

SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
November 2017

**Modern buildings but no money:
Basel has no strategy for its museums**

**The new Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis:
finally Ticino is back!**

**Landslides in the mountains:
the climate change in the Alps**

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“Climate change is a reality, even if some people still refuse to believe it.” These were the words used by Swiss President Doris Leuthard when she addressed the media in Bondo in Grisons last August. Three million cubic metres of rock had just fallen from nearby Piz Cengalo. Huge piles of rubble had thundered down the valley, burying parts of the village. Eight hikers lost their lives but nobody in the village was

hurt thanks to its warning system. There was nevertheless large-scale destruction.

In the past, natural disasters happened in far-away places. Switzerland found out about such events via newspapers or television: devastation caused by hurricanes in the Caribbean or flooding after torrential rain in Asia. But Switzerland has been affected for some time now. Glaciers are breaking up or melting in the mountains, and huge rockfalls are occurring in the valleys. In the lowlands, villages are being flooded and crops destroyed by hailstones the size of tennis balls or frost in May.

Erratic weather patterns have also developed in Switzerland, which is something we have to get used to. The causes – which this issue's focus article convincingly describes – are well-documented: the temperatures in the mountains are rising and hot summers are becoming more frequent. This is impacting directly on the glaciers and the stability of the mountain slopes.

As it has not been conclusively proven that climate change is primarily due to human behaviour rather than the caprices of nature, many people still do not see the need to change their habits. But, as Federal Councillor Leuthard remarked, climate change is a reality that cannot be denied, not even in Switzerland ever since Bondo.

MARKO LEHTINEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The end to the Jura conflict – Moutier switches sides



This is a lesson in democracy which Switzerland has given to Europe and the world in difficult times when many values are being challenged.

JEAN AMHERD, FRANCE

The Jura conflict may seem outdated. However, one look at Spain makes you glad that in the Swiss Confederation we have a model of a society where democracy is alive.

GÉRARD BOILLET, FRANCE

Sion 2026 – a more modest Olympic Games

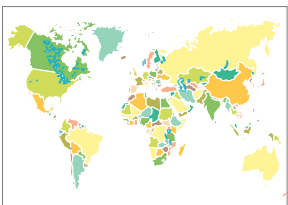
I can't quite believe what I am hearing. Priority is unfortunately given to business at major sporting occasions these days, which is obvious from recent global events. I nevertheless wish the team behind the bid well.

ERNST RÜTIMANN, THAILAND

Hans Stöckli has shown remarkable commitment. However, I no longer believe the Swiss people will support the Olympic bid – except perhaps in Valais. These events based on the ethos of “bigger, better and more expensive” belong to the past. This approach will fail today simply because of the fear of terror attacks and the enormous security costs involved. Climate change is also scratching the veneer of the Winter Olympic Games.

HELEN MEIER, SWISS ABROAD

After the election – the new Council of the Swiss Abroad



I don't feel represented by the Council of the Swiss Abroad. I do not belong to a Swiss society and was therefore excluded from the election. The Swiss are always very proud of their democracy, but this is an extremely undemocratic

system. Why should I be forced to join a society if the Council of the Swiss Abroad wants to represent all Swiss people abroad? I believe that all registered Swiss citizens should be entitled to vote for the Council of the Swiss Abroad.

KAY KUNZ, SWISS ABROAD

Why were we overlooked on our island? Should we really only be finding out about the elections after the announcement of the results?

BERNHARD MASTEL, MAURITIUS

In the latest issue of “Swiss Review”, I read: “Between January and August, Swiss citizens around the globe were called upon to elect their 140 representatives on the Council of the Swiss Abroad.” I regret that I am once again one of the many Swiss Abroad who did not hear this appeal and were not invited to take part in the election. Despite all the repeated claims to the contrary, the system of census suffrage, which belongs in the Middle Ages, clearly still applies as only registered members of certain Swiss societies can vote. I can therefore only reiterate that I do not regard the Council of the Swiss Abroad as representing me or as the legitimate voice of the Swiss Abroad. It is just a body of the societies.

ARTHUR MEYER, AUSTRIA

I am 75 years old and look after over 20 children at a home in Nepal. Despite being registered with the Swiss embassy, I was never informed about this election. I also see that India and Nepal are not represented on the map.

HANS KELLER, NEPAL

This is the first time I have heard about this Council. I live in Indonesia and see that it has no representative on the Council of the Swiss Abroad. Why is that?

MANFRED RICHRATH, INDONESIA

I can understand the discontent of many Swiss Abroad. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and the Council are endeavouring to make the elections more democratic. However, this will require e-voting in all cantons. All Swiss Abroad will then be able to elect their delegates directly. However, it is practically impossible to hold a direct election without e-voting. Who will organise and carry out the election? Who will pay for the voting documents to be sent out? These are just a few of the unresolved issues. Incidentally, the number of delegates per country is based on the number of registered Swiss Abroad whereby a minimum number of 1,500 Swiss Abroad must be reached. Germany and France therefore have the most delegates, whereas countries like Turkey and Bolivia have just one.

STEFANIA ZANIER,

COUNCIL OF THE SWISS ABROAD DELEGATE FOR SPAIN



If the eternal ice melts, mighty summits will teeter

The Alps are mighty and magnificent. Or are they mighty and terrifying because they are beginning to crumble and tumble down into the valleys below? This question has been raised by the dramatic events of summer 2017 in the Swiss mountains. This has highlighted the impact rising temperatures are having on the Alps.

MARC LETTAU

There was no indication that anything out of the ordinary would happen in the Grisons mountains on 23 August 2017. It was a bright summer's day. But then at 9.30 a.m., three million cubic metres of rock came loose on the 3,369-metre-high Piz Cengalo. The mass of rock crashed into the valley below and fragmented. The impact pulverised a 10 to 15-metre-thick glacial sheet lying in the rockfall's path. The rubble combined with the loose rock saturated with melt water at the bottom of the mountain. Shortly afterwards a torrent of mud

and debris rolled down the mountain, heavy and powerful enough to push huge lumps of rock down into the valley too. "Rolled down" is not really an accurate description. The mudslide travelled at up to 40 kilometres an hour towards the village of Bondo five kilometres away and collided with part of it.

The incident claimed the lives of eight hikers whose bodies have still not been found. As Piz Cengalo is under observation due to previous rockfalls and a warning system has been installed high above the village, nobody in Bondo itself was hurt. The

warning system raised the alarm, giving them time to reach safety from the mudslides and falling debris.

Just a week later, another large section of rock came away from Piz Cengalo during a night-time storm. Another mudslide hurtled down into the valley. There was a third landslide on 15 September. Several hundred thousand cubic metres of rock crashed down the mountainside for over two hours. The "Bondarini", as the residents of Bondo are known, are aware that another one and a half million cubic metres of rock are moving on Piz Cengalo.

Moosfluh provides a wonderful view of the Aletsch glacier. However, the glacier is no longer a safe place for hiking as it is melting away.

First the mountain,
then the glacier...

A change of location – the Trift glacier on the 4,000-metre-high Weissmies normally moves down the valley at a rate of around 15 centimetres a day. The Bondo landslide was still making the headlines when the movement of the Trift glacier's permanently monitored ice sheets began gathering pace. The speed of movement increased to two and then four metres a day. That is a staggering rate for glaciers. Experts and authorities raised the alarm on 9 September and requested 220 residents of Saas Grund to leave their homes. The evacuation was completed by 6 p.m. and the hiking area was cordoned off. These steps did not come a moment too soon. In the early hours of the morning on the following day, the tip of the glacier under observation broke into pieces, slid over the steep rock face and fragmented into ice granulate upon impact. Nobody was hurt.

...and finally an entire mountainside

Another change of location – Moosfluh at an altitude of 2,234 metres, close to Bettmeralp, provides wonderful panoramic views of the Aletsch glacier. However, the mountain slope abutting

Geologist Hugo Raetzo warns: "Temperatures in the Alps have risen at twice the rate of the global average since the late 19th century."

the glacier is no longer a safe place for hiking. Warning signs prohibit access by mountain climbers because "people can disappear into the large holes, such as glacial crevasses, on the hiking route", warns the safety officer responsible for the area. His warning does not appear exaggerated. Around 160 million cubic metres of rock are moving here. It is the largest movement of rock in Switzerland and is very rapid at times. Whereas the Moosfluh moved by a few millimetres a year on average in previous millennia, this suddenly increased to 30 metres in 2016. Such astonishing rates have not been recorded anywhere else in the Alps. Deep fissures and metre-wide crevices in the terrain in places suggest that a far larger mass could plunge into the valley here than in the Bondo landslide.

