

SWISS REVIEW⁺

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
April 2016



**The “Swiss franc shock” one year on –
the impact of the strong currency**

**Major shake-up in the party leadership –
SVP, CVP and FDP choose new presidents**

**FC Basel poised to win their next league title –
their winning formula**

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Dear readers, I became the new editor-in-chief of “Swiss Review” in Berne last November. As this is my first editorial piece, I would like to extend my best wishes to you all.

This issue focuses on the “Swiss franc shock”, an issue that has dominated the news for over a year. The entire Swiss nation has been talking about it since the Swiss National Bank abandoned the minimum exchange rate to the euro in January 2015, increasing the value of our currency. The euro rate has slipped below one Swiss franc at times. The talk since has been of companies closing down and mass redundancies. Those directly affected have lost their jobs because of the strong Swiss franc, while the situation is somewhat surreal for others. The Swiss people are being confronted with this issue almost every day in the media. The nation clearly fears it is on the verge of collapse. The shock nevertheless remains an intangible and abstract concept for many people in their everyday lives. Some are therefore wondering whether the Swiss franc shock will really live up to its name or is just a storm in a teacup sparked by the chronic fear of impoverishment of an extremely affluent society.

The euro rate has now settled down at around CHF 1.10, and it appears the Swiss economy is much more resilient than many people feared. As our guest journalist Daniel Hug outlines in this issue’s focus article, the appreciation of the Swiss franc was indeed a shock initially. The de-coupling from the euro paralysed the economy, costing around 10,000 jobs by the end of the year. But this has not destroyed our economy. What remains is uncertainty over the future development of the exchange rate and its long-term consequences.

I also wish to draw your attention to a reply card from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs enclosed with this issue. This card allows you to switch from the printed version of “Swiss Review” to the online one. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad is unfortunately being affected by the enormous cost-saving pressure facing federal government, and “Swiss Review” is no exception. Eliminating printing and delivery costs would be of great help to us. I am counting on you!

MARKO LEHTINEN



Cover photo:
“The Swiss franc shock”
photo by Alf Dietrich

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Grateful for the workforce

I am horrified by the attitude of many people who arrogantly scoff at the suffering of millions of refugees. Allow me to ask – as I help to provide support for Syrian refugees in Germany – who will plug the hole that will open up in the economically active population over the coming decades owing to demographic change? Here in the Black Forest region many of my colleagues – hoteliers, restaurateurs etc. – are grateful for the new workforce.

The Syrians may have a different faith but as a rule they are no cleverer or less intelligent than the local workforce. And believe it or not, my female employees and I greatly appreciate the new respect shown towards us. For months we have no longer had to carry heavy boxes and nobody has made any offensive remarks or made us endure any unpleasant experiences owing to our gender. Our experience



ranges from satisfied to highly impressed and I can assure you that there have only been a few isolated negative incidents.

NICOLE BARTLOME, GERMANY

Well-educated refugees

The Syrian refugees are predominantly well educated and can be integrated into the Swiss employment market within a short period of time. First and foremost, Switzerland needs engineers and doctors as more and more Swiss people are deciding not to pursue these career paths. And there is no such thing as “bogus refugees”. It is obviously easier for wealthier people to leave their native country. But that does not mean they did not fear for their lives at home.

KARIN STRICKER, BY EMAIL

The refugee crisis

Millions of people had no choice but to leave their homeland. To see that you only need to look at images of the bombed-out Syrian cities of Homs or Aleppo. Or the

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destroyed hospitals in the Kurdish-controlled zone. The second major drama is currently being played out in the opinion columns. With few exceptions, we find a mixture of alleged facts and sometimes rash assumptions. And as if that were not bad enough, the debate is shifting towards xenophobic, racist and entirely disrespectful invective. Hatred will not resolve any of the problems. If we wish to prevent a complete fiasco, we must now seek ways of protecting refugees from further misery and with all our strength combat the causes of the conflicts triggering the migratory movements in the first place.

HELEN MEIER, BY EMAIL

What should be done with illegal immigrants?

The huge influx of refugees from Syria and Africa could have been foreseen a long time ago. What action did the EU in Brussels take? None at all. It sat back and did nothing. The EU countries are now unable to cope because no preparations were put in place. Switzerland must avert such a dilemma. The borders will unfortunately have to be closed for a certain period in order to get to grips with the registration and rejection of applications. Those who are unable or do not wish to adapt should be immediately deported. I have been living in Thailand for some time and believe the Thai immigration system should also be deployed in Switzerland. Those who are here illegally are unceremoniously expelled. It is a rigorous and, in the view of some people, tough system. But it is an efficient one. Mind you, the deportation issue is somewhat different in Europe. Where should the deportees be sent if war and persecution is taking place in their native countries? The problems in Europe – and in Switzerland as well – will become more acute rather than easier to resolve.

EVELYN DEGEN, THAILAND

Even more cars? No, thanks!

I live in Japan where everything is geared towards mobility. Motorways are being expanded and the Hikari Shinkansen, which travels between Tokyo and Osaka every ten minutes, transports around 700 people each journey. The average speed is 150 km/h. Every day 3.5 million people use the Shinjuku railway station. If I want live scampi on the table in the morning, I can order them the day before from Kyushu, which is



around 1,200 kilometres away, with guaranteed delivery. They are of course transported inexpensively by van. Does any of this make sense? Is it necessary? How much wastage of natural resources will it take to satisfy our never-ending appetite for more? Cars, holiday flights and HGV transport are all too cheap. And the next generation will have to pay for it.

More traffic, vehicles and urban development? No, thanks! I voted against the second Gotthard tunnel.

ANDRE ZIMMERMANN, TOKYO

The excessive tourist flow

Nothing is more desirable than road-to-rail transfer. Firstly, rail transport is less expensive than road. Secondly, in Switzerland – where the railways are completely electric – rail transport offers tremendous benefits in terms of environmental friendliness. In contrast, a new road tunnel represents destructive competition. The massive flow of tourists in Europe is already excessive. As much as possible should be done to curb it. Tourism is a good business if operated on a mass scale. Excessive tourism, however, destroys the environment. That's why I voted against a second Gotthard tunnel.

BRIGITTE MEIER, BY EMAIL

No affordable health insurance available

Politicians often come up with some strange things – for example, the notion of abolishing the right to dual citizenship. Another equally significant issue, in my view, is that the Swiss Abroad are unable to take out affordable health insurance policies in Switzerland for old-age and survivors' insurance (AHV) pensioners (based on basic insurance). Ordinary AHV pensioners if they reside in Switzerland are entitled to supplementary benefits that cost the state money. So what stands in the way of appropriate and affordable basic insurance?

HERBERT STÄHELI, BY EMAIL

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The “Swiss franc shock” has a far-reaching impact

It is over a year since the Swiss National Bank abandoned the minimum rate against the euro. This has cost over 10,000 jobs to date and has halved economic growth.

DANIEL HUG

It was a difficult moment for Thomas Jordan when he appeared before the media on Thursday, 15 January 2015. The chairman of the Swiss National Bank (SNB) was perceptibly tense because his decision, which had been announced several hours earlier at 10.30 a.m., triggered a tremor on the foreign exchange market. The euro-Swiss franc minimum rate of 1.20 no longer applied.

The SNB's three-member Governing Board was now relying on negative interest instead of the minimum rate: “To ensure the removal of the minimum rate does not result in undue tightening of the monetary framework conditions, the National Bank is cutting the interest rate significantly,” said Jordan at the time. The introduction of penalty interest of minus 0.75 % on bank balances aimed to deter investors from depositing their money

“The monetary policy system has been out of kilter since 2008, and Switzerland has to take the rap for any anxiety on the markets through its currency.”

in francs, thus ensuring the value of the franc did not rise too much. This succeeded to an extent. During the major crises of recent months, less money flowed into Switzerland and there was lower appreciation pressure than in previous years, even during situations like the Greek debt crisis in the summer.

Since 15 January 2015, Switzerland has been the only small country with a very open economy that refrains from any linking to larger currency

zones – with consequences that will continue to be felt, even if the initial appreciation of the franc against the euro by almost 20 % has since halved. While the Swiss economy has not fallen into recession, the “Swiss franc shock” has had a far-reaching impact on industry, trade and tourism.

Great uncertainty

There is still great uncertainty over the future development of the exchange rate: “The monetary policy system has been out of kilter since the 2008 financial crisis as Switzerland has since taken the rap for any anxiety on the financial markets through its currency,” remarks Martin Neff, chief economist at the Raiffeisen Group. He believes we have been in an extraordinary phase of appreciation since 2008 which bears comparison with the difficult period after 1973. Around 10 % of jobs were lost in Switzerland at that time. This view is also shared by the economist Bruno Müller-Schneider who has attempted to determine the cost of abandoning the minimum rate in a study. This can be observed in various areas:

The economy: The de-coupling from the euro paralysed the previously buoyant economy. Following a 1.9 % growth rate in 2014, the Swiss economy only grew by a meagre 0.7 % in 2015, according to the latest estimates. By contrast, the economy of the EU countries expanded by 1.8 %. At +1.1 % growth this year, according to the KOF economic research unit at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Switzerland will again lag well behind Germany (+1.8 %).

Labour market: If the economy falters, unemployment rises after a certain period of time. The unemployment rate climbed to 3.8 % in January 2016 – a year earlier it stood at 3.5 %. In total 163,000 people are now registered as unemployed – 8.4 % more than in January 2015. That is the highest level since April 2010. Companies which primarily manufacture in Switzerland and only benefit to a limited extent from cheaper purchasing prices abroad are being hit. These include traditional sectors of industry, such as metalworking, electrical engineering, watchmaking, mechanical engineering and automotive manufacturing. “We anticipate further redundancies in industry,” Neff indicates. Valentin Vogt, chairman of the employers' federation, anticipates that the rise in the value of the franc will have cost around 20,000 jobs by mid-2016. Unemployment figures in Europe are currently falling. Germany has reported its lowest unemployment since 1991. In the German federal states of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, which border Switzerland, the rate fell to 3.7 % and 3.4 % respectively in December.

Structural change: The growth in GDP hides the fact that Swiss industry is in recession and is shrinking. Around 45,000 jobs have been lost here since 2008. The companies oriented towards foreign markets have attempted to retain their market shares there by relinquishing their profit margin. But now they are increasingly focussing on procurement abroad, relocation, cost-saving measures and headcount reduction. They lack the planning certainty required for investing after the end of



the minimum rate. “The export-oriented companies have not yet come to terms with the appreciation of the Swiss franc,” says Daniel Küng, head of Switzerland Global Enterprise, the organisation responsible for promoting foreign trade. “Last summer, many companies simply didn’t know how to deal with the currency appreciation or how to retain revenues and profit margin.” The situation has since been alleviated somewhat thanks to a slightly weaker Swiss franc. “Companies have increased productivity, extended working hours, purchased abroad more and relocated or halted pro-

cesses,” says Küng, outlining the results of a business survey. “De-industrialisation has begun in Switzerland,” confirms Franz Jaeger, an experienced economic policy-maker and emeritus professor of economics at the University of St. Gallen. The Swiss economy is undergoing far-reaching structural change, “but this is based on distorted exchange rates that are not justified in real economic terms”, criticises Bernd Schips, former head of KOF.

