

What should Switzerland's direction be over the next four years? Welcome to our big 2023 election survey.

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In around two months' time, on 22 October 2023, Switzerland's voters will choose a new parliament. The 246 newly elected National Council and Council of States members will then shape the country's political course over the next four years. In December, parliament will appoint the seven-member federal government, the Federal Council, for a new term. According to an unwritten rule, referred to as the "magic formula", the three biggest political parties are entitled to two Federal Council seats each, and the fourth-strongest party to one seat. This arrangement could change based on how the current parties in government (the SVP, SP, FDP, and Centre) perform in the parliamentary elections. With Alain Berset (SP) announcing that he will step down from the government at the end of the year, there is already one vacant seat up for grabs. The six remaining members of the Federal Council intend to stand for election again.

Parliament plays a key role

The Federal Council and parliament pass legislation and set the course for making decisions that affect our



everyday lives and shape the outlook of future generations. In direct democracy, voters can influence the country's political course through referendums and initiatives. Nevertheless, the composition of parliament plays a key role in determining the overall orientation. Over the next few years, Switzerland faces significant political challenges both domestically and abroad. What is our country's position on Europe? Must we redefine Swiss neutrality in view of Russia's war of aggression? How do we meet our climate goals? How will Switzerland meet its future energy needs? How do we secure the long-term funding of pension provision?

Six parties in the spotlight

"Swiss Review" grilled Switzerland's six biggest political parties ahead of the elections. We wanted to know the positions of the SVP, SP, FDP, Centre, Greens, and Green Liberals in three key areas: environment and energy; neutrality and foreign policy; and society and domestic policy. We also focused on the "Fifth Switzerland" in our survey. What do you think about the Swiss Abroad exercising their political rights? Should Switzerland go

ahead with e-voting? And the key question: why should Swiss citizens living abroad vote for your party?

You can read the answers that the political parties gave to these and other fundamental questions. Further questions and answers are available online – in addition to a comprehensive dossier containing every "Swiss Review" article on the 2023 elections to date. The final page contains the names of the candidates from the "Fifth Switzerland" who are running for a seat in the National Council. It also includes a note explaining why it is particularly hard for these candidates to get elected to parliament.

Further information

How the main political parties approach the "Fifth Switzerland": [revue.link/parties](https://www.revue.link/parties)

Online guidance for voters ahead of the federal elections: [revue.link/aides](https://www.revue.link/aides)

Election dossier of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad: www.elections-2023.ch



Swiss People's Party (SVP)

Right-wing national-conservative party; strongest party since 2003. 2019 election: 25.6%. Current political weight: 53 seats in National Council, 7 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council.
www.svp.ch



Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP)

The only left-wing party in government; roots go back to labour movement. 2019 election: 16.8%. Current political weight: 39 seats in National Council, 7 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council.
www.sp-ps.ch



FDP – The Liberals

Merged with the Liberal Party in 2009 to establish FDP.The Liberals. 2019 election: 15.1%. Current political weight: 29 seats in National Council, 12 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council.
www.fdp.ch



The Centre

Founded in 2021 following the merger of the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) and Conservative Democratic Party (BDP). 2019 election (cumulative result): 13.8%. Current political weight: 28 seats in National Council, 14 seats in Council of States, 1 seat in Federal Council.
www.die-mitte.ch



Swiss Green Party (the Greens)

Left-wing party whose roots go back to the anti-nuclear movement. 2019 election: 13.2%. Current political weight: 28 seats in National Council, 5 seats in Council of States, 0 seats in Federal Council.
www.gruene.ch



Green Liberal Party (the Green Liberals, GLP)

Founded in 2007 as a moderate splinter group of the left-leaning Greens. 2019 election: 7.8%. Current political weight: 16 seats in National Council, 0 seats in Council of States, 0 seats in Federal Council.
www.gruenliberale.ch

Approved by voters on 18 June 2023, the Climate and Innovation Act points the way towards making Switzerland carbon-neutral by 2050. Do we need further climate action?

No. There is no need for government intervention in a free-market economy. We need to intensify energy research instead. To ensure safe electricity production, we also need new fourth-generation nuclear power plants as well as a system for recycling spent fuel rods.

Yes. To meet our climate goals, we must expedite our energy transition towards renewables. We must improve energy efficiency, speed up the modernisation of buildings, enhance public transport, regulate and hold the financial sector to account, and reduce energy consumption to a reasonable level.

Yes. Provided we implement liberal policies to meet our climate goals. This includes agreeing on targets and carbon trading rules for the industrial sector as well as implementing measures related to buildings and mobility. We should look for technology-neutral solutions in all areas.