Cengalo, the Trift glacier and Moosfluh – these three locations raise the question as to whether significant climate change lies behind the extensive degeneration and whether, as a consequence, the Alps will no longer be seen as mighty and magnificent but instead as a mighty and terrifying place to visit.

"We are experiencing rising temperatures"

Geologist Hugo Raetzo from the Hazard Prevention Division of the Federal Office for the Environment points out the obvious first of all: "We are experiencing rising temperatures in the high mountain regions." Temperatures in the Alps have risen at twice the rate of the global average since the late 19th century. The increase in temperature has also become more acute in the mountains in recent decades. This rise in temperature is obviously impacting on the glaciers and the permanently frozen and therefore stabilising substrate, known as permafrost,

explains Raetzo. In addition to the general warming, which is causing the permafrost to thaw, the very hot summers of recent times are also a factor, indicates the natural scientist. Hot summers could become the "trigger point" for rockfalls. Rockfalls and landslides were more frequent in the summers of 2003 and 2015 when higher than average temperatures were recorded.

The Piz Cengalo is one of the mountains lying in the permafrost zone. Is it a typical example of a mountain that begins to disintegrate when it gets too hot in the mountains? Raetzo explains that it is not quite that simple. The correlations are often much more complex, and developments over millennia are a major factor. However, the Swiss Permafrost Monitoring Network reveals just how much the temperature has risen in the depths of the ground. The Corvatsch measurement station, for example, shows that the temperature at a depth of 10 metres is a degree higher today than it was 30 years ago. Temperatures are also rising at a depth of 20 metres, a level where seasonal fluctuations have had little effect in the past. Raetzo remarks: "It is certainly not the case that every mountain is disintegrating." But the geological structure increases the risk of landslide. This is illustrated by a simple example. If the substrate defrosts, a certain gradient is required before rock slides.

Fissures and crevices full of water

The Piz Cengalo is certainly steep. However, no definitive causal analysis of this specific case has yet been produced. The "Bondarini" are therefore left to speculate on the factors behind the Piz Cengalo landslide. Siffredo Negrini, a mountain guide, has tried to fathom out what happened. He has long avoided the mountain. He explains





Bondo residents survey the destruction caused by the avalanche of mud, debris and scree on 23 August.

Photos: Keystone

why: “Ice and snow melt quickly there, and water fills the fissures and crevices. It then freezes, cracking the rock.” The recent incident aside, Raetzo points to a general lesson that must be learned on the Swiss mountains: “The permafrost is being warmed and the glaciers are receding – warm melt water, which is extremely prevalent in summer, is penetrating to great depths. This changes the situation and potentially also the stability of the terrain.”

The abundance of melt water has also impacted on the Trift glacier. Raetzo explains that some of the melt water reaches the bottom of the glacier in hot summers, heating the very spot where the glacier is embedded into the rock – or at least should be. Experts unanimously agree that the glacial ice falls of 9 September were the result of high summer temperatures. Martin Funk, a glaciologist at the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, comments: “Such an incident can only take place in summer.” The climate is therefore having a direct impact on the glacier.

Most glaciers in the Alps are set to disappear by the end of the century, apart from a few at high altitude. Switzerland must therefore prepare itself for significant change. The first lesson for the lay person is that if the glaciers melt, their stabilising force is also lost. The entire tip of the Trift glacier broke off because there was nothing sup-

porting it. The deeper sections of the glacier used to support the steep part of the Trift glacier, but they have now melted away.

The mountainside has no support

This process of change is accelerating as support structures disappear. Moosfluh provides a good example of this phenomenon. Here the Aletsch glacier is supported – or at least was – by the abutting mountainside. The Aletsch glacier has receded by around three kilometres in length since 1850 and 400 metres in height based on the tip today. Its dwindling dimensions mean the ice is no longer exerting pressure on the slopes. The original pressure of 35 bar “is no longer being applied”, according to Raetzo, which clearly explains the movement of the Moosfluh.

Despite the principle that “melting glaciers mean the mountains lose a support structure”, the consequences are not generally as dramatic as on the edge of the Aletsch glacier. Raetzo explains that the right “geological structure” also has to exist in the first place: Events far back in the Earth’s history have probably caused “weakspots and clasts in the bedrock” on the mountain. The underground processes of fragmentation – which mean we are now seeing extremely dynamic geomechanical interaction –

were therefore set in motion much earlier. Put simply, if the “eternal ice” is supporting a mountain that is already fragile, the melting of the glacier proves fatal.

After the dramatic events of summer 2017 in the mountains, one thing is clear – neither the landslide on the Piz Cengalo nor the break-up of the Trift glacier came as a complete surprise nor did they find Switzerland unprepared. Bondo constructed a protective wall several years ago to act as a collection basin for impending mudslides, which probably prevented the village from being destroyed. The Trift glacier has been under observation for years, along with the Bis glacier in Mattertal. At Moosfluh too the tiniest shift does not escape the attention of the experts because the mountain is being monitored. Radar systems, GPS, optical evaluation procedures and other measuring systems are deployed. It appears Switzerland is extremely well equipped in terms of technology for monitoring danger. Raetzo backs this up: “We have much accurate information on the movements in the areas under observation and are working at a high standard technically.” National and cantonal environmental agencies and universities are collaborating on the trialling of GPS-based observation networks in pilot areas in Upper Valais. The GPS sensors deployed in unstable zones provide real-time data on movements. “The early warning systems we are working with are of a very high standard by international comparison,” says Raetzo. But he warns against bullishness: “We’ll never have control over nature despite all the technology at our disposal – not today nor in the future.”

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard underlined the message even more clearly in comments captured by TV cameras in Bondo: “We will continue to experience such incidents. Melting permafrost, mudslides and climate change are a reality, even if some people still refuse to believe it.”

Tourism – part of the Alps will have to survive without snow

Winter tourism in the Swiss mountains is suffering owing to global warming. “We need to switch to a different model,” warns the Valais-born researcher Christophe Clivaz, who recommends an economy “based on the needs of the resident population”.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

For many ski resorts in Switzerland, a country with 1,500 ski lifts, global warming has resulted in seasons with little or no snow for several years. “In Mont-Noble, a small resort high above Sion, we’ve been unable to open for three Christmases in a row. If that happens again this year, you have to wonder whether it’s worth continuing to support this activity,” questions the researcher Christophe Clivaz. He represents the town of Sion on the governing body of the commune of Mont-Noble. Clivaz is also the co-author of a popular science book about the challenge posed to the winter-sports industry by climate change.



Many Swiss ski areas have had to resort to artificial snow due to the lack of snowfall.

Photo: Keystone

The outlook is rather bleak for some resorts, especially those at medium altitude, including some which can no longer operate without large-scale investment. Canton Vaud has already stated that it will “gradually withdraw from the worst affected ski areas”, according to a report by the canton in 2013. In general, the cantons of Ticino, Uri and Valais are particularly vulnerable to snowfields retreating, as shown by research.

Artificial snow

Clivaz, who lectures at the Institute of Geography and Sustainability at the University of Lausanne, is calling for the development of a different economic model for the mountain regions, where tourism generates up to 30% of the added value created in some places. There is little evidence that this work has begun, apart from in Grisons, “which seems incredibly capable of adapting”. “We are seeing companies sustained single-handedly by public entities which are opting for arti-

cial snow and new facilities. All the small resorts are competing with one another for customers against the backdrop of a general decline in people taking part in winter sports,” remarks the tourism expert. What about the large-scale real estate developments in Amimona and Andermatt? The author believes they are “geared towards the winter season and belong to a different era”.

High-altitude resorts that have been less affected by global warming, such as Zermatt, for example, can take advantage of the situation by attracting European skiers deprived of snow. “The ski areas generating most of the revenues in the industry will always be certain of snow in future,” the study states.

The appeal of cool retreats

Christophe Clivaz is calling for “a plan for disinvestment in ski lift infrastructure in order to shift towards an economy based on the needs of the resident population”. With this kind of model, the village of Nax, situated below the Mont-Noble resort, could welcome people from the region all year around or for short breaks, and also provide accommodation for town dwellers, according to the Valais-born author. The Alps will continue to provide cool retreats, which will become all the more appealing as summers by the sea become ever hotter, stress the three authors of the book “*Tourisme d’hiver. Le défi climatique*” (Winter Tourism – the Climate Challenge).