Shopping tourism: For most people the most immediate effect of the stronger Swiss franc is that they can

now go on holiday abroad less expensively and can shop more affordably on the other side of the Swiss border. Having overvalued Swiss francs in their pocket has encouraged the Swiss to travel abroad much more often: last year, a total of around 12 to 13 billion Swiss francs was spent abroad. The Swiss retail sector is losing out on billions of francs in revenues due to the distorted currency rate. Many shops in the city centres of Basel and Zurich have even closed down. Conversely, Swiss tourism has suffered a significant decline in visitors from Europe. The number of overnight stays by Eu-

A shopping centre across the border in Germany welcomes its Swiss customers with a “grüezi” – shopping tourism is a notable consequence of the strong Swiss franc.

Photo: Keystone

Europeans fell by 4.3 % and the decrease was even greater in the mountain regions. The growing number of Chinese tourists can only partly make up for this shortfall because spending by Asians on accommodation and food is only a fraction of that by European visitors.

Deflation: The currency appreciation has led to a huge fall in import prices. This drove consumer prices down to minus 1.3 % in December compared to the previous year. The National Bank should in fact ensure monetary stability, but prices have been falling for several years.

Savings: The negative interest and extremely low interest rate levels are weighing down savers and pension funds, which are barely achieving any yield on their capital investments. The pension fund association Asip estimates a direct shortfall of around 400 million Swiss francs as an express result of negative interest. However, the base rate would probably have been lowered into the negative range even if the minimum exchange rate had been continued.

The costs of abandoning the minimum rate are placing such great strain on the economy because the Swiss franc strengthened abruptly. A long-term view over a 40-year period shows that the Swiss franc's external value compared to 27 countries – adjusted for inflation – has only risen by 0.4 % a year on average. The economy can, of course, cope with periods of continuous currency appreciation.

The sudden drop in the euro after the abandonment of the minimum rate from 1.20 to around 1.02 Swiss francs led the National Bank – in addition to introducing negative interest – to intervene in the foreign exchange market after January 2015. “The value of the franc has risen so strongly that it cannot continue without a damag-

EUR to CHF Exchange Rate from November 2014 until February 2016



ing impact on the export industry and tourism,” remarked Serge Gaillard, Director of the Federal Finance Administration. In summer 2015, the SNB stabilised the rate at around 1.04 francs when the Greek crisis flared up again by means of currency purchases of 18 billion Swiss francs. A franc rate close to parity with the euro was deemed too damaging to the Swiss economy. In January, the SNB was able to maintain the rate at around 1.10 Swiss francs.

Criticism of the National Bank

The traces of the currency purchases are apparent in the SNB's balance sheet. From January 2015 to January 2016, the foreign exchange reserves rose again – by 77 billion Swiss francs – and now stand at 575 billion. Around half of this increase is attributable to SNB interventions, while the remainder is due to slightly stronger foreign currencies and earnings from foreign currency investments.

Criticism of the National Bank's course of action has grown. Since January 2015, the monetary authority has relentlessly reiterated that there was no alternative to de-coupling from the euro. However, such rhetoric is not shared by all economists. Professor of economics Jaeger firmly believes that

more vigorous intervention is needed. “The SNB must weaken the franc,” he stated last November. The economist Bruno Müller in turn recommends – as do a number of professors – a new minimum rate against a currency basket made up of two units euro and one unit dollar.

However, there are currently strong indications that the National Bank is not seeking a radical change of direction but is instead working with an implicit minimum rate which is not being declared publicly. With the current rate at around 1.10 Swiss francs to the euro, it has already been able to significantly improve the situation for large sections of the Swiss economy.

After 15 January 2015, the euro rate fell from CHF 1.20 to under CHF 1. It has now stabilised at around CHF 1.10.
Source: www.xe.com

DANIEL HUG IS CHIEF BUSINESS EDITOR AT THE
“NZZ AM SONNTAG”

“The National Bank faced with twin pressures”

The SNB's task is to ensure price stability but prices have fallen with the end of the minimum rate. The economist Philippe Bacchetta explains why.



A professor at the Swiss Finance Institute and at HEC Lausanne, Philippe Bacchetta looks at the National Bank's strategy and underlines the Swiss franc's high exposure on the world financial markets.

Swiss Review: Does the SNB's approach differ from that of other national banks?

Philippe Bacchetta: The mechanism deployed by our bank is the same as elsewhere, but Switzerland differs from other countries because it is a small nation that is highly exposed to the pressures of the international markets. The SNB is therefore a small bank faced with major forces, in contrast to Denmark, for example, which is a small country but less exposed.

What part does the Swiss franc play in this international exposure?

Foreign investors include assets denominated in Swiss francs in their portfolios. They buy shares in Swiss industry or bonds issued by the Confederation. They deposit funds in the Swiss financial system, which moves some of them abroad. Switzerland's wealth – its pension funds and multinationals – is in turn a source of international investment. That's what creates this exposure.

How does the SNB create money?

Let us take the recent example of the purchase of currency (*editor's note: this was the key element of the minimum rate policy*). The SNB buys bonds and shares denominated in euros from a Swiss bank. By doing so, the SNB pays these amounts to the bank, which increases the money supply or, to be more precise, the monetary base. The banks

therefore have an account with the SNB and this represents most of the monetary base. This capital receives very low interest rates – in fact they are currently negative – but the banks do not have anywhere else to put it.

But the SNB also buys shares, in US companies, for example?

Yes, it does. It sells euros to buy dollars, which it invests in shares. In order to remain neutral in its selections, the SNB makes acquisitions based on the market index. If, for example, the New York stock market index indicates a 2 % rate for Apple shares, it invests 2 % in them. However some prices, in particular those of companies involved in weaponry, are excluded from such purchases.

The SNB's task is to restrict inflation and to ensure price stability. Has this objective been achieved?

Strictly speaking, not entirely as there was negative inflation caused by the abandonment of the minimum rate (*editor's note: companies have reduced their prices to remain competitive*). The SNB is therefore faced with twin pressures. It should be noted that there was a period of negative inflation, but not deflation, which is associated with recession.

The SNB abandoned the minimum rate in January 2015. Was it forced to do so?

This step was inevitable. Buying something at a price above its value – namely, euros at CHF 1.20 instead of CHF 1.09 as at present – is not good. At the rate this foreign currency buying was taking place, we would have found ourselves today with assets far in excess of Switzerland's gross domestic product, which would have created an increasingly dangerous situation (*editor's note: in the event of a fall in the price of the euro*).

Was the introduction of this policy in 2011 essentially a good idea?

The question I ask is why introduce it in the knowledge that an impasse would result.

Attack on “free lawyers”

How should Swiss asylum policy be organised? The Swiss people will decide on this issue on 5 June 2016. The referendum forced by the SVP is likely to see an extremely difficult debate over the approach towards refugees.

MARC LETTAU

Hundreds of thousands of refugees from war-torn and crisis-hit regions are currently seeking protection in Europe. This is also affecting Switzerland. The situation is very volatile. The State Secretariat for Migration had to continually revise its refugee figures upwards last year. By the end of 2015, 40,000 refugees had arrived in Switzerland – large numbers came from Eritrea (10,000), Afghanistan (8,000), Syria (5,000), Iraq (2,000) and Sri Lanka (2,000). The number of ref-



Should asylum seekers be provided with free legal aid? Opinion is divided over this issue.

Photo: HEKS/Sabine Buri

ugees stood at a similar level to during the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

Around 40,000 people will again seek asylum in Switzerland in 2016, according to forecasts by federal government’s migration experts. This may be a conservative estimate in light of recent developments. The countries in south-eastern Europe have increasingly attempted to seal themselves off from the influx of refugees since the beginning of the year. In February, Austria indicated its intention to significantly restrict the permeability of its southern border to refugees. This announcement may result in more refugees avoiding the route through the Balkans and in-

stead attempting to enter Europe via Italy. This would also bring Switzerland closer to developments as Italy’s northern neighbour.

Focus on two key issues

The asylum system will remain high on Switzerland’s political agenda regardless of the course of events as the referendum called by the SVP against the revised Asylum Act has now come to pass. By submitting 65,000 signatures, the party is forcing a popular

vote on the revised law that the Federal Council and Parliament supported by a large majority.

It is obvious which issues the referendum debate will stir up. The revision focuses on two key issues. Firstly, the asylum procedure, which can currently take years, should not exceed 140 days in future. This increased speed aims to establish clarity much more quickly about whether applicants will be admitted or not. Secondly, these short periods are to be supplemented by a safeguard against incorrect decisions. Asylum seekers would be provided with free legal aid. This aims to ensure constitutionally correct decisions. However, it is pre-

cisely this legal aid that the SVP deems excessive. It dubs the proposal “free lawyers for everyone” and argues that it will simply inflate an enormous aid and legal industry. The party hopes to see the exact opposite happen – a generally more restrictive policy with significant restrictions to the right to asylum.

If the Swiss people support the SVP on 5 June 2016 by voting against the revised Asylum Act, this would not only remove the contentious “free lawyers” from the table but initially also the reduced procedure time. The problem that this would cause is obvious from the figures. Of the 40,000 asylum applications submitted, only 28,000 of them were judged at first instance in 2015. The mountain of pending applications rose to 30,000. This stirs up the perpetual debate over the issue of how the negative consequences of lengthy procedures can be alleviated. The widely held view is that having poorly integrated refugees who find themselves in a seemingly endless queue leads to high welfare costs for Switzerland and poor integration and development prospects for those who will remain in Switzerland come what may. Minister of Justice Simonetta Sommaruga (SP) is therefore calling for access to the labour market or internships to be facilitated for those to whom Switzerland has granted protection. She would like to remove the major obstacles that currently exist in this area. This is the opposite of what the SVP is seeking to achieve through its referendum.

MARC LETTAU IS AN EDITOR WITH THE “SWISS REVIEW”

A bonanza for everyone?

Money from the state for everyone unconditionally – that is the aim of the popular initiative for an unconditional basic income which will be put to the vote on 5 June.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Everyone, regardless of whether they are in gainful employment or not and irrespective of their financial position, would receive a basic income. Those behind the initiative indicate an amount of CHF 2,500 a month for each adult. Children and young people up to the age of 18 would receive CHF 625.

The initiative does not explain exactly how this is to be financed. However, reflections on this matter are set out in supplementary documentation: Someone earning CHF 6,000 a month would only receive CHF 3,500 directly from their employer. CHF 2,500 from every salary would go into the basic income pot from which the employee would receive the remaining CHF 2,500. The basic income would also replace certain welfare benefits. However, the financing of the remainder is even contested by the advocates of the unconditional basic income.

The debate is heavily influenced by people's different concepts of what it is to be human – do people essentially enjoy working? The authors of the initiative – primarily artists, journalists and intellectuals – are inclined to believe they do. In their view, few people would be content with an income of just CHF 2,500, which means the financial incentive of gainful employment would be maintained. The Federal Council rejects the proposal because it would have a “far-reaching, undesirable impact, in particular on the economic system and social cohesion”. A clear majority of MPs share this view. In the Na-

tional Council, CVP spokesperson Ruth Humbel dubbed the initiative a “romantic social experiment”. The SP and Greens do not support the initiative either, apart from a few exceptions.

A global issue

Such opposition comes as little surprise. Unconditional basic income removes the model of paid work as the cornerstone of the economy and society. Many on the left also regard the initiative as a fundamental attack on the welfare state. This is because a uniform monthly pension of CHF 2,500 could never replace the tailored social insurance benefits that take account of the vicissitudes of life. There is also a fear that Parliament could initiate swingeing welfare cuts when it came to structuring the basic income in specific terms – the lowest possible basic income and the abolition of other welfare benefits. But that is precisely what makes unconditional basic income appealing to some neo-liberals. They see it as a means of cutting back the social insurance system.