Yes. The Climate and Innovation Act delivers on the net-zero goal of the Paris Agreement. With its stimulus programme for residential buildings, its emission reduction targets, and its promotion of innovation, the legislation constitutes an effective, balanced package. It is an important step in the right direction. Further democratically approved steps are still necessary.

Yes. The legislation sets climate goals and promotes key action. But more money is needed. This is why the Greens have co-launched the Climate Fund Initiative, calling for 0.5 to 1 per cent of GDP to be set aside for the purpose of fighting climate change and protecting the environment.

Yes. We need further action to achieve the aims of the legislation. Our four-pronged strategy (efficiency, renewables, energy storage, and Europe) offers intelligent solutions to optimise the synergies between ecology and economy while ensuring energy security.

As approved by voters in 2017, Swiss law bans the construction of new nuclear power stations. Should we lift the ban?

Yes. Because the catastrophic meltdown at the Japanese nuclear power plant in Fukushima influenced the electorate's decision to approve the ban. This disaster is irrelevant to Switzerland and the safety of our power plants.

No. As part of the Paris Agreement, Switzerland and other countries are committed to limiting global warming to no more than 1.5°C. This means moving away from fossil fuels and nuclear power.

Neither yes nor no. Apart from a massive expansion in renewable energy, Switzerland urgently needs new big power plants to ensure energy security with enough base-load capacity throughout the year, including winter.

No. We oppose the construction of new nuclear power stations. Instead, we need quickly workable, realistic, pragmatic solutions focusing on domestic, renewable energy to ensure energy security, drive the switch from nuclear and fossil fuels, and reduce our reliance on foreign energy.

No. Any new plant would take decades to start producing energy, while costing billions of francs. There are also major safety issues, not to mention the still unsolved problem of nuclear waste. There are good, less expensive, more quickly available renewable alternatives like solar and wind.

No. We can ensure energy security with renewables. Nuclear brings major risks and involves the unresolved question of how we dispose of the waste. Our four-pronged strategy (efficiency, renewables, energy storage, and Europe) is clearly a better alternative. However, we support nuclear research.

The expansion of solar power, wind power and hydropower is increasingly to the detriment of environmental protection. Is this a justifiable trade-off?

Neither yes nor no. It depends on whether the expansion in renewables relates to existing infrastructure such as dams or installations on buildings that already have an environmental impact, or to new infrastructure with a highly detrimental impact on wildlife and the natural landscape.

Yes. But the SP has already suggested specific ways in which to reconcile the rapid roll-out of hydro, wind and solar with environmental concerns. It is possible to turbocharge the development of renewables while preventing irreversible biodiversity loss.

Yes. We need a rapid expansion in power capacity. Both the public sector and electricity suppliers must drive the increase in renewables and take advantage of simplified approval procedures. Efforts by the left-green faction and environmental organisations to oppose this are counterproductive.

Yes. The Climate and Innovation Act means that Switzerland is committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. We therefore believe it is acceptable to prioritise specific projects aimed at generating renewable energy. This includes developing dams and pushing solar power.

No. Biodiversity and the switch from nuclear and fossil fuels are inextricably linked. We, the Greens, are committed to expanding renewable energy in tandem with nature. This means stopping energy wastage as well as installing solar panels on all suitable roofs, facades and infrastructure to mitigate the environmental impact.

Yes. Provided there is no irreversible, disproportionate impact that cannot be offset through suitable replacement or compensatory measures. Furthermore, we are against irreversibly damaging and destroying natural or cultural assets of national importance. The benefits must also be sufficient to justify the environmental impact.

The Swiss Evangelical People's Party (EVP) (3 seats in National Council), the Partei der Arbeit Schweiz (PdAS) (1 seat), Solidarités (1 seat), the Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (EDU) (1 seat), and Lega (1 seat) were not included in the survey. One independent sits in the Council of States.



Which individual climate policy measures should be prioritised in the next legislative period?

- Lift restrictions on technology in research and implement further measures as outlined in our previous answers.
- Abolish government climate funding and the resulting bureaucracy. Subsidised measures only make the process more costly and are only feasible for a small number of major projects.
- Slash or do away with politically inflated energy prices as well as duties and taxes on electricity, diesel, oil, etc., so that Switzerland can continue developing as an industrial economy.

- A binding decarbonisation roadmap and a binding pathway to renewable energy – especially solar and wind.
- Cut transport emissions and electrify vehicles with renewable power, and promote public transport as well as pedestrian and cycle links.
- We want climate-friendly financial services. We should promote transparency, set investor targets, define standards for the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and introduce a CO2 tax on profits from climate-damaging investments.

