernising the election system to boost voter participation is nothing less than democracy in action. What has the reaction been in the electoral constituencies participating in this process? We asked Stephan Frei, CSA delegate from Germany, and Rolf Blaser, the Sri Lanka-based CSA delegate for the Central, West and South Asia electoral constituency, for some feedback.

How were elections to the CSA conducted in your constituency before the introduction of direct voting?

Stephan Frei: Previously, delegates were elected by the presidents of the 40 or so Swiss associations that make up the German section of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

Rolf Blaser: At the last election, the Swiss Circle Sri Lanka was the only recognised Swiss association in our constituency consisting of 24 countries. The Swiss Circle Sri Lanka asked its members to submit their candidacies ahead of the general assembly – the meeting at which the election of CSA delegates for the 2021–25 legislative period subsequently took place.

What efforts are you making to engage with Swiss in your region ahead of the 2025 elections?

Stephan Frei: We have a website, an increasingly popular Instagram channel, a newsletter, and a new [swisscommunity.org](https://www.swisscommunity.org) group dedicated to Swiss living in Germany. We also rely on the regional editions of “Swiss



“This is democracy in its purest form and a true testament to Swiss culture and equality.”

Rolf Blaser, Sri Lanka. Photo provided

Review”, because these are circulated to most Swiss living in Germany.

Rolf Blaser: In Sri Lanka, we meet regularly in person ten to 12 times a year. These gatherings are a chance to interact as well as celebrate Swiss culture in different ways. We continually update our Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts in addition to our website. We also have an email newsletter containing details of future events. Furthermore, a regional newsletter with relevant information for the entire constituency is sent to all embassies and consulates for forwarding.

What do you hope the switch to direct elections will achieve?

Stephan Frei: We want the CSA to have greater legitimacy and to better reflect the

Are Swiss Abroad affected by ETIAS?

Question: I have heard that the new ETIAS rules will come into force in spring 2025, and I am now wondering what impact this will have on Swiss Abroad. Do the rules apply to us?

diversity of the Swiss expatriate community. This is possible if the majority of Swiss Abroad can elect their local delegates.

Rolf Blaser: Thanks to this change, all registered Swiss nationals can now stand for election as well as vote, regardless of whether or not they belong to a recognised Swiss association. This is democracy in its purest form and a true testament to Swiss culture and equality.

What you need to know

To cast your vote in the CSA elections, you will need to be registered under a valid email address at your local consulate or embassy by 31 January 2025 at the latest. This is because voters will receive voting instructions directly by email from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

Voting will be possible from Friday, 11 April 2025.

Anyone who not only wishes to vote but also wants to stand for election to the CSA should contact their local election coordinator without delay.

Application forms must be submitted by 15 February 2025.

The list of participating countries and the contact details of local election coordinators are available on the official election website:
www.swisscommunity.org/de/elections

Answer: In future, travellers will need to have an ETIAS travel authorisation to enter most European countries, including Switzerland (ETIAS stands for European Travel Information and Authorisation System). But in practice, this will only apply to nationals from visa-exempt countries who wish to travel to Europe for a short-term stay of up to 90 days. Travellers will be able to apply online for an ETIAS travel authorisation. ETIAS is linked to a traveller's passport and is valid for up to three years or until the passport expires, whichever comes first. According to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), ETIAS is expected to go live in May 2025 at the earliest.

No need to worry: if you are a Swiss Abroad with a Swiss passport, you will still be able to enter Switzerland – and most European countries for that matter – unconditionally. Article 24 of the Swiss Federal Constitution guarantees freedom of domicile to all Swiss in Switzerland.

ETIAS travel authorisation could, however, be of relevance to members of your

family. If they do not hold Swiss citizenship and are nationals of one of the visa-exempt countries, they will need an ETIAS travel authorisation to enter Switzerland in future.

It will be possible to fill out the ETIAS application form using either the official ETIAS website or the ETIAS mobile application. Applying for an ETIAS travel authorisation will cost 7 euros. Applications will normally be processed within minutes. However, it may take longer if you are requested to provide additional information or documentation to support your application. This is why you should apply for an ETIAS travel authorisation well in advance of your planned journey.

Please note that a valid ETIAS travel authorisation does not guarantee automatic right of entry. When you arrive at the border, a border guard will ask to see your passport and other documents and verify whether you meet all entry conditions.

STEPHANIE LEBER, OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT



Travellers holding Swiss passports will be able to enter Switzerland without an ETIAS travel authorisation. Passport holders of other countries who do not require a visa to enter Switzerland will have to apply for ETIAS travel authorisation. Photo: Keystone

A summer full of great surprises

The 2025 FYSA summer camp schedule for children aged eight to 14

Winter is barely upon us, and we are already thinking of next summer. After all, we want to hit the ground running when our holiday camp summer season begins, ensuring that our young camp participants have the time of their lives. And we have a few choice surprises in store next year:

1. Children can now go on a “Swiss trip” even if they have been on one before.
2. All children from Swiss schools abroad can take part in our holiday camps.
3. The holiday camp starting in mid-July has been extended by one day, so that as many children as possible can celebrate Swiss National Day together.