Another change taking place is advancements in the working world which enable resorts like Verbier to attract as residents people who run their businesses online. Christophe Clivaz also raises the question of people’s desire to enter the tourism sector. “In Valais, apart from Zermatt, which has a strong tradition of hospitality, lots of parents are advising their children against taking this career path,” he says. Various original initiatives in the mountains are being run by young people from abroad. The professor from Valais highlighted two examples: a sleep-on-straw bed and breakfast offer in Saxonne, run by an English woman, and the high-quality barns in the hamlet of Commeire owned by Belgians. The study also draws attention to the fact that the tourism industry is one of the reasons for climate change. In 1998, tourism was responsible for 5.2% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Christophe Clivaz, Camille Gonseth and Cecilia Matasci: “*Tourisme d’hiver. Le défi climatique*” (Winter Tourism – the Climate Challenge). Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes.



Challenging fresh start after pension debacle

After the rejection of the “Old-Age Pension 2020” bill on 24 September, the search for a plan B on pension reform is proving complicated. There is also significant time pressure.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

All parties must be prepared to give and take – this was the spirit embodied by the “Old-Age Pension 2020” project. What some people saw as good old-fashioned Swiss compromise was regarded as a fiasco by others. Greater revenues and savings were to balance the books of old-age and survivors’ insurance (AHV) until 2030. The conversion rate was to be lowered to stabilise occupational pension provision, in other words the pension funds. It was hoped that the level of old-age pensions could be maintained thanks to restructuring of the pension funds and a 70 Swiss francs a month rise for the new AHV pension. The pension age for women was to gradually be brought into line with that for men, so from 64 to 65 years of age. It also intended to make retirement more flexible between the ages of 62 and 70.

Seven years were spent tweaking this bill only for voters to scupper the entire reform package on 24 September 2017. In total 52.7% were opposed

to the Federal Act on Pension Reform. The additional funding of AHV through an increase in VAT was also rejected by 50.05% of voters and the majority of the cantons. After a 20-year reform backlog on old-age pension provision, the SP Federal Councillor Alain Berset had wanted to reform and stabilise both the first pillar – AHV – and the second pillar – the pension funds – with a comprehensive package.

Berset’s mammoth undertaking

The wide-ranging scope of the proposal had benefits but also the drawback of being extremely complex. It also provided angles of attack for all sides. Both the conservatives and the left-wing parties were divided amongst themselves. The FDP and SVP joined forces to oppose the bill. The 70 franc increase was their main bone of contention. The Federal Council, a small parliamentary majority, the SP and CVP did their utmost to get the reform bill through. However, in

French-speaking Switzerland it was far-left groups who successfully called the referendum. They saw the increase in the pension age for women as socially unacceptable.

Interior Minister Alain Berset conducted a highly committed referendum campaign, making numerous appearances throughout the country, and did not hold back from making dramatic statements. He warned young people that they risked not receiving AHV in future if they rejected the bill. These and similar remarks were construed as counter-productive threats by various sides.

SVP and FDP team up with the far left

The two major right-wing parties – the FDP and SVP – were thus able to defeat the reform package in an alliance with the far left. In large swathes of French-speaking Switzerland the rejection of the reform can therefore be interpreted as a no from the left. But contrastingly it was the right who said no in German-speaking Switzerland. Both sides are now fighting for sovereignty over the interpretation of the result in the aftermath of the battle.

However, a wide variety of factors contributed to the failure of the pension reform. This makes the search for a quick and viable solution difficult. Stabilising the social institutions is imperative in view of increasing life expectancy and the ageing of society. Federal government calculations indicate that the AHV system will face a shortfall of seven billion Swiss francs by 2030. Federal Councillor Berset will now get all the parties and associations together around the table as a

Yes to food security

Overshadowed by the referendum on old-age pension reform, the issue of “food security” was also decided at the ballot box – this concerned a counterproposal to the popular initiative of the same name put forward by the Swiss Farmers Union. Not opposed by any of the parties, the bill was also approved by the Swiss people with 78.7% voting in favour. However, the new legal norm will not change anything as no legislative amendment is provided for. “The new constitutional article supports the general thrust of current agricultural policy,” according to the Federal Council’s official explanatory statements. The constitutional article lays down how food supply for the population is to be secured on a long-term basis. These are matters which were essentially already covered by the Constitution but are now enshrined as a comprehensive concept, including securing the basis of production, especially arable land, resource-efficient food production adapted to the location and a market-oriented agricultural and food industry. The new article leaves scope for very different interpretations. Farmers may see it as a requirement for greater structure, and environmental associations as a remit for a more eco-friendly approach. (JM)

first step. The conservative opponents of the reform were already alluding to a plan B prior to the referendum. SVP President Albert Rösti said on Swiss television on the Sunday of the referendum that a broad compromise would have been reached in Parliament had the 70 franc increase in AHV not suddenly been added. FDP President Petra Gössi outlined her plan B as follows: the pension age for women would rise to 65 years of age, VAT would also have to be increased for AHV and the pension age would be made more flexible. The main reason for the rejection of the bill, she said, was the 70 franc increase in AHV: “A rise in AHV must therefore be definitively ruled out. The majority of Swiss people do not support this supplement,” she said. The conservatives also want to reform the first and second pillars in separate bills.

The red lines

For his part, SP President Christian Levrat made clear on referendum day where the red lines were for his party: “No reduction in pension, no increase in the pension age for women to 65 without compensation and no general increase of the pension age to 67.” The supporters of the bill did not regard the infamous 70 francs as a pension rise, as opponents complained, but rather as a form of compensation. CVP President Gerhard Pfister also remarked that the pension age could not be increased without compensatory measures.

It was not by chance that Levrat warned of a pension age of 67. The issue was not up for discussion as part of the defeated bill but it was never-



The opponents of the pension reform bill triumphed with their arguments. But what now?

Photo: Keystone

theless raised by SVP President Rösti on the evening of the referendum. Hans-Ulrich Bigler, FDP National Councillor and Director of the Swiss Trade Association, mentioned a “moderate increase in the pension age in monthly increments” shortly after the referendum. The “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, the mouthpiece of conservative Switzerland, maintained: “Debate over a higher pension age is now urgently needed after the referendum.” In contrast, “Der Bund” commented: “Some people on the right and business leaders hope the people are willing to accept a pension age of 67 as they are under the impression that the AHV

system is facing a financial crisis. This is a cynical and dangerous calculation. A general increase in the pension age will not gain majority support in the foreseeable future.”

The row over a new pension bill is already raging between politicians and in the media. The search for consensus will prove difficult, especially since the conservative victors of the referendum on 24 September cannot put forward a bill without reaching agreement with the left if another debacle at the ballot box is to be avoided. After all, a referendum on AHV has never been won without the support of the left.

Ignazio Cassis – the eighth Ticino-born Federal Council member

After an 18-year absence, Italian-speaking Switzerland is once again represented in government. The Federal Council is well balanced in terms of regional politics but not gender.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

“The first shall be the last” – The Federal Assembly for once defied this expression of biblical origin. It was the early frontrunner who was elected as the new member of the Federal Council in only the second round of voting on 20 September, winning 125 votes, just over the absolute majority of 123 required. Ignazio Cassis, the FDP National Councillor from Ticino, emerged as the favourite to succeed Federal Councillor and Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter, who announced his retirement in mid-June, and managed to hold this position until the end.

This was certainly not a foregone conclusion. Candidates named early often fall away during the nomination and voting procedure. Cassis also had to contend with competition from within his own party. The FDP parliamentary group presented Parliament with a choice of three candidates. In addition to Cassis, it put forward National Councillor Isabelle Moret from Vaud and Cantonal Councillor Pierre Maudet from Geneva. Maudet, an outsider as a non-

member of the national parliament, conducted a particularly active campaign not just in parliament as the voting body but also in the media. He primarily highlighted his experience as an executive board member and abilities as a dynamic and unconventional figure. He achieved a respectable result, winning 90 votes in the decisive round of voting, while Isabelle Moret was well beaten, ending up in third place with 28 votes.