- Switzerland has made significant progress in the use of renewables in recent years, but more must still be done. The FDP wants investment in renewable energy sources as well as sufficient base-load power on the national grid.
- Switzerland is strong in research – an area that could play a key role in the development of new technologies. The FDP wants to continue supporting innovation. Nothing should be off the table.
- Switzerland must continue to address the implications of climate change while developing measures and strategies that will help us adapt to new realities.

- We want to promote business-friendly innovation that drives renewable energy production.
- Yes to energy security through action on climate change: we must accelerate the switch to green energy and thereby reduce our reliance on other countries and fossil fuels.
- Providing businesses and private households with financial support and specialist advice in order to meet the goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2050.

- Solar as standard on all buildings and infrastructure – to produce as much power as Switzerland needs on any given day. This type of electricity generation has the most public support.
- Climate action is also the job of the public sector – funding and zero-interest loans for building renovations, heating system changes, and fossil-free mobility; investments to train the necessary skilled people. This is what the Greens and the SP are calling for in their Climate Fund Initiative.
- Climate-friendly finance – Switzerland has significant global responsibility as a financial centre.

- We explain these measures in detail in our strategy paper (efficiency, renewables, energy storage, and Europe).

Swiss-EU relations affect the everyday lives of the over 500,000 Swiss Abroad who live in the EU. Which is the most important condition that must be met before the Federal Council can negotiate with the EU on a new framework agreement?

It is primarily local and bilateral legislation that affects the lives of Swiss Abroad in the EU. Swiss nationals were already living in the EU before freedom of movement between Switzerland and the EU came into force (June 2002). Existing bilateral agreements on matters like social security and double taxation offer sufficient protection and peace of mind. We should not be superseding these with conditions unilaterally imposed by the EU. There should be no new framework agreement without taking our direct democracy into account.

There has been a lack of trust between Berne and Brussels since talks on an institutional agreement broke down in May 2021. Switzerland needs to take quick, unilateral action to rebuild this trust. Firstly, the Federal Council should make it very clear to the European Commission that it is interested in resolving the institutional sticking points. Secondly, Switzerland should increase its cohesion payments to the EU. Thirdly, Switzerland should show solidarity on EU immigration policy by taking in considerably more migrants.

Bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU are of vital importance. A good, reliable relationship with Brussels is crucial for our economy and our society. The bilateral approach has proved to be tailor-made for both parties. The FDP believes in developing this approach. Joining the EU or the EEA is not an option in our view. Nor is restoring relations through a free-trade agreement.

The Centre wants to continue the bilateral approach and advocates strong, stable cooperation with the EU to ensure Switzerland's prosperity. As far as Europe is concerned, we therefore expect the Federal Council to make a clear commitment to safeguarding wages and protecting our welfare system.

Abandoning talks on a framework agreement was a huge mistake by the Federal Council. Universities, students, artists, scientists, the economy and, not least, the Swiss Abroad are suffering the consequences of this breakdown in relations. It is all the more incomprehensible for talks to still have not resumed two years later. For us, the answer is simple: time to get back to the negotiating table. All the requirements for talks are in place. The Federal Council must now take the next step. This is why we have launched our Europe Initiative to improve Swiss-EU relations.

We liked the framework agreement as it was over two years ago. The framework agreement would have given Switzerland full access to the single market and enabled talks on new sectoral agreements (e.g. for energy or healthcare). It would also have provided the Swiss economy with legal clarity and allowed us to be a full part of EU education and research programmes. Essentially, the framework agreement is ready. The Federal Council only needs to retrieve it and present it to parliament for approval. In the current situation, the Green Liberals want the immediate adoption of a new negotiating mandate.



FDP
Die Liberalen



Grünliberale

Several European countries would like to supply Ukraine with Swiss-manufactured weapons, but this is not possible under Swiss law as it stands. Should Switzerland allow the re-export to take place?

No. A country that respects the rule of law keeps to the agreements that it has signed. The unilateral re-export of arms to a warring party would violate Swiss neutrality. We would lose our international status as a neutral country – and consequently our role as an unbiased intermediary.

Yes. Although Switzerland is a neutral country, it has a legal, political and moral duty to support Ukraine. The SP advocates a solution that would allow the Federal Council, under strict conditions based on international law, to approve requests to re-export weapons to Ukraine by way of exception.

Yes. The war in Ukraine has shown that the War Materiel Act in its current form is unsuitable for the challenges of today. For months, the FDP has been committed to finding a solution compatible with neutrality.

Yes. The Centre believes that Switzerland must stand with Ukraine and allow other countries to transfer Swiss weapons to Ukraine. We will work constructively towards solutions to support Ukraine as effectively as possible.

