

SWISS REVIEW⁺

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
October 2016



**Switzerland's locational disadvantage –
an interview with Lovebugs' vocalist Adrian Sieber**

**The battle over organisations –
how much Geneva pays for its international reputation**

**The right to darkness –
fighting light pollution with a star park**

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When the sky is lost to us



I can vividly recall the most star-lit sky of my life. We were travelling in a rickety night bus in the high plains of Bolivia when our vehicle broke down around 3 am in the middle of nowhere. We used the involuntary break to exercise our legs. And there it was: the most remarkable star-lit sky I had ever seen. We stood in the absolute darkness of the night-time wilderness while a sea of stars, the likes of which we

had only known from melodramatic Steven Spielberg movies, stretched out above us.

When I look at the sky at home on a clear night, I can undoubtedly see a few bright stars and may even be able to make out something that resembles the Milky Way. But in contrast to the firmament in the wilds of Bolivia, it is a misty haze. Admittedly, I live close to a light-filled city. Yet even in the Swiss nature the view of the night sky does not compare with the incredible beauty of the skies above the Andes.

My recollection is not clouded. Densely populated Switzerland is now so flooded with light that the stars can only be seen in their full splendour in the most remote corners of the country. This is illustrated by a recent light pollution map produced by an organisation called Dark Sky Switzerland. And it is not just stargazers and astronomers who have started campaigning to protect the night and the right to darkness in recent years. Medical science has now also identified the consequences that permanent light pollution can have on people's health.

So there is much more to it than simply the beauty of the night. I am, however, very much looking forward to the latest Swiss initiative in the fight for darkness. The Gantrisch Nature Park in the foothills of the Bernese Alps – an exceptionally dark spot in the Swiss landscape – is to become the nation's first certified star park. The International Dark Sky Association has already declared 37 regions worldwide official oases of darkness. To these a Swiss one will be added shortly. And I will be one of the first people to pay this park a night-time visit in the hope of again seeing a star-lit sky like the one in Bolivia.

MARKO LEHTINEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover photo:
Adrian Sieber of Lovebugs
(Photo: Keystone)

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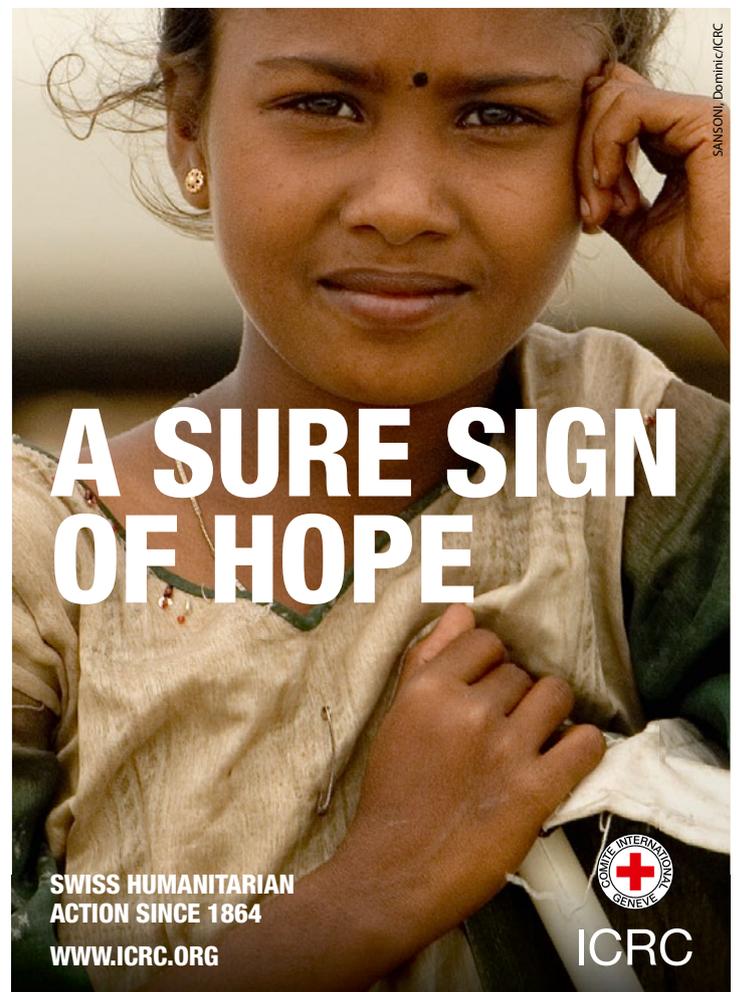
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Railway history at the Gotthard Pass.
The opening of the base tunnel



Hats off to Switzerland! A first-rate technical achievement, and a testimony to the (political) willpower of the people behind such a massive project. ROBERT RICKENBACH

Between tradition and modernity.
The alphorn in pop and jazz

As half Swiss, half English I have played a carbon alphorn for the last five years. I echo some of the sentiments in the article. I get great pleasure playing "Alfie", my alphorn, in London, in the middle of the city, up in Scotland, on our beautiful Devon coast. I tend to be relaxed about tradition and sticking to rules. Tradition for me is like grammar: as a player of a number of musical instruments you absolutely need the "grammar/tradition" of an instrument to play well.



But then like language, your vocabulary develops and flourishes because of a sound grounding of the "grammar/tradition". I find players who go beyond the past and test the boundaries of what the alphorn can achieve, amazing and a great inspiration. I too hope one day to emulate them, if only half as well!

N. EVERETT, ENGLAND

Born in Switzerland into a family with a long farming and alpine cattle breeding history, I did bring an alphorn with me when I moved to Texas. I generally blow a few tunes around midnight greeting the New Year, albeit there is no echo in the wide open prairies and I do not have any Longhorns to call in the evening. The sound of the alphorn awakens recollections of my brother's fantastic alp and summer life high above the Rhine River in Grisons, and many festivals in Switzerland. But it is even more of a pleasure to hear the alphorn blend or lead when playing together with other instruments. Its unique sounds deliver memories and just good music to the ear and heart. OTHMAR SCHWARZENBERGER, USA

Since I play the alphorn myself, I'm against modern alphorn music. It undermines tradition. If I feel like hearing music like that, then I grab a saxophone. CHARLES SCHMID, AUSTRIA

Editorial: Casting your vote – even if it is sometimes a chore!

Your editorial only concerns a small section of your readers. No, I did not vote on 5 June. It's difficult for me to get to the polls from Africa, where I live. You also need to get the brochures Marko Lehtinen refers to in advance, yet the postal service is very slow and the distances huge in this country. I am thus a Swiss citizen deprived of his right to vote. And yet there is a solution. It's what enables me to receive the "Swiss Review", write to you, do my banking, etc.: the internet. As long as voting via the internet is not possible, I shall remain a citizen without rights. Of course, it is probably complicated to set up. However, it should be possible for a country proud of having dug the world's longest rail tunnel, shouldn't it? But when? YVAN STERN, ALGERIA

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The lights of Switzerland awaken the friends of the night

Switzerland is getting brighter. Artificial lights are chasing away the dark, even in the most remote corners of the country. But one particularly underexposed corner in this sea of Swiss lights is striving to preserve the remaining blackness of night and become the first star park in Switzerland.

MARC LETTAU

In the mountain village of Surrein in the canton of Grisons, a chapter in Switzerland's civilisation history was closed in 2016. Surrein was the last Swiss village to exist without street lighting, a deep black anachronism in an increasingly bright world. But Surrein, too, has finally put an end to the darkness. For 40 years the citizens of Surrein have been arguing for and against pitch black nights. This year – at the fourth attempt – they've finally agreed on the erection of 46 street lamps.

The key arguments are a good indicator of how people in Surrein view progress. The place needs street lighting because stepping in cow dung at night is not unheard of, because enormous holes dominate the streets and because as more and more of its inhabitants empty out of the village, those left behind have to care for one another. "We can't, for example, afford to lose anyone under a car," argues one local. And it continues to be evident just how much darkness and fear are related to each other: Surrein's citizens believe that no dark figures move about in lit villages. Indeed, there was a deep-seated rumour circulating in the mountain village for years about a black man with a covered face, who would emerge at night to terrify the people. Yet the Grisons police denied it: this black man – l'um ner – was a figment of the imagination. But it's better to be safe than sorry... Modern LED

lights now illuminate the mountain village so well that even the rumour about the dark figure has quickly faded.

The ongoing expansion of public lighting, which is now coming to a provisional end in Surrein, is justified by cultural and historical logic. Since man has known how to work with fire, light has symbolised warmth, safety

Biology of the night

The fact that moths and other insects get trapped in lamps, only to be scorched to death or to die of exhaustion, is a well-known phenomenon. But birds are especially affected by this. All too often, flocks of birds become trapped in the light cones illuminating cities. They circle inside them until they reach exhaustion, or until they die from exhaustion. Artificial light also leads birds in spring to migrate too early into summer habitats, which cuts their chances of survival. Bats, on the other hand, delay and shorten their search for food if light is projected onto the exit of their roost. Their chance of survival declines, too. Finally, too much artificial light prevents nocturnal amphibians from mating at all. As a result, artificial light has a direct effect on biodiversity. (MUL)

and social well-being. But this attitude isn't shared by all. In Surrein, it was those representing the young generation, of all people, who voted "against the loss of night". Darkness has its own beauty, their spokesman told a

community gathering. The "almost audible silence of the night" would be destroyed by artificial lights. "In Zurich they'd pay good money to get rid of all those lights."

The darkness of night fades

Just a few more street lamps... is it really such a big deal? But the whole thing actually has come at a cost. Switzerland is paying for the (alleged) increase in security at night with the loss of pure night-time. The scattered lights of cities as well as industrial and tourism facilities are even chasing natural darkness from the countryside. While 25 years ago roughly one third of Switzerland's natural areas were immersed in darkness at night, this figure was only 18 % in 2009. The trend has relentlessly increased in recent years.

This phenomenon is called "light pollution", and has long invaded even the most remote of areas. Even in outlying areas with declining numbers of inhabitants, an increase in illumination has been recorded. Surrein is an example of this. The village, now twinkling with lights, has 250 inhabitants. At the start of the debate, around 400 people spent their nights in pitch black darkness.

Judges campaign for dimmed lights

Nature lovers and environmentalists aren't the only ones concerned. The



A rare Swiss image: the "unpolluted" night sky over the future Gantrisch Dark Sky Park in the foothills of the Bernese Alps.

Photo: Martin Mutti

federal authorities are alarmed as well. If the amount of lights switched on in Switzerland at night increases by 70 % within the next 20 years, it would be "dramatic", explains Alexander Reichenbach, who works at the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment studying the effects of growing light pollution at night (see interview). And a light bulb went on a long time ago in the minds of those working in the courts. In a landmark judgement in 2009, the Federal Supreme Court ruled that purely decorative lighting was to be switched off at 10 pm. Because when even steep mountain slopes were being put "in their best light", the federal judges had every reason to be upset. When it came to the expansive illumination of the Mount Pilatus peaks, they found that one should not completely

risk "the natural spectacle of dusk". They added that, "in particular, the colour changes seen on the mountaintop at dusk" are a treasure worth protecting.

