

SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
January 2020

Corippo: Light and shadow in the smallest Swiss Alpine municipality

**The Swiss Holocaust victims:
Swiss citizens in Hitler's death camps**

**Switzerland wants to tailor its development
aid more closely to its own interests**




Connect now!




Follow the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) on social media to stay informed about all our activities.

 www.facebook.com/swisscommunity

 www.twitter.com/SwissCommunity

 www.linkedin.com/company/auslandschweizer-organisation

 www.youtube.com/SwissCommunityorg



SwissCommunity partners:

Switzerland Tourism.



Swiss Travel System.



SWI swissinfo.ch

The shadows of war

- 4 Mailbag
- 6 Focus
Swiss citizens
in Hitler's death camps
- 10 Report
Corippo: when an entire
Alpine village becomes a hotel
- 13 Society
Sign language
is seeking recognition
- 16 Politics/Elections 2019
The Council of States too is greener,
contains more women and is younger
- News from your region
- 17 Politics
Switzerland plans to modify
its development aid
The great dilemma: what should be
done with Swiss jihadis?
- 22 Literature series
Gertrud Wilker's view of the USA
- 23 OSA news
Studying in Switzerland
Camps for children and adolescents
- 26 news.admin.ch
- 28 Images
- 30 Books/Sounds
- 31 Top pick/News



The guns may have fallen silent, but the war is by no means over. Pain and shock linger and cast their shadow across subsequent generations. Neutral Switzerland is discovering this now as the public is – at last – developing a clearer image of the Swiss Holocaust victims. For hundreds of these victims the Swiss passport offered no protection. They were locked up in Dachau, Auschwitz and other horrific places. Some survived. Many did not. This may be history, but it is by no means the past as these victims still constitute an empty space in the official historiography of Switzerland to this day. Until now, they were primarily viewed as difficult “compensation cases”.

However, thanks to a remarkable new book (page 6), the question now being asked is why the Swiss victims found themselves in such a situation in the first place. They are without a doubt first and foremost victims, because the horrors of the Nazi regime knew no limits. However, looking back, a nightmare picture of the behaviour of Switzerland and its diplomats also comes to light. Admittedly there were Swiss diplomats who fought bravely for their countrymen and women and for humanity. However, it is unsettling to hear about those cases where the victims were basically abandoned. The behaviour of the diplomatic team in Berlin in the latter years of the war, for instance, was one of sycophantic, silent restraint. Except in certain cases, they generally did not advocate for Swiss concentration camp prisoners, as they were fearful of angering the Reich.

This distinction between Swiss citizens who were deemed worthy of protection and those who were not is one of the dark shadows of war that Switzerland must address. Swiss citizens who were considered unworthy of protection and thus second-class sometimes included Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, “asocial persons”, socialists and even those with dual citizenship. During and after the war, they were accused in not so many words of being partly responsible for their own fate. What that means is that the Swiss ultimately followed the same criteria used by the Nazis to judge human beings.

If we are to properly address this period in history, we need to be brave enough to ask a crucial question: are we any different today than we were then? More specifically: do Swiss Jews encounter less hostility today than they did in the past? Are the Sinti people with roots in Switzerland, who received no protection back then and were labelled gypsies, accepted today? Do we now look at people with dual citizenship without suspicion?

These are not questions for historiography but rather for the present.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Locked up in Switzerland simply for being poor and undesirable



We Swiss know terms like “administrative detention” only too well. However, people who were not affected have no idea what it was like. The report of the Independent Expert Commission has finally brought to light the full extent

of this inhuman practice, and it sends shivers down my spine when I read the findings. And the fact that the legislation was not amended until 1981, under pressure from other countries (incompatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights), shows that there was still little awareness of any actual wrongdoing, even in the 1980s. Therefore, many brave people had to step forward to end this unjust system, and now – decades later – again, to make sure the deeds of the past are not forgotten. I am in awe of these people.

OSKAR SCHMID, OTTOBRUNN, GERMANY

Thank you for exposing my country’s shameful past. In retrospect, I feel disgusted, but grateful for the courage it has taken to reflect on this not so glorious period of our history. Despite it all, I remain attached to the country that made me!

LAURENT BÜRKI, GUIDEL, FRANCE

Surprised and totally shocked to find this out now. Couldn’t stop reading your report. And this was going on under my nose for 25 years while living in Switzerland. Never spoken about, non-existent conversation at the table. Who knew? Repulsive and shameful.

ISABEL FUCHS, CONNECTICUT, USA

Reading this article sent shivers down my spine. I would like to congratulate your magazine for publishing it. I was so proud to have been granted citizenship, but the idyllic view I had of Switzerland is now somewhat tarnished.

ISABELLE LESCURE-BELLAN, LISBONNE, PORTUGAL

There is still reason to be proud of a country which is prepared to face the dishonourable moments of its past and to accept them.

DAVID GANI, LONDON, GB

When I read the date 1981, I was shocked to the core. I thought that this episode had come to an end after the Second World War and did not continue for so long. Those responsible thought they were doing the right thing for these “detainees” and the families that they separated. But this is not an excuse.

ERNST RÜTIMANN, TRANG, THAILAND

Elections 2019: Switzerland has been hit by a green wave

I can understand why some of my friends who reside in Germany are (rightly in my opinion) rather jealous of Switzerland’s political system. Let’s see what the “new” policy achieves. I’m really optimistic that women and young people will bring something different to the political arena than a whole lot of men who have been holding onto their jobs for a long time.

On the proportion of women in politics: how wonderful! It’s hard to believe that Switzerland, once Europe’s “taillight” in the area of women’s suffrage, is now virtually a front runner. Keep it up, Helvetia!

ANDREA FRÖHLICH, BENNINGEN BEI STUTTGART, GERMANY

I am pleased about the new trend in voting and above all about the strengthening of the green bloc.

Let’s hope that electronic voting will be adopted. I feel that thinking and acting from a global perspective, without neglecting the “national” side of things, could make for a more efficient and coherent Swiss foreign policy in the face of new challenges.

MIGUEL MÁRQUEZ DÍAZ, OSORNO, CHILE

I received the material to vote too late: about three weeks after the deadline. I hope that we will soon be using the electronic vote. We are in the 21st century. Congratulations to the women and the young people who represent the best of your Swiss people.

CHRISTIANE JOHNSON, REDDING, CALIFORNIA

Why does the author not touch on the low voter participation of only 45.1 per cent? There were more non-voters than voters: that puts the results in context. Besides giving the impression of lack of interest, political impotence or complacency, it could be said to cast doubt on the credibility of many politicians and parties. That’s a pity and is also dangerous as you should not surrender democracy to totalitarian movements of any political hue, just because they tend to seek attention more loudly than others. Good policy ultimately requires consensus as well and not the ability to be confrontational. It is less spectacular but much more effective for the common good.

ERIC WEBER, THAILAND



Switzerland in cardboard

In its last edition, the “Swiss Review” also explored the 100-year-old history of Swiss modelling. We would like to thank the numerous readers who took part in our draw for 20 models. The winners have been notified; the models are already on their way to you by post – and we wish you a lot of fun with building “Switzerland in cardboard”.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,
AND SANDRA KREBS, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

The first star park in Switzerland



It is entirely true: we humans also need darkness at night for sleep to be truly restorative. Being able to look up at a starry sky is a RIGHT that human beings should demand, just like listening to the birds sing and the frogs croak. It

forms part of our natural emotions: those of childhood which have been replaced by the emotion created through cinema or television. Whilst nature, the great provider of magical scenes, no longer attracts attention.

SANTIAGO DE GERMAN RIBON, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Thank you for being brave and a good role model. I hope this encourages many people throughout Switzerland and the rest of the world to follow suit.

KATHARINA PREIS-JOST, HAUSEN OB VERENA, GERMANY

Bank fees eat up any interest



Things have got slightly worse for us all. The bank fees for Swiss Abroad have increased sharply. For example, the cantonal bank that we looked at charges 120 Swiss francs per customer base on top of the account fees – and only because we live in Germany. That equates to 360 Swiss francs per year – for actually doing nothing.

GIACOMO A MARCA, GERMANY

Negative interest rates are a real problem. At the moment here in Australia the interest rates are at a record low but not negative yet. If they ever go below zero, then money in your hand is worth more than the same amount in the bank. People will start looking for alternatives. The problem is if the government threatens us with a jail term and heavy fines for holding cash at home. Also cash transactions of over 10,000 Australian dollars carry heavy fines and potential jail. I wonder how the banks gained so much power over us. Negative interest only works for a handful of people. I don't think it's good.

DANNY ZEMP, AUSTRALIA

“SWISS REVIEW” – THE APP IS JUST THREE CLICKS AWAY!



Get “Swiss Review” free as an app! It's really easy:

1. Open the store on your smartphone or tablet.
2. Enter the search term “Swiss Review”.
3. Tap on install – all done!



Consular services
anywhere, conveniently on your mobile devices

- Guichet en ligne DFAE
- Online-Schalter EDA
- Sportello online DFAE
- Online desk FDFA

www.fdfa.admin.ch Bangkok (2019)

International Health & Travel Insurance and Superior Service for Travelers, Expatriates and Mobile Employees.

T: +41 43 399 89 89
E: info@asn.ch
W: www.asn.ch

soliswiss

COOPERATION & SOLIDARITY

YOUR SWITZERLAND ABROAD.

SINCE 1958 ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR SWISS LIVING ABROAD, TRAVELERS AND RETURNEES.

WWW.SOLISWISS.CH PHONE: +41 31 380 70 30

Gino Pezzani's prisoner number in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. "Sch." stands for Swiss, the red triangle for political prisoners. The Nazis deported Pezzani from occupied France in 1944. He barely managed to survive.



Swiss citizens in Hitler's death camps

At least 391 Swiss citizens, many of whom were Swiss Abroad, were imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. This is the finding of a historical textbook in which three journalists shed light on the fate of Swiss internees in the concentration camps for the first time.

SUSANNE WENGER

Young mother Marcelle Giudici-Foks was transported by rail to Auschwitz on 10 February 1944. The Gestapo in occupied France packed her and over a thousand other Jews into cattle cars. Marcelle, a fun-loving dance teacher from Royan on the Atlantic coast, was married to the Swiss Abroad Jean Guidici, which gave her Swiss citizenship. Jean's parents had fled a life of abject poverty in Ticino and were trying their luck as waffle bakers in France.

When life became dangerous for the Jews in France from 1942 onwards with the onset of mass deportation, Marcelle and Jean considered leaving the country for the safety of Switzerland. However, due to Marcelle's advanced pregnancy, they made a last-minute decision not to join the rescue train convoy deployed by the Swiss authorities. At the end of January 1943, the Confederation finally brought home the Swiss Jews living in

France. Before this, Berne had hesitated to act for a long time, despite the Head of the Swiss Consulate in Paris, René Naville, warning several times that Swiss citizens were under threat. However, repatriation came too late for Marcelle Giudici, and she died in Auschwitz.