No. The War Materiel Act forbids the export of Swiss armaments to countries embroiled in war, while our military neutrality precludes making decisions on a case-by-case basis. Switzerland must support Ukraine by providing much more financial assistance, freezing all oligarch assets and banning Russian commodity trading.

Yes. Because Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a criminal war of aggression under international law.

Russia's war on Ukraine is testing Swiss neutrality. Must we redefine what neutrality means?

No. Switzerland is a sovereign country. Our neutrality defines our foreign policy and forbids us from being a party to armed conflicts between other countries. However, we must provide humanitarian assistance to all warring parties and support all peace negotiations.

Yes. We must adapt neutrality to the reality of the times. Neutrality does not mean championing a country or a group of countries with imperial aspirations, but standing on the side of international law at all times. This also includes being more proactive in supporting the UN and its objectives.

Neither yes nor no. Neutrality is an instrument for maintaining security and not a means to shirk responsibility. We should always adapt it to the prevailing circumstances. Neutrality was never meant to be rigid.

Neither yes nor no. Neutrality is a foreign policy instrument and not an end in itself. Its function is to ensure Switzerland's independence, security and prosperity in a turbulent world. Swiss neutrality does not absolve us of our responsibility to take a stance.

Yes. The war has changed what we thought we knew. Switzerland must contribute to security and stability in Europe. The debate on neutrality has begun. For us, Switzerland clearly stands on the side of international law and human rights.

Yes. The Federal Council's interpretation of neutrality is too strict. Where the use of force violates international law, Switzerland must be able to support the victim, particularly by providing essential supplies (e.g. protective helmets and vests) to the civilian population.

Should Switzerland increase its military spending from the current 0.76 to at least 1 per cent of GDP and align its defence policy more towards "international cooperation"?

Yes. Our armed forces have been underfunded, because people mistakenly thought that we were now in an era of global detente. This situation now needs to be rectified. A neutral army is tasked with national defence, which is why international military cooperation should equate to nothing more than disaster relief.

No. Our centre-right and right-wing parliament has presided over a massive increase in defence spending. This needs to be reversed. Our army is bloated, too expensive and incorrectly equipped. However, we need to cooperate more with Europe on security. Swiss peacebuilding deployments also need to be speedier, more frequent and more effective. Switzerland's approach to peace and security must finally reflect the interconnected reality of the 21st century.

Yes. Switzerland's security policy must adapt to new threats and focus on modernising the armed forces and rectifying skill deficiencies. We need to raise the defence budget to 7 billion francs. Military cooperation with NATO also needs to intensify, because a completely autonomous defence policy is no longer realistic.

Yes. To meet the threats of the 21st century, our armed forces need to be equipped accordingly. Defence spending needs to rise in stages to one per cent of GDP by 2035. Switzerland must also contribute to European security – and increase military cooperation with its neighbouring countries and with NATO.

No. Switzerland already spends more on defence per capita than Germany, for example. Our country must invest in international cooperation and in fighting the biggest threats to human security: the environmental crisis and our dependence on authoritarian petrostates.

No. We oppose increasing the defence budget without any rationale, but we approve additional, justified expenditure in specific areas. To guarantee Switzerland's security, we also advocate closer cooperation with the EU and NATO as well as full interoperability.

The retirement age for men and women will be 65 from 2028. Should the retirement age be raised again for both sexes to secure the long-term funding of the welfare system?

Neither yes nor no. Further reform will be necessary in future. Demographic changes mean that the retirement age needs to be made more flexible. The current reform has stabilised Old-age and survivors' insurance (OASI) until at least 2030. We will see what the next reform brings, as soon as we begin to address the time beyond 2030 within the next few years.

No. The right-wing parties want to hollow out the welfare state bit by bit. Less money is available thanks to their policies. Instead, we need to shore up pensions to protect purchasing power. This is why the SP is against a further increase in the retirement age and in favour of a 13th OASI pension payment.

Yes. OASI is heading for financial meltdown due to demographic changes. By raising the retirement age to 66 and linking the retirement age to life expectancy, our Pension Initiative is exactly what is needed to address the problems besetting OASI and ensure that the state pension system continues to work in future.

No. The latest reform has secured the funding of OASI over the next few years. A further increase in the retirement age is, therefore, neither financially necessary nor socially acceptable. However, OASI still discriminates against couples by capping their pensions. This needs to stop (see our Fair Pensions Initiative).

No. A further increase in the retirement age is unnecessary. OASI can easily be funded through a fair reallocation of SNB profits and a slight increase in the contribution percentage rate. The Greens also support an inheritance tax on the superrich to the fund OASI.

Yes. Retirement provision is becoming increasingly unbalanced as a result of demographic change. To keep pension benefits at their current levels, we need to change the retirement age and make it more flexible. But other measures are still needed (e.g. a debt ceiling for OASI).