This issue is not just being discussed in Switzerland. A restricted experiment with an unconditional basic income is to be conducted in Finland in 2017. Similar ideas are also being toyed with in France and the Netherlands.

JÜRIG MÜLLER IS AN EDITOR WITH THE “SWISS REVIEW”

Public service, petrol as a milch cow and test tube babies

Three very different proposals will also be put to the vote on 5 June.

There was rare unanimity in Parliament over the “**pro public service**” popular initiative launched by consumer magazines – the bill did not receive one single vote. The initiative calls for semi-public enterprises, such as the Swiss Post Office, Swisscom and the SBB, not to seek to achieve a profit, to refrain from cross-subsidisation in other administrative areas and not to pursue any fiscal interests. The salaries paid by these companies should also not exceed those of the federal administration. The initiative requires a “decent service at reasonable prices” instead of “overpriced tickets”, “maximum fares” and “profits running into billions”. Opponents warn that the popular initiative could lead to a weakening of public services and tax increases.

The “**milch cow initiative**” does not concern agriculture but instead transport. Car importers and road associations, which are behind the initiative “for a fair transport policy”, believe they are the milch cows of the nation. This is because only half of all revenue from petroleum tax goes towards road transport. The other half goes into the general federal coffers. The authors of the initiative are calling for all of the tax revenue to be ring-fenced for road transport. A funding shortfall is looming here, they say. Nobody in Parliament is supporting the popular initiative, apart from the SVP and some FDP MPs. The introduction of complete ring-fencing would jeopardise other federal undertakings. Opponents also warn of tax deficits of CHF 1.5 billion.

The revised **Reproductive Medicine Act** concerns ethically complex issues. The constitutional amendment was approved by the Swiss people in 2015, making previously prohibited pre-implantation diagnostics possible. However, a broad-based committee made up of figures from various parties from left to right has called a referendum against the implementing law. This concerns the conditions under which genetic screening can be undertaken with artificial insemination. There are also fears over selection by eliminating embryos with trisomy 21, for example, before implantation into the womb. (JM)

Major shake-up at the top

Three of the four parties represented on the Federal Council will be led by new presidents from April. Toni Brunner's departure was a real thunderbolt.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Senior managers, heads of marketing, figureheads to the outside world and circus trainers within their parties – party presidents are omnipresent, they are politics personified. Three presidents from the four Federal Council parties stepping down at the same time is a national issue. The heads of the Free Democrats (FDP), the Christian Democrats (CVP) and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) – Philipp Müller, Christophe Darbellay and Toni Brunner – will have to be replaced at party conferences in April.

In the case of Valais-born Darbellay, he is relinquishing the position begrudgingly as the limitation on the term in office cost him his National Council seat. According to an unwritten law, a party president should also be represented in Parliament. He therefore announced his decision to step down back in mid-2015. Müller, by contrast, is going for strategic reasons. In his own words, he wants to see in a generational change in good time. He has knocked his party into shape and was one of the winners at the autumn elections.

Secret of the SVP strategists

While Philipp Müller's departure came as a surprise, SVP leader Toni Brunner dropped a real bombshell at the start of the year with news of his exit. Brunner is leaving the top job at the peak of his career. With just under 30 % of the vote, the SVP is in a stronger position than ever before and also recaptured a second Federal Council seat in December. Brunner beamed with pride and was brim-

ming with energy. Shortly before Christmas he told the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" that he and the parliamentary group leader Adrian Amstutz would lead the party into the next elections as well. His actual words were: "No reshuffles are planned." Yet, some three weeks later and this statement was turned on its head. If you believe the official party version, Brunner suddenly came to the conclusion over the turn of the year that he wanted "to focus more intensively again in future on his political work as a National Councillor and his own farming business". The real reasons remain the secret of the SVP party

SVP President Toni Brunner announced his departure at the height of his political career.

Photo: SVP Schweiz



strategists, and they do not like putting their cards on the table.

However, the party leadership is firmly in control and pointing the way forward. At the same time as the announcement of Brunner's departure, it also named his successor, 49-year-old Albert Rösti, a Bernese National Councillor. This was remarkably autocratic for a party which sees itself as the guardian of direct democracy yet nipped in the bud any broad-based debate within the party about the most significant personnel decision. Even if another candidate were to emerge at the last minute, they would have a tough task up against Rösti.

More than a change of image?

With Albert Rösti, the SVP is introducing a careful change of image. Rösti was a successful election campaign leader last autumn. As the SVP has practically sucked up everything to the right of it and is also targeting the voters of other conservative parties, he was able to refrain from using excessively shrill tones and conducted a reasonably moderate campaign. The trained agronomist comes across as reserved. He may therefore prove popular, particularly in French-speaking Switzerland and Ticino, where the SVP has declared its intention to increase its support. However, Rösti is just as true to the party line as Toni Brunner in representing the party's main issues. Christoph Blocher, the SVP's father figure, is still keeping a keen eye on events. He also announced that he would step down as SVP vice-president in April, but is not completely withdrawing

from politics. The billionaire from Herrliberg remains the party's main funding provider and will continue to pull the strings in the background.

Yet, the surprising departure of Blocher's protégé Toni Brunner may point to the start of the post-Blocher era. Albert Rösti will ensure thematic continuity. However, he is also a politician who is very well connected across party lines, who permits divergent opinions and does not ridicule politicians of different persuasions. He is more a pragmatic politician than an ideologist and does not present every issue as a matter of life or death for the nation. However, there are also shifts towards more radical positions within the SVP. With new National Councillor Roger Köppel, editor-in-chief of "Weltwoche", new National Councillor Magdalena Martullo-Blocher, CEO of Ems-Chemie, Zug National Council member and former Federal Council candidate Thomas

Aeschi and others, there is a new guard thrusting itself into the foreground who often conduct politics in a more trenchant and provocative way than the existing party establishment.

The big question now is how the party will develop under the more conciliatory politics of Albert Rösti. The SVP will remain a distinctively right-wing party. But it may rein in its propensity for aggressive rightist populism and position itself more as a large conservative people's party of the right. Or Rösti may play the likeable party leader while his party's fundamental position shifts even more systematically towards radical right-wing nationalism.

The second big question is what the SVP's relationship with the FDP and CVP will be like. During the last legislative period, there were occasional vows of "conservative solidarity" but they never really came to fru-

ition. New party presidents are unlikely to change much in this respect. Major differences will remain over European, foreign and social policy issues. There may be greater cooperation in the fields of economic, welfare, financial, energy and environmental policy, particularly if the currently touted favourites for the FDP and CVP win in April.

Petra Gössi and Gerhard Pfister?

When this issue of the "Swiss Review" went to press, it was still unclear what the line-up of FDP and CVP candidates would look like at the party conferences. The 40-year-old Schwyz National Councillor Petra Gössi has put herself forward as a candidate for the Free Democrats. She is already FDP president in the canton of Schwyz, and her politics are significantly right of centre. The same applies to 54-year-old Gerhard Pfister, a CVP National Councillor from Zug. Other potential candidates, including those from the centre-left wing of the CVP, had declined one after the other by the time of going to press.

Even if the presidential posts are filled with representatives from the right of each party, that does not necessarily mean they will move closer to the SVP. Cooperation between the major conservative parties is not likely to become easier. After all, the most important objective of each party leader will be to establish the points of difference from the competition for profiling reasons. However, the three new presidents – if they turn out to be Albert Rösti, Gerhard Pfister and Petra Gössi – will find one another more accessible on a personal level than their predecessors on account of their rather reserved nature.

Whereas FDP leader Philipp Müller (left) is stepping down of his own accord, the restriction on the term of office is forcing the departure of CVP President Christophe Darbellay (right).

Photos: FDP Switzerland, CVP Switzerland



Surprisingly clear rejection of implementing initiative

Almost 60 % of voters rejected the SVP's implementing initiative following an unprecedented campaign. The law on foreign nationals will nevertheless be tightened up.

BARBARA ENGEL

The electorate attached great importance to the referenda on 28 February and to the implementing initiative put forward by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) in particular. This is clearly underlined by the 63.1% turnout which is the highest since the vote on the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992.

However, nobody expected that the implementing initiative would be so resoundingly rejected with 58.9% of voters and 20 cantons against it. A majority were still in favour of the initiative at the end of January, according to an official poll.

More than one million Swiss francs collected

The change of mood was brought about by an unprecedented campaign in which creative artists, former federal councillors, MPs, young people, over 150 Swiss professors of law and even bishops took part. In excess of 1.2 million Swiss francs were collected through crowdfunding. This enabled the opposition to achieve as much media presence as the SVP which supported the proposal. A wide range of arguments against the initiative were put forward and the mobilisation of the electorate was a resounding success. The SVP's isolationist tendencies may have proven unappetising to large sections of the population as the party's demands call into question even the fundamental principles of the constitutional state, such as the separation of powers.

Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga, who is federal minister of justice, appealed to people to vote to protect the constitutional state on the evening of the referendum. Sommaruga said that it was "a sign of maturity and democratic responsibility" that the electorate decided "they did not wish to take over the role of Parliament and the courts".

Many more deportations

After the rejection of the implementing initiative, the law on the deportation initiative adopted by Parliament, which the Swiss people accepted in November 2010, will now enter into force on 1 October 2016. Under the law, foreign nationals convicted of serious crimes will be automatically deported. The expulsion lasts for between 5 and 15 years irrespective of the severity of the sentence. However, the courts can refrain from imposing deportation in exceptional circumstances in the event of serious personal hardship. The SVP announced that it would keep a close eye on how this hardship provision was applied exactly. It anticipates that around 4,000 foreigners will be deported from Switzerland each year in future. That figure currently stands at around 500.

Second Gotthard tunnel on the way, "marriage penalty" retained

There were no surprises amongst the other referenda on 28 February. The result of the vote on the marriage penalty was nevertheless tight.

57% voted in favour of the proposal permitting the construction of a second road tunnel at the Gotthard. This should soften the impact of the renovation of the existing tunnel. Supporters of the initiative – with Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard at the forefront – played up the importance of security and national cohesion during the referendum campaign. Opponents highlighted the high costs and the fact that the second tunnel would increase road capacity enormously, hampering road-to-rail transfer and leading to the use of two lanes in two tunnels in future in an extreme scenario. On the evening of the referendum Federal Councillor Leuthard gave assurances that this would not happen as the protection of the Alps was enshrined in the federal constitution.

The CVP and the definition of marriage

The CVP's initiative on the abolition of the "marriage penalty" – officially known as "for marriage and families" – was rejected but just 50.8% voted

no. This is despite the fact that the Federal Supreme Court declared fiscally disadvantaging married couples to be unconstitutional in 1984. Opponents warned of high costs during the referendum campaign and demonstrated that the "marriage penalty" only affects high earning married couples. They also used the definition of marriage as a permanent "union of man and woman" as a further reason for rejecting the proposal. Opponents argued that this definition contradicted efforts to open up marriage to same-sex couples.

Resounding rejection of Young Socialists' initiative

Speculation on the rise and fall of food prices will not be prohibited in Switzerland. The "no speculation on food" initiative was clearly rejected – with 59.9% opposed – as expected. 40% voting in favour is nevertheless a respectable achievement from the perspective of those on the left and the Greens.