"Worthy of our attention"

The Swiss Abroad René Pilloud was also interned in a concentration camp. He was born in Fribourg and emigrated to French Bellegarde, near the Swiss border, with his parents. His father worked in a factory; René completed an apprenticeship as a tool maker. In February 1944, while on the way to a sports competition, the 17-year-old was unwittingly caught up in a Wehrmacht operation against the French resistance. He was mistreated and taken to the Mauthausen concentration camp via a circuitous route. The Swiss authorities went to great

lengths to free him. According to the records, he was "particularly worthy of our attention".

On one occasion, a prisoner exchange was tabled, but Switzerland refused to cooperate. It did not want to swap innocent Swiss citizens for legally convicted German criminals. These noble constitutional principles extended Pilloud's ordeal. At the beginning of 1945, he was seconded to the camp crematorium and made to burn hundreds of corpses every day. The Red Cross was only able to get him home to Switzerland just before the war ended. He was emaciated, traumatised and had tuberculosis. Switzerland paid him 35,000 francs in compensation as a Nazi victim. He died in Geneva in 1985.

Putting faces to the numbers

René Pilloud and Marcelle Giudici: two names; two horrific stories. They are outlined in detail in the book writ-



Die Schweizer KZ-Häftlinge. Vergessene Opfer des Dritten Reichs
(Swiss concentration camp prisoners. Forgotten victims of the Third Reich)
Balz Spörri, René Staubli, Benno Tuchschnid
NZZ Libro; 320 pages, 147 images. CHF 48.–
Only available in German.

ten by the journalists Balz Spörri, René Staubli and Benno Tuchschnid. Other fates were also reconstructed. For four long years, the authors conducted painstaking, in-depth research in archives and databanks, and spoke with descendants of the victims. As a result, they now have the first proven list of victims containing the details of 391 women and men with Swiss citizenship who suffered in Nazi concentration camps; 201 of them died there. The book also contains information on 328 inmates who were born in Switzerland but never held citizenship: 255 of them did not survive the concentration camps. All the victims were arrested in Germany or in occupied areas and then deported. This occurred most often in France, where the majority of Swiss Abroad were living.

Some of the Swiss concentration camp victims were Jewish, but resistance fighters and marginalised groups were also persecuted. The authors list all 391 in the book as a “memorial”, from Frieda Abegg to Maurice Zumbach. Where possible, they give the victims a face with photos. “They were numbers in the concentration camps; they are compensation cases in the Swiss Federal Archive,” write the authors, “this book restores their dignity as human beings”.

Spineless authorities

It is quite remarkable that it has taken 75 years for there to be public awareness in Switzerland of the fact that Swiss citizens were interned in the concentration camps. Although survivors such as René Pilloud spoke openly of their experiences after the war and parliament approved compensation, the Swiss public showed little interest. These biographies are missing in seminal academic works. By writing about the fates of these people, the journalists are not just expressing sorrow at what occurred, something that any-

one can do by uttering trite platitudes. They are also posing the tough question of the role of Switzerland’s officials. Their conclusion: “Switzerland could have saved dozens of lives if it had acted more courageously and put more pressure on the German authorities.”

It is “always easier” to make such an assessment decades later, says co-author Balz Spörri in a conversation with the “Swiss Review”. If you want to judge the strategies of the time objectively, you need to consider the knowledge and leeway possessed by those involved throughout the various phases. The book outlines in depth how politicians and the media in Switzerland reacted to the development of the concentration camps by the Nazi regime. Although there was evidence, the concentration camps were not truly perceived as death camps in this country for a long time.

Second-class citizens

In 1942, the Head of the Swiss Aliens’ Police, Heinrich Rothmund, delivered an innocuous report on his visit to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The Federal Council was eager to believe his story. The authors found no evidence “that the Federal Council as a whole addressed the topic of concentration camps or Swiss concentration camp prisoners before 1944”. It was fearless diplomats such as the Swiss ambassador to Berlin, Paul Dinichert, who managed to gain the release of several incarcerated Swiss. However, after Germany occupied France, Berne called for restraint. Dinichert’s successor, Hans Frölicher, spent his time doing nothing. If Switzerland provoked Hitler, he feared that Hitler would order his armies to march into the neutral country. But Frölicher was viewed in Switzerland as an opportunist and a Nazi sympathiser.



The fun-loving Swiss dance teacher Marcelle Giudici-Foks on a beach in Royan on the French Atlantic coast. In 1944, the new mother was deported to Auschwitz and murdered for being Jewish.



The Zurich hairdresser Nelly Hug was arrested by the Gestapo together with her lover in Berlin in 1942. She survived the tortures of the Ravensbrück concentration camp – the photo shows her in ironed prison clothing.



Mina Epstein, born and raised in Zurich, murdered in Auschwitz, with her husband in Antwerp, Belgium. She sought refuge as a Jew in Switzerland, but the border guards turned her away as she did not have Swiss citizenship.



Anne-Françoise Perret-Gentil-dit-Maillard, a book binder from Neuchâtel, joined the Resistance in Paris. She was deported to a concentration camp, but managed to escape. Switzerland refused to compensate her for her suffering as a Nazi victim.



The Zurich social democrat Albert Mülli, pictured here in 1995, fell into the clutches of the Gestapo in Vienna in 1938. He survived several years in the Dachau concentration camp. Back in Switzerland, he was spied upon by the intelligence services.



Claude Richard Loefer was arrested in France in 1944 for his involvement in the Resistance. The occupation authorities initially deported the 18-year-old to the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp. He died in 1945 in the bombardment of the Buchenwald concentration camp.

All photos: Laurent Favre, Dorénav Archives. From: "Die Schweizer KZ-Häftlinge", 2019, © NZZ Libro

There was another reason why the Swiss authorities refrained from doing everything they could to protect at-risk Swiss citizens abroad. Some – criminals, social misfits, disabled people – were actually unwanted because it would have put a strain on the state purse to house them. Others belonged to groups that were ostracised in Switzerland: communists, gypsies, homosexuals, social outsiders. "There is considerable evidence in the records to support this," says Spörri. Thus, the Chief of the Division of Foreign Affairs in Berne, Pierre Bonna, informed the diplomats in Berlin that "the embassy is not permitted to put itself on the line if by doing so it disadvantages all other Swiss that are worth protecting for the benefit of elements who have contributed to the difficulties they now find themselves in through their own fault or un-Swiss, challenging behaviour".

"That sort of woman"

This stance sealed the fate of Anna Böhringer-Bürgi from Basel. The authorities labelled her behaviour "disolute" early on; she also encountered problems with the law. By marrying a German, the mother of seven lost her Swiss citizenship. Shortly after war broke out, she sought refuge in Switzerland at the age of 54 and applied to regain her citizenship. She was turned down. She was deemed to be "a notorious harlot and law-breaker"; care would be taken to ensure that "that sort of woman does not regain cantonal citizenship" noted a civil servant. Böhringer had to leave the country. In 1945, she died in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Later, Switzerland rejected her daughter's application for compensation. They justified their decision by saying that her mother did not have Swiss citizenship at the time of her arrest.

The 391 concentration camp victims detailed in the book have now all died. Their horrific experiences stayed with survivors like Albert Mülli their whole lives. The Zurich plumber and social democrat was arrested by the Gestapo in Vienna in 1938 and later transferred to the Dachau concentration camp as a political prisoner. He was accused of having communist ties. Mülli survived six years there. He returned to Switzerland, started a new life and became a member of the cantonal parliament. Before his death in 1997, the past caught up with him. In the nursing home where he lived with dementia, he was tormented by nightmares. Day and night, he relived the horrors of the concentration camp. Mülli's daughter told the book authors that it was very painful to watch him suffer this way.

Keeping memories alive

The book is just the start, says Spörri; extensive research into Swiss victims of the Nazi terror is required. Moral reparation is also needed; recognition that these victims existed, that they were harmed and had suffered injustice. Many of them fought against the Nazi regime and paid with their lives. "We think it's time that a member of the Federal Council says something on the topic," Spörri says. The author welcomes the commitment of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad to erecting a memorial (see Page 9). To date, the Federal Council has said nothing definite on the topic of memorials.

A memorial could be combined with digital forms of remembrance to reach the younger generations too, suggests Spörri. Such as a website containing the life stories of the victims; i.e. a virtual memorial. One thing is clear: there will soon be no more contemporary witnesses to the Holocaust. This makes it all the more important to store their accounts in a collective memory.

“We need more than just a commemorative plaque”

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is calling for a memorial to the Swiss victims of National Socialism. The memorial should also commemorate courageous Swiss citizens who offered protection and help to the persecuted, says OSA President Remo Gysin.

INTERVIEW: SUSANNE WENGER

For the first time, a book presents verifiable victim numbers. It shows that the number of Swiss who died in the Nazi concentration camps is much higher than the OSA assumed. Are you surprised?

Remo Gysin: No, I'm not surprised that we now know of more than twice as many murdered Swiss victims. Everything is still very much in the dark. Further research will prove that there was an even higher number of victims.

“It should also be used to raise awareness of the dangers posed by racism, antisemitism and discrimination.”

The book reveals that the Swiss authorities could have done more to save the victims. Did the federal government abandon Swiss Abroad?

There is no doubt that the Swiss authorities could have saved more lives. The Bergier report on Switzerland's role in the Second World War spelled this out clearly. The new book provides further evidence. For example, I would have liked the Federal Council of the time and the Swiss ambassador to Berlin to have had a different attitude. I am thinking here of the bravery of Carl Lutz, who saved ten thousand persecuted Hungarian Jews when he was a Swiss diplomat in Hungary.

In 2018, the Council of the Swiss Abroad supported the idea of setting up a memorial

to the Swiss concentration camp prisoners. What is the aim of such a memorial?

The memory of these victims should be preserved and strengthened. We should use this glimpse into the past as a lesson for the future, and to raise awareness of the dangers that racism, antisemitism and discrimination hold. I have in mind a memorial that encourages self-reflection, thought and discussion.

Where should the memorial be placed and what form should it take?

It must be a public, easily visible and accessible place that is worthy of a memorial expressing Switzerland's acknowledgement of its historical responsibility. I think Berne is the obvious choice. It could take various forms, and these options should be examined closely as the process continues. A steering group consisting of the OSA, ETH Zurich's Archives of Contemporary history, Jewish organisations and an expert in memorials is already at work. Contrary to my original opinion, it needs to be more than just a simple commemorative plaque.

What message should it convey?

It should commemorate all the victims, and in particular the Swiss victims of National Socialism and the Holocaust. I also think it would be appropriate to remember Swiss citizens who fought against National Socialism or offered protection and help to the persecuted.

Who should finance the memorial?

At present, there has been no definitive decision on the matter. As a

member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Switzerland has committed to preserving the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, so I believe the federal government will support and finance the project, possibly with the support of the cantons and the local municipality.

Are further steps required to reappraise this period of history?

Besides the memorial, the current developments in society and politics show us that there is a need for further intensive research and teaching, a comprehensive information concept and educational offers at different school levels.