FDP
Die Liberalen



Grünliberale

Another women's strike took place in Switzerland on 13 June 2023. Do we still need to do more for gender equality?

No. Gender equality has been enshrined in the Gender Equality Act since 1996. Both sexes have equal rights. There is no need for any other measures – such as quotas, which exacerbate discrimination and divide society.

Yes. There is still a lot to do before we see real equality. Women still earn 1,000 francs less per month, just because they are women. Looking after the children and caring for older family members is still often seen as a female responsibility, while women still live in fear of domestic violence or being groped on the street.

Yes. We still need action in certain areas like second-pillar occupational pension provision. This is why the FDP supports the pension fund reform approved by parliament, which strengthens coverage specifically for women. Individual taxation is another key instrument to promote equality. Greater female participation in the job market would also result in more women taking up leadership positions.

Yes. The Centre continues to work toward greater gender equality. For example, in championing the pension fund reform and the reform of the Gender Equality Act, we focused on key issues related to women and advocated for a better work-life balance. Further progress needs to follow.

Yes. As long as gender is the reason why people earn less and are exposed to greater violence and discrimination, we will continue to campaign for equal pay, better work-family balance, and greater protection for women.

Yes. In particular, we need to introduce individual taxation as well as paid parental leave for both parents where both parents work (instead of maternity and paternity leave).

Around a quarter of Switzerland's population have no Swiss passport. Should we lower the obstacles to citizenship?

No. In our direct democracy, citizens have the final say on political decisions. It is, therefore, important that people who arrive in Switzerland understand and learn about their responsibility, the workings of our country, and the long-term consequences of future decisions. This takes time, interest and commitment.

Yes. We believe that it is in the interests of us all that the people who live here shape the future of our country. To do so, they need to be allowed to have a say and take decisions like the rest of us. We need uniform, formal naturalisation criteria at federal level, while the naturalisation procedure itself also needs to be quick and inexpensive.

No. Simplified naturalisation for third-generation foreign nationals was an important step in 2018. You can always talk about making certain changes here and there, but the FDP believes that the naturalisation procedure works well by and large. The principle still holds that citizenship comes after the process of integration and does not precede it.

No. The Centre opposes any changes to the Swiss Citizenship Act, which was only amended five years ago. To become a Swiss citizen, you must meet certain conditions. Acquisition of citizenship is the outcome, not a condition, of successful integration.

Yes. Because our democracy becomes stronger when more people are able to participate in it. This is why the Greens support the Democracy Initiative to make naturalisation a fundamental right, with the same fair conditions for naturalisation applying to everyone.

Yes. We want the following: 1) The process of becoming Swiss to start at school: those in compulsory education for at least five years considered to be integrated in and familiar with Swiss life. 2) Naturalisation applications can be made after 7 years instead of after 10. 3) The minimum period of stay in the municipality should be reduced to 1 to 3 years. 4) No more naturalisation "interviews".

Work-family balance is a long-running political issue. Should the state do more to fund the expansion of day care (nurseries) for children?

No. People have been able to manage work and family since time immemorial, without the state having to fund day care. People should manage their own lives as they see fit, without delegating responsibility to the state.

Yes. Work-family balance is the key to equality. And childcare services are crucial to promoting work-family balance. This is why the SP is calling for good, affordable day care across Switzerland as part of its Day-Care Initiative.

Essentially, yes. However, the FDP wants a lower-cost option to the one approved by the National Council in March. Cantons and municipalities need to offer enough day-care facilities. Tax deductions for childcare services would incentivise companies to provide day-care options. We need to incentivise private nurseries in cantons where most or all nurseries are publicly funded. There should be a level playing field for everyone.

Yes. More financial investment should certainly be taken into consideration to promote a better work-family balance. Furthermore, this would help to keep women on the job market and stem the skills shortage. The federal government already provides support, but the responsible cantons must also fulfil their responsibility.

Yes. It is a proven fact that women cut their working hours following the birth of their first child, which is why there has to be enough affordable day care to allow young mothers to remain at work and not be lost to the job market during staff shortages.

Yes. Because there has to be a healthier relationship between work and family life. Nurseries and other types of day care allow parents to increase their working hours, which mitigates the skills and people shortage.



Several cantons have voted no to lowering the cantonal voting age from 18 to 16. Should 16-year-olds be allowed to vote at federal level?

No. Sixteen-year-olds are children in the eyes of the law and do not have the same rights and obligations as adults. They are not yet integrated into the world of work either, which is why lowering the voting age is inappropriate. All decisions at the ballot box have consequences. A 16-year-old cannot make these decisions yet.

