



JULY 2026

Swiss Review

The magazine
for the Swiss Abroad

**Food politics – can Switzerland
produce more of what it eats?**

**Swiss-EU package of agreements –
the issues at stake**

**Living on the edge –
Mürren and its precarious location**





Consular services
anywhere, conveniently
on your mobile devices


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

www.fdfa.admin.ch Barcelona



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
 Confédération suisse
 Confederaziun Svizra
 Confederaziun svizra

**Switzerland in
your pocket**

SwissInTouch.ch
The app for the Swiss abroad

swissintouch.ch

Exclusively available here

Read it instead of waiting.

Is your printed copy of “Swiss Review” overdue again? You can pick up the magazine on your **tablet or smartphone**. The app is free of charge and contains no advertising. You can find the app by searching for “Swiss Review” in your App Store.



Zum Abschalten: Gedanken hochfahren.

NZZ am Sonntag

Weiter denken. Besser leben.



Die «NZZ am Sonntag» jetzt
3 Monate als E-Paper zum Preis von 1
(für 26 CHF statt 78 CHF):
go.nzz.ch/sr



4 Focus

Swiss agriculture
and the politics of food

8 Politics

Neutrality in the spotlight

Road to digital democracy
proves bumpy

14 Society

Switzerland and the scourge
of domestic violence

16 Swiss extremes

Living on the edge

19 Switzerland in figures

A little bit (more) of everything



Photo: Wikimedia

News from your region**20 History**

Ancient discovery in Lake Neuchâtel

22 Report

Prehistoric giants

24 News

Questions and answers on the new
Swiss-EU package of agreements

30 Notes from the Federal Palace

Enrol on the register of the Swiss
Abroad to exercise your political rights

32 SwissCommunity

Cover photo: Keystone

Food for thought – at home and abroad



There are certain things that are quintessentially, unmistakably Swiss. The Alps, direct democracy, cheese. Expats know the feeling: you spot a piece of Gruyère, some Emmentaler or a bar of Swiss chocolate in your local supermarket, and suddenly you are transported right back to your home country.

But actually, how Swiss is our food these days? The answer may surprise you. Switzerland produces less than half of the food eaten in the country. In other words, over half of the calories that the Swiss population consumes come directly or indirectly from other countries. This statistic is even more astonishing when you consider that agriculture is front and centre in our nation of lush pastures, grazing cows and bucolic family-run Alpine farms.

But that tells only part of the story. Agriculture is one thing; food security, the environment, profitability, and public expectations are another. Long gone are the days when the contents of our plates were just a question of taste. Some will say that eating meat is as natural to human beings as walking upright, others that it is no longer viable. And while Switzerland imports much of its food, it exports cheese all around the world. Of course it does. Our country likes to be self-sufficient, but we are truly intertwined with the rest of the world – and Europe in particular.

Talking of Europe, the electorate will at some stage have to vote yes or no to Bilaterals III, the new package of Swiss-EU agreements (see page 24). It is the same old question: how close a relationship does Switzerland need with the European Union to remain economically strong but politically independent? The neutrality debate also touches on how autonomous we want to be in an interconnected but uncertain world (see page 8). That such issues are relevant to agriculture is perhaps no coincidence. What we eat depends not only on the weather, our soil and our fields, but also on markets, agreements and our relationship with the world. Like it or not, food is also political.

WALTER SCHMID, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“Swiss Review”, the information magazine
for the “Fifth Switzerland”, is published by the
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

**Swiss
Community**

Can Switzerland produce more of what its people eat? And other questions

Few countries support their farmers as much as Switzerland, which produces around half of all the food calories its population consumes. The Food Security Initiative, due to be put to voters on 27 September 2026, aims to push this level of self-sufficiency much higher.

CHRISTOF FORSTER

When the nights draw in and the temperatures drop, Switzerland likes to fall back on hearty fare like rösti, raclette and fondue. The basic ingredients for these classics – milk and potatoes – are staples that have been sourced and eaten in our own country since time immemorial. Swiss-produced vegan cheese alternatives are now a viable option too.

Indeed, modern diets are now considerably more diverse than they used to be. Farmers still help to put food on our plates but trying to understand the money and trade flows that make Swiss agriculture tick means grappling with a dizzying array of figures. Besides our own personal preferences, it is a complicated web of direct transactions, subsidies, tariffs, import quotas, and a great deal more that dictates what we eat. Here are five questions (and answers) to make sense of it all.

1 Could Switzerland potentially be able to produce all the food it needs?

A 2025 study co-written by ETH Zurich agricultural ecologist Andreas Bosshard says yes. This conclusion surprised Bosshard himself. He and his co-authors think Switzerland could become completely self-sufficient. It could even produce enough food for over 10 million people, compared to 4.2 million today. Switzerland's net self-sufficiency rate is currently around 50 per cent, or 57 per cent if you take imported animal feed into account. The initiative "for food security" (Food Security Initiative) wants Switzerland to hit 70 per cent.

Bosshard suggests nine measures that could be implemented without major monetary investment, the most important of which concerns livestock feed. Cattle should only graze on grass and not be fed concentrates and maize. Switzerland now devotes 60 per cent of its arable land to growing animal feed, while

According to an ETH Zurich study, Switzerland could potentially produce enough food to feed over 10 million people.

also importing concentrate feed. If cows fed on grass alone, this would free up large swathes of land to grow food for humans. Although it would lead to lower milk yields, demand would still be met given current levels of overproduction, the study says.

Food waste is another factor. By halving it, Switzerland could feed 1.8 million more people. We should also return to the practice of feeding food waste safely to pigs, not least because of the positive environmental effects, as it would help us to reach our carbon and ammonia reduction targets.

Yet the Swiss Farmers' Union believes that full food self-sufficiency is completely unrealistic. During the Second World War, when only four million people lived in Switzerland and more agricultural land was available, self-sufficiency was around 70 per cent despite rationing, it argues.



The farming sector itself can only do a small amount of the things that are needed, Bosshard concedes. Most measures require the involvement of the food industry, retailers, and consumers, he says, adding that, since the Second World War, the state has, to a large degree, shaped and played a role in encouraging today's consumption habits and behaviours, which are responsible for many of the inefficiencies in the food system. This particularly applies to animal-derived foods. For decades, at least 80 per cent of agricultural subsidies have gone into animal farming, with crop production receiving only 20 per cent.

In its 2022 report on the future direction of agricultural policy, the Federal Council also concludes that more arable land must be used to grow crops for direct human consumption to ensure that domestic food production keeps up with population growth. Yet 100 per cent self-sufficiency will not be possible despite all this, because many of the key resources needed in the Swiss farming sector are often imported. These include artificial fertilisers, pesticides, diesel, and seed.

2 How environmentally sustainable is Swiss agriculture?

In its most recent 2016 report on environmental goals for agriculture, the Federal Council painted a mixed picture on whether targets related to biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, phosphorous, and pesticides were being met. Environmental goals have not been reviewed systematically since then, with no study keeping track of progress. This significant lapse in knowledge makes obtaining a coherent overview impossible, say farming experts. The latest updates and analyses only relate to individual areas.

To receive direct subsidies, farms must fulfil a range of sustainability criteria. This mandatory standard ("proof of environmental performance") is not stringent enough, counter environmental groups. The Swiss branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature notes that none of the government's 13 environmental goals have been met.

According to the latest government assessment of farming practices and their environmental impact, too much nitrogen still ends up in sensitive ecosystems, despite levels falling. Ammonia levels are also down but still above the required tar-

The Swiss branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature notes that Switzerland's environmental performance is poor.

get. The situation regarding pesticides is also less than satisfactory. Levels have dropped since 2019, but in rivers and streams they rose again in 2024. Parliament has already approved measures to halve the risks posed by pesticide use by 2027.

Imported food has a more detrimental impact on the environment than that of domestic produce, says the Swiss centre of excellence for

Aims of the Food Security Initiative

The Food Security Initiative seeks to increase to 70 per cent the extent to which domestic food production covers domestic food consumption. Ten years would be the timeframe for achieving this target. It would mean diets having to become more plant-based. The initiative also calls for the protection of groundwater resources as well as the promotion of a sustainable system of agriculture and food production. Behind the initiative are Franziska Herren from the Clean Water for All association plus a number of other people. Herren was also the driving force behind the Clean Drinking Water initiative that was rejected in June 2021. The Federal Council and parliament have rejected the Food Security Initiative without offering a counterproposal. Voters will offer their own verdict on 27 September.

(CF)

agricultural research, Agroscope, citing potatoes as an example. Findings in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Italy were used for comparative purposes. The results were less clear-cut in the case of animal products.

Biodiversity, on the other hand, has remained stable. This is positive news given its otherwise historic decline, the government wrote in its 2025 Agricultural Report. Biodiversity levels are nevertheless still very low.

There is, therefore, still a lot to do to improve environmental sustainability. According to a new Agroscope study, it is possible for the food system to be much more environmentally friendly, resulting in healthier diets and a higher rate of food self-sufficiency.

3 Is Switzerland a country of small farms?

By international standards, farms in Switzerland tend to be relatively small family businesses. The average size of a Swiss farm is 22 hectares of used agricultural area, which is considerably less than in most European Union countries. There is no precise definition of what a small farm is, although a farm of 10 hectares or less

By international standards, farms in Switzerland tend to be relatively small family businesses.

is typically referred to as a smallholding or small-scale farm. Switzerland has 13,213 such farms (out of a total of 47,075 farms in 2024). Nearly five per cent of farms cover even less than a hectare.

Most farms (12,380 in 2024) are between 10 and 20 hectares, while seven percent of farms exceed 50 hectares. The traditional Swiss farm is primarily a family operation run on a full-time or part-

time basis. All family members are typically involved, often across multiple generations.

Swiss agriculture has, however, been in a state of flux for quite some time. Around one to 1.5 per cent of farms close every year. In 2025 alone, 805 farms went out of business. The land is usually taken over by neighbouring farms, hence the average agricultural area per farm is steadily increasing. Farms have increased in size by some 50 per cent since 2000.

4 To what extent does the state subsidise food production?

Switzerland pours huge subsidies into food production, and our farmers receive some of the highest levels of government support worldwide. This reflects a deliberate political strategy.

Switzerland pours huge subsidies into food production, and our farmers receive some of the highest levels of government support worldwide.

Roughly half of every franc that a farmer makes comes from the state, either in the form of subsidies (e.g. direct payments) or through higher consumer prices caused by tariffs. Liberal think tank Avenir Suisse estimates that agricultural trade protection costs Switzerland nearly three billion Swiss francs a year. Added to this are federal contributions to support production and promote sales, such as cheese-making subsidies, which amount to about 500 million francs a year on top of 2.8 billion francs in direct payments (2024). Consequently, every person in Switzerland pays an average 300 francs of their own money in direct payments to the agricultural sector each year, as well as around 40 francs to the dairy industry, regardless of how much or



little they consume. Some of the subsidies come with conditions, like protecting the countryside or promoting biodiversity.

Then we also have hidden subsidies. Economists point, for example, to the reduced VAT rates that apply directly to soil cultivation services like sowing and ploughing, and indirectly to food products. Food in Switzerland is subject to a reduced VAT rate of 2.6 per cent because it counts as a basic necessity. Given that food consumption is not spread equally across the population, this creates distortions that are inefficient and not necessarily fair. Higher-income households also benefit from the reduced rate, because the food they buy normally tends to be more expensive. Sometimes, they even end up benefiting more.

Economists believe these myriad subsidies and tax breaks not only distort the market by delaying structural changes but also have a negative climate and environmental impact. They doubt whether Switzerland could maintain a high degree of self-sufficiency during a crisis.