BARBARA ENGEL

Geneva at odds with its alternative culture

During the 1990s and 2000s, the city at the end of the lake was teeming with occupied makeshift centres and party venues. Due to a hardening of policy, technical restrictions and a zero-risk approach, Geneva is today experiencing a low point.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Does Geneva still provide young people (and the not so young) with alternative meeting places – open, accessible party venues where up-and-coming artists can launch cultural projects without having to present a business plan? Many emerging artists believe the canton is now going through a crisis. The background to this situation is the disappearance of the squats during the 2000s and, in particular, the closure of the huge self-managed Artamis space in 2011. “There is a lack of venues, and this is becoming acute. I hope this is resolved with the new districts where the can-

ton promises that culture will be integrated,” says the Christian Democrat Alia Chaker Mangeat, a member of the communal parliament who sits on the arts and culture committee.

Culture budget cuts

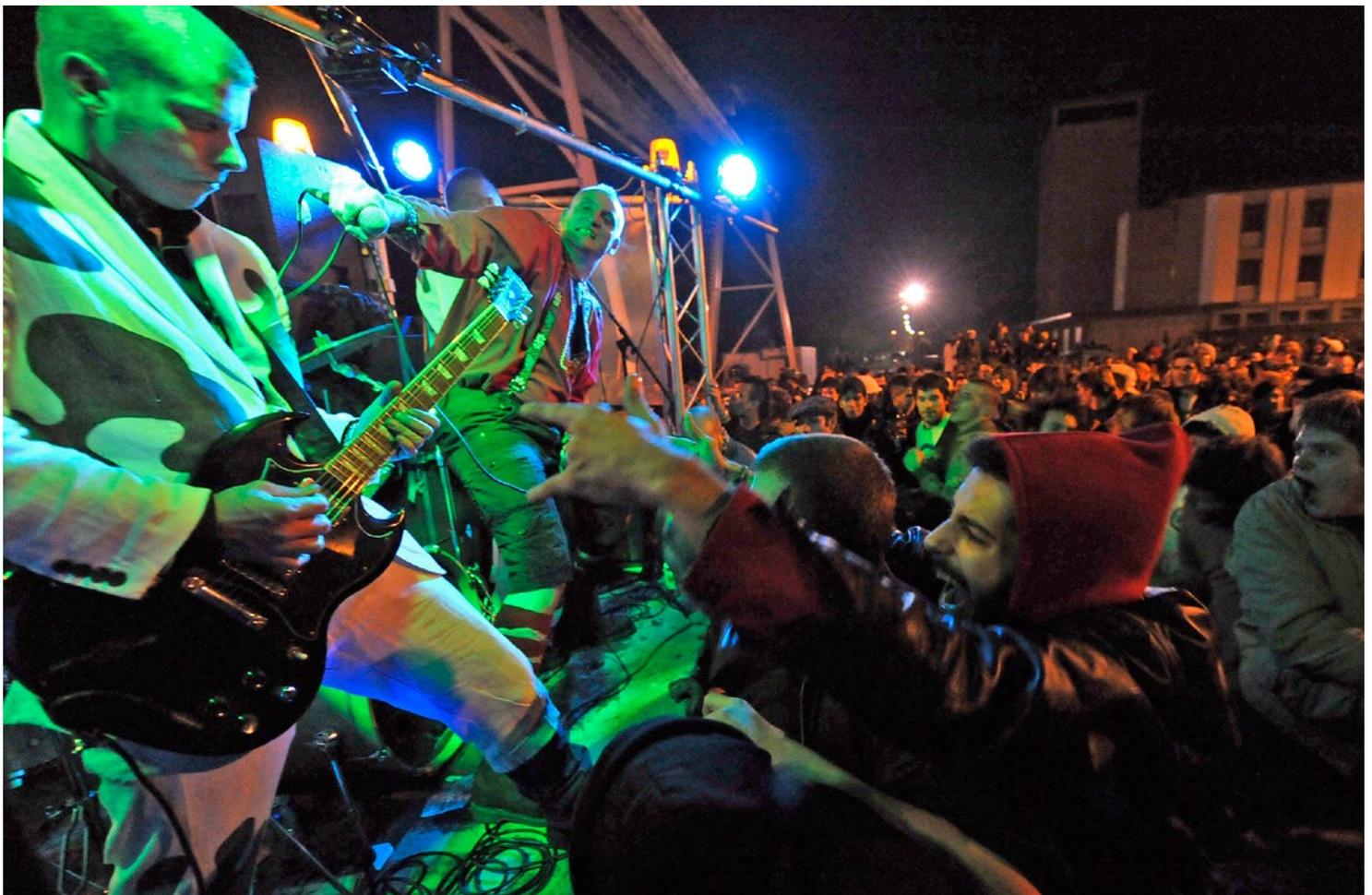
A recent political tipping point was the vote in December 2015 for a 2% linear cut in the municipal council’s social services and culture budget. “In the past, the right and left used to negotiate. The right managed traditional cultural venues, such as the Grand Théâtre, while the left looked after the emerging cultural scene. These cuts

mean they are now at loggerheads again,” says Léon Meynet, a former socio-cultural events organiser who was involved in the 1970s in setting up the first autonomous cultural centre, in Saint-Gervais.

In 2015, L’Usine, Geneva’s first alternative venue, was the subject of a political battle with the department of employment and social security run by Pierre Maudet, the FDP Cantonal Council member. At the heart of this dispute was the obligation imposed on the cultural organisations at L’Usine to request separate administrative authorisation for their refreshment bars due to a new law governing li-

A demonstration over the Usine took place in Geneva in 2010 with a street festival.

Photo: Keystone



censed premises and entertainment. The alternative centre refused to accept this policy, which it deemed contrary to the principles of self-management. “In the view of the magistrate, all bars came under one category and this system was applicable across the board,” explains the Socialist politician Sylvain Thévoz, a member of the arts and culture committee.

Entertainment or culture?

L’Usine, which has been involved in the reform of this law since 2010, believes the magistrate overlooked the outcome of the negotiations. “They are talking about business whereas we are talking about culture,” contends Samantha Charbonnaz, a permanent employee at L’Usine, who works for 2,500 Swiss francs a month, a part-time salary for what is effectively a full-time position. She is critical of the term “entertainment associated with public recreation”. She believes this reveals a profound lack of understanding on the part of politicians of self-managed venues. “They want to speak to a manager. There isn’t one because it’s only as a collective that we can manage everything. But that does not mean we are not responsible,” counters Clément Demaurex, a former permanent employee.

On 24 October a disorderly demonstration in support of L’Usine resulted in damage being caused in the city centre. In view of its refusal to accept the demands of the canton over the refreshment bar issue, the response of the right on the municipal authority has been to freeze its funding. It also decided to make it pay the costs of the damage caused. The two decisions were ultimately rejected by the canton and the licensing issue was finally resolved by means of mediation by the city of Geneva. At the same time, young people have had access restricted to one of Geneva’s main party streets – the Rue de l’Ecole-de-Médecine. The

The life and death of three leading venues in Geneva’s alternative cultural scene

L’Usine: Opened in 1989, the former gold refinery hosts a wide range of cultural activities and party venues. This is the flagship of alternative culture in Geneva.

Artamis (from ‘les amis de l’art’ – art lovers): This 12,000 m² brownfield site in the heart of the city whose buildings were previously used by the company Services Industriels de Genève hosted craft events, refreshment stands, bars, clubs and artists. Initially occupied in 1996, the site was closed in 2010. It will be replaced by an eco-neighbourhood.

RHINO (which stands for: ‘Retour des habitants dans les immeubles non occupés’ – return residents to unoccupied buildings): Located in Plainpalais, the two buildings that made up the RHINO squat, with their party and music venues La Cave 12 and Bistr’OK, were part of night-life in Geneva for 20 years. Rhino was shut in 2007 under the hardline regime of the uncompromising public prosecutor Daniel Zappelli. La Cave 12 was saved with the support of the canton. It has relocated to Geneva’s right bank.

aim of this step undertaken by the city is to curb noise levels in this popular area where around a dozen bars are found in close proximity.

“Noise prevention cannot come at any cost,” says Christian Lutz, a photographer who has spent five years working at the Artamis site (see above). He believes the increase in complaints about night-time noise is explained by the lack of open and accessible venues in the city. “Collapsing in the street due to excess alcohol is better than people locked within four walls looking at a screen. We are living in an age where the political goal is zero risk. Such sterilisation leads to poverty of the imagination and the extinction of debate,” argues the Geneva resident.

Opposition instead of compromise

There is less capacity for negotiation than during the 1980s and 1990s when the magistrates knew how to meet halfway. This was particularly true of the Liberal cantonal councillor Claude Haegi, who devised the trust-based contracts, a system that allowed young

people to use an unoccupied building until it was renovated. “The regulations on health and safety and fire make opening such venues very complex,” says Sylvain Thévoz. “The same goes for requesting any sort of funding at all. In the event of occupation, the police respond immediately and the penalties are severe. At the end of the day, there is no longer public support for the squats, as there was during the years of property speculation.” His CVP colleague Alia Chaker Mangeat points out that politicians have the right to establish regulations on expenditure but believes it is necessary to “pull in the same direction for culture” and calls for “space to be left for alternative venues, which are often run by volunteers”.

Disused buildings now scarce

Christian Lutz is concerned. “Switzerland wants the best sports people and the best artists. But if you don’t have places where people can experiment, they’ll go to Manchester or Berlin, for example, where there’s an avant-garde scene.” With its 100 or so squats, some with bars, but also concert halls and dance floors, alternative culture was an integral part of life in Geneva for a quarter of a century. Such free space no longer exists. However, Geneva’s alternative wave has seen new centres emerge that are supported by the public authorities. These include La Gravière, a party venue on the banks of the River Arve, and Motel Campo, located on an industrial park in the Acacias district. “New venues are being permitted but they are all the same,” points out Samantha Charbonnaz. “Buildings that can be occupied for non-commercial purposes no longer exist and the adoption of a tougher line is pushing people to the margins,” concludes Clément Demaurex.

STÉPHANE HERZOG IS AN EDITOR WITH THE “SWISS REVIEW”

The final resting place – Swiss-made

Is there life after death? Who knows. One thing is for sure, there is definitely a vibrant form of posthumous tourism going on. For those who have passed away in different parts of the world, the great journey home sometimes begins with a detour to Switzerland.



MARC LETTAU

Firstly, to brush up on your Helvetic vocabulary, let me remind you that the word for ‘remembrance’ in the Romansh dialect of Puter is ‘Algordanza’. Algordanza is also the name of a company in Domat-Ems in the canton of Grisons, which recently delivered its 6,000th diamond. But these diamonds do not come from the depths of the Grisons mountains. They are created in production halls

where small quantities of graphite are exposed to high temperatures and incredible pressure in powerful machinery. This process transforms graphite into diamonds.

The most important point is that the graphite from which the light blue diamonds are made is extracted from the ashes of the deceased in a complex procedure. The high-tech company therefore works at the delicate juncture between letting go and holding

on and offers its customers an immortal product – precious stones for people who not only want to keep their deceased loved ones in their hearts but also to wear them as jewellery around their necks. Rinaldo Willy, who founded the company, has adopted the ethos of gemstone rather than gravestone. His “commemorative diamonds” are ideal for modern-minded people who no longer wish to be tied to one place.

A special kind of natural burial: in the stylish little wooden case, the urn containing the ashes of the deceased is flown by helicopter to a glacier where the ashes are scattered over the eternal ice.

Photo: Die Letzte Ruhe

Combating mortality with a petrification process – is that ethically acceptable? Algordanza spokesperson Celine Lenz believes that is an issue for family members. The company itself does not pass judgement. It simply wants to provide a service for “people with a distinctive culture of remembrance” and to “supply them with something personal that sparkles”. Questions about dignity during the production process are nevertheless justified. Strict rules apply: “Nobody touches the ashes. No-one touches the diamonds with their bare hands. That privilege is reserved for family members.”

