

DECEMBER 2023

Swiss Review

The magazine
for the Swiss Abroad



**Elections 2023 – Switzerland shifts to the right,
but the SP keeps the red flag flying**

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The 2023 elections – by Max Spring, the “Swiss Review” cartoonist. www.maxspring.ch

A shift to the right, and other hot potatoes



“Swiss parliament shifts to the right” is the simplest way to sum up the federal elections of 22 October 2023. The hardline conservative SVP, the party that won the biggest voting share, was jubilant. But was this actually just a shift to the right? Not necessarily. The Swiss Social Democratic Party also made gains. Both the Right and the Left improved on their performance of four years ago. Here's my take on why. The world has changed incredibly since the 2019 elections, as has the prevailing mood in Switzerland. The pandemic turned life on its head, Russia's invasion of Ukraine upended the geopolitical order, and, most recently, the Israel-Hamas war has shocked everyone. Meanwhile, the cost-of-living crisis and the collapse of big bank Credit Suisse have undermined our belief in a prosperous, stable Switzerland. Things are not as they should be.

According to political scientist Michael Hermann, we turn to political parties promising refuge in times like these: “‘We will protect you from high costs,’ says the SP. ‘We will protect you from the immigrants and other dangers,’ says the SVP.” The losers this time – including the Greens, the Green Liberals and the FDP – instead told people what to do: go without this, go without that, adapt to change, do more. The majority of voters, 53.4 per cent, skipped the elections completely. You could say they also didn't want to be told what to do. They let the politicians do their thing – then shrugged their collective shoulders.

How about a change of subject? I can make a half-decent rösti. It's all in the detail – and the potatoes. Ideally, the spuds need to be slightly floury. Just parboil them until they are al dente. Then leave them in the fridge for two to three days, after which they will have lost moisture and taken on perfect consistency. Grate them, then add pepper, plenty of salt and a copious amount of butter. Transfer to a pan and fry on a medium heat without stirring. Now for the main trick: add peppermint to season. My rösti can release endorphins – when I get it right.

Unfortunately, we cannot escape reality – even with rösti in our stomachs. Switzerland had another bad potato harvest this year. Farming experts are already predicting further misery: in about 100 years, it may no longer be possible to grow potatoes in Switzerland at all (see page 9). Climate change and politics have implications for us all, regardless of whether we vote or not.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“Swiss Review”, the information magazine for the “Fifth Switzerland”, is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

Switzerland shifts to the right

The right-wing SVP focused on immigration to win the national elections as the green wave ebbed. The SP and the Centre also benefited from voter concern – over soaring healthcare costs.

THEODORA PETER

For the Swiss Greens and Green Liberals, 22 October 2023 was a day to forget. Four years after their unprecedented triumph at the ballot box, the environmental parties suffered losses in the National Council. The Greens dropped below the symbolic 10 per cent mark – from a record 13.5 percent to a 9.8 percent share of the vote. The party was still able to defend two thirds of the National Council seats that it won in 2019 – a small consolation. Nevertheless, the Greens were undoubtedly the losers of the election. The same applies to the Green Liberals (GLP), who also relinquished a third of their seats with a voting share of 7.6 percent.

But the October sun shone on the SVP. The right-wing Swiss People's Party increased its share of the vote from 25.6 to 27.9 percent, having been the big loser in the "climate elections" of 2019. Four years on and it has regained three quarters of its National Council losses of 2019 in one fell swoop. Minds go back to 2015, when the SVP celebrated its biggest-ever election victory with nearly 30 percent of the vote. Given the uncertain geopolitical situation and the rising influx of refugees, the party was able to campaign successfully on its anti-immigration platform. In the run-up to the elections, it launched a "sustainability initiative" aimed at limiting Switzerland's population to 10 million.

The SP remained the second-strongest party with an 18.3 percent share of the vote – a 1.5 percent increase that reversed most of its previous election losses. But this did not offset the collapse of the Greens. Overall, the 2023 elections have weakened the left-green camp. In the forthcoming legislative period, the left-wing parties will have to rely even more on referendums and popular initiatives to push through their policies at the ballot box. As was previously the case, the SP and the Greens will have to make alliances in parliament – particularly with the Centre.

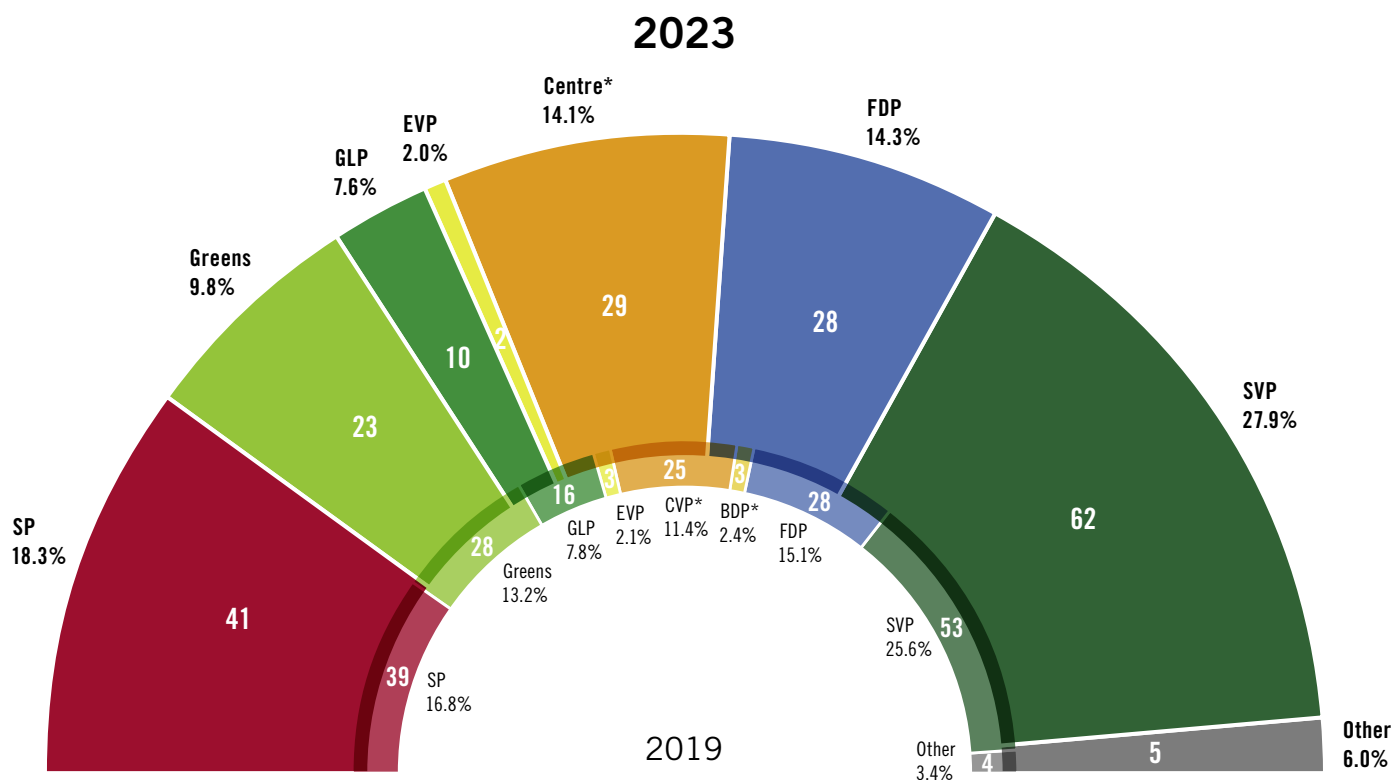
The Centre – in the kingmaker role

Founded in 2021 following the merger of the CVP and BDP, the Centre skilfully sold itself during the election campaign as the main centrist alternative to the Left and the Right. It will continue to play the kingmaker role in forging parliamentary majorities. Under its new name, the party improved slightly with a voting share of 14.1 percent – almost catching up with the FDP on 14.3 percent. With a loss of 0.8 percent, the FDP election performance was as underwhelming as it was four years ago. This gradual decline is hard to digest for the once proud FDP, one of the founding parties of the Swiss federal state.

While the Swiss Evangelical People's Party (EVP) suffered losses, other small parties gained ground. These in-



ELECTIONS
2023



The new balance of power in the National Council – this chart shows the number of seats as well as the percentage share of the vote for each party. The smaller semi-circle shows the results of the 2019 elections. “Other” now consists of the EDU (2 seats), the Geneva Citizens’ Movement (2 seats) and the Ticino League (1 seat).

*The Centre was created following a merger between the CVP and the BDP, which ran separately in 2019.

clude the Geneva Citizens’ Movement (MCG) and the Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (EDU), both of which belong to the right-wing camp. However, critics of Covid restrictions running on the “Aufrecht” and “Mass-Voll” tickets missed out on the National Council by a clear distance.

The SVP attracted new voters

Why has parliament shifted to the right? According to a post-election survey by the Sotomo research institute, 26 percent of voters said that immigration was a decisive factor in how they voted. The SVP has always been able to mobilise the electorate by focusing on immigration, says political scientist Sarah Bütikofer. “But in this election campaign they were able to gain new voters beyond their traditional support base – and across the party political spectrum.”

Besides immigration, healthcare costs also influenced voting choice. The rise in health insurance premiums was a key issue for 25 percent, with dissatisfaction with how the issue was being tackled accounting for a third of voter defections. “However, no single party is able to set the agenda here in the way that the SVP has made the issue of immigration its own,” said Bütikofer in an interview with Radio SRF. The parties able to translate concern over soar-

ing premiums most effectively into votes were the Centre and the SP. Both have submitted their own initiatives to counter rising health costs. These will be put to voters in 2024.

Climate policy no longer a green monopoly

Astonishingly, 23 percent cited climate change as an important issue in the post-election survey despite the Greens losing. Why the discrepancy? There is no comparison between the current situation and how things were four years ago, says Bütikofer. “There was a progressive mood in the air in 2019. Climate change was the hot topic, prompting many people to vote for a party with the word

Female representation in the National Council has fallen from a record 42 percent to 38.5 percent – due to the resurgent, male-heavy SVP.