Remo Gysin: Remo Gysin has presided over the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad since 2015. Before that, the doctor of economics led the Social Democratic party in the Swiss parliament for twelve years. He was a regional councillor in Canton Basel-Stadt for eight years.

A village is to become a hotel

With just eleven inhabitants, the village of Corippo in Ticino is tiny – the smallest municipality in Switzerland. However, not for long: in just a few months, the hamlet will be merged with the municipality of Valle Verzasca. However, one major question remains: what economic prospects does a tiny Alpine village with an elderly population have?

GERHARD LOB

The street leads steeply upwards, passing by the 220-metre-high Verzasca Dam, which became world famous when James Bond jumped off it in the movie “GoldenEye”. And then it runs alongside the dam until you finally catch sight of Corippo. The small village is perched on the right side of the valley like a bird’s nest; the stone houses and slate-covered roofs seem to merge into one with the terraced slopes and surroundings. The church tower is in the centre of the village. The first thing visitors see on entering the village is a small cemetery. However, the All Saints’ Day candles have burnt down, and the flowers have wilted.

It should be rather romantic, but with rain and a light snowfall, the little village appears sad and unwelcoming on this wintry afternoon. There is a sign reading “Chiuso – geschlossen seit 30 Oktober” (Closed since 30 October), in front of the only Osteria (restaurant) in the village, which is a popular stop-off for hikers in summer. According to the Federal Statistical Office, the municipality only has eleven inhabitants with an average age of 70 plus. This makes it the smallest municipality in Switzerland, although not for much longer: in April, Corippo will become a district of the joint municipality of Verzasca.

Nowadays, many houses in Corippo are empty or only used as holiday residences in summer. During its heyday in 1850, almost 300 people lived there. Since then, things have gone downhill. Corippo has suffered the same fate as all of Valle Verzasca and other Alpine regions in northern Ticino. Poverty combined with a lack of work and income led to an exodus. The roman à clef on Ticino history, “Il fondo del sacco” by Plinio Martini (in English: “No beginning, no end”) about emigrants from Valle Maggia, could easily have taken place in Valle Verzasca.

The superlative of being the smallest municipality in Switzerland still applies to Corippo for now. However, the locals do not seem to think a great deal of this. And they want to speak about it even less. Questions from outsiders on the state of the smallest municipality are answered grumpily or simply ignored. “Everyone has migrated down the valley,” murmurs a senior citizen, who quickly closes the garden door behind him.

Corippo has not had a working local government for many years. The 55-year-old Claudio Scettrini, a forestry worker and the youngest inhabitant in the tiny place, was the last president of the municipality. Together with his aunt and his sister-in-law, he made up the municipal council. “However, we always had to run everything past the canton, and in the end, nothing ever happened,” said Scettrini, when he resigned in frustration in 2017. Since then, the municipality has been managed externally.



Higher, further, faster, more beautiful? In search of the somewhat different Swiss records. Today: The smallest Swiss community



In the eyes of Ticino state councillor Norman Gobbi, the inability of the smallest municipalities to guarantee a working administration is proof that there is no way past a targeted merger policy. A municipality the size of Corippo is no longer able to autonomously provide important services that are expected by its citizens nowadays. Water supply and canalisation cost millions. “Like many other municipalities, Corippo had to face up to this reality,” says Gobbi.

The merger of municipalities has been expedited for decades for this very reason. In 25 years, the number of municipalities in Ticino has fallen from 245 to 115. “Under the cantonal merger plan, we are seeking to reduce this number to 27 municipalities over the long term,” says Gobbi. The same process is happening across the country. Nationwide, the number of municipalities fell from 2,899 to 2,255 be-

Tiny and extremely picturesque – at least from a distance. The Alpine village of Corippo in Valle Verzasca, Ticino.

Photo: Keystone

tween the year 2000 and spring 2017. Some cantons such as Glarus have made a clean sweep: 25 local communities were reduced to three municipalities in 2011. There is a downside to this development, though. Sceptics are worried that people’s connection with their own municipalities of residence will be further weakened by the formation of these large associations.

Back to Corippo: in the old parsonage at the church, one of the locals speaks plainly: “People no longer want to speak with journalists as they have twisted our words.” It is a fact that, in the last few years, numerous media professionals have visited the village in the valley of Verzasca after it got out that a hotel village would be built there. Reports have even appeared in the New York Times. A television team from the BBC also roamed through the place.

But what is actually in the pipeline? Some of the old stone houses, known as Rustici, are to be converted into hotel rooms. The Osteria is to become a reception area where guests can also eat their meals. “Albergo diffuso” or “scattered hotel” is a concept that has already been implemented in several old settlements in Italy. Corippo would be a pioneer in Switzerland.

Fabio Giacomazzi is an architect, urbanist and president of the Corippo Foundation, which is driving the hotel project and bought a dozen old stone houses years ago for this pur-



Reproduced with the consent of swisstopo

pose. The goal is to retain the “magical atmosphere” of the place but also to breathe new life into the hamlet at the same time. Giacomazzi has already shown numerous people around the village and abandoned buildings, in which time seems to have stood still. Sometimes there are even old shoes on the wooden floors or odds and ends in the corner. Cobwebs adorn the windows. However, a holiday apartment has already been set up in one of the foundation’s houses, and the mill has also been refurbished. The renovation of the other houses will finally start in early 2020. The mood in the village is somewhat sceptical. “They’ve been making promises for years,” says one of the locals.

Giacomazzi can understand their scepticism, but points out that the conversion work can only go ahead when all the money has been collected. The total budget is 3.6 million Swiss francs. “And at present, we still need just short of 600,000 Swiss francs,” says the architect. He seems con-



The migration has left its mark. Abandoned items everywhere are gathering dust.

Photo: LOB

Fabio Giacomazzi wants to retain Corippo’s “magical atmosphere” – so he has bought up houses. Photo: LOB



Publican Claire Amstutz is delighted that the village is to become a “scattered hotel”. Photo: LOB



fident that they will soon get the money together, ideally through private donations.

Claire Amstutz supports the project. She is the publican at the Osteria in Corippo. However, she rarely comes in winter. We run into her rather coincidentally while she is preparing a Sunday meal for her regulars: a Bernese plate – with dried beans, boiled potatoes, sauerkraut, bacon and sausage. Amstutz, who originally hails from the German-speaking part of Switzerland, is still unsure what the future holds; she is waiting for the new contract for the 2020 season.

It is interesting to note that there is already a certificate hanging in the Osteria bearing the words “Hotel Innovation Award”, which was conferred by the Swiss Society Hotel Credit and Gastrosuisse for the “Albergo diffuso” project in 2017. This prize has also brought many calls from people wanting to book a room. “Only it hasn’t been possible to date,” laughs Amstutz.

Thomas Egger describes the Corippo project as “exemplary”. The Valais CVP national councillor is president of the Swiss Working Group for the Alpine Areas (SAB). “A decentralised hotel is a wonderful starting point to improve the use of the existing structures,” he adds. And he refers to analogous initiatives in Grenchols (VS) under the name “Poort a Poort”, as well as in Albinen (VS) under the name “Albijou”.

Egger is strongly opposed to abandoning municipalities or parts of the Alpine area. And he also has the Federal Council on his side. The Swiss government approved a report in mid-November detailing how the existence of the Alpine areas is to be safeguarded and migration curbed. Expansion of digital infrastructure, i.e. with broadband and high broadband, is deemed essential.

GERHARD LOB IS A JOURNALIST IN LOCARNO (TI)

Once forbidden, sign language is on its way to becoming a recognised national language

There are more than one million hearing-impaired people living in Switzerland, many of whom cannot participate in society without a sign language interpreter. For this reason, the Federal Council is thinking of raising the legal status of sign language.



MIREILLE GUGGENBÜHLER

Brigitte Schökle is sitting in the meeting room of the 120-year-old Walkerhaus, a striking brick building located in the centre of Bern. Tanja Joseph has taken up her place opposite her. She is facing the light so that Schökle has a perfect view of her face. Joseph is a sign language interpreter – and she is there to translate. Why? Because

Schökle is deaf. The 50-year-old is the managing director of the Interest Group for the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired (IGGH), which is active in the canton of Berne, in German-speaking Fribourg and in the Upper Valais region. Schökle requires the assistance of an interpreter whenever she conducts a meeting with hearing men and women.

Sign language is not just an aid, says Brigitte Schökle. “It’s an independent language”; a language with its own grammar and syntax.

Photo: Danielle Liniger

She and all other deaf employees have a budget of 1,778 Swiss francs a month for interpreting services in the workplace. The Swiss Disability Insurance Act guarantees them this assistance. However, it still does not amount to much: “It’s enough for around ten hours of translation, but we need more than that,” says Schökle.

This example illustrates the major problem faced by hearing-impaired people: impeded access to communication. This problem is evident not only in the workplace but also everywhere deaf or hearing-impaired people encounter hearing people during everyday life. For example, in the healthcare and school sectors, in public offices and also in the cultural area.

“Nowadays, we live in a society that is strongly impacted by the media and communication. Although the internet has revolutionised a great many things, there are many areas with no videos in sign language or videos with subtitles in the three national languages,” says the IGGH managing director.

Sign language should become an official national language

We may well see improvements in the method of communication, and translation aids will become more prevalent in Switzerland over the next few years. The Federal Council has received three parliamentary procedural requests urging it to legally recognise the prevalent sign languages

Dialectal diversity

Switzerland is one of the last countries in Europe still to legally recognise sign language. However, Geneva and Zurich mention sign language in their cantonal constitutions. Efforts towards cantonal recognition are also being made in Vaud, Berne and Ticino. Sign language and the deaf culture are also mentioned in the Basel Gender Equality Act.

The Swiss German, French and Italian sign languages are used in Switzerland. There are also five regional sign language dialects in German-speaking Switzerland (ZH, BE, BS, LU, SG).



Two ...

... friends ...

... in a sports plane ...

(see additional texts) in Switzerland. This political awakening has “been a source of great happiness” to the deaf community, says Schökle.

Legal recognition of sign language could result in measures to prevent discrimination against the hearing-impaired. The legal basis against discrimination towards hearing-impaired people is already “rock-solid and precise”, maintains the Swiss Federation for the Deaf (SGB). However, it is not applied often enough. According to the SGB, deaf adults are three times more likely to be unemployed than hearing adults, for example.

Around 10,000 people in Switzerland have been deaf or severely hearing-impaired since birth. This corresponds to around 0.2 per cent of the population. And a further one million Swiss people live with a hearing impairment.

Hands behind your back!

Sign language used to be forbidden

Brigitte Schökle has been deaf since the age of six – after contracting meningitis. “There have been a lot of positive changes since then,” she says; from one day to the next, she had to switch to attending the former

A line of a song by the Bernese dialect troubadour Mani Matter (1936–1972) “S’sy zwee Fründen im ne Sportflugzüg en Alpeflug ga mache” (“two friends in a sports plane go on a flight in the Alps”), translated by the interpreter Tanja Joseph.

