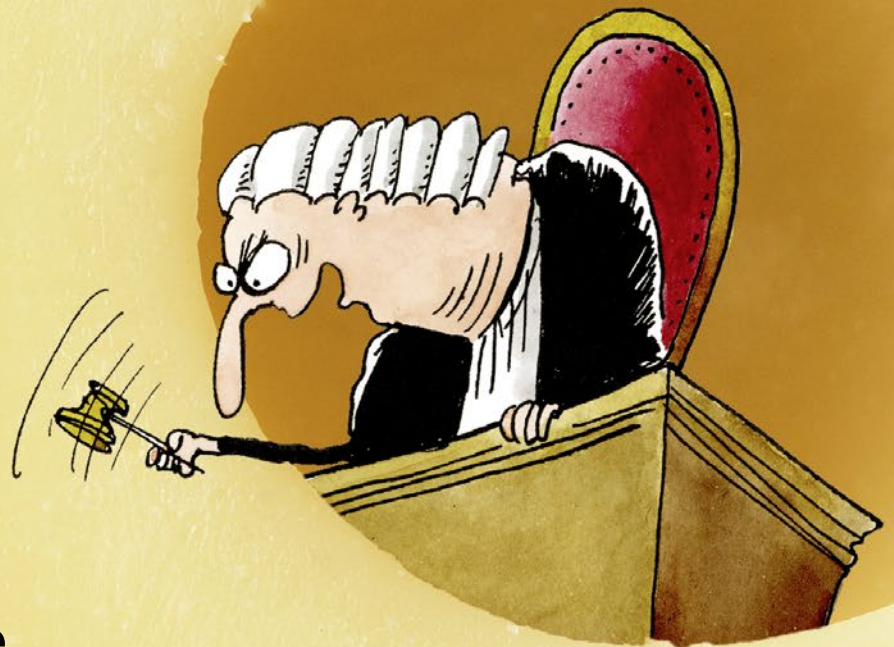


DECEMBER 2022

Swiss Review

The magazine
for the Swiss Abroad



A spicy Swiss cheese hoping for mild judges in Brussels

**A debate strikes at the heart of the nation:
what exactly does “neutrality” mean for us?**

**Radioactive for eternity:
Switzerland plans its nuclear waste disposal site**



+SWISS+
COMMUNITY

The entire team of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad SwissCommunity wishes you a happy and successful 2023.

We look forward to continuing our work for the interests of the nearly eight hundred thousand Swiss living abroad.

Our New Year card has been created by Sandra Liscio, a Swiss Designer and Lettering Artist based in London. Read the portrait of Sandra Liscio in our community platform: <https://swisscommunity.link/sandraliscio>

Watch the
animated
greeting card



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Cover photo: Emmental cheese.
Foto StockFood / Michael Wissing, Cartoon Max Spring

Our cheese, and our neutrality



Anyone wheeling out the hoary old clichés about Switzerland is bound sooner or later to talk about cheese. Probably Emmental. This cheese, with its large holes, has become a veritable Swiss icon. The only thing is that far more cheese labelled as “Emmental” is manufactured outside Switzerland than within the country. The Swiss cheese industry is thus seeking to protect the brand more strongly and has called on the jurisdiction of the European Union (page 10). This is not without a touch of irony: it would be the very same “foreign courts” so often warned about in Swiss farming circles coming to the aid of an agricultural product that could not be more Swiss. The outcome of the case remains uncertain.

Young Emmental is mild. The cheese may be strong, spicy or sharp, depending on its age. If it is allowed to mature for a long period, its texture changes and salt crystals form in its holes. Emmental is thus synonymous with variety and is anything but a ‘neutral’ cheese.

This, coincidentally, brings us to the topic of neutrality. Neutrality is currently the subject of some passionate debate in Switzerland. Is a nation that participates in sanctions against a warring Russia still neutral? Or is neutrality a set of values that actually requires compassion and action in the face of the horrors of war? Should we look more closely or look away?

If we examine the question more closely, the meaning of neutrality has frequently changed in the past and is doing so again. Sometimes, the abstract concept also provides no clear answer as to what is to be done when war erupts across the continent.

It is very likely that the Swiss people will be given the opportunity in the foreseeable future to express their opinion on neutrality at the ballot box (page 4). This is definitely a privilege, as neutrality does not constitute a solid fundamental value unless we all agree on what it means. Anyone looking to join the discussion now will furthermore observe to their amazement that neutrality is a topic that cannot be discussed neutrally at all.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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**Swiss
Community**

neutrality



As war rages in Europe, Switzerland is wrestling with its neutrality

Switzerland has been practising neutrality for longer than virtually any other country. But is it in keeping with the times? The political debate on the issue was reignited by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Sooner or later, the underlying question will be decided at the polls.

THEODORA PETER

Neutrality is as much a part of Switzerland's identity as direct democracy is. Switzerland does not get involved in foreign conflicts, but helps out in humanitarian crises and acts as an intermediary. This understanding of its role met with a mixed reception on the international stage in the past. There were words of encouragement for its willingness and efforts to promote peace, and criticism for staying on the sidelines and profiteering – whether during the Second World War or during apartheid.

Switzerland's self-image as a non-partisan nation has been under the microscope once again since Russian troops marched into Ukraine in February this year. After initially hesitating, Switzerland also adopted the severe sanctions of the European Union (EU) to a hitherto unprecedented extent. "Playing into the hands of an aggressor is not being neutral," argued Swiss Federal President Ignazio Cassis (FDP) as he explained the Federal Council's position after war broke out, and referred to breaches of international humanitarian law by Russia. Conversely, the government expressly

ruled out supplying weapons to Ukraine. As a neutral country under the Hague Convention of 1907, Switzerland may not favour any specific warring party.

'Cooperative' and 'active' neutrality

There have been various concepts and notions of neutrality for centuries, as historian Marco Jorio illustrates in his article ("Which neutrality?", page 7). Recently, Federal President Cassis proclaimed 'cooperative neutrality' at the World Economic Forum in Davos in May. In a speech delivered to the international public, the foreign minister emphasised that Switzerland was campaigning as a neutral country both for the fundamental values it holds dear and for globally shared values. "Switzerland therefore stands alongside the nations that refuse to look on passively while the foundations of democracy are attacked." In addition, Switzerland is also willing to commit to a 'stable security architecture', which must be multilateral in order to exist. Cassis thus argued for Switzerland's role as

a neutral intermediary accepted by all sides.

Former Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey (SP) had already coined the term 'active neutrality' during her term of office (2003–2011). The country has transitioned from a "neutrality born of necessity, dictated by its security requirements, to an active neutrality based on the rights of the people", the federal minister wrote in her 2020 book "Die Neutralität: Zwischen Mythos und Vorbild" ("Neutrality: Between Myth and Role Model"). In this book, Calmy-Rey even describes Switzerland joining the United Nations in 2002 and its 2011 application (approved by the Swiss Federal Council) for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council as a paradigm shift. Switzerland will assume its seat on the Security Council in 2023/2024.

Christoph Blocher launches neutrality initiative

One party that stands in stark opposition to the active extension of Swiss neutrality is the Swiss People's Party (SVP). In the view of the SVP, adopting the EU's sanctions against Russia

in particular is tantamount to a 'breach of neutrality'. Switzerland joined the war itself out of 'pure opportunism' and thereby sacrificed its credibility as an intermediary, in the words of SVP doyen, Christoph Blocher. To prevent the country getting 'sucked into wars' in the future, Blocher and several fellow party members from the SVP launched a popular initiative designed not only to enshrine Switzerland's 'comprehensive, perpetual and armed neutrality' in its Constitution, but also to codify the fact that Switzerland would neither impose sanctions on warring nations nor join any defence alliances. On 8 November, the collection of signatures for the initiative began.

Until now, neutrality has been described in the Swiss Federal Constitution in only basic terms. The Parliament and Federal Council are bound, under the Constitution, to take "measures to protect the external security, independence and neutrality of Switzerland". The Constitution dictates that Swiss foreign policy should be devoted to "alleviat[ing] need and poverty in the world and promot[ing] respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful co-existence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources". This phrasing leaves a lot of political room for manoeuvre, which is something that Blocher wants to restrict via an additional article on neutrality.

Developing international collaboration

It will be a few years yet until the public gets to vote on any additions to the Federal Constitution. However, now

What sort of neutrality?

MARCO JORIO

"No-one gets it anymore," the moderator cried almost in despair during a political discussion programme on Swiss TV about neutrality, as the politicians around the table banded about concepts of neutrality peppered with adjectives. In the public debate too, a confusing mix of terms like 'integral', 'differential' and 'cooperative' neutrality can be heard. The list of these so-called adjectival neutralities demonstrates that neutrality is not a fixed concept. "Neutrality changes its hue as events develop," Swiss Foreign Minister Marcel Pilet-Golaz observed during the Second World War.

Although an internationally recognised law of neutrality has existed since 1907, this law lays down only a few scant principles governing the rights and duties of neutral parties during war. The principle of neutrality developed from this law and has been applied autonomously by every

neutral country in war and peace in order to lend credibility to national neutrality. This principle is often more overt than the law on neutrality. The various flavours of neutrality include 'perpetual' neutrality, as practised in Switzerland for 400 years, and 'occasional' neutrality, which arises only in one specific war and is applied by virtually all countries in virtually all wars. Neutrality can be armed (Switzerland, Austria) or unarmed (Costa Rica); it can be recognised by international law (Switzerland, Austria) or adopted by the country in question but not recognised by international law (Ireland).

But even the perpetual, armed neutrality practised by Switzerland and recognised by international law (since 1815) has changed. Prior to the First World War, neutrality had exclusively military connotations. During the First World War, both sides waged a merciless economic war where even neutral parties found them-

that the petition has been launched, the SVP has brought the issue of neutrality to the table in time for the next Swiss general election in 2023. The initiative is receiving active support from the Pro Schweiz (Pro Switzerland) organisation, which sees itself as carrying on the mission of the Campaign for an independent and neutral Switzerland (Auns) to reject any attempts to bring Switzerland closer to the EU.

The remaining political parties see the SVP's position on neutrality as outdated. The prevailing view is that more international collaboration is needed with regard to the war in Ukraine, instead of isolation. The Liberals (FDP) are not even ruling out a rapprochement with NATO. In addition,

there are calls for a relaxation of the strict rules on exporting Swiss munitions. Supplying weapons directly to a warring party may be out of the question, but Swiss politicians view it as problematic if countries like Germany are unable to give Ukraine tank ammunition purchased from Switzerland. A commission from the Council of States is currently examining potential exceptions to this 'ban on re-exports'. The conventional purpose of the ban is to prevent Swiss weapons from falling into the 'wrong' hands.

Also a matter of solidarity

The Federal Council is adhering to its traditional policy of neutrality, as it



Dr Marco Jorio is a historian (specialising in Recent History and Swiss History). He was a project manager and editor-in-chief of the Historical Dictionary of Switzerland for 30 years. He has recently authored a history of neutrality, which is to be published in the near future.

selves dragged in against their will. Switzerland was forced to submit virtually all its foreign trading to the scrutiny of the two warring alliances. This gave rise to the concept of economic neutrality.

After the war, Switzerland joined the League of Nations. However, Switzerland was not prepared to renounce its military neutrality. Some tough negotiations led to the London Declaration of 1920, where the country was allowed to accept eco-

conomic sanctions, albeit not military ones. This variety of neutrality was then named 'differential neutrality'. When it emerged in the 1930s that the League of Nations was in no position to safeguard world peace, Switzerland distanced itself from the League in 1938 with the slogan "Back to integral neutrality". The League of Nations conceded that Switzerland was no longer bound by the League's sanctions.

This 'integral neutrality' was pursued by Switzerland during the Second World War and the Cold War, and this very inflexible and legally formalised position has become successively suppler since the 1960s. For example, Switzerland joined the European Council, pursued an idealistic human rights policy and participated actively in the negotiations at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, today: OSCE). Since Switzerland joined the UN 20 years ago,

it has returned to a type of 'differential neutrality'. In contrast to 1920, however, Switzerland was not granted any formally neutral status when it joined the UN. Switzerland has nonetheless unilaterally declared that it intends to maintain its neutrality. Now, the UN charter restricts neutrality and requires Switzerland to adopt the sanctions imposed by the UN. In addition, however, Switzerland's Law on Sanctions from 2002 states that the country will also follow the sanctions that the OSCE and its main trading partners apply. This has now happened with the EU sanctions against Russia following the latter's military aggression. As to whether the concept of 'cooperative neutrality' introduced by Federal President Cassis will ever become a reality, only time will tell.

Neutrality in the 'Historical Dictionary of Switzerland': [revue.link/neutral](https://www.revue.ch/revue/2022/01/neutral)



Cartoon: Max Spring

affirmed once again this autumn. In particular, the government regards the recent adoption of EU sanctions against Russia as being compatible with neutrality. Furthermore, the Federal Council intends to cooperate more closely with foreign powers on security and defence issues, both with the EU and with NATO. Although Defence Minister Viola Amherd (The Centre) has categorically ruled out joining NATO, the Swiss Army should still be able to participate in the military alliance's defence exercises. "We should be more than just freeloaders," Amherd stressed in a newspaper interview. Switzerland needs partnerships if it is to be able to count on support from abroad in the event of an emergency. This type of coop-

eration is always 'give and take'. Finally, it is also about contributing to solidarity and stability in Europe.