Ornithologists and stargazers were the pioneers in the fight against light pollution in Switzerland. Ornithologists made it clear that migratory birds are being caught in the light cone over cities and are sometimes circling to fatal exhaustion. And astronomers complained that the Swiss are completely losing the mind-expanding view of the universe. How about counting shooting stars on a summer night as perseids, leonids and orionids whiz towards the earth in a shot of light? Forget it. Holding hands under the starry ocean of the Milky Way? A thing of the past.

Georg Scheuter, President of the Swiss Astronomical Society, is quite clear on the subject. He says that in Switzerland, city dwellers have "certainly never" seen the Milky Way. Instead of the 5,000 stars that can be seen by the naked eye during a pitch black night, it's "merely a few dozen" in the big cities. All major Swiss cities are playing "in the big leagues" when it comes to light pollution, he says.

As bright as 20 full moons

For exactly 20 years now, the NGO Dark Sky Switzerland has been fighting to protect Switzerland's nights. Their motives are obvious, its director Rolf Schatz says: too much artificial light threatens the diversity of nocturnal fauna and has other disadvantages for humans. People can sim-

ply “pull down the blinds” at night, says Schatz. “But nature can’t.” To illustrate this, he calculates just how much light infiltrates Switzerland’s nights: the usual street lamps illuminate the surrounding area 20 times more than the brightest of full moons. “If we were expected to tolerate 20 times more sunlight during the day, we’d soon realise that it’s impossible,” he says. But even Schatz sees a bright spot. In Switzerland, more and more people are beginning to realise “that we have long since reached an amount of night light that is no longer beneficial”. This also means that more and more citizens are standing up. They are saying that there’s “something like a human right to dark nights”.

The men and women of Dark Sky Switzerland are no longer fighting the fight for darkness alone. The subject is now an everyday topic. As a result, the Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects (SIA), which sets mandatory standards, put a planning policy in place in 2013 that aims to avoid “unnecessary light emission in outdoor spaces” (SIA standard 491). But Rolf Schatz is still concerned. According to Schatz, technological developments pose risks too. The upgrading of public lighting to LED saves electricity. But these highly energy-efficient LED lamps pose the risk “of increasing the amount of light dramatically”. In this way, energy efficiency could inadvertently lead to a new environmental load.

Exclusive night darkness, certified

When night becomes day, true pitch black darkness becomes a rare, precious commodity. The Gantersch Nature Park at the foot of the Bernese Alps is latching onto this idea. The Nature Park, a sort of unlit backyard in the city, wants to make night-time darkness its unique selling point.



The dark of night as a unique selling point: Nicole Dahinden hopes to create Switzerland’s first certified star park, the “Dark Sky Park”.

Photo: Manu Friederich

Switzerland’s light pollution map shows clearly that true night darkness here has become virtually non-existent.

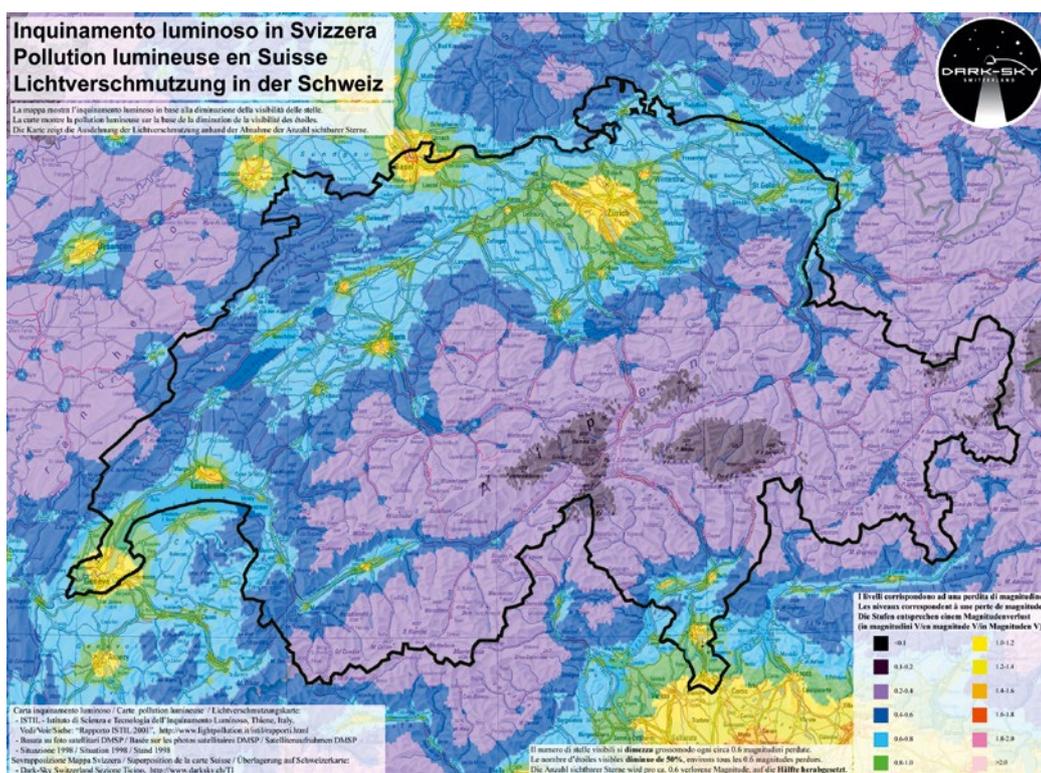
Map: Dark Sky Switzerland

They are working to become a certified “Dark Sky Park”. Worldwide, the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) has certified 37 regions so far. Project manager Nicole Dahinden hopes that the IDA will also certify “her” oasis of darkness by 2019. The Gantersch area would become the first and so far the only star park in Switzerland. One condition is that all communes located within the nature park participate. So far, they’ve all been willing. Another condition is that the approximately 400 square kilometres of dark landscape actually remain sufficiently dark. To record this, Dahinden roams the nocturnal

landscape with her instruments and gathers proof. One initial conclusion: it is darker here than on many of the high Alpine peaks. From there you can see how the bright city of Milan lights up the night horizon.

The goal of becoming the first star park sounds like something driven by marketing ambitions. But Dahinden firmly denies that. Of course protecting the “intangible treasure of darkness” could appeal to a range of people. But the goal of protecting nature is an unmistakable mission of the project.

In fact, there are large parts of the nature park that lie within an important bird sanctuary. On the one hand, many endangered bird species breed here. On the other hand, numerous migratory birds cross the Gurnigel watershed, and migratory birds in particular rely on the starry night sky. Unlike many other nature conservation projects, no one really feels that protecting starry nights is urgent, Dahinden says. “But there’s nothing negative about it.” What is more, “really, no one can be in favour of light pollu-



Artificial light is leading to a 24-hour society

We are making less and less use of true daylight as we expose ourselves to more and more artificial light. This is altering human biology, says Alexander Reichenbach, light specialist at the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment.

“Swiss Review”: Mr Reichenbach, when it comes down to it, light is something pure. How can we speak of light pollution?

Alexander Reichenbach: Light is not simply light. Light changes greatly throughout the day. Its intensity and spectral composition change. If the wrong light is on at the wrong time, we speak of light pollution.

When does light become pollution?

When light extends beyond its pure purpose in terms of space, time or intensity, we speak of light pollution. Compared to other factors that influence the environment, light pollution is not the key issue. But, as scientists, we have to admit that we are only beginning to understand its consequences, especially



since electric lights have only been around for about 100 years. In the end, the technology revolution just might have consequences that we aren't aware of today.

That sounds a bit mysterious to us laypeople.

In terms of human impact, we can already see how much artificial light is affecting society. It is the driving factor behind the trend towards a 24-hour society. On top of that, new types of light also have a new composition, a higher proportion of blue. This blue portion of light is particularly potent from a biological standpoint. As we're exposed to less and less natural light during the day, the biological impact of artificial light increases.

What is the threat to our health if we are exposed to too much blue light for too long?

One concern is that our sleep phase is being shifted backwards. The secretion of the hormone melatonin, which prepares us for sleep, is delayed by too much blue light.

People don't want to be in the dark, they want light. How can we teach people to want more night time and darkness?

Most people we talk to about this seem to be on board. Planners are often willing to make provisions against excessive light. Of course, it helps that unnecessary light leads to unnecessary energy consumption and thus higher costs.

On the neighbour's balcony are small, bright solar lights that change colour at night. It's quite cheerful...

That's exactly the kind of decorative lighting addressed by the Federal Supreme Court ruling. The court found that non-functional decorative lighting should be turned off at 10 pm. The background to the decision is that even dim sources of diffuse light can lead to light pollution and potentially adverse effects on flora and fauna. Basically, we now know that we must use light wisely.

Let's take fireflies, for example... they couldn't care less about dark night regulations. Is this awkward for the light pollution debate?

No, not at all. Fireflies are actually proof that dark nights would be a good thing. If nights were darker, we'd see natural spectacles like the glow of fireflies again. It's often not dark enough nowadays. Only a small number of people know what a night with glowing fireflies is like.

INTERVIEW: MARC LETTAU

tion". And if you fight for dark nights, ultimately you're fighting for your own health.

There's at least one group of people who understand perfectly what Dahinden is saying. Astronomers discovered this dark corner of the earth long ago. They make regular pilgrimages to Gantrisch. This dark oasis in a nightly sea of lights is now known throughout Europe. Astro-freaks

gather here summer after summer for "Star Parties", sharing a common glimpse upwards into the infinity of space. The organisers of the parties take this very seriously. Anyone who wishes to move their car after dark is only allowed to use the handbrake and must avoid the brake pedal. Because, of course, the flashing red break light alone would jeopardise the dark experience.

Gantrisch Nature Park: www.gantrisch.ch

Swiss Astrovillage in Lü (GR): www.alpineastrovillage.net

International Dark Sky Association (IDA): darksky.org

MARC LETTAU IS AN EDITOR WITH "SWISS REVIEW"

What impact will “Brexit” have on Switzerland?

A stronger Swiss franc, a weaker Europe, even lower interest rates: the outcome of Great Britain's EU referendum has far-reaching consequences for the Swiss economy.

SIMON SCHMID

In June, the people of Great Britain chose to leave the European Union. What will this mean for Switzerland and its economy? The effects are already being felt at several levels.

1. Interest rates will remain low for even longer

Brexit will go down in history as the mildest stock market crash ever. Although there was great anxiety in New York, London and Tokyo on the morning of 24 June, the panic had evaporated again within days. Indeed the losses had been recouped by the first week of July, including at the Zurich stock exchange. One reason for this is that investors realised that the result of the referendum would have almost no immediate consequences. After all, the negotiations between Great Britain and the EU are likely to drag on for two or more years. It is still not clear what future economic relations between the two will look like. The United Kingdom may even maintain relatively close ties with the Continent through the European Economic Area.