Shift to the centre-right

The election of Cassis has seen the Federal Council shift to the centre-right. The left-green parties never disputed the FDP’s entitlement to the Federal Council seat but favoured Isabelle Moret and Pierre Maudet. Cassis was too right-wing and business-friendly on various issues for the SP who were particularly critical of his lobbying for the health insurance schemes. The SVP, on the other hand, regards the new Federal Councillor as the guarantor of a right-wing,



The newly elected Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, the 117th member of the Federal Council, swears an oath to the United Federal Assembly. Photo: Keystone

Ignazio Cassis

Ignazio Cassis, who was born in 1961, is married and lives in Montagnola. He studied medicine at the University of Zurich and obtained his doctorate in medicine in Lausanne. From 1988 to 1996, he worked as a junior doctor practising surgery, internal medicine and social and preventive medicine. From 1996 to 2008, he served as Ticino's cantonal medical officer and from 2008 to 2012 as the Vice-President of the Swiss Medical Association (FMH). Until his election to the Federal Council, he was president of the care home association Curaviva and president of the health insurance association Curafutura. He joined the National Council in 2007 and was re-elected twice. From 2015, he was chair of the National Council's Social Affairs and Health Committee and president of the FDP parliamentary group in the Federal Assembly. JM

conservative block of four in government. The SVP had continually criticised Didier Burkhalter for sometimes making common cause with the two SP members, Alain Berset and Simonetta Sommaruga, as well as CVP Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard.

A rigid block mentality is essentially foreign to collegial government as changing majorities are part and parcel of the system of concordance and search for consensus. However, it is anticipated that Federal Council decision-making will now reflect centre-right policy more often with Ignazio Cassis in office, especially in terms of policy on finance, economic affairs and Europe. The economically liberal Cassis nevertheless also holds liberal views on some social policy issues. For example, he supports the decriminalisation of the use of cannabis and cocaine.

As Federal Councillor, Ignazio Cassis will take over the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs from the retiring Didier Burkhalter. Despite speculation prior to the allocation of the departments, none of the six existing Federal Councillors wanted to take over a new ministry. Cassis is therefore also responsible for the thorny EU portfolio. He has always asserted that the bilateral treaties with the EU are essential but has nonetheless hinted at pursuing new approaches on the contentious institutional framework agreements.

Questions of identity and symbolism

At Federal Council elections it is never just about the substance on political issues in the narrow sense nor simply whether the candidate possesses the necessary personality traits, intellect and leadership skills. At least as much importance is attached to issues of identity and symbolism, in other words having the “right” composition of the seven-strong body in terms of representing gender, language and culture and the regions and cantons. With the election of Ticino-born Ignazio Cassis, the United Federal Assembly has this time given top priority to the linguistic region aspect. Italian-speaking Switzerland is represented in national government for the first time

since Flavio Cotti stepped down in 1999. He becomes the eighth Federal Councillor from Ticino since 1848.

Having one member from Ticino, two from French-speaking Switzerland and four German-speaking Swiss on the Federal Council ideally embodies the spirit of federalism as the federal Constitution requires the different parts of the country and linguistic regions to be represented appropriately. In contrast, the gender balance is far from ideal. Women are under-represented in relation to the proportion of the population they make up, with just two Federal Councillors – Doris Leuthard and Simonetta Sommaruga. Women have only ever once made up the majority of the Federal Council during a brief period between 2010 and 2011 with Micheline Calmy-Rey (SP), Doris Leuthard (CVP), Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf (BDP) and Simonetta Sommaruga (SP). The gender issue is therefore set to play a key role the next time a member of the government steps down, or at the latest when the Federal Council is completely re-elected at the end of 2019.

The new party-political norm

Federal Council elections always attract attention from the Swiss media. Its members are effectively like “Swiss royals”, as professor of history and Federal Council researcher Urs Altermatt recently referred to the seven-strong body in an interview, and are figures who have a status of prominence extending far beyond their political significance. However, the most recent election was largely a routine affair apart from in terms of region and personnel. For the first time since the late 1990s, a Federal Council election was held without any party-political turmoil. There had even been minor skirmishes during the election of Guy Parmelin (SVP) in December 2015 after Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf (BDP) stepped down. A new magic formula (2 SVP, 2 FDP, 2 SP and 1 CVP) has now established itself. Nobody challenged the FDP's entitlement to the seat.

A long period of instability has now finally come to an end. It began with the SVP's rapid rise to being the best-supported party in the 1990s, which coincided with the FDP and CVP losing votes. The SVP demanded two Federal Council seats in the form of an ultimatum. It got these in 2003 with the spectacular election of Christoph Blocher at the expense of CVP Federal Councillor Ruth Metzler. However, the SVP's father figure was just as spectacularly de-selected in 2007 and replaced by his party colleague Widmer-Schlumpf from Grisons. This in turn resulted in this Federal Councillor splitting from the SVP to form the BDP and this small party's eight-year stint in national government.

The protracted wrangling over the body's party-political composition severely tested the system of government for years. The Swiss system of government – famed for its stability and a key pillar of Switzerland's model of success – has now weathered the storm.

People who want to drive cars themselves must use the cantonal roads

The Federal Roads Office has a controversial vision – only completely driverless vehicles will be permitted on certain sections of motorway from 2040.

ANTONIO FUMAGALLI

When the first cars began appearing on Swiss roads towards the end of the 19th century, this development did not go down well in all quarters. There were major concerns that the new form of transport would endanger not only pedestrians but also traditional horse-driven forms of transport. The canton of Grisons reacted most vehemently. It unceremoniously imposed a general ban on motor vehicles in 1900. This was not lifted until 1925 and only after ten referendums.

The world is now once again facing a technological development that will entail far-reaching changes for the transport system. The key concept here is driverless cars. To ensure that the public and legislators are not taken by surprise again as they were many years ago, the Federal Roads Office (FEDRO) is already preparing the ground. The recently updated strategic direction for 2040 reveals just how precisely defined its plans already are. “While only completely driverless vehicles will be permitted on certain sections of road and at certain times, vehicles with and without steering wheels will travel on other sections,” it indicates.

Not a legislative project yet

But what exactly is the Federal Office envisaging? Will motorists who prefer their old-fashioned cars have to stick to the cantonal roads 20 years from now to get from Zurich to Berne? FEDRO underlines that the paper is a vision and not the actual formulation of a proposal. There is currently no legislative project that would prevent non-autonomous cars from using sections of road. “We are currently focusing on issuing special permits for driverless vehicles,” says media spokesperson Thomas Rohrbach, referring to projects such as “Olli”, the driverless bus in Zug, and the unmanned PostBus in Sion.

Transport Minister Doris Leuthard raised the prospect of test routes for driverless systems two years ago in an interview with “Schweiz am Sonntag”. FEDRO Director Jürg Röthlisberger recently indicated again that such routes could be introduced within two to three years. Regular operation is conceivable within eight years. The main reason for the protracted timeframe is legal issues, in particular liability in the event of an accident. A motion put forward by National Councillor Thierry Burkart (FDP/Aargau), which calls for greater legislative flexibility in view of technological developments, was referred to the second chamber in June.

The “exclusive” sections of road – outlined in FEDRO’s 2040 vision – nevertheless take things a step further. The Federal Office envisages “state-of-the-art separated carriageways without stopping

traffic and intersections”. In other words, motorways with relatively few junctions. “It may look something like the A1 between Estavayer and Yverdon or the A9 in Valais. And why not have a long car tunnel like the Gotthard?” remarks Rohrbach.

Sharing cars

Those wanting to travel these routes with manually controlled “vintage” cars would effectively be excluded. However, FEDRO points out that most vehicles will be driverless by 2040 and nobody will have to miss out on rapid travel – several people will be able to club together to use driverless cars upon payment of a corresponding fee. “Nobody would have to own a car as people would share them instead,” explains Rohrbach.



Driverless cars on Swiss roads – a model for the future or a flight of fantasy? (Pictured: a Google driverless car)

Photo: Keystone

The Federal Office’s plans for the roads have not been welcomed by everyone. “At the moment, this scheme is little more than a pipe dream of officials,” says François Launaz, President of Auto Schweiz, the Swiss automobile association. Certain road users cannot be discriminated against. It is also unclear how this type of “two-tier system” could be managed. Manfred Wellauer of the Motor Trade Association of Switzerland regards the timeframe as too optimistic: “As cars on Swiss roads are eight to ten years old on average, it would mean that most of the cars sold from 2030 would be fully driverless models, which I don’t believe is realistic.”

Driverless vehicles are both a blessing and a curse for the automotive industry. While mechatronics technicians will service and maintain an increasing number of electronic components, panel beaters will see their livelihood under threat as one day there will be hardly any accidents.