5 Is food a new religion?

According to the Food Security Initiative, Switzerland should produce more of its own food by growing more crops for human consumption. This quickly leads into an emotive debate. Food has become a religion of sorts. Not in the sense that it delivers answers to existential questions like life after death or where we came from. But for people who devote themselves to it, food generates a sense of identity going far beyond what is on the plate. Eating vegetarian or vegan can turn into a mindset that extends into many areas, just as eating meat has become a political statement for some. The way we eat can be about much more than diet: animal welfare, sustainability, environmental protection, climate change, lifestyle, individualism, even world views as a whole.

People no longer eat vegan, they are vegan. Or they are meat eaters. Naturally, we are talking about one of countless characteristics that define us. Hence, discussions about food preferences can quickly become heated. Another par-

Switzerland pours huge subsidies into food production, and our farmers receive some of the highest levels of government support worldwide.

allel with religion may be the ideological aspect, whereby people act according to strictly defined rules. In religion, they call it dogma.

Like religious belief, food too can engender a sense of community – where you feel connected to like-minded people and distance yourself from those who think differently. Until well into the 20th century, it was almost impossible for a Protestant and a Catholic to tie the knot. Such marriages were frowned upon. Nowadays, there are vegans who deem it impossible to be in a relationship with someone who eats meat. There are vegans who are convinced that the way they eat is helping to save the planet. Some meat eaters firmly believe that eating as much meat as possible is their prerogative, arguing that they are merely doing what humans have always done. Sometimes they feel that non-meat eaters are taking the moral high ground and push back.

Much like religion, food can be redemptive – delivering health, purity, and moral integrity. This can complicate relations at the dinner table.

Rigid or flexible? Neutrality in the spotlight

Neutrality is part of Switzerland's identity. But how far should it go? On 27 September, voters will decide on the "Neutrality Initiative" submitted by the right-wing Pro Switzerland association. The proposal advocates a strict interpretation of neutrality.



THEODORA PETER

SVP doyen and former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher is the mastermind behind the popular initiative "Safeguarding Swiss neutrality" (Neutrality Initiative). Blocher was unhappy that the Federal Council adopted the wide-ranging European Union sanctions against Moscow in 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Financial sanctions, the freezing of assets, and import and export bans are some of the measures now in place. This was a "breach of neutrality", lamented Blocher. Switzerland had itself become a party to the war "for reasons of pure opportunism" and had damaged its credibility as a neutral intermediary (see "Swiss Review" 6/2022).

An initiative subsequently tabled by Pro Switzerland – the successor or-

ganisation to AUNS (the Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland), which Blocher founded 40 years ago – now wants "perpetual, armed neutrality" to be enshrined in the constitution. This would prohibit Switzerland from joining any military or defence alliance, while cooperation with an alliance such as NATO would only be permitted in the event of a direct military attack on Switzerland. The authors of the initiative explicitly

Former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher – shown here (centre) submitting the Neutrality Initiative to the Federal Chancellery in April 2024 – wants a strict definition of neutrality to be enshrined in the constitution.

Photo: Keystone

According to the results of a survey, a majority of the public want Switzerland to be able to impose sanctions on countries that violate international law.

want to ban what they call "compulsory, non-military measures against warring countries" of the type Switzerland has imposed on Russia. The only exempt measures would be sanctions approved by the UN Security Council. Regarding the war in Ukraine, Russia has consistently used its veto as a permanent member of the Security Council to block any substantive resolutions.

The Federal Council had cited violations of international humanitarian law as the reason for joining the EU's economic sanctions on Russia. "Playing into the hands of an aggressor is not neutral," Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis (FDP) explained at the time. But the government ruled out supplying weapons and protective equipment to Ukraine. The international

law of neutrality precludes Switzerland from affording preferential treatment to any warring party – and the Federal Council has so far stuck to this strict interpretation of impartiality, even if doing so weakens the effectiveness of sanctions against the aggressor.

A majority in parliament oppose the initiative

Until now, the Federal Constitution has contained no explicit definition of Swiss neutrality. But it obliges the Federal Council to take measures to safeguard Switzerland's external security, independence, and neutrality. The Federal Council sees no reason to amend these provisions. Since the birth of the federal Swiss state in 1848, there has been a conscious choice not to make the wording more precise, Cassis explained during a debate on the Neutrality Initiative in parliament. This flexibility was necessary and had proven itself in the last 175 years. "Neutrality is an instrument and not an end in itself."

Besides the Federal Council, a majority in parliament also oppose the initiative. Those who would vote no warn against Switzerland limiting its foreign policy options in a time of uncertainty. The initiative promises clarity but inflicts a straitjacket, said the FDP National Councillor for Aargau, Maja Riniker, during the parliamentary debate. "Maintaining neutrality by shielding ourselves from the world is utopian." There is particular pushback on prohibiting economic sanctions against warring countries. Had Switzerland not aligned itself with the EU sanctions against Russia, "we would more or less have become Putin's European lifeline", said the SP National Councillor for Grisons, Jon Pult.

The SVP, the only party to support the initiative, wants the Federal Coun-



Flexibility matters, Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis (FDP) told parliament: "Neutrality is an instrument and not an end in itself."
Photo: Keystone

cil's interpretation of neutrality to be strictly limited. Preserving neutrality requires courage and backbone, it says. SVP National Councillor for Geneva, Céline Amaudruz: "It is not our role to be following the herd, but to keep channels open for negotiation."

Most Swiss want to keep things as they are

What do the Swiss public think of neutrality? According to the results of a survey published at the start of 2026 by the Sotomo research institute, the Swiss support the principle of neutrality but do not want to change the way it is currently applied. A big ma-

jority are in favour of Switzerland not participating militarily in conflicts involving other countries. By the same token, an equally strong majority want Switzerland to be able to impose sanctions on countries that violate international law.

The survey, conducted in November 2025, showed considerable opposition to the Neutrality Initiative. Only

"Neutrality is an instrument and not an end in itself."

Ignazio Cassis

39 per cent said they intended to vote yes or would tend to vote yes, while 58 per cent rejected the proposal or were inclined to do so. The undecided accounted for only three percent.

There was no updated polling data available at the time of our editorial deadline. The initiative will be put to voters on 27 September. A separate initiative on food security will also be on the ballot (see Focus on pages 4 to 7).

Contentious arms exports

After addressing the Neutrality Initiative, the electorate will have another neutrality-related issue to think about. A vote on amending the War Materiel Act (WMA) is expected to take place at the end of November. This is after left-wing parties called a referendum opposing the bill, which aims to relax restrictions on Swiss arms exports. The conservative majority in parliament approved the revised WMA in December 2025 to help the Swiss arms industry generate more revenue. It would allow Switzerland to grant exports and re-exports of war materiel to any of 25 Western countries – including the US, Argentina, Japan, and EU and NATO countries – if these countries were ever involved in an armed conflict. This would be a change to the current export restrictions designed to prevent Swiss arms from being used in civil wars or ending up in the hands of terrorist organisations. The Federal Council can exercise its veto whenever it believes that Swiss interests are in jeopardy with regard to foreign affairs, security, or neutrality. Yet there is still a risk that Swiss weapons could circulate unchecked around the world, say opponents. Nothing will change for Ukraine, regardless of the referendum: pressure from the SVP has resulted in parliament maintaining the ban on Swiss military equipment being sent to Kyiv.

(TP)

Another bump in the road towards digital participation

E-voting makes it easier for Swiss Abroad to vote. But further patience is needed after another glitch. The news on e-collecting is a little more positive.

EVELINE RUTZ

An e-voting pilot in Basel-Stadt made headlines after it was hit by a technical glitch on 8 March. The canton was unable to count 2,048 votes from Swiss Abroad and people with physical and/or mental impairments, because the relevant code failed to decrypt the digital ballot box that contained these votes. The contents of this ballot box remained blocked – and were not included in the vote count (see “Swiss Review” 2/2026). However, this had no tangible effect on the overall results, given that none of the votes were tight.

The Basel-Stadt cantonal chancellery and the Federal Chancellery (FCh) immediately put out statements saying that the e-voting system itself was not the cause of the problem. In the other pilot cantons of St Gallen,

Thurgau and Grisons, all e-votes had been counted without a hitch. It was only in Basel where an issue prevented access via a USB stick. The process may have been handled incorrectly, say experts. An external analysis will aim to find out precisely what happened.

Basel-Stadt has suspended its e-voting pilot until the end of this year. The other three cantons trialled e-voting again on the latest voting Sunday (14 June 2026) after reviewing their processes for decrypting digital ballot boxes. These cantons also employed other means of data storage besides USB sticks. The Federal Chancellery had given them the green light to conduct further pilots, saying it was “highly unlikely” that there would be another glitch like the one in Basel-Stadt.

Public confidence “broken”

Nevertheless, the mishap refuels a debate that has been ongoing in Switzerland for over 20 years. Critics of online voting feel vindicated. “There are too many risks,” says Rahel Estermann, co-head of the Swiss non-profit civil rights and consumer protection organisation Digital Rights. Especially given the high security standards that elections and popular votes must meet, she adds. Not only does voting confidentiality need to be maintained, but it must be possible to trace votes individually and verify the overall result. According to Estermann, fulfilling these three requirements at the same time is almost impossible from a technical standpoint. All it takes is a minor issue for the result of an entire vote to lose credibil-

Only paper votes were counted in Basel-Stadt on 8 March, following a failure to decrypt the digital ballot. The glitch has refuelled the debate on e-voting.
Photo: Keystone



ity. The incident in Basel caused considerable damage, political scientist Michael Herrmann told SRF. “It has broken public confidence and sets the whole process back years.” There was anger from Swiss who live abroad. One woman in France said she had been deprived of casting her vote. “We have fought long and hard for this right.” And now this.

Supporters of online voting also agree that the right to participate must be safeguarded, but argue that the trials, which began in 2023, have gone well over the course of 300 dif-

After polls closed on 8 March 2026, the canton of Basel-Stadt was unable to count 2,048 votes from Swiss Abroad and people with physical and/or mental impairments.

ferent votes. The right lessons now need to be learned, so that the glitch ultimately helps to improve the system. The canton of Lucerne also wants to pilot e-voting, starting in September this year.

Thanks to e-ID, which the electorate narrowly endorsed in September 2025, e-voting could one day go completely digital. E-ID should be available from 1 December 2026. The federal government originally wanted to roll it out this summer but is now introducing further data privacy and security measures after the Swiss Federal Audit Office expressed misgivings.

More efficient, more secure,
more reliable

Using the government’s e-ID system to collect signatures digitally – a pro-



cess referred to as e-collecting – is another objective. The validity of signatures could then be checked in the space of a few clicks. This would save committees, municipalities and the Federal Chancellery a lot of work. Administrators would be able to do away with things like sending signature sheets back and forth by post. They would be informed of the number of authenticated signatures in real time and could plan their work accordingly. Voters would also benefit, because their data would have better protection and be transmitted reliably. This is why e-collecting has been back on the political agenda since 2024. Recent cases of signature fraud involving professional firms (see “Swiss Review” 1/2025) mean there is increased pressure to improve the existing paper-based system. The goal is not to move the entire process online. Signature collections will still take place in the public domain, but digital technology would make them more efficient, more transparent and more secure.

Input and consultation

Five out of the six largest parliamentary parties – with the exception of the SVP – are committed to introducing a digital system, which they would like to begin trialling sooner rather than later. The Federal Chancellery is preparing a pilot and has brought together a broad range of stakeholders in order to reach a solution that can

As it currently stands, signatures collected for referendums and popular initiatives are still submitted to the Federal Chancellery in boxes. E-collecting would make political participation easier for Swiss Abroad.

Photo: Keystone

command a majority. It launched a collaborative process in August 2025, drawing on an approach that has already proved effective with regard to e-ID. Not only does it regularly host online sessions to share insights, expertise, experience, opinions and ideas, but it has also created an online platform for written communication. Federal Chancellor Viktor Rossi will rely on this dialogue to define the system’s parameters, starting with technical implementation.

There are also regulatory, political and organisational challenges surrounding the project. One is making sure that the collection platform is neutral, i.e. that it provides information on referendums and popular initiatives without disseminating any political message. The platform should be designed to ensure that no proposal is given more prominence than others. Experts anticipate an increase in the number of petitions. Civil society groups may be able to shape political debate more than they do at the moment.