Photos: Danielle Liniger

School for the Deaf and Mute in St. Gallen: “For me, the change in school was a complete culture shock,” she says.

At that time, sign language was forbidden at school. Pupils had to keep their clasped hands behind their back so that they were unable to communicate with each other in signs. Deaf education experts were convinced that the deaf had to learn spoken language to do well in life. This meant they should express themselves verbally like hearing people, and not with their hands.

This assumption was influenced by a conference of deaf education experts from all over the world, the Milan Congress, in 1880. The resolutions of this congress had wide-ranging consequences for the social life of the deaf – including in Switzerland and up to the present day. “We suffered immensely during the era of ‘spoken language education theory,’” says the managing director of the IGGH.

Despite the ban on using sign language at the former School for the Deaf and Mute, the pupils communicated in sign language during lunchtime and out in the playground during their breaks. “They were the only places where educators did not interfere. In



... go on a flight in the Alps ...

this way, I gradually learnt sign language from my school friends,” says Schökle.

Early support is paramount

In contrast to former times, deaf and severely hearing-impaired children nowadays no longer have to attend a special-needs school, but rather can also be integrated into a mainstream school. Some hearing-impaired children (and adults) wear either a hearing aid or even a cochlear implant (an implant which is placed in the auditory canal). This enables the wearer to at least partially understand language. However, the aids cannot replace normal hearing.

Today’s hearing aids and school attendance do not provide sufficient support for hearing-impaired children, says Schökle, who has three children that can all hear: “Early support is paramount. Hearing-impaired children should be able to learn sign language from the time they are small and grow up ‘bilingual.’” She says that if you have this opportunity, you will have a better chance of receiving a good education because the school material can also be imparted with the assistance of interpreters. “It is here in the field of

childhood education that I am hoping for changes; if sign language becomes legally recognised in Switzerland,” says Schökle.

Translate concerts – for everyone

During Schökle’s childhood and adolescence, the signs seemed to be large and take up a lot of space; nowadays, they are much more subtle and sophisticated. Very few hearing people are aware that sign language not only consists of hand movements and facial expressions but also has its own grammar and syntax. “It is not just an aid but rather an independent language in itself,” notes Schökle. In the last few decades, the language has grown “more extensive and richer” and has continuously developed.

Even to the extent that is now possible to translate entire concerts into sign language. Brigitte Schökle has contributed widely in this area. She is convinced that bridges can be built with the translation of cultural events – bridges between hearing and hearing-impaired people.

At cultural events she discovered that the listening public is very interested in seeing sign language interpreters and the deaf poetry slammers go about their work; their attention

Politics is on the move

The deaf community in Switzerland has the support of three national councillors – Christian Lohr (CVP), Regular Rytz (Greens) and Mathias Reynard (SP) – who are pushing for legal recognition of the three Swiss sign languages at the political level. The National Council has already approved interventions on this issue by the three politicians. Besides legal recognition, Lohr, Rytz and Reynard are demanding concrete action in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the aim of achieving “the complete, inclusive and barrier-free participation of deaf and hearing-impaired people” in society.

was fully on the interpreter or deaf artists. “This is because sign language allows the subject matter to be conveyed to the public in an extremely visual, vibrant and emotional manner.”

“The simple fact that sign language is now accepted in the cultural field is great. Needless to say, we’d actually like to take part on an equal basis and independently in all facets of society,” says Schökle. For this reason as well, the legal recognition of sign language by the Federal Council is a “step in the right direction”.

MIREILLE GUGGENBÜHLER
IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST AND LIVES IN THUN

The “Fifth Switzerland” helped to drive the green trend

Post-election analysis clearly shows that the “Fifth Switzerland” voted strongly in favour of the Greens in the 2019 National Council elections. On the other hand, they had little say in the Council of States’ elections.



MARC LETTAU

Unprecedented gains by the green parties, more women, more left-leaning and slightly younger: this was how the “Review” summed up the National Council elections held on 20 October 2019. Since then run-off votes have taken place to complete the composition of the smaller chamber, the Council of States. Here we see a similar result: it is not more left-leaning but instead far greener, contains more women, and is younger. Female politicians including the two 31-year-olds Lisa Mazzone (GE, Greens) and Johanna Gapany (FR, FDP) as well as 35-year-old Céline Vara (NE, Greens) have brought down the average age.

The deciding ballots of the Council of States were a rather unsatisfactory affair for the “Fifth Switzerland”. The lack of e-voting was particularly noticeable because the documents for the run-offs were sent out at extremely short notice. Many Swiss Abroad were unable to take part as a result. The voters of the “Fifth Switzerland” had more influence on the National Council voting: they strengthened the political turnaround. A

quarter of the votes from abroad went to the Greens.

This means that the green vote of the “Fifth Switzerland” was far greater than that of domestic voters. Voting behaviour could not be fully analysed because the votes cast by Swiss Abroad are not noted separately by all the cantons. However, the figures from the densely populated cantons present a clear picture. For example, in Zurich, the most densely populated canton by far, voters from the “Fifth Switzerland” amplified the green trend considerably. The Greens and the Green Liberals (GLP) received a joint percentage share of votes from abroad of almost 38 per cent. At the same time, the two large pole parties, SVP and SP, were relegated to positions two and three (the strongest party in terms of voting share is highlighted each time):

Party	Overall results	Voting behaviour
	Canton Zurich	Fifth Switzerland
SVP	26.7 %	18.3 %
FDP	13.7 %	13.1 %
CVP	4.4 %	3.6 %
BDP	1.6 %	1.3 %
GLP	14.0 %	15.4 %
Greens	14.1 %	22.4 %
SP	17.3 %	17.9 %
Others	8.2 %	8.0 %

There is an obvious explanation for the strong support given to the green parties by voters living abroad. Climate change is by far the most international topic and from the perspective of the “Fifth Switzerland”, it is easier to relate to than the domestic Swiss dispute on pension reforms or similar.

French-speaking Switzerland voted greener than ever before this year: in Geneva and Neuchâtel, the Greens and the Green Liberals more than doubled their voter percentage. The Greens achieved the same in the canton of Jura and – to a lesser extent – in Valais as well. The Greens also gained considerable ground in Vaud. However, in the western Swiss cantons, the voting behaviour of the Swiss Abroad generally deviated less markedly from that of the domestic Swiss. Geneva serves as an example of this trend:

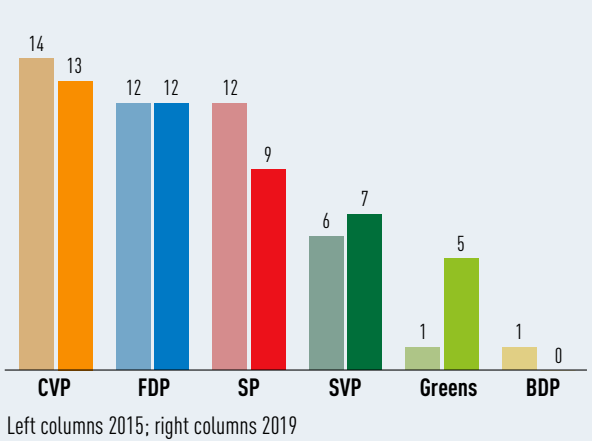
Party	Overall results	Voting behaviour
	Canton Geneva	Fifth Switzerland
SVP	13.7 %	14.6 %
FDP	17.9 %	17.1 %
CVP	7.7 %	6.8 %
BDP	0.4 %	0.4 %
GLP	5.4 %	4.9 %
Greens	24.6 %	20.4 %
SP	14.7 %	12.2 %
Ensemble à gauche /PdA	7.4 %	8.0 %
Others	8.2 %	15.6 %

The pattern repeats itself in a number of cantons in German-speaking Switzerland. The Swiss Abroad’s support of the Greens was above-average, also in cantons that predominantly voted conservatively, such as the canton of Aargau. Overall, the Greens improved their share of the vote in Aargau to 9.8 %. On the other hand, the percentage of green votes from abroad was 21.7 %.

At the time of going to press, it was not clear what the outcome would be of the bolstered Greens’ demand for a seat in the national government. We will provide the results of the Federal Council elections on 11 December in the next “Review”.

Data research collaboration: Stefanie Mathys-Zerfass

The distribution of seats in the Council of States



Now Switzerland's aid is helping the poorest countries adjust to climate change. Depicted in the photo: a rain-water reservoir in the Wag-Hemra region in Ethiopia.

Photo: Patrick Rohr, Helvetas



Swiss development cooperation requires a larger dose of “Swissness”

Switzerland wants to tailor its international aid more closely to its own political and economic interests in the next few years. However, aid agencies fear that this will lead to cuts being made to public funds set aside for fighting poverty.

THEODORA PETER

Switzerland has been providing development aid for almost 60 years now. What began with the construction of hanging bridges in Nepal has developed over decades into a comprehensive policy that aims to improve the living conditions of people in developing nations. Since then, millions of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America have benefited from education and health programmes. Switzerland has also made its mark as a neutral state that promotes peace and the rule of law. To this day, the primary goal of worldwide development cooperation is to fight poverty. For the first time, this cooperation has been linked with the goal of sustainable development in the 2030 Agenda, which was adopted by the United Nations

in September 2015, and has an economic, social and ecological dimension, including measures on climate protection.

Developing countries are future markets

In Switzerland, the Federal Council lays down the strategy for international cooperation every four years. It now wants to set a new course for 2021–2024. When it comes to selecting the countries and programmes, in addition to reducing poverty, the new strategy should take greater account of the interests of the Swiss economy as well as Swiss interests related to migration and security. When approached for a comment by the “Swiss Review”, Foreign Minister Ig-

nazio Cassis (FDP) said that “Switzerland’s open and strongly globalised economy makes it reliant on a stable international order”. The Confederation has an interest in strengthening the constitutional principles in developing countries, on the one hand for the people living there, “but also because these countries are potential future markets”. Switzerland also has an interest in “tackling the underlying causes of irregular migration and flight”, Cassis said.

However, in the case of migration politics, the Federal Council will refrain from making development aid dependent on a country’s cooperation – for example in readmitting rejected asylum seekers – as the SVP continues to demand. Aid agencies as well as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have expressed misgivings about this linkage. In spring 2019, the OECD Development Assistance Committee warned that Swiss development aid should concentrate more on the needs of its partner countries and less on combating irregular migration.

Withdrawal from Latin America

On the other hand, the OECD considers it a step in the right direction that Switzerland wants to place geographical boundaries on its commitment. The Federal Council intends to concentrate on providing bilateral aid to the poorest regions of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and eastern Europe, and to reduce the present number of 46 priority countries to 34 in the future. The withdrawal from Latin America is justified with the argument that these countries – with the exception of Haiti – are no longer among the poorest in the world. Aid agencies are less convinced, however. There is massive social inequality and conflict in Latin American countries too, such as in Bolivia, stresses Mark Herkenrath, Managing Director of Alliance Sud, the thinktank of the six largest Swiss aid agencies (Swissaid, Fastenopfer, Brot für alle, Helvetas, Caritas, Heks). Through its efforts, Switzerland is making a major contribution to strengthening civil society and protecting human rights in Latin America. “A withdrawal is only acceptable if the freed-up resources flow back into combating poverty rather than into building partnerships with the private sector,” says Herkenrath. From experience, there has been limited success in mobilising private resources in fragile states.