Now that we are facing a war in Europe, former certainties about lasting peace and well-being are starting to wobble, even in Switzerland. The world is an unstable one, and Switzerland must find a new place in it.

"The Neutrality of Switzerland"
Publication FDFA 2022
[revue.link/neutrality](https://www.revue.ch/revue/2022/01/neutral)



"Neutralität: Zwischen Mythos und Vorbild".
Micheline Calmy-Rey. NZZ Libro (2020)

Jean-Luc Godard



In an emblematic scene from “Breathless” (1960), Jean-Paul Belmondo suddenly addresses the camera directly. “If you don’t like the sea, if you don’t like the mountains, if you don’t like the city... then you can go f*** yourself!” The first films produced by French-Swiss filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, who died on 22 September 2022, caused quite a sensation in the 1960s. The unknown actors, raw dialogue, spontaneous script writing, filming from the shoulder and using natural light, and jerky editing, with the soundtrack seeming to evolve on its own, were all elements of Godard’s filmmaking that constantly subverted cinematic conventions. And the radical changes he implemented have since spread like a wave throughout the industry and to such an extent that his legacy is now everywhere. His filmography is vast and multifaceted, including some 50 films and around ten documentaries. The director continued to create right up until he died, using every medium available, from smartphones and video to painting and collages. Godard was also well known for his pithy quips. “When you go to the cinema, you raise your head. When you watch television, you lower it,” he once remarked. The man loved tennis, but he also objected stridently to the way it was presented on TV. He came up with his own vision of documenting the sport. “I’d film some guy, any qualifier. He’s in Paris, doesn’t have much money, he’s looking for a cheap hotel. He takes the metro, he plays his match. And then he’s beaten. In the next round, I’d focus on the player who beat him, and then the winner of that match, which would inevitably take us to the final.” And that was Godard the star, commenting on life with his Vaudois accent – a quaint reminder of his roots to anyone with an ear to hear it.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Kim de l’Horizon wins the German Book Prize

One of the most prestigious literary awards, the German Book Prize, has gone to Switzerland this year: Kim de l’Horizon was awarded the prize for their debut novel “Blutbuch” (“Blood book”), which has thus now been recognised as the best German-language novel of the year. Kim de l’Horizon identifies as non-binary, and the protagonist of their prize-winning novel does not identify as a man or as a woman either. The jury felt the novel’s non-binary narrator “sought their own voice with tremendous creative energy”. The prizegiving ceremony at the Frankfurt Book Fair was also a sensation in the visual sense: as a gesture of solidarity with oppressed women in Iran, Kim l’Horizon shaved their head during their acceptance speech. (MUL)

Ignazio Cassis visits Volodymyr Zelensky

The Swiss federal president and foreign minister, Ignazio Cassis, made a surprise trip to Ukraine on 20 October. According to Cassis himself, he wanted to form his own impression of the situation and discuss the reconstruction of Ukraine with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv. He was quoted as saying “We also want to support Ukraine’s efforts to rebuild itself innovatively.” The challenges posed by the coming winter were also reportedly discussed. Cassis’s visit took place only hours after numerous Ukrainian cities were bombarded with kamikaze drones, marking a further escalation of the war. (MUL)

No referendum on fighter jet purchases

The Swiss population will not get the chance to vote on the procurement of the F-35 stealth fighter jet. The initiators of the popular initiative, which has gathered over 100,000 signatures, have now withdrawn it. There was no point in offering a pseudo-referendum, said National Councillor Priska Seiler Graf (SP) on behalf of the petition committee. The actions of the Swiss Federal Council and Parliament in mid-September made a popular initiative entirely obsolete: in spite of the pending referendum, the decision was taken to purchase 36 fighter jets. Even a No vote at the polls would have been unable to stop the 6-billion-franc deal. (MUL)

Swiss glaciers shrink considerably

This year has been bleak for Swiss glaciers. According to glaciologists, glaciers shrank more rapidly this year than in any previous year since records began. Glaciers lost a total of 3.1 cubic kilometres of ice. This is more than six percent of the total volume of all glaciers. The Pizol (SG), Vadret dal Corvatsch (GR) and Schwarzbachfirn (UR) glaciers totally disappeared in 2022. The disappearance of the glaciers was exacerbated by a combination of unfavourable factors: low snowfall during winter, a heatwave as early as May and an extremely dry summer with virtually no precipitation. (MUL)

Winter brings rising refugee numbers

The war in Ukraine is continuing to drive people from their homes. Switzerland is expecting the number of people in need of protection – including those arriving from further removed crisis-hit regions – to rise sharply by the end of the year.

THEODORA PETER

Cold weather makes life difficult for anyone without a permanent roof over their head. In Ukraine, accommodation for people displaced from regions destroyed by bombing has been made winter-proof. The country currently has 7 million internally displaced persons, in addition to the estimated 4.4 million people who have fled to other countries in Europe since the war broke out. At the time of publication in late October, Switzerland had taken in around 66,000 Ukrainians. According to official estimates, this figure is expected to rise to 80,000-85,000 by the end of the year. The increase in refugee numbers does however depend significantly on how many can be accommodated in the countries neighbouring Ukraine. In an extreme case, up to 120,000 people may seek shelter in Switzerland.

In parallel, the number of asylum seekers from other crisis regions worldwide is also rising. In September alone, 2,681 people from countries including Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea sought refuge in Switzerland. The last time so many applications for asylum were filed in a single month, according to the State Secretariat for Migration, was during the refugee crisis in 2015/2016. Now that the restrictions on travel imposed during the pandemic have ended, the number of refugees travelling to Europe is rising once again.

Protection status S applies until revoked

Refugees from other countries have to go through the conventional procedure for seeking asylum, but Ukrainians are granted 'protection status S' automatically. This allows these refugees to look for a job and to travel freely. This category of refu-



gees, activated by the Federal Council in March 2022, was originally intended to last for one year only. Since then, however, Justice Minister Karin Keller-Sutter (FDP) has made it clear that protection status S would continue to apply after spring 2023 – specifically, until it is revoked by the Federal Council. Keller-Sutter did specify that this status will not be revoked until the situation in Ukraine has returned to normal, e.g. if there is a ceasefire or if peacekeeping troops are posted to the country. At the time of going to press, around 5,000 Ukrainians had returned to their home country, of their own volition.

The Left and Green parties in Switzerland consider it fundamentally

Refugees arriving from Ukraine may once again be a common sight at Swiss railway stations this winter. The federal authorities are expecting refugee numbers to rise.

Photo: Keystone

problematic that people fleeing from other war zones should be discriminated against in favour of Ukrainians, whether on the job market or in terms of being allowed to bring their families over to join them. The Socialist Party, the Green Party and the Green Liberal Party have thus submitted motions in parliament to improve the situation of the people affected, who have been granted temporary admission in Switzerland. So far, the corresponding reforms have all failed for want of majority political support.

For Swiss official information on the war in Ukraine
[revue.link/ukraine](https://www.revue.link/ukraine)



Hard cheese: Emmental comes under pressure

Two or three centuries ago, Emmental cheesemakers exported their know-how all around the world. This is now causing problems for Emmental: authentic Emmental cheese, an iconic traditional Swiss product, is under threat. More cheese labelled as 'Emmental' is produced outside Switzerland than within the country. Swiss cheese producers are appealing to the European courts for help.

DÖLF BARBEN

Emmental cheese, with its large holes, is famous around the world. If something is full of holes, it is said – in many languages – to be like Swiss cheese. The Swiss product has been a resounding success.

Today, Emmental cheese can still be made in around 100 dairies across Switzerland. The requirements are strict: the farms must be no more than 20 km from the dairy, the cows must be fed on grass and hay only (i.e. no silage), and the cheese must be made exclusively from unpasteurised milk and stored and aged for at least 120 days in its place of manufacture.

Every dairy bears its own number, which is stamped every few centimetres on the top of each wheel of cheese. This means you can tell where even small portions of cheese have been made. For example, number 3206 stands for the Hüpfenboden dairy.

In the midst of meadows and forests

The Hüpfenboden dairy is located north of Langnau, at the heart of the Emmental valley, whose inhabitants lived the high life for many years from the 16th century onwards, thanks to the cheese trade. The

smart building rises up between two hills as though riding on a saddle, surrounded by fields and forests. Marlies Zaugg and Bernhard Meier live in Hüpfenboden together with their two children and an apprentice. In addition to Emmental cheese, they also make other specialities. They are masters of their craft. That said, they do not sound particularly optimistic when they talk about the future. They do want to “do something to maintain Switzerland’s great cheesemaking tradition”. However, if the authentic product is not afforded greater protection, this hardly seems possible. “We can’t keep up with all

Marlies Zaugg does not sound optimistic when she talks about the future. In the absence of stricter protection, she believes the beloved tradition of cheesemaking could die out. Photos: Danielle Liniger





the cheap imitations,” Zaugg says. “The cheese as we know it today is set to gradually disappear,” her husband adds.

‘Foreign courts’ to the rescue?

There is a genuine problem here. The presence of numerous imitators is a threat to authentic Swiss Emmental, which has borne the AOP protected designation of origin since 2006. However, the issue of trademark protection is now gaining momentum. The delicious irony here is that European courts are being asked to award the famous Swiss Emmental greater levels of protection. ‘Foreign courts’, so often the target of heartfelt mistrust and suspicion in Swiss farming circles, could be the very ones to come to the rescue of an agricultural product that could not be more Swiss.

Alfred Rufer understands the background to this situation. He is the deputy director of Emmentaler Switzerland, a trade organisation responsible for positioning Swiss Emmental on the free market and protecting it from imitators. A lot of other countries now also manufacture cheese that bears the ‘Emmental’ name, he says – far more than is made in Switzerland itself. Switzerland is not even the largest manufacturer of Emmental in the world: France is. “These are facts that we just have to accept,” he says. According to Rufer, the battle was lost 200 to 300 years ago. This was the period when cheesemakers emigrated and began to make Emmental all over the world.

The fight against freeloaders

Today, the fight has taken on a different tone. In Rufer’s view, it is unfair that foreign manufacturers can profit from the noble reputation of Swiss

Emmental. This is in spite of the fact that the cheap imitations cannot hold a candle to the original, as they do not meet the official requirements and the quality is not the same. “They are just freeloaders,” Rufer says. “No one should be able to ride someone else’s coattails.” The objective is clear: customers all over the world should be able to tell whether they have a Swiss Emmental cheese in their hands or not. Many people are prepared to pay more for Swiss quality, says Rufer. “However, if the origin is not clear, that means other people are getting rich off our efforts.” Swiss manufacturers know the benefits that legal protection would bring: only their cheeses would be allowed to be sold under the ‘Emmental’ label, writ

The dairy in Hüpfenboden resembles an idyll from the past, surrounded by forests and meadows on a hill in the Emmental valley.

The process of manufacturing Emmental begins in the copper-lined cheese kettles. Every two months, the dairy farmers are told how many cheeses they are allowed to produce.

large and without any qualifications. Any other ‘Emmental’ cheeses would need to state their region of origin just as boldly as the name, such as Allgäuer Emmental.

Just a cheese with holes?

Unfortunately, the European Union has rejected this definition of the intellectual property behind the cheese. According to the EU, the term ‘Emmental’ is not a designation of origin but merely a commonly used name for a hard cheese with holes. This does not make any sense to the trade organisation, so it is appealing to the European Court. Recently, verbal negotiations took place. The verdict is expected in three to four months’ time, according to Rufer. “We think it’s going to go in our favour,” he says. If the verdict goes the way he hopes it will, it will open the doors for more Swiss Emmental to be sold in key markets such as Germany, France and the Benelux countries. The reason is obvious: customers who care about quality are more likely to pick the authentic product.

The biggest customer of all is... Italy

Exports of the cheese are already considerable: a little over 2,200 tonnes of Emmental was shipped to Germany alone in 2021, and just un-





der 770 tonnes to France. The biggest customer was Italy, with 5,500 tonnes – more Emmental than is eaten in the whole of Switzerland. Trademarks are very well protected in Switzerland's southernly neighbour, however.

Any break in the negative trend in Swiss Emmental would be a success in itself. Within the space of a decade, the quantity produced annually in Switzerland has fallen from over 25,000 tonnes to just under 17,000 tonnes, whereas the quantity of all cheese manufactured rose from 181,000 tonnes to 207,000 tonnes.

Not all milk becomes Emmental

Marlies Zaugg and Bernhard Meier have experienced this in their dairy as well. Every two months, they are told how much Emmental they are allowed to manufacture. "The quantity just keeps going down over time," Zaugg says. Currently, they are allowed to devote 40 percent of the milk they receive from their suppliers to making the cheese.

The remainder is used to make their own varieties of cheese. They then sell this cheese directly, to res-

The wheels of cheese are hefty, often weighing in excess of 100 kg, and today are regularly turned by machine. That said, the daily routine still involves plenty of manual labour.