However, there's also another reason for the stock market rally: interest rates have fallen again. Major central banks like the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank look likely to continue pursuing very expansive monetary policies. That will drive share prices upwards. Borrowing must remain cheap because the economy is still sluggish, especially in Great Britain, where the Bank of England cut its base rate to an all-time low in the

aftermath of the Brexit vote in expectation of a significant economic slump.

These negative economic developments are affecting Switzerland, where returns on ten-year federal loans are now at -0.5%, their lowest point ever. As a result, the hoped-for normalisation of global interest rates has moved further into the distance. This also means that the Swiss National Bank (SNB) will have to maintain for even longer its negative interest rates that are designed to put international investors and those with significant savings off the Swiss franc. This will particularly hurt the likes of pension funds and health insurers, which hold large amounts of liquid assets.

2. Pressure on the Swiss franc will remain high

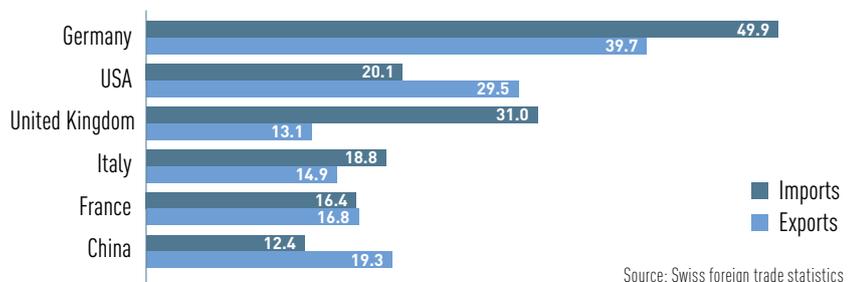
The SNB weathered the initial post-Brexit storm well. Although the exchange rate against the euro fell from

CHF 11 billion buying up foreign currencies. However, it can't relax just yet. The foreign exchange market may explode again and the pressure on the Swiss franc looks unlikely to diminish. Observers reckon that the SNB is continuing to buy up foreign currencies to maintain a first line of defence at CHF 1.08. If tensions in Europe rise further, the SNB would have no choice but to cut interest rates again to stabilise the euro exchange rate at about CHF 1.05.

3. Damage to exports and tourism

Six percent of Switzerland's exports go to Great Britain. The eurozone accounts for 40%. The slight upswing in these markets proved an important boost for the Swiss economy following the shock to the franc. Were investment as well as consumer spending in these regions to fall, this would also hit Swiss companies. With

Principal business partners in 2015 (in CHF billion)



Source: Swiss foreign trade statistics

CHF 1.10 to CHF 1.06 in the immediate aftermath of the vote, it was soon back between CHF 1.08 and CHF 1.09. That was largely thanks to clear communication by the SNB and its intervention on the foreign exchange mar-

ket. In the decisive phase around the Brexit referendum, the SNB spent the exception of the crisis-resistant pharmaceutical industry, most export sectors are likely to feel the knock-on effect of Brexit. That's bad news for the tourist industry in particular, which is already in the dol-

drums, with fewer hotel bookings in the first half of the year. In a typical year, some 700,000 Brits visit Switzerland. The weaker pound means many of these will now stay at home. If they do travel to Lucerne, Mürren or Verbier, they will have less money for restaurants and souvenirs. Nonetheless, Theresa May spent her holidays in Zermatt in August. Her stay was a godsend: posing in hiking pants and a polo shirt with trekking poles and a backdrop of Swiss mountains, Great Britain's new prime minister told a mass of British journalists how wonderful it was to wander in the Alps.

The banks will have to get by without such advertising. Financial institutions like Credit Suisse have lost out on the stock exchange. The price of shares in Switzerland's second-biggest bank even briefly fell to below CHF 10. But Swiss banks aren't alone in their sorrows. Low interest rates are depressing revenues throughout Europe. As such, banks from Italy to Germany are suffering under low profitability and an uncertain future.

4. Agreement with Europe moving into the background

Brexit probably killed off any hopes for a rapid and strict implementation of the mass immigration initiative as intended by those behind it. It is widely believed the EU will now take great care not to make any concessions on migration whilst the negotiations with Great Britain are underway. On the other hand, this realisation has led Swiss politicians to speed up their search for a solution without the SVP. A compromise currently taking shape would involve implementation of the initiative with a slight domestic bias. Under this proposal, put forward by the FDP, employers would be obliged to report job vacancies to regional job

centres in Switzerland before recruiting applicants from abroad. On the other hand, a regional and sector-specific protection clause suggested by the CVP would also apply. Experts are not ruling out the possibility that such a package, which would require neither ceilings nor quotas and would therefore be compatible with EU principles, could be approved by 7 February 2017.



A good omen?
British Prime Minister Theresa May and her husband Philip spent their summer holidays in Zermatt.

Photo: Keystone

To what extent such a solution would restrict immigration remains to be seen. Nevertheless, it would be good for Swiss companies, which rely on stable underlying conditions and flexible migration policies.

5. A chain reaction: the political worst-case scenario

The Brexit vote has given nationalists yet another boost. Far-right politicians like Marine Le Pen are now demanding their own referendum on the EU and the euro. Their claim that European integration harms their countries more than it benefits them is backed up by economic developments. After all, figures released for the last few quarters show the eurozone economy in sluggish mood. Only Germany has grown. The French and Italian economies are stagnating.

The next test for the European project will come in November, when Italians vote on a constitutional amendment that Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has staked his political future on. France goes to the polls to elect a new president in 2017. Should eurosceptic movements like the Front National or Movimento 5 Stelle come to power, Europe's disintegration could gather pace. Already, a

mere 49 % of Italians consider the European common currency to be beneficial.

It's hard to predict what impact such a scenario would have on the financial markets. The Swiss franc would undoubtedly skyrocket in value. Were a country like Italy to leave the eurozone, an increase in unemployment and a recession would be the least that Switzerland could expect.

SIMON SCHMID IS CHIEF ECONOMIST
AT THE "HANDELSZEITUNG"

International Geneva resists competition from rivals

The prospect of hosting international organisations has whet the appetites of cities worldwide. Expensive and traffic-clogged as it may be, Geneva is losing none of its appeal. Almost a billion Swiss francs will be spent renovating UN buildings.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

How is it possible that a city-canton with just 500,000 inhabitants can be so prized by countries around the globe as a venue for their meetings? Or rather, will this unique status continue given the high cost of living in Switzerland and in a place where, according to an analysis published in late 2015 by the research institute of the Foundation for Geneva, “there are very few opportunities to live near your place of work, the road network is notoriously gridlocked, and there is inadequate public transport provision”?

The authors of this report point to a paradox. “Even though the density of players within international Geneva is greater than ever, Geneva’s ability to remain, alongside New York, one of the two major centres of international governance is being called into question regularly and with a sense of urgency.” Competition is particularly great from Asia, where countries are demanding their slice of the pie in hosting international organisations.

The attractiveness of densely-packed diplomacy

“I’m optimistic,” says Guy Mettan, the director of the Swiss Press Club. He believes there are three main reasons why Geneva has managed to resist the eagerness of cities like Budapest, Abu Dhabi, Nairobi and Songdo in South Korea to knock it off

its pedestal. “Firstly, Geneva has expanded and encouraged the hosting of diplomatic missions for the last 15 years. This is a key point because an embassy is expensive to set up, and countries choose the best location with the highest density of diplomatic activity to which to send their representatives. The figures bear this out: over the last decade, Geneva has welcomed 20 new permanent missions at the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) and other international organisations. According to the Presidential Department of the Republic and State of Geneva, the city now accommodates 175 missions. In 2013, a study on international Geneva found that in the previous five years there had been 21 partial moves away compared with 18 new arrivals. The balance therefore appears to have been maintained.

A doubly neutral city

The canton’s second advantage, Guy Mettan quips, is that Geneva is not Berne. “Because it isn’t the capital, it doesn’t represent a nation. Furthermore, it is located within a neutral country, is not part of any transnational organisation and cannot therefore be suspected of harbouring a political agenda in favour of NATO or the European Union. As a result, UN Member States aren’t gathering there in order to do Switzerland a favour but, rather, to defend their re-

gional interests,” Mettan adds. Thus, while tensions remain high in Ukraine and the fighting bloody in the Middle East, Geneva’s double neutrality affords the canton a privileged position.

By international comparison, the report by the Foundation for Geneva concludes, the canton is the world’s premiere centre of governance, ahead of even New York in terms of the number of international conferences and meetings held there annually, at around 2,700. “It would take a huge effort on Switzerland’s part to attain this level of universal diplomacy if it had to travel to Vienna or Oslo to play this role,” says National Councillor Carlo Sommaruga (GE/PS).

Renovation finance crisis

In April, as Geneva was rocked by a crisis centring on mismanagement by the Foundation for Buildings for International Organisations (FIPOI), the body responsible for steering the renovation of UN buildings, Sommaruga said in the French Swiss press that he had noted “an erosion of support for international Geneva” in Berne. Nevertheless, any annoyance on the part of elected representatives was not borne out when it came to approving loans for work on international Geneva, he said. In June, the Genevan parliament, for its part, approved loans for renovation (see box). At the same time, it also de-

cided to shut down another foundation, the FCIG, which looked after non-governmental organisations, a move that enabled Geneva to get its hands on assets estimated at CHF 28 million. Whereas Guy Mettan views the event as somewhat anecdotal, Carlo Sommaruga considers it a sign that the canton and the Swiss Confederation aren't interested in NGOs. "We must maintain and develop ideal conditions so that civil society and NGOs can play their part, which is crucial for the smooth running of UN organisations and global governance," he says.

Now that the case surrounding the FIPOI has been closed, the canton appears ready to pursue its role as "the toolbox of the global world", as Guy Mettan calls it. Ivan Pictet, a Genevan banker and the president of the Foundation for Geneva, also seems unconcerned. "Even in this age of ultrafast electronic communication, leaders still feel the need to meet in person and exchange opinions directly," he says.

Pictet sees two trends on the horizon: "international cooperation with less rigid forms than those set up in the aftermath of the Second World

War" and the growth of public-private partnerships like the Global Fund, a Geneva-based financial institution set up in 2002 to accelerate the eradication of the AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria epidemics.

STÉPHANE HERZOG IS A JOURNALIST
WITH THE "SWISS REVIEW"

Switzerland contributes to the renovation of the buildings of international organisations

Geneva and Switzerland have agreed unprecedented investment to consolidate the infrastructure of international organisations.



The Palais des Nations, workplace for some 3,000 people, accounts for the largest chunk of this investment. The budget for the renovation of the UNOG premises is CHF 836.5 million. Of this, CHF 400 million is an interest-free loan from the Swiss Confederation and Geneva. A loan by the Swiss Parliament – CHF 292 million – will be put before the State Council this autumn along with loan projects for the WHO and the ILO.



The cost of renovating and expanding the headquarters of the World Health Organization has been put at CHF 250 million. According to the Presidential Department of the Republic and State of Geneva (PRE), the Swiss authorities plan to approve a loan of up to CHF 140 million.