Initial findings are expected at cantonal level. St Gallen has developed its own system, which is set to go online soon. Geneva’s solution is still in the conceptual phase. The technical implementation of e-collecting is easier than e-voting, says Rahel Estermann, adding that a secure and data-efficient open-source approach is key. A digital solution would make political participation easier, with Swiss Abroad and people with impairments standing to benefit in particular. “E-collecting would strengthen democracy.”

Swiss Abroad are eligible to sign petitions for popular initiatives and referendums, provided they are entered in the electoral register. This currently applies to 246,624 people. There are no figures available on the number of Swiss Abroad who sign petitions.

The photos and notes of Ella Maillart are a passport to adventure

Just like her fellow Geneva native Nicolas Bouvier, Ella Maillart was one of the great Swiss voyagers of the 20th century. Between 1932 and 1939, before the world was engulfed by war, this adventurer born into a wealthy family criss-crossed the USSR, Iran, Afghanistan, China and the rest of Asia, particularly Central Asia. Her photographs unveil the intrepid woman she was. Street scenes in Moscow, while Stalin's reign of terror was in full swing behind the Iron Curtain. Maillart crossing a mountain pass at an altitude of over 4,800 metres. Here she is again in the deserts of Chinese Turkestan, at a time when the Westerners crossing these regions could be counted on the fingers of one hand. This exhibition in Lausanne shows a selection of prints developed for the occasion. They are taken from archives donated in 1988 by Ella Maillart to Photo Elysée museum and the University of Geneva. Margin notes on the photos from the adventurer herself bring the visit to life. The exhibition sheds light on the historical events witnessed by the Geneva native: the Sovietisation of Central Asia, the transformation of China after the fall of the imperial regime and the creation of Manchukuo, the state located in Manchuria and controlled by Japan. The photos and the notes taken together reveal a view of the world marked by a deep humanity. The images are entered in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Exhibition: Ella Maillart Photographic Encounters
Until 1 November 2026
at Photo Elysée,
Place de la Gare 17, 1003 Lausanne



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1 Ella Maillart lends out her Leica.

Photo: Estate of Ella Maillart and Photo Elysée, Lausanne

2 Ella Maillart, The new railway between Nanyo and Ninguta, west of Vladivostock, 1934, Japanese Korea.

Photo: Estate of Ella Maillart and Photo Elysée, Lausanne

3 Skaters outside the Forbidden City, 1935, Beijing, Republic of China. Photo: Estate of Ella Maillart and Photo Elysée, Lausanne

4 A portrait of Ella Maillart in the aisles of Photo: Elysée. The Geneva native died on 27 March 1997 in Chandolin (Valais), at the age of 94.

Photo: Photo Elysée, Lausanne

5 Black and white pictures from the other end of the world.

Photo: Photo Elysée, Lausanne

6 Qaidam Desert, at 3,000 metres' altitude, late May 1935. Mount Kitin Kara, in the Kuen Lun mountain range, in Qinghai, Republic of China.

Photo: Estate of Ella Maillart and Photo Elysée, Lausanne

7 Ella Maillart, My street — Ostozhenka, 1930, Moscow, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR.

Photo: Estate of Ella Maillart and Photo Elysée, Lausanne

8 Ella Maillart, Ukrainian knife-grinder, 1930, Moscow, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR.

Photo: Estate of Ella Maillart and Photo Elysée, Lausanne

Femicides in Switzerland – violence behind closed doors

With domestic killings of women reaching a new high in 2025, the Confederation and cantons are putting forward measures to curb the violence and give victims better protection. But is that enough?

SUSANNE WENGER

It is 13 February 2024 at around mid-day. A 41-year-old man punches his 38-year-old wife in the face and strangles her to death in their own home in an exclusive area of Binningen (canton of Basel-Landschaft). The couple, parents of two small children, are close to breaking up. The husband dismembers the body to dispose of it. A 47-year-old woman and her two daughters die after being stabbed in their apartment in Corcelles (canton of Neuchâtel) on the night of 19–20 August 2025. The 52-year-old ex-husband quickly becomes the focus of the investigation. A 71-year-old woman is found dead in her detached home in Grabs (canton of St Gallen) on 26 April 2026. The police arrest her 67-year-old husband.

Three violent killings at three locations in three years. There are women of every age in Switzerland who live in danger within their own four walls. It is becoming harder for society and politicians to ignore the scourge of domestic violence. The time when such abuse was isolated has long since passed. On average, a woman dies from domestic violence every two to three weeks in Switzerland. The number of women and girls killed in 2025 was 25 – the highest

The number of women and girls killed in 2025 was 25 – a new record. Overall, there were 55 homicides in Switzerland last year.

yearly figure since the federal government began listing such crimes separately in 2009. Overall, there were 55 homicides in Switzerland last year.



At the end of the Binningen murder trial in May 2026, people formed a human chain outside the court near Basel in memory of the woman who was killed. Photo: Keystone

Government alarmed

The victims of domestic violence also include men. But there is a clear pattern with homicides: over 90 percent of victims are female, and the perpetrators are mostly male. The peak of 2025 has alarmed the government. “We cannot go on like this,” Interior Minister Elisabeth Baume-Schneider declared. Justice Minister Beat Jans called it a crisis of safety, given that gender-based violence leads to more fatalities than other crime in Switzerland. A committee of government, cantonal and municipal representatives approved urgent action back in

mid-2025, when cases were proliferating. One of the recommended measures is that regions work together to create safe spaces in women’s refuges.

Nora Markwalder, criminal law professor at the University of St Gallen, does not yet see a sustained rise in the number of homicides against women but thinks the figures are worryingly consistent. Whereas recent decades have seen male-on-male killings fall sharply in Switzerland, the rate of intimate-partner homicides committed by men against women has remained much the same. “This is concerning,” she says.

Murder, plain and simple

The term “femicide” offers a possible answer. Coined in the 1970s by the American sociologist Diana Russell, it touches on the social dimension of the crimes committed. The UN referred to femicide in 2012 as the killing of women and girls in their own homes. Analyses show that femicides are often linked to the perpetrator’s possessiveness, need for dominance, or general expectations of and attitude to women. The most dangerous time is when partners separate. Markwalder: “Around half of the killings happen during or after break-up.”

There is no definition of femicide in the Swiss legal context. Women’s rights groups, politicians, and the stopfemizid.ch research project have been employing the term for some time to raise awareness. But public authorities and the media are also using it more. Femicide tells it like it is, says Markwalder. “It is murder, plain and simple – not a family drama, or an accident, or a crime of passion, as they euphemistically used to call it.”

New victim hotline

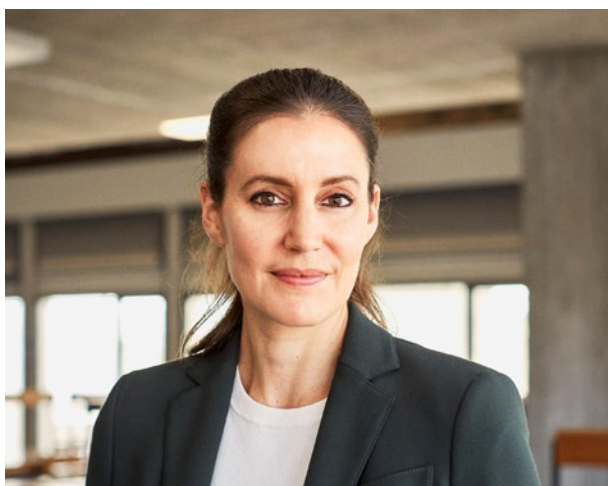
Domestic violence – including rape, physical abuse, and threatening behaviour – used to be seen as a private matter in Switzerland: what happened at home stayed at home. It was not until 2004 that it became an offence prosecuted by the state. Politicians, irrespective of their political colour, have repeatedly demanded measures to combat gender-based violence. And by ratifying the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention in 2018, Switzerland has pledged to take action. A road map adopted by the Confederation and cantons in 2021

In 2027, the Confederation and cantons plan to unveil a new national strategy to combat domestic and sexual violence.

has produced some early results. A national hotline opened in spring 2026, with victims now able to call 142. Cantons have improved their escalation procedure to help identify abuse earlier; given that femicide often comes at the end of a spiral of violence, as a government analysis has shown.

The police have become more proactive in engaging with high-risk individuals. Some cantons are testing electronic tagging as a way to enforce restraining orders. The federal government has launched a prevention campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse. Legislative changes are also up for debate in areas like gun law. A 2025 study by the University of St Gallen showed that domestic killings in Switzerland involve a disproportionately high use of firearms, especially among older perpetrators. One reason is that Swiss men are allowed to take their standard-issue weapons

Male-on-male killings in Switzerland have fallen sharply, but the rate of intimate-partner homicides committed by men against women has remained much the same. “This is concerning,” says criminal law professor Nora Markwalder. Photo provided



home with them at the end of military service.

Criticism – from left and right

Women’s rights groups and left-wing parties note that, despite making progress, Switzerland still needs to do more to implement the Istanbul Convention. They have criticised a lack of funding for women’s refuges and claim that protection for women varies a lot from canton to canton. The right-wing SVP says domestic violence is a migrant problem first and foremost. It wants tougher sentences handed out and offenders deported.

In 2027, the Confederation and cantons plan to unveil a new national strategy to combat domestic and sexual violence. Besides delivering a more standardised approach, it will also address the problem of digital violence. Furthermore, parliament has commissioned a feasibility study on how femicides – including those outside the domestic bubble – are recorded.

Shocking murder

The Binningen case went to trial this May. It revealed a devastating chain of events. The Basel-Landschaft court sentenced the husband to life imprisonment for murder and for desecrating the corpse. It concluded that the perpetrator acted out of revenge and a need for control, and was hurt and angered by his wife wanting to leave him. In the end, he killed his wife to cover up his abuse. The presiding judge said out loud what many were thinking: “This is a case of femicide.” Family, friends and activists remembered the victim by forming a human chain outside the court during sentencing.

Living on the edge

Perched on the edge of a vertical cliff, Mürren (canton of Berne) is a base-jumping mecca boasting the steepest cable car in the world. What is it like to live there?



The Schilthornbahn to Mürren is the world's steepest cable car. It is so steep that it more or less departs the valley floor through the roof. Photo: Dölf Barben

DÖLF BARBEN

There is a spot in the middle of Mürren where tourists like to stop and take photos. Today is no exception. A young woman tosses her hair forward and then back, before smiling in front of the imposing backdrop. Her friend lines up a shot. Approaching from the side is a mother with her little boy. "Careful," she says, "there's no handrail."

She is a little overcautious, because there is no danger here. Or at least not yet. From this viewing point, there is a path that leads down a steep grassy slope. Go 100 metres down and you reach a fence with a gate.

This is the edge of the cliff – and the gate is open. On the other side is a small platform for adrenaline-seeking base jumpers, who leap from here off the mountain before parachuting onto the valley floor.

Hold on to the fence with one hand, strain your head forward, and you can get a glimpse of the sheer drop below. Your heart will skip a beat. At the bottom: the cable car station, parked cars,

roads, houses. Everything improbably small yet frighteningly close.

Up through the roof

Mürren is perched on a high plateau in the Lauterbrunnen Valley, not far from Interlaken. Below is a vertical rock face that is overhanging in places. There is probably no other village that clings as much to the edge of a mountain – in Switzerland at least.

The new cable car connecting Mürren with the valley floor underlines what an extraordinary location this is. It is the steepest cable car in the world. Riding it feels like being pulled up by the hair. Cable cars normally leave the bottom station moving forward. This one more or less departs through the roof of the building.

Its support cables point upward like an hour hand that has almost reached 11 o'clock. The cabins have to cope with a maximum gradient of 159.4 per cent. You are glued to the window all the way up, staring at the sheer rock. Water sprays out of the



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

Today: Mürren – a spectacular village boasting the world's steepest cable car

cliff here and there. The cable car climbs 775 metres in four minutes.