ANTONIO FUMAGALLI IS DOMESTIC AFFAIRS EDITOR AT THE “AARGAUER ZEITUNG”

“Cannabis light” paves the way for the legalisation of marijuana

Sales of a form of cannabis low in THC but rich in cannabidiol have sky-rocketed in Switzerland. The sudden emergence of this legal form of marijuana clouds the issue. In the long term, it could lead to the complete legalisation of cannabis.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

A minor legal amendment has opened the door to a lucrative market in “cannabis light” – or rather, cannabidiol (CBD), one of the plant’s active substances. In 2011, the Swiss government set the maximum level of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) permitted in cannabis, which increased from 0.5% to 1% to facilitate its use industrially. This psychotropic molecule is banned internationally. As for CBD, it is not covered by the Swiss Federal Act on Narcotics.

Manufacturers have therefore worked on the production of a “light” variety of cannabis, obtaining the right to sell it in 2016. This regulatory inroad has triggered a rush to buy “cannabidiol cannabis”. This product, which is credited with therapeutic properties, became available overnight both in small shops and at large-scale retailers. It is sold as a smokeable cannabis and as a cigarette, but also in the form of oil and capsules, etc. At the end of September, the Federal Customs Administration reported that 330 manufacturers had registered for it.

Police left in a tricky position

The sale of this legal cannabis has caused a lot of problems. Cantonal police officers, for example, suddenly have the impossible task of determining whether people are smoking joints or CBD. They are therefore now looking into systems that can quickly analyse THC levels in cannabis. The response from the health-



care sector has been mixed. Smoking cannabidiol may be bad for your health, but at the same time consumers suffer less damage than when using marijuana containing high levels of THC, which has been proven to be harmful.

Some prevention experts believe that this stampede for CBD is paving the way for the legalisation of cannabis. “We will see a legal amendment within two or three years,” says Jean-Félix Savary, who heads an addic-

A number of cannabis shops in Switzerland sell legal products with a THC value of less than 1%.

Photo: Keystone

tion study group in French-speaking Switzerland. Savary says the arrival of cannabidiol is “good news because it reveals a lack of regulation in this area. But we need a decision on the matter.” The addiction expert is lobbying for a state-controlled market similar to that proposed by a Canadian bill on cannabis.

A “high” without the downside

Why are products containing cannabidiol enjoying such success? “THC can induce psychotic states, but CBD is the opposite because it has a calming effect,” Savary says, pointing out that a desire to self-medicate often lies behind the consumption of psychotropic substances. “Through the consumption of cannabidiol, a substance which does not produce a high, we have discovered that people smoking joints may have been looking for something else in the plant other than THC itself.” “Regular smokers can consume cannabis all day without getting stoned,” explains Alec Burri, the manager of a company that sells cannabidiol.

The arrival of over-the-counter sales of CBD has nevertheless acted as a wake-up call for politicians. Aargau SVP National Councillor David Zuberbühler kicked off the debate in mid-September when he asked the Federal Council why it didn’t ban cannabidiol-rich hemp. Amongst other things, the parliamentarian pointed out that the Federal Office of Public Health advised consumers not to drive after consuming it.

Renting land to grow CBD cannabis

Since September 2017, My Growing Company has been offering a unique solution: leasing land to people who want to grow their own cannabidiol cannabis. “We wanted to share our passion for cannabis with consumers by enabling them to watch their crops growing on the land they are leasing,” says Alec Burri, the manager of this SME in Jura. Consumers choose their variety of cannabis CBD, for example Mademoiselle Fraise, which sells at CHF 5.40 per gram. It is sent out two or three months later by post. By contrast, a packet of cigarettes from the Swiss brand Heimat – the cannabis in which contains more than 20% CBD – costs almost CHF 20.

The incredible hype surrounding creepy-crawlies

The use of mealworms, crickets and locusts in food was recently authorised in Switzerland. Restaurateurs and retailers believe there is big business in insects.

ALAN CASSIDY

The group at the next table are understandably straining to see and their staring is, of course, irritating. We're sitting in "Bug A Thai" in Basel, one of the first restaurants in Switzerland to serve insects. Along with Pad Thai, fried rice and other Asian dishes, the menu includes an insect burger made with crushed locusts. There is also a skewer kebab where the locusts come whole and fried. Both dishes, the burger and the kebab, are now sitting in front of us on the table. We hesitate for a moment.

The use of mealworms, crickets and locusts in food has been permitted in Switzerland since 1 May. There has since been incredible hype about the creatures. The Swiss media database contains almost 250 articles on the subject from the past six months. TV crews have flown into Switzerland from all over Europe, the USA and Japan to film reports in which excited reporters and passers-by nibble on a mealworm or bite into a cricket.

Roger Greiner, the owner of "Bug A Thai", has also noticed the interest. He is pleased with how business with the insects is going. Shortly after opening his restaurant he was selling over 20 burgers a day – even though the insect dishes are only served in the evenings. "People are more inclined to try something like this than during their lunch break," he explains.

Meatballs on the shelves

The restaurateur firmly believes that lots more people will want to try these creatures. "It's the future," remarks Greiner. Supermarkets have been selling insect-based products since the end of August. Coop was the first retailer to enter the market, stocking two products on its shelves – a burger and a kind of meatball, both made with mealworms. Coop actually wanted to introduce these products much earlier but could not source the insects. Domestic production is in its infancy, and the creatures could not be imported from abroad initially due to federal government provisions on food safety. Demand is still currently outstripping supply, especially for mealworms.

The insects are however now on sale thanks to breeders from Belgium, and Coop is pleased with how business has started. While the retailer does not reveal exact figures, spokesperson Andrea Bergmann remarks: "There is great interest in the insect-based products, and sales have been very strong from the outset." The burgers and meatballs are made by the Swiss company Essento. Its founder Matthias Grawehr also played a significant part in generating all the hype surrounding the edible creatures. The authorisation of the insects is down to the persistent, effective lobbying campaign conducted by an alliance of food pioneers and ecologists.

The political figurehead of this lobby is Isabelle Chevalley, the Green Liberal National Councillor. In several parliamentary motions, the politician from Vaud called upon the Federal Council to permit the use of insects as food. Only Chevalley signed her first motion, but the second one was backed by over 60 National Councillors. Between the two motions, an insect aperitif was held at the Federal Palace, which proved highly successful in attracting media attention. Former CVP President Christophe Darbellay was photographed for the "Blick" newspaper biting into a caramelised



Locusts are a new sight on Swiss plates which will take some getting used to.

Photo: Keystone

cricket. When federal government began revising the comprehensive Federal Act on Foodstuffs shortly afterwards, the Federal Council declared its willingness to examine the authorisation of certain insect species in response to a further motion submitted by Chevalley.

Extremely rich in protein

The arguments put forward by those supporting the use of insects are always the same. These creatures are healthy, tasty and their production is environmentally sustainable because it uses fewer resources than that of conventional meat. These arguments have also clearly been well received by customers and restaurant-goers. The products are geared towards various groups, according to Coop spokesperson Andrea Bergmann: "They range from those curious about experiencing new tastes to environmentally-aware customers and people looking for nutrition that is high in protein."

An element of curiosity is definitely required when sampling these dishes. Less so the burger, as the insects cannot be seen, but certainly with the skewer-of-locusts dish. We pull off the wings from the rear of the first creature with a degree of trepidation, take a bite and feel a palpable sense of relief. It tastes like fried food, popcorn or pretzels, but there is also a meaty after-taste. The people at the next table are still looking over.

ALAN CASSIDY IS DOMESTIC AFFAIRS EDITOR AT THE "TAGES-ANZEIGER"

Traumatic Munich experiences

Mentored by Rilke, Regina Ullmann from St. Gallen became one of the most important writers in the German language. Munich, where she had spent half her life, would shape her destiny.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

“I brought him into the world amidst fire and mortal danger. I want to protect him like a plant protects its blossoms.” The farmer’s wife is talking about her child, an unwelcome arrival due to his disabilities and whom her husband would have preferred to have killed, in the mini-drama “Feldpredigt”, published in Frankfurt in 1907. The author was Regina Ullmann, the daughter of a factory owner, born on 14 December 1884 in St. Gallen, who after the death of her father lived in Munich with her mother and sister and was bandied around as an original writer in the artists’ quarter of Schwabing. Dressed like a farm girl, with a squint in one eye and a slow way of speaking and writing, she impressed literary figures like Erich von Kahler and Albert Steffen as soon as she began to tell a story. Rainer Maria Rilke finally took the “profound, earnest and peculiar creature” under his wing suspecting how closely her first work was connected to personal experience. Taking advantage of her innocence, both Hanns Dorn, an economist, and Otto Gross, an anarchic psychiatrist at odds with Freud and Jung, got the naive young woman pregnant and permitted the two daughters born from the relationships to be raised by farmers in Feldkirchen near Munich.