The transformation into a diamond should be regarded as an alternative to other forms of burial, explains Lenz. This perspective is fitting, as being turned into a diamond is the most expensive option for ordinary mortals: Algordanza charges over 20,000 Swiss francs for a polished, 1-carat commemorative diamond. 0.5-carat versions are ordered more frequently. These are available for under 9,000 Swiss francs, and the order books are full. Ashes of the deceased who have started their great journey home often arrive from Germany and Japan, in particular. Over 90 % of those who find their way into the pure, clear crystal lattice of a rhinestone in Grisons previously lived abroad. The company has long had subsidiaries in over 20 countries. But despite the boom, turning ashes into diamonds is a niche service in the Swiss funeral services sector.

A grave out in the open

Switzerland has become the preferred destination in burial tourism. This is the view of the businessman Beat Rölli, who has operated as a “specialist in natural burials” for a decade with his company Die letzte Ruhe. By natural burial he means scattering the ashes of the deceased beyond the

narrow confines of the cemetery walls in the open natural environment. For people who believe their eternal hunting ground should be the alpine region with its natural landscapes, Rölli offers burials in mountain meadows, mountain streams, waterfalls, rocks and glaciers. Those who feel drawn to the skies can also book a burial flight. Rölli arranges for an aeroplane, helicopter or air balloon to take off, and the ashes are thrown to the winds at altitude.

There is great demand for natural burials, but the burial is just one aspect of departure from the earthly life, according to Daniel Reichlin, who is responsible for forward planning matters at Rölli’s company, in other words, all the agreements that people enter into while still alive in relation to their demise. In Reichlin’s opinion, all the discussions beforehand and the support of those left behind are at least as important as the fundamental decision to choose nature a final resting place in the open.

When Rölli’s telephone rings, the callers are often from abroad. The main reason for their desire to travel to Switzerland is not just related to the alternative undertaker’s services. Switzerland’s liberal laws are also a key factor. The Swiss confederation curtailed the influence of the churches over the burial system in 1874. Supervision of the cemeteries was transferred to the secular authorities. However, the fact that cemetery funerals and interment are not mandatory in Switzerland – in contrast to many other countries – also plays a major role. Although interment of the body is only permitted at cemeteries in Switzerland, too, family members are free to decide what they wish to do with the ashes of cremated relatives. They can opt for a cemetery. But they can also bury the urn in their own gardens, keep it on the bookcase or use the ashes to nurture a newly planted apple tree.



This was once a person: A Swiss company makes diamonds from the ashes of the deceased.

Photo: Algordanza

Most people are cremated

The legal framework not only boosts ‘burial tourism’ but is also primarily driving the rapid change in burial culture in Switzerland. Whereas the village carpenter making a coffin, the funeral procession making its way through the village and strong men lowering the coffin into the grave were a common sight a generation ago, a very different picture has emerged today: 60,000 to 65,000 people die in Switzerland each year, and well over 80 % of them are cremated. This trend is also on the up. Philipp Messer, President of the Swiss Association of Funeral Services (SVB), underlines that the continual increase in cremations is also changing the culture of departing life. The traditional, individual grave in a row is on the way out. Increasingly fewer people are insisting on an individual plot. Today, over a third of those buried in a cemetery opt for a communal grave. Very often, the ashes are scattered “outside the cemetery”, explains Messer.

Resting places beneath trees

The most commonly selected alternative to conventional burial in Switzerland is being laid to rest in the open, often in a specially designated woodland. Ueli Sauter, who lost a friend of many years in 1993 and then decided to plant a tree and to put his friend’s ashes into the roots, is a pioneer of woodland burials. Following on from this occasion, Sauter looked for opportunities for burial in woodlands and subsequently set up an organisation called Friedwald. Friedwald has now contractually secured 70 woodland plots where it offers stately trees declared ideal and sturdy by foresters beforehand. Those who choose a Friedwald tree can also bury the ashes of several loved ones there. It is kept as woodland and does not become a park. There are no name



plates for the deceased on the trees, no benches identifying it as a place of rest and it is not fenced in. If storms and bad weather leave a woodland resting place looking unkempt, then that is seen as the way of things and part of nature.

The concept of the woodland cemetery has firmly established itself. Sauter reveals that woodland owners now even approach him offering plots of land. Many municipal cemetery authorities have long since also responded to this trend by planting trees in sections of their cemeteries at the foot of which urns can be buried.

SVB President Philipp Messer said that when reflecting upon the form of burial, the primary consideration should be for what it represents. He often sees “too much modesty”: Many elderly people do not wish to become a burden to their relatives or for someone to have to tend the grave for many years. They insist on a “very simple affair”. Pomp is very much passé. But such great restraint is also sometimes “a naive approach”. “It is inconceivable to most people that nothing takes place at the grave,” remarks Messer. Somebody’s passing always requires a structure and some words: “A fu-

neral without words can be a very oppressive occasion.” The needs of the living should not be discarded: “Anyone who says they don’t need anything or anyone at their funeral is excluding all those who would like to pay their respects in their own way.”

The trend towards greater simplicity is nevertheless also explained by demographic factors. People are living much longer and are often also ill for longer, sometimes suffering from dementia. Distance from the living begins while they are still alive. Such circumstances often make death seem like a relief.

Disappearing without a trace

The urn placed on the bookshelf where it can be seen every day. The ashes scattered with no name in the beech grove. The most expensive option as a diamond on a small gold chain. The loved one scattered to the winds on a mountain peak. The striking conclusion is that the change in burial culture in Switzerland oscillates between the need for permanent, eternal remembrance and the desire to gently disappear without a trace. Daniel Reichlin, who works for Letzte

Releasing ashes in a stream: This is also possible in Switzerland.

Photo: Die letzte Ruhe

Ruhe, has also noticed these conflicting interests. The way in which people think has changed completely, and he points to a growing sense of equanimity. Lots of people say: “Either I’ll be remembered or I’ll be forgotten.” Theologians nevertheless object that the change does not result in a better way of dealing with death and grief. The trend towards departure without a trace is robbing those left behind of the place they need to grieve. It certainly does not alleviate the grief. And the opposite trend towards the eternal memorial is a way of resisting the definitive nature of death.

What is more, the technology deployed to produce diamonds from the ashes of the deceased can now also be used by those who are very much alive and kicking. The Swiss company Augenstern also synthesises diamonds from a handful of incinerated hairs of living persons. But business with the living is far less brisk than with the deceased. It is as though the living suspect that the eternal affection expressed through man-made diamonds may be somewhat more fragile than the diamond itself.

www.algordanza.com
www.die-letzte-ruhe.ch
www.friedwald.ch

Nurturing talented young players is a cornerstone of FCB's success

FC Basel look set to win the Swiss league title for the seventh consecutive time in May. The department responsible for bringing through young talent is making a major contribution.

OLIVER GUT

The man's name is Breel Donald Embolo. It is debatable whether 'man' is the right word to describe the professional footballer who plays for FC Basel. The striker turned 19 in February and is therefore still a teenager. He is

million Swiss francs to immediately buy him out of his contract with FCB which runs until 2019 and to put him in their own team. That is a record offer for a player with a Swiss passport or a player from the Swiss league. The Basel club said thanks but no thanks.

sel took over the operational management of the club in 2009 as vice-president. While the patronage of its former president Gigi Oeri had returned FCB to the glory days of the 1960s and 1970s, an independent, self-sustaining football-entertainment business subsequently emerged under Heusler's prudent leadership. This has left and continues to leave the national competition lagging further and further behind in all respects. While all the other clubs are dreaming of winning titles with budgets of 10 to 30 million Swiss francs, FCB's basic budget is twice that of its strongest financial rivals. The club also has reserves. Now with its top players attracting the attention of the giants from the big foreign leagues, the Basel outfit usually generates more money through sporting prizes and transfer fees per year than it spends.

It has accumulated 30 million Swiss francs according to the most recent figures. That is soon expected to rise because the 2015 financial year will also be a profitable one with the sale in January for a transfer fee of almost 14 million Swiss francs, of Mohamed – a player carefully scouted initially then bought for 800,000 Swiss francs – to Arsenal FC, a club in the extremely wealthy English Premier League. And also because the club has Breel Embolo on its books.

If everything runs to plan, he will make a major contribution to FC Basel's sporting success this spring. The next league title alone is worth around 20 million Swiss francs because it ensures direct qualification to the lucrative Champions League. It is widely assumed that Embolo will



The 19-year-old international footballer Breel Embolo (centre) currently symbolises FCB's successful youth development policy better than anyone.

Photo: FC Basel

still growing if anything. At the end of this season the club will in all likelihood be crowned Swiss champions. No other player symbolises the enduring success of FC Basel as much as this youngster with the mischievous face.

Also voted the Super League's best player, in his first season as a first-team regular Breel Embolo is already the most important striker at the Basel club that sits at the top of the league. And much more than that, the up-and-coming footballer with a Cameroonian background is one of the most sought-after talents in international football. Bundesliga top club VfL Wolfsburg offered a transfer fee of 30

A self-sustaining business

The fact that it could afford to do so is testament that the red-and-blue success story is much more than a collection of golden championship trophies. Sporting and financial success go hand in hand – one cannot exist without the other. The football enterprise at St. Jakob Park is in a state of constant flux, a positive spiral almost. But this does not happen by itself. It is in this position thanks to effective performance at all levels, particularly at the top. Bernhard Heusler, President of the Board, is the first name to mention. The commercial lawyer from Ba-

move to a top club abroad during the summer. This will bring in a transfer fee for FCB in excess of the 30 million Swiss francs that Wolfsburg offered.

He will then become the youngest and most shining example of how investing in the development of your own players pays dividends. When it comes to explaining the success of FC Basel, its youth development section is undoubtedly a cornerstone. Since Gigi Oeri became involved in FCB at the turn of the millennium, supporting and improving the quality of this section has been one of the club's priorities. Thanks to the patron's injection of money and the expertise of people like Peter Knäbel, who as technical director was head of youth development from 2003 to 2009, a plan was drawn up and implemented, which is still largely in place and which regularly produces top-class players. Under the now director of football at Hamburg HSV, the club introduced a targeted approach of bringing not just the best young players from the region but from all over Switzerland to Basel. These raw diamonds were then polished into young professionals. The fruit of this labour was regularly harvested within five years with players such as Ivan Rakitic, Eren Derdiyok, Yann Sommer, Fabian Frei, Valentin Stocker, Xherdan Shaqiri and Granit Xhaka emerging. All names who once played for FCB and were then transferred abroad at great profit. Every one of them is an international today. Rakitic plays regularly at the great FC Barcelona where he won the Champions League in 2015. He has reached the top, and Xhaka and Sommer are thought capable of achieving similar feats.

Who knows Werner Mogg?

To enjoy such incredible careers, it takes not just talent and the right approach in an effective system. It also takes a capable youth development



Raw footballing diamonds are polished at FCB's CHF 20-million campus facility.

Photo: FC Basel

coach. At FCB, there are household names who have come through the academy but also less well-known football experts who are no less vital. These include Werner Mogg, the head coach of the under-16s team, who reached pension age a few days ago. Having previously coached Alex Frei and Marco Streller as young players at FC Aesch, he was brought to FCB in 2002. He has no intention of retiring, which is good news for the red and blues. The players who have taken the step into the first team and then abroad via the FCB youth development system are most likely to mention his name when asked which coach they learned the most under.