Bond movie

There are some beautiful old posters celebrating Mürren's spectacular location. But what else does this sunny place have to offer?

For the people who live there, Mürren's teetering cliff-top position is maybe a little less scary. "Their" Mürren is the loveliest place on Earth – a peaceful car-free village with a glorious tourism heritage. It sits at the foot of one of 007's old haunts, the Schilthorn mountain: the revolving restaurant at the summit, Piz Gloria, featured in the James Bond film "On Her Majesty's Secret Service", making Mürren more famous. None of the lo-

The world's steepest cable car connects Mürren.

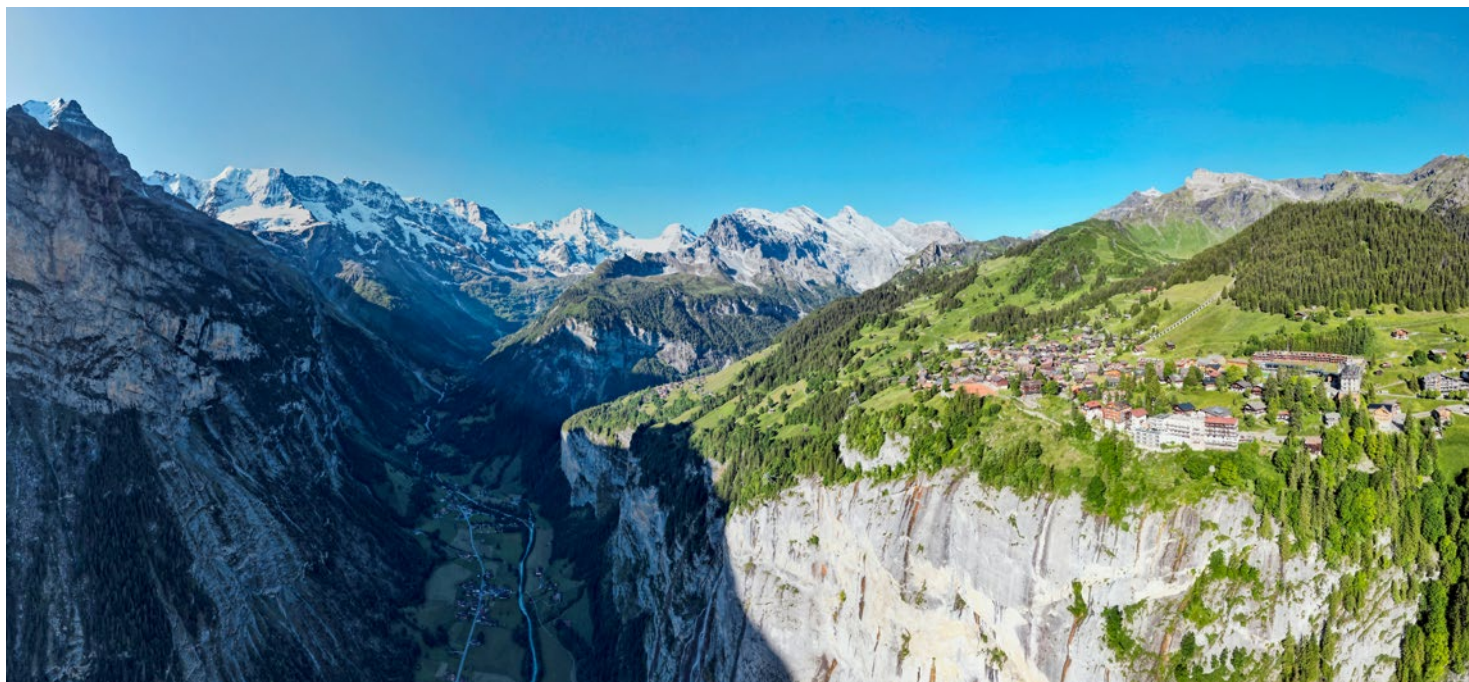
cals talk about the cliff edge. You need to ask them first.

Kurt Huggler, 81, grew up in Mürren. He is a former ski racer, tourism director, and hotelier. "Yes, of course," he says, "we ventured down there a lot when we were boys." They would mess around and throw things, pick rare flowers, or just sit by the edge and peer down. They didn't tell their par-

Kurt and Verena Huggler in front of their house in Mürren. He was a tourism director and hotelier. Both competed in ski races.

Photo: Dölf Barben





ents about everything they did. Huggler tells the story of a dare that involved hanging upside down from a tree trunk over the edge. Just the thought is enough to make you feel queasy.

Below is a vertical rock face that is overhanging in places. The drop below is dizzying.

He plays it down. Nothing bad ever happened, he insists. Maybe this was also thanks to their parents, who told them that there was a little fellow with a hook dwelling in the rock face who pulled children down and ate them.

Listen to Huggler and you begin to understand that he relates to risk in a way that only people born in the mountains can. He has climbed peaks all his life. "I would never negotiate a difficult route without safety gear." What he thinks of base jumping goes without saying. You have to judge danger when you live in the mountains. Families need each other. "No one can afford their next of kin dying."

Huggler laughs about another aspect of living near the rock face. "We

used to simply tip our rubbish over the edge." Hardly any of it was plastic, at least back then. There was no green waste either. "We fed that to the pigs." It was mainly empty food tins and all sorts of large items. Once they even threw half an ice-cream maker down the cliff. It originally belonged to a hotel. "That was a sight to behold!" The rubbish never tumbled all the way to the bottom; it would come to a standstill on a ledge and was later filled in. "They should dig the pile up – then you really would learn a lot about Mürren," he grins.

"You have to see it to believe it"

Sven von Arx, 30, a building services technician and a member of the local council, was in awe of the place when he moved into the village six years ago. "I am still amazed by Mürren's beauty and location." At first, he genuinely wondered how anyone could have thought of settling in such a precarious spot.

The village of Mürren (visible to the right) is perched around 800 metres above the floor of the Lauterbrunnen Valley. Its inhabitants are used to living in this spectacular spot.

Photo: Wikimedia

ren's beauty and location." At first, he genuinely wondered how anyone could have thought of settling in such a precarious spot.

He has now got more used to that aspect at least. Paragliding, which he did for a while, gave him a similar feeling. He was petrified when he first floated out over the edge and saw the huge drop between his feet and the valley floor. "But it was nothing special 40 flights later."

Likewise, the new cable car. He says the ride is spectacular, but it is a good while since he last stood by the window. "Only visitors do that."

Nevertheless, he is fascinated by the actual rock face. Whenever friends are visiting, he likes to take them on the Via Ferrata – a cabled traverse down the cliff on which you are secured at all times. "You have to see it to believe it," he says. The route goes past a base-jumping platform. Von Arx's views on base jumping are similar to Huggler's. "When I see them leap, I wonder how on earth anyone could do it."

Sven von Arx arrived in Mürren six years ago. He is still in awe of the village's location. Photo: Dölf Barben



The Mürren Via Ferrata



Erinaceus europaeus



Photo: Pro Natura

For the past 30 years, Pro Natura has selected Switzerland's Animal of the Year, and for 2026, Switzerland's oldest environmental organisation has chosen the European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus* in Latin) – a surprising decision given that this creature already has a high profile. The common hedgehog is just the cutest little spiky ball in the world. Hearing one snuffle and munch around the garden on a balmy summer's night is particularly enjoyable. Volunteers around the country care for injured hedgehogs. Road signs alert drivers to hedgehogs, reminding them to slow down. Pro Natura has, nevertheless, chosen the animal to raise awareness. With numbers dwindling in Switzerland, hedgehogs have been classified as "potentially threatened" for the last four years. This is because they now live mainly in towns and villages, where they are being squeezed out of their habitat by humans. Pro Natura is calling on people to design and maintain hedgehog-friendly spaces. These nocturnal mammals need shelters to rest and build their nests. They need openings in fences and walls so that they can roam through gardens. And they need untouched spaces where plants attract the insects on which they like to feed – beetles, millipedes and caterpillars especially. Uncovered swimming pools and robotic lawnmowers are a no-no – both are a danger to life and limb. The latter would make short shrift of a hedgehog's spikes, of which there are up to 8,000. Experts advise the Swiss public to forget their love of the neat and tidy; hedgehogs prefer unkempt patches with leaf piles and dead wood to pristine gardens with immaculate lawns. November is when they return to hibernation – provided they can find a suitable resting spot.

SUSANNE WENGER

How Swiss should a Swiss product be?

The Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property has loosened the rules governing use of the Swiss cross – as a concession to global brands like the footwear company On. Until now, at least 60 percent of manufacturing costs have had to occur in Switzerland for a Swiss cross to be affixed to a product. In certain cases, a product designed or developed in Switzerland can now use it too. (WS)

OECD criticises high cost of day care

Switzerland still has work to do on gender equality, says an OECD report. The Swiss pay gap between men and women is one of the highest. This is mainly due to the high proportion of women in part-time work as well as the cost of childcare. In December, parliament approved a new law that paves the way for higher childcare allowances. (WS)

E-ID vote – complaint rejected

Last September saw 50.4 percent of the electorate vote yes to the introduction of digital IDs (e-ID). The Federal Supreme Court (FSC) rejected a legal bid to overturn the referendum result, which centred on a donation that Swisscom paid to supporters of the yes campaign – regarded as contrary to the principle that a state-controlled company must be politically neutral. The FSC deemed the objections inadmissible because they were submitted too late, and the result of the vote remains valid. E-ID is to be rolled out in December. (WS)

Federal Council tightens too-big-to-fail rules

The Federal Council wants systemically important ("too-big-to-fail") banks like UBS to be subject to stricter capital requirements, so that investments in foreign subsidiaries are, in future, fully backed with readily available equity capital. This is following the collapse of Credit Suisse in 2023. The new rules aim to reduce the likelihood of another taxpayer-funded bailout and put the Swiss financial centre on a stronger footing. Parliament is due to debate the proposal in autumn. (WS)

Federal Council decides not to increase retirement age

The Federal Council has submitted its OASI reform proposals for consultation. Instead of increasing the retirement age, it wants to incentivise people to work longer by introducing a higher tax-free allowance from age 65 and allowing for greater flexibility in the transition to retirement. Taking early retirement would also be made harder. The changes would generate an extra 600 million Swiss francs a year for the pension system from 2030 to 2040. The question of funding remains open regarding the 13th state pension payment, the first of which is due in December. (WS)

"Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 51st year of publication and is published five times a year, in 13 regional editions, in German, French, English and Spanish. It has a total circulation of 479,000, including 311,000 electronic copies.

All Swiss Abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / Abroad: CHF 50).

ONLINE EDITION
www.revue.ch

EDITORS
Walter Schmid, Editor-in-Chief (WS),
Stéphane Herzog (SH), Theodora Peter
(TP), Susanne Wenger (SWE), Amandine
Madziel, FDFA representative (AM)

FDFA OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS
The editorial responsibility for the "Notes
from the Federal Palace" section is
assumed by the Consular Directorate,
Innovation and Partnerships, Effin-
gerstrasse 27, 3003 Berne, Switzerland.
kdip@eda.admin.ch | www.eda.admin.ch

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Airpage AG, Uster/Zürich
furrer@airpage.ch | www.airpage.ch

The ordering parties are fully responsible
for the content of advertisements and
promotional inserts. This content does not
necessarily represent the opinion of either
the editorial office or the publisher.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Nema Bliggenstorfer (NB)

TRANSLATION
SwissGlobal Language Services AG,
Baden

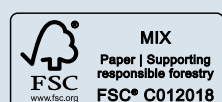
LAYOUT
Roman Häfliger, Basel

PRINT
Vogt-Schild Druck AG, Derendingen

PUBLISHER
The "Swiss Review" is published by the
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. The
postal address of the publisher and the
editorial office is:
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad,
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne.
revue@swisscommunity.org
Phone: +41 31 356 61 10
Bank details:
CH97 0079 0016 1294 4609 8 / KB-
BECH22

COPY DEADLINE FOR THIS EDITION
16 June 2026

CHANGES OF ADDRESS
Please advise your local embassy or
consulate. The editorial team cannot
access your address and administrative
data. Thank you.