Photo: Danielle Liniger

taurants, via small regional shops or at local markets. There is a self-service cupboard in front of the dairy containing a wide range of their products. Sales are good. People who visit on foot or by bicycle are only too keen to take advantage of the offer. But if shifting their cheese is so easy,

what is the problem? Emmental made as tradition demands "is simply better", Zaugg says. But that quality comes at a price. "Feeding the cows, manufacturing the cheeses by hand, regularly tending the wheels, the cellar used for ripening – everything costs more." Enough people need to be aware of this and also think it matters, "otherwise there's no point".

Finally, this traditional career needs new blood that is prepared to go the extra mile. This is a further source of concern for Marlies Zaugg. Her day begins at 5 am. Cheese is made seven days a week. "Cows produce milk at the weekends as well," she says with a grin. At least she and her husband can take it in turns at the weekend, or hire a replacement in order to take time off.

DÖLF BARBEN IS A JOURNALIST AT THE "DER BUND" AND "BERNER ZEITUNG" NEWSPAPERS.

These large, striking holes are typical of Emmental. The taste and texture vary widely depending on its ripeness.

Photo: Keystone



Keeping a lid on nuclear waste for eternity

Switzerland produces nuclear energy. This process creates highly toxic, radioactive waste, which must be stored safely for thousands of years. After 50 years' intensive searching, a decision has been taken as to where this hazardous waste should be buried. Plenty of questions nonetheless remain unanswered about this disposal site, which is scheduled to cost 20 billion Swiss francs.



Nagra has carried out test drilling, such as here in the vicinity of Stadel, into the deep layers of underground rock. The magic ingredient is Opalinus. It is currently believed to be suitable for storing radioactive waste.

Photo: Keystone

MARC LETTAU

In the rural municipality of Stadel, in the Zurich lowlands near the German border, everyday life has been pretty tranquil for the past few centuries. The landscape, sculpted by glaciers and bordered by wooded hills, is shaped by agriculture. Here, amidst the fields unspoiled by a single building, quarrying work has begun. Rich deposits of gravel, another legacy from previous ice ages, are being removed.

After a period of relative peace and quiet, Stadel is now at the centre of a dynamic project set to last a millennium: it is to become the entrance to a massive underground disposal site for radioactive waste. The Swiss National Cooperative for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste (Nagra) spent almost 50 years looking for a site where this waste could be stored for good. In September 2022, it decided on Stadel, owing to the thick strata of stone lying deep beneath the ground there. The Opalinus clay found in Stadel offers the safest possible solution for containing radioac-

tive substances, Nagra experts argue. The director of Nagra, Matthias Braun, said that Stadel “offered the best safety reserves” of all the locations they had examined. He conspicuously failed to mention that alongside the site being the best for geological reasons, local political resistance to the project is also low.

Thinking in unfathomable timespans

Shafts up to 900 metres in depth are to be dug into the ground near Stadel. These shafts will provide access to the caverns that will be carved out of the thick Opalinus clay and used for storing radioactive waste. Nagra has to think in terms of unfathomable timespans: according to current knowledge, low- and medium-level radioactive waste needs to be stored safely for 30,000 years. As for highly radioactive waste, Nagra is working on the assumption that it will need to be stored for around 200,000 years. The safety reserves should be designed to prevent the ra-

radioactive material being brought to the surface - by anyone or anything - for around one million years.

Lid on in around a hundred years

The search for a final disposal site for radioactive waste generated in Switzerland has proven to be decidedly difficult. In some places, such as in Ollon (Vaud), angry farmers chased away the Nagra survey teams with pitchforks. Communities and cantons in other potential locations held popular votes that rejected the proposal. Stadel and the canton of Zurich, on the other hand, have basically run out of options when it comes to fighting the decision on the site's location. This is because, in light of the tremendous amount of resistance, legislation was passed to impose strict limitations on communities' and cantons' ability to intervene in the issue. Nevertheless, now that the long search has come

Switzerland began transporting its nuclear waste, sealed in concrete-filled steel barrels, across Europe via goods train in 1969 and dropped it into the North Atlantic. It kept up this controversial practice until 1983.

to an end, there is still a lot to do. Nagra must first apply to the Swiss federal government for planning permission for the final disposal site. This is scheduled to take place in 2024. Only if the federal authorities conclude that safely storing nuclear waste in Stadel is possible at all will the official location have been decided. This is not expected to happen before 2029. Then, Swiss voters will also get to have their say on the final disposal site. In other words, construction will not begin until 2045 at the earliest. The first steel barrels containing radioactive waste will thus be ready for storage in 2050. 2115 will then be the year for putting the lid on: the final disposal site will be sealed.

Nuclear semiotics: talking to distant posterity

Until then, Nagra still needs to find the answer to the question of how we can warn future societies of the dangers lurking under the ground in Stadel. It is a difficult one, as any warning signs erected today will have disappeared without a trace in 100,000 or even 10,000 years. The English megaliths Stonehenge serve as an illustration of the

challenge involved: even though the impressive structure is only around 4,000 years old, its meaning and purpose have been lost to time. Researchers are therefore working on nuclear semiotics, a form of expression intended for the inhabitants of the distant future, in the knowledge that human society in its current form may no longer exist in 200,000 years, and numerous ice ages may have resulted in glaciers shearing layers off the surface of the land in Stadel and reshaping it completely.

2011 marked the decision to exit nuclear energy

Compared to all the protests against Nagra, reactions to the site it chose have been relatively mild. Even fierce opponents to the use of nuclear energy – including the Green Party and Greenpeace – admit that Switzerland has no alternative if it is to meet its responsibility and store the radioactive waste it generates as safely as possible. Another reason for this position is that Switzerland's gradual exit from nuclear power has now been decided. In the direct aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster (2011), the Swiss Federal Council voted not to approve the construction of any new nuclear power stations. The dismantling of the Mühleberg nuclear plant, commissioned in 1972, has already begun. Although the remaining four nuclear reactors of Beznau I (1969), Beznau II (1972), Gösgen (1979) and Leibstadt (1984) are still running, they are slowly but surely reaching the end of their lifespan. Against this backdrop, many see the final disposal site as an estimated 20-billion-franc final chapter in the history of nuclear energy use in Switzerland.

Or will new nuclear power stations be built after all?

Politicians from the FDP (The Liberals) and the SVP (Swiss People's Party) have been openly pushing for a loosening of the de facto ban on building new nuclear power stations. The construction of the final disposal site has influenced this new debate: considering the enormous cost of such a site, the question of just how affordable nuclear energy is at the end of the day has returned to the spotlight. Nuclear power stations themselves would have to contribute the money for the site to a decommissioning fund, and, like it or not, pass on the expense in the form of higher energy prices. An argument that seems to spring more from short-term thinking is that new nuclear power stations could reduce energy dependence on belligerent Russia: Switzerland's current nuclear power stations rely to a considerable degree on uranium, supplied by Russia.



Two symbols that anyone today would understand. But how can we inform future civilisations of the dangers? Nuclear semiotics is now in search of the answers.

For more information, please see revue.link/nagra
Nagra website: www.nagra.ch



Controversial proposals mobilise voters

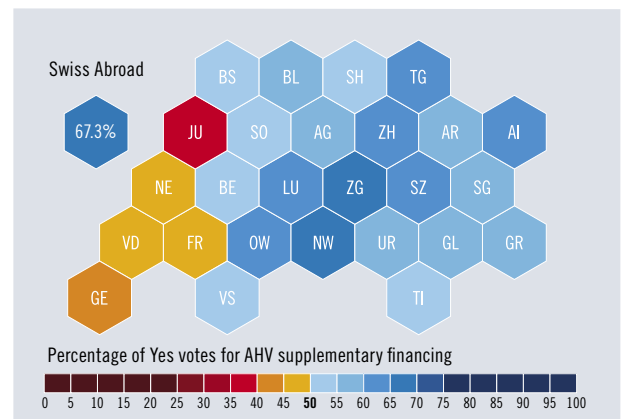
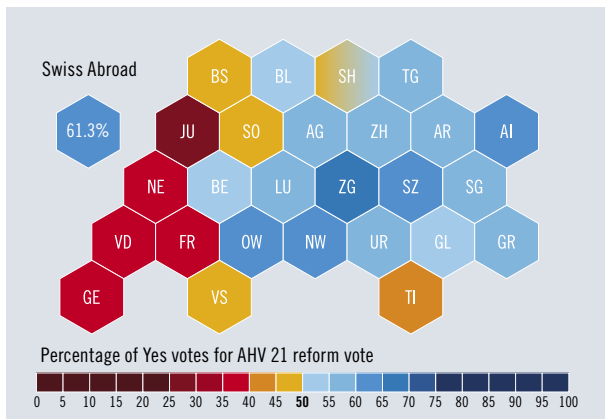
The votes of 25 September saw the highest voter turnout in 2022, as more than half of the electorate – around 51 per cent – headed to the polls. Three of the four votes went the way of the Federal Council and parliament.

OASI pension age for women now 65

Women will now receive their OASI state pensions one year later than before – at 65 instead of 64. A narrow majority of 50.5 per cent approved the change, with a margin of around 30,000 voters. The result reveals a divided country: French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland rejected the proposal while most German-speaking cantons favoured it. Emphatic approval also came from the “Fifth Switzerland”. (TP)

VAT rises to fund OASI

Swiss value-added tax on services and products is to increase by 0.4 per cent to 8.1 per cent. VAT on food, medicine, newspapers and books will climb from 2.5 to 2.6 per cent. In the hospitality industry VAT will increase from 3.7 to 3.8 per cent. The additional revenue from these increases will help to fund the old-age and survivors’ insurance (OASI) state pension. A clear majority of voters, 55 per cent, approved the proposal. (TP)

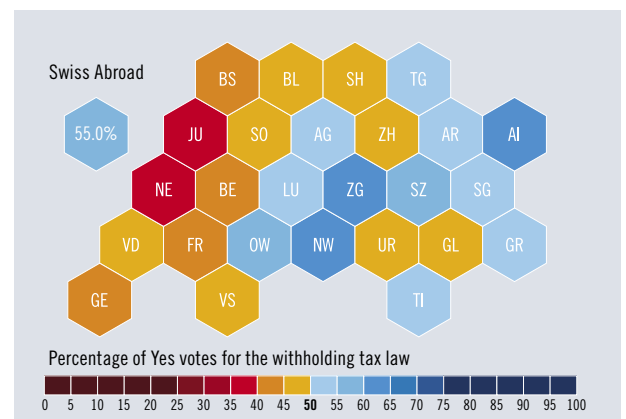
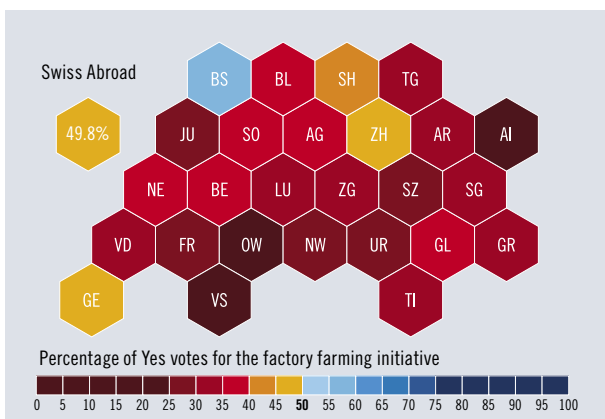


No change to animal farming rules

The popular initiative to end factory farming failed, with almost 63 per cent saying no. There will, therefore, be no change to animal farming rules. The authors of the initiative wanted to ban intensive, large-scale livestock farming. Opponents said the proposal was unnecessary, as Switzerland already has a stringent Animal Welfare Act. The “Fifth Switzerland” also rejected the initiative. (TP)

No tax breaks for companies

Withholding tax on interest income from Swiss bonds will not be abolished, after 52 per cent of voters rejected a change in the law. The left-wing parties successfully contested the proposal, which would have resulted in an annual tax shortfall of several hundred million francs. The Swiss Abroad were in favour – but ultimately in the minority. (TP)





Retirement age for women is rising to 65

The ‘vote of the year’ was a tense moment for women. They voted No by a large majority on the reforms to the old-age and survivors’ pension (OASI). However, they were narrowly defeated. Women will have to work for one more year before they are able to draw their pension. The reform of the occupational pension scheme is pending, and should see women better off.

DENISE LACHAT

First there was anger. Tensions broke out on 26 September, the day after the vote on the OASI pension reforms, including in Bahnhofplatz in Berne. National Councillor for the Socialist Party Tamara Funciello proclaimed heatedly into the microphone, in front of several hundred female demonstrators, that the outcome of the vote was simply disgraceful. “Old, rich white men” had decided that women in Switzerland would have to work for one extra year in the future.

Indeed, a majority of men had voted to raise the retirement age for women to 65, against the will of the majority of women. The disparity between the sexes was particularly marked during this vote: two thirds of the women who voted (63%) came out against the reform, whereas only around one third

of men (37%) voted No. However, a majority of (largely urban) women also contributed to the exceedingly close outcome of the vote. These women also came under fire from Funciello. The centre-right national and state councillors had, she said, done absolutely nothing for the cause, of equality aside from making empty promises. The exasperated reaction from urban politicians was not long in coming: in the days following the vote, pot shots were launched from both sides, and there was talk that women in Switzerland were divided.