There are of course other new things that you can read about in our 2024 annual report, which is available on our website. We are already looking forward to next year, when we hope to see many new and familiar faces. Here is our summer schedule (please visit our website for further details):

Offer	Date	Age group
Adelboden (canton of Berne)	21 June – 4 July 2025	10–14
Swiss trip 1	25 June – 4 July 2025	12–14
Sedrun (canton of Grisons)	4–18 July 2025	12–14
Bellevue (canton of Vaud)	9–18 July 2025	8–11
Swiss trip 2	9–18 July 2025	12–14
Uster (canton of Zurich)	19 July – 2 August 2025	12–14
Bellevue (canton of Vaud)	19 July – 2 August 2025	8–11
Swiss trip 3	23 July – 2 August 2025	12–14
Fieschertal (canton of Valais)	2–15 August 2025	10–14
Swiss trip 4	6–15 August 2025	12–14

You can sign up for the camps from 00:00 (CET) on Tuesday, 14 January 2025. To get you in the mood, the online version of this article includes three short videos with footage from our holiday camps in 2024: www.revue.link/clip

DAVID REICHMUTH / ISABELLE STEBLER, FYSA

Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
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Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)
Alpenstrasse 24, 3006 Berne, Switzerland
Email: info@sjas.ch
www.sjas.ch



The OSA Youth Service summer camp schedule for young people aged 15 to 18

Attending a holiday camp in Switzerland means experiencing the majestic Alps, making friends with fellow young Swiss Abroad from around the world, and discovering Swiss culture. From hiking, to swimming in crystal-clear lakes, to spending evenings around the campfire – every day is a unique adventure.

Conceived and organised by the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), our camps offer young people the opportunity to connect with their Swiss roots and enjoy a formative, unforgettable time. A summer in Switzerland is the perfect opportunity to have fun and make memories for life. Here is an overview of our holiday camps in 2025, which are geared to young people aged 15 and older:

Offer	Date
Swiss Challenge, throughout Switzerland	5–18 July 2025
Sport and leisure camp, including Swiss National Day celebrations, in Sainte-Croix (canton of Vaud)	19 July–2 August 2025
Sport and leisure camp in Sainte-Croix (canton of Vaud)	2–15 August 2025

In addition to our holiday camps in 2025, webinars addressing the issues at stake in upcoming federal popular votes will also be available throughout the year. These webinars are aimed specifically, but not exclusively, at young Swiss Abroad.

Further information on all Youth Service offers is available on the www.swisscommunity.org website. Direct link to youth offers: www.revue.link/youthoffers

You can sign up online for the holiday camps, from 14 January 2025, 14:00 (Swiss time) to 15 March 2025. For additional details, please do not hesitate to contact the Youth Service.

MARIE BLOCH, OSA YOUTH SERVICE

Swiss
Community

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Discussion

Our intrepid reporter cycled through Jura in the last edition of “Swiss Review”, inspiring many readers in the process. Some of them now intend to explore Switzerland’s youngest canton by bike themselves. Just one note of caution: the Jura region is anything but flat; you cycle either uphill or downhill. And some of the gradients are stiff, to put it mildly. So, enjoy the ride but take your time.



The freedom to be different – Jura, Switzerland’s youngest canton

PERNETTE ZUMTHOR, ARLES, FRANCE

Thank you for this detailed and very well-researched article. I also enjoyed reading it because it has given me a few great ideas for cycling around Jura myself.

MARKUS LÜTTIN, SPAIN

I used to live in Jura during those pre-referendum years covered in your article. Aged 12, I remember helping out at a family farm near Delémont. The adults at the dinner table would often talk about the pros and cons of establishing the canton of Jura. The grievances were certainly real, because Berne’s cantonal government made life more difficult for many people in Jura. This sowed the seed of political self-determination – a goal that became more and more imperative. And in hindsight we can say that establishing the new canton was evidently the right

decision. Otherwise, Moutier would not have voted to join Jura too. Things have indeed calmed down since then, so the solution to the Jura puzzle could not have been more Swiss.

BARBARA SURBER, LIMA, PERU

Many thanks for keeping people like me up to speed with events in Switzerland – and for covering themes like the one dealt with in this article.

CORRECTION

We like to be accurate, which is why we need to correct the date of the all-important 1974 popular vote that we gave in our article about the canton of Jura in “Swiss Review” 5/2024. The plebiscite in Berne-administered Jura, which led to the eventual creation of the new canton, did in fact take place on 23 June 1974, and not on 23 March 1974.

THE “SWISS REVIEW” EDITORIAL TEAM

Switzerland’s contentious motorway expansion plan

WILL MOWAT, UK

I invite everyone to look up the terms “induced demand” and “generated demand” in connection with transport planning. One soon sees that providing ever more traffic capacity is completely unsustainable. Act in haste, repent at leisure.

Thank you! Your donations helped us to keep going

Donations, big and small, from our readers were of huge support to our magazine in 2024. Despite growing cost pressures, they helped us to continue producing the quality journalism that our editorial team strives for. They also reinforced the sense that readers in the “Fifth Switzerland” regard “Swiss Review” as **their** magazine. We very much hope to count on your support again in 2025 and are grateful for your contribution, because every little helps.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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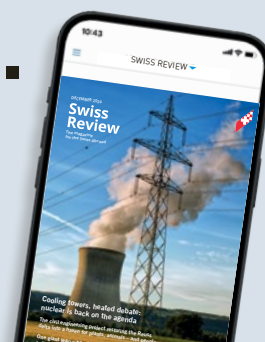
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