“green” in their name.” The world has completely changed since then. First the pandemic, then war, then the recent collapse of big bank Credit Suisse – “There was one crisis after another.” To compound this, the Greens no longer have exclusive rights to climate and environmental policy either. The Climate and Innovation Act was the result of a broad-based compromise supported by all parties except the SVP, she points out.

Distinctly greener and a little more to the left – how the fifth Switzerland voted

How to describe the voting preferences of the Swiss Abroad in the October 2023 elections? Distinctly greener, slightly more left-wing, and a bit more liberal-friendly compared to the domestic electorate.

The SP secured the biggest share of the expatriate vote on 20.4% (compared to 18.3% in the overall result), followed by the SVP – the most popular of the centre-right and right-wing parties in the “Fifth Switzerland” – on 18.5% (overall: 27.9%). Hot on the SVP’s heels were the Greens on 18.4% (overall: 9.8%). The FDP ended on 13.6% (overall: 14.3%), while the Green Liberals bettered their domestic result, attracting 11.4% of the expatriate vote (overall: 7.6%). The Centre, meanwhile, accounted for a modest 7.7% (overall: 14.1%).

Compared to the 2019 elections, the “Fifth Switzerland” also shifted a little to the right but not as much as Switzerland as a whole. The SP, the Greens and the Green Liberals secured just over 50% of the vote combined, as opposed to nearly 53% four years ago.

No luck for the election candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland”, who were mostly way down on the votes needed to claim a National Council seat. Some expatriate candidates who achieved respectable results in 2019 were crowded out this time by a flood of other candidates on myriad election lists.

Notably, voter turnout in the “Fifth Switzerland” was lower in many cantons than four years ago – but was significantly higher in Basel-Stadt, where expatriate voters were able to use the new e-voting system: 23.8% (2019: 19.2%). Turnout also increased slightly in St Gallen, another canton in which e-voting is being trialled.

MARC LETTAU

The 46 seats in the Council of States have not all been filled, with a second round of voting to decide 13 seats scheduled for mid-November – after the editorial deadline of this edition of “Swiss Review”. It was a neck-and-neck race between the FDP and the Centre in a smaller chamber that will continue to be conservative-dominated. In the last four years, the Council of States has repeatedly blocked decisions by the more progressive National Council – e.g. on increased funding for day-care centres. With the National Council shifting right, the two chambers are now a little less politically divergent.

Elections to the Federal Council in December

Switzerland’s newly elected parliament will convene at the start of December. To mark the beginning of the legislative period it will appoint the seven-member federal government, the Federal Council, for a new term on 13 December. Who from the SP will succeed their party’s outgoing Federal Councillor Alain Berset? As the second-strongest party, the Social Democrats have two Federal Council seats – which will remain uncontested by the other parties.

The 2023 elections saw a record number of candidates, with **5,909 people competing for 200 National Council seats**. There were 618 election lists – another new high.

According to an unwritten rule known as the “magic formula”, the three parties with the most votes are entitled to two seats each, and the fourth-strongest party to one seat. Based on this logic, the existing composition of the Federal Council – 2 SVP, 2 SP, 2 FDP, 1 Centre – continues to apply. The two serving FDP Federal Councillors – Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis and Finance Minister Karin Keller-Sutter – can expect to be re-elected in December. But with the Centre Party closing in on the FDP, questions surrounding the magic formula are likely to resurface sooner or later. The Greens will have to postpone their dream of joining the Federal Council for another four years – their chances of stepping into the breach are low.

Overview of results (Federal Statistical Office):
[revue.link/elections2023](https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/topics/elections/revue.link/elections2023)



Transparent election campaign funding – an important first in Swiss democracy

This year's parliamentary elections saw parties, candidates and election committees having to publish details of budgets and major donations. A statutory duty of disclosure has been introduced to make political funding in Switzerland more transparent – but loopholes were already apparent.

SUSANNE WENGER

The Greens received a record donation of one million Swiss francs, most of which they used for their election campaign. The donor was Carmita Burkard, heir to the founding family of building materials group Sika. On the other side of the political spectrum, former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher invested 550,000 francs in the SVP election campaign. There had long been speculation about Blocher being a party donor. This was the first-ever specific donation of his to be disclosed – courtesy of a new statutory provision that came into force in 2022 and debuted in this year's elections to the National Council and the Council of States.

How much money goes to which parties before every vote? How much do pressure groups give and to whom? Swiss voters could only make an educated guess until now, as there was no duty of disclosure at federal level. Such questions were all the more pertinent because state party funding in Switzerland is rudimentary at best, and parties very much rely on money from private sources instead. Since the 1970s, this lack of

transparency had attracted criticism not only in Switzerland but also from GRECO, the anti-corruption arm of the Council of Europe.

SVP and FDP with the biggest war chests

Yet parliament continued to reject calls for change – before changing its mind in 2021 in the face of a popular initiative by the SP and the Greens. Parties must now disclose their expenditure and name donors who contribute 15,000 francs or more. Funding for elections and popular votes must be disclosed to the public if it amounts to at least 50,000 francs. The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) is responsible for oversight. Parties must disclose details to the SFAO, which then publishes the data on its website.

None of the information disclosed before the elections was earth-shattering, but at least the facts were there in black and white. Take campaign spending. The FDP and SVP were the parties that spent the most on the 2023 election campaign. The SVP had 4.9 million francs at its dis-

posal at national level – the most money – followed by the FDP on 2.5 million. Factor in the budgets of the cantonal parties and candidates, and the FDP narrowly led the way on almost 13 million compared to almost 12 million for the SVP – although final accounts were not completed until after the elections.

Lack of transparency over benefactors

From 2024, the duty of disclosure will also apply to popular votes. Swiss democracy will become more transparent from the electorate's point of view. However, there are already ways in which the new guidelines can be creatively interpreted to circumvent the spirit (if not the letter) of the law. In some cases, benefactors have already started hiding behind privately run legal entities with names like "Verein für lösungsorientierte Politik". Consult the SFAO list to see who is behind this and similar funding vehicles, and you will find no more information.

But how much impact does money actually have on election results? If you have more funds, you can mobilise support and win more votes, write political scientists Rahel Freiburghaus and Adrian Vatter in Berne. On the other hand, voters ultimately have to trust parties on the issues that matter. The Greens have fallen out of favour despite receiving the biggest donation. And the candidate with the biggest individual budget, Zurich's Donato Scognamiglio from the EVP, missed out on a National Council seat despite a war chest of 365,000 francs.

The election posters are gone, but the transparent political funding is here to stay. From 2024, the funding disclosure rule will also apply to popular votes.

Photo: Keystone



Information on political funding (SFAO website): revue.link/fiko



Walter Thurnherr



Over the last eight years, the Federal Council's chief of staff, Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr, has been at the centre of political power without actually being a member of the federal government. The Federal Chancellor has a direct line to the executive, which is why Switzerland's political parties regard the office as important. Thurnherr belongs to the Centre party. It was a surprise when he announced he would not be standing for election in parliament again. Thurnherr, 60, is well respected. Commentators agree that he threw himself into the role and exerted influence despite the purely advisory nature of his remit. Thurnherr always belied the assumption that you exercise such offices by being seen and not heard. He has an agile, analytical mind and is a popular and witty public speaker. Humour allows him a certain distance and reminds him that there is a world outside the Federal Palace, he once said. Thurnherr, a native of the canton of Aargau and son of a master builder, is no stranger to the world outside Switzerland either. After studying physics, he embarked on a diplomatic career that took him to Moscow and New York. The Swiss Abroad constituted his area of responsibility at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Many expatriates believe he was too slow in implementing e-voting later as Federal Chancellor. Thurnherr, who has plenty of digital savvy, countered by saying that e-voting needed majority backing, which took time in the Swiss political system. He has now stepped down of his own accord. The last legislative period had been difficult amid all the crises, he told the media. Thurnherr was non-committal on his future plans. He may now have more time to post on social media about strange mathematical and physical phenomena, as is his wont.

SUSANNE WENGER

The Catholic Church covered up over 1,000 cases of sexual abuse

The Swiss Catholic Church is guilty of having systematically covered up or played down sexual abuse for decades. This is the conclusion of an investigation by historians at the University of Zurich, which has uncovered serious transgressions as well as “the most severe, systematic abuses that went on for years”. The inquiry was commissioned by the Swiss Bishops' Conference and its findings published in mid-September. The academics identified a total of 1,002 cases of sexual abuse, involving 510 accused and affecting 921 people from 1950 to 2022. But this was only the “tip of the iceberg”, they said, adding that not all Church archives have been examined yet. Many people in the Swiss Catholic Church were devastated by the findings, prompting a mass exodus of members. (MUL)

Federal Council considers banning Hamas after the attack on Israel

The reaction in Switzerland to the attack on Israel by Hamas and the resultant Israeli-Palestinian escalation was one of shock, with the Federal Council consequently deciding to explore whether Hamas can be listed as a banned organisation. Any formal ban would require a change in the law. In addition, the government said it was reviewing the development aid that it sends to the region, and Palestinian NGOs in particular. Switzerland also gives 20 million Swiss francs every year to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA). Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis said there was “no alternative” to UNWRA, and that no other NGO could do what it did with regard to health care and education. Around 28,000 Swiss nationals currently live in Israel. At least one Swiss-Israeli dual citizen has been killed in the violence. (MUL)

Swiss Olympic wants Switzerland to host a sustainable 2030 Winter Olympics in various locations

The Swiss Olympic Association (Swiss Olympic) believes that Switzerland is fit to host the Winter Olympics in 2030 – or 2034. It came to this conclusion in a recently published feasibility study, saying that the Winter Olympics in Switzerland would be a highly sustainable event held around the country at existing facilities – an antidote to the bloated, economically burdensome games of recent times. In the past, Swiss bids to host the Winter Olympics have mostly fallen foul of a sceptical public. Many have been rejected in popular votes, often due to concerns over the resulting costs and environmental impact. Swiss Olympic wants to avoid a plebiscite on the 2030 Games and believes the event can be funded almost entirely by the private sector. (MUL)

Santa's post office

Every year, thousands of children in Switzerland write letters to Father Christmas just before the festive season. They receive replies from Ticino.