Improving women’s situation in old age

Subsequently, further conciliatory opinions came to the fore. There is not one single definition of feminist

politics, and not all women have to be equal, the way not all men are, said Maya Graf in an comprehensive interview with the “Aargauer Zeitung” newspaper. Graf, the Green Party state councillor for Baden, has, together with Green Liberal National Councillor for Berne Kathrin Bertschy, co-chaired Alliance F, the umbrella organisation for women in Switzerland, since 2014. Alliance F had both a Yes and a No committee for the pension vote. Other questions were met

Retirement age for women

The retirement age for women was the focal point for debate in this reform of the old age and survivors’ pension (OASI), and not for the first time. In 1948, when the OASI was introduced, the retirement age was 65 for both men and women. The fact that parliament unilaterally reduced women’s pension age to 63 in 1957 and then to 62 in 1964 appears an expression of antiquated values today. Women are more prone to illness and their strength fails sooner – the arguments put forward by men in those days. The “Tages Anzeiger” called it a “patriarchal show of strength”, designed to ensure that women would be back to looking after the home a couple of years before their husbands’ retirement. Whatever the situation, the retirement age for women was progressively increased in 2001 and then in 2005, to 63 and then 64. Three additional attempts at securing equality were voted down or defeated in parliament. After the fourth attempt on 25 September 2022, the age has now returned to 65 for both genders. (DLA)



“Dini Mueter isch hässig” (Your mother is furious): one of the slogans brandished by women protesting against the results of the OASI vote. Photo: Keystone



“Men decide that women will have to work one year longer”

Tamara Funicello, National Councillor, SP, Bern

with unanimity, such as equal pay for the same work and paid childcare. A crucial point to note in the wake of the debate on the retirement age for women is the observation that women of every political inclination are demanding that women’s situation must be improved when they retire.

Old-age pensions for many women are unsatisfactory, but this is not primarily the OASI’s fault. Since the major OASI reforms in 1997, the first pillar of the old-age pensions has greatly improved for women: education and childcare credits were introduced, together with provisions for sharing the pension between spouses. This sharing scheme involves totalling up the income earned during marriage by both spouses and using it to calculate the pension by giving half to each spouse.

Gaps in occupational pensions

The greatest difference between the sexes is the yawning gap in the second pillar: mandatory occupational pensions (OPA). Because women often earn less than men, their wage contributions to their pension fund are lower. Anyone who works part-time or who works in an industry with low salaries undertakes voluntary care work or is simply paid less for doing the same work can expect their retirement assets to be scant. The pension based on these assets is correspondingly small, especially as wages that are not only poor but also fall under a certain annual income level (currently 21,510 Swiss francs) are not covered by compulsory insurance. The focus in the wake of the narrow Yes vote on OASI pension reform is now on revising OPA pensions. The core issue is putting those working low hours or with a low income in

a better position to be able to save privately for their retirement.

However, the second pillar suffers from similar issues to the first one: long life expectancies have made it more challenging to finance pensions, and this problem has been exacerbated by low interest rates. The yields from pension funds are too low to be able to convert policyholders’ retirement assets into pensions that will remain at current levels over the



“Not all women have to be equal either”

Maya Graf, Green Councillor of State, Basel Land

The three pillars of old-age pensions

The maximum OASI pension is currently CHF 2,390 per person per month, and the minimum pension in most cases is CHF 1,195. These OASI pensions alone are not enough to live on in Switzerland. Two further pillars are required. In addition to the State OASI pension and supplementary benefits (1st pillar), an occupational pension from the pension fund was created in 1985 (2nd pillar). Finally, legally regulated private pensions (3rd pillar) have existed since 1987. The aim of this 3-pillar system is to ensure people will be able to maintain their accustomed standard of living when they retire. (DLA)

long term. An additional and complex long-term debate is when – and indeed whether – a ‘revision for women’ needs to take place at all.

The allegation that the larger number of women in parliament since the 2019 elections have achieved nothing is dismissed by the co-chairs of Alliance F. They cite the example of the women’s session organised in autumn of 2021, which brought two dozen petitions before parliament. Furthermore, women argued that additional issues should be discussed in parliament, such as individual taxation, the financing of childcare, a review of the law on sexual offences, marriage equality including access to reproductive medicine and the financing of a programme to prevent domestic violence. The key bills are already in progress, Maya Graf says in the “Aargauer Zeitung”. This also includes reform of the OPA.

Any teachers?

Although Switzerland's state education system is generally well regarded, Swiss elementary schools are finding it increasingly hard to recruit trained teachers. Schule Schötz is one of them – but this particular school in the canton of Lucerne sees the teacher shortage as a chance to reinvent itself.

MIREILLE GUGGENBÜHLER

“We are good children and we try hard.” This is how one of the girls in Year 1 at Schötz elementary school (Schule Schötz) in the canton of Lucerne describes herself and her fellow classmates. She is speaking in a video that the head teacher uploaded to social media in spring 2021. The state school produced the clip in a desperate bid to find someone who could teach the children who had started school that year. The children themselves knew exactly the type of person they wanted. “Our teacher has to be good at football, kind, and not scold us.” At the end of 2022, the same children now have their dream teacher.

From globetrotting to teaching

Peter Bigler, the head teacher, is a happy man as he sits in his office. Some 100 people teach at his school. “Thanks to the video, we found someone who was travelling around the world when we interviewed them,” he says. Making the video was not something he had ever had to do before. Until recently, state schools in Switzerland have not had to worry too much about being able to recruit new staff.

Swiss elementary schools have a good reputation – 95 per cent of all the country's pupils attend state school while the remaining five per cent go to private school. Confidence in state schools is high compared to that in other countries. Domestic commentators often refer to education as Switzerland's ‘most important’ or ‘sole’ resource. It used to be relatively easy for schools to find qualified teachers, but this has changed over the last two years. Few, if any,



A different kind of job interview: the kids of Year 1 talking on video link with their future teacher (who was still travelling around the world at the time). Photo provided by Schule Schötz.



people are now applying for teaching vacancies. This is down to various factors. For example, more teachers are retiring than lining up to enter the classroom. According to the federal government, pupil numbers have also been steadily increasing since 2016, and will continue rising until 2031. A lack of qualified people on the market, coupled with burgeoning class sizes, has left state schools with staffing problems. Another phenomenon exacerbating the situation: most teachers in Switzerland – especially at primary school level – are women who work part-time. This means schools need teachers in greater numbers to meet their pupils' full-time needs.

Teacher shortages are particularly acute in German-speaking Switzerland. The situation is a little less dramatic in French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland.

Teachers without teacher training

Even Switzerland's most senior head teacher Thomas Minder, who chairs the Swiss head teachers' association, has to pull out all the stops to fill vacancies with suitable staff at his own school. More and more people with no teacher training or with no certificate for the level at which they want to teach are applying for jobs. Head teachers end up hiring these applicants, because there is no other option. "I once approached someone I know in a private capacity, because I think this person is good at dealing with children and we simply couldn't find anyone else," says Minder. But nothing came of it in the end, and he was able to recruit someone qualified after all. Minder: "One or two without teacher training in each team is fine. But no more. And my

staff have to be satisfied that the teaching doesn't suffer as a result."

It is unclear how many people in Switzerland teach without having done teacher training. The Federal Statistical Office only gives a full-time-equivalent (FTE) figure for total staff without full qualifications. In the canton of Berne, for example, the number of teachers without full qualifications in the 2020/21 school year amounted to about 1,038 FTEs. The number of equivalent FTEs in the canton of Zurich was 782.

Exodus to other professions

"We won't solve the problem of teacher shortages in the short term," says Minder, who believes that action is also necessary in areas where change will likely take longer. "Too many teachers are moving to other professions. We need to make it easier for them to return to the teaching profession." Furthermore, many erstwhile student teachers get cold feet after they start work. "This is why it is imperative that people do aptitude tests before getting into teaching training."

A novel approach

Schötz elementary school also had to go looking for new teachers for the new school year. Not an easy task. But Peter Bigler was able to fill all 20 vacancies. Did he shoot another video? "We are indeed still producing videos," he laughs. "But now the videos give insights into how we work." The school has sharpened its profile in order to stand out from its peers – something you normally only see in Switzerland's private education sector. "Private schools are a little bit ahead of us in that regard," he says.

975,000 children go to school in Switzerland (from nursery school age to 15 years old). Over 11,600 schools make this possible. The reputation of Swiss primary schools is very good: **95% of all children go to state school.**

Bigler again: "In our teaching, we focus increasingly on promoting four general life skills: collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking – because we believe these qualities are of particular value in the 21st century." The school has created its own dedicated teaching modules, including an Inventors' Workshop. As far as Bigler is concerned, the current teacher shortage is not a crisis. "On the contrary, it is a chance for us to shape and not just manage school life. To follow a vision and break with orthodoxy."

Switzerland has the world's densest rail network

Switzerland's trains are becoming faster and more frequent while offering a record number of connections. The 175-year-old network shapes the way people live. Several challenging competitions shine a spotlight on this railway phenomenon.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

The Swiss tend to think they are unique. When it comes to rail travel, which celebrated its 175th anniversary in Switzerland in August, they are right. Switzerland's rail network is the densest in the world. The number of trains is increasing to meet the demands of a growing population, and they are becoming faster, enabling longer journeys. The technical quality of the Swiss rail network, its beauty, and its stunning routes through the Alps attract tourists from all over the world.

This uniqueness also results in unusual competitions, such as the Swiss Train Challenge, which aims to travel through 26 cantons in under 24 hours. This can be accomplished with a simple day pass, available from your municipality for just 44 Swiss francs. In 2015, a journalist from the RTS television network completed the feat in 19 hours and 46 minutes. His team relied on the calculations of Philippe Morf, a traffic planner from the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB). In 2016, a group of four young people from Ticino took



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

This edition: on the densest rail network in the world.

up the challenge, completing it in 17 hours and 19 minutes. The team was able to rely on flawless connections, in a country where 91.9 percent of trains are on time, according to the SBB.

A challenge for passionate doctoral students

In 2018, a German and a French doctoral student from EPFL threw their hats into the ring. "If we wanted to beat the record time, we knew we would have to bring out the big guns," agree Dirk Lauinger and Emmanuel Clédat. The two scientists used an algorithm paired with a geographic information system. The algorithm was run on a desktop computer and delivered its results after ten days of calculations, proposing a route that could be completed in 16 hours and 54 minutes. The actual implementation did not go to plan, however, due to a series of delays. What's more, the route included a 3.7 km ride on a PubliBike from Schaffhausen to Thurgau that

became impossible since the rental bikes were out of order! The former EPFL researchers explain that they embarked on this adventure due to their passion for trains in general and the Swiss railway in particular. "It's a political statement in favour of a reliable and decentralised rail network,"

The longest journey from west to east: La Plaine to Scuol

What is the best way to grasp the true scope of the Swiss rail network? We chose to make the longest possible journey from west to east. This 461-kilometre trip links La Plaine (GE) to the Scuol-Tarasp station in Grisons, where the line ends. Our journey began in the early hours of the morning at the small station that marks the last stop before France. From Geneva to Brig, the train bound for Venice raced past. In Brig, the red cars of the Glacier Express were filled with tourists from all over the world. The journey to Chur via the Oberalp Pass, at an altitude of over 2,000 metres, seemed to flash by. We shared a table with a

couple from Atlanta and an IT specialist from India. The former spoke of "unreliable" American trains, while the latter bemoaned "overcrowded" trains in his homeland. We changed trains in Chur bound for Landquart. From there, the train headed south-east and then east, gliding through the long Veraina tunnel. We passed through the Müstair valley, where castles perch on towering peaks and villages have lilted names like Sagliains, Lavin, Guarda and Ardez. In Scuol-Tarasp, the arrival announcement was made in Romansh. After our 10-hour journey, it felt like we had arrived in another country. (SH)

Netzkarte der Schweiz
Carte du réseau suisse
Carta della rete svizzera
Network map of Switzerland