Mogg, like all the other youth team coaches from the under-14s up, has his office on the modern youth development campus at the St. Jakob Park sports facility.

Built at a cost of 20 million Swiss francs and opened in August 2013, it has four grass pitches and one synthetic one. In addition to offices, a restaurant, a public cafeteria and changing rooms for all the teams, the main building also contains a gym, treatment rooms and a revitalisation pool.

This project too was largely driven forward by Gigi Oeri. Now FCB honorary president, she still contributes

2.6 million Swiss francs to the foundation which she presides over. This not only meets the running costs of the state-of-the-art facility but also helps to find schooling and employment opportunities for the young players, and pays for the running of the FCB accommodation building in Lehenmatt. This is where the stars of the future live during their football training just like Fabian Frei and Valentin Stocker did before them. FC Basel focus not just on developing all-round footballers. They also endeavour to produce responsible young adults who can also survive if their dream of becoming a football star does not come true.

Breel Donald Embolo is also a fine example of what this means. When at the age of 17 he netted against Ludogorez Rasgrad in early November 2014 to become the youngest Swiss player ever to score a goal in the Champions League, he kept his feet firmly on the ground despite all the plaudits. He was still doing his commercial apprenticeship, and one of Europe's most coveted young footballers attended lessons on time at his vocational college the next day.

OLIVER GUT IS SPORTS EDITOR AT THE "BASLER ZEITUNG"

A native of the canton of Valais with an Italo-Turkish background

Instead of a lawyer in Lausanne, Jean-Luc Benoziglio became a widely read exponent of the Parisian “nouveau roman”.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

“I could have stayed in Lausanne after my law degree and spent my life there working as a lawyer. It would not have changed the course of history.” This is what Jean-Luc Benoziglio told a journalist in 2012, a year before his death. He did not remain in Lausanne but instead spent almost his entire life in Paris and became an advocate of the “nouveau roman” as an author. This is a style to which his early novels produced between 1972 and 1978 – “Quelqu’un bis est mort”, “Le Midship”, “La Boîte noire”, “Béno s’en va-t-en guerre” and “L’Ecrivain fantôme” – were dedicated, books which only proved popular in insider circles despite their incredible craftsmanship.

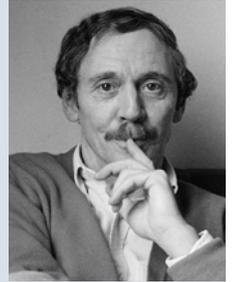
In 1980, when his sixth novel, “Cabinet portrait”, was published, Benoziglio wrote on the jacket: “A victim of underhand pressure exerted upon him, the author finally provides us with a sixth novel in which the sentences are short, parenthesis is rare, there are lots of paragraphs and the punctuation marks are roughly in the right place, and all of this in a story of biblical, novelistic simplicity.” The change of direction paid off as the story of an author left by his wife who resides in miserable back rooms and searches for his origins in a multi-volume lexicon – this disingenuous, humorous book, which in reality did not bid farewell to the “nouveau roman”, but instead brilliantly popularised it – won Benoziglio the Prix Médicis. And the most surprising thing was that the reserved author revealed a great deal about his origins for the first time.

Born on 19 November 1941 in Monthey, canton of Vaud, as the son of Nissim Beno, a Jewish psychiatrist who had emigrated from Turkey, and an Italian mother who was a strict Catholic, after his law degree he became a publishing editor for a whole host of prestigious Parisian publishing houses, which included “Editions du Seuil” in whose avant-garde series “Fiction & Cie” fifteen of his books were published.

Switzerland and Judaism

Though long since naturalised as a French citizen, Benoziglio did not forget Switzerland or his Jewish background. “You do not spend your first 25 years in a country, canton or city without being deeply influenced by it,” he once remarked.

The genocide of the Jews is also a continually recurring theme, though he knew how to surprise by always presenting new perspectives. In “Le jour où naquit Kary Karinaky” (1986) meetings take place in parallel at the height of the Cuban Crisis at the White House, in the Kremlin and in a Parisian school where the fate of the poorly performing pupil Kary is at stake. “Peinture au pistolet” (1993) provocatively deals with Switzerland’s refugee policy between 1939 and 1945 and with the unrest in Paris in May 1968. “Le feu au lac” (1998) is a harrowing literary remembrance of the Holocaust, while “La pyramide ronde” (2001) gives a literary life to a despotic Egyptian pharaoh. Benoziglio’s last book finally leads back to Switzerland – “Louis Capet, suite et fin” (2005). This novel supposes that the French national assembly did not sentence Louis XVI to the guillotine in 1793, but instead banished him to exile in Switzerland. Here, the former king living under the bourgeois name of Louis Capet does indeed meet his historical end by fracture of the neck but only when he falls down some stairs.



“For me writing comes from writing, through the association of ideas and words. I love surprising myself. What would the pleasure in writing be otherwise? Sometimes I only have ideas ten seconds before I write them down. And when I read through what I’ve written, I tend to cross things out rather than add anything.”

(Interview with “Le Temps”, 16 April 2005)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Le feu au lac” has been translated into German by Gabriela Zehnder as “Das Losungswort”, which is available from “Die Brotsuppe” publishing house in Biel.

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH

100th anniversary of the OSA

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2016. Taking the title 'Switzerland in the World', the anniversary year will of course look back at the OSA's history but with the aim of focusing on the current and future needs of our fellow citizens worldwide. With events, books and a poster exhibition, this anniversary year will emphasise reflection, but in a celebratory spirit.



Auslandschweizer-Organisation
 Organisation des Suisses de l'étranger
 Organizzazione degli Svizzeri all'estero
 Organizzaziun dals Svizzers a l'ester

The Swiss Abroad will be honoured throughout the anniversary year, and the diversity of emigration and its contribution to Switzerland will be highlighted. As part of this, we invite you to join us from 15 to 17 April in Brunnen and from 5 to 7 August in Berne, where the centenary congress will take place. Here is the events programme:

An overview of the 100th anniversary of the OSA in 2016

2 March 2016

Official launch of the Centenary of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

Official launch of the anniversary with a new homepage for the OSA's website www.aso.ch where you will find the events programme, links to centenary publications and a virtual exhibition that traces the history of Swiss emigration and gives a presentation of the Swiss Abroad today.

A special stamp marking '100 years of the OSA and the Swiss Abroad' produced in collaboration with Swiss Post will also be available.

15 to 17 April 2016

25 years of the Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen

The Area for the Swiss Abroad was officially opened in 1991 as part of the celebrations marking the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation. The site, located in Brunnen in the canton of Schwyz, symbolises the importance of the 762,000 Swiss Abroad to our nation.

While the OSA is celebrating its centenary, the Area for the Swiss Abroad is commemorating its 25th anniversary. To mark this occasion, three days of celebrations are planned. A ceremony, which will be attended by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Johann Schneider-Ammann, will officially open a permanent poster exhibition at the Area for the Swiss Abroad. For more information, visit www.aso.ch.

24 July to 4 August 2016

Trek by young people in Switzerland

Over a two-week period, 100 young Swiss Abroad – divided into four groups – will set off from the four corners of our country to discover Switzerland. They will report on their adventures on the www.swissinfo.ch website and in the SSR-SRG media channels. For more information, see www.aso.ch and www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/leisure-offers.

5 to 7 August 2016

94th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (Berne)

Friday 5 August 2016

While the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) is holding its summer meeting at the Federal Palace during the morning and afternoon, events will be taking place on the Bundesplatz. The programme will include free concerts, entertainment and information stands. Speeches will be held on the Bundesplatz by Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter, representatives of the city of Berne and the canton of Berne and the main partners in the

centenary celebrations. The meeting of the CSA and the speeches and concerts on the Bundesplatz will be broadcast live and streamed via www.aso.ch thanks to support from swissinfo and the SRG SSR.

Saturday 6 August 2016

Congress conference

The morning will be given over to visits organised for the congress participants (Federal Palace, media and production centre). In the afternoon, congress participants will meet at the Kultur Casino in Berne for a conference on 'Switzerland in the world – the development of international mobility.' The final evening will also be held at Berne's Kultur Casino.

Sunday 7 August 2016

Excursions

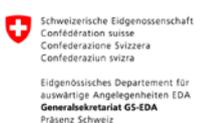
Trips to the Swiss Open-Air Museum in Ballenberg organised together with Switzerland Tourism. Congress details and registration at <http://aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad>.

Publications, online poster exhibition, stamp commemorating the OSA's 100th anniversary

At www.aso.ch you will find the detailed events programme, links to centenary publications, a poster exhibition and the stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary.

The OSA's centenary year promises to be an occasion full of dialogue and events. We hope many of you come to Brunnen and Berne to allow us to share these moments with you.

We wish to thank all of our anniversary partners:





94th Congress of the Swiss Abroad from 5 to 7 August 2016 in Berne

Switzerland – Part of the World: Development of International Mobility is the theme of the 94th Congress of the Swiss Abroad from 5 to 7 August 2016 in Berne. Many highlights await you during the anniversary year of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. Further information can be found on our website at www.aso.ch.

With a congress ticket, the Swiss Abroad will also benefit from preferential conditions (75 % reduction on the official sales price) when buying a Swiss Travel Pass Flex from Swiss Travel System. The Swiss Travel Pass Flex will entitle the Swiss Abroad to unlimited use of most means of public transport in Switzerland and to reductions at cultural institutions.

Congress participants will also benefit from free admission to the Swiss National Museum where they can discover Swiss history and culture.

Further information on this year's congress (programme, online registration, accommodation in Berne, etc.) can be found at www.aso.ch > Offers > Congress of the Swiss Abroad > Congress 2016.

We hope you are able to attend.



Please send me the registration documents in spring 2016 for the 94th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (5 to 7 August 2016) in Berne.

My address is:

Surname/first name: _____

Address: _____

Country/postcode/city: _____

Email: _____

It is important that you write legibly and in block capitals.

The registration documents are available in two languages:

German French (Please tick the language required)

Send the completed form to:

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Communications & Marketing,

Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, Switzerland

Fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01 or send an email to: communication@aso.ch

IMPRINT:

"Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 42nd year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 400,000, including 165,000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year. The ordering parties

are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. This content does not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher. EDITORS: Marko Lehtinen (LEH), Editor-in-Chief; Stéphane Herzog (SH); Marc Lettau (MUL); Jürg Müller (JM); Peter Zimmerli (PZ), responsible for

"news.admin.ch", Relations with the Swiss Abroad, FDFA, 3003 Berne, Switzerland TRANSLATION: CLS Communication AG LAYOUT: Joseph Haas, Zürich PRINT: Vogt-Schild Druck AG, 4552 Derendingen POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial office, advertising: Organisation of the

What does educationsuisse – Education in Switzerland offer young Swiss Abroad?

Staff at educationsuisse answer around 1,000 queries a year from young people and their parents or relatives who are interested in education or training in Switzerland. The questions are very wide-ranging and concern matters such as the search for apprenticeship places, university requirements and the related recognition of foreign school-leaving qualifications, linguistic knowledge, grants, accommodation options and insurance issues.

Leaving the country where they have grown up to move to Switzerland for their education presents a major challenge for young Swiss people abroad. They sometimes no longer have any ties with their homeland and have to get used to a completely new environment, different customs and new people. A long way from their family, this is not always easy.