THEODORA PETER

It just says “Father Christmas at the North Pole” on the envelope – the recipient has no fixed address. Nor does he need one. The post will end up in Ticino. Every year, a dedicated team of around eight “elves” in Cadenazzo near Locarno have the job of sorting all the letters to Santa that have been painstakingly handwritten by children in Switzerland. One of these elves is 55-year-old postal worker Moritz Succetti from Camorino, who says he gets a kick out of giving joy to so many children. His normal day job at Swiss Post in Cadenazzo consists of handling undeliverable mail from all around Switzerland.

More than 30,000 letters

Tens of thousands of letters to Santa are set to arrive in Cadenazzo again this December. Some 33,000 items were counted last year. There were nearly 36,000 in the previous year – a record. The letters often include drawings, wish lists – or even the odd baby’s dummy that the child in question has promised to stop wearing. “We get a lot of touching messages,” says Succetti. For example, children will write about losing one of their parents or mention that one of their family has fallen ill. “I remember reading a letter from a girl whose sister was seriously ill. It almost brought me to tears.” Recent things in the news, like war or Covid, are not lost on children either. “Many kids were worried for Father Christmas’s health during the pandemic, writing that they hoped he wouldn’t catch the virus.”

The Cadenazzo elves make sure that all children receive a signed reply from Santa in French, German or Italian – with a small gift enclosed, like a colouring book for example. If the child has not provided an address, the elves do their best to find one. The Swiss Post directory comes in handy, while the postmark on the envelope can also provide clues. They are able to get a match in 90 per cent of cases, but there will always be letters that cannot be traced. “This is why it is important that children give their full address,” says Succetti.

Cultural differences

The amount of mail to Santa has almost doubled in the last ten years. Nearly three quarters of the letters come from French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland, and around 20 per cent from German-speaking Switzerland. Another five per cent are written in English – Santa naturally also replies to these. Cultural differences come into play as well: children in French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland



Dressed for the occasion – in Swiss Post yellow. The Christmas elves in Cadenazzo search meticulously for every child’s missing postal address. Photo: Keystone

write to Father Christmas, German-speaking children traditionally address their letters to the “Christkind” (Christmas angel). Regardless of recipient, all the young authors of these letters want their wishes to come true.



Letters to Father Christmas from Switzerland have become more numerous in recent years. The largest proportion of them come from French-speaking children.

Photo: Swiss Post/provided

The potato crop is suffering from the heat and threatening to trigger water shortages

Switzerland's roughly 4,000 potato farmers have seen three years of mediocre harvests. The potato plant needs water in summer. It is suffering from the scorching summer months as water scarcity becomes an issue.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Potatoes are a staple of the Swiss diet. Take the rösti, for example. And a picnic is not a picnic without a good packet of crisps. Swiss farmers are also fond of potatoes: in good conditions, they offer unparalleled returns to farmers on the Swiss Plateau. But it takes 10,000 Swiss francs to cultivate a hectare. "The potato is the best crop for transforming sunlight into calories, and it can also be consumed directly, which is a bonus," comments Patrice de Werra, potato expert at Agroscope, the centre of excellence for agricultural research in Switzerland. The potato also needs water, much more than wheat or sweetcorn,

"The worst thing for the potato plant is extreme weather conditions."

Niklaus Ramseyer, general secretary USPPT

for example. The water must also come at the right time – in summer, when the potato variety grown for chips and crisps sinks its tubers into the earth. However, ever since 2021, there has been one heatwave after another. And potatoes don't grow at temperatures over 30 degrees. In fact, the rain has also sometimes come at the worst possible moment, as in the summer of 2021, when it impeded the planting season. "The worst thing for the potato plant is extreme weather conditions," comments Niklaus Ramseyer, general secretary of the Swiss



Union of Potato Producers (USPPT). Potato growers have seen their income fall markedly, by 40 percent in some cases. Switzerland now has to import the foodstuff from neighbouring countries. More than 50,000 tonnes were imported in 2021, year of the worst harvest since the turn of the century, at only 380,000 tonnes, against more than 500,000 tonnes in the good years. The accumulation of these bad harvests is starting to weigh on farmers' morale so much that some of them are thinking of giving up on the potato.

Droughts in a country rich in water

It all comes down to water, even in Switzerland, with its wealth of rivers and lakes. "It is a major problem," ac-

It was a difficult year for Swiss potato farmers, with rain at the wrong time as well as very high temperatures that stunted growth and parched the soil.

Photo: Keystone

knowledges Ramseyer of the USPPT. "We're getting more rain in winter and less in summer. If a river's water level goes down, the farmers using surface waters may have this source denied to them by the authorities," he remarks. The USPPT is lobbying for the installation of sprinkler systems wherever possible. About 45 percent of holdings do not have such a system. "Only a fraction of them will be able to install sprinklers," explains de Werra, due to the gradient of the land and the proximity of water sources. Niklaus Ramseyer is pushing for new solutions. "For example, we could use dams to store the water in the winter, so that we can irrigate more effectively in the summer," he suggests. Farmers can also try planting more robust or early blooming crops. In any case, the potato growers are



“The potato may no longer be here in 100 years’ time.”

Patrice de Werra, Agroscope

fighting tooth and nail to defend the potato. “There is strong demand and we want to meet it. And we are against importing. The main thing is to preserve the arable land that is devoted to growing potatoes,” emphasises Ramseyer, adding that Switzerland has fertile land and enough rain for the potato crop.

Switzerland does not measure its water

“We’ll always have enough water in Switzerland, albeit not necessarily in the right place and at the right time,” remarks Bettina Schaepli, professor of hydrology at the University of Bern. These dry summers are a novelty in a country where having to water the potato crop was unusual a few decades ago. Schaepli predicts a trade-off among the regions, with agriculture being a priority, as it feeds the people. Water will need to be measured and distributed fairly between agriculture, industry and private use.

However, Switzerland does not measure its water. “Farmers have to provide statistics on everything they do, except for water consumption,” bemoans Schaepli, adding that farmers do not waste this resource, which they pay for.

Will dams save the potato? The hydrology professor sees two distinct issues to consider, given how disparate these two activities are. “The main thing is rain and snow,” she says.

In any event, the Swiss potato faces an uncertain future. The length and intensity of heatwaves, the lower rainfall in summer and the level of evaporation will reduce available water volumes at key times. “The challenge affects vegetable cultivation as a whole, as this needs even more water than potato farming. As for the potato, if climate disruption accelerates, the potato may become a delicacy in 70 years. In 100 years, it may no longer be here,” says Patrice de Werra. Swiss farmers will favour less water-intensive agriculture, such as sweet corn or lentils. “They can adapt; meanwhile, countries like Russia will acquire more arable land,” he concludes.

A question of timing

Usually, the early potato varieties are planted in February, whereas the potatoes used to make chips and crisps are planted between March and May. The first harvest is in June and the second in September. The potatoes are then stored until the following spring. Some growers had to plant late in 2023 – around early June – because of the waterlogged ground. This interfered with root development. June was dry and hot. The potatoes, however, were not able to withstand these extremes in weather. Then, August was hot again. The Swiss Union of Potato Producers predicts a bad harvest and believes the country will have to import again. Every winter, small potatoes of the size used for raclette are imported from the south, especially from Egypt. (SH)

Swiss potato fields like this one in Burgdorf (canton of Berne) depend increasingly on irrigation. But that means increasing competition for what water there is.

Photo: Keystone





“Foudre”, an Alpine tale of temptation





“Foudre”, director Carmen Jacquier’s debut movie, is set in a remote Alpine valley in the summer of 1900. It was filmed in the Binn Valley (canton of Valais). Elisabeth, 17, is about to take her vows as a nun when she has to return to help on the family farm after the sudden death of her oldest sister, Innocente. The exact circumstances of Innocente’s death remain a taboo until Elisabeth stumbles upon her sister’s diary one day.

“Foudre” (which means bolt of lightning in French) is a vivid tale of religious piety and

sexual awakening – among a devoutly Catholic community in which sensuality and female lust are regarded as the devil’s work. After premiering in Toronto in 2022, the film was screened at numerous festivals and has already won a number of awards. Now it is Switzerland’s entry at the Oscars in the Best International Feature Film category. We will find out at the end of December whether “Foudre” is on the Academy shortlist. The next Oscars ceremony will take place in March 2024. The last Swiss feature to win

best foreign-language film was “Journey of Hope” in 1991 directed by Xavier Koller, which captured the plight of refugees.

Regardless of whether it bags a prestigious Oscar nomination, the film is to be released in the United States under the title “Thunder”. The US rights have already been signed.

THEODORA PETER

Film trailer: revue.link/thunder



“The depths of despair”

Basel-born Lore Berger, who died in 1943 at the age of 21, only wrote one novel. But this solitary work resonates deeply even today, particularly among women.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

On 13 August 2023, 20 German-speaking Swiss writers gathered at the water tower overlooking the Basel suburb of Bruderholz. Standing on the tower's upper platform, they took turns to read out excerpts from the novel of an author who jumped off the water tower and committed suicide before any of them were born.

Rewind 80 years. One of the entries submitted for the 1943 Büchergilde award was a manuscript called “Der barmherzige Hügel. Eine Geschichte gegen Thomas” (The merciful hill. A story against Thomas). The jury would have probably put the manuscript quietly to one side had they not been informed that the anonymous sender was Lore Berger, born in 1921. Berger, whose father was a high school teacher, had earned notoriety that year on 14 August after jumping to her death off the Bruderholz water tower. Although it was the type of book to make readers during wartime even more depressed, it was voted in fifth place by the jury and then printed in autumn 1944.