Controversial role of the private sector

However, Federal Councillor Cassis wants to strengthen the role of the private sector. It is “essential that it is included in development cooperation due to its innovatory



Hanging bridge in Nepal: such images are a reminder of where Swiss development aid began. Back then and today, hanging bridges make life easier – such as here in the Dhading district – attending school, exchanges, trade, development.

Photo: Narendra Shrestha, Helvetas

strength, expert knowledge, sales channels and investment options”, he said. From the perspective of Alliance Sud, the private sector contributes to sustainable development when it creates “decent” jobs, and respects human rights and the environment in developing countries rather than using them for tax evasion.

The Federal Council is expected to decide on its definitive message on international cooperation for the period 2021–2024 in February 2020. Last summer, around 250 organisations, parties and associations took part in the first-ever consultation process carried out on the strategic key issues. There has been widespread criticism as many believe the goals are extremely vague.

80 centimes per day/inhabitant

Both the strategy and the framework credit for the next four years will be presented to parliament. A total amount of 11.37 billion Swiss francs is envisaged for international cooperation, which corresponds to around 80 centimes per day/inhabitant. The planned total sum is slightly higher than the 11.11 billion Swiss francs that is available for the current 2017–2020 period.

Switzerland will no longer spend money on development aid on the basis of gross national income (GNI). The spending is likely to make up around 0.45 per cent of the



GNI. In 2011, parliament ordered the Federal Council to raise this figure to 0.5 per cent. However, this goal will not be achieved in the current period.

Last year, the OECD Development Assistance Committee repeated its call for Switzerland to keep the promise that it made in 2011. Aid agencies that have been pleading for years for a figure of 0.7 per cent of GNI now hope that the newly formed parliament will make the appropriate corrections. Alliance Sud notes that countries including Sweden, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark and the UK have allocated up to one per cent of their yearly GNI for development cooperation.

The SVP, on the other hand, wants to make radical cuts. From its perspective, Switzerland spends too much taxpayer money on development aid. For this reason, the People's Party wants to shift one billion francs from the development aid budget to the old-age insurance fund annually. A popular initiative to this effect is in the pipeline. The only money that the SVP wants to protect from cuts is humanitarian aid for people in dire need after catastrophes such as famines or earthquakes.

Consultation process documents on Swiss development cooperation for the years 2021 – 2024:
[ogy.de/eza2024](https://www.sdc.admin.ch/eza2024)

Switzerland in figures

Counterfeit notes, expensive chocolate, melting glaciers

82

82 counterfeit 1,000-franc notes were confiscated in Switzerland in 2018 – which is an unprecedentedly low number. A total of 17,654 were recalled in 2000. The Federal Office of Police says that the high quality of Swiss notes discourages forgers, but they are now bringing more forged 5-franc coins into circulation.

640

An 80-gram bar of the world's most expensive chocolate costs 640 Swiss francs. It was created by the Zurich manufacturer Attimo Chocolate. It is made from rare Grand Cru cocoa, saffron from the village of Mund (VS) and crystals extracted from fresh oranges. Only 50 bars of this expensive product have been produced.

85

This statistic has nothing to do with chocolate, but rather with the digital trend: 85 out of every 100 Swiss children do not get enough exercise. According to the World Health Organisation WHO, they exercise for less than an hour per day. As a result, the inactivity rate of 11-to-17-year-olds in Switzerland has increased further.

10

It almost slips our minds during winter: Swiss glaciers have shrunk by 10 per cent over the last five years. According to Swiss glaciologists, the glaciers are melting at a faster rate. The Pizol glacier (SG) has disappeared entirely and was symbolically buried by alpinists on 22 September 2019.

56

If you have read up to here, you are clearly interested in facts and news. However, according to studies conducted by the University of Zurich, the number of people who do not worry about the news or actively avoid it is growing. In the case of under-30-year-olds, around 56 per cent are now described as "news-deprived".

Jihadi detainees present a dilemma for Switzerland

There are said to be around twenty Swiss nationals detained at present in Iraq and in Syria, including women and children. The fundamental rights of these individuals, whether they have been fighting for the Islamic State or not, are not guaranteed. The Confederation has no plans for repatriation.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Western countries are not in any hurry to take back their nationals detained in Syria and Iraq. In north-east Syria, Jihadi travellers are kept in open-air prisons and in camps. In Iraq, individuals suspected of terrorist activity for the Islamic State (IS) are held in prisons. In this tense country, several westerners have already been sentenced to death, although they have not been executed. Observers have criticised the flawed criminal procedures.

In Syria, families captured after the fall of the last bastions of the caliphate in 2019 are living in “apocalyptic” conditions, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). This is the case for the al-Hawl camp, where almost 73,000 individuals, including 67,000 women and children, are currently held, according to the ICRC. In this area of Syria, destabilised by the Turkish intervention this autumn, 12,000 people are accused of serving as fighters for IS, explains Mehmet Balci, co-founder of the NGO Fight for Humanity (FFH). Swiss passport holders account for around 20 individuals in this region, according to the Federal Intelligence Service. Three young men of Swiss nationality are imprisoned in Syria, adds Jean-Paul Rouiller, head of the joint analysis group on terrorism at the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP). The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is not aware of any Swiss nationals accused or detained in Iraq. Amongst the westerners sentenced to death in Iraq, however, is one young man who grew up in Thurgau and who holds a C permit. “Switzerland does not have to intervene in this case,” states Rouiller.

It is for the states concerned to judge the crimes

So, what would happen if Swiss nationals were sentenced to death? The objective of the authorities is that “prosecutions and execution of sentences are carried out in accordance with international standards in the states in which the crimes were committed”, says the FDFA. Should this not be the case, it will be up to Switzerland “to sentence these nationals as soon as they return to the country, or a state

with which Switzerland has a judicial assistance agreement”, states the FDFA.

Of course, the subject of capital punishment remains a theoretical one. No judicial procedure has yet been undertaken in north-east Syria and there is no death penalty in that part of the country. “The situation would be different if the Kurdish forces running the IS prisoner camps decided to let these people be moved to the regions of Syria controlled by Bashar al-Assad, where the death penalty still exists and there are few guarantees of a fair trial,” warns Balci. A dozen European fighters have already been transferred to Iraq and sentenced to death, notes the GCSP. In such a case, at least from a legal point of view, Switzerland would be obliged to repatriate its nationals, explains Jean-Paul Rouiller.

The future of IS fighters and their families is also linked to political questions. On the one hand, the Kurds would like to hold trials for the fighters responsible for atrocities committed in their region, underlines Balci of FFH. Rouiller states that “in Iraq, western prisoners represent a lever for the government in the context of negotiations aimed at obtaining the means to fight against terrorism”. Regarding the death penalty, “Switzerland should do something in this context to remain consistent with its status as the world leader against the death penalty within the UN Human Rights Council,” reasons Alain Bovard of Amnesty International.

A policy judged “unsustainable and dangerous”

“Is Switzerland unable to repatriate 20 people and try them if necessary? It would be strange if it did not. The country is already dealing with cases of radicalised individuals on its own territory,” says Balci. The passivity of Switzerland and other Western countries with regards to minors is even more concerning. “Switzerland will examine the possibilities of repatriating minors on a case by case basis if it is in the best interests of the child,” states the FDFA. The foreign ministry considers that the presence of children – allegedly representing fewer than ten of the Swiss nationals – in this crisis region “is the responsibility of the mother”. “Until now,

the repatriation of children has failed above all because the mothers are not ready to let their children leave without them,” explains the FDFA.

The president of Lawyers without Borders, Saskia Ditisheim considers this position to be “unsustainable and dangerous”. She highlights that “for some Swiss nationals now held in Syria, radicalisation and allegiance to Daesh took place on Swiss territory”. For this lawyer, Switzerland would gain from repatriating these people and putting them on trial, “notably because of the essential information they could provide for the authorities”. She advocates the immediate repatriation of non-combatant Swiss women and children.

Jean-Paul Rouiller recognises that “the question of children concerns Switzerland, like other countries, on an ethical level”. However, he is calling for the matter to be considered more closely. The specialist points out that IS has recruited children from six years old and that it has identified thousands of minors in the context of a policy of recruitment. “Minors who have committed crimes will have to be tried, but they remain victims,” summarises Balci. According to the ICRC, children must only be detained as a last resort.

As for Swiss women, the head of the analysis group working in conjunction with the GCSP recalls that they could be

At times, there were more than 70,000 relatives of Islamic state fighters interred in the Syrian camp Al-Hawl; among them, ten thousand women and children.

Photos: Keystone archive image, March 2019



prosecuted in the context of the federal law prohibiting al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. One solution adopted by the Swiss authorities is to strip dual nationals of their Swiss citizenship. Such a procedure is currently underway against a Swiss woman of dual nationality from Geneva, imprisoned in Syria along with a child. In September, Switzerland revoked the Swiss citizenship of another dual national sentenced to imprisonment two years ago for having helped two fighters to reach the warzone in Syria and Iraq.

Wives of Islamic State fighters wait with their children in the crowded Syrian refugee camp Al-Hawl to be deported to another camp or to be reunited with relatives.

Photos: Keystone archive image, June 2019



She found her voice in German in America.

Very few Swiss women viewed the USA through more critical eyes than Gertrud Wilker in 1962/63.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

“The best, the largest of everything is for sale, wrapped up in a hypnotic belief in the advertising superlative. You drown in offers, shampoo, petrol, razor blades, artificial fertiliser. Grinning, busty and leggy billboard girls turn the streets into a veritable gauntlet run between artificially construed, insatiable cravings.” This was the USA in 1962. A state “whose land is scored only with cities and streets, but which is by no means defeated”. A state “that remains the mortal enemy of its population, that you cannot fight fiercely, barbarically and ruthlessly enough, whose wild beauty may be afforded neither love nor mercy; only a fierce determination to exploit it”.

Gertrud Wilker also expresses her admiration for America in her book “Collages USA”, published in 1968. However, of all the impressions that the Bernese secondary school teacher born in 1924 gained when she lived in the USA with her two children and her husband from 1962 to 1963, the critical-disparaging perspective took precedence and she eventually realised that she felt out of place in America and wanted to “step into a new future” in her “old world” rather than there.

German in a foreign environment

However, she was convinced that her time in America helped her to make great strides as an author: “I made a conscious effort to learn German here once more, as a mirror image of my lifestyle, as a refuge for my identity. It gave me my name, a linguistically tangible I; it contained the essence of me in this foreign world.”