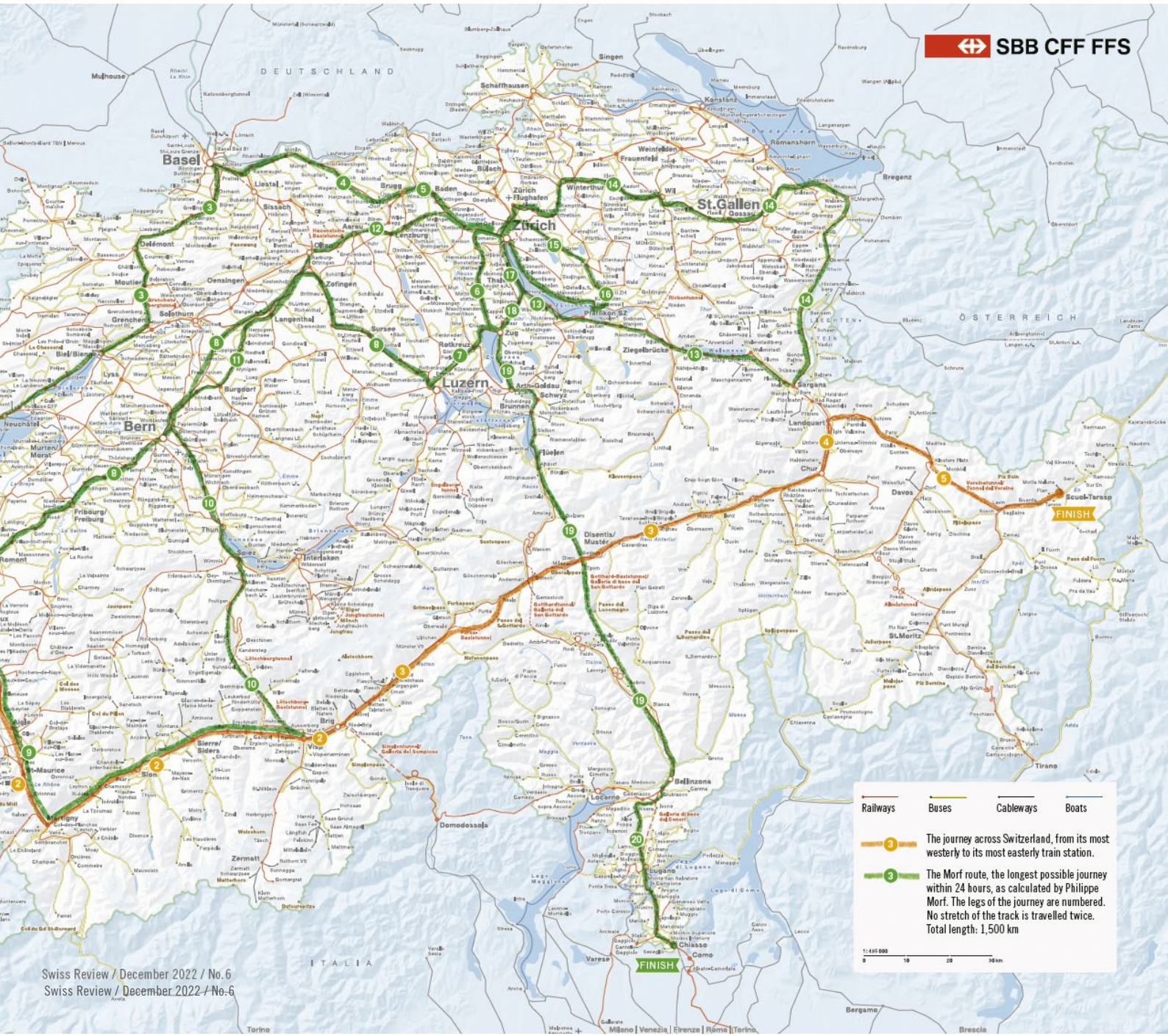




says Clédat, who points out that “a train journey pollutes much less than four people driving in a car”. They both admire the Swiss network’s density. “It’s unlike the French network, which is designed as a radial system, with Paris at its centre,” Clédat says, and he regrets that many shorter lines

in his country have been abandoned. “The Swiss network has evolved in this way because Switzerland doesn’t have an automobile industry,” Lauinger surmises. He describes the German network as less centralised than in France, but one that operates on a just-in-time basis. “In Switzerland, trains aren’t al-

La Plaine (GE), the most westerly railway station in Switzerland, shown here in the dark. La Plaine is the starting point of the great west-east crossing. Photo: Stéphane Herzog



ways run at maximum speed, which leaves room to make up for potential delays.”

Trains now doubling as offices

As stated above, trains are going faster, and new technologies have transformed them into moving offices. “A daily journey of 90 minutes isn’t a problem as long as you can work during it,” says Vincent Kaufmann, a professor of mobility analysis at EPFL. True, “but only if you have a first-class ticket”, comments Pierre Dessemontet, a geographer who studied with Kaufmann and is currently mayor of Yverdon-les-Bains. The two specialists researched the impact of Zurich’s suburban rail network on urban sprawl. “In the 1990s, longer commuter distances were covered by car, whereas from 2000 onwards, trains have taken over,” explains Kaufmann. Expanding rail networks contribute to the spread of built-up areas, but this is not a new phenomenon. “In the



19th century, the development of tram lines led to the growth of towns and cities, thus causing urban sprawl,” recalls Dessemontet. Unlike cars, which can spread out in all directions, “trains structure this development by concentrating urban development around stations”, adds the geographer.

Trains separate home and work

Excellent rail connections can also encourage people to stay put. Instead of moving to Berne for work, a federal employee might choose to stay in Lausanne and commute. The carbon footprint remains positive, of course, since trains account for only 0.2 percent of the CO₂ emissions of all land based transportation. However, Kaufmann fears this trend could impact the good relations between the different regions in Switzerland. “In the past, a job in Berne, for example, required you to relocate and learn German or even Swiss German. Commuting by train reduces these obligations, which are also opportunities for cultural exchange.”

The statistics give the impression that trains will one day be able to handle the majority of journeys. In reality, however, car usage continues to grow. No massive modal shift from individual motorised transport to public transport is evident. At the same time, many trains are crowded dur-

ing rush hour. “They’re used by long-distance commuters, in particular. So it would be hard to accommodate all the motorists as well,” comments Kaufmann. According to government forecasts, demand for passenger transport is expected to increase by a further 11 percent by 2050. Meanwhile, Covid 19 has changed habits. “It’s difficult to predict the long-term structural effects of the changes brought about by the pandemic, especially in terms of remote working. We would need to experience a normal year again, but instead we have the war in Ukraine, inflation and the energy crisis,” remarks Dessemontet, the Vaudois geographer and mayor.

The atmosphere in commuter trains is often the same as in the office: these trains have become a workplace for many.

Photo: Keystone

The world’s densest network

With an average of 159 trains operating per day on each line, including freight traffic, the Swiss rail network is the densest in the world. According to the Swiss Public Transport Association, it almost doubled in size between 2000 and 2019, with the number of kilometres travelled on the rails reaching a peak of 21.7 billion in 2019. By October 2022, there were 406,000 GA Travelcards (unlimited travel on the entire network) in use, and 2.8 million Half Fare Travelcards. (SH)



End of the platform at Scuol, the most easterly train station in Switzerland. This is where the West-East crossing ends.

Photo: Stéphane Herzog

Farewell to the phone book!

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142

The event is not marked by any great fanfare, but is nonetheless momentous: after 142 years, the Swiss telephone directory is no more. Millions upon millions of these hefty volumes have been printed on their signature thin paper. But the most recent edition will be the last. Is this a threat to the richness of Swiss culture? Not in the sense that the rather literarily limited book (‘many characters, little plot’) is disappearing, but because the traditional ‘Fötzeliregen’ confetti of Shrove Tuesday celebrations in Lucerne is under threat: for decades, the little strips of paper used in this tradition have been made from old telephone directories.

120

In many areas of Switzerland, last summer was the hottest and driest since records began. Hosepipe bans were in force, especially in Ticino. However, this didn’t stop the number of private swimming pools in Switzerland rising. The leader of the pack is clearly the Ticino municipality of Brione sopra Minusio, with 120 pools for 465 inhabitants, or one pool for every 3.8 people. The trend is rising.

15 %

Carefully chosen statistics can generate juicy headlines, such as: more and more young Swiss women want to perform military service. The number has risen by 15 percent in a year. Sounds impressive. In absolute terms, however, the situation is less impressive: the 2022 summer recruit school saw 244 women sign up, 32 more than in the previous year.

31 %

Looking for an example of an actually significant change? How about this? In 1960, 1 percent of all Swiss people said they did not belong to any religion. In 2020, that figure had risen to 31 percent. Those without any religious affiliation are today the second largest “denomination” – behind Catholics and ahead of Protestants. More info on the subject: revue.link/religion

9.9

Contrary to religious matters, Switzerland’s faith in chocolate is unshakeable. The Swiss get through 9.9 kilos of the stuff per person every year. If you eat that many sweets but don’t want to get fat, you’ll have to jog for almost 1,000 kilometres to burn off all those calories. You could also try doing nothing: there are enough calories in that much chocolate to let you snooze in front of the telly for over a month – without any other drinks or snacks.



Confident women were the leitmotiv of Peter Knapp's photography work for French fashion designer Courrèges; Paris 1966.



An unusual photoshoot for "Vogue" fashion magazine; London, 1971.

How a Paris-based Swiss fashion photographer captured the mood of an epoch



Floating like spacemen – colourful shots for tights manufacturer Dim; Paris, approx. 1968.



Making a statement with the mini-skirt – photoshoot for French department store Monoprix; 1967.



Everything was in motion – fashion shoot for “Elle” magazine; Paris 1967/68.

On finishing his training to become a graphic designer in the 1950s, Peter Knapp, who grew up in the Zurich Oberland, moved straight to Paris to study art. He began a career as a designer and photographer in the French capital, subsequently becoming “an influential figure in the international fashion world” in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Swiss Foundation for Photography puts it. Knapp’s time as art director at “Elle” magazine, where he started in 1959, was particularly momentous – a period of social revolution when female fashion acquired a more casual and accessible off-the-peg look. Models began to wear trousers and mini-skirts instead of haute couture. “Elle” editor-in-chief Hélène Lazareff eschewed the staid, stiff formula. Her women had to be self-confident. Her Swiss art director conceived a magazine layout to match this approach, and often stepped behind the camera himself.

The “Peter Knapp – Mon Temps” exhibition at the Swiss Foundation for Photography in Winterthur takes visitors on a journey through Knapp’s unconventional body of photographic work. Publishing house Scheidegger & Spiess has released a book to coincide with the exhibition. As both book and exhibition explain, Knapp’s photographs captured women in motion on the streets instead of posing in the studio. This meant the models could essentially determine how their photoshoots would look. Knapp’s images brought emancipation to life, writes art historian Laura Ragonese in the accompanying book. The central element of his fashion photography was movement, with visual dynamics expressing this new freedom of mind and body.

Knapp’s work captured the mood of an epoch, as he himself once said in an interview. According to Swiss Foundation for Photography director Peter Pfrunder, Knapp is an artistic and photographic maestro who has continued to embrace the power of images during his subsequent time working as a freelancer. To a ripe old age, in fact. Knapp, now 91, won last year’s Swiss Grand Award for Design. SUSANNE WENGER

Exhibition: “Peter Knapp – Mon Temps” at the Swiss Foundation for Photography in Winterthur runs until 12 February 2023.
www.fotostiftung.ch/en

Book: Peter Knapp – Mon Temps. Modefotografie 1965-1980; published by Peter Pfrunder, Scheidegger & Spiess, Zurich 2022 (available in German). CHF 49/EUR 48

All photos © Peter Knapp/Fotostiftung Schweiz

He just wanted to be as Swiss as everyone else

Jenő Marton's books were a declaration of love for a nation that never came around to embracing the Hungarian native as one of its own.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

"With their small brains and side-oriented eyes, male ants could not be relied on. Weak-willed, unfathomable and erratic as they were, their task was important. Because they had to produce offspring, they were fussed over and cherished, even though they always seemed to be in the way." Although this reads a little like a feminist pamphlet, it is an extract from one of the most original novels ever produced in Switzerland. "Gunaria, das Reich der Ameisen. Sinn und Deutung der Gemeinschaft" ("Gunaria, the kingdom of the ants. Making sense of a community") is set in an ant colony where community needs take precedence over the individual.



Jenő Marton
(1905–1958)

Circus, then reform school

The book's author, Jenő Marton, was born in Hamburg in 1905. Marton arrived in Switzerland as a Hungarian circus child in 1917 and was sent to the reformatory in Aarburg to be moulded into an obedient citizen after being thrown out of school in Zurich. He stayed at Aarburg until 1925 and recounted his experience there in the 1935 novel "Zelle 7 wieder frei" ("Cell number 7 is free again"). Marton spent his whole life wanting to be as Swiss as everyone else. And he was willing to put in an inordinate amount of effort to achieve this goal. He trained as a tailor in Aarburg, before working as an advertising advisor, a film director and then as the managing director of a cash register factory. Marton was also heavily involved in the Zurich Scout Movement, a commitment that inspired his literary works.

Original children's books

Marton followed up "Zelle 7 wieder frei" with a series of skilfully written

children's books, including "Die Dreihäuserkinder" ("The children from Dreihäuser"), 1935, the incredibly successful urban adventure story "Stop Heiri – da dure!" ("Stop, Heiri – this way!"), 1936, and the autobiographical "Jimmy, Jacky & Jonny, die Zirkusbuben" ("Jimmy, Jacky & Jonny, the circus boys"), 1941. The aforementioned "Gunaria", which likewise appeared in 1941 (under the Büchergilde Gutenberg publishing label), also had a personal twist to it. However, "Gunaria" will ultimately be remembered as an exquisitely allegorical homage to democratic Switzerland – the country that finally made Marton a citizen in 1940, albeit without allowing the au-

"Cell number 7 is still free! Wolf Georg was not even listening anymore. The word 'cell' was all he needed to understand. The cells were hidden behind these small lattice windows. Wolf Georg had never heard of lattice windows, because he had never come across them until now. Resistance was futile. He could see no way out. It was a cruel realisation. And it was humiliating for him – a companion's companion, a friend's friend, brother's brother and father's son – to be passed around like a piece of livestock. "Follow the head warden." Wolf Georg followed the man out.

thor to change his name to the more Swiss-sounding "Georg Martin".