A novel secretly written on the back of court records

Lore Berger had studied German for three semesters and published a series of children's stories. But no one had an inkling that she had written a novel secretly on the back of court records while serving in the women's auxiliary service of the Swiss army at Territorial Court 2B between February 1942 and June 1943 – 250 pages centred on a failed romance that had practically driven her to anorexia. Her account of this and of life in Basel as a student during the early war years was as poetic and sarcastic as it was accomplished. Yet it is unlikely that Berger's unfaithful lover was the reason for her suicide. More likely



Lore Berger
(1921 – 1943)

“One can write a book for different reasons. Out of vanity, out of poverty, or as a calling. I, for one, like to recite a phrase that I once read: the dancer dances, the artist creates, the musician plays. Because all three wish to be freed from tension. This is how they find their release. By communicating to others.”

(Excerpt from “Der barmherzige Hügel”, Lore Berger, Th. Gut Verlag, Zurich 2018)

she felt shackled as a young woman – by society in general, a lack of understanding from her parents, an agonising sense of loneliness, and a lack of equality.

Esther, her alter ego in the novel, experiences the “depths of despair” after being jilted by boyfriend Thomas. Herein we see the symbolism of the water tower and the “merciful hill” overlooking Bruderholz on which it stands – from which Berger found release from her shackles.

Until the end of the story, the tower remains the focal point of an unrequited love that can only be reciprocated in Esther's dreams and fantasies. Indeed, the book's strength ultimately lies in the poetic way in which it juxtaposes a love story with the real-life contours of Bruderholz, starting as early as the preface (and continuing to the end): “People cry like others would do, grieving the loss of their happiness. But ignore that. Gaze instead at a field of barley as it ripples and sways in the breeze. Let it soothe your tired, ailing, tear-soaked eyes. Realise that this wide expanse is a home for you, offering a kindness and compassion of which you have heard all your life and in which you never believed.”

This year's literary vigil at the Bruderholz water tower reaffirmed how Lore Berger's only novel has stood the test of time and how her cry for help still reverberates generations later.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Der barmherzige Hügel. Eine Geschichte gegen Thomas.” Complemented by fragments of the author's intimate diary. Verlag Th. Gut, Zurich 2018 (volume 35 of the “Reprinted by Huber” series)/French: Lore Berger: “La tour sur la colline”, translated from German by Martine Besse; Zoé poche, Éditions Zoé, Geneva 2007.

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST BASED IN ZURICH

Museum pays homage to Swiss multilingualism

Multilingualism is part of Switzerland's identity. Featuring interactive sound technology, the "Multilingual Switzerland" exhibition at the National Museum Zurich offers visitors a journey through the history of Switzerland's four language regions.

THEODORA PETER

German, French, Italian, Romansh – or English. Visitors first choose the audio language in which they want to be guided around the exhibition. On their headphones, they then catch the voices and sounds of a virtual railway station – conversations and sentence fragments in a variety of languages and dialects as they walk through the entrance hall.

Language standardisation

The "Multilingual Switzerland" exhibition at the National Museum Zurich offers an audio-visual insight into how Switzerland's national languages have evolved over the centuries. It shows how most of the regional patois in French-speaking Switzerland was suppressed by the end of the 17th century, a process influenced by the standardisation of language in neigh-

bouring France. A grammar textbook from Geneva dating back to 1790 records how local words and phrases were eradicated from French language teaching. The Reformation and the printing press also led to the advent of a standard written language in German-speaking Switzerland, although dialects were less stigmatised. Indeed, the opposite was true from the 19th century onwards, with the first-ever dictionary of Swiss-German vernacular being published in 1881.

Like this milk carton from the 1970s, most food packaging in Switzerland continues to be multilingual. Labelling in more than one language has no longer been a statutory requirement in the EU since 2021. Photo: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, ZHdK

Illustration: Nebelspalter



bouring France. A grammar textbook from Geneva dating back to 1790 records how local words and phrases were eradicated from French language teaching. The Reformation and the printing press also led to the advent of a standard written language in German-speaking Switzerland, although dialects were less stigmatised. Indeed, the opposite was true from the 19th century onwards, with the first-ever dictionary of Swiss-German vernacular being published in 1881.

In the 15th century, notaries in Italian-speaking Ticino discarded Latin and began writing in a lingua franca derived from the Lombard vernacular. Ultimately, it was the Tuscan Italian championed by Dante that established itself as the written and administrative language, and later as the spoken language through teaching in schools.

The Romansh language region used to stretch to the shores of Lake Constance but was quickly outmuscled by German. Romansh is now composed of five different dialects spread along the valleys of Grisons. Rumantsch Grischun evolved into the unified written language in the 1980s and has been used as the official form of Romansh since 2001.

The exhibition reminds visitors that Switzerland also has other languages that go back a long way. One of them is Yenish, which features on a wooden display. Furthermore, an embroidery sampler containing Hebrew lettering is proof that a form of Western Yiddish was spoken in the Surb Valley in Aargau until the last century.

"Multilingual Switzerland" also looks at today's polyglot Switzerland beyond the four national languages. Over 20 per cent of the Swiss population have a first language other than one of the official ones, while two thirds speak more than one language.

Visitors get to hear nine people who are able to communicate in more than one language – including Swiss writer Usama Al Shahmani, who is originally from Iraq: "For me, writing in German is a bit like 'arriving'." The exhibition website contains video recordings of all nine people talking – with subtitles in five languages.

Dialects of the past

Visitors to the "Multilingual Switzerland" exhibition at the National Museum can also listen to audio recordings of rare and extinct Swiss dialects. Here are three examples:

Gisèle Pannatier from Evolène explains how patois is spoken within her family (2001, Valais Media Library, Martigny): [revue.link/gisele](https://www.revue.link/gisele)

Jacques Gruet's 1547 pamphlet, recited in patois by Oliver Frutiger (2023): [revue.link/jacques](https://www.revue.link/jacques)

Don Francesco Alberti speaks in the Ticino dialect of Bedigliora (1939, phonogram archives of the University of Zurich): [revue.link/francesco](https://www.revue.link/francesco)

Multilingual Switzerland.
National Museum Zurich.
Until 14 January 2024.
www.landesmuseum.ch/multilingual-switzerland



“Grannies” take Switzerland to court to demand more action on climate change

A group of older women called Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland has brought a case before the European Court of Human Rights to force Switzerland to do more on climate change. We talk to the group’s co-chair Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti, 73.

SUSANNE WENGER

A residential area in Basel on a very warm autumn day. The climate activist who welcomes us warmly into her home has grey hair. She has been campaigning on environmental issues for half a century. Retired nursery teacher and parent advisor Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti has eight grandchildren. She and other female peers have taken Switzerland to court because they believe Berne is not doing enough on climate change. They have given the climate debate a new twist by arguing that their rights have been violated.

Wydler-Wälti and her husband live together in their terraced house. We can see a small garden from the lounge window. Books about the climate crisis are piled up on the sofa. One of them is called “How Women Can Save the Planet”. “This house is my one climate crime,” she proffers. It is too big for two people, even if it does have solar panels. Wydler-Wälti has always tried to live sustainably. She gave up flying long ago and only buys what she needs. She also keeps “every little bag and piece of string”. Recycle it, don’t throw it away, she learned from her parents.

Duty of care

Wydler-Wälti joined the green and women’s movements when she was a young mother. She calls 1986 a “traumatic” year in which the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the Schweizerhalle chemical accident near Basel influenced her thinking. “The children were unable to go outside, because we didn’t know whether there were chemicals in the air.” Wydler-Wälti is not a member of any political party. She has never held political office.



But when Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland was founded in 2016 in response to an idea by the environmental organisation Greenpeace, she jumped at the chance of becoming co-chair – a position she shares with Anne Mahrer, a 75-year-old former Green Party National Councillor from Geneva.

The group currently has around 2,500 members, all of them female, whose ages range from 64 to over 90. These women are united by one cause: Switzerland must show greater ambition in cutting greenhouse gas emissions and achieving the goals of the Paris climate agreement. The retirees are using the Swiss constitu-

Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti (left) and Anne Mahrer presenting their case during a Grand Chamber public hearing at the European Court of Human Rights in March this year.

Photo: Keystone

tion and the European Convention on Human Rights as the basis for their action, arguing that the state has a duty of care to protect the right to life. Heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense as a result of climate change. Older people are more susceptible to their effects, they say, with older women particularly at risk of illness and death.

Deadly heatwaves

Statistics show that heatwaves are more dangerous for older women. According to a recent study conducted by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute on behalf of the Fed-

eral Office of Public Health and Federal Office for the Environment, there were 474 heat-related deaths in Switzerland during the record-breaking summer of 2022, all among the over-75s, with 60 percent of fatalities being women. Excess deaths due to heat were higher in older women than in older men. There are, therefore, good legal reasons why membership of the group is restricted to older women. “It means that we are bona fide claimants,” says Wydler-Wälti.

The group took its case to the Federal Office for the Environment, then to the Federal Administrative Court, then to the Federal Supreme Court. It lost three times. According to the Federal Supreme Court, the women’s rights had not been sufficiently affected. Then came Strasbourg. In 2020, the group and four individual women took out a lawsuit against Switzerland at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg. The ECHR’s Grand Chamber of 17 judges conducted a public hearing in March this year, with Swiss government representatives and the claimants’ team of lawyers making their respective cases. In particular, the Swiss government argued that action on climate change is a complex challenge for politicians, not for courts.

“We have already lost a lot of time”

“Wow”, thought Wydler-Wälti as she sat in the courtroom. They were finally being taken seriously. Not only that, but she and her fellow claimants were potentially on the way to setting a legal precedent across the member states of the Council of Europe, of which Switzerland itself has been a member since 1963. This is because the court in Strasbourg was deciding

for the first time whether there is a link between climate change and human rights. But why were the women not trying to win majority support for their cause through democratic means in Switzerland, i.e. gain the sort of backing that saw voters approve the Climate and Innovation Act earlier this year?