Ultimately, her American experience spurred Gertrud Wilker to write eleven books between 1970 and 1985, and become one of the most eminent Swiss female authors of her generation.

“Radiation-proof words”

Her masterful use of German is evident in the 1970 volume “Einen Vater aus Wörtern machen”, which contained many of her best texts. The novel “Altläger bei kleinem Feuer”, published in 1971, then takes a critical look at a Swiss village in a time of economic prosperity. This is quite different to the legendary novel “Jota”, published in 1973, whose title character, a headstrong young woman, appears and

then disappears once more in a city like Bern, coming across to some as a saviour and to others as an annoyance. In the story “Flaschenpost”, published in 1977, a woman survives an atomic war with 300 others in a bunker and records in her notes, which are central for her author, that: “Although I have relinquished any personal hopes, I still hold out hope for my words, that they are radiation-proof and will survive the destruction that lies outside the bunker doors.”

In the face of death

In 1977, Gertrud Wilker was diagnosed with cancer, which she succumbed to after a long battle at the age of sixty on 25 October 1984. However, she wrested two books from the disease, and in doing so wrote herself into the annals of the women’s movement: “Blick auf meinesgleichen. 28 Frauengeschichten”, published in 1979, and “Nachleben”, the novel with which she so poignantly safeguarded the legacy of her deceased aunt.

However, two titles already foretold her own legacy: the volume of prose “Feststellungen für später” published in 1981 and the collection of songs entitled “Leute ich lebe”, published in 1983. And in the poem entitled “Briefentwurf”, “Lieber, dir bring ich / zur Kenntnis”, “dass es leicht ging, mühelos, / durch die Luft zu fallen / in Vogelgestalt.” (Dear, I would make you aware / that it was easy, effortless / to fall through the air / in the form of a bird)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Available in bookstores:
Gertrud Wilker:
“Energie auf die Zukunft. Ein Lesebuch”.
Compiled by Beatrice Eichmann-Leutenegger and Charles Linsmayer. Reprinted by Huber No. 6. Verlag Th.Gut, Zurich.

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH



“For two years, I remained conscious of the fact that I was out of place in America; every word was a translation; everything stood for something. You are not a member, not a contender; you exist, you walk alongside. You remain unaffected by the gradients of national annoyances; you live in the early form of a shocking freedom, but it is enjoyable”.

(From “Collages USA”, 1968)

“I particularly enjoy the practical projects”

Savian Scanu, a Swiss Abroad who grew up in Sardinia, talks about the challenges he has faced and his impressions while studying in Switzerland.

Savian Scanu, you are a Swiss Abroad who grew up in a village on the Italian island of Sardinia. What motivated you to study in Switzerland?

I decided to study in Switzerland due to the high quality of the education. I also wanted to learn German as I only spoke Swiss German. On top of this, the desire to see the world from an-



Student Savian Scanu in the Grisons Alpine countryside close to Scuol (GR). Photo: donated

other perspective was another factor in moving to Zurich after completing my university entrance examination in Italy.

You registered to study Mechanical Engineering at ETH Zurich. What were the biggest challenges you faced initially?

My two biggest challenges were following the lessons in German and the generally high standard of teaching. I had to provide a C1-level language certificate to gain admission to ETH. After a few months, I realised that the faculty was not meeting my expecta-

tions. I then discontinued my studies, worked in Switzerland as a gardener, among other things, learning the ins and outs of the working world in the process, and saved money towards further study. Finally, I registered to do a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences.

What are the main focus areas of this degree programme?

I have always been interested in environmental issues. The current importance of the topic, the professional relevance and the wide variety of lectures sparked my interest. The curriculum in the first year includes foundational courses such as mathematics, climatology and biology. Afterwards, you can specialise in a particular area. I deal primarily with sustainable tourism in my area of specialisation.

What do you like about your present study in particular?

I particularly enjoy the practical projects that we carry out with municipalities and tourist destinations. I am currently working on a concept for the sustainable development of tourism services in Scuol (GR). We have been discussing questions including: How can we retain the traditional Alpine landscape; and how can we provide incentives for people to use public transport?

What do you think of student life in Switzerland in general?

It's awesome. There is a wide range of free sports-related activities for students on offer in Zurich. It is also absolutely stunning down at the lake during summer.

What are your future plans?

All being well, I will complete my studies in December 2020. Afterwards, I want to work. I will probably have to complete several internships initially. They are usually low-paid, but are important to gain a foothold on the employment ladder.

What advice would you give young Swiss Abroad who are thinking of studying in Switzerland?

The most important thing is to find an apartment in good time, particularly in Zurich. You may be able to share one with other students. You should also get information about health insurance. Considering the high cost of living in Switzerland, a scholarship may be helpful. *educationsuisse* assisted me with my application for a scholarship from my home canton.

(RG)

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

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)
 Alpenstrasse 26
 CH-3006 Berne
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 00
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01
info@aso.ch
www.aso.ch
www.revue.ch
www.swisscommunity.org



Our partners:

educationsuisse
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 04
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01
info@educationsuisse.ch
www.educationsuisse.ch



Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 16
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01
info@sjas.ch
www.sjas.ch



Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
 Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
 Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
 Fundazion per giuven svizzers a l'ester

The “Parliament” of the Swiss Abroad will meet on 14 March 2020 in Bern

In keeping with tradition, the next meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) will be held on Saturday 14 March 2020 at the Town Hall in Bern. The meeting will be open to the public and a live feed will be available on the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) website, www.aso.ch, along with the agenda, which will be published approximately three weeks in advance.

The Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA), representative body of the “Fifth Switzerland”, is made up of 140 delegates, of which 120 represent the community of the Swiss Abroad. The remaining 20 are individuals living in Switzerland, with a background in politics, economics, social advocacy or culture. They are all committed to representing their 760,000 fellow citizens living abroad.

The CSA meets twice per year to discuss subjects directly impacting the Swiss Abroad and to thereby protect their interests. The spring meeting will be held in March in Bern, and the autumn meeting will be held in August as part of the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. The delegates are appointed on a voluntary basis for a period of four years (2017–2021). They are elected by the communities of Swiss Abroad. During their meetings, the CSA may adopt resolutions and recommendations aimed at authorities, institutions or public opinion. (JF)



The Parliament of the “Fifth Switzerland” sits regularly in Bern. In this image: a debate during a meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad in March 2018. Photo: Marc Lettau

What challenges does our democracy face?

Annual Congress of the Swiss Abroad

Immigration, data protection, digital challenges, and exercising our political rights: how is the Swiss democratic system meeting today's challenges? Where does it need to change? How can we guarantee respect of the basic democratic rights in Switzerland, unique in the world?

Such are the questions, amongst many others, that speakers will be asked to answer or debate at our 2020 congress on the weekend of 22–23 August. Save the date now and join us in Lugano! (JF)

What is the procedure for setting up a new Swiss society?

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) aims to foster good relations among the Swiss Abroad and to strengthen their ties with Switzerland. The OSA is supported by its recognised Swiss societies abroad. However, what does a society need to do to obtain recognition from the OSA? It must meet all the following requirements:

- The purpose of the society is to foster good relations among the Swiss Abroad and to strengthen their ties to their home country.
- More than 50 per cent of the active members are Swiss citizens.
- The majority of the board of directors are Swiss citizens.
- The steering committee is headed by a Swiss citizen.
- At least seven Swiss citizens belong to the society.
- The society convenes a members' meeting at least once a year and has an executive board that is re-elected periodically.
- The society is affiliated to the umbrella organisation responsible for its country if such an organisation exists (France, Germany, Italy, UK, Spain-Portugal, Austria-Liechtenstein-Slovenia, Netherlands, Canada, Argentina).
- The society expressly undertakes to inform the OSA if any of the requirements are no longer met.

Upon obtaining recognition from the OSA, societies are accepted into the worldwide network of the Swiss Abroad societies and institutions.

They automatically receive communications and newsletters from the OSA and are listed on the www.swisscommunity.org website. Societies that do not fulfil all the above-mentioned conditions may be recognised as associate societies. This allows them to also benefit from the information and services of the OSA.

Societies that are interested in obtaining recognition from the OSA can complete the application form. It is available on the OSA's website, www.aso.ch, or by following the direct link: ogy.de/recognition-by-osa. (ASO)

The OSA's Legal Service provides general legal information on Swiss law, particularly in areas which concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law or intervene in disputes between private parties.

IMPRINT: “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 46th year of publication and is published in German, French, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 418,000, including 235,000 electronic copies. Regional news appears 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. EDITORS: Marc Lettau (MUL), Editor-in-Chief; Stéphane Herzog (SH); Theodora Peter (TP); Susanne Wenger (SWE); Simone Flubacher (SF),

responsible for “news.admin.ch”, Relations with the Swiss Abroad, FDFA, 3003 Bern, Switzerland EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Sandra Krebs TRANSLATION: SwissGlobal Language Services AG; LAYOUT: Joseph Haas, Zürich; PRINT: Vogt-Schild Druck AG, 4552 Derendingen POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial

office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, Tel.: +41313566110, Fax: +41313566101, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. Email: revue@aso.ch

COPY DEADLINE for this edition: 26 November 2019

All Swiss Abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Bern. www.revue.ch

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





The Youth Service introduces a new camp

Besides the popular sport and recreational camps and the variety of the Swiss Challenge, the Youth Service is offering a new camp in 2020 for those who would like to improve their German or French.

New: language, sport and culture

This summer, the Youth Service is organising a new language, sport and culture camp in two of Switzerland's national languages – French and German. During the week, the participants will attend French or German lessons in the mornings given by specialist teachers. In the afternoons and at the weekends, they will play sport and discover Switzerland together. To round it all off, on the final weekend they will take part in the 98th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lugano.

Camp locations and camp date:

- Bern (BE) and Lugano (TO) 8 to 23 August 2020
- Age group for 16 to 25-year-olds

Sport and recreational camps

With young Swiss Abroad from all over the world, the participants in our sport and recreational camps experience a summer full of breathtaking excursions, hikes and sporting activities, and make new international friendships. The young people taking part enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of their homeland for two weeks. Base camp is in a comfortable lodge, from which to discover the region and Swiss culture together. These camps are for young people who enjoy sport.

Camp locations and camp dates:

- Châteaufort (VD) 11 to 24 July 2020
- Fiesch (VS) 25 July to 7 August 2020
- Age group for 15 to 18-year-olds

Swiss Challenge

During the two-week Swiss Challenge, the participants get to know the great diversity of Switzerland, explore the largest Swiss cities and find out what it means when four languages meet in one country. The Swiss Challenge is a mix of sightseeing, travel, mountain hikes, sport and culture.

Camp location and camp date:

- Whole of Switzerland 11 to 24 July 2020
- Age group for 15 to 18-year-olds

More detailed information on the offers and on how to register is available on our website:

www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/youth-offers

Youth Service contact details:

Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA),
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, Switzerland,
Telephone +41 31 356 61 24, Fax +41 31 356 61 01,
Email: youth@aso.ch.