The building housing the headquarters of the International Labour Organization has been undergoing renovation since 2015. The total cost of this work is estimated at CHF 205 million. The Swiss Confederation is considering offering a loan worth CHF 70 million.



The premises of the International Telecommunications Union, which it was once feared would depart altogether, also need renovating. The Confederation is studying the terms of a CHF 150 million loan to help finance this project.



The building of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is to be reconstructed. The Confederation is planning to offer a loan of CHF 59 million. According to the PRE, a dispatch for parliament is being drafted in Berne.



In April, the Federal Council approved a dispatch relating to the provision of a loan of CHF 9.9 million for renovating the facades of the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross. A loan for this project will be discussed in the Swiss Parliament later this year.

The new power constellation in the federal parliament

The strengthened right-wing majority is caught between political in-fighting and a “conservative turnaround”, while the left is isolated and alarmed. New political alliances are gradually taking shape.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

The Social Democrats have raised the alarm. They say the conservative majority has “lost all sense of responsibility for the nation’s overall interests and the common good”. Furthermore, “the right-wing majority led by the SVP is bulldozing its way through. There is no longer any attempt to find a consensus. The SVP is dictating the direction, and the FDP and CVP are following meekly.” This pithy analysis by the SP is part of a “call to awkwardness” issued on 25 June.

The approach is not new. Addressing a party conference back in 1984 following the failure by the SP’s official candidate, Lilian Uchtenhagen, to be elected to the Federal Council, the then SP chairman, Helmut Hubacher, announced that his party would continue campaigning in an “extremely awkward” manner. However, the explosiveness of this statement had a limited impact in practice. Nonetheless, the term from 1984 has now been repeated in the latest rallying cry.

“Aggressive policy of tax breaks”

The Social Democrats are alarmed because right-of-centre parties have been in a stronger position since the parliamentary elections in October 2015. Added to this, the SVP, FDP and CVP appointed new leaders this spring in the form of Albert Rösti, Petra Gössi and Gerhard Pfister – all of whom hail from the right wing of their respective party. According to SP Chairman Christian Levrat, the “unified right” is also pursuing an “aggressive policy of tax breaks”. The prime example of this, he says, is the Corporate Tax Reform III bill, which was ap-

SP Chairman Christian Levrat, shown here at the SP Switzerland party conference in Chur last June, backs a new political “awkwardness” by his party.

Photo: Keystone



proved by parliament in June. This alone will cut federal tax revenues by about CHF 1.5 billion. The SP has sought a referendum on the issue, thereby ushering in the first phase of its new “awkwardness”.

Bernese National Councillor and Greens Chairman Regula Rytz asserts that right-wing and conservative parties have entered an “era of ideologists” in which the quest for social equality has been replaced by short-sighted political patronage. Rytz says the hard line is most obvious in the government’s financial and fiscal policies. However, she believes this is untenable in the long term because the public has realised that the “policy of mass cutbacks” threatens Switzerland’s international commitments and its status as an educational location. Rytz says it is also remarkable how far to the right the CVP has shifted. For example, whereas the party had still supported the energy strategy in the last legislative period, “it is now involved in scaling back the targets”.

The CVP does indeed appear to be changing course under its new chairman, Gerhard Pfister. Pfister has shown himself to be extremely ambi-

tious. In the autumn of 2015, months before the elections, he wrote an article in the “Basler Zeitung” entitled “Thoughts on a conservative turnaround”. In this he said that although conservative parties had a clear majority in parliament, “a social democratic agenda is still gaining the upper hand on key issues”. Pfister claimed that this was because the FDP and CVP had broadened their agenda too far and that a “renaissance of conservative politics” was needed. The conditions: “The SVP would have to limit its radicalisation, the FDP its quest for power and the CVP the arbitrariness of its political programme”.

A conservative turnaround?

This constitutes clear criticism of Pfister’s predecessor, Christophe Darbellay, who maintained close ties with the small centre parties: the Green Liberals and the Conservative Democratic Party (BDP). In an article published in the June issue of “Schweizer Monat” magazine, Pfister distanced himself emphatically from both these parties. “These parties don’t have any part to play in the conservative turn-

around,” the new party chairman wrote. In his view, the turnaround – a frequently used expression – relates first and foremost to “joint positions” with the SVP and FDP.

However, it remains to be seen whether the conservative trio can reach a consensus on decisive issues. Speaking to “Swiss Review”, Bernese National Councillor and SVP Chairman Albert Rösti remained deliberately cautious on the matter. He said the new leaders of the three conservative parties were collaborating very well and had “a trusting relationship”. Nevertheless he stressed that “a joint project is not planned and cooperation is on a case-by-case basis”. After all, he added, what counted was not only the party leaders but primarily the shift in the balance of power in parliament and on the Federal Council. “Some improvements” could be seen with regard to taxation and social contributions in particular, Rösti said, alluding to the Corporate Tax Reform III bill. In energy strategy, too, he pointed out that “certain problems” had been eliminated and earlier parliamentary decisions overturned.

European policies without conservative unity

Nevertheless, this cannot hide the fact that Switzerland’s conservative parties still have major differences over issues like asylum, immigration and European policies. One thorn in the country’s side, according to Rösti, is the FDP’s attitude towards the mass immigration initiative, the widespread implementation of which the Free Democrats would oppose. He also described as “disappointing” the attitude of the Federal Council, which he accuses of taking “left-wing” decisions on numerous issues even though it now has a clear SVP/FDP majority.

Schwyz National Councillor Petra Gössi, the chairman of FDP Switzer-

land, doesn’t think much has changed recently. “Parliament doesn’t function very differently from how it did before the 2015 elections, and the majorities still change,” she says. For instance, the FDP sometimes agrees with the SP on social issues. However, because financial, fiscal and economic topics are centre stage at the moment, alliances between the conservative parties are currently in the foreground and simply easier to forge thanks to more pronounced majorities.

But Gössi attacks the Swiss People’s Party on one key issue: “The SVP does everything it can to shoot down bilateral treaties with the EU. That’s a dangerous game. Ceilings and quotas are out of the question for us when implementing the mass immigration initiative. The maintenance of our bilateral agreements is therefore a top priority for the FDP.”

According to Claude Longchamps, a political scientist and the head of the GfS Research Institute in Berne, the FDP has deliberately drawn a clear line in the sand over this because it is extremely keen to save Switzerland’s bilateral agreements for economic reasons. In this respect, he sees touchpoints between the Free Democrats and the left-wing parties. In all other respects, the SP has had far less room for manoeuvre since last year’s elections and the appointment of the three new conservative party leaders. Although the Council of States continues to function in a relatively non-partisan way, Longchamps says, the alliances still change frequently and individual councillors stray from the party line. By contrast, the shift in the balance of power is plain to see in the National Council and Federal Council.

The actual majority has been lost

Longchamps says the SP has “lost its actual majority” in the Federal Council because both the SVP and the FDP now have two seats. Prior to the elec-

tions, this majority had worked thanks to the presence of Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf from the minor BDP. “The energy turnaround and even Swiss banking policy were based on having two SP councillors, one CVP and one BDP member,” Longchamps says. FDP Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter has therefore now become the decisive member. Although he occasionally votes in favour of centre-left ideas, “he is not bound into this constellation”. Quite the contrary. He is the subject of increasingly close scrutiny by the SVP in particular, which considers the FDP its most important partner.

Longchamps also sees rivalry between the FDP and CVP. Under its new chairman, Gerhard Pfister, the Christian Democrats want to be “better on business” than the FDP. As a result, he says, they are more willing to join forces with the SVP than the FDP on agriculture and commerce, for example. Longchamps thinks Pfister wants the CVP to portray itself more strongly as the new centrist force and that he also holds conservative views on social and family issues. “His predecessor, Christophe Darbellay, looked to the left and to the right and then took what he wanted at that time,” Longchamps recalls. That repeatedly gave the SP new opportunities. SP Chairman Christian Levrat had been able to garner a majority in certain areas and therefore influence the political agenda through the use of what Longchamps describes as “sensible offers” to the CVP and BDP. But that isn’t working any more. “The parties of the left no longer have a battle plan for how to actively forge their own majorities,” Claude Longchamps asserts.



Nuclear power: voters to decide whether to pull the plug

On 27 November, the Swiss people will vote on an initiative by the Greens to switch off the country's nuclear reactors.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

The Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 is seen as the spark that triggered Switzerland's gradual withdrawal from nuclear power. However, a number of cantons and municipalities had already discussed and even begun moving away from atomic energy even before 2011. These included the cities of Basel, Berne, St. Gallen, Lucerne and Aarau. Last June, more than 70 % of the inhabitants of Zurich backed a move to sell the city's stakes in the Gösgen and Leibstadt nuclear power stations as well as French plants in Bugey and Cattenom by 2034. What left-wing parties and the Greens hailed as a landmark decision on polling day, the FDP dismissed as merely a symbolic gesture without consequences for the operation of nuclear power stations.

That may be true in the short term, but a vote due in the autumn could very well have serious ramifications. On 27 November, the controversial and at times hotly-debated topic of the future of nuclear power in Switzerland will be determined once and for all. That's when the electorate will get to vote on a Green Party proposal to phase out atomic energy. The popular initiative demands a halt to the construction of new nuclear power stations and that existing plants be taken off the grid within 45 years. If approved, Beznau I and II and Mühleberg would have to be shut down a year after the vote. Gösgen would follow in 2024, while Leibstadt would become the last of Switzerland's five nuclear power stations to be switched off in 2029. Indeed the plants would have to close even earlier if security concerns arose. The initiative also calls for concrete measures to promote the move away from nuclear power: energy-saving measures, energy efficiency and the expansion of the use of renewable energy.

The National Council opposes limits

The Greens aren't alone in wanting to limit the lifetimes of the country's nuclear power plants. Last year, within the framework of the Federal Council's Energy Strategy 2050, the National Council also backed plans to restrict the lifetimes of the oldest nuclear plants to 60 years. However, because the Council of States won't even consider this and the political tide has turned since last autumn's elections, the National Council overturned its earlier decision in March 2016 and now no longer wants to limit the lifetimes of nuclear power plants.

According to Jürg Bieri, the managing director of the anti-nuclear Swiss Energy Foundation (SES), what now remains of the Federal Council and parliament's fundamental decision to abandon atomic energy is little more than "a loose ban on the construction of new nuclear power plants within the Swiss Energy Act". Bieri thinks an orderly withdrawal would "also bring order to the replacement of nuclear power by renewable energy", while setting a specific date for

shutting plants down would "facilitate planning and secure investment for domestic power plants". During the debate in parliament, Berne's Green Party National Councillor Regula Rytz said that any energy strategy that did not include restricting lifetimes would not constitute a genuine abandonment of nuclear power.