Unfathomable depth

Rilke noted that Regina Ullmann possessed unfathomable depth, contributed the foreword to her second book “Von der Erde des Lebens” in 1910, edited her poems and regarded her “Geschichte von einem alten Wirtshausschild” from 1925 as an unsurpassable, almost divine pinnacle. When he died in 1926, she lacked a mentor, and although Regina Ullmann converted to Catholicism under the influence of Ludwig Derleth and combined elements of Catholicism with the Baroque and the dreamlike in story collections like “Die Barockkirche” and “Die Landstrasse”, she had to leave Germany in 1937 due to her Jewish origins. After the death of her mother she moved from Austria to St. Gallen where she was provided with accommodation by nuns with the support of the patron of the arts Nanny Wunderly-Volkart and lived reclusively as a tolerated refugee until 1950 when she obtained citizenship of St. Gallen in return for payment. She had wanted to emigrate to the USA for a while. It was surprising there-

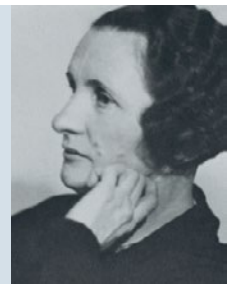
fore that the wonderful, profound writer was rediscovered as an icon of Catholic literature in the Adenauer era, when authors like Reinhold Schneider and Werner Bergengruen were enjoying success, with books like “Der Engelskranz” and “Madonna auf Glas” and that she even became the first winner of the newly founded St. Gallen Culture Prize. However, she did not die in St. Gallen but at her daughter’s in Feldkirchen in 1961.

A posthumous novel

She had endeavoured in vain to write a novel throughout her life and had continually managed to secure funding for this. After her death, the manuscript of a novel entitled “Girgel und Lisette” on which she had clearly spent many years was found amongst her estate. Attempts to decipher the text reveal a disguised account of her relationship with Otto Gross, the father of her second daughter. This brings to light the quintessentially important fact that Regina Ullmann could never overcome the trauma of this relationship and suggests that the enigmatic, unmistakable and often incredibly modern style of writing was not the expression of divine inspiration nor a delayed consequence of her dyslexia but may rather have been the result of deep hurt from a love affair kept secret for a lifetime.

“Die Landstrasse” is available from Nagel & Kimche. The Regina-Ullmann reader “Ich bin den Umweg statt den Weg gegangen”, which contains a detailed biography of the author, can be ordered from charles@linsmayer.ch.

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH



“A different story, the real one, is hidden beneath some of my stories. It may be possible to write it down after a few decades. I have always abandoned any attempts I have made in this direction. I’ve entered so deeply into some of my stories that it is difficult to find my way out again.” (Regina Ullmann, from “Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf”, in “Ich bin den Umweg statt den Weg gegangen”, a reader, Frauenfeld 2000.)

Basel in need of a museum strategy

One construction project after another: Basel, the “city of museums”, is building museums on a grand scale, but these institutions lack the funding to meet their running costs.

CHRISTOPH HEIM

While Marc Chagall and Paul Klee set the tone this autumn in Basel, the city of art and museums’ culture management is in turmoil – its museums’ policy simply isn’t working. As there is nowhere near enough money available, Josef Helfenstein, who has been Director of the Basel Museum of Art for almost a year now, has appealed to the public for help. The museum faces a 2.5 million Swiss franc shortfall in revenues needed to cover running costs in 2018.

The major autumn exhibition in the art museum’s new building looks at Chagall’s “breakthrough years” and focuses on the Franco-Russian painter’s artistic exploits in the 1910s. At the same time, the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen is exploring Klee’s approach to abstraction in art. Both exhibitions are exquisitely beautiful and bring together absolutely outstanding pieces from their own collections as well as from museums and private collections worldwide. Basel is once again Switzerland’s art hotspot.

The Klee exhibition is also the pinnacle of a year of exhibitions in which the Fondation Beyeler celebrates its 20th anniversary. With 300,000 to 350,000 visitors a year, the private museum – which is also planning to build an extension designed by Peter Zumthor – is more successful than any other art museum in Switzerland. This development will be set in villa gardens, extending the existing grounds considerably. It is being funded entirely by private patrons. “Chagall – the Breakthrough Years” at the Basel Museum of Art is the fourth major exhibition in the new annex designed by the Basel-based architects

Christ & Gantenbein. It is the first exhibition curated by its director Josef Helfenstein, a native of Lucerne who was enticed away from the Menil Collection in Houston.

Increase in space with repercussions

The remarkable new building, which resembles a fortified tower and, with its light brick façade, represents a contemporary interpretation of the old building constructed in 1936, opened in April 2016 with a large-scale public celebration. The extension, with its rather understated interior, was funded by Roche shareholder Maja Oeri and the canton of Basel-Stadt, which each contributed 50 million francs. It gives the museum one third more space and makes operational procedures easier. The world-famous art collection no longer has to be continually taken down and then hung back up again to accommodate temporary exhibitions. The museum nevertheless faces major issues.

The increase in space requires more staff to guard the paintings and to handle the higher number of exhibitions, both content-wise and organisationally. However, the additional costs will not be met by higher revenues. The budget for 2018 faces a 2.5-million-franc deficit. This is an amount that the cantonal parliament, even in the wealthy city of Basel, is reluctant to provide especially since the planners and former president of the cantonal Executive Council Guy Morin have been accused of playing down the running costs in order to gain approval for the new building scheme.

The Basel Museum of Art’s funding gap is not the only major issue for Basel’s culture policy, which has been stretched to its limits by an unprecedented number of construction projects. The main building of the barracks overlooking the Rhine is to be



converted into a creative workspace with shops at a cost of 45 million francs. There are also plans to relocate the Natural History Museum – which is bursting at the seams in its building on the Münsterhügel – together with the Basel cantonal archives to a new site in the district of St. Johann at a cost of no less than 190 million francs. Furthermore, a number of private museums, namely the Swiss Architecture Museum, the

House of Electronic Arts and the Swiss Sport Museum, are in dire financial straits because the federal government has either fully or partially withdrawn their funding.

Museum strategy required

After the planning errors at the Basel Museum of Art there are now doubts over not just the credibility of the calculations for other projects in the region but also the competence of the culture section of the cantonal execu-

standing public museums costing Basel-Stadt around 50 million francs a year. It is therefore not just a matter of the increased operating costs of the expanded Museum of Art in Basel, but also the Natural History Museum, the History Museum, the Museum of Ancient Art and the Museum of Cultures.

The Museum of Cultures, previously the Basel Museum of Ethnology, was able to relocate to a new building designed by Herzog and de Meuron in 2011. Neither it nor the Museum of

Who wants to move to the Natural History Museum?

Some 11 million francs has already been ploughed into the plans for the Natural History Museum's new building. If the relocation actually comes about, one of Basel's largest and most prestigious museum buildings will be left empty. With its high ceilings, the listed building constructed by Melchior Berri in 1849 is just as unsuitable for apartments as it is for office space. This is why Morin tried to entice the Museum of Ancient Art here so that it could combine its original exhibits with the plaster casts from the sculpture hall. The Museum of Ancient Art declined the offer. The wooden flooring is apparently not robust enough to bear the weight of heavy marble sculptures. Basel now has to deal with the luxury problem of who will occupy this empty museum. Nobody has come up with an answer yet.

On a final note, the History Museum is also sending out SOS signals to those responsible for Basel's nebulous culture policy. Marc Fehlmann, the museum's new director, has identified a significant lack of funding there too. As, in contrast to Helfenstein, he sees little chance of securing more funding from the canton, he has decided to close the Museum of Music, which is located in a former prison, as an emergency measure. Historic walls are also in urgent need of repair at the Haus zum Kirschgarten which belongs to the History Museum.

Many parts of Basel, "the city of museums", are in a sorry state of affairs, and the city wants to know how its new mayor plans to restore order after the costly mess left behind by her predecessor.



tive, which until recently was managed by Philippe Bischof, the new head of Pro Helvetia. Basel's cantonal parliament is calling upon Elisabeth Ackermann, Morin's successor as mayor, to finally provide the museum strategy that Morin and Bischof failed to deliver.