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 – at two-week summer camps between the end of June and the end of August 2020.

Run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA), these camps offer the chance to explore lakes, mountains, rivers and countryside on foot, and visit various sights and cities. Games, sports and workshops will also feature strongly among the daily activities.

Children at the camps will learn a lot about their home country – from traditional songs and cooking recipes, to typical Swiss games and sports. The demand for our Schweizer Reise (Swiss trip) offer has grown every year, so we are pleased to inform you that we will offer two such trips per year in the future.

The camps all have one thing in common in that children of similar age from different countries meet and interact with each other across the linguistic, cultural and geographical divide. They are a chance to make new friends and share unforgettable memories.

There are still some free places available in our holiday camps. For a full schedule and further details as well as the relevant application form, visit www.sjas.ch/en/camps. Alternatively, we can send you a comprehensive overview of our camps by post on request.

The FYSA wants to enable all Swiss children living abroad to visit and experience Switzerland for themselves at least once. We therefore offer price reductions whenever these are justified. Simply fill in the "Application form for reduction of the camp fees". We will also be happy to help if you require any further information. (LR)

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA),
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne.
Tel.: +41 (0)31 356 61 16, fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01, email: info@sjas.ch, www.sjas.ch

What happens to my old-age and survivors' insurance (OASI) if I live and work abroad?

If you live and work abroad and wish to maintain your contributions to the OASI scheme, you can join the voluntary old age and survivors' insurance/invalidity insurance (OASI/DI). By doing so, you will avoid substantial pension reductions.

The best way to explain this is with examples. Let's take a look at the case of Mr A first: he is being seconded by his employer, whose headquarters are in Rapperswil, to a subsidiary in China for three years. According to the social security insurance agreement between Switzerland and China, his employer will continue to make social security payments during this time. This means that Mr A will still have health insurance in Switzerland and remain a part of the statutory occupational pension scheme (second pillar). Mr A will also continue to draw family allowances from Switzerland. On arrival in China Mr A must submit the secondment certificate from his OASI compensation office. By doing so, he is providing proof that he is under no obligation to insure himself in China.

However, what happens in the case of Mrs B, the wife of Mr A? She will care for their two primary-school-age children while the family is living in China. This means she can apply for seamless continuation of her OASI/DI/APG insurance as well. To do so, she must apply to join the OASI compensation office of A no later than six months after moving abroad.

However, Mrs B cannot continue her compulsory insurance while she is in China if she accepts a job with an employer whose registered office is in



Explore the world as a Swiss chef: if you work abroad, you should check the fine print of your pension scheme carefully.

Photo: Keystone

China. In this case, the same rule applies for her and all other employed people who – unlike Mr A – are not seconded. They can join the voluntary OASI/DI. If they do so, they can draw a pension when they reach retirement age, just like people who are insured in Switzerland. With her contributions to the voluntary OASI/DI, the now employed Mrs B can thus close the contribution gaps and avoid significant reductions in her OASI pension. Deadlines apply in this case. Mrs B is obliged to submit a membership application within one year of leaving the compulsory OASI/DI/APG insurance scheme.

Contributions to the voluntary OASI/DI scheme are determined based on the annual income earned and/or income from self-employment. From 1 January 2020, the annual contribu-

tion to the voluntary insurance scheme is 10.1 percent of the annual salary. For unemployed people, the amount depends on their assets and any pension income. The minimum annual contribution is 950 Swiss francs.

The Swiss Compensation Office (SCO), which pays OASI pensions to insured persons resident abroad is also responsible for the use of the voluntary OASI/DI scheme. Further information on voluntary OASI/DI insurance and on membership conditions is available at www.zas.admin.ch (cf. under “Private voluntary OASI/DI insurance”).

For further information: sedmaster@zas.admin.ch, or telephone +41 58 461 91 11. [ZAS]

HELPLINE FDFA

☎ from Switzerland +41 800 24 7 365
 ☎ from abroad +41 58 465 33 33
 E-Mail: helpline@eda.admin.ch
 Skype: helpline-eda

Travel advice

www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise
 ☎ from Switzerland +41 800 24 7 365
 ☎ from abroad +41 58 465 33 33
www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae

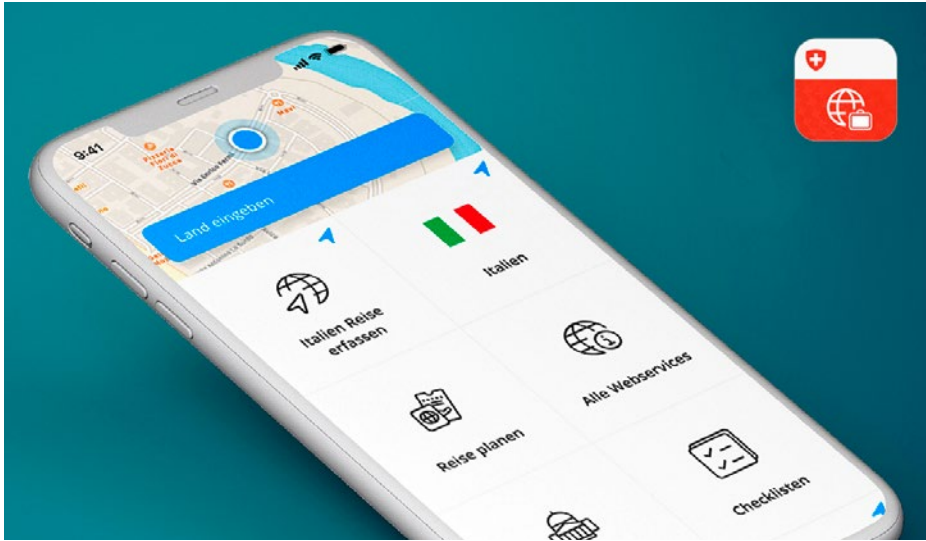
itineris

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



Plan well.
Travel well.

App available for free for iOS and Android



Travel Admin app

An unforgettable trip starts with being well prepared. Travel Admin is the new app developed by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to replace the itineris app. The Travel Admin app meets your needs with a simple layout and a fresh, appealing design. In addition to the integrated trip registration, you can update your current location with the click of a button, so the FDFA can contact you more easily if there is an emergency situation at your destination. The app allows you to search and display all Swiss representations abroad that provide services to Swiss citizens on a map. You can create and man-

age your own travel checklists and consult the FDFA's Travel Advice. The FDFA's comprehensive travel app also features information from private-sector partners. Travel Admin app is now available for download from the Apple and Google app stores. Bon voyage! (FDFA)



Information

Notify your local Swiss representation of your email address(es) and mobile phone number(s), or of changes to these, and register at the online desk (on the FDFA website at www.eda.admin.ch or via www.swissabroad.ch) to select your preferred format for receiving "Swiss Review" and other publications. Please contact your Swiss representation if you have trouble signing in.

Both the latest and previous issues of "Swiss Review" are available to read and/or print out at any time via www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is delivered free of charge electronically (by email) or as a print edition to the homes of all Swiss Abroad. It is also available via an iOS/Android app.

Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date. Everything you need to know about 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 VoteInfo app.

The following proposals will be put to the People on 9 February 2020:

- Federal Popular Initiative "More affordable homes"
- Amendment of the Criminal Code and the Military Criminal Code of 14 December 2018 (Discrimination and incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation)

Popular initiatives

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

- "Help asylum seekers in their home countries" (08.04.2021)
- "For a mobile phone system that is health compatible and energy efficient" (15.04.2021)
- "Liability for mobile phone radiation" (22.04.2021)
- "For a secure and sustainable pension system" (Pensions Initiative) (05.05.2021)

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

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





Alpine products between tradition and innovation: waterproof milk containers also make great sauna tubs.

Alpine workshop in a museum

“The best wood for the roof of a stall grows next to the stall,” says the Grisons-born shingle maker, Eva Gredig. She is one of seven shingle-making specialists from the Alpine region that are exhibiting their craftsmanship in the Swiss Alpine Museum, Bern. Visitors can pick up a hammer themselves, join in the slate-making workshop and cover parts of the Alpine museum in slates together.

The Alpine workshop exhibition depicts daily life rather than an idealised Alpine world. What does it mean

to create a product with your hands in a digitalised and globalised world? How much actual manual work do modern trades contain nowadays? How do you make a living from it? Besides slate makers and a ski builder, the exhibition includes further trades from the Alpine region just waiting to be discovered: carpentry, violin making, cobbling, cheese making and weaving. (TP)

“Alpine workshop. The Artisans”, Alpine Museum Bern, until 27 September 2020. www.alpinesmuseum.ch



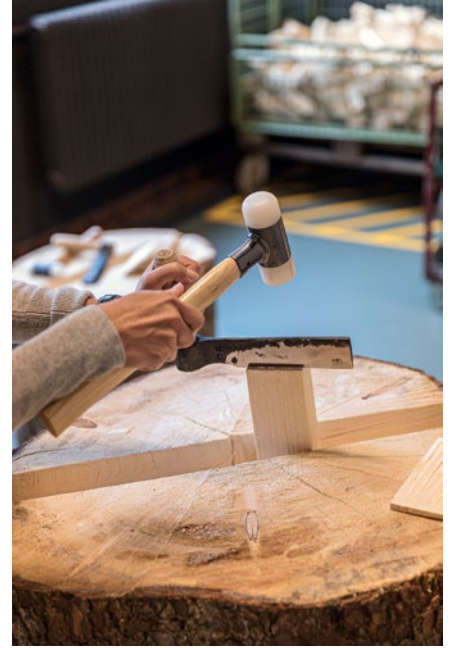
Students of the violin-making school in Brienz show off their craft.



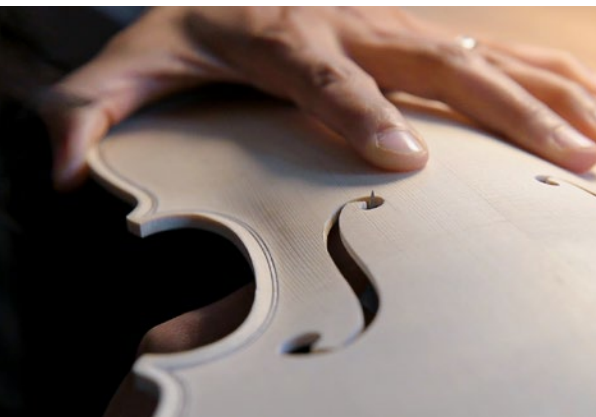
Vaud-born ski maker Lucas Bessard in his workshop in Cuarnens.



Video installations provide an insight into the daily life of professional people: Jessica Correia de Freitas in the Tessitura hand weaving mill in Poschiavo.