Alpine masterpiece

But Marton's masterpiece came in 1943/44 with "Jürg Padrun", a novel that won the Büchergilde award. "Jürg Padrun" is the high-water mark of 20th century Swiss-centric literature, written by an author whose desire to belong gave him the determination and stamina that others lacked. Jürg Padrun, an 18th-century forest ranger in the Engadine village of Avrona, sounds the alarm when he realises that the trees above the village are diseased. Braving prejudice from villagers, he fights to restore the forest. Padrun dies in the inevitable avalanche, but the forest saves the village. With its slightly archaic, rhapsodic tone, its remarkable fusion of Ladin and German verse and prose, and its tension-filled narrative, Jürg Padrun is a thrilling epic of unique charm. The academic rigour with which Marton describes the various practices and terms associated with Alpine life takes the edge off the occasional moment of pathos. He goes into further detail in an accompanying glossary, adding his own illustrations for good measure.

But even this most fervent declaration of love for Switzerland failed to engender the response that Marton hoped for. The author eventually gave up writing for good due to personal struggles and a lack of critical acclaim. By the time he died on 18 June 1958 at the age of 53, he was as good as forgotten.

Jenő Marton's antiquarian books are available at libraries.

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST BASED IN ZÜRICH

Elusive fulfilment



ELISA SHUA DUSAPIN:
The Pachinko Parlour.
Translated by Aneesa
Abbas Higgins.
Daunt Books
Publishing, 2022.
120 pages, approx.
CHF 25

“Lost in Translation” was the name of the 2003 film that depicted the experience of feeling lonely and linguistically isolated in a foreign land. Like the movie, Elisa Shua Dusapin’s novel “The Pachinko Parlour” is set in Tokyo. Claire, aged 30, has arrived in the city from Switzerland to visit her grandparents and accompany them on a trip back to their home country of Korea. But Claire’s time with them is an oppressive experience. She speaks Japanese and knows the culture, but her grandparents insist on talking Korean, a language that she has forgotten in Switzerland. Claire’s interaction with them is painfully laboured – reduced to simple words, gestures, and facial contortions.

Playing games like the Swiss version of Monopoly helps to bridge the gap. Claire’s grandmother, in the early stages of Alzheimer’s, is a Playmobil fan. Her grandfather runs

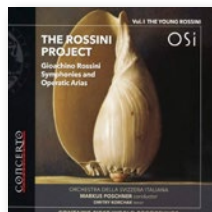
a small Pachinko parlour that has seen better days. Claire divides her time between her grandparents and tutoring a ten-year-old girl, Mieko, in French. At least she and Mieko are gradually able to bond and overcome their cultural differences.

“The Pachinko Parlour” is both a jarring and a beautifully tranquil book, its emotional rawness reflected in the book title. Pachinko is a lonely arcade game played by the masses in Japan, who sit in tightly packed rows, oblivious to those on the slot machines next to them. Players launch their pinballs hoping for a moment of fulfilment that remains elusive. There are no cash prizes to win – only underwhelming teddy bears and chewing gum packets.

Using sparse prose, author Elisa Shua Dusapin infuses the novel with the subtle melancholy of the Pachinko parlour. The summer is hot and humid, the city loud and hectic. The twinkling, pulsing Pachinko amusement arcades feel as contrived as a Disneyland parade. By no means is Claire unhappy – boyfriend Mathieu awaits her in Switzerland. But she feels strangely listless, stuck in limbo between different languages and generations both familiar and unfamiliar. It gradually dawns on her that her grandparents are reluctant to return to a Korea from which they have become estranged. All that the elderly couple have left is their Korean mother tongue in a foreign country. As Claire boards the ferry to make the crossing to Korea, her grandparents are unable to walk up the gangplank with her.

BEAT MAZENAUER

“We are ambassadors for the canton of Ticino”



ORCHESTRA
SVIZZERA ITALIANA
The Rossini Project:
Vol. II, The Young Rossini,
Concerto Classics 2020
Rossini: Symphonies and
Operatic Arias, Concerto
Classics 2018

A concert guest from Zurich may wonder during the interval, while taking a breath of fresh air and watching the shooting stars fall over San Salvatore by the light of the moon, why lightness of being is always a feature of Lugano concerts. Instead of wheeling out the traditional Mediterranean clichés or talking about the permanent holiday atmosphere in Ticino, they might be better off seeking an explanation in the concert’s start time: 20.30.

This gives people time to nip to the pizzeria for dinner and enjoy a glass of Merlot on the piazza after work. Everyone is refreshed, relaxed and happy by the time they arrive at the concert.

However, we learn over this glass of Merlot on the piazza that this late start is dictated by Ticino radio: first the news is broadcast, and then the music. That suits us just fine – and the orchestra too: the fact that all subscription

concerts are broadcast means that the Orchestra Svizzera Italiana (OSI) can be heard throughout the canton, and even the world.

Take your seats, please! The orchestra follows its principal conductor, Markus Poschner, with enthusiasm and plenty of energy, and has developed its own signature sound. As the final applause rings out, we think back to the words of the conductor, who had told us over cappuccino that afternoon: “This orchestra’s talent for playing with great virtuosity and great delicacy is tremendous. It is a small sports car that is very sensitive and precise in its movements.” No wonder that its recordings over the past few years have been universally acclaimed – its versions of rare Rossini works are the jewel in the crown of any music collection.

Poschner says, without a hint of modesty, that the OSI was the toast of the town at Bayreuth over the summer: “We also need to be present on the European market: we are ambassadors for the canton of Ticino, and we are looking for competition.” As if he had sensed our doubts, he said: “We have a lot to offer that other orchestras don’t: here, we have our own perspective on music.”

To cite a few facts in support of his statement, he launched enthusiastically into an account of a concert in Vienna in spring 2022, where they played Tchaikovsky’s “Pathétique”, despite the fact that the Vienna Philharmonic, under its star conductor Franz Welser-Möst, performed exactly the same piece the day before and the day after.

Although the OSI is in a good place, you also feel it needs to be very flexible in order to survive. As they like to say in Ticino, there is still work to be done. Visually at least, the orchestra has a cool northern look. Together with Estonian celebrity photographer Kaupo Kikkas, they travelled up the Gotthard mountain range and posed for some unique snaps.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS

Extraordinary acoustics on the outskirts of Berne

SE Musiclab is a remarkable new audio facility near Berne. Its founder and creator Jürgen Strauss has spared no expense in equipping a former brewery with next-level acoustics. We paid him a visit.



SUSANNE WENGER

SE Musiclab is situated in a seven-metre-high concrete hall nestled at the foot of the Gurten hill at Wabern station in the Berne suburb of Köniz. The former Gurten brewery used to bottle and store its beer at these spacious premises until 1996. According to the mastermind behind SE Musiclab, Jürgen Strauss, such suitable venues as this are few and far between. Strauss, a 57-year-old from Berne, had a clear vision of what he wanted, namely to bring music and other sounds to life in an optimal space with high ceilings and a high

area load. “We installed one hundred tonnes of material to create the best possible acoustics.”

The material went into building the “Lab”, a soundproof cylindrical structure housed inside the repurposed brewery. Five metres in height and 11 metres in diameter, with a double shell made from 60 tonnes of clay and 40 tonnes of wood, this free-standing rotunda is the centrepiece of the project. The outer shell, consisting of 32,000 soft mud bricks, was built in situ by a mobile robotic system developed at ETH Zurich, which needed three months to complete the job. It

Sound pioneer Jürgen Strauss in front of the centrepiece of his sound lab. In the background, the wall made from 32,000 clay balls can be seen.

Photos: Remo Neuhaus, supplied

was a pioneering and painstaking construction process – but worth the effort, because the finished interior is deathly quiet. “Quieter than the most secluded Swiss mountain valley covered metres deep in snow”, says Strauss.

Three-dimensional soundscape

No exterior sounds can enter the Lab – not even the rumble of passing trains. Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) went as far as re-laying the rail tracks at Wabern to prevent ground vibrations from affecting the sound qual-

“It is quieter inside the Lab than in the quietest Swiss mountain valley buried under heavy snow.”

Music lab creator Jürgen Strauss

ity. The Lab itself was built on springs for the same reason, and combines organic outer materials (clay and wood) with state-of-the-art audio technology and a futuristic interior. With its white panelled walls, yellow lighting, monitors, computer system, and mixing desk, the noiseless rotunda looks like a space capsule.

The facility has a built-in 24-channel sound system that Strauss developed himself – an area of technology in which the SE Musiclab creator has excelled for years. This surround-sound speaker system generates a three-dimensional soundscape, mimicking the acoustics that we hear every day through our ears, says Strauss. “Unlike what we see through our eyes, human hearing is 360-degree audio.” The direct sound and its reverberations give us an impression of totality, he adds. Humans can also focus on specific things like conversations and block out other sounds – a sensation that Strauss wants the sound system to recreate.

Music and other sound recordings

Besides the soundproof structure and modern audio technology, the interior acoustics are another key aspect. All sounds inside the rotunda resonate quickly and evenly. “There is no distorting echo,” says Strauss. Everything has been well thought out. Strauss chose yellow lighting because he says it creates a neutral atmosphere. Red lighting would be different because it gives more warmth to the audio experience. Evidently, there is a lot more to sound than meets the ear. The effect is at its most striking exactly in the middle of the room, as Strauss begins to play a few audio recordings – electro, classical, 1960s folk. It envelops you from every angle. Every individual tone feels tan-

gible and amplified – a pleasantly comforting experience that both concentrates and relaxes the mind.

Some people have shed tears in this space-age pod, says Strauss. “The experience always induces some sort of reaction.” It is immersive listening in its purest form. Strauss believes that SE Musiclab can potentially add greater depth to musical recordings, bring audio dramas and film scores to life, and take videogame aural effects to the next level. Anyone can rent the facility. SE Musiclab also includes a recording studio with a six-metre-high ceiling. This room is wired to the Lab and has been acoustically fine-tuned just like

The outer shell made from 60 tonnes of clay was built by a mobile robotic. No exterior sounds can enter the Lab – not even the rumble of passing trains.

its counterpart, with angled walls and adjustable cloth blinds – the latter allowing acts to vary their sound.

Reconstructing Haydn

The OPC, or one-person cinema, constitutes the third element in Strauss’s audio concept. Sleekly designed in the vague shape of a boat, the OPC is an intimate audio-visual entertainment interface designed for use by amateurs and professionals alike. Strauss, who developed the OPC in collaboration with architects, is particularly interested in the relationships between music, architecture and acoustics. He is currently looking at acoustic simulation in 3-D virtual spaces – a digital technique called auralisation, incorporating vocals and instruments.

Auralisation can produce acoustic renderings of a variety of spaces, from cultural venues to apartments, as well as spaces that no longer exist. SE Musiclab is now being used to do a 3-D reconstruction of the opera house at Eszterháza Palace, the former summer residence of the Hungarian noble family Esterházy. It was





here that Joseph Haydn served as court composer in the 18th century, writing and performing many of his works. A fire destroyed the music room at Eszterháza in 1779, but the actual room plans still exist. “These plans allow us to reconstruct the room and then recreate its acoustics,” explains Strauss, who is a fan of classical symphonies and is looking forward to hearing the results.

From physics expert to audio pioneer

Strauss wants SE Musiclab to be a place where people engage in production work, R&D, further education and team-building events. In particular, there is still a lot to discover in the area of psychoacoustics, the scientific study of sound perception and audiology, he says. The facility has attracted great interest since it opened

Clay on the outside, cutting-edge audio technology on the inside. The central listening spot in the music lab.

Photo: Roger Huber

last spring. According to experts, there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Strauss manages SE Musiclab in a private capacity, with funding coming from a joint-stock company in which he and four other locally based individuals own all the shares. He comes across as a knowledgeable, busy, ambitious but easy-going guy. By his own admission, he is constantly drawn to the beauty of audio. “Even just a sonorous string instrument sends me into raptures.” When you listen, you enter into your own little world.

Strauss, who is qualified to work in a physics laboratory, founded his own audio electronics company at a young age. Not only does he now advise and supply international customers, but he also lectures at Swiss universities. Creating the perfect soundproof wall while sharing the larger philosophical-historical context. One

of the pictures at the entrance to SE Musiclab is a painting dating back to 1753. Called “La Serinette”, it depicts a lady sitting and playing a small barrel organ, or serinette, while looking at her pet canary. Strauss says that the work is a metaphor for culture, the natural world, reciprocal interactions, and the relationship between humans and machines. “SE Musiclab is state-of-the-art, but these themes are even more relevant 270 years later.”

www.semusiclab.com
revue.link/musiclab



Momentum is gathering for an official electronic ID

With extensive political support, the foundations are currently being laid in Switzerland for the introduction of an electronic identity card (E-ID). An E-ID would make e-voting easier, amongst other things

EVELINE RUTZ

Voluntary, secure and straightforward – this is the model for the electronic ID card (E-ID) currently being launched by the Swiss government. The process is moving at an impressive pace. After the Swiss population rejected in March 2021 a solution backed by private providers, a new version is now under consultation. The key aspect is that the state itself will manufacture the E-ID, and be responsible for developing and running the trust infrastructure.