"Absolute joke"

Conservative opponents of the initiative argue that Switzerland's nuclear power plants are considered some of the world's safest. Switzerland's ability to meet its energy needs was also raised in the parlia-



If the nuclear withdrawal initiative is approved, plants like that in Beznau would have to be shut down within a year. Photo: Keystone

mentary debate, with some suggesting that if the country took its nuclear plants offline too quickly, more energy would have to be imported in the form of electricity from nuclear, coal-fired and gas-fired power stations. CVP National Councillor Daniel Fässler from Appenzel-Innerrhoden called this "an absolute joke from an ecological and economic perspective". Bernese FDP National Councillor Christian Wasserfallen said it was utopian to want Switzerland to be able to cover 40 % of its energy needs with electricity from alternative sources within ten years.

Whatever voters decide on 27 November, a date has already been set for switching off one of the country's nuclear plants. The Mühleberg plant near Berne is to be taken out of operation on 20 December 2019. BKW has become the first operator to make concrete moves towards phasing out nuclear power, albeit on economic rather than political grounds. The utility company has decided that retrofitting demanded by nuclear watchdog ENSI no longer makes sound financial sense.

New York as the city of love and death

Books like “Museum of Hate” and “The Ballad of Typhoid Mary” show the extent to which Jürg Federspiel adopted New York as his second home.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

Jürg Federspiel was born in Kempttal on 28 June 1931. In 1961, when he lined up alongside other debutants like Paul Nizon and Peter Bichsel with the publication of a collection of short stories entitled “Oranges and Deaths”, Werner Weber said Federspiel stood out from the pack. Even later, his books stood out not only because of the brilliant research that went into making them, but also for their affinity with the themes of life and death. Having begun with the description of a man who shoots himself dead with a carbine, he continued along similar lines in “Museum of Hate”, published in 1969, a warts-and-all report about a New York in which a young Swiss man first sees nothing but razorblades and is then overwhelmed by visions of death and sexuality.

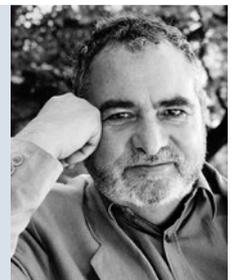
Federspiel had lived in Paris and Berlin, but when he went to New York in 1967 he was gripped by “complete euphoria”. Without ever breaking ties with Switzerland, he spent part of every year until his death in the city he had evoked literarily not only in “Museum of Hate” but also in “The Ballad of Typhoid Mary”, “The Best City for Blind People”, “Madness & Garbage” and “Voices in the Subway”, never abandoning his central themes of love and death.

“The Ballad of Typhoid Mary” became his most famous book. In this, these themes focussed entirely on the fictional Grisons cook Maria Caduff who, like the genuine historical character Mary Mallon (1869–1938), roamed around New York like an angel of death, spreading typhoid wherever she went, without dying from it herself. Apart from the fact that this unwittingly presaged the dawn of a disease associated with sexuality, AIDS, the book also provided the seed for a trend that is far from over. Dr Rageet diagnosed in Mary “an indifference that sometimes attacks us and now descends upon us as the last and possibly ultimate plague of the soul. A ghost is wandering around. And that ghost is called Hopelessness.”

Ominous foresight can also be found in Federspiel’s most sensual book, “Geography of Lust” (1989), which deals with the spectacular consequences of a tattoo that a Milanese bon vivant named Robusti has etched on the buttocks of the beautiful Laura. An inscription in the sky in the tattoo reads: “The age of shame is finally over. God has forgiven us. Our skin is our clothing. It belongs to us!”

Death was not simply a literary motif for Federspiel, but an existential challenge. Forced to watch as his TB-suffering father turned off his own oxygen supply in Davos in 1949, Federspiel realised: “We can’t contradict the dead. We must seek them out in the restraints we have invented for them.” In 1959, it was his turn to face death when he had to have half a lung removed in order to stay alive, an operation which left him with a certain handicap. In 1997, polyneuropathy and Parkinson’s disease forced him to abandon plans to turn the Davos of his youth into the backdrop for a novel. Love, too, remained yearning rather than fulfilment. The latter proved elusive with both the dainty anti-feminist Esther Vilar (“The Manipulated Man”) and a later relationship which saw him retreat to a village in Thurgau. Zoë Jenny was there to witness his last stay in New York. In “Spätestens Morgen” (2013), she wrote about the sensitivities of a now deeply melancholy Federspiel sitting on a New York park bench in the autumn of 2006. “Four o’clock in the morning is the executioner’s hour,” he told his young fellow writer. It must have been at precisely this time on 12 January 2007 that he sought death unnoticed in the River Rhine in the centre of Basel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Jürg Federspiel’s books are published in German by Suhrkamp.



“It was night as I glanced out of the window on the 14th floor of the building. The view of New York and its tens of thousands of lights is truly tremendous and lovely. I wondered whether every light represented a person’s dream to be king for at least one night amid the darkness of million-fold disappointment.”
(Extract from “Manhattan and a Boxer” in “American Dreams”, Zurich, 1984)

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH

“We Swiss are probably not born eccentrics”

Lovebugs have released their first album for four years, entitled “Land Ho!”. An interview with frontman Adrian Sieber about being Swiss in the pop music industry and international expectations.



INTERVIEW: MARKO LEHTINEN

“Swiss Review”: After a four-year break, Lovebugs – now a band made up of seasoned dads – have released their latest album.

Adrian Sieber: Yes, our drummer Simon Ramseier was the last of the five of us to become a father. He had a daughter a few months ago.

Why did the new album take so long to arrive?

“Land Ho!” was actually completed a year ago. There were certain parts of the tracks that we were not entirely happy with. So, we remixed the al-

bum, which we had recorded in Berlin, and took the opportunity to add four more tracks at home in Basel at the studio of our guitarist Thomas Rechberger.

You initially recorded at Funkhaus, a former radio studio in east Berlin. Why Berlin?

Our producer Marco Jäger lives there. He’s from Berne but moved to Berlin a few years ago.

But there are studios in Switzerland which are just as good as those in Berlin...

Absolutely, Funkhaus is a fantastic studio, but there are equally good facili-

ties in Switzerland, too. That has long been the case. Great artists like Queen, David Bowie and Deep Purple came to Switzerland decades ago. On the other hand, recording abroad can prove extremely inspiring for Swiss bands. Particularly when you’ve got a family, being able to get away for two weeks to focus entirely on music has great benefits. At home you have to take your children to nursery and get caught up in everyday life. Abroad you can immerse yourself completely in the music and explore new places and meet new people. That’s why we went to Berlin.

Adrian Sieber lives in Basel and has never considered moving abroad: “We were able to develop at our own pace as a band in Switzerland, and that’s why we are still here.”

Photo: Sony Music

“Land Ho!” will also go on sale outside Switzerland like most of Lovebugs’ previous albums. The band’s labels have always tried to establish it on the major markets but have never really succeeded. Why is that?

After we topped the Swiss charts several times and represented the nation at the Eurovision Song Contest, many people expected us to achieve an international breakthrough as the next logical step. As this did not really happen, people were soon saying that Lovebugs had “not made it” – despite us having thousands of loyal fans all over the world. I’ve always found such views annoying as you have to be realistic about your expectations. Switzerland is a very small nation with a tiny music industry. Launching an international career as a Swiss band remains extremely difficult – there are huge obstacles to overcome.

So, Swiss bands have a locational disadvantage.

Most definitely. If we had really been trying to achieve a breakthrough internationally, we would have needed to move to London or New York 20 years ago. Our career would probably then have taken a completely different path.

Does it feel like a missed opportunity?

No, we chose the right path. And to be quite honest we never seriously considered moving abroad. Our social scene was in Basel and we didn’t want to give that up. Our experience with German labels has not always been great. We got the impression that they wanted to make decisions about us without understanding our music, and the people we were dealing with were also constantly changing. So, we decided at an early stage that we would rather create something together with people who knew us in a familiar environment instead of focusing on abroad. We were able to develop at our

own pace in Switzerland, which is why we’re still here and have the same management 20 years on.

Were the trips to Germany a waste of time then?

No, of course not. The labels organised concerts and tours for us, and audiences loved us. We were seen as an international newcomer band in Germany and even featured in “Bravo”. We certainly enjoyed that.

Were you taken seriously as a Swiss band?

The Germans, of course, found us quite cute because we were from Switzerland, but admittedly we were a bit back then (he laughs). But we never felt that we were not taken seriously as musicians.



Lovebugs – a Basel success story

Lovebugs are one of Switzerland’s most successful pop bands. The quintet led by singer-songwriter Adrian Sieber formed in 1992 in Basel, but was originally a trio. Lovebugs quickly became one of the country’s most popular indie pop bands. They not only wrote great songs but also looked good, which explains why they were seen as a boy band in the early days. The group has released ten studio albums to date, three of which have topped the Swiss charts. Lovebugs attracted special attention in 2009 when they represented Switzerland in the Eurovision Song Contest with the song “The Highest Heights”. The new album “Land Ho!” was released on 7 October in Switzerland and abroad by Sony Music. (Image: Lovebugs at the Eurovision Song Contest, photo: Keystone) LEH

It’s not particularly hip for a pop band to come from Switzerland – in contrast to, say, Iceland or Denmark, which are also small countries.

That’s true and it’s annoying, but Switzerland has produced little in terms of pop music and that is our lot. But at least Lovebugs have always had an exotic appeal abroad.

Swiss pop bands are not seen as particularly audacious or distinctive.

We Swiss are probably not born eccentrics, and you need to be to stand out on the pop scene. We live in a neutral country in the heart of Europe and always want to please everyone. This mentality undeniably often rubs off, whereas the Icelandic, for example, produce idiosyncratic music amidst the forces of nature on their island on the periphery of the continent. We Swiss are also reluctant to take big gambles. We still want to graduate, work and earn money at the same time.

Switzerland is a prosperous country that offers many other opportunities besides music.

And that’s something I value greatly about our nation. I live in Basel – an international and very open city – which provides me with stability as well as financial and social security. Those are key factors. Personally, I don’t mind the Swiss mentality at all. I like the Swiss reserve.

“The Germans, of course, found us quite cute because we were from Switzerland.”

A place of symbolism, a place of unity

The Area for the Swiss Abroad is nestled within the bay in Brunnen and boasts incredible panoramic views. Now, one of Switzerland's most beautiful sites needs our support.

SILVIA SCHOCH

From the elegant, expansive park at the Area for the Swiss Abroad, you have a spectacular view of the green-blue shimmering lake and the Rütli. The view is breathtaking. Settled on the slopes of Seelisberg is the idyllic birthplace of the Confederation, surrounded by the white peaks of the Uri mountain range. The distant views of the Rütli and the Mythen have inspired countless poets, composers and painters. One such artist was Geneva-born Charles Giron, whose large murals have hung over the politicians at the National Council in the Federal Palace since 1902.

With the increase in steamship traffic in the early 19th century, the subsequent construction of the Axenstrasse and the opening of the Gotthard railway, Brunnen developed from a small fishing, boating and farming village into a tourist town with a booming hotel industry. Crowned rulers weren't the only ones with privilege; politicians and great artists such as Goethe and Wagner were also drawing inspiration from the views at this charming site. Queen Victoria wrote in her diary after a visit: "Nothing can exceed the beauty of the lake in any direction. The lake itself, that wonderful colour – varying from sapphire blue to emerald green – it's too glorious."