The Springboard project, which educationsuisse launched last year in cooperation with the OSA's Youth Service, helps young people aged 18 and over to put their educational plans into practice in Switzerland. They receive support with planning and choosing educational options and with funding and getting started with their education or training. For three to six months at the start of their education or training (apprenticeship or course of study in Switzerland) the young Swiss Abroad can live with a host family who will provide a room and meals for 500 Swiss francs a month. The aim of this is to facilitate integration into the new environment in Switzerland as quickly as possible.

For further information or questions about the Springboard project, please contact Ruth von Gunten (info@educationsuisse.ch).

The website www.educationsuisse.ch provides information about education and training in Switzerland. The staff at educationsuisse – Education in Switzerland would be pleased to provide you with further information.

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE



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

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08.02.2016

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

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



Youth Service offers

■ Anniversary camps (22.7 to 7.8.2016)

4 camps, 2 weeks, 1 experience: Four sensational anniversary camps will take place at the same time this summer, all with the same destination – Berne. Starting from four points of departure the groups will each take a different route to the capital. Everyone will meet up in Berne and party on the Bundesplatz.

■ Culture, history & politics (starting point: French-speaking Switzerland)

We will discover Switzerland's diversity from French-speaking Switzerland. Castles, lakes, vineyards and much more besides will be explored until we finally reach Berne. This camp does not just have a lot to offer culturally; we will also find out a great deal about Swiss politics and its unique characteristics. There is something for everyone wishing to enjoy a camp offering a diverse range of activities.

■ Sightseeing challenge

(starting point: Basel)

We will get to know Switzerland from its international side – on the journey from Basel to Berne we will visit various cities and look at what makes them special. Various challenges await you during the camp.

■ Sports & leisure (starting point: Grisons)

The emphasis here is placed on hiking, climbing, mountain biking and action with like-minded people. We will set out from Engadine and explore exciting Swiss regions on the way to Berne.

■ Outdoor & adventure (starting point: Ticino)

We are getting ready for an unforgettable experience in Ticino. Travelling on foot, by bicycle and in canoes, and sleeping under the stars – a wonderful adventure awaits.

Educational offers

German language courses in Zurich,

11.7 to 22.7.2016 / 8.8 to 19.8.2016

French language course in Biel,

11.7 to 22.7.2016

Switzerland as an educational centre:

Visit educational establishments and take advantage of contact with students and individual advice on education

Springboard: Support with planning and starting education and training in Switzerland

Election of the Council of the Swiss Abroad – Recommendations

The Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) will be re-elected in 2017. At its meeting in August 2015, the CSA adopted a number of recommendations for the attention of the Swiss societies abroad with the aim of increasing the CSA's electoral base and thereby achieving better representation.

These recommendations are as follows:

- All Swiss Abroad registered on an electoral roll are authorised to take part in the election of the CSA
- Candidates must be nominated by a minimum number of voters.
- Candidatures should, where possible, be published in the regional section of 'Swiss Review' and in "Gazzetta Svizzera"
- Where they exist, umbrella organisations have the authority and responsibility for conducting the elections

These are recommendations and not requirements. The Swiss societies abroad and their umbrella organisations are free to follow them or not. Voters and candidates must hold Swiss nationality and be domiciled abroad. While the CSA is aware that there are still unresolved issues that need to be addressed, it hopes these recommendations will provide impetus in ensuring the CSA is more representative.

Further information can be found at www.aso.ch and www.swisscommunity.org.

Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

From the end of June until the end of August, Swiss children abroad can have a fantastic time while also discovering Switzerland and its culture at two-week summer camps together with 30 to 50 other children from all over the world.

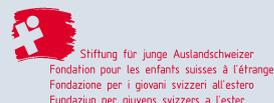
Attractions are visited, lakes, mountains, rivers and landscapes are discovered on short hikes and cities are explored at the camps run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad. Some days are also spent at the camp base where we enjoy games, sporting activities and various workshops.

Participants also have the opportunity to gain fascinating insights into Switzerland. We look at the Swiss languages, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes and typically Swiss games and sports.

The interaction with participants from other countries and the exchange across linguistic, cultural and national boundaries present a unique opportunity to make new friends and enjoy some unforgettable moments.

There are still places available at our holiday camps. The exact details and the registration form can be found at www.sjas.ch/en/camps. We would also be pleased to send you our information brochure with an overview of the offers available by post on request.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad wishes to give all Swiss children abroad the opportunity to discover Switzerland in this way on at least one occasion. We can offer reduced rates in justified cases. The form required can be requested on the registration form. We would be pleased to provide you with further information.



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

Online counter for consular services

In 2000, the FDFA introduced the IT application VERA at the representations abroad to manage the personal data of the Swiss Abroad. This software has reached the end of its life cycle and will be replaced by a new application in summer 2016. The new eVERA solution with its online counter will enable consular services to be geared even more effectively to the requirements and issues of the Swiss Abroad and to be provided in line with the current business processes of e-government. The project was launched with the following objectives:

- Customers can enter their data into the new application themselves irrespective of time or place
- Customers can update the data entered themselves
- Customer concerns take precedence over services and responsibility within the scope of the legal provisions

The new application will allow the Swiss Abroad to register and de-register in the eVERA online counter independently of time and place if they can identify themselves electronically. This means that, in future, our customers will be able to use consular services from the comfort of their own homes or using their mobile devices

without having to visit the representation provided they have an electronic identity card (e.g. SuisseID). In future, it will therefore be possible to obtain and request the following services from the consulate responsible for the customer in the same way as with e-banking or online orders:

- Moving to and from Switzerland and countries abroad
- Changes of address
- Registration of civil status matters, such as births, adoptions, marriages and partnerships, divorce and death
- Registration and de-registration for exercising political rights
- Registration and de-registration for publications ("Swiss Review", etc.)
- Ordering attestations (attestation of citizenship and registration)
- Ordering authentication (of documents)

SuisseID is available from various providers. Further information on security, applications and the order process can be found on the www.suisseid.ch website. The Swiss Abroad can also obtain or order the services mentioned via the online counter if they do not have an electronic identity card. The customer can register in the online counter with a username and password and then use the services mentioned. However, depending upon

the nature of the service, further ID documents will have to be sent to the representation abroad for identification. All consular services can, of course, still be ordered in person and transacted at any time at the consulate responsible.




A look to the future

There will be further developments in the field of information transfer and communication between the FDFA and its customers in future. As the authority responsible for consular affairs, the FDFA's Consular Directorate plans to adapt existing and future FDFA products (in particular, brochures, publications, websites, apps and events) and other sources of information to the requirements of the Swiss Abroad on an ongoing basis and to make them user-friendly.

This should simplify navigation in the new eVERA online counter, for example, and also extend the range of information. In addition to basic information, there are also plans to provide further individualised regional information and functions for the Swiss Abroad online. This could provide the representations abroad with the opportunity, for example, to manage relations with Swiss communities via a new communications channel.

HELPLINE FDFA

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 © from abroad +41 58 465 33 33
 E-Mail: helpline@eda.admin.ch
 Skype: helpline-eda

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www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae

itineris

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



Plan well.
 Travel well.

App available for free for iOS and Android

The online platform's future clientele will also include Swiss travellers who already have the Itineris portal for registering their details for the event of a crisis. New functions may be added in this area in future.

Technological and social developments in administration and, in particular, in terms of interaction with our customers will be taken into account in a further stage of the eVERA online counter. E-government contributes towards providing Switzerland with a highly effective means of administration for the Swiss community abroad and fostering their ties with their homeland. Independent participation in administrative activities based on equal opportunities and the political involvement of people with disabilities, people with age-related limitations and customers with long journey times can also be significantly increased and improved thanks to e-government.

The Swiss Abroad will be informed in due course of the link to the online counter's homepage. An email address will be required to use the platform. You can ensure that you can be reached quickly now by registering your email address with the representation responsible for you. Please use the attached form or register electronically at: www.swissabroad.ch.

Responsible for official news of the FDFA:
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Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Berne, Switzerland
Tel. +41 800 24 7 365 or +41 58 465 33 33
www.eda.admin.ch, email: helpLine@eda.admin.ch

Federal referenda

Voting proposals are determined by the Federal Council at least four months before the voting date. The following four proposals will be put to the vote on 5 June 2016:

- Popular initiative of 30 May 2013: 'Pro Service public' (In favour of public service)
- Popular initiative of 4 October 2013: 'Für ein bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen' (For an unconditional basic income)
- Popular initiative of 10 March 2014: 'Für eine faire Verkehrsfinanzierung' (For fair financing of transport)
- Amendment of 12 December 2014 to the Federal Act on Medically Assisted Reproduction (Reproductive Medicine Act, RMA)
- Amendment of 25 September 2015 to the Asylum Act (AsyIA)

Further voting dates in 2016: 25 September and 27 November.

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations of Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at www.admin.ch/votes.

Popular initiatives

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found at www.bk.admin.ch > Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen

Appeal

Please help us to save on printing and delivery costs. You can actively support the implementation of federal government's cost-saving measures without having to miss out on any issues of "Swiss Review" in future: a response card is enclosed with this issue which you can use to inform us if you wish to receive "Swiss Review" electronically in future. You can also register for the electronic version online at: www.swissabroad.ch. Please do not forget to inform the representation responsible for you of changes to your email address or other address details.

www.swissworld.org

Your Gateway to Switzerland



Switzerland.

Contemporary art from Ticino

What is new in Ticino's art scene? The MASI Lugano has been addressing this question for a number of years in its "Che c'è di nuovo?" exhibition series. Work by the region's young artists is currently on display for the fourth time at the art museum in Italian-speaking Switzerland with installations, paintings and sculptures from Ticino.

LEH

The fourth exhibition in the "Che c'è di nuovo?" series runs until 19 June at the MASI Lugano's Palazzo Reali.