“We have already lost a lot of time,” the co-chair replies. Popular votes, elections, demonstrations, lawsuits – anything that will help their cause is welcome. The “grannies” are being “played” by Greenpeace, some people have said. This is an insult as far as Wydler-Wälti is concerned. Yes, they are in contact with Greenpeace. Indeed, the environmental organisation is covering their legal costs. But the women make their own decisions. They have come together with a wealth of expertise and experience and have many years of campaigning already under their belt.

Solidarity with the young generation

Appearing at the ECHR in Strasbourg has put Wydler-Wälti and friends in the public spotlight. People have praised them for their courage and tenacity. Others have been less flattering, suggesting they should go home and look after their grandchildren. Someone sent them an anonymous email saying old women like them used to be burned at the stake. Wydler-Wälti: “Being compared to a witch is a compliment in my book. They were strong women.” A ruling from Strasbourg is not expected until 2024. Meanwhile, the women are giving talks, organising events and fielding media inquiries from around the world. They have already at-



“This house is my one climate crime. It is too big for two people.”

Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti standing in her back garden in Basel.
Photo: Keystone

tracted attention from outlets like Al-Jazeera and the “New York Times”.

The day after she spoke to us, Wydler-Wälti took the train to Strasbourg again – this time to express solidarity with another climate lawsuit taking place at the ECHR. Six young people from Portugal have taken 32 European countries including Switzerland to court. From young to old – climate action is important regardless of demographic, says Wydler-Wälti. “If we win our case, everyone wins in the end.”

Link to the Strasbourg hearing of 29 March 2023: revue.link/hearing

“Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 49th year of publication and is published six times a year in German, French, English and Spanish in 13 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 431,000, including 253,000 electronic copies.

“Swiss Review”’s regional news is published four times a year.

The ordering parties are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. This content does not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher.

All Swiss Abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30/Abroad: CHF 50).

ONLINE EDITION
www.revue.ch

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PRINT
Vogt-Schild Druck AG, Derendingen

PUBLISHER
The “Swiss Review” is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). The postal address of the publisher, the editorial office and advertising department is: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne. revue@swisscommunity.org
Phone: +41 31 356 61 10
Bank details:
CH97 0079 0016 1294 4609 8 / KBBECH22

COPY DEADLINE FOR THIS EDITION
26 October 2023

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From zero to a hundred

A group of Swiss students have broken the world record for the fastest 0-100 km/h acceleration by an electric car. High-power suction is the key to their success.



DÖLF BARBEN

What a strange sight. Zip away, then brake. Like breathing in and out just once. Barely three seconds elapsed before the electric car and its driver Kate Maggetti came to a halt again. The vehicle needed just 0.956 seconds and a distance of a little over ten metres to reach a speed of 100 km/h.

On 12 September, students from ETH Zurich and Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts set a new world record at the Switzerland Innovation Park in Dübendorf. Never before had an electric car accelerated faster from zero to a hundred. A team from the University of Stuttgart had notched the old record of 1.461 seconds one year previously.

A very fast but extremely brief acceleration – Kate Maggetti driving electric car “Mythen” on the track at Dübendorf.
Photo: ETH Zurich, Alessandro Della Bella

The Swiss car, now entered in the Guinness Book of Records, is called “Mythen” – named after the two iconic Mythen mountains in the canton of Schwyz. It only weighs around 180 kg, including driver, and has in excess of 300 hp. All of the vehicle’s components – from printed circuit boards (PCBs), to four wheel hub motors and the chassis – were developed by the students themselves. “They spent every moment of their free time working on this project,” says Matthias Rohrer of the Academic Motorsports Association of Zurich (AMZ).

Founded in 2006, AMZ gives students the opportunity to build a racing car from scratch with which to compete in events every year. The



spin, generating a lot of smoke and not much speed.

The key to breaking the record was to be as light as possible and have as much traction as possible. The students developed a completely new system to increase traction, says Rohrer. They installed a suction device under the car, positioned very closely to the ground. “You can compare the system to a vacuum cleaner sucking a carpet.”

The device only uses a fraction of the engine power but produces around 180 kg of downforce in addition to the weight of the vehicle and driver. This more or less doubles the friction of the tyres.

Crucially, the device ensures strong traction right from the start – which is essential if you want the fastest possible 0-100 km/h acceleration. The rear and front wings that are fitted on a Formula One car would not work, because they only create downforce when the car has reached a certain speed.

The students installed traction control to get even more performance out of their car. This prevents wheel spin by adjusting power delivery instantly. Says Rohrer: “This allowed us to go right up to the limit.” The tyres are also warmed up before the start, so that they grip even better.

Thanks to this clever engineering, the students managed to beat the previous acceleration record by a considerable margin. “Hopefully, we won’t have to relinquish the record any time soon,” says Rohrer.

Going from zero to a hundred in 0.956 seconds is impressive. Formula One cars, electric racing cars, and powerful sports cars need well over two seconds. But there is a vehicle that accelerates even quicker: the dragster. With its 10,000 hp engine and huge back wheels, it will hit 100 km/h in 0.6 seconds. To get an idea of how extreme that is, imagine “Mythen”

work involved in developing these cars is very intense but extremely enjoyable, says Rohrer. These “highly complex, technical projects” allow students to put theory into practice.

The Swiss-developed electric vehicle accelerates twice as quickly as a Formula One car.

The world record attempt was also about transferring power as well as knowledge. Power from the wheel hub motors to the ground, to be precise. This was the main challenge. Do nothing and the wheels would just



ABOVE: Putting on warm tyres. The suction device is visible close to the ground.

BELOW: Teamwork was key to breaking the world record. Photos: ETH Zurich, Alessandro Della Bella

did not have to brake but could simply carry on accelerating – let’s say for as long as it takes to read this article. After 150 seconds, driver Kate Maggetti would already be moving at a speed of almost 16,000 km/h and – if she started in Geneva – would have just left Switzerland at its north-eastern corner near St Margrethen by Lake Constance.





Switzerland's salt industry is still state-run

Salt production in Switzerland has to meet all local demand. This commodity, which lies buried in the depths of the earth, has been subject to a monopoly since the 17th century. Switzerland's last surviving mine is a salt mine. Report from Bex Salt Mines.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

The small electric train descends into the ground and rumbles through the tunnels, where there is hardly room to stand. Numbered lamps cast some light along the way, although not enough to tell whether you're going up or down. The wagon finally comes to a halt at an underground station. Our guide tells us that we have climbed about 20 metres over 1.6 kilometres of rail. The people who constructed these tunnels from the 17th century had their reasons for building them this way: "It's better to be going downhill when you're getting the rocks out of the mine," explains

Arnaud Tamborini, operations manager at Bex Salt Mines.

All is calm at the small visitor station at the heart of this mountain. It's 18° C and the relative humidity is 80 percent. Being in the bowels of the earth like this is oppressing and reassuring at the same time. Welcome to Bex Salt Mines, in the canton of Vaud. This is Switzerland's sole salt mine, in a region where there used to be several of them. Back in the day, brine – salt-saturated water – extracted from the rocks used to be placed in large kettles heated by wood fires to extract the precious salt. Bex is also the only mine in Swit-



Higher, farther, faster,
more beautiful?

In search
of somewhat
unconventional
Swissrecords.

**This edition:
Switzerland's oldest
state monopoly.**

zerland full stop. Each passageway or cavern has its own story to tell. Take the Bouillet well, which was excavated over 26 years to a depth of 200 metres by men equipped with a hammer and knife. They didn't even find any salt at the bottom of it.

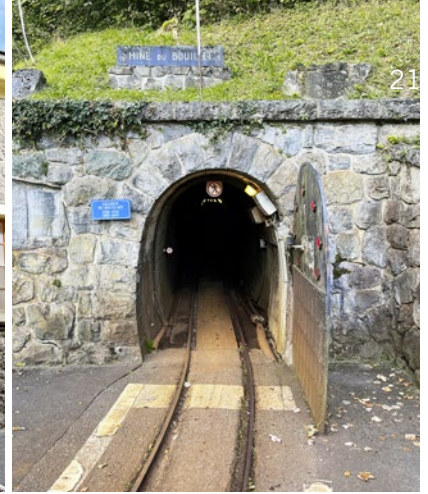
An archaic monopoly?

Who thinks twice about putting salt on their food or on the road? These seemingly banal actions conceal a rich history, as salt was actually a symbol of power for centuries (see box). In fact, the condiment still enjoys a special status in Switzerland.



“Etat de Vaud” (state of Vaud) above the entrance to the storage building in Bex (left). The entrance to the salt mines deep in the mountain is a little more understated (right).

Photos: Stéphane Herzog



The mines at Bex have an air temperature of 18°C and a constant relative humidity of 80 per cent.

Photo: Saline Bex/
Sedrik Nemeth



The salt mined at Bex is stored in a wooden, dome-shaped storage facility.

Photo: Stéphane Herzog

Almost all the salt mined every year in the country is for domestic consumption. There are also stringent import controls on salt. Everything, including pricing, is managed by one company: Swiss Saltworks, owned by all the cantons and the Principality of Liechtenstein. An intercantonal convention from 1973 guarantees the supply of salt to every region in Switzerland. This monopoly has created considerable paperwork as it allows the cantons to set salt prices unilaterally and then profit by selling salt to municipalities to grit the roads.

The ‘white gold’ comes from three places: Riburg salt works, located to the east of Basel in the canton of Aargau, Schweizerhalle in the canton of Basel and Bex in Vaud. They produce up to 650,000 tonnes of salt every year. On the Central Plateau, salt lies in subterranean layers 20 to 50 metres thick, 250 metres below ground level. The miners drill into the ground as they do in the Texas oil-

fields. At Bex, however, men work through the tunnels in search of veins. The table salt they are looking for is marketed as a craft product. It can be found in department stores and is known as ‘Sel des Alpes’. “It’s a product with a history behind it and is seen as a premium salt,” states



Situated on the side of the Rhône Valley, Bex is surrounded by wonderful Alpine scenery. The saltwater springs at Bex were actually discovered by goats in the 16th century.