The Swiss Path, one of Switzerland's most popular hiking trails, also begins on the Rütli. It extends east along the wildly romantic Lake Uri down to Flüelen, reaching a powerful end at the Area for the Swiss Abroad

in Brunnen. The hiking trail was a gift from the cantons to mark the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation in 1991. Each of the 26 cantons is represented on a section of the path in the order of its entry into the Confederation. The length of the section depends on the number of inhabitants and symbolises the unity of the Confederation. The path begins with a 182-metre section representing the canton of Uri. The canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden is the shortest section, extending for 71 metres, while the canton of Zurich is the longest at six kilometres. Each and every Swiss national is symbolically represented by five millimetres of path along the 34.85 kilometres. The Area for the Swiss Abroad, as the end point of the Swiss Path, perfectly symbolises the sense of belonging that the Fifth Switzerland feels towards the Confederation.

A feeling of connection in the heart of Switzerland

The Area for the Swiss Abroad is also the starting point for the Waldstätterweg hiking trail. This younger trail is broken into seven stages and stretches through extraordinary landscapes and cultural and historical sites along the northern shore of Lake Lucerne, crossing the city of Lucerne before heading back to the Rütli. Together, the two trails form a perfect ring around the lakes. The location of the Area for the Swiss Abroad in the heart of Switzerland could not be more traditional, memorable or wonderful.



The creative impulse for including Swiss living abroad in the Swiss Path as part of the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation can be attributed to the head of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad in the 1980s. With the approval of the Council of the Swiss Abroad, the Directorate worked purposefully and with a clear vision. In January 1989, Walther Hofer, president of the newly-formed Foundation Board, celebrated by saying: "By joining forces, we made it happen!" Thanks to a global fundraising campaign amongst Swiss living abroad, half of the purchase price was raised. The other half was covered by the Federal Government. This allowed the participants to acquire the 5,400-square-metre peninsula on the western end of the Brunnen promenade. As a result, Swiss living abroad and those at home can share this beautiful piece of home. An impressive symbol of mutual unity – for the Swiss Abroad, a tie to their homeland, and for those living at home, a connection to those abroad.



As part of the celebration on 4 May 1991, the Area for the Swiss Abroad was officially handed over to the public. On National Day, the entire Federal Council gathered at the Area for the Swiss Abroad before attending National Day celebrations on the Rütli. The square was one of the main venues during the 1991 festivities, attracting numerous visitors from home and abroad. Large presentation boards showing “An Encounter with the Fifth Switzerland” informed the public about the Swiss diaspora.

Modernisation of the Area for the Swiss Abroad

The Foundation focused in the years that followed on the usability and upkeep of the square. A granite monument was erected and the presentation boards were brought up to date. Since its acquisition the square has been a popular destination for tourists and groups of all kinds. Events are held here several times a year, including village festivals, federal cel-

ebrations and open-air musicals, as well as Swiss Solidarity festivities and the SRF live broadcast “SF bi de Lüt”.

After 25 years, the Area for the Swiss Abroad was forced to undergo a large restoration project. The top layer of the lawn was taken off and replaced with gravel turf to protect it and to ensure the continued possibility of hiring out the square, which is the sole source of income. Electrical installations had to be renewed. The Canton of Schwyz covered CHF 150,000 of the total cost of CHF 270,000. The commune of In-

Brunnen with both Mythen ranges. The Area for the Swiss Abroad in the foreground.

Photo: Axel B. Bott

genbohl in Brunnen, the Schwyzer Kantonalbank and participating companies donated more than CHF 60,000. Swiss citizens living abroad had donated CHF 35,000 by the end of June (see patrons list at www.auslandschweizerplatz.ch). To complete the restoration, we are still lacking CHF 25,000. As a result, the current Chairman of the Foundation Board, Alex Hauenstein, is sending out one last appeal for funds to the Swiss Abroad. “After the generous support received 25 years ago in acquiring the location, we hope to be able to complete the restoration phase with the help of the Swiss Abroad,” he explains. “Swiss President Johann Schneider-Ammann visited us on 15 April in Brunnen as part of the 25-year anniversary celebration and inaugurated the Area for the Swiss Abroad. Now we need your support to help raise the remainder – through a personal donation or a Swiss club contribution. Thank you so much!”

Patrons will be listed on the donors list at www.auslandschweizerplatz.ch and will be issued with a receipt for donations of CHF 500 or more. Receipts for smaller amounts are issued upon request. Patrons donating CHF 5,000 or more will have their names engraved on the patrons’ plaque.

SILVIA SCHOCH IS THE REGIONAL EDITOR OF “SWISS REVIEW” AND AN OSA DELEGATE

Donate by bank transfer to: Foundation for the Area for the Swiss Abroad, CH-6440 Brunnen, Schwyzer Kantonalbank, Schwyz, IBAN CH91 0077 7002 0398 2195 1 BIC: KBSZCH22XXX

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The Swiss schools abroad

The 17 Swiss schools abroad officially recognised by the Swiss Confederation are spread across nine countries on three continents. In all, around 7,800 pupils – including some 1,800 Swiss children – attend these Swiss educational establishments in Italy, Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Thailand and Singapore. They are taught by about 300 Swiss teachers as well as numerous local teaching staff. The Swiss Federal Government supports these schools financially and the sponsor cantons provide advice on educational and administrative issues. The schools were established in locations with larger Swiss populations and/or where Swiss companies operated. The schools in Italy, for example, were founded back in the 19th century. More were opened in other countries over the course of the 20th century. A new school in Beijing is planning to open its doors in the summer of 2017.

The Berne-based association *educationsuisse* is the umbrella organisation of the Swiss schools abroad, representing their interests to the general public, companies and the authorities in Switzerland. *Educationsuisse* also undertakes a number of administrative, financial management and HR tasks on behalf of these schools and organises the annual conference of the Swiss schools abroad.

In addition, *educationsuisse* supports and advises young Swiss citizens abroad and pupils at Swiss schools abroad who would like to study or undergo vocational training in Switzerland.

Information about the Swiss schools abroad and the advice on offer can be found at:

www.educationsuisse.ch.

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE



The Youth Service's winter offers

- New Year ski and snowboarding camp in Valbella (GR) for people aged 15 to 20 (27/12/2016 to 6/1/2017)
- New Year ski and snowboarding camp in Grächen (VS) for people aged 18 and over (27/12/2016 to 6/1/2017)
- German language course in Berne from 9/1/2017 to 20/1/2017
- Discover Switzerland: an individualised leisure programme in Switzerland
- Springboard: support with planning and starting education and training in Switzerland

For further information and to register, go to www.aso.ch or www.swisscommunity.org.

Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
youth@aso.ch
 +41 (0) 31 356 61 00
www.facebook.com/ASOyouth

OSA advice

I am a Swiss citizen abroad living in a country outside the EU/EFTA. What are my rights in terms of unemployment insurance if I return to Switzerland?

People returning to Switzerland from a non-EU/non-EFTA country are entitled to 90 working days of unemployment benefit. The specific requirements for this entitlement to unemployment benefit are: return to Switzerland after a stay of over a year in a non-EU/non-EFTA state; the period of employment as an employee abroad within the last two years amounts to at least 12 months; confirmation of the period of employment from the employer can be presented.

The benefits amount to 80 % of your flat rate, which is 153, 127, 102 or 40 Swiss francs a day depending upon education and age. These amounts are reduced by half if you are exempt from meeting the contribution period requirement owing to school education, retraining, further training or following a vocational apprenticeship, are under 25 years of age and do not have any child maintenance obligations.

People who have worked for a company with its head office in Switzerland during their stay abroad and have therefore paid Swiss unemployment insurance contributions are treated in the same way as those who work in Switzerland. They are generally covered by a longer eligibility period.

People returning to Switzerland from an EU/EFTA state are subject to different provisions due to the coordination of the social security systems as part of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. The last country of employment is generally responsible for the payment of unemployment benefit unless you can prove that you worked in Switzerland for at least 12 months in the two years prior to registration for unemployment insurance.

Further information:

www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch/publikationen/broschueren



Winter camp for children aged 8 to 14

There are still some places left on our New Year ski camp in Sedrun/GR!

Date: Saturday, 28 December 2016 to Monday, 6 January 2017

Number of participants: 42

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: approx. CHF 150

Registration

Full details of the winter camps and the registration form can be found at <http://sjas.ch/en/camps>. Reduced contribution rates will be granted in justified cases. The required form can be requested on the registration form. We would also be pleased to post you our information brochure on request. The winter camp in Sedrun is the only FYSA offer in the 2016/17 winter season.

FYSA centenary competition

Design a postcard to mark 100 years of the FYSA for a chance to win a free place at a camp in the summer of 2017.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad will be 100 years old in 2017. To mark this jubilee, the FYSA is holding a picture competition:

1. Are you aged between 8 and 14?
2. Then draw a picture on the topic of "100 years of the FYSA" (maximum size: A4) and send it by post, enclosing a copy of your ID card or passport, to:
Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)
Alpenstrasse 26
3006 Berne
SWITZERLAND
3. The deadline for entries is 8 January 2017.
4. Following internal preselection, the ten best drawings will be published on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/sjas.fese/) from 9 January 2017 onwards.
5. Our followers on Facebook will then have until 31 January 2017 to "like" their favourite drawing.
6. The drawing that gets the most likes will win the competition. The entrant will be notified by email.

So, get out your coloured pencils and pens and draw yourself two unforgettable weeks in one of our jubilee summer camps in 2017. Good luck!

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



OSA centenary: major celebration in Berne

The festivities marking the 100th anniversary of the OSA reached their climax on 5–7 August in Berne. Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter congratulated the OSA on the Bundesplatz, the Council of the Swiss Abroad held a meeting in the Federal Palace, and a plenary session discussed the topic “Switzerland: a part of the world”.

MARKO LEHTINEN

In the highlight of this jubilee year, numerous spectators and 170 invited young Swiss people from abroad gathered on the Bundesplatz in Berne on Friday 5 August to hear Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter praise the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and watch him cut a cake together with OSA President Remo Gysin to mark the start of the jubilee party. “Young Swiss Abroad: our world needs you!” Burkhalter told the young people assembled in front of the podium. The festivities having thus been duly opened, the square was given over to a series of activities focusing on 100 years of the OSA as well as free concerts that continued well into the evening.

The centenary celebrations were held under the motto “Switzerland:

a part of the world”. How important are the Swiss Abroad in today’s globalised world? What are their needs? How can the OSA support the mobility of the 762,000 Swiss men and women living and working abroad? What visions does the organisation have for the future? These questions were also raised at the plenary session at the Kultur Casino in Berne on 6 August. Six speakers addressed the topics of migration, mobility and networking and their significance for the Swiss diaspora. The young people also heard a speech from their peers in the shape of Davide Wüthrich and Wanja Kaufmann from the Swiss Abroad Youth Parliament, before OSA Directors Ariane Rustichelli and Sarah Mastantuoni finished with a presentation of the biggest challenges facing the OSA.