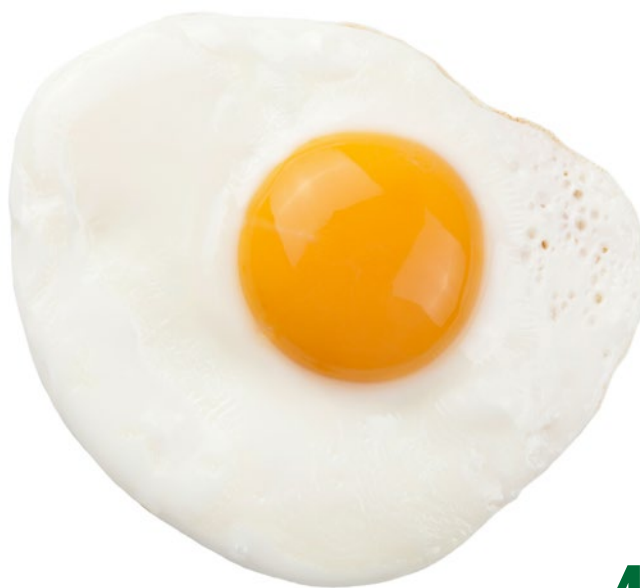


Switzerland – a little bit (more) of everything

5

Switzerland is one of the five best-rated countries in the world. In 2025, it maintained its image as a stable, prosperous and reliable nation with trustworthy institutions and a high quality of life. It is seen by the international community as synonymous with success, even in these uncertain times.

SOURCE: FDFA



0.4

Life expectancy in Switzerland has increased – by 0.4 years for women and 0.3 years for men. Newborns can now expect to live until they are 86.3 years old if they are female, or until the age of 82.7 if they are male. Age demographics are shifting too, with the over-65s now outnumbering the under-20s for the first time. A population getting older, and living longer, has far-reaching implications for the state pension, the labour market, and lawmakers.

SOURCE: FSO

25%

One quarter of the population speak a native language that is not one of Switzerland's four official languages. English is the most common non-official language, followed by Albanian and Portuguese. It is particularly young people, Swiss with immigrant backgrounds, and non-Swiss who often use more than one primary language. Switzerland is even more linguistically diverse than its four national languages would suggest.

SOURCE: FSO

15,000

Switzerland has an egg shortage. The relevant import quota has been increased by 15,000 tonnes, so that some 240 million extra eggs can be imported at a lower rate of duty from 1 May 2026 until the end of the year. This is because supply is unable to keep up with demand. Annual per capita consumption in Switzerland amounts to 197.7 eggs.

SOURCE: FEDERAL OFFICE FOR AGRICULTURE (FOAG)

409,000

This is the number of overnight stays reported by the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) in 2025 – a new record. The SAC's most popular Alpine hut was the Lämmerenhütte on the Gemmi Pass in the canton of Valais, which hosted 10,053 overnight stays. As the Alps become increasingly popular, an SAC-commissioned study has revealed that one third of SAC huts could become unstable due to melting permafrost. Food for thought.

SOURCE: SAC

Roman ship cargo discovered

Archaeologists have discovered ceramics, tools and weapons dating back to the 1st century CE at the bottom of Lake Neuchâtel. This find could provide new insights into Roman-era goods transportation, trade networks and technical know-how.

EVELINE RUTZ

In November 2024, two divers discovered numerous round objects at the bottom of Lake Neuchâtel. Were they Second World War mines? Only when they switched on their lamps did they realise this was something completely different. “You could tell from the colour that it was terracotta,” Julien Pfyffer, founder and president of the Octopus Foundation, recalls. He and an archaeologist from the canton of Neuchâtel recognised that they were looking at an array of ancient dinner plates. They then came across various other ceramic vessels strewn among the algae, mussels, sand and stones – countless cups, bowls and dishes. This was an extraordinary find. “We remained rooted to the spot for several minutes, surveying the cargo,” says Pfyffer.

“We remained rooted to the spot for several minutes.”

Julien Pfyffer, president of the Octopus Foundation

Two and a half years have since passed, with the Neuchâtel cantonal archaeology office (OARC) carrying out subsequent excavations in 2025 and 2026 – supported by the archaeological service of the canton of Fribourg (SAEF), and the Octopus Foundation. A joint team of experts identified and documented around 1,000 objects not far from the lake shore. They brought crates of artefacts up from the depths and took them to the Laténium archaeological park and museum in Hauterive, where

they are currently being stored in a controlled environment. Fearing looters and vandals, the team kept their work on the project strictly confidential and have only recently informed the public. “The find is of inestimable value,” says the head of OARC, Sonia Wüthrich, adding that the richness, variety and unusually good condition of the cargo are unprecedented in Switzerland.

An important transport and trade route

Archaeologists speculate that the items come from a merchant vessel that sank some time between 20 and 50 CE. Back then, Lake Neuchâtel formed part of a key transport and trade route that connected the southern and northern parts of the Roman

Circle shapes at the bottom of Lake Neuchâtel – a drone image led to the spectacular discovery.

Photo: Octopus Foundation





Empire and served as an artery for moving food, building materials, goods, animals, and people. It was easier, more efficient, and cheaper to transport cargo on water. Earlier finds already point to Switzerland's water bodies serving as transit routes in Roman times. The remains of Roman merchant vessels have been excavated in Germany, southern France and the Mediterranean. Yet few examples of cargo have ever been recovered.

This is why the well-preserved and extensive range of artefacts at the bottom of Lake Neuchâtel is remarkable, not only in a local but in a European context. Wüthrich calls it a "unique source of information previously unknown to us, opening a fascinating window into Roman-era Switzerland and its economic past".

Goods from Andalusia

The ceramic vessels, in particular, could well have been made locally and earmarked for sale. They had been carefully packed in wooden crates. Some plates looked like they had been stacked together, as if they had collapsed from a shelf. On board

the vessel, they were likely stowed on a wagon constructed of ash wood, given that the divers found four wheels nearby. This suggests that the Romans favoured a dual system of transportation, evidently combining both land and water routes in the 1st century CE. Two perfectly preserved amphoras are proof that Roman trade networks covered long distances. They originally came from a Roman province in the region of present-day Andalusia and were presumably filled with olive oil. Three Roman swords were also recovered complete with wooden scabbards. Could the vessel have had a military escort on board? The swords could have been used for protection, but alternatively, could simply have been part of the cargo.

The cargo was scattered over a 600-metre stretch on the bed of the lake. It is quite conceivable that the crew threw the items overboard after their vessel got into difficulty. "We want to understand the circumstances of this shipwreck and establish the relevant details," says Wüthrich, explaining that she and her colleagues will aim to put the event into a broader historical context. They want to learn more about trans-

A bronze pot – the quantity and variety of artefacts will keep archaeologists busy for some time to come.

Photo: Octopus Foundation

port routes, trade networks, technical know-how, ceramics production, and how products were distributed.

Public to learn more from mid-2027

Nevertheless, the job now is to preserve and restore. This will be challenging, given the sheer quantity of objects and the various materials from which they were made. For example, OARC had to rent additional cold-storage facilities and reorganise its storage space. Wüthrich admits that the logistical and financial expense is considerable, but it is, she says, a necessary step to preserve the artefacts and make them accessible to the scientific community and, later, the general public. Indeed, the public should learn more about the find and the excavations from mid-2027. A book and a documentary film are currently in the pipeline. A small themed exhibition has also been mooted. The idea is that the Laténium museum will one day have an area dedicated to waterborne transport and the Roman period.

The artificial straightening of waterways in the 19th and 20th centuries is a big factor in why the valuable cargo has now been discovered. Interventions to "correct" the course of rivers caused water levels to drop and altered the flow of the current. Objects that had disappeared under layers of sediment are now visible. "We regularly monitor the bed of the lake and the cultural heritage preserved underwater," says Wüthrich. Aerial surveys and diving missions make this possible. A drone image alerted researchers to the underwater cargo, showing a dark area with small circles. Are there any other places where the experts believe similar finds could be made? Wüthrich: "Not at the moment, but we wouldn't rule anything out!"

Dinosaurs and their crocodile cousins are all the rage with the Swiss

There are three ways to view dinosaurs in Switzerland: the tracks in Vieux Émosson (Valais), the Jurassica Museum (Jura) and the site of Frick (Aargau). Even though the Valais tracks are actually from distant cousins of the dinosaurs, these locations really draw the crowds.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Doctor Lara Sciscio, a specialist in dinosaur tracks, pushes open a large wooden door leading into a cellar. This is the cellar of Porrentruy Castle (Jura), which still houses prisoners on the upper levels, as we learn from our second guide, palaeontologist Gaël Spicher, a PhD student at the Jurassica natural history museum (undergoing renovation until 2027). This treasure trove is dedicated entirely to the finds unearthed at the famous digs that formed part of the A16 Transjurane motorway construction. The project, launched in the early 2000s, took a path through an area that it was thought might feature interesting remains. A team of archaeologists was assembled to carry out some emergency digs, as recounted by scientific journalist Pierre-Yves Frei in his latest book*, dedicated to dinosaurs in Switzerland. In February 2002, near Courtedoux (Jura), some dinosaur tracks were uncovered. They were from sauropods. These long-necked, broad-footed quadrupeds were herbivores. They lived during the Upper Jurassic period, approximately 152-157 million years ago. "They would not have hunted us as food, in the way that, for example, a T. Rex would; T. Rex lived in the Cretaceous period and its tracks have been found in the US," explains Sciscio. The Jura site contains around 700 trails – from dinosaurs crossing Europe – and 14,000 footprints. A real jackpot for the researcher, who joined the Jurassica Museum four years ago from her native Zimbabwe. "A footprint tells us about the animal's gait, its stride and its weight," says the palaeontologist, who specialises in ichnology



"A footprint tells us about the animal's gait, its stride and its weight."

Lara Sciscio, specialist in dinosaur tracks

(the analysis of footprints). What about the skeletons? Here, there are none. But sauropod remains were discovered in Moutier (Jura) as early as the 19th century, the scientist explains. The animals in question looked like the Diplodocus.

Tracks 1.20 metres in diameter

Our two scientists open boxes containing fossils unearthed during the Transjurane digs. One is the fossilised stomach of a tortoise. It was alive 152 million years ago, during the Upper Jurassic, whose name itself derives from the Jura. As soon as each fossil or item of animal remains is discovered, it is covered in plaster to protect it, then removed from the rock and transported to the lab for cleaning. There is enough work here to keep scientists busy for decades. But where are the dinosaurs? The palaeontologists slide out a heavy vertical file. It contains the round tracks left

by an *Amanzia* sauropod. This creature had feet as large as columns (1.20 m in diameter in the largest footprint), a long neck, a small head and a long and very strong tail. It stood around four metres at the hip. The "drawing" is the result of comparisons with other sauropods, as these digs did not uncover any skeletons of these animals, adds Sciscio. In order to identify an animal with certainty, however, you need to have both its tracks and its skeleton. The two researchers take us into the courtyard of a training centre, where we can see the basement through glass. This view lets us observe tridactyl (three-toed) tracks, left by theropods, bipedal dinosaurs that were carnivorous and close relatives of the T. Rex. As a reminder, this monster lived up to the extinction of non-avian dinosaurs; modern birds are actually living dinosaurs. The other dinosaurs died out 66 million years ago.