Yes. Political participation is crucial. Teenagers under 18 are unable to vote despite the fact that political decisions will affect them the longest. This is wrong. They should have voting rights at municipal, cantonal and national level from the age of 16.

No. In several cantons, a lowering of the voting age has been rejected at the ballot box or at parliamentary level. Introducing this change at federal level and presenting the cantons with a fait accompli would be undemocratic. The voting age should remain at 18, when children legally become adults. Instead of making more exceptions, we need to have a fundamental discussion about the adult legal age.

No. The youth wing of our party supports lowering the voting age. We are more sceptical. You would first have to lower the adult legal age to 16, which we do not support.

Yes. Young people, who still have a long time to live, should also be involved in taking decisions that affect their future. People in modern, progressive democracies should be able to vote from the age of 16. Greater participation makes democracies stronger and more future-proof.

Yes. Young people should be able to vote earlier on issues that affect their future (e.g. pension provision, environmental policy, climate and energy policy).

Affordable housing is scarce in cities and tourist regions. What is the most important thing we can do to counteract this problem?

Building land in Switzerland is very expensive because it is scarce. Excessive immigration means that demand is even higher. High-density housing can only partly ease the problem. This is because you still have inflexible building regulations, a complicated and slow authorisation process, and nonsensical energy regulations to contend with – all of which makes the process of finding viable solutions even slower and more expensive. Rising interest rates and an overregulated rental market mean that it has become less attractive to invest in housing. Much of the problem is home-made, and we could be more proactive in rectifying the situation. There is plenty we could do.

Profit-minded property owners and estate agents take advantage of rising demand and charge inflated rents. The government must be more active in counteracting this failure of the market. Public land should not be sold to private entities but used for appropriate, affordable housing and made available to SMEs on a leasehold basis. Rent controls are a way to prevent price explosions. To stop the property market from overheating, we also need to restrict access to the Swiss property market for investors, groups and funds from abroad.

More housing, less regulation! Building needs to become attractive again. You can build new housing. You can renovate ageing housing stock while adding additional floors and increasing density. You can also convert commercial property to residential housing. All of this should be made simpler and easier.

To provide a growing population with more housing, you need a comprehensive approach to land and site development at all government levels. One quick win would be to restrict the right of complaint with regard to smaller building projects. The Centre has also campaigned to amend the Second Homes Act.

We should promote non-profit housing schemes, where housing cooperatives charge according to the cost rent on a non-profit basis. Viewed in the long term, cooperative housing is very reasonably priced. Furthermore, cooperatives create innovative, space-saving forms of housing such as communal and multi-generational homes. These allow older people to downsize into smaller housing after their children have moved out, with larger homes set aside for families. In tourist regions, we also need to close loopholes in restrictions on the building of second homes and prevent new loopholes from appearing.

We have a package of measures that would create high-quality, sustainable, adequate-sized, reasonably priced housing space in the right locations. Moderate densification is necessary to meet higher demand for housing. Rigid noise protection regulations have created a logjam and need to be loosened as a matter of urgency, not least in larger urban areas. A bill that was tabled as a result of one of our parliamentary motions points the way in this regard. Overall, we need an effective, long-term, joined-up approach to spatial, structure and land-use planning in order to achieve high-quality housing offering short commutes and valuable space for humans and nature.

E-voting pilots took place again in three cantons on 18 June. Should we now push ahead with e-voting and make it available to all Swiss Abroad in particular?

Neither yes nor no. Our system is secure and well thought out. E-voting, on the other hand, is prone to fraud (e.g. through hacking). Unfortunately, our suggestion that voting papers be sent to the Swiss Abroad by email and returned by post fell on deaf ears.

Yes. Many Swiss Abroad are unable to exercise their constitutionally enshrined political rights, because voting papers continue to arrive too late for many. E-voting is the only way to ensure that the entire "Fifth Switzerland" can take part in elections and popular votes.

Yes. Many Swiss Abroad are still unable to exercise their right to vote, because voting papers arrive too late or not at all. E-voting could help to redress this – but not completely, because the necessary codes would still have to be sent by post.

Yes. E-voting is very important for Swiss Abroad. It makes it easier for our expatriate nationals to exercise their political rights. The Centre believes, therefore, that the introduction of e-voting is an absolute priority.

Yes. However, for security reasons, pilots should be strictly limited to Swiss Abroad and to people with physical and/or mental impairments, to whom e-voting offers genuine added value. If all Swiss Abroad could be officially assigned to their own canton, this would expedite the process.

Yes. As long as we can ensure that e-voting is fraud-proof.



Do we need to take other concrete steps to ensure that the Swiss Abroad can exercise their political rights? If so, what exactly should be done?