© Swisstopo

Arnaud Tamborini. The marketing is slick. Packets of Sel des Alpes are sold for a few dozen centimes more than the entry-level ‘JuraSel’ salt, produced in Basel. But do the two taste any different? Jura salt from the Rhine is slightly more aggressive on the tip of the tongue, according to the Culinary Heritage of Switzerland. The Bex salt mines have exploited this by producing their own product ‘Fleur des Alpes’, which comes from the mountains. The glacier water that flows there is laden with salt and other minerals. It evaporates in reservoirs. The crystals can then be gathered by hand and spread over larch boards.

Three miners for 15 kilometres of tunnel

The Bex mines have only three miners. That is enough to produce the required output at Bex, which is set up to supply around 30,000 tonnes of salt

a year. The miners drill into the rock up to 800 metres underground. The core samples extracted from the mountain – in 3-metre sections – indicate where the salt deposits are located. “Drilling is our way of finding out about the deposit,” is how Arnaud Tamborini sums it up. A perforated



A salt mine employee inspects the salt, which is still hot after the drying process. Keystone archive, 2010

“When it leaves our premises, the salt sees the light again for the first time in 200 million years.”

Arnaud Tamborini, production manager at Bex



‘Sel des Alpes’ (Salt of the Alps) – provenance is everything in the world of salt. Photo Pascal Wasinger

tube is then inserted into another pipe and placed in the borehole to go up through the vein. Source water is injected at high pressure, which dissolves the white gold, fills the pipe with salt and conveys it to the Bex production site.

Only about 10 percent of the salt output at the Vaud site is for culi-

nary use. The rest is used for gritting roads and for industrial purposes. The factory also has a storage warehouse with a total capacity of 12,000 tonnes: a salt mountain in a hangar. It seems a shame to throw all this salt on the ground. Swiss Saltworks has indicated that production volumes of table salt at Bex should increase in

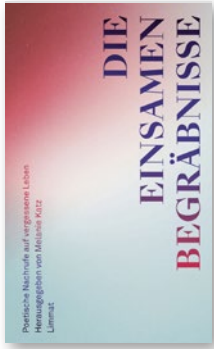
the future, mainly for exports of the high-quality Sel des Alpes. Looking for salt in the ground is a risky business. Collecting the salt is a noble act. “When it leaves our premises, the salt sees the light again for the first time in 200 million years,” observes the white gold production manager at Bex.

Switzerland’s most ancient monopoly

The Swiss bought salt for cooking from Germany and France from the Middle Ages. Cheeses from Pays d’En-Haut, Gruyère, Emmental and the Alps were transported across the lake to Geneva and then down to Marseille. During the Renaissance, these cheeses were shipped all over the world. In the 17th century, a monopoly was established in the Swiss cantons and all European countries. The salt tax – known as ‘la gabelle’ – was a heavy burden on the people. “It was to combat these abuses from the Ancien Régime that countries decided to take over,” explains Geneva-based historian and economist Dominique Zumkeller. At Bex, saltwater springs were identified by goats. The first mention of these slightly salty waters dates from 1554. In 1685, Berne – an in-

ternational power in those times – bought up all the region’s concessions to ensure its own supply. Bex was the first salt deposit discovered in Switzerland. It was inevitably going to be mined. In the latter half of the 19th century, industrial techniques made Switzerland self-sufficient in salt. Nowadays, the concepts of profitability and sustainable production remain the driving forces for the owners of Bex Salt Mines. Hence the building of a new hydroelectric station on the River Avançon, “which will enable an entirely green production process”, as Arnaud Tamborini is delighted to report. This hydroelectric power will produce all the energy needed to treat the brine via evaporation, a process that requires a lot of heat. The salt monopoly is going nowhere. (SH)

Poetic tributes to the lonely deceased



MELANIE KATZ
(PUBLISHER):
"Die einsamen Begräbnisse" (The lonely burials) Limmat Verlag
216 pages, CHF 32
einsamesbegrabnis.ch

Funerals are sad events, not least when no one is there to mourn because the deceased has no family or friends. This happens several times a year in the city of Zurich, with the interments taking place at a communal grave. However, such funerals are no longer quite as lonely. In 2017, poet Melanie Katz imported a Dutch project to Zurich called "The Lonely Burial". The idea is that a notable poet attends the burial and recites a fitting epitaph for the deceased. A book has now been published containing 37 of these poems as well as essays on loneliness, death and interment.

The poet lends meaning to this otherwise forlorn event, writes Alexander Estis. People who die a lonely death often leave behind "small black holes" that need to be filled in through research, says Nathalie Schmid.

This is why the poets have embellished each of the 37 poems with an account of how they traced what little information there was about the deceased. Looking for clues was quite a challenge in many cases. "How can I pierce the loneliness without contradicting the facts?" asks Martin Bieri.

Published by Melanie Katz, this book provides an answer. It contains a wide range of different poems and written accounts that sometimes barely skim the surface. "We know little about you/Nothing in fact," Klaus Merz's poem begins. But sometimes there is someone who knew something about the deceased which could then be included in the epitaph. A lonely burial becomes a proper farewell. And the poem communicates solidarity, writes Katz. The result is a wonderfully touching ritual. Many of the memories and scraps of information about the deceased are quite similar at first glance, but ultimately each of the epitaphs has a very personal feel. The people who died may have lived in precarious circumstances, yet each of them had something that made them unique. These varied tributes stand in relief against the often cold, fast-paced, unheeding nature of modern life. Poet Michael Fehr: "Calm and strength are not mutually exclusive."

BEAT MAZENAUER

Back to herself



NICOLE BERNEGGER:
"Back To You",
Alien Pearl Records
2023

It took a while, but Nicole Bernegger has finally broken free as an artist. This is not to say that the Basel singer has not been true to herself over the years, but, after winning reality talent show "The Voice of Switzerland" a decade ago and living through the subsequent hype, she has had to do the hard miles to discover herself again like she did with her band The Kitchenettes.

The music on her new album is testament to this journey. Bernegger has always loved late 1960s soul and makes no apologies for it here. "Back To You" is not purely a retro album but has obvious contemporary influences. Nevertheless, the groove of a long-forgotten era shines through in all nine tracks in some way or another, along with elements of disco, pop and funk.

Bernegger, now 46, used to have to play for a chart position. Those days are gone. Her fourth LP sounds fresh and relaxed. From the soothing "Red Blue Yellow Green" to the sensual "Crescent Moon" – the songs by Bernegger and her trusted band ooze authenticity. To be clear: this is Nicole Bernegger, not "The Voice of Switzerland". She is making the music she wants without the record label forcing her to collaborate with musician xyz or manufacturing some hip new sound for her.

The mother of three is now in full control in every sense. Four years ago, she waved goodbye to the major record companies and created her own label together with manager Steffi Klär. And in making this new record, she even sat in the production chair for the first-ever time. Recorded at One Drop Studio in Basel, the resultant album has an organic, warm, earthy feel.

The likeable singer's outward appearance has also evolved. Bernegger used to stick to a strictly sixties-inspired fashion regime with signature bun ponytail. She has now discarded this visual corset – and taken a further step back from her old television persona.

MARKO LEHTINEN

Swiss culture on the international stage

From art to literature, from design to the theatre, from film to music – Switzerland consistently produces talent that is the envy of the world, helping to put Swiss culture on the international stage.

The federal government is strongly committed to supporting these cultural exports. Through funding, grants and culture drives, it enables Swiss artists to present their work around the world. This not only strengthens Swiss cultural heritage but also promotes cultural interaction and understanding across the international divide. The Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia also supports the dissemination of works from various cultural fields as well as Swiss performances at important international events such as the Venice Biennale of art and architecture and book fairs (see box). There is one exception: the Swiss Films foundation is responsible for promoting the Swiss film industry abroad on behalf of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC).

Hollywood success

Swiss films enjoy an excellent reputation and have won major awards at prestigious events like the Berlinale and the Cannes Film Festival, highlighting the quality and variety of Switzerland's movie industry. In particular, 2017 was an outstanding year that saw two Swiss features each nominated for an Oscar. Timo von Gunten's "La femme et le TGV" and Claude Barras's "My Life as a Courgette" not only dazzled international audiences but also cemented Switzerland's reputation as a country with a flourishing film culture. Triumphs like these are of huge importance. They not only underline the country's artistic excellence and creative talent, but also Switzerland's cultural diversity and its ability to tell stories that will resonate in other countries. This helps to showcase Swiss culture around the world and strengthen Switzerland's standing in world cinema as well as enhancing Switzerland's national identity.

Beautiful Swiss books

The Swiss Culture Awards, presented every year by the Federal Office of Culture in the fields of art, design, literature, music, thea-

tre, dance, and film, also act as an important advertisement for Swiss culture abroad. Not only do they pay tribute to outstanding talent in Switzerland, but they also give Swiss culture a better profile around the world. "The Most Beautiful Swiss Books" award, which is affiliated to the "Best Book Design from all over the World" interna-

The Swiss Culture Awards, presented every year by the Federal Office of Culture in various fields, act as an important advertisement for Swiss culture abroad.

tional competition, is an impressive example. The international competition in Leipzig, which is organised every February by Stiftung Buchkunst (the German Foundation for Book Design), saw Switzerland scoop

The Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia

Through involvement in events, projects and translation work, the Swiss arts council Pro Helvetia helps to showcase Swiss cultural practitioners abroad. This includes funding public presentations, organising promotional events for international hosts, appearing at international exhibitions and networking events (e.g. Venice Biennale and Avignon Theatre Festival), and producing promotional material. The six Pro Helvetia liaison bases in Cairo, Johannesburg, Moscow, New Delhi, Shanghai and South America foster relations with local partners and cultural institutions, act as intermediaries on the ground, and offer residential, research and exchange programmes that allow artists and cultural practitioners from Switzerland to gain a foothold and engage with international audiences.