An overall political strategy is required for the museum city of Basel, which not only has a world-famous art museum but also funds five out-

Ancient Art has expressed any expansion plans. All museums nevertheless want to know whether they are meant to serve as institutions which look after and exhibit their collections – for which they can more or less meet operating costs – or whether the canton also expects them to carry out exhibition and educational work with a local, regional or even international reach. This would require more funding.

The distinctive new building of the Museum of Art in Basel was officially opened a year and a half ago.

Photo: Keystone

The self-evident success of Beat Feuz

A few years ago, it seemed unlikely that Beat Feuz would one day win gold at the Ski World Championships. It now seems almost as if he was destined to be downhill world champion. Feuz is looking to win an Olympic medal in February.

BENJAMIN STEFFEN

There are many tales surrounding Beat Feuz and his past, some with an element of tragedy to them. He has suffered constant injury, but has always bounced back. There are legendary stories about him, yet there are always people who will hear and be struck by them for the first time. They are surprised to learn that Feuz is still a ski racer, despite countless operations on his left knee. He was once at risk of needing a transtibial amputation and had to have his knee flushed out five times under general anaesthetic in autumn 2012. This period marked such a major turning point that Feuz now divides his career into two parts – up to 2012, and after his comeback at the end of 2013.

Beat Feuz has been downhill world champion since last February after an incredible turnaround. When asked, however, Feuz denies that this has changed his life – perhaps more people recognise him now than before, but otherwise, everything is still the same. Although there were times when there was nothing to suggest that Feuz would one day rise to the top again, least of all at the World Championships, his new status is looked upon with a peculiar sense that it was a matter of course. World champion? Suddenly everyone knew it would happen all along.

Great intuition on the snow

Feuz grew up in the Emmental valley in Schangnau that had the only ski lift in the area which his grandfather had helped to build 60 years ago. The lower section of the lift was situated on the land of Rudolf Heinrich Feuz,

who ran the farm on which his grandson would later grow up. Beat was born in February 1987, and of course began skiing at just short of two years of age, but nobody suspected that this was the beginning of the natural course of events that would lead little Beat to a career on the world stage.



World Championship pose: the Emmental skier in St. Moritz last March.

Photo: Keystone

Feuz is credited with possessing great intuition on the snow without anybody being able to explain what this really means. Feuz just took part in a race and won, an influential trainer from his junior days once explained – it is as simple as that.

The perception of his incredible talent became more firmly entrenched when Feuz gained a reputation for not putting in enough effort rather than working too hard. Several companions from the various levels recall that he steered away from weight training, preferring to stay in his hotel room munching on sweets. When Feuz turned up as junior world champion for training with World Cup skiers, the coach Sepp Brunner told him not to bother coming back unless he lost ten kilos. And years earlier when the fastest boys in the Emmental valley did fitness training in the autumn, Feuz mainly showed up

when a games afternoon with a snack was scheduled.

Broken ankles

They are wonderful tales, probably not overly embellished, but nevertheless just stories from the past. Feuz would not have become world champion had he done the bare minimum. There were countless times when he could have given up, demoralised by injuries and setbacks. At just nine years of age, he broke both ankles while freeskiing and did not take part in a single race due to injury between April 2007 and October 2009, or in the 2012/13 season. Most people would probably have understood if Feuz had quit the sport – but this is perhaps the other side of this self-evident success. Feuz never seriously considered giving up as long as his body allowed him to continue. It is as though he owes it to his natural ability to continue striving for gold.

Feuz is leading a different life now to that before the major setback in autumn 2012. He trains less, for example, not for an easier life but as a precautionary measure for the sake of his body. Whereas his peers train five days in a row in preparation for the season, he takes a break on the third day. He adopts a cautious and measured approach – it is not all light-hearted. He has given up on the biggest goal in ski-racing – becoming the overall World Cup winner. In the 2011/12 season, he missed out on this feat by 25 points. He suffered a knee injury just under a month before the end of the season, “I twisted it and the next day the knee was swollen,” he explained. Feuz nevertheless re-



fused to have it examined more closely because he knew the doctors would have advised him to immediately refrain from taking part in more races. Feuz raced another ten times. He stood on the podium on three occasions, and ended the season in second place behind the overall winner Marcel Hirscher. This revealed a further aspect of Feuz's self-evident success – he fought for his opportunity knowing what he had put his body through and its limitations.

A Swiss Abroad in Austria

Today, Feuz knows that his body can no longer endure the strain of taking part in almost every race of the winter season. He focuses on victory at prestigious venues, like Wengen and Kitzbühel, in World Championship races and Olympic Games. He has become a one-day specialist and a maverick in some respects, not to mention a Swiss Abroad. He lives in Austria in

Aldrans, a small town near Innsbruck, in the native country of his Austrian partner Katrin Triendl, who was also once a ski racer but now works as a physiotherapist.

The Austrians seem to like him and he has been spared the notorious skiing rivalry between Austria and Switzerland. A restaurant in the region has even named a cordon bleu dish – containing Emmental cheese – after him. Feuz encourages his girlfriend to say that he is not Austrian, but instead comes from the Emmental valley – he has deep roots in Schangnau, the origin of all his self-evident success. This winter again he will set off from Austria to win medals for Switzerland. The Winter Olympic Games are being held in South Korea in February.

Preparations had gone well up to the start of autumn, which can't always be taken for granted with Feuz. Something has always got in the way in recent years. There have even been times when he has only been able to

Will Beat Feuz hit top form again this season? "There are no guarantees that I'll be fast," the downhill skier says modestly.

Photo: Keystone

take part in a handful of World Cup races. "There are no guarantees," he said in an interview in September. He was referring to his health, but added: "And there are no guarantees that I'll be fast either." It is as though he wanted to refute the widely-held view that he would obviously hit form, reaching top speed, just like that.

If he is standing on the podium after the Olympic downhill race on 11 February 2018, there will be fewer people hearing and being struck by his story for the first time. Most will say they knew it would happen all along.

BENJAMIN STEFFEN IS SPORTS EDITOR AT THE
"NEUER ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG"

“Our efforts are beginning to pay off with some banks”

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) tackles the issues of concern to the diaspora in Switzerland. The burning issue at the moment is the banks, which make it difficult or downright impossible for the Swiss Abroad to open accounts, explains Remo Gysin, President of the OSA. Other key issues are insurance and e-voting.

INTERVIEW: MARKO LEHTINEN

Mr Gysin, no other issue is causing greater discontentment amongst the Swiss Abroad at present than the Swiss banks' treatment of their customers in the diaspora. It is being made difficult, and sometimes impossible, for the Swiss Abroad to open bank accounts and some banks will no longer issue them with credit cards.

Yes, this situation is untenable. Long-standing customers abroad are

What can the OSA do?

Our strategy is to seek direct dialogue with the banks. We have been drawing their attention to this issue for several years and our efforts are now beginning to pay off with some banks. For instance, the bank Cler has indicated that it will make its services available to Swiss Abroad in Europe. This is a first step. We are also increasing the pressure on the public banks – in other words, the systemically important

should ensure that all Swiss citizens – including those abroad – can have an account. The proposals have contributed significantly to a rethink in Parliament. There has been a real new dawn over policy on the banks, especially in the National Council. A number of councillors who opposed these proposals in the spring have had a change of heart. The National Council recently submitted a motion to the Foreign Affairs Committee requiring Postfinance to treat Swiss citizens at home and abroad equally. This is encouraging.

Is absolute equal treatment of the Swiss Abroad by the banks realistic?

It is a vision that may never be entirely fulfilled. We nevertheless have specific demands. We want the authorisation of accounts for all Swiss citizens as well as reasonable fees and minimum deposits which do not disadvantage the Swiss Abroad.

Another real cause of concern for many Swiss Abroad is old-age pension. Lots of them have lived and worked abroad for many years, want to return to Switzerland after their retirement and suddenly find themselves faced with major issues due to contribution gaps and other unexpected hurdles.

That's an important point. The OSA is therefore demanding facilitated access to voluntary AHV. We want to cut the five-year qualifying insurance period for people who temporarily move to an EU or EFTA member state so that they are not left in the mire when they return home. As far as AHV is concerned, we're disappointed that the old-age pension re-



Remo Gysin, President of the OSA, is also focusing on insurance: “We want to cut the five-year qualifying insurance period for people who temporarily move to an EU or EFTA member state.”
Photo: Adrian Moser

having their accounts closed and relationships terminated by the banks. Almost all of the banks are demanding excessive charges from the Swiss Abroad which cannot be justified by administrative costs. They also want ridiculous minimum deposits to open accounts. The Zürcher Kantonalbank, for example, requires Swiss citizens abroad to deposit 100,000 Swiss francs.

banks with a public service mandate – as well as the cantonal banks.