Another famous location in Switzerland for observing the tracks of these varied and occasionally terrifying animals is Vieux Émosson, in Valais. These tracks are located at an altitude of over 2,400 metres. The site turned out to be full of surprises, as palaeontologists discovered years later that the animals in question could not have been dinosaurs. "These tracks were left behind by close relatives of the dinosaurs, with whom they shared a common ancestor in the early Triassic," reveals Pierre-Yves Frei. How this misunderstanding came about features in his book. In 1976, French geologist Georges Bronner and friends decided to travel to the region of the Émosson dam on foot. On the second day, the group reached the region of Vieux



Pierre-Yves Frei: "Un dinosaure dans la montagne". Savoir suisse, Lausanne 2026, 192 pages



The most well-known dinosaur fossil site in Switzerland stems from a misunderstanding.

years old, and dinosaurs had only just started appearing in the southern hemisphere at that point. So, the received wisdom is no longer dinosaurs but pentadactyl (five-toed) animals, upright crocodilians almost three metres long and with powerful jaws, belonging to the division of Pseudosuchia. The other division of the clade was Avemetatarsalia, the division of the dinosaurs.

Frick and its perfect skeletons

In his book, Pierre-Yves Frei mentions another legendary location in the history of dinosaurs in Switzerland: the quarries at Frick (Aargau), where, in 1976, Swiss palaeontologist Ben Pabst discovered the fossilised remains of dinosaurs around 210 million years old, Plateosauruses, in the clay. These herbivores were eight metres long and weighed four tonnes. The museum in Frick hosts a complete skeleton of the animal. This corner of Aargau is believed to contain around 500 fossils per hectare. Why are there so many? “During the Triassic, the bodies of water on this large plain became mud pools in the dry season. The bigger dinosaurs were driven by thirst to wade in regardless and they could not always escape,” the author explains. “I’d hate to imagine getting trapped there, but it leaves valuable evidence,” the Geneva native adds.

Émosson, the name of the first dam built in the valley. Georges Bronner took some photos with his daughter Sylvie. The Alsace native’s attention was suddenly drawn to a slab half-submerged in snow. These were not merely holes: they were tracks. News of this discovery travelled around the world and the site would become – and remain – the location of the Vieux Émosson dinosaurs. Why were they thought to be dinosaur tracks? The first reason, the Geneva

journalist explains, was that the tracks were very numerous but they were of mediocre quality. They suggested the presence of three-toed footprints, characteristic of dinosaurs. In reality, all the footprints are five-toed. Another difficulty was that the sedimentary rock did not contain any fossils, which made precise dating impossible. The pioneers of this discovery had put their faith in the tracks being 230 million years old. However, the rock itself is 240 million

Millions of years ago, theropods lived in Switzerland. There is a replica outside the Jurassica Museum in Porrentruy.

Photo: Stéphane Herzog

Swiss-EU relations – major decisions loom for parliament

Switzerland has negotiated a new set of agreements with the European Union (EU). The federal parliament will now review and debate the package, which exceeds 1,000 pages – after which voters will have the final say. Some important and contentious issues are at stake.



Why the need for these agreements in the first place?

The existing agreements with the EU (Bilaterals I and II) are over 20 years old. The Federal Council wants to consolidate and strengthen the bilateral framework with a new package, Bilaterals III, which ensures continued frictionless participation in the EU single market, the Swiss economy's most important marketplace, and preserves freedom of movement, giving Swiss citizens the right to live and work in any country within the European Economic Area.

What areas does the new package of agreements cover?

The package consists of two elements: “stabilisation” and “further develop-

ment”. Its first part contains five existing agreements that have been amended with regard to freedom of movement, land transport, air transport, agriculture, and mutual recognition of product standards. The second part (“further development”) features three new agreements on electricity, health, and food safety. As far as the EU is concerned, the whole set of agreements can only be ratified as a complete package and cannot be unpicked. Yet parliament could still decide to put Bilaterals III to the electorate in two stages.

Where are the biggest sticking points?

There is controversy on institutional issues like the adoption of EU law, or

President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen signed the negotiated set of agreements on 2 March 2026. Both sides must now ratify the treaties – in Switzerland, this is the job of parliament and the electorate. Photo: Keystone

what to do when there are disputes between the two parties. In the case of agreements relating to the European single market, Switzerland will have to adopt any new EU rules. Referred to as a “dynamic” form of align-

Future generations of Swiss who wish to benefit from freedom of movement and emigrate to the EU will be affected.

ment, this is the same mechanism that applies to the Schengen Border Code. Switzerland will now have an informal say in developing such rules.

It can refuse to adopt a rule outright but, in doing so, would have to expect retaliatory measures from Brussels. Dispute resolution is another tricky issue. If Berne and Brussels disagree on how an agreement should be interpreted, an independent arbitration panel steps in. If a conflict involves a question regarding the interpretation of EU law, the arbitration panel must refer the matter to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in Luxembourg, whose job is to ensure that EU law is followed and applied in the same way across the EU. The Federal Council has emphasised that the CJEU cannot decide on specific disputes or intervene of its own accord in arbitration proceedings.

What do the political parties think?

The rightwing-conservative SVP is the only government party to oppose the package categorically, warning of “foreign judges” and a loss of Swiss sovereignty. The other parties represented in the Federal Council – the SP, FDP, and Centre – essentially support the new package, as do the Greens and the Green Liberals. The trade unions are also in favour, provided parliament approves measures to protect wages. The *economiesuisse* business federation, for its part, believes that the agreements are crucial to Switzerland’s competitiveness.

Is the “Fifth Switzerland” affected?

Essentially, nothing will change for the 540,000 or so Swiss Abroad who currently live in European countries. But future generations of Swiss who wish to benefit from freedom of movement and emigrate to the EU will be affected. The advantages of free movement also include mutual recognition of university qualifications and the transferability of social security rights.

Can Switzerland limit immigration unilaterally?

As a rule, citizens of EU states may live, study and work in Switzerland thanks to freedom of movement. However, Switzerland has negotiated a safeguard clause stipulating that it can limit immigration if “serious economic or social problems” arise. But the EU would likely retaliate – for example, by enforcing reciprocal immigration restrictions on Swiss citizens (see also the article on pages 26 and 27 about the vote on the “No to a Switzerland of 10 million” initiative).

Consultations are likely to drag into 2027, with voters possibly not having their say until 2028.

When will the electorate vote on the Swiss-EU package of agreements?

First of all, the National Council and the Council of States are expected to review the package, starting in the 2026 autumn session. The extensive and complex agreements constitute one of the biggest agenda items of recent years. Ratification will require parliament having to amend 36 pieces of legislation and pass three new laws. Consultations are, therefore, likely to drag into 2027, with voters possibly not having their say until 2028. It is still unclear whether the vote will only require a simple majority of the electorate, or whether a majority of the cantons will also be necessary for a binding result. The voting procedure is a highly contentious, politically charged issue.

Why is a majority of the cantons pivotal?

The bar for a yes vote is raised if the majority of cantons must also vote in

favour. This would suit opponents of the package, who say a majority of the cantons is necessary because the agreements impinge on the Federal Constitution. But the Federal Council sees no absolute legal basis for this. Supporters believe a simple majority of the electorate is sufficient, as was the case in the votes on Bilaterals I and II. The chances of a yes vote increase if a majority of the cantons is not required. Parliament must ultimately decide which voting procedure will apply.

What happens if there is a no vote?

If the package of agreements fails to pass, the existing bilateral agreements remain valid but, according to the Federal Council, will become less important and effective because they will no longer be updated. Maintaining the status quo is not an option for supporters, because Switzerland would not be able to strike new deals with the EU in areas like the electricity market if bilateral relations are not stabilised. Switzerland also risks being excluded from EU schemes like the Horizon research programme. But opponents say Switzerland should go it alone and secure free trade agreements around the world instead of signing EU treaties.

THEODORA PETER

See our EU dossier:
www.revue.link/euswiss

Information from the Federal Council:
www.revue.link/package



Voters thwart SVP immigration initiative

Around 55 per cent of the electorate rejected the SVP's "No to a Switzerland of 10 million" initiative on 14 June. An overwhelming 70 per cent of expatriate voters dismissed the proposal. The majority of Swiss are evidently unwilling to jeopardise freedom of movement.

THEODORA PETER

The aim of the immigration-sceptical SVP's "No to a Switzerland of 10 million" initiative was to have a population cap enshrined in the constitution. This would have meant Switzerland's resident population not being allowed to exceed 10 million before 2050. There are currently 9.1 million people in Switzerland. The authorities would have had to have curbed migration sharply once the population reached the 9.5-million threshold – which it will in the next five to 10 years, forecasts say. In tabling the initiative, the SVP ultimately wanted Switzerland's agreement with the EU on the free movement of people to be terminated (see *Swiss Review* 2/2026). The proposal failed to gain traction among 54.8 per cent of voters and a majority of cantons, after the government and parliament argued that the "radical" initiative was a danger to Swiss prosperity.

The vote polarised debate, driving 58.9 per cent of the electorate to the polls. This is the highest turnout since

Switzerland gave its verdict on the 13th state pension payment. The two sides ploughed a combined total of some 15 million Swiss francs into the voting campaign – the biggest outlay since the entry into force in 2022 of a law obliging political parties and stakeholders to disclose details of their funding. Opponents of the initiative had more money to play with – nine million francs compared to the six million francs that the yes camp had at its disposal.

The "No to a Switzerland of 10 million" initiative was particularly unpopular in French-speaking Switzerland and in towns and cities in general, whereas it attracted significant support in central and eastern Switzerland (see map). The biggest yes vote (65.9 per cent) came in the canton of Appenzell-Auserrhoden, the lowest in the canton of Basel-Stadt (26.5 per cent). Approval was almost as low among the Swiss Abroad (29.8 per cent), after the Council of the Swiss Abroad publicly rejected the initiative.

Federal Council: "voters give thumbs-up to the bilateral approach"

The Federal Council believes the result is "a sign of stability, openness and reliability", Justice Minister Beat Jans (SP) told the media in Berne, adding that it was a thumbs-up to the Swiss-EU bilateral approach from voters who want stability at a geopolitically and economically uncertain time. In Brussels, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen responded to the result with diplomatic reserve. "The EU and Switzerland share deep ties and a strong partnership. We will continue working together to modernise and deepen our cooperation," she wrote on X.

Both sides are currently in the process of ratifying the negotiated set of Swiss-EU agreements. The Swiss parliament will debate the package in autumn, before voters again have the final say (see pages 24 and 25).

Meanwhile, the SVP has lost out again – only six years since its "For moderate immigration" initiative was rejected by around 57 per cent of voters. Its latest attempt to convince voters was considered to have a greater chance of success. Indeed, the "No to a Switzerland of 10 million" slogan found widespread resonance, given the drawbacks that have come with rapid population growth (from seven to nine million inhabitants in the last 25 years). The ensuing housing shortage, for example, has seen high demand push up the price of rents (see *Swiss Review* 2/2026).

A no vote "will not solve a single problem", warned SVP President Marcel Dettling moments after the result. The issues highlighted by the initiative would continue to dog

The cross-party alliance opposing the SVP's "No to a Switzerland of 10 million" initiative celebrates the result of the 14 June vote.

Photo: Keystone



Switzerland in the months and years to come, he said. The government takes the arguments of the yes camp seriously, Federal Councillor Jans insisted, citing the action plan to combat the housing crisis as one of a number of measures already taken.

The SVP is now focused on scuppering the Swiss-EU package of agreements, which it has consistently dubbed the “subjugation treaty”. Furthermore, parliament will soon debate the so-called “border protection initiative” that was submitted by the SVP in autumn 2025. Switzerland’s biggest party says it wants to tighten border security and “stop asylum abuse”, so that only 5,000 “genuine” refugees are let into the country every year.

Tightening access to civilian service

A separate item also appeared on the 14 June ballot sheet, with a narrow majority of 52.5 per cent (Swiss Abroad: 51.9 per cent) endorsing a legislative amendment that tightens access to civilian service. The aim of the reform is to keep more young men in the armed forces. In particular, it will now become less appealing for soldiers to switch to civilian service at a later stage, because they will be faced with a much longer service stint if they do so.