"My Life as a Courgette" won Best Fiction Film at the 2017 Swiss Film Awards and was nominated as best animation at the Oscars. Film stills: FOC/provided



"Art in architecture and public space 1968–2008" by Susi & Ueli Berger – winner of the "Golden Letter" at the 2023 "Best Book Design from all over the World" competition in Leipzig. Photo: provided/FOC

The successes of **Swiss cinema on the international stage underline Switzerland's cultural diversity and its ability to tell stories that will resonate in other countries.**



Sophie Hunger. Photo: Jérôme Witz



Jossi Wieler, Swiss Grand Award for Theatre/Hans-Reinhart-Ring 2020. Photo: FOC/Gneborg



Uriel Orlow, Swiss Grand Prix for Art/Prix Meret Oppenheim 2023. Photo: FOC/Florian Spring

many awards this year. Out of 560 titles that were submitted by 30 different countries, prizes went to four books that had also won awards in “The Most Beautiful Swiss Books” competition. The connection between the two competitions provides a global platform for Swiss books and an opportunity to showcase the quality of book design in Switzerland.

Based abroad but proud to be Swiss

The film score for the Oscar-nominated animation “My Life as a Courgette” was incidentally produced by Berne musician Sophie Hunger, who won the 2016 Swiss Grand Award for Music. Sophie Hunger is one of numerous Swiss Culture Award winners who are proud to be Swiss but live and work abroad. Hunger lives in Berlin and also has an apartment in Paris. Her beguiling pop music features songs in Swiss-German, German, French and English. She pushes the envelope and defies categorisation with each new album, deftly flitting between the genres of jazz, folk, rock, pop and chanson.

Theatre director Jossi Wieler, who won the Swiss Grand Award for Theatre/Hans Reinhart Ring in 2020, has earned acclaim both at home and abroad. Wieler was born in 1951 in Kreuzlingen (canton of Thurgau) and lived from 1972 to 1980 in Israel, where he studied stage directing at Tel Aviv University. In 1980 he joined the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf as assistant director, going on to direct numerous productions at theatres in Germany and Switzerland, in cities including Heidelberg,

Bonn, Stuttgart, Basel, Hamburg, Munich, Zurich and Berlin. Wieler now lives in Berlin. He has been a key international player in musical theatre for a quarter of a century. His many theatre productions in Germany and Switzerland have won numerous national and international awards. The Stuttgart Opera was also voted Opera House of the Year under Jossi Wieler’s leadership in 2016. Wieler’s international reputation underscores the importance of his work in a European context.

The 2023 Swiss Grand Prix for Art/Prix Meret Oppenheim went to Uriel Orlow. Born in 1973 in Zurich, Orlow studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design and the Slade School of Art in London, and at the University of Geneva, before receiving his PhD from the University of the Arts in London. He now lives and works in Lisbon, London and Zurich. Orlow, who has presented his work at numerous international survey exhibitions, including the 54th Venice Biennale, Manifesta 9 and 12, Genk/Palermo, and biennials in Berlin, Dakar, Taipei, Sharjah, Moscow, Kathmandu and Guatemala, enjoys an excellent reputation in the world of art. His work has been shown at many museums and art venues internationally, including the Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Whitechapel Gallery and the ICA in London; the Palais de Tokyo in Paris; Les Complices, Helmhaus and Shedhalle in Zurich; as well as in Geneva, Ramallah, Marseille, Cairo, Istanbul, Mexico City, Dublin, New York, Toronto, Melbourne and elsewhere.

Sophie Hunger, Jossi Wieler and Uriel Orlow, as well as Frédéric Pajak (resides in Arles, France; Swiss Grand Award for Literature 2021) and Etienne Delessert (lives and works in Lakeville, Connecticut, USA; Swiss Grand Award for Design 2023), are just some of the many Swiss Culture Award winners who are unequivocally Swiss but whose activities have taken them far and wide.

(FOC)

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Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date.

The next voting date is 3 March 2024.

Everything you need to know about these voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by parliament and the Federal Council, etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's VotelInfo 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 security – by strengthening sustainable domestic production, more plant-based food and clean drinking water (Food Initiative)" (13 December 2024)
- "No to a Switzerland of 10 million! (Sustainability Initiative)" (4 January 2025)
- Federal Popular Initiative "For the effective protection of constitutional rights (Sovereignty Initiative)" (17 April 2025)

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



Please note

Provide your Swiss representation with your **email address(es) and mobile telephone number(s)** and/or any changes thereto and register online (link on FDFA homepage www.eda.admin.ch or via www.swiss-abroad.ch), to choose the edition of "Swiss Review" and any other publications you would like to receive. Please contact your representation if you have any problems registering.

You can read and/or print the current edition of "Swiss Review" plus all editions going back to 2006 at any time at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italian) is available electronically (via email, free of charge) or in print to all Swiss Abroad addresses and by iOS-/Android app.



Making new friends, enjoying the scenery, and experiencing lasting memories – camp participants sitting near a Roman bridge by the Verzasca river.

Photo: Leonie Eyer, "Swiss Challenge"

Holiday camps in 2024 for Swiss Abroad aged 15 or over

With wonderful memories of this year's summer camps, we at the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) are now preparing our camps for 2024. As always, we look forward to starting the registration process for the next set of summer and winter camps in Switzerland.

A wealth of experiences, adventures, fun and encounters with fellow young Swiss Abroad from various continents awaits. We look forward to seeing many new and familiar faces next year. Here is an overview of our holiday camps in 2024:

- 6.7.24 – 19.7.24** Sport and leisure camp in Flüeli-Ranft (canton of Obwalden), including a visit to the 2024 Congress of the Swiss Abroad
 - 6.7.24 – 19.7.24** "Swiss Challenge" covering various Swiss regions, including a visit to the 2024 Congress of the Swiss Abroad
 - 20.7.24 – 2.8.24** Sports, leisure and language camp in Flüeli-Ranft (canton of Obwalden), including German or French course
 - 3.8.24 – 16.8.24** "Swiss Challenge" covering various Swiss regions
 - 27.12.24 – 5.1.25** New Year ski camp in Davos (canton of Grisons)
- For further information, visit [revue.link/events](https://www.sjas.ch/revue.link/events).

You can sign up online from 9 January 2024, 2 p.m. (Swiss time) to 15 March 2024 for the summer camps, and by 30 September for the New Year ski camp. (FS)



Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad,
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, Switzerland
youth@swisscommunity.org
www.swisscommunity.org
Tel. +41 31 356 61 24



Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

Swiss children living abroad will have an opportunity to get to know Switzerland and its culture – and have a great time with around 40 other children from around the world – at a series of two-week summer holiday camps from the end of June to the end of August 2024. Registration for these camps begins on 9 January 2024. Here are the camp dates:

- Saturday 22 June – Friday 5 July 2024:** Two holiday camps for 12 to 14-year-olds – one in Flühli (canton of Lucerne); one that criss-crosses Switzerland ("Swiss trip").
- Saturday 6 July – Friday 19 July 2024:** Three holiday camps – one for 8 to 11-year-olds; one for 12 to 14-year-olds; one that criss-crosses Switzerland ("Swiss trip").
- Saturday 20 July – Friday 2 August 2024:** Two holiday camps – one for 8 to 11-year-olds; one for 12 to 14-year-olds.
- Saturday 3 August – Friday 16 August 2024:** Two holiday camps – one for 10 to 14-year-olds; one that criss-crosses Switzerland ("Swiss trip").

Further details on the various offers (locations, age groups, etc.) will be available online from mid-December 2023 at www.sjas.ch. The registration deadline is 15 March 2024.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) aims to give all Swiss children living abroad the chance to get to know Switzerland in this way at least once. We therefore offer price reductions whenever these are justified. The relevant fee reduction application form is available to fill in when you sign up to a camp. For further details, please do not hesitate to contact the FYSA. (DR)

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

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) Alpenstrasse 24, 3006 Berne, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 31 356 61 16 Email: info@sjas.ch / www.sjas.ch/en



Together across borders

The 100th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place in the magnificent setting of Lucerne, against the backdrop of Lake Lucerne and the majestic Alpine peaks. And that's not all – we will be celebrating three anniversaries, and enjoying an interesting exchange of ideas.



The Chapel Bridge and its water tower – one of the most iconic sights in Lucerne. Photo: Lucerne tourist board/Anina Fässler

The 100th Congress of the Swiss Abroad, scheduled for 11-13 July 2024 in Lucerne, is a historic occasion for the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), SwissCommunity. Under the theme “Together across borders”, this congress will celebrate the enduring, often invisible and yet profound link between the Swiss Abroad and their home country.

We also have two other big anniversaries to celebrate in 2024: 90 years of organising holiday camps for young Swiss Abroad, and 50 years of the “Swiss Review”, a vital information source for the “Fifth Switzerland”. These anniversaries emphasise once again the importance of cross-border connections and the key role of the OSA, SwissCommunity, in maintaining ties with Switzerland.

Since the first congress in 1918, Swiss migration has undergone a remarkable evolution, with more than 800,000 of our compatriots living abroad in 2023, equivalent to more than 10 percent of the Swiss population. There was a time when people left intending never to return as they searched for a brighter future elsewhere. Today, we are seeing a more dynamic international mobility of shorter duration, often prompted by

career opportunities or a quiet retirement in another country. The needs of the Swiss Abroad have also evolved over the decades.

The history of the OSA Congress also reflects societal developments. The Second World War saw the cancellation of four con-

gresses, while the 2020 and 2021 editions could not take place as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. These 105 years have seen major transformations in mobility and means of communication. We have progressed from writing the occasional letter home, which took months to arrive, to instantaneous hyperconnectivity from anywhere.

The 100th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be a memorable occasion. It will address the past, present and future of the Swiss diaspora and will enable us to celebrate this



The Lion Monument commemorates the Swiss Guards who fell during the Storming of the Tuileries in Paris in 1792.