“Ecoutez les jeunes!” (Listen to the young people!) Remo Gysin said at the end of the event, bringing to a close the festivities that had been opened by Federal Councillor Burkhalter.

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter speaks to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad on the Bundesplatz on 5 August.

Photo: OSA

Electronic voting for the diaspora

In addition to the festivities on the Bundesplatz, the Council of the Swiss Abroad also held a meeting on 5 August. In honour of the centenary, this took place in the splendid National Council chamber of the Federal Palace. Eighty-one council members with voting rights chose Christian Zeugin to succeed the outgoing chairman of the “Swiss Review” commission, Richard Bauer. National Councillor Laurent Wehrli was also elected to replace Christa Markwalder, who is stepping down as the domestic member of the Council of the Swiss Abroad. The Council also recognised the Confederation of Oregon Swiss Inc. in the USA as a Swiss association.

Following a brief discussion, the CSA approved a resolution on PostFinance AG, which had cancelled without warning the credit cards of customers living



abroad. The resolution called on the OSA Executive Board to urge the Federal Council, and especially Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard, to intervene in order to convince PostFinance to reverse this move as soon as possible.

Not surprisingly, given that the Council of the Swiss Abroad is due for re-election next year, proposed amendments to the voting procedures for delegates triggered a lively debate. In the end, the OSA Board

recommended that all Swiss Abroad who are on the electoral roll be allowed to vote. The delegates approved this recommendation by a large margin.

The assembled Swiss Abroad also reached a broad consensus following a short podium discussion on electronic voting held within the framework of the meeting in the chamber of the National Council. Although electronic voting has long been permitted in Geneva, for example, it is still not possible in more than 20 cantons, thus also affecting the Swiss Abroad from those cantons. Appealing to the cantons, podium member and OSA Co-Director Ariane Rustichelli said the OSA had been “shocked”, therefore, that nine cantons had scrapped e-voting shortly before the 2015 elections. She said every single canton had a duty to ensure that all the Swiss Abroad could benefit from e-voting. The result of the vote was greeted with widespread applause.

LEH

100 Faces – Portraits of Swiss living abroad

Presence Switzerland, part of the Consular Directorate at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and responsible for the image of Switzerland abroad, has worked closely with the OSA to mark the 100-year anniversary of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) with the release of the book "100 Faces – Portraits of Swiss living abroad".

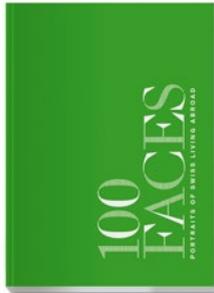
One hundred people from past and present, with extraordinary life stories, represent their home to the world and influence the image of Switzerland abroad. Their lives are multifaceted and their reasons for emigration diverse. Yet all of Switzerland's citizens living abroad

have something in common – their connection to Switzerland.

Participants were invited to speak about their social background and their professional career in the language of their choice. This created portraits of 90 people from roughly 50 countries and all five continents with different life stories, personal stories that also represent the history of Swiss

identity. Furthermore, the lives of ten figures from past centuries are highlighted, figures who made a name for themselves abroad.

Get to know these 100 people on the website www.houseofswitzerland.org (Search - 100 Faces).



Important notice

Please notify your Swiss representation of your email address(es) and mobile telephone number(s) and/or any changes to these and register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletter from your representation, etc.).

The latest issue of "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is sent free of charge to all households of Swiss Abroad who are registered with an embassy or consulate general either in printed format or electronically (via email or as an iOS/Android app).

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



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Federal referenda

Voting proposals are determined by the Federal Council at least four months before the voting date.

The following proposal will be put to the vote on 27 November 2016:

- Popular initiative of 16 November 2012:
"For an orderly exit from nuclear energy" (Atomausstiegsinitiative)

Further voting dates in 2017:

12 February, 21 May, 24 September, 26 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 under Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

CH Info: The Brochure App



The "Swiss Confederation – a brief guide" brochure gives a current overview of Switzerland's political system, the administration and its judicial authorities. It is now also available as an app for tablets and smartphones.

What makes Switzerland unique? How is Parliament made up? Who is the government? When do people vote? Questions like this are answered with text and graphics, and large-format photos give the publication special appeal.

The section on the separation of powers explains what type of jurisdiction the Parliament, the

government and the Federal Supreme Court have. The policy priorities of the departments are also presented, as well as an overview of how the parties are positioned at federal level.

Numerous links offer further information online. But the app is your quickest source of information: with one quick tap you're taken straight to the corresponding website. The app is always updated six weeks before voting, with links to explanations for Federal Council votes and videos explaining the individual bills.

The brochure can be ordered at: www.bundespublitionen.admin.ch (in German).

The "CH info" app can be downloaded from the Apple Store or the Google Play Store for free. The publisher is the Federal Chancellery.

The dawn of online consular services: the FDFA opens its virtual consulate

By 2020, half of the people on our planet will be connected to the Internet and almost 90 % of data traffic will flow through mobile devices. Service providers would do well to bear these figures in mind when thoughts about quality, efficiency and customer satisfaction dictate their decision-making in developing tools for work and modern communication.

e-government

In 2007, the Swiss Federal Council adopted an e-government strategy intended in particular to modernise the procedures of Switzerland's authorities, especially by ensuring communication is possible through electronic channels. It also put in place measures to enable citizens to file all their important paperwork with the authorities electronically.

By expanding the law to include the Swiss Abroad, parliament has clearly established the framework for providing consular services via a single point of contact. For its part, the Federal Council added that these services could be offered and obtained either electronically or virtually and that they should cover in particular areas such as consular services, the mailing of publications, the generation of statistics and the setting up of information channels.

Conscious of the importance of IT in contemporary society, the Swiss Abroad themselves made it the central theme of their 92nd congress in August 2014. Speaking at the event, the then OSA President Jacques-Simon Eggly said that, to improve relations with their fellow citizens, "the authorities should take advantage of new information technology to inform, contact and maintain close ties with the Swiss diaspora."

A single virtual point of contact

To meet these different mandates and expectations, the FDFA has developed a modern IT-based management system for the Swiss Abroad.

Aside from a more up-to-date IT architecture, this new system primarily offers the Swiss Abroad online services based on four principles: interactivity between users and the authorities, mobile access to information, online payment and interconnection with parallel systems (social insurance, local authorities, etc.).

Thus, from early October 2016 onwards, a new internet portal will enable all the Swiss Abroad to benefit from a range of online services: notification of arrival or departure abroad, the initiation of administrative procedures, direct contact with consulates, changes of address, etc.

This portal will be easily accessible via the FDFA's main site (www.dfae.admin.ch, "Online counter") as well as those of the relevant Swiss representations. The main challenge for access to the online counter will be in identifying users. Because it is dealing with personal information that must be reliable at all times, two procedures have been laid down: direct access for SuisseID cardholders and access via two-stage identification (name and personal password + a code received by SMS). Detailed information can be found on the online counter page.

Like all the other FDFA websites, the online counter will be accessible via all devices (PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones) thanks to the integration of responsive design.

Dynamic approach

In order to encourage users to make use of an online service, they need to be able to use it regularly and thus become acquainted with the system. Such regular use requires the range of services offered by the online counter eVERA to be attractive. It will therefore be expanded further in the future. New features are already planned, including notifying changes of address, online payment for issued certificates, registry office announcements and crisis management.

The FDFA is thus pleased to be able to extend its services to the Swiss Abroad in a way that is effective and environmentally friendly by limiting the use of paper, all thanks to moving to virtual transactions.

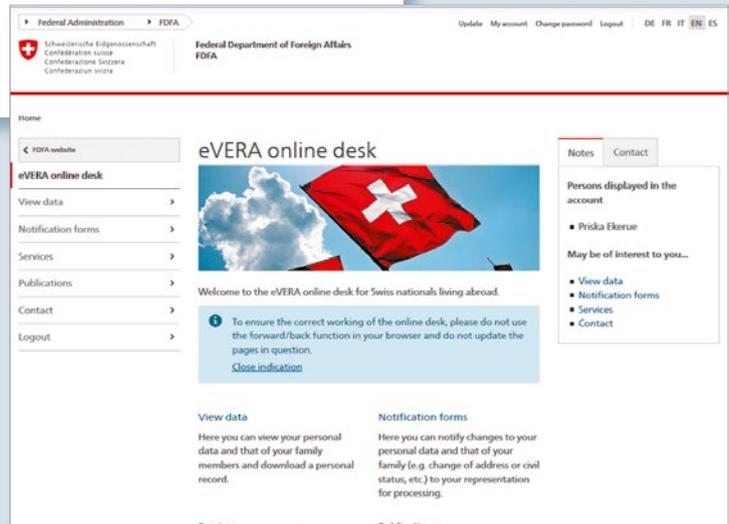
LAURENT PERRIARD, DEPUTY DIRECTOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS, FDFA





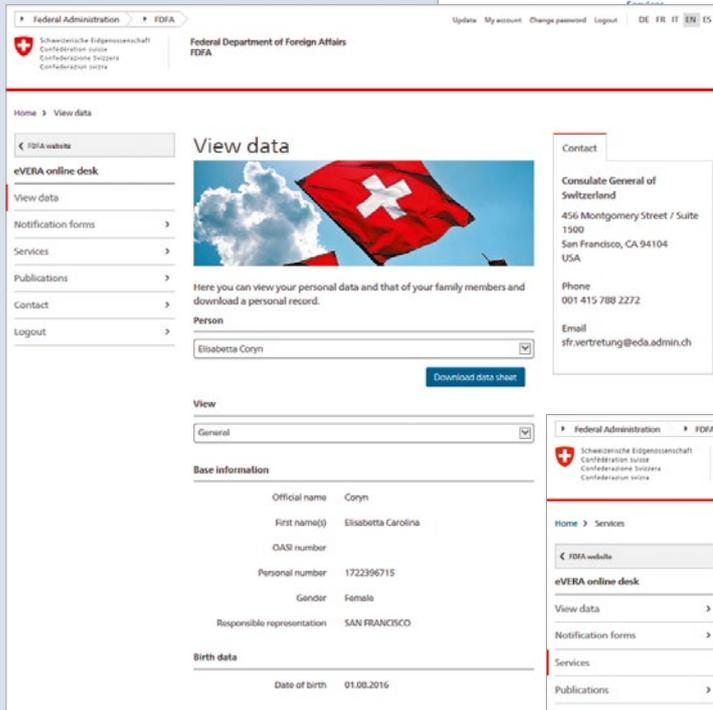
Registration screen:

There are two ways to log on to the online counter.