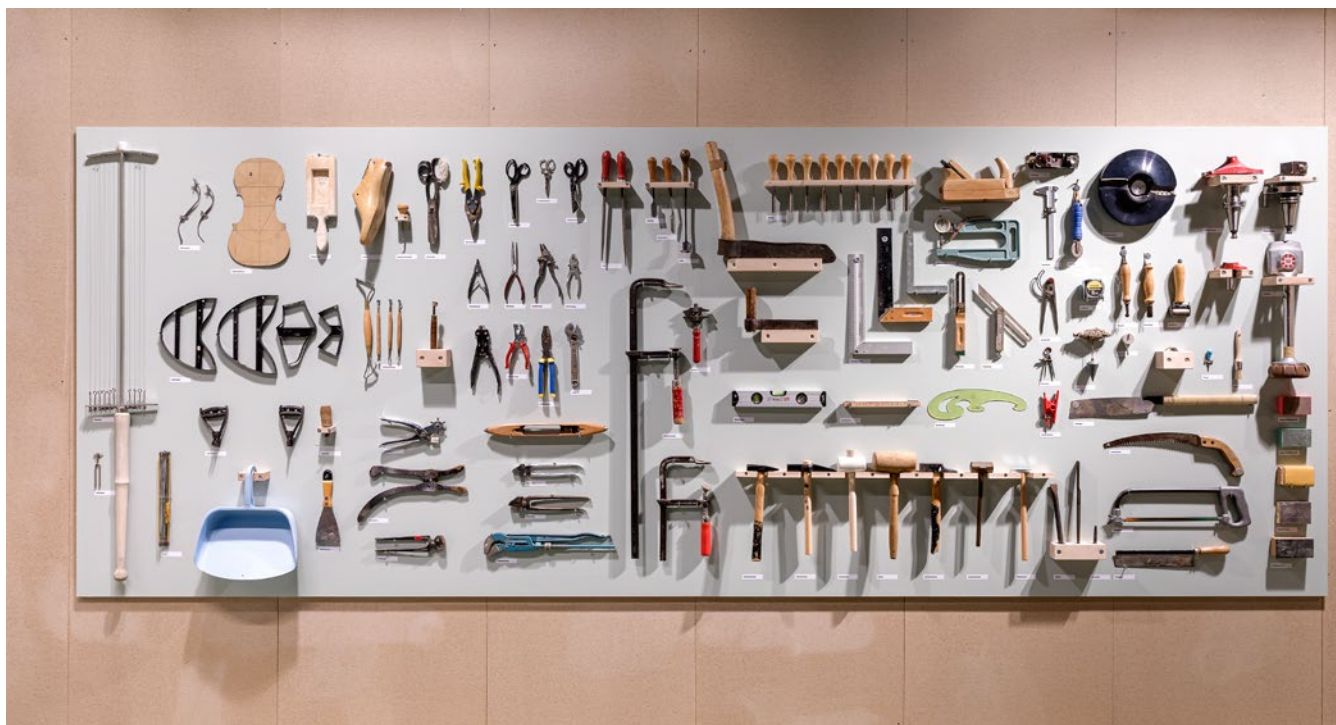


The public lend a hand in the museum's slate-making workshop.



Violin-maker Mahdiah Shahraki puts the finishing touches to her work in Brienz.

Touching is allowed: there is a story behind every tool.



20th century Switzerland, revisited in a comic



ÉRIC BURNAND AND
FANNY VAUCHER
"Le siècle d'Emma",
éditions Antipodes,
207 pages.

Did you know that in November 1918, as the war was coming to a close, a general strike saw Switzerland plunge into a near-revolutionary period, and that at this time the army fired on protesters, killing three men in Grenchen (SO)? Did you know that between 1942 and 1945, 17 Swiss men were executed by firing squad for having sold information to Germany? Have you ever heard of Max Leo Keller, Swiss Nazi and founder of the National Movement of Switzerland, who left for Germany in 1941 and was later sentenced to 14 years imprisonment upon returning to his country?

"Le siècle d'Emma," ("Emma's century" in English) is a 200-page comic book, published in November, which revisits the official version of Swiss history. The tale is punctuated by many dark episodes that are less than well known. It begins at the time of the general strike in 1918 and ends at the fall of the Berlin Wall, in November 1989. The narrative follows the life of a fictional woman named Emma, born in the small watch-making community of Grenchen, at the foot of the Juras. In 1918, she loses her fiancé in the clashes at the time of the general strike. In 1937, she rows with her brother over his pro-Nazi stance. In 1956, her nephew, whom she has adopted, shows her the dark side of Italian immigration. In 1975, her granddaughter confronts her with anti-nuclear and feminist challenges.

Written by Éric Burnand, former RTS journalist, and illustrated by Fanny Vaucher, "Le siècle d'Emma" captivates the reader. We suffer alongside those who have been crushed by the machinery of the state, even when accused of treason. The pages reveal a glimpse of Switzerland at different stages in its evolution. The period of 1956 to 1959 is notably striking: at this time, the economy sees an extraordinary boom, abortion and cohabitation are prohibited, and women do not have the right to vote. "In this introverted Switzerland, distrust is everywhere," says Burnand. During this period, Italians are met at the border and examined like cattle. The graphic novel gives substance to situations. As seasonal workers had no right to family reunification, Emma sees her adoptive son's Italian fiancée forced to bring her son into the country through the green border.

STEPHANE HERZOG

Heidi's Switzerland bathed in a red sunset



HEIMWEH:
"Ärdeschön", Phonag 2019.

Is it possible to be homesick (in German, Heimweh haben) even if you are at home? The eponymous twelve-member men's choir (Heimweh) can. All of them live in different rural areas of Switzerland, but they are homesick for their homeland – for an idyllic Switzerland that conveys familiarity, serenity and security. The world they depict in their songs is an escapist, idealistic, clichéd and striking homeland right out of a picture book.

It is a world swimming in clichés that work perfectly. In their fourth album, "Ärdeschön" (Beautiful Earth), Heimweh sing, for example, about the "Alpabfahrt" and toast their good cheese. "Äs isch Alpabfahrt bi üs im Tal / D'Herbschtsunnä schiint numal / Gllii scho git's dr erschti Schnee." ("It's time for the Alpabfahrt in our valley / the autumn sun is shining again / The first snows are just around the corner".) On the other hand, they remind us of life in an old farmhouse: "Im Summer het's mängs Feschthli gäh / Ds halbe Dorf isch eis cho näh / U me het tanzet bis id Nacht." ("We sometimes held get-togethers in the summer / Half the village came for a drink / And we danced long into the night.") However, things get really emotional in the title song: "The sky is bathed in a red sunset / Which makes the Alps glow / We are looking after our country well / And it is doing the same for us". And an alphorn sounds in the distance.

The content that conveys such yearning is underscored musically by a popular dialect pop – however, the album is definitely more pop than folk music. The accordion stays in the background, zithers and clarinets cannot be heard, instead the sound is synthesizers, guitars, contrabass and drums. The verses are each sung by a lead singer, while choir music and yodelling is only in the refrains.

Zurich producer Georg Schlunegger's choir has already achieved great success with this concept. Heimweh's earlier works always landed at the top of the Swiss charts or in third place. They have sold more than 100,000 albums, won two Swiss Music Awards, completed sold-out tours – and ensured a real Swiss atmosphere at wrestling competitions and all manner of events in the country. So it is hardly surprising that these down-to-earth men in their traditional costumes are at the top of the Swiss hit parade once again with their fourth album.

MARKO LEHTINEN

Martin Suter



Martin Suter is once again able to celebrate his birthday on 29 February because 2020 is a leap year. He also has every reason to pop the cork on a bottle of champagne. The Zurich-born author, who will soon turn 72, has been the highest-selling Swiss author internationally for more than twenty years. His breakthrough came with the novel “Small World” in 1997. At that time, he was in his late forties; a late bloomer. Further well-known titles followed, including “The Dark Side of the Moon”. Suter also achieved success with the criminal series based around the dandified Zurich detective Allmen. “Allmen and the Koi”, the sixth volume, landed directly in the top spot on the bestseller list last autumn. This has almost become a regular haunt for the author whose works have been translated and filmed many times. Before he became a full-time writer, Suter was a successful advertising creative director. This period of his life afforded him an insight into the boardroom, which he later skilfully debunked in newspaper columns that were as biting as they were humorous. He is an extremely disciplined writer, but Suter the intellectual is also a bon vivant. He likes to look stylish, have beautiful things, had a second residence on Ibiza, and currently lives in Marrakesh. The “Süddeutsche Zeitung” has termed him “the very antithesis of the starving artist”. However, like other authors, he is concerned about the structural change afoot in publishing. Now Suter is experimenting with a digital model. You can subscribe to reading material, videos and podcasts for six Swiss francs or five euros per month on his website www.martin-suter.com. “Less than the price of a latte macchiato”, he notes. He has also revived his “Business Class” column online. Globalised Swiss bankers and other exponents of top management still provide him with plenty of material.

SUSANNE WENGER

Tension between Berne and Colombo

At the end of November, an employee of the Swiss embassy in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo was kidnapped and forced to reveal confidential information. The Swiss authorities condemned the attack, labelling it “extremely serious and unacceptable”. The Sri Lankan government disputes the Swiss account of the events. Observers suspect that the incident may be connected to the flight of a high-ranking Sri Lankan official to Switzerland. (MUL)

Cleaning service in outer space

Switzerland is contributing 542 million Swiss francs to the new five-year budget of the European Space Agency (ESA). By doing so, it is consolidating its role in space research. Switzerland is leading the way in several programmes, such as in the mission to locate space junk and bring down old satellites with controlled re-entry. (MUL)

Reformed church supports “Marriage for All”

In November, the delegates of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches voted overwhelmingly to back moves to allow homosexual couples to marry. Despite the decision, reformed pastors are still free to decide whether they wish to marry same-sex couples, or not. The landmark decision supporting “Marriage for All” was also made against the backdrop of the Green Liberals’ parliamentary initiative: they are demanding that all couples be allowed to enter into legally regulated domestic partnerships – irrespective of their sex or sexual orientation. (MUL)

Wind park fails due to landscape protection

There will be no large park with wind turbines built in the canton of Grisons. The voters of the local municipality of Lugnez have rejected the plan to build 18 windmills, each more than 100 metres in height, around the 2,357-metre-high Um Su mountain. They submitted that it is more important to protect the Alpine landscape than to build an ecologically viable wind park. (MUL)

Geneva airport: people want to have their say

The Genevans want to have their democratic say in the future of Geneva airport. They voted overwhelmingly at the ballot box in favour of anchoring their right to co-determination in the Geneva constitution. Under the new regulations, not only economic aspects must be considered when developing the airport, but also environmental protection and the quality of life of the local residents. Business circles vehemently opposed the change, but without success. (MUL)



Switzerland.

Come and see
for yourself.



Schwarzsee/Kaiseregg, Fribourg Region, © Silvano Zeiter

Find your perfect winter experience at [MySwitzerland.com/winter](https://www.myswitzerland.com/winter)
and tell us about your favourite moments using [#INLOVEWITHSWITZERLAND](https://www.instagram.com/INLOVEWITHSWITZERLAND)



Swiss Travel System.