No. Compared to other countries, our expatriates have generous voting rights. The Swiss Abroad can take part in elections and popular votes at municipal, cantonal and federal level. What is more, it is possible for Swiss Abroad to be elected to the National Council, the Council of States or the Federal Council, even if that is somewhat unlikely.

Yes. The Federal Council and the cantons must work towards developing a reliable, trustworthy and financially secure e-voting channel specifically for the “Fifth Switzerland”.

Yes. The introduction of a government e-ID scheme is vital to ensuring that the necessary codes for e-voting can be sent electronically. An e-ID scheme would also simplify various government and consulate services.

Yes. The Centre supports concrete measures that allow the Swiss Abroad to participate in Switzerland’s political and social life. International election lists is one of them, which is why we will again have candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” representing our party this year at the federal elections.

Yes. We want to make it easier for Swiss Abroad to vote. The Greens believe that embassies and consulates should oversee the process, without the need for any more time-consuming postal deliveries. Furthermore, we support a change in the constitution that would ensure that Swiss Abroad are also represented in parliament.

Yes. We should make voting easier wherever possible. This also includes authorities being more proactive in informing Swiss Abroad of their right to vote.

The Swiss Abroad have an indefinite right to vote. Should this right to vote be time-limited instead, e.g. to 30 years?

No. Any time limit would be very hard to implement. It is likely that third- or later-generation expats rarely exercise their right to vote anyway, because they no longer have a real connection to Switzerland – unless they actually return to Switzerland.

No. More and more Swiss live abroad for differing lengths of time. Many of them will return sooner or later. It is, therefore, right that the Federal Constitution allows them to continue exercising their political rights even if they stay abroad for several decades.

No. Swiss have the right to vote both at home and abroad. Swiss Abroad must make sure that they are on the electoral register. Those who no longer have a close connection to Switzerland tend not to exercise their voting rights anyway.

No. The Centre believes there is no need to put a time limit on voting rights for Swiss citizens, either at home or abroad.

No. The Greens want to extend, not remove, political rights. The Swiss Abroad are no exception in this regard. But this also applies to foreign nationals in Switzerland.

No. Swiss expatriates clearly have a role to play in our country’s political life. We are committed to increasing expat participation in elections and popular votes. This is why we have launched our international section, GLP International.

The Swiss Abroad represent an ever-increasing proportion of the electorate. Why should Swiss citizens living abroad vote for your party?

Like its parent party, SVP International represents the traditional values of Switzerland and its citizens: personal and social freedom, sovereignty, independence, individual responsibility, and neutrality. These values, together with a social market economy, have made Switzerland into one of the world’s richest countries. We want to minimise state intervention so that entrepreneurship, innovation and competition can continue to prosper in a country that remains an attractive place for jobs. Only a profit-oriented market economy ensures a functioning welfare system.

Swiss citizens living abroad should vote for the SP, because their political voice often tips the balance not least on foreign policy issues. They play an important role in shaping the present and future of an open, equitable society. Our international section, SP International, is strengthening the relationship Swiss Abroad have with Switzerland and Swiss politics. SP International supports the political rights, activities and interests of our citizens abroad, e.g. through the comprehensive rollout of e-voting.

Our international section, FDP.The Liberals International, has been defending the specific interests of the Swiss Abroad for decades. We campaign for a modern, cosmopolitan Switzerland and advocate international mobility. Global interconnectedness and the unfettered transfer of expertise are key to Switzerland’s development.

We champion expatriate interests and want the Swiss Abroad to be fairly represented in society and politics. This is why we have been strongly campaigning for guaranteed health insurance outside the EU/EFTA area, the introduction of e-voting, easier access to the Swiss banking system, and full OASI benefits also for people domiciled abroad.

The Greens advocate a cosmopolitan Switzerland that does more for international cooperation. We oppose the closure of Swiss representations abroad. As a rich country generating high CO₂ emissions, Switzerland has a big responsibility to combat global warming – because the impact of climate change can be seen around the world. In the area of development cooperation, Switzerland can also do more to fight poverty. With regard to Europe, we are doing more than all the other parties to ensure that Swiss-EU relations improve and freedom of movement continues.

We actively champion the interests of the Swiss Abroad. In particular, formal relations with the EU are of great concern to many Swiss living abroad. We also believe that making it as easy as possible for Swiss Abroad to exercise their voting rights (via a secure e-voting process) is crucial, and that it should be possible for expatriates to return to Switzerland without being disadvantaged for doing so (access to social security, recognition of foreign qualifications, etc.).