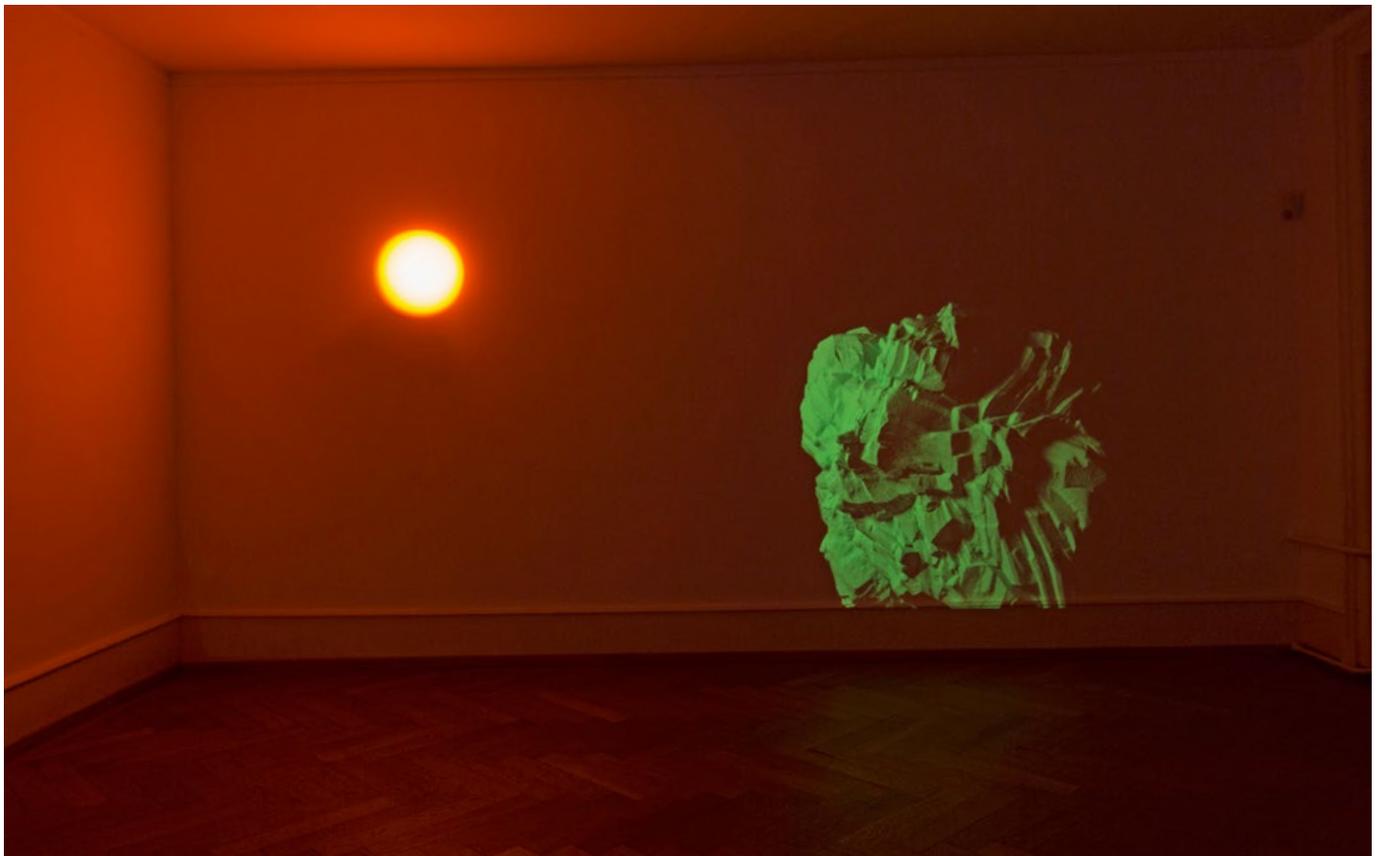
www.masilugano.ch



Vera Trachsel: *Zwei Freunde*, 2015.



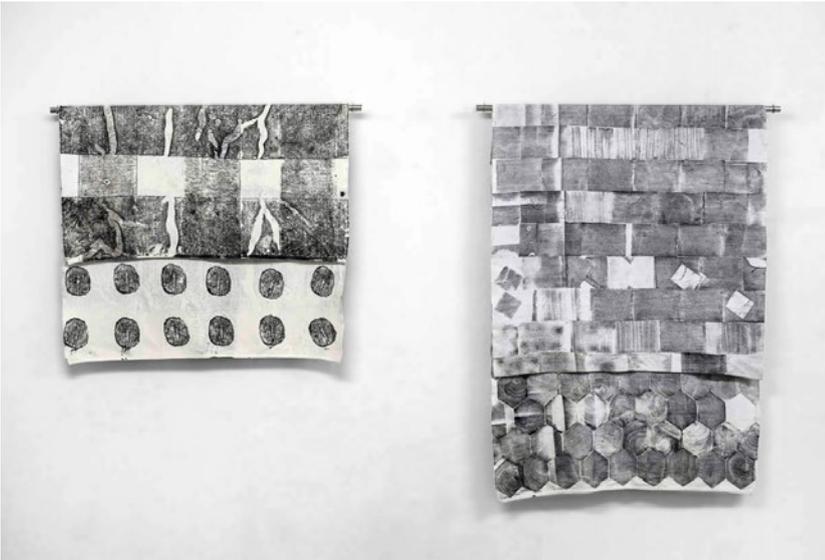
Hanna Hildebrand: *Helianthus Coco*, 2015.



Alan Bogana: *Indecisium Belt*, 2015. Photo: Martina Flury Witschi



Eleonora Meier: *Nothing Deeper Than Skin*, 2015.



Marta Margnetti: *Roadside Picnic*, 2015. Photo: Julie Lovens



Nina Haab: *Te Whariki*, 2013.

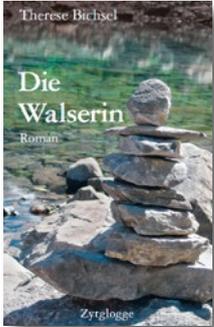


Sisters From Another Mister: *My Island Is A Beautiful Island*, 2014.



Karim Fortin: *K*, 20. Photos: MASI Lugano

The agonising question – stay or go?



TERESE BICHSEL:
"Die Walserin".
Zytglogge Verlag, 2015;
292 pages.
CHF 36, EUR 36.

Should we really leave? Is there no other solution than to enter into the unknown? Pregnant Barbara from the canton of Valais and her husband Conrad are faced with this question after narrowly escaping death again in the Lötschental valley following an avalanche. But they also find themselves under pressure for other reasons. Their native valley yields too little economically to feed the growing population. They decide, together with others, to leave. Around 1300 AD they set off on the dangerous and arduous route from Valais over the mountains into the sparsely populated, inhospitable Upper Lauterbrunnental valley in the Bernese Oberland. What today seems like a challenging hike was a journey into the unknown back then.

The natives of Valais founded Weiler Ammertten and later also Gimmelwald and Mürren. In the 18th century the inhabitants of Ammertten headed down into Isenfluh, high above the Lower Lauterbrunnental valley.

With her simple, plain but also powerful language, Therese Bichsel succeeds in making the bleakness of the settlers' lives in the wilderness tangible. This has nothing to do with romanticism – quite the contrary: Bichsel depicts the hard social pecking order of the late High Middle Ages and weaves it into an exciting plot. At its centre is Barbara, who loses her husband soon after arriving at the new settlement and comes to terms with her tough life as a single mother demonstrating bravery and resilience but also fatalism.

While there is no historical evidence of the life of the novel's character Barbara, the "primordial mother" of the people of Ammertten, the emigration of the inhabitants of Ammertten during the 19th century outlined in the middle section of the book is well documented. The all-important and agonising question is raised at the outset here, too: shall we stay or go? The question is not initially posed explicitly, but it gradually pervades the minds of the people suffering from economic hardship. Good news from the Caucasus from a family member who has already emigrated sways the decision. Another family emigrates in 1879. They produce cheese, achieve prosperity and emigrate again after being dispossessed following the Russian Revolution of 1917, this time to Canada.

Therese Bichsel has carried out extensive research of the source material and quotes at length from letters by emigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries. "Die Walserin" is a successful collage of fact and fiction about people who time and time again have to leave everything behind to start from scratch somewhere else – it is a literary memorial to Swiss "economic migrants" sprinkled with local colour from the Bernese Oberland.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

On a journey of discovery through the States



ANNA ROSSINELLI:
"Takes Two To Tango",
Universal Music.

There was great excitement when Anna Rossinelli announced her new project. She was going to spend three months travelling around the US with her band to do some research into the roots of rock music, to gain inspiration from gospel and blues and to finally go into the studio in New York to immortalise the result in a documentary film and an album.

So far, so good. However, the vocalist from Basel wanted to fund the project through crowdfunding and to essentially go on the trip using an advance from her fans. This resulted in an absolute furore. Why should her fans pay for her journey of self-discovery through the US with tens of thousands of Swiss francs? Almost every newspaper covered the story, and the lead singer, who has become a seasoned pro since her appearance on the Eurovision Song Contest, was forced to think twice.

They nevertheless got the money together, and Rossinelli and her fellow musicians, Manuel Meiser and Georg Dillier, set off on their pilgrimage across the Atlantic. They sang with a gospel choir in Dallas, jammed with a busker in Los Angeles, listened to brass bands in New Orleans, played with Joe Cocker's former keyboard player, met countless other musicians and captured these encounters on tape. They then recorded their new tracks in Wall Street, drawing upon moments from their travels.

An album was produced from the "Takes Two to Tango" project which reveals a more mature Anna Rossinelli – it is the work of a woman who skilfully shifts between alternative pop and singer/songwriter, stands out through her extremely expressive voice and has finally cast off her girlish attitude.

The ten tracks also work well as a single entity, which is no mean feat considering how they arose. The recordings of guest singers, harmonicas, choirs and guitars are subtly blended into the material and do not become an end in themselves. However, "Takes Two To Tango" does not really sound as American or "black" as Rossinelli's previous music. It is an exceedingly Swiss album, albeit a very good one. As to whether the controversial, expensive trip to the US and all the uproar has paid off, this remains to be seen.

MARKO LEHTINEN

Stamp to mark “100 years of the OSA”

Special tribute is being paid to the OSA. Swiss Post is issuing a stamp to mark the organisation’s 100th anniversary in April. The one-franc stamp was designed by Bernese artist Tom Künzli.



Fewer foreigners arriving and more leaving

More foreigners left Switzerland in 2015 than in the previous year and fewer arrived. The Federal Statistical Office indicated that this trend occurred for the second consecutive year. The net figure of 71,495 immigrants is 9.4 % below that for 2014. In total, 150,459 foreign nationals moved to Switzerland, which is 1.1 % fewer than in the previous year. The number departing rose by 6.1 %. Some 73,444 foreign nationals left Swiss soil last year. At the end of 2015, there were 1,993,916 foreigners living in Switzerland, 68 % of them from EU/EFTA states. Italy topped the list with 313,725, followed by Germany with 301,548 and Portugal with 268,067.

Naturalisations rise again

The number of foreign nationals becoming naturalised Swiss citizens continually fell between 2006 and 2014 – from 45,700 to 32,800. The trend changed in 2015 with the number of naturalised persons standing at 40,600. Experts believe the trend reversal compared to recent years is attributable to popular initiatives, such as the mass immigration and implementing initiatives, which have caused a mood of uncertainty amongst foreign citizens.

Correction

An error was made in the German version of February’s “Swiss Review”: The focus topic on page 9 read “Integration ist ein einseitiger Prozess” (integration is a unilateral process). This was an error: “Integration is NEVER a unilateral process”.



Pierre Graber

He is causing a stir posthumously. Pierre Graber, Federal Councillor from 1970 to 1978, passed away in 2003 at the age of 94. He is believed to have concluded a secret standstill agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the early 1970s. Research carried out by the NZZ suggests that, after several attacks against Switzerland, the PLO agreed to refrain from terrorist activities against our nation if Federal Councillor Graber ensured that Palestinian terrorism suspects were not prosecuted. Pierre Graber did not inform the other Federal Councillors about the deal, according to the NZZ.

“A foreigner is only foreign in a foreign place.”

CARL VALENTIN (1882 TO 1948), GERMAN AUTHOR AND COMEDIAN

“An enormous wave has hit Europe. We would do well to have good solutions, and I believe the Federal Council has good solutions.”

JOHANN SCHNEIDER-AMMANN, PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION, ON THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES

“Building castles in the sky costs nothing, but their destruction is very expensive.”

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC (1885 TO 1970), FRENCH AUTHOR

“It’s an absurd situation. Our companies recruit tens of thousands of workers from abroad each year while thousands of refugees fit for work obtain welfare benefits in Switzerland. Something is wrong there!”

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR SIMONETTA SOMMARUGA

“If you commit foolish acts, they must at least succeed.”

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE (1769–1821)

“If you do not set any limits, you reach your own.”

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR DORIS LEUTHARD

“Truth and politics rarely live under the same roof.”

STEFAN ZWEIG (1881 TO 1942), AUSTRIAN AUTHOR

“If immigration soars, political decisions must be made.”

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR GUY PARMELIN

“To be doing good deeds is man’s most glorious task.”

SOPHOCLES (DIED 406 BC), GREEK POET



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