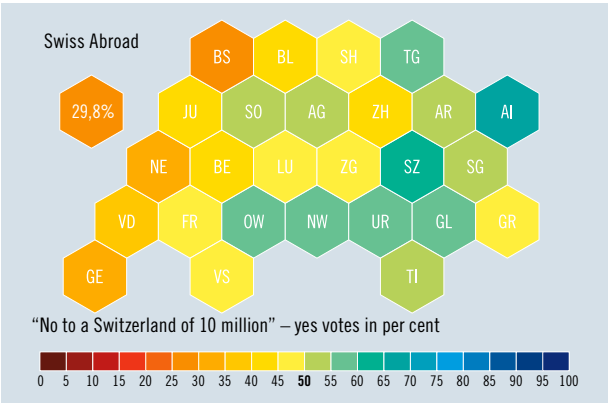
A left-green alliance called the referendum, opposing what it regarded as an unnecessary impediment that will



not make the army automatically more attractive. It is concerned that those affected could exempt themselves from military service by taking medical discharge – instead of doing civilian service for the benefit of society.

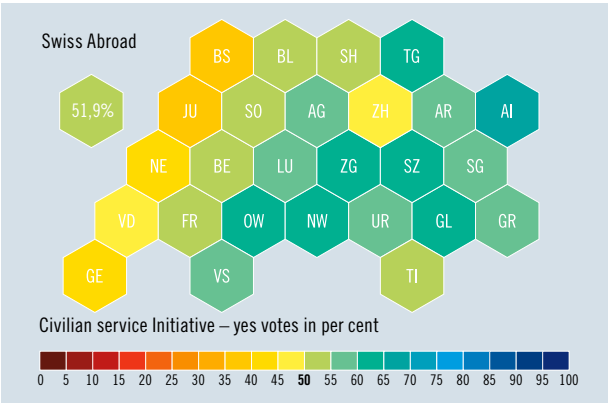
The two sides ploughed a combined total of 15 million francs into a fiercely contested voting campaign.

“No to a Switzerland of 10 million” – rejected



A nationwide minority of 45.2 per cent voted in favour of the initiative. Support for the proposal among the Swiss Abroad was much lower (29.8 per cent). The majority of cantons, likewise, rejected the SVP’s bid to limit Switzerland’s population to 10 million.

Civilian service – legislative amendment approved



A 52.5 per cent majority voted yes to a change in the Civilian Service Act that will make civilian service less attractive as an alternative to mandatory military service. The majority of expatriate voters (51.9 per cent) also voted in favour. A simple majority of the electorate was sufficient to effect the legislative amendment – no cantonal majority was necessary.

The first female president of the ICRC has a lot on her plate

Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, appointed in late 2022, is the first woman to head the International Committee of the Red Cross. The war in Ukraine has led to a fall in donor contributions. Humanitarian law is increasingly being flouted. The president has launched a campaign to revitalise it.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

In an organisation that claims to be determined to achieve gender parity in executive roles, the appointment in October 2022 of the new president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, diplomat Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, makes a statement. “It was about time,” says Philippe Lazzarini, former head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), pointing out that this particular glass ceiling has already been broken in several UN agencies.

The Croatia-born ICRC president who hails from Basel experienced a baptism of fire through Russia’s attack on Ukraine in early 2022. This placed the ICRC under considerable pressure. “Every campaign run in the field is subjected to intense scrutiny. It makes the work more delicate and complicated,” according to someone familiar with the agency. The ICRC has been criticised by the Ukrainian authorities, who have condemned the fact that the institution’s delegates are unable to gain full access to the country’s prisoners of war in Russia. “That’s because we’re not being granted that access,” Mirjana Spoljaric Egger told the press.

Another consequence of this conflict is reduced financial support from the major donor countries, particularly the US and European states. Part of this aid was sent directly to Ukraine and allocated to hosting refugees in Europe. The expansion of the ICRC pursued by the former president, Peter Maurer, was put on hold. In late 2023, Spoljaric Egger unveiled the organisation’s plan to redirect its focus to protecting and helping the victims of conflicts. At the end of 2025, the ICRC eliminated the equivalent of 2,900 full-time posts, returning to its 2017 staffing levels of 15,000 employees.

Humanity confronted with austerity measures

Is multilateralism under attack? The president reacted by launching a global initiative aimed at revitalising political commitment to international humanitarian law (IHL). Mirjana Spoljaric Egger is also interested in how this law applies to fields such as autonomous weapons, cyberwarfare and the use of artificial intelligence. The Swiss woman’s face sometimes seems to reflect the suffering of the people ensnared by war. This was evident during her recent visit



to Gaza, where she condemned a “moral failing”. When asked about her approach to the calamities she faced, the president highlights the work of the ICRC. “A simple message from an imprisoned soldier to his mother can be immensely comforting. Allowing a family to give a loved one a dignified burial is always a worthy cause,” she stresses.

“She’s someone who shows empathy for the victims of war,” observes Philippe Lazzarini, who left his position as head of UNRWA in late March. On the subject of Gaza in particular, where 400 employees of that agency have been killed, Lazzarini feels that the general public no longer understands how the ICRC can remain neutral. “The president cited breaches of humanitarian law in a general manner, without naming the aggressor. However, the duty of neutrality does not prevent us naming a belligerent when all other avenues have been exhausted,” he believes. At the end of April, Mirjana Spoljaric Egger was in Iran to discuss urgent humanitarian issues. In May, she visited a prison in Baghdad. “The ICRC remains determined to intervene at the front line in conflicts, where few other organisations can operate.”

Mirjana Spoljaric Egger wants to revitalise humanitarian law in a world marked by the war in Ukraine and a drop in support from donors.
Photo: Keystone

Almost half of Swiss Abroad live in a neighbouring country

As at 31 December 2025, there were 838,600 Swiss citizens living abroad. Their number has continued to grow since 2024 (+11,900 people, an increase of 1.4%). Almost half of the Swiss Abroad have settled in a country bordering Switzerland. These statistics on the Swiss Abroad were released by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).

Swiss citizens living abroad

01 Population

2025

Swiss citizens living abroad



838 600

By sex

♂ 388 700
♀ 449 900

Average age

41 years 46 years

Swiss citizens living abroad by sex and age group

0–17 years

♂ 23%
♀ 19%

18–64 years

♂ 56%
♀ 53%

65 years or older

♂ 21%
♀ 28%

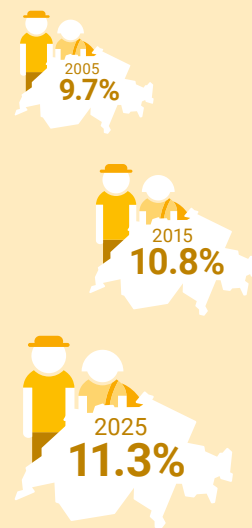


75%
Swiss abroad with multiple citizenships

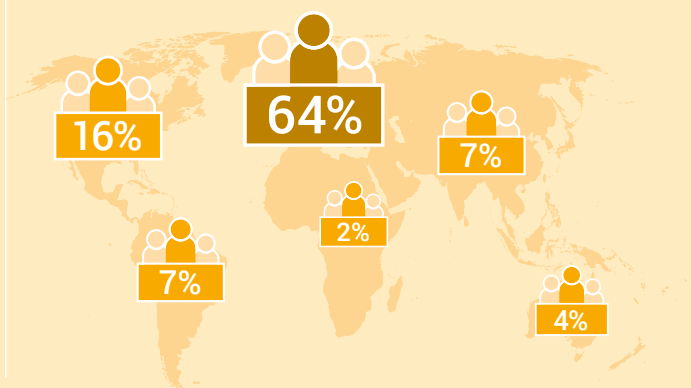
The most common countries of residence (including dependent territories outside the mainland)

France	214 000
Germany	102 100
United States	85 900
Italy	53 100
Canada	42 000
United Kingdom	41 400
Spain	28 200
Australia	27 000
Israel	25 000
Austria	19 100

Swiss citizens living abroad as a percentage of all Swiss citizens



Percentage of Swiss citizens living abroad by continent of residence



Source: FSO – Population and Households Statistics (STATPOP), Statistics on the Swiss Abroad (SE-Stat)

statistics.admin.ch

© FSO 2026

At the end of 2025, there were 838,600 Swiss citizens living abroad, 11% of the total population holding Swiss nationality. Almost half of Swiss Abroad (47%), 392,200 people, live in a country that shares a border with Switzerland. One quarter (212,400) live in mainland France, while 12% (102,100) live in Germany, 6% (53,100) in Italy, 2% (19,100) in Austria and 1% (5,600) in Liechtenstein.

Many Swiss live in the border regions and big cities of neighbouring countries

Around 50,800 Swiss live in the Haute-Savoie department of France. Other French border regions are also home to a large number of people of Swiss nationality, such as the departments of Ain (18,100), Haut-Rhin (17,000) and Doubs (14,500). Lörrach (5,100), Waldshut (4,300) and Konstanz (3,000), three regions of Germany that are geographically close to Switzerland, are also prime living destinations. The same trend can be seen in bordering regions of Italy and Austria: the Italian provinces of Como (4,400) and Varese (3,900) and the Austrian district of Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet (3,700) are all home to several thousand Swiss.

Some Swiss citizens also choose to settle in major cities in neighbouring countries. Around 11,800 Swiss people live in Paris, 8,000 in Berlin, 6,800 in the Province of Milan, 4,500 in Vienna, 4,400 in Munich, 3,700 in Rome and 3,100 in Hamburg.

(FSO)

For more information:
www.revue.link/statistic



Young Swiss Abroad: maintaining ties

When they reach legal age, young Swiss Abroad are called upon to confirm their individual registration with their competent Swiss representation (embassy or consulate). This process, which is essential if they are to retain the entirety of their rights, is too often neglected, which can have serious consequences in the long term.

APOLLINE SIX, CONSULAR DIRECTORATE, FDFA

When someone entered in the register of the Swiss Abroad as a minor reaches legal age under Swiss law, the competent representation (embassy or consulate) will ask them to confirm their entry in the register, in accordance with Article 12(3) of the Swiss Abroad Act (SAA). To this end, they will receive an official letter asking them to confirm their registration, either by post or directly via the FDFA's online office. Before they reach legal age, the young Swiss Abroad are registered under their parents' names.

An essential step that is often neglected

This step is crucial to ensure that young people can avail themselves fully of their rights, including their political rights. More broadly, being registered with a representation grants access to a wide array of official information, consular services and opportunities connected with Switzerland. This includes the ability to participate in federal elections, receive the "Swiss Review" and carry out certain administrative processes remotely. Every year, however, many young Swiss Abroad fail to confirm their registration in time and are struck off the official registers.

Every year many young Swiss Abroad fail to confirm their personal registration and are struck off the register. Confirming your registration is more than a simple administrative formality: it is a way of staying connected to Switzerland.



Young Swiss Abroad, at an OSA holiday camp, visiting the Federal Palace and meeting representatives of the Consular Directorate. Photo provided

The consequences should not be underestimated

In some circumstances, the consequences can be serious: a child born abroad to a Swiss parent and who holds another nationality will automatically lose their Swiss nationality once they reach 25, unless they have been declared or they declare themselves to a Swiss authority abroad or within Switzerland or if they have stated in writing that they wish to retain their Swiss nationality.

In this situation, the role of the parents is key. They are often the ones who take care of their children's formalities, even when their children have grown up, and who remind them of the important deadlines.

"Young Swiss Abroad" project

In light of this observation, providing greater information and support for the young people concerned seems essential. With this in mind, the Consular Directorate of the FDFA has launched the "Young Swiss Abroad" project. Making the young Swiss Abroad aware of their rights and obligations is one of the goals of consular strategy for 2026-2029 as adopted by the Federal Council.

This project forms part of the mandates defined by the Swiss Abroad Act and designed to strengthen the ties that bind the Swiss Abroad to each other and with Switzerland, and to facilitate international mobility for Swiss nationals (Art. 2). It is also designed to promote dialogue among the young Swiss Abroad, both with each other and with Switzerland (Art. 9(3)).