An explanatory video is currently available to show the public how the future E-ID should work. The app can also be tested in seven cities: “This gives people an initial glimpse of how it will be implemented visually and technically,” Urs Paul Holenstein from the Federal Office of Justice (FOJ) said recently. Reactions from testers have been mixed: some are sceptical, whereas others are curious and open-minded. Holenstein evoked the concept of a ‘digital rift’.

He explained how people would obtain an E-ID in the future. The first step is to consult the federal authorities online and submit proof of identity, such as a selfie. If the picture of the person’s face matches the image in the federal identity register, they will be issued with an electronic identity card. This ID is then added to their electronic ‘wallet’. From then on, they will be able to identify themselves digitally online and in everyday situations. They can enjoy the convenience of doing all their ‘official admin’ online, such as requesting a copy of their criminal record or filing their taxes.

The only personal data they will need to disclose is the data relevant to the specific situation. For example, if they have to prove that they are over 18, only this information will be communicated. Their date of birth and their first name and surname will not be shared. “You will be able to add additional documents to your ‘wallet’ in the future, such as your driver’s licence,” said Urs Paul Holenstein. “The E-ID will form the basis for a whole range of applications.”

A crucial element for e-voting

E-voting stands to benefit from this as well: the entire process could be organised electronically. The authorities could provide all relevant documents and access data to the voting population online. This would accommodate the over 200,000 Swiss Abroad who are entitled to vote. They would no longer have to be told that they would receive their PIN in good time in the post, as was the case for the trial schemes to date. The entire process



The concept of the digital official identity card is explained in a video from the Swiss government. Photo: supplied

could be paperless. “This would make it easier for the Swiss Abroad to exercise their political rights,” said Ariane Rustichelli, Director of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

The fact that a new solution is already available in the wake of the population’s No vote in 2021 is testament to the broad political consensus that Switzerland needs an E-ID. “This is undisputed,” says FDP National Councillor Marcel Dobler. The left/right debate is of no importance when it comes to digital topics. This makes it easier to reach a cross-party agreement. The members of the Swiss parliament were already in agreement when the motion’s defeat at the polls became evident: they quickly decided on the benchmarks for a new law. This exerted ‘constructive pressure’ on the Federal Council, said Green politician Gerhard Andrey, who launched the initiative.

The solution currently under discussion is built on three principles. The state will provide the basic service. Data will be saved sparingly and locally (privacy by design). Finally, the users themselves will decide when and to whom they disclose their data (self-sovereign identity). The Swiss government will design the E-ID to ensure it is compatible with the EU’s services. “We are in contact with the EU and various other countries with a view to ensuring the E-ID is compatible internationally over the long term,” said Rolf Rauschenbach, spokesperson for the FOJ. The official explanatory video sums up the objective as follows: “Your digital life should become easier and more secure.”

www.e-id.ch



Switzerland in your pocket: SwissInTouch, the app for the community of the Swiss Abroad

SwissInTouch promotes discussion and relations with Swiss official bodies and your Swiss representation abroad, is open to your needs and grants you direct and user-friendly access to important consular services and information.

More and more Swiss people are settling down abroad and are registering with embassies and general consulates. The country's representations always endeavour to address the community's concerns and share important information with them. The everyday work of Switzerland's representations abroad and various crises such as the Covid pandemic have meant that the need for a central instrument for information and communication for the community of the Swiss Abroad has become greater than ever. The information has always been available, but it used to be a matter of sourcing it from a variety of different channels, by which time it was no longer up to date anyway. This led to permanent representatives or consulates being contacted more frequently in order to obtain the necessary information.

The FDFA has acknowledged the needs of the Swiss Abroad

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) has acknowledged this need and shown the political will to promote communication with the Swiss Abroad even more strongly and to use digital media. The Consular Directorate of the FDFA was commissioned to create a new digital instrument for improving efficiency.

The aim was to develop a communication and information platform that would allow regular contact with the community



of the Swiss Abroad and where official information could be obtained directly from Switzerland. The Swiss Abroad should also be able to find all the information and services relevant to them on a single platform, in a simple and straightforward manner.

An app for the Swiss Abroad by the Swiss Abroad

In order to create the best possible product and meet all the relevant requirements, Swiss Abroad from all around the world were involved with the project. The requirements of the Swiss Abroad were documented via a series of fascinating interviews and served as a basis for the app's development. The people chosen for the task were granted regular insights into how the project was going and could test the various functions on offer. Their feedback was taken into account directly by SwissInTouch when they developed the app.

As well as providing useful functions and information, SwissInTouch is aimed at anyone interested in remaining in contact with Switzerland and keeping a little corner of their home country in their pocket at all times.

Download SwissInTouch free of charge and get access to all its handy functions!

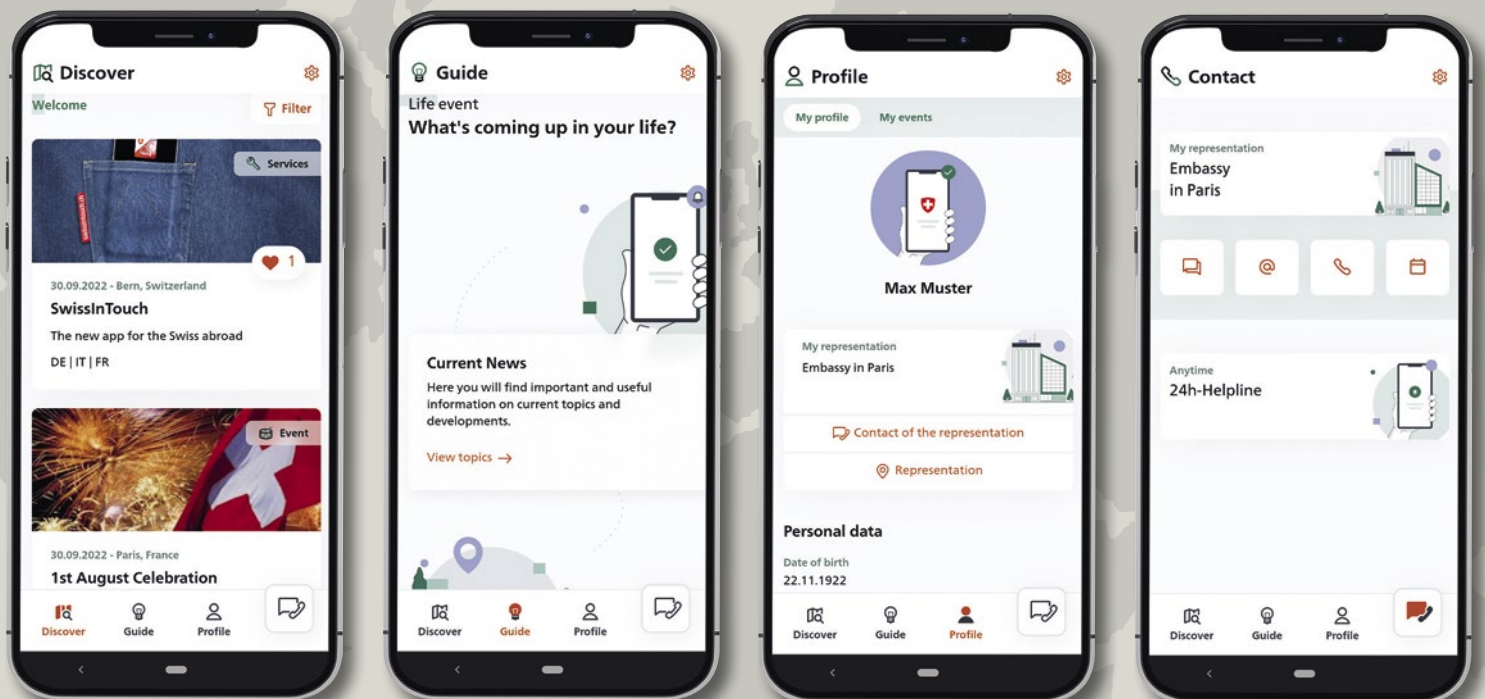


Install now!

swissintouch.ch



All functions at a glance



Discover

Discover posts from your representation and Swiss communications. Obtain interesting information on a range of topics, take part in surveys and register for events. The SwissInTouch feed contains important information and the latest news from your representation, the Consular Directorate of the FDFA and a range of partners. It is a great way to stay informed and up to date.

Guide

The 'Guide' section provides support during emigration and immigration, as well as a host of other life situations. Regardless of your current stage of life, this section of the app can provide country-specific information for various situations. To make it easier to find this information, categories such as daily life, family, retirement or emergencies have been created that will lead you directly to the right information, so you do not waste any time.

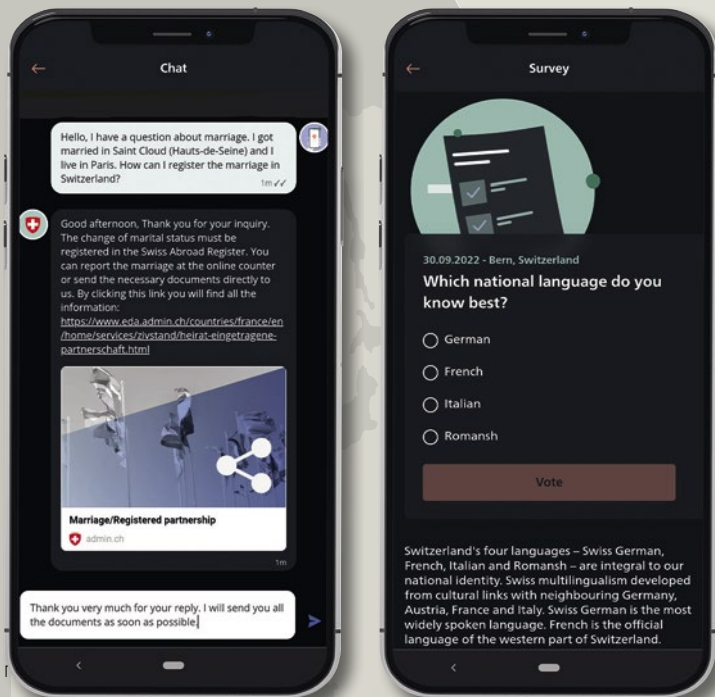
Profile

In the 'Profile' section, you can manage your upcoming events and keep an eye on things. One single login grants you full access to all functions and services from the app. You can edit your personal details and also select your local representation, to ensure that you get the right information in your feed. In addition to choosing your representation, you can also add any other representations that interest you.

Contact

Keep an eye on things and contact your representation using your preferred means of communication. You can view the full range of contact options at a glance and choose whether you prefer to communicate with your representation by telephone, by email or by chat. If you need to make an appointment with your representation, there is also the option of requesting one.

All functions at a glance (continues from page 33)



Chat

If you have any queries or concerns, you can contact your representation directly and easily via the chat function. This function lets you submit your questions and concerns quickly and with a minimum of fuss, even outside the representation's opening hours. The representation's staff will get back to you as soon as possible and will be pleased to advise you.

Survey

Your opinion is important to us! You can take part in surveys on a variety of topics and make your voice heard. We need your help to ensure that the needs of the Swiss Abroad continue to be heard. We are here to listen to your concerns, and guarantee that any participation will be completely anonymous.

Federal votes

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

The Federal Council has decided not to hold a federal popular vote on 12 March 2023. The next voting date is 18 June 2023.

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 Votelnfo app.



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):

- Federal Popular Initiative "For a socially-just climate policy – financed through fair taxation (Initiative for a Future)" (16.02.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative "Electricity for everyone at all times (Stop the blackout)" (01.03.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative "For a fair energy and climate policy: investing in prosperity, jobs and the environment (Climate Fund Initiative)" (06.03.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative "Protection from mobile phone radiation (Safer Phone Initiative)" (13.03.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative "Yes to fair OASI pensions for married couples – to finally end discrimination against marriage!" (27.03.2024)
- "Yes to fair federal taxes for married couples – to finally end discrimination against marriage!" (27.03.2024)

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



Consular services
anywhere, conveniently
on your mobile devices



www.fdfa.admin.ch

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

Dubai (2022)

What are the benefits of getting married as opposed to entering into a civil partnership?

Question: I am a Swiss Abroad and have been living in a civil partnership with my Canadian partner for a number of years. What would be the benefits of getting married?

Answer: The difference between a civil partnership and a marriage is not only symbolic. The “Marriage for all” regime opens up new opportunities for same-sex couples. If you are married, you have the right to adopt children together. You also have access to sperm donations in Switzerland. Provided access to reproductive medicine complies with the Swiss Reproductive Medicine Act, both spouses will be legally recognised as parents. However, in the case of private sperm donations, or if you and your partner access a sperm bank in your country of residence, only the person giving birth will be legally recognised as a parent in Switzerland. And with regard to adoptions and sperm donations, the question of whether a parent-child relationship is recognised in your country of residence depends on the relevant legislation in that country.

If you are insured under the Swiss old-age and survivors’ insurance (OASI) scheme, you have better legal protection as a married couple. If the eligibility criteria for an OASI survivor’s pension are fulfilled, a widowed spouse receives a surviving spouse pension, regardless of whether they have children – provided that (a) they are at least 45 years old when they became widowed and (b) have already been married for five years.