Swiss Abroad aiming for the Federal Palace

MARC LETTAU

It is an exceedingly high hurdle to overcome, but this has not deterred another group of candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” from standing for election to the National Council. One of the difficulties is that there is no dedicated electoral constituency for the “Fifth Switzerland”. Swiss Abroad simply vote in the canton in which they most recently lived. Those who wish to stand for election must also do so in “their” canton. They must rely on a cantonal party to put them on an election list. Switzerland’s former ambassador to Germany, Tim Guldemann, is to date the only Swiss Abroad who has managed to reach the Federal Palace. He was elected from the SP Zurich list in 2015.

A tricky question of strategy

It has not always been easy for the parties to strike the right balance in this regard. Sometimes they have lots of expatriate candidates, like the SP and SVP four years ago. Sometimes they have very few Swiss Abroad standing for election. The SP had 30 candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” in 2019. It now has just one Swiss Abroad hoping to win the voters’ trust: Pascal Cuttat (Nairobi, Kenya).

By the time of going to press, “Swiss Review” had received notification of the following candidates for the National Council:

SVP

GENEVA: Grégory Leutert, Hungary; Marc Van Oost, Luxembourg. LUCERNE: Inge Schütz, president of SVP International, Belpberg/Stockholm; Nicolas Szita, London. SCHAFFHAUSEN: John McGough, Hungary; Björn Stahel, Norway.

SP

BERNE: Pascal Cuttat, international crisis manager, Kenya, SP men’s list for Berne.

FDP

There are no Swiss Abroad standing for the FDP. However, the party has a list of domestic candidates who intend to represent the interests of the “Fifth Switzerland”. This list will soon be available on the FDP International website

(under “Wahlen”/“Élections”): fdp-international.com/wahlen.

Centre

The Centre had not supplied any names by the time of our editorial deadline but was intending to have expatriate candidates standing in St Gallen, Thurgau and Ticino.

Greens

The party was in the process of drawing up expatriate lists in a number of cantons but could not supply any names by the time of our editorial deadline.

Green Liberals

BASEL-STADT: Wanja Kaufmann, Sweden; Thomas Willhelmi, Germany; Andrea Frey, Italy; Thomas Häni, Germany. GENEVA: Franz Muheim, UK; Antoine Belaieff, Canada; Bastien Debiève, Spain; Dominique Caillat, Germany. VALAIS: Valérie Biermann, Switzerland/Canada.

Candidates from the OSA committees

The leading committees of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) – the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) and the “Fifth Switzerland” parliamentary group – also have members who are standing for the National Council and Council of States. According to OSA President Filippo Lombardi, these candidates are important: “They all represent and bring the interests of the Swiss Abroad to bear in parliament, while ensuring that the views of those living abroad are incorporated in the policies of their respective parties.”

OSA Executive Board

Carlo Sommaruga, Council of States (SP, Geneva, standing for re-election); Laurent Wehrli, National Council (FDP, Vaud, standing for re-election); Franz Muheim, UK, National Council (GLP, Geneva).

Parliamentary group

Leading members: Martina Bircher, National Council (SVP, Aargau, standing for re-election); Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter, National Council (Centre, Basel-Landschaft, standing for re-election); Roland Fischer, National Council (GLP, Lucerne, standing for re-election); Nicolas Walder, National Council (Greens, Geneva, standing for re-election).

Recommendations from umbrella organisations (example of Israel):

Regional expatriate umbrella organisations can also make voting recommendations. Swiss Community Israel (SCI), for example, approved a list of the following candidates at its extraordinary general meeting:

National Council

Sarah Wyss, CSA member (SP, Basel-Stadt, standing for re-election); Eric Nussbaumer (SP, Basel-Landschaft, standing for re-election); Andri Silberschmidt (FDP, Zurich, standing for re-election); Claudia Friedl (SP, St Gallen, standing for re-election); Marianne Binder-Keller (Centre, Aargau, standing for re-election); Sonja Rueff Frenkel (FDP, Zurich); Fabian Molina (SP, Zurich, standing for re-election); Laura Riget (SP, Ticino).

Council of States

Carlo Sommaruga (SP, Geneva, standing for re-election); Daniel Jositsch (SP, Zurich, standing for re-election).

Explaining its recommendations, SCI said that the candidates in question had “specifically looked after the interests of the Swiss Abroad”.

SCI organising its own courier service

Will the votes of the Swiss Abroad arrive in Switzerland on time? This question, one frequently asked in places outside the EU, has also been preoccupying Swiss voters in Israel, who have taken matters into their own hands. According to its representative Erich Bloch, SCI is going to organise its own courier “because of the importance of these elections”. A Swiss expatriate will bring the sealed ballot envelopes to Zurich’s main post office in person. Bloch: “There is no other option, because the Israeli postal service is so unreliable.”

Our online edition has a continually updated list of candidates: revue.link/candidates