Boats are a common sight in Lucerne – vintage paddle steamer “Uri”, moored at Bahnhofquai.

Photo: Lucerne tourist board/Elmar Bossard

The Swiss Abroad, ambassadors of cross-border philanthropy



View from the slopes of Mount Pilatus down to Lake Lucerne and the city of Lucerne. Photo: Lucerne tourist board/Elmar Bossard

connection to our homeland which is reflected in the spirit of unity among the Swiss wherever they may live.

The event will feature the active participation of over 60 young Swiss Abroad who have participated in the holiday camps, with a Swiss government representative also in attendance. Moreover, the presence of the business and research communities will offer numerous networking opportunities. The festivities will include official speeches, entertainment and much more besides, all in two iconic locations: Lucerne and the Square of the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen, enabling attendees to discover or rediscover a region rich in tradition and the characteristic Swiss experience.

Reserve the dates so we can all attend the 100th Congress in a festive, convivial and welcoming ambience.

MAYA ROBERT-NICOUD, OSA



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For more information: revue.link/congres24



Generosity is deeply engrained in the Swiss DNA and the Swiss Abroad are no different. A survey conducted by gfs.bern for the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) and mediating body Swiss Philanthropy Foundation (SPF) shows that over 90% of the Swiss Abroad make charitable donations.

A total of 2,583 Swiss Abroad living in 123 countries worldwide took part in this survey between 26 June and 26 July 2023. More than half of them regularly donate between 50 and 499 Swiss francs in support of different causes; the average donation in Swiss households is 350 francs.

Three-quarters of respondents said they considered philanthropy important. Among the main drivers of this generosity are knowing exactly where the funds are going and how those funds will make a difference. Solidarity is another major motivating factor in people deciding to make charitable donations. The survey also shows how people from families with a tradition of giving are more likely to donate, emphasising the importance of preserving philanthropy through the generations. The main causes supported by the Swiss Abroad are combating poverty and supporting development, followed by health, the environment and education.

The OSA commissioned this survey to determine whether charitable giving, like the exercise of political rights, is a means of staying connected to Switzerland. The results showed that only 13 percent of Swiss Abroad make donations in Switzerland and that a mere 9 percent have already made provisions for legacies in their will. So, although there is still work to be done, avenues are also in place to promote the philanthropy of the Swiss Abroad in Switzerland.

SPF, as the mediating foundation, works with donors living in and outside Switzerland on a daily basis. One of SPF's main objectives is to give more support to the philanthropy of the Swiss Abroad, particularly through providing solutions to structure their donations in a framework of good governance, for example by creating sheltered funds where people can donate during their lifetime as well as through their estate. The cross-border donation network Transnational Giving Europe also facilitates donations to Switzerland from Europe.

CONSTANCE CHAIX, SWISS PHILANTHROPY FOUNDATION

For more information:
Link to the report in German or French: revue.link/generosite
Swiss Philanthropy Foundation: www.swissphilanthropy.ch



An apprenticeship in Switzerland opens up prospects for the future

Do you know exactly what a plastics technologist or an arboriculturist does? These are just two of around 245 professions in which young people, and also adults, can complete an apprenticeship in Switzerland. Last August, more than 70,000 young people, that is about two thirds of all school leavers, started an apprenticeship.

Why a vocational apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is very varied, and allows the apprentice to plunge straight into the working world. The training takes place three to four days a week in a private or public company and one to two days a week at vocational school. There are also a few full-time vocational schools.

A plus point is the small wage that the apprentice earns throughout the training.

Prospects after the VET vocational diploma

An apprenticeship lasts three or four years, depending on the profession. Those who complete their apprenticeship and gain the Federal VET Diploma are well prepared for

Scholarships for vocational training or university studies in Switzerland

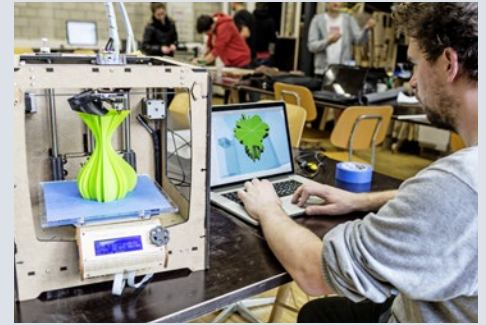
The "Foundation for the Swiss Abroad" has been managing funds since 1961 to support young Swiss abroad who wish to complete a vocational apprenticeship or university studies in Switzerland and whose families do not have sufficient resources.

For further information and to submit a scholarship application, please contact

educationsuisse,
education in Switzerland,
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, Switzerland,
Tel. +41 31 356 61 04,
info@educationsuisse.ch



An enormous range characterizes the 245 professions for which apprenticeships are offered in Switzerland – from arboriculturist ...



... to plastics technologist. What all apprenticeships have in common is that they combine practical training in a company with theoretical training at a vocational school. Photos: Keystone

work in their chosen profession. The Swiss labour market is constantly on the lookout for people with expert skills. There are numerous in-service training opportunities for professionals, including federal examinations and diplomas.

During or after the apprenticeship, it is possible to complete the vocational baccalaureate, which opens the way to universities of applied sciences. Like the "traditional" universities, these offer Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes and are very practice-oriented.

Required language skills

Depending on the language region, knowledge of French, German or Italian is required. Usually, for an apprenticeship a B2 level is required, and for skilled trades a B1 level.

How and where to find an apprenticeship

You can find out how and where to find apprenticeships on the official website of the Swiss vocational, educational and career guidance service www.berufsberatung.ch. All professions are presented there in detail alongside a list of vacant apprenticeship positions. In addition, many companies publish vacancies on their websites or on job portals.

Your application must be prepared with care. The dossier should contain a CV, a let-

ter of motivation and other documents such as certificates, relevant diplomas and grades from the last school year. The letter of motivation should be clearly formulated, but not too long, and it should make clear why you are seeking this particular training.

On the above-mentioned website you will find many useful tips for compiling your dossier. Some companies also require an aptitude test such as the Multicheck (more about the Multicheck at: revue.link/multicheck).

Finances

The salary an apprentice earns is not enough to ensure financial independence. However, if parents are not able to support their children financially, there is the possibility of applying for scholarships.

The staff at [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch) will be happy to advise you on this as well as on all other topics related to education in Switzerland.



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Discussion: an order of merit – and calls for more democracy

We recently wrote about a Holocaust survivor who has devoted her life to honouring the memory of her rescuer. This woman has now been awarded one of the highest honours in Hungary. The latest articles in our magazine have also prompted many of you to write in from around the world.



Agnes Hirschi
Photo: Danielle Liniger

Agnes Hirschi receives the Hungarian Order of Merit

The May edition of “Swiss Review” contained an article about Agnes Hirschi from Berne. On 30 October 2023, Hirschi was awarded the Order of Merit of the Kingdom of Hungary at the behest of the Hungarian president, Katalin Novák. Agnes Hirschi escaped the Holocaust in Hungary as a child – thanks to Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz, who later became her stepfather. Since retiring 20 years ago, she has made it her vocation to tell others about what Lutz did in saving her and thousands of others from the Holocaust. Hungary has now honoured her in recognition of her work. For more information, visit www.carl-lutz.com. (MUL)

More democracy for the “Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland”

MAYA NERINI, EVIAN, FRANCE

The majority of Swiss Abroad have done fairly well in life, I would say, hence they deserve to be elected into the Council of the Swiss Abroad and have their say as members of the “Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland”. Unfortunately, delegate positions have only ever gone to people who belong to Swiss associations. Many of these delegates are retired and blocking the way for others. You hear of people who have been in the Council for 30 years and keep getting

elected! Swiss Abroad who are not affiliated to any Swiss association should also be able to get elected.

GÉRALD BOREL, FLORIANOPOLIS, BRAZIL

Regarding political participation in general, it is absurd that Switzerland is still unable to make e-voting available to all expatriates. And I mean everyone – including those who live in remote corners of the world or in countries with unreliable postal services. The frequently cited “security concerns” no longer hold water given the technology at our disposal.

“Fifth Switzerland” voting behaviour

ALEJANDRO LEMP PAVEZ, SANTIAGO, CHILE

The “Swiss Review” article on expatriate voting behaviour in the last 36 popular votes was an outstanding analysis of how much political influence we as voters abroad actually have. revue.link/abstimmen

Benches – a ubiquitous piece of Swiss outdoor furniture

RUDOLF MEGERT, LEIPZIG, GERMANY

The humble (park) bench is the height of culture! Places without benches are not quite as inviting. Being able to sit on a bench in peace on my own – and enjoy nature – is my idea of bliss.

Visit the online edition of “Swiss Review” at www.revue.ch. Read the latest comments on our articles and join the conversation yourself. You can also share your opinions on the community discussion forum of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA).

Link to the SwissCommunity discussion forum: members.swisscommunity.org/forum



The print edition of “Swiss Review” remains reliant on donations

Now for the hard truth: the print edition of “Swiss Review”, particularly appreciated by many readers in the “Fifth Switzerland”, will continue to rely on monetary donations in 2024. The rise in energy and raw material prices has hit us hard financially – and mailing costs are set to increase sharply next year too. This is a huge challenge for a magazine available to read for free.

Not only do you, our readers, want to read the magazine, you also want a tangible and physical reminder of Switzerland to hold in your hands. And we want to be able to offer you this. We would, therefore, be extremely grateful if you were able to pay a voluntary subscription to help fund the print edition of “Swiss Review” in 2024. All donations to the magazine are a great source of motivation for us.

Voluntary subscriptions from our readers are, therefore, an important and much-appreciated way to ensure the print edition’s long-term survival. We hope you agree that this latest magazine illustrates our unwavering commitment to the hard-copy format, as we believe that we have put together another content-packed, stimulating and highly readable “Swiss Review”. And we would really like to continue doing this in future - for you, our readers.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

How to contact “Swiss Review”:

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Phone +41 31 356 61 10

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I need my first head for heights.

Davos, Graubünden, © Adrian Assalve, Getty Images



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