Unless otherwise agreed, the concept of joint ownership of property continues to apply to married couples, as opposed to the separation of property in civil partnerships. Furthermore, getting married makes it easier for your partner to obtain Swiss citizenship.

Couples can convert their civil partnerships into marriage by means of a simple document called a conversion declaration, which they can hand in at their local Swiss representation. Alternatively, couples can apply to initiate a preparatory procedure before marriage. This will then enable them to have their names changed at the time of marriage. Couples converting their civil



“Marriage for all” not only has symbolic implications. In many regards, marriage puts couples in a better position compared to a civil partnership. Photo: Keystone

partnership into a marriage can still change their names retroactively, but this will cost extra.

A word of caution: there is a gap in the law in the case of marriages involving the preparatory procedure, namely it is not clear whether a civil partnership is considered as time during which the couple are married. This, for example, could affect eligibility for simplified naturalisation – your partner must be married to you for at least six years – or your entitlement to a surviving spouse pension. However, with regard to the process of converting a civil partnership into marriage, the law clearly states that the duration of your civil partnership is taken into account. If you want to play safe, filling in a conversion declaration is therefore the best option.

Smilla Schär,
OSA Legal Service,
info@swisscommunity.org

Summer holiday camps for children aged 8 to 14

Swiss children living abroad will have an opportunity to get to know Switzerland and its culture – and have a great time with around 40 other children from around the world – at a series of two-week summer holiday camps from the end of June to the end of August 2023. Registration for these camps begins on 11 January 2023. The camp dates are:

Saturday 24 June – Friday 8 July 2023
Saturday 8 July – Friday 21 July 2023
Saturday 22 July – Friday 4 August 2023
Saturday 5 August – Friday 18 August 2022

Further details on the various offers (locations, age groups, etc.) will be available online from mid-December 2022 at www.sjas.ch. The registration deadline is 15 March 2023.

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



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

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



The Swiss education system in brief

The Swiss education system is characterised by renowned universities and solid basic vocational training.

Switzerland offers an extremely wide range of education courses and training opportunities, and a variety of pathways can be followed. Anyone holding the qualifications required can generally embark on the course of their choice. Sufficient language skills in the language of instruction are also important.

A special feature is the vocational apprenticeship combining theory and practice. This basic vocational training takes place in a training company, i.e. in a private company or in a public authority, with one to two days of school per week. There are also some full-time schools.

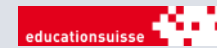
Two-thirds of all young people choose an apprenticeship in one of the around 245 professions after completing compulsory

schooling. During or after the apprenticeship, there is also the possibility of completing a vocational baccalaureate. With the vocational baccalaureate diploma, you can study at a university of applied sciences.

The universities in Switzerland offer a comprehensive, diverse, and excellent study programme. There are ten public universities (Geneva, Lausanne, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Berne, Basel, Lucerne, Zurich, St. Gallen and Svizzera Italiana) and two federal institutes of technology (ETH Zurich und EPF Lausanne). Numerous public universities of applied sciences offer practice-oriented university studies. The universities of teacher education train young people to become qualified teachers at the various school levels.

We recommend that you inform yourself early on about the university admission requirements, the required language skills, as well as the options for applying for a vocational apprenticeship. RUTH VON GUNTEN

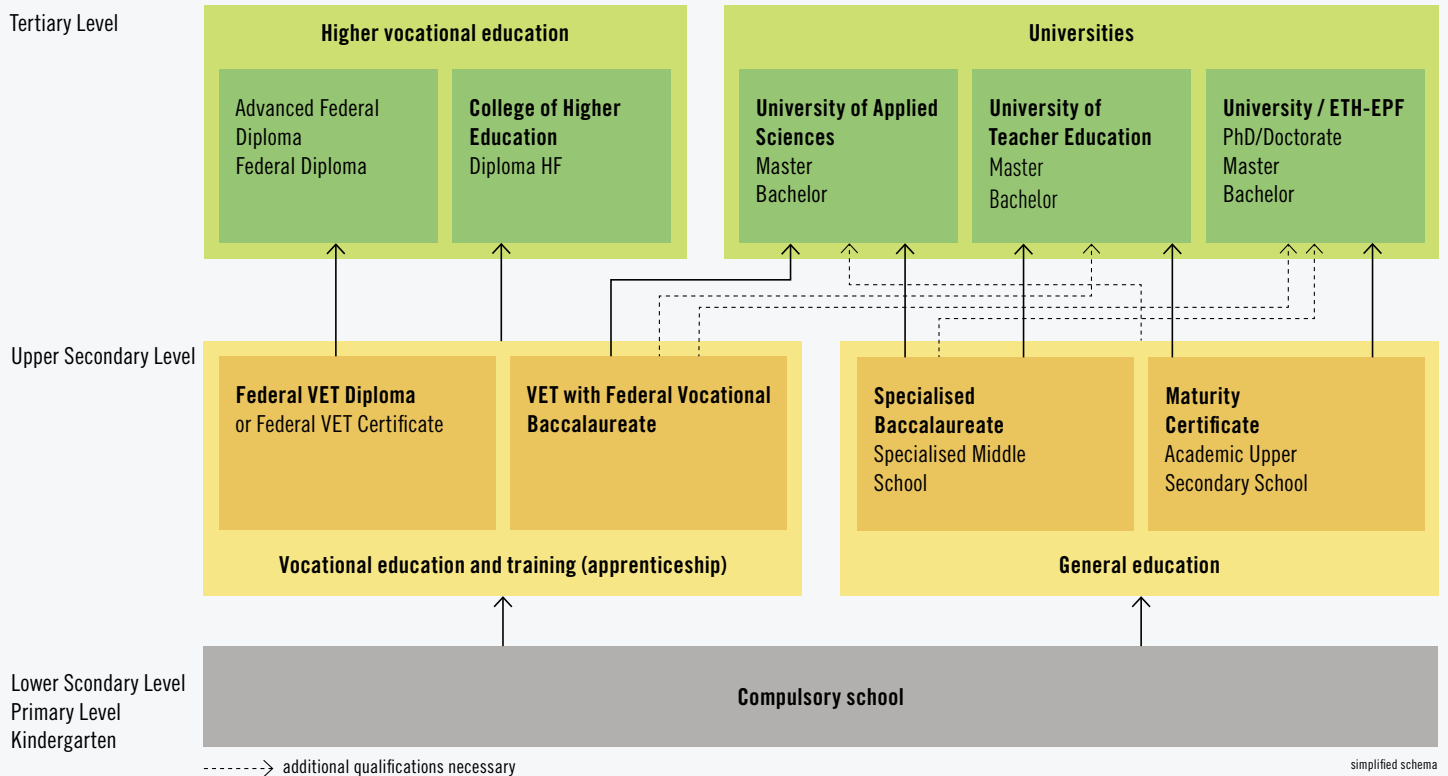
Educatiosuisse offers counselling to all young Swiss Abroad on all matters related to education in Switzerland.



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The Swiss education system



The Swiss education system is characterised by a high degree of flexibility. There are many ways to begin or to change to a different education programme. Applicants with the required qualifications can generally attend their chosen course.

Opportunities for Swiss Abroad aged 15 and over for 2023



The view's even better from up here. Photo: supplied

With the wonderful memories of this year's summer camp still fresh in our minds, we at the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) are now preparing the events for the coming year. This much is already clear: we are delighted to announce that holiday camps will once again be held in Switzerland, together with the Online Congress, in collaboration with the Youth Parliament of the Swiss Abroad (YPSA).

Holiday camps for 2023

A wealth of experiences, adventures and fun, combined with the opportunity to meet people your own age from different continents, are guaranteed. "It was an amazing experience; I would have loved to stay longer" and "I made plenty of friends and really appreciated the opportunity to discover Switzerland" - these are only some of the messages we have received from participants. We are looking forward to seeing many new and familiar faces over the coming year.

You can find all information about our events online: revue.link/camps23. Registration is open online from 14.00 Swiss time

on 10 January 2023 until 15 March 2023. For any further information, please contact the Youth Service.

URSULA KORMANN



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Third Online Youth Congress: 24 June 2023

Committed and interested Swiss young people from around the world have the opportunity to gain a fascinating insight into interesting topics as well as to engage in discussions at the third Online Congress.

For this event, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is collaborating with the Youth Parliament of the Swiss Abroad (YPSA). Attendance is free of charge. Further information and the topics for this year's event will follow shortly. (UK)

Voluntary donations to help support the printed version of "Swiss Review"

This edition of "Swiss Review" marks our continuing commitment to the printed version: we had plenty to tell you, so – in our estimation – we took all the material and turned it into a presentable edition worth reading. We are also honouring the sustained high interest that our readers have been showing in having a printed "Swiss Review". For many Swiss Abroad, this magazine has become a treasured, tangible link to Switzerland. Around 325,000 readers currently subscribe to the paper version of "Swiss Review".

This does not mean that all is well with the "Review", though – far from it. The war in Ukraine is driving up paper prices and energy costs even further. Swiss printing houses have recently had to raise their prices massively. Since the "Swiss Review" has no additional financial resources, this is becoming a serious burden.

In view of this, please note again that you can pay a voluntary subscription to help fund the print edition of "Swiss Review". Your kind support will allow us to continue publishing on paper for the foreseeable future. For a voluntary subscription, please make your payment to the following account (note that cheques cannot be cashed):

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Discussion

Tensions between the EU and Switzerland are harming Swiss research and prompting fears of isolation. This topic, discussed in the previous issue, met with keen interest from many of our readers, who commented enthusiastically on Switzerland's relations with the EU. This messy situation continues to this day. Livia Leu, Switzerland's most senior diplomat, went on record only recently as saying that there were no signs of a new start to negotiations with the EU in the foreseeable future. The European Commission is not yet ready to negotiate, in Leu's view.



Swiss scientists fear isolation

JEAN-LUC TISSOT, BRAUNSCHWEIG, GERMANY

The article leaves open how Switzerland lost its status of associate with the EU. It was the Swiss people themselves who decided this, by popular vote. Now, they are reaping what they sowed! I deeply regret the anti-European sentiment in Switzerland. I sympathise with the EU, which has consistently leaned away from cherry-picking in its policies, whether with Switzerland or with other countries.

PHILIPPE CASSARD, NORMANDY, FRANCE

What this excellent article shows comes as no surprise to me: the European Union is behaving like an imperialist organisation.

ANNE HEIDI BATCHELOR-SCHWEIZER, FRANCE

This is a typical example of another own goal for Switzerland. Accepting certain EU rules doesn't mean joining the EU. Sure, there are problems in every country. Having spent several years living in Spain, and having lived in France since 2016, I've seen this myself. But despite everything, I far prefer living in the EU to living in Switzerland, and I find that sad. It's a shame for Switzerland to not seize at least a few opportunities for approval.

MICHEL TIÈCHE, FRANCE

Only research at European level will provide the possibility of effectively surviving against powers such as China, the United States and

others boasting resources against which even a rich Switzerland will not be able to contend. If Switzerland has been able to fare well in the world until now, it is certainly not through withdrawal, but thanks to its openness to the world, its acceptance of people on its soil who have come to enrich the land with their skills, and its ability to exchange. Seeking to have everything without giving anything in return is a surefire way to end up losing everything, sooner or later. CERN is a wonderful example of shared success, co-built on a European scale. Switzerland would never have managed this alone.

URS DIETSCHI, SALT SPRING ISLAND, BC, CANADA

This is the result of Switzerland always trying to be different and better than the rest of the European countries. It is time to become a member of the EU team.

RUBI TEL ARI, ISRAEL

Switzerland needs to be independent in its relations with other countries, especially with Europe. The world is about to change dramatically and Switzerland has to have the ability to coordinate its national interests, especially with regard to technology research. Europe and the USA are weakening and some other countries will prevail - India, Brazil and Israel are all potential partners for future research and development.

Why are new oil-fuelled heating systems being installed again?

FLOW BOHL, LONDON

Great article. Shame Switzerland came out against the CO² Law in 2021. That means Switzerland will continue to depend on expensive fossil fuels from totalitarian regimes.

RENATO BESOMI, SPAIN

I can understand that a lot of homeowners have to watch their spending. Heat pumps are expensive and they're not subsidised enough by the state. The price of electricity has its part to play too. Everything is supposed to be electric, but there's apparently not enough electricity to go round and, above all, it costs too much.

BRUNO BRÜCKMANN, GERMANY

We should finally break away from this "lawnmower approach" of treating all property in the same way and actually start optimising the south-facing roofs of new houses and adapting building regulations accordingly.

ÖNDER ERDOGAN, ÇORUM, TURKEY

The less reliant we are on the outside world, the better. The worst example of this is the Russia/Ukraine war that's currently going on. Therefore, the best way forward is to make plans for the future without wasting any time.

The Helvetic unity of the "Fifth Switzerland"

MARC MEISTER, SPAIN

An interesting study, which introduces you to the Swiss Abroad over 55. I have been living in Spain for over 36 years, and have therefore spent over half my life in another country. That said, I still feel very attached to Switzerland. Something that makes me particularly happy is that my children, who have never lived in Switzerland, are the biggest Switzerland fans you could imagine. They even know the line-up of the Swiss national football team off by heart...

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

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



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<https://members.swisscommunity.org>

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