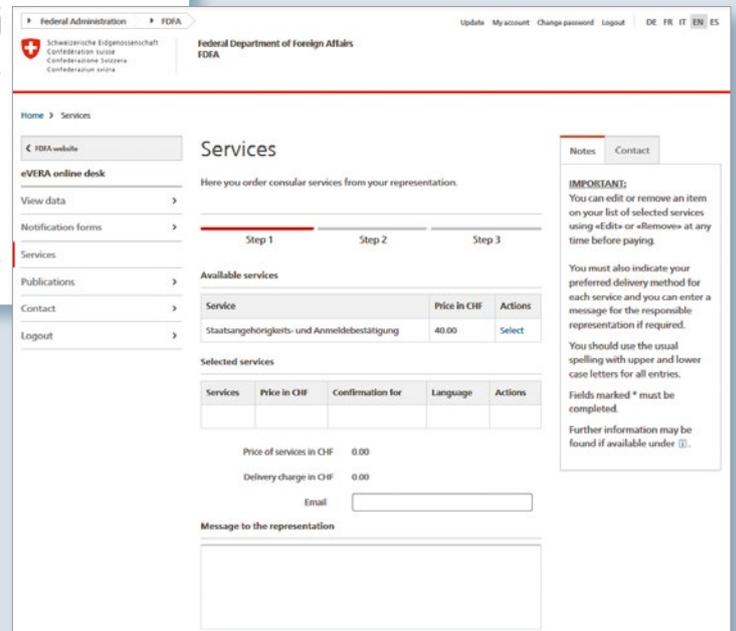
Online counter:

Having successfully logged on, you are taken to the main page, where you can choose from various services.



Data screen:

You can consult and download your data at any time.

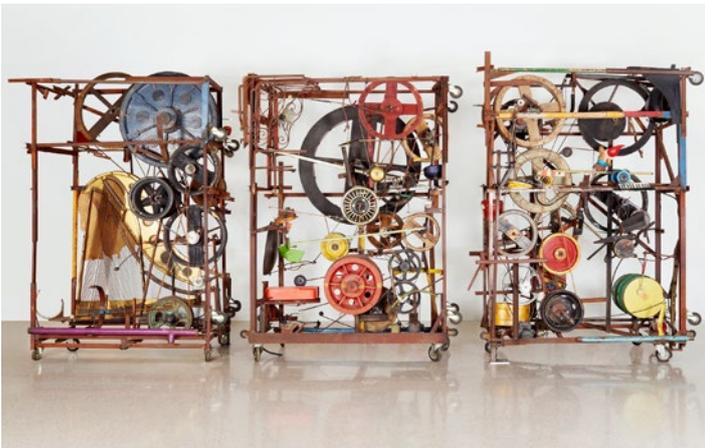


Available services:

Services can be ordered and paid for online.



Rolling across the keyboard: The dynamics of Tinguely's musical creations often only become apparent when seen close-up.



The first music machine from the "Méta-Harmonie" four-part series dates back to 1978.



A tangled structure made of a thousand pieces: a music machine from 1984.



Large-scale music machines

A museum was dedicated to the deceased Swiss artist Jean Tinguely precisely 20 years ago in Basel. Some of his sonorous sculptures are currently on display there. The large-scale machines produce noises, sounds and create music seemingly by chance – jingling, rattling, music-making art of timeless charm.

LEH

The “Music Machines/Machine Music” exhibition at the Museum Tinguely in Basel runs from 19 October 2016 to 22 January 2017.

www.tinguely.ch

1, 3, 4, 5: © 2016, ProLitteris, Zurich; Photo: Museum Tinguely, Basel, Daniel Spehr

2: © 2016, ProLitteris, Zurich; Photo: mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien

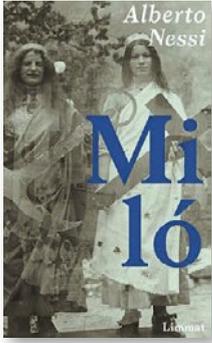


The most everyday items are incorporated into Tinguely's music machines.



Drum set or vehicle? Close-up shot of the “Méta-Hamonie II” from 1979.

Partisans and other stories



ALBERTO NESSI: "Miló".
Translated by Maja Pflug.
Limmat Verlag, 2016.
232 pages, CHF 34.50,
EUR 34.50
Published in Italian
by Edizioni Casagrande, 2014.

Alberto Nessi's "Miló" collection of stories, published in 2014, is finally available in German. The protagonists of these 18 stories live on the border between Italy and Switzerland. In the first such tale that takes place in Geneva before the start of the Second World War an Italian immigrant ekes out a meagre living rolling cigars and worries about her son Miló in prison. Having subsequently been extradited, Miló wanders around Italy doing various odd jobs. In September 1943, he goes underground and dies in the mountains fighting the fascists.

The author visited his widow and brings her memories to life: "Seeing him up on that scaffolding, she fell in love with him because he was a free young man." It is a wonderful

declaration of love in this war-ravaged era. Further tales about male and female partisans follow, combined with those of men and women alive today. These are the stories of the so-called "little people" who will never be famous. And yet they are swimming against the tide, showing bravery by refusing to abide by social norms, biding their time in abandoned Ticino villages or seeking a better life as migrants.

You can sense that Alberto Nessi is a good listener and always puts a person's inner life centre stage. "Forever", an homage to his father, is a gem. Nessi's portrayal of his father, who died at an early age, is clear, almost detached. Perhaps that is why it seems so close and tight. His comment "or maybe you saw me here, completing your work as a chronicler" is evidence of a close inner connection between father and son.

Nessi is indeed a chronicler through his stories, which shine a spotlight on resistance, bravery and thus freedom. Sometimes they drift into his protagonists' dreams, thus attaining a wonderfully lyrical side.

This is therefore a volume replete with poetry that, thanks to Maja Pflug's sensitive translation, is also a delight to read in German. Maja Pflug has been translating Italian literature into German for many years. In 2011, she was awarded the German-Italian Translator's Prize for her life's work.

Alberto Nessi, born in 1940, returned to his native Ticino after completing his studies in Fribourg. He taught in Mendrisio, wrote for newspapers and worked as an author. In February 2016, he became the first Italian-speaking author to be awarded the Swiss Grand Prix for Literature for his life's work.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Peter Schärli's liberated jazz



PETER SCHÄRLI TRIO
featuring Glenn Ferris:
"Purge", Enja, 2016.

Peter Schärli has been touring for more than 35 years and has played throughout Europe and at festivals around the globe. In this time, his music has become even more stylish and mature. Trumpeter Peter Schärli comes from Lucerne and lives in Aarau. His jazz is popular among many people who claim not to like jazz. His latest album, "Purge", is proof positive of this.

On nine tracks that flow and groove, the Peter Schärli Trio featuring Glenn Ferris play melodies that create connections and contain superb improvisations on the main theme. The result is jazz that is so relaxed that you overlook the almost secret complexity of tracks with unique chord progressions and unusual forms.

This music is the product of deliberate omission and of paring down, enabling its essential elements to come to the fore more clearly. The album title, "Purge", means doing precisely that. "I don't believe in being better, faster and louder than others, whether in society or in music," Schärli said in an interview. Nevertheless he adds, "I practise daily. Sometimes I play a single note for 45 minutes."

Just like his long-established Special Sextet, the Peter Schärli Trio featuring Glenn Ferris is a real working band. He's been playing with the earthy sounding bassist Thomas Dürst and the wonderful trombonist Glenn Ferris for decades. The youngest member of the band is Hans Peter Pfammatter, who has already made a name for himself with experimental electronic projects, though here he plays classic piano, albeit in an imaginative and form-conscious manner.

Glenn Ferris, the American in Paris, played with jazz and pop icons like Frank Zappa, Archie Shepp, Don Ellis, Tim Buckley and Stevie Wonder before coming to Europe. His swing is as sentimental as it is funky and full of soul; his solos are a delight to behold. The band leader's clear and precise sound creates a veritable horn section.

Peter Schärli turned 60 last year. "Purge" is like an initial stock-taking of his current qualities. These qualities can also be heard in his other trio with Brazilian guitar-player Juarez Moreira and the Basel pianist Hans Feigenwinter as well as in his ballad-like quartet "Don't change your hair for me". Schärli is therefore a tried-and-tested guarantor of understated class.

PIRMIN BOSSART

Claude Longchamps



How many Sundays have we spent in front of the TV listening to the analysis of this dapper gentleman who always wears a bow-tie in front of the camera. We like his blend of meticulous elegance, which his bow-tie suggests, and his unique charm. When Claude Longchamps dissects the latest voting results on Swiss television, we always see him as this rather well-nourished man with the air of a bartender, commenting on the projections eloquently, pertinently and expertly. What a fascinating character!

Claude Longchamps has been a firm fixture on Swiss TV for many years when it comes to elections and referenda. A voting Sunday without the university lecturer and pollster from Fribourg is impossible to imagine. But things are now set to change as the 59-year-old political scientist and historian has decided to scale down his working commitments. He was omnipresent as chief executive of his GfS Research Institute in Berne, but Longchamps now wants to hand over the company. He will remain chairman of the Board of Directors until 2019, but he passed operational management on to Executive Board members Urs Bieri and Lukas Golder on 1 May.

For us, this means we will have to get used to voting Sundays without the man in the bow-tie in future. Longchamps is planning to take a break from the Swiss political scene next year to go on an extended trip around the world, as he revealed to the magazine "Bilanz".

MARKO LEHTINEN

Dimitri dies at the age of 80

He was Switzerland's most famous clown. A whole generation grew up with his mimes and beaming smile. Dimitri took to the stage for the first time in 1959 with a solo act but achieved his major breakthrough with guest performances at the Circus Knie during the 1970s. The trained potter was also famous for his own theatre and the "Accademia Teatro Dimitri" theatre school in Ticino. He gave an extensive interview to "Swiss Review" last winter. Dimitri seemed on the ball, sharp-witted and full of vigour, talking about a film project without dialogue that tells the story of a station master called Molinari. It did not come to fruition. Dimitri passed away peacefully on the evening of 19 July after a performance. He was 80 years of age.

First arrests of returning jihadists

The first returning jihadists have been arrested in Switzerland. After a first case in June, the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland arrested a further returnee, a 29-year-old with dual Swiss and Tunisian citizenship, at Zurich airport in August. He was from French-speaking Switzerland and flew back to Switzerland from Turkey. He now faces charges for infringement of the ban on IS and for supporting a criminal organisation. The latest figures released by the Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) indicate that the number of travelling jihadists recorded since 2001 stands at 77. The number of those returning reached 13 as at the end of July, according to the FIS.

Bulgaria honours Marc Lettau

The "Swiss Review" journalist and editor Marc Lettau has been presented with the "golden laurel branch" by the Bulgarian foreign ministry. The Bulgarian embassy in Switzerland paid tribute to his major contribution to Bulgarian democracy through his projects. The award was presented as a mark of gratitude and in recognition of his efforts. Lettau first visited Bulgaria as an orienteer 25 years ago. He then supplied food and medicine for local people through his Variant 5 association, helped out in nurseries, established dental practices, supported the fight against tuberculosis locally and set up media projects for journalists. Marc Lettau and his family now spend around two months a year in Bulgaria.



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Isabel and Christian Koch

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