The "Young Swiss Abroad" project is structured around three axes: identifying the needs of young people and representations;

By confirming their entry in the register of the Swiss Abroad, young people can make sure they will still be able to exercise their political rights as well as have access to all the consular services.

developing innovative communication media; and providing greater support for embassies and consulates to facilitate their work in the field.

Two surveys were conducted to identify the needs of young people and the challenges encountered by representations. The former of the two gathered information from 23 Swiss representations located in the 10 countries hosting the largest number of young Swiss Abroad. The latter, addressed to young people aged 15-30, attempted to gain a better understanding of their wishes and their needs.

The results emphasise the strong connection felt by young people with Switzerland and their pronounced interest in the specific possibilities the country offers, whether in terms of study, apprenticeships, employment or even entering into dialogue with other young Swiss Abroad. The survey did show, however, that young people are still reluctant to make contact proactively with embassies and consulates. This is in spite of the fact that representations play a key role in upholding and reinforcing the link with Switzerland. Over and above the consular services they provide, they act as an initial point of contact for guidance and information and create opportunities to meet people at events and through initiatives aimed at the younger generations. Get in touch with them today!

Staying in touch with Switzerland: much more than a formality

The young Swiss Abroad enjoy plenty of opportunities: they can study and travel in Switzerland without needing a permit. Abroad, embassies and consulates organise activities aimed at young people, especially when those people come of age. Moreover, initiatives such as the OSA or SJAS summer camps are a chance to discover Switzerland, strengthen one's feeling of belonging and make long-lasting ties. At the end of the day, confirming your personal registration as a young Swiss Abroad is so much more than an administrative formality: it is a call to stay connected with Switzerland, its values, its institutions and the numerous opportunities it offers.

Are you a young Swiss Abroad? Check out the new "Young Swiss Abroad" page, which contains some key information on your rights, your obligations and the opportunities for working and studying in Switzerland. QR code or link

Young Swiss Abroad
www.revue.link/youngswiss



SwissInTouch
www.swisstouch.ch



Some other useful online links:
www.revue.link/young



Switzerland is calling

Young Swiss Abroad receive personalised guidance from educationsuisse on education and training in Switzerland.

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE

Every year, many young Swiss people from around the world choose to move to Switzerland for their education. While there are no official statistics, the staff of educationsuisse meet many young Swiss Abroad each year who take this step, driven by the desire to grow personally and actively shape their future.

Good preparation is essential to making education or training in Switzerland a success. educationsuisse offers free information and personalised advice on education and training in Switzerland.

- Information relating to different educational options such as university studies or vocational training
- Information relating to specific questions regarding admission requirements, required language skills, deadlines, accommodation, scholarships, insurances, etc.
- Individual counselling onsite in Berne or online
- Vocational and study counselling in cooperation with a professional career counselling provider (fee-based)
- Assistance in applying for cantonal scholarships and administrative support
- Financial help (grants/loans) from educationsuisse and private foundations

The educationsuisse staff speak English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. They will be glad to help and answer questions via email, telephone, online or onsite in Berne. Our counselling services are supported by a contribution from the Federal Office of Culture (Federal Department of Home Affairs).



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



“educationsuisse supported me from the beginning of my studies with my scholarship applications to my home canton of Zurich. This substantial administrative assistance was an important source of personal support. Without the dedication of educationsuisse’s staff, I would not have been able to successfully complete my studies. They were also always there for me whenever I had questions about everyday life in Switzerland.”

Paulo Wirz

“Thanks to educationsuisse’s guidance, I found my educational path in Switzerland. I am very grateful to educationsuisse, as I always felt well supported.”

Alexia Colamonico



Paulo Wirz, Swiss Abroad from Brazil, studied art at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and in Geneva at the Haute école d’art et de design (HEAD). In 2021, he was a recipient of the Swiss Art Award, awarded by the Federal Office of Culture.



Alexia Colamonico, Swiss Abroad from Italy, completed a bachelor’s degree in international relations at the University of St. Gallen and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in economics at the University of Zurich. Alongside her studies, she works at a bank to further advance her professional goals.

Summer: time for adventure

The SJAS summer camps are in full swing. Three hundred Swiss Abroad children and young people from 48 different countries are attending a total of nine camps this summer. Around 100 committed leaders are bringing their energy and creativity to devise varied programmes.

RAYA KELLER

First up this summer was the camp at Zweisimmen in the canton of Berne followed a few days later by the first Swiss Trip through the Alpine foothills. The camps normally start by defining some ground rules. The camp community has to decide how everything will be run during the two weeks they will be living together – a key foundation for a good camp. The rules make things more secure, even when they are put to the test by someone trying to find out whether and, if so, how far the leaders will let them bend the rules.

The campers also learn how to handle a Swiss Army knife and they are allowed to use it to make a carving. The international themed event is another staple of the camps. Everyone brings something to eat or drink from their country of residence with placards presenting the specialities and the country they are from. Sampling the different dishes is of course the highlight of the event.

An unforgettable experience

The three camps in Wengen, Rechberg and the second Swiss Trip in western Switzerland also ran successfully. Whether hiking in the mountains, climbing the high ropes or taking a refreshing dip in the lakes and rivers, enjoying outings to Swiss cities or having games evenings together – the camps created lasting memories. The children and young people discovered different regions of Switzerland, learned about new cultures and made cross-border friendships. Sporting activities and camp life provided special moments every day centred around intercultural exchange. At the same time, the participants became more familiar with their home country and discovered various corners of Switzerland; whether by train, on foot or inflatable dinghy.



On the Swiss Trip across Switzerland. The children taking a break to admire the Furka Pass.

Photo: Pixofluna

Registrations for the winter

Although the last summer camps are still running, it is already time to start thinking about the winter season. There is still time to register for the 2026/2027 winter camps in Valbella and the JUSKILA at Lenk. The JUSKILA will also be attended by almost 600 young persons living in Switzerland. The 2027 edition of this unique winter camp is for anyone born in 2012 or 2013 who has not attended the camp before. In September, a draw will be held for the 25 places allocated to Swiss Abroad.

The registration deadline is 1 September:
<http://www.revue.link/wintercamp>



Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer:innen
Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
Fondazione per la gioventù svizzera all'estero
Foundation for young Swiss Abroad

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (SJAS)
Alpenstrasse 24, 3006 Berne, Switzerland
Email: info@sjas.ch
www.sjas.ch



1/800 000



The "Fifth Switzerland" is a colourful, varied and multilingual puzzle with well over 800,000 pieces. Today's puzzle piece is ...

... **Marcus Deiss**, born in 1973, an ICT/B2B adviser and author who has been living in Zambia since 2022. Deiss writes books that explore landscapes, cultural identity and the stories of places. His work includes the three-volume series "Timeless Switzerland".

What does 'homeland' mean to you?

Home to me is not a fixed place but a feeling of familiarity. It is the moment when landscape, language and behaviour need no explanation – they are simply understood.

Is it possible to have several homelands?

Yes. Home is where you live, take responsibility and build relationships. Switzerland is where my roots are – Zambia is the place I currently choose to call home.

What is it like for you being connected to more than one country?

It creates distance – but also gives clarity. You begin to see differences more clearly and question what you used to take for granted. This perspective has a direct influence on my writing.

What relationship do you have with Switzerland?

A calm and consistent one. It manifests itself less in the day-to-day and more in how I see the landscape in which I live, and in my view of orderliness and cultural structures. Many things about a place only become apparent when you no longer live there.

What do you miss the most about or from Switzerland?

How the whole country is easily accessible. The proximity between lakes, cities and mountains – and that everywhere is well connected as a matter of course.

Has your attitude to (Swiss) traditions changed since you emigrated?

Yes, I have become more aware of them. Distance makes traditions less self-evident but more important at the same time.

More: www.revue.link/puzzle3

Your donations to "Swiss Review" remain as important as ever

Your donations are a great help to us. They give us huge motivation to provide the Swiss Abroad with top-quality content. Every "Swiss Review" is your own little home from home, regardless of where you live in the world. But "Swiss Review" also costs money – and is still feeling the squeeze. Please show your solidarity and donate. With your help, we hope to safeguard the magazine's future and continue to produce the independent, quality journalism that our editorial team stands for. Can we count on your support?

WALTER SCHMID, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Please donate now – every little helps in securing the future of "Swiss Review".

Donate via credit card:

www.revue.link/creditrevue



Donate via PayPal:

www.revue.link/revue



Bank account for donations:

IBAN: CH97 0079 0016 1294 4609 8
Bank: Berner Kantonalbank
Bundesplatz 8, CH-3011 Berne
BIC/SWIFT: KBBECH22

Beneficiary:

BEKB Bern, Account 16.129.446.0.98
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad,
FAO Mr A. Kiskery,
Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne
Reference: Support Swiss Review

Email:

revue@swisscommunity.org

Swiss Community Days

21 August 2026 – Seehotel Waldstätterhof
22 August 2026 – Area for the Swiss Abroad

Join us at Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen for an interesting discussion on topics that affect us all.

A new era begins

In 2025, we on the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) took stock for the first time in the 10 years since the Swiss Abroad Act came into force. Not in words but in deeds – with direct elections in 13 countries to choose our delegates. Forty percent of CSA delegates now have a direct mandate. Ideally, we want to be hitting the 90 percent mark in 2029.

This small step for the CSA is a giant leap for the “Fifth Switzerland” as a whole. Proof that our online direct elections work will help us to argue the case for introducing e-voting for all Swiss Abroad – and that this should happen in all cantons by the 2031 national elections at the latest.

But it is not just about whether online voting works. Switzerland’s expatriate community and its stalwart associations must also participate in the new system. National and supranational umbrella associations

must operate effectively to organise elections and oversee orderly election campaigns. In turn, we need election candidates who acknowledge the OSA for what it



is – with its rules, its strengths and, occasionally, its weaknesses. It is in all our interests that we work together constructively to do the best for our compatriots abroad. The working atmosphere within the CSA needs to improve, not deteriorate.

Besides the CSA’s complete refresh, much has also happened within our organisation, with the transition at the helm of the OSA – from Ariane Rustichelli to Lukas Weber, and then to Daniel Hunziker – as well as a new editor-in-chief of “Swiss Review” and a new head of the Youth Service. We are entering a new era, and I hope that everyone can join in and benefit in their own way.

FILIPPO LOMBARDI, OSA PRESIDENT

New head of the Youth Service – Michel Gerber wants to build international bridges to Switzerland



Dear Swiss Abroad,

On 20 April 2026, I became head of the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. After growing up in Ostermundigen, I went abroad to study and work. I did a sports management course and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in the US, and, in doing so, picked up valuable experience at various organisations in the international sports and events industry.

For example, I worked in sales and customer relations at the Manchester Monarchs, a former team in America’s second-tier ice hockey league. Meeting Swiss sports personalities like ice hockey player Nino Niederreiter further strengthened the affinity I had to my home country. I later worked at the Gillette Stadium in Boston, where my job included responsibilities relating to the Copa América, South America’s quadrennial men’s national-team football tournament. My most recent stint involved sponsorship and sales for the UConn Huskies, which are the intercollegiate athletic teams representing the University of Connecticut.

The years I spent abroad have had a lasting impact, deepening my sense of attachment to Switzerland. It was this distance from home that showed me how important cultural roots, shared values, and exchange are within the Swiss expatriate community.

These experiences are a particular source of motivation for me in my new role.

I want to help young Swiss Abroad to develop a close connection to Switzerland, enthuse them with our values and show them the diversity and beauty of our country.

I look forward to building bridges to Switzerland with young people worldwide and continuing the work of the OSA Youth Service with commitment and new ideas.

Kind regards,
Michel Gerber



Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, Switzerland
Phone. +41 31 356 61 25
youth@swisscommunity.org
www.swisscommunity.org



Beyond borders. We remain the bank close to you for the Swiss abroad.

We offer you professional, personalised support that is subject to the highest quality standards.