Progress is also being made at parliamentary level. This gives reason for hope.

Most definitely. Roland Büchel and Filippo Lombardi, two National Councillors sitting on the OSA's Executive Board, have submitted proposals on this issue. We are targeting the systemically important banks which

95th Annual Congress in Basel

The newly elected Council of the Swiss Abroad met in Basel in August. Swiss people from all over the world also gathered for their Annual Congress. The event's theme was "The Swiss at home and abroad – one world".

116 members of the newly elected Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met on 17 August in Basel for the first meeting of the new term of office. They elected National Councillors Laurent Wehrli (FDP/Vaud) and Claudio Zanetti (SVP/Zurich) as new Switzerland-based members of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's (OSA) Executive Board and reappointed Remo Gysin as President.

The main issue discussed at Basel City Hall was discrimination against the Swiss Abroad by Swiss banks. At the end, Roland Büchel, OSA Executive Board member and SVP National Councillor, remarked: "We must keep up the pressure, including on the Federal Council." Old age and survivors' insurance (AHV) – the reform of which was to be put to referendum on 24 September – was also discussed. Delegates were keen to express their views on the "Old-Age Pension 2020" bill even though the issue was not on the agenda. They decided to support the reform bill by 80 votes to 22 with several abstentions.

The issue of pension reform was also addressed on the following day at the Annual Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Federal Councillor Alain Berset, who opened the speeches at the Basel Congress Center, said in his address: "This reform will secure our pensions, maintain pension levels and bring retirement provision into line with current requirements." The bill was defeated at referendum a month later.



After the Federal Councillor, other speakers took to the podium to explore the theme of "The Swiss at home and abroad – one world", including Thomas Milic from the Sotomo research institute. He analysed the voting patterns of the Swiss at home and abroad at elections and referendums and concluded that there were hardly any differences in general but there was disparity in specific individual cases. Compatriots abroad were less concerned about the refugee crisis than their fellow citizens in Switzerland but much more concerned over relations between Switzerland and Europe. As six out of ten Swiss Abroad live in Europe, this issue affects many of them directly.

After the speeches, the afternoon was rounded off by a podium discussion. Participants highlighted just how much the Swiss Abroad enrich Switzerland. Pascale Baeriswyl, State Secretary of the FDFA, explained that "the Swiss Abroad are to some extent our ambassadors abroad, for which we are truly grateful."

MARKO LEHTINEN

Federal Councillor Alain Berset gave a speech on AHV at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Basel. Photo: Adrian Moser

form bill was defeated on 24 September. It would also have benefited the Swiss Abroad.

Health insurance can also present problems for the Swiss Abroad.

Yes, we therefore advise all Swiss Abroad to sort out their health insurance before leaving Switzerland. Anyone moving to a country outside the EU or EFTA automatically loses the protection of basic insurance and is therefore dependent upon a private policy. This frequently causes problems. It is often complicated and expensive for the Swiss to take out health insurance policies abroad. What is more, in many cases they do not cover illnesses.

E-voting is also a perennial issue for the Swiss Abroad. What is the state of play with regard to electronic voting?

The OSA is actively campaigning for e-voting, and federal government aims to introduce it across the board as part of its digitalisation strategy. More and more cantons – most recently Fribourg – are introducing e-voting. However, it remains voluntary for the cantons at the moment. Politicians are slowly beginning to grasp this issue.

A final matter often mentioned in relation to the Swiss Abroad is mobility. How important is this to the Swiss Abroad? People are better connected and more mobile today than ever before. You can fly half way around the world for 100 Swiss francs. What are you campaigning for here?

Travel to and from Switzerland has increased amongst the Swiss Abroad. People move away, return to Switzer-

land and then depart again. In the past, people who emigrated generally did not return. The OSA's task is to ensure there are no major upheavals with all of this mobility – whether in terms of political rights, bank accounts or insurance. Some administrative obstacles also currently restrict the mobility of Swiss people,

ranging from the life certificate, which must be presented, to AHV where gaps suddenly appear. We want Swiss people to enjoy mobility without being restricted by such complications. After all, mobility means freedom.



OSA advice

Up to what age can I undertake voluntary military service in Switzerland?

Up to the end of the year in which you turn 24 years of age. Swiss Abroad who wish to undertake basic military training must contact their Swiss representation. Recruitment generally takes place at the age of 19 based on a special procedure. An application for early enlistment can be made in justified exceptional cases. We always advise that you contact your representation in good time. The military service book is issued by the authorities in Switzerland.

The OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law, in particular in the areas that concern the Swiss Abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

FYSA – Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

From the end of June to the end of August 2018, Swiss children abroad can have a fantastic time while also discovering Switzerland and its culture at two-week summer camps together with around 40 other children from all over the world.

Registration for the summer camps will begin in January 2018. The exact details of the various offers (dates, locations, age groups, etc.) and the registration form can be found at www.sjas.ch/en from 1 January 2018. We would also be pleased to send you our information brochure with an overview of the offers available by post on request. The registration deadline is 15 March 2018.

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

Please contact the FYSA office for further information.

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Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundaziun per giuven svizzers a l'ester

educationsuisse – education and first professional experience in Switzerland

Education in Switzerland means first-rate vocational training and university degree courses. educationsuisse provides young Swiss people abroad with general information about education in Switzerland and offers specialised services.

Information on the educational opportunities available

How is the education system structured? Are you interested in academic courses at a traditional university or university of applied sciences or in vocational training?

Information on specific issues

What language skills and education background is required? How do I organise my stay in Switzerland?

Personal advice

A wide range of issues are discussed and explained in personal consultations. Which course or training is right for me? Vocational and educational aspirations are explored and analysed in cooperation with a professional careers and education consultancy.

Advice on grants and applications

Are publicly funded grants (from the canton of origin) or financial support from an educationsuisse private fund available?

Working as a language assistant in Switzerland

An internship is a great way of gaining your first professional experience before, during or after your education. The national agency Movetia arranges placements for young students from abroad as language assistants at Swiss grammar or vocational schools through its "language assistants" programme. As native speakers, language assistants enhance language teaching and illustrate cultural aspects of their native country. The programme is aimed at Swiss students and graduates from traditional universities, universities of applied sciences and teacher training colleges who were born abroad or spent their childhood abroad from the age of four and who grew up with one of the following languages: English, German, French, Spanish or Italian. The paid position will last from around September 2018 to June 2019. The application deadline is the end of March 2018.

More specific information on the offers can be obtained directly from educationsuisse. Our employees speak German, French, English, Italian and Spanish.

www.educationsuisse.ch
<https://www.movetia.ch>



Take advantage of the OSA's offers for young people – register now!

If you've never been to one of the Youth Service's winter camps, then you've really missed out. Young Swiss Abroad from all over the world spend 10 days under the same roof and enjoy themselves on the slopes of the Swiss Alps and at the camp base. You'll get to know all sorts of new people.

What do you all have in common? Switzerland. Our skiing and snowboard instructors will show you the latest techniques or teach you how to ski or snowboard. This is an incredible and unique experience. The programme of enjoyable camp activities is rich in variety and great fun. And of course there'll be a fantastic camp party, too.

There are still a few places available on the following winter programmes:

- New Year's camp in Les Diablerets (Vaud) for those aged 15 and over (27.12.2017 – 5.1.2018)
- Winter camp in Saas-Grund (Valais) for young adults aged 18 and over (27.12.2017 – 5.1.2018)
- German course (absolute beginner to B1) in Lucerne (8.1. – 19.1.2018)

Discover Switzerland (two weeks – available at any time)

In addition to the winter camps, we can also provide you with the opportunity to explore Switzerland on your own. We will arrange your stay with a friendly host family and put together an itinerary based on your interests. You'll embark on a new journey of discovery every day, visiting famous and lesser known places. Your personal Swiss Travel Pass will allow you to use the train, bus, tram or boat and can also be used as a museum pass.

Summer camps 2018 – start of registration

The preparations for the summer camps are already in full swing. From 1 January 2018, you can find out about our programmes and camp locations and register for the 2018 camp season.

Information and registration: www.aso.ch or www.swisscommunity.org.

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



Emigration today – mobile Swiss

The most popular countries to emigrate to are in Europe – France and Germany – with the USA in third position. Apart from these traditional emigration destinations, places such as Thailand are becoming increasingly popular. Advice on emigration and stays abroad can be found on the FDFA website: Living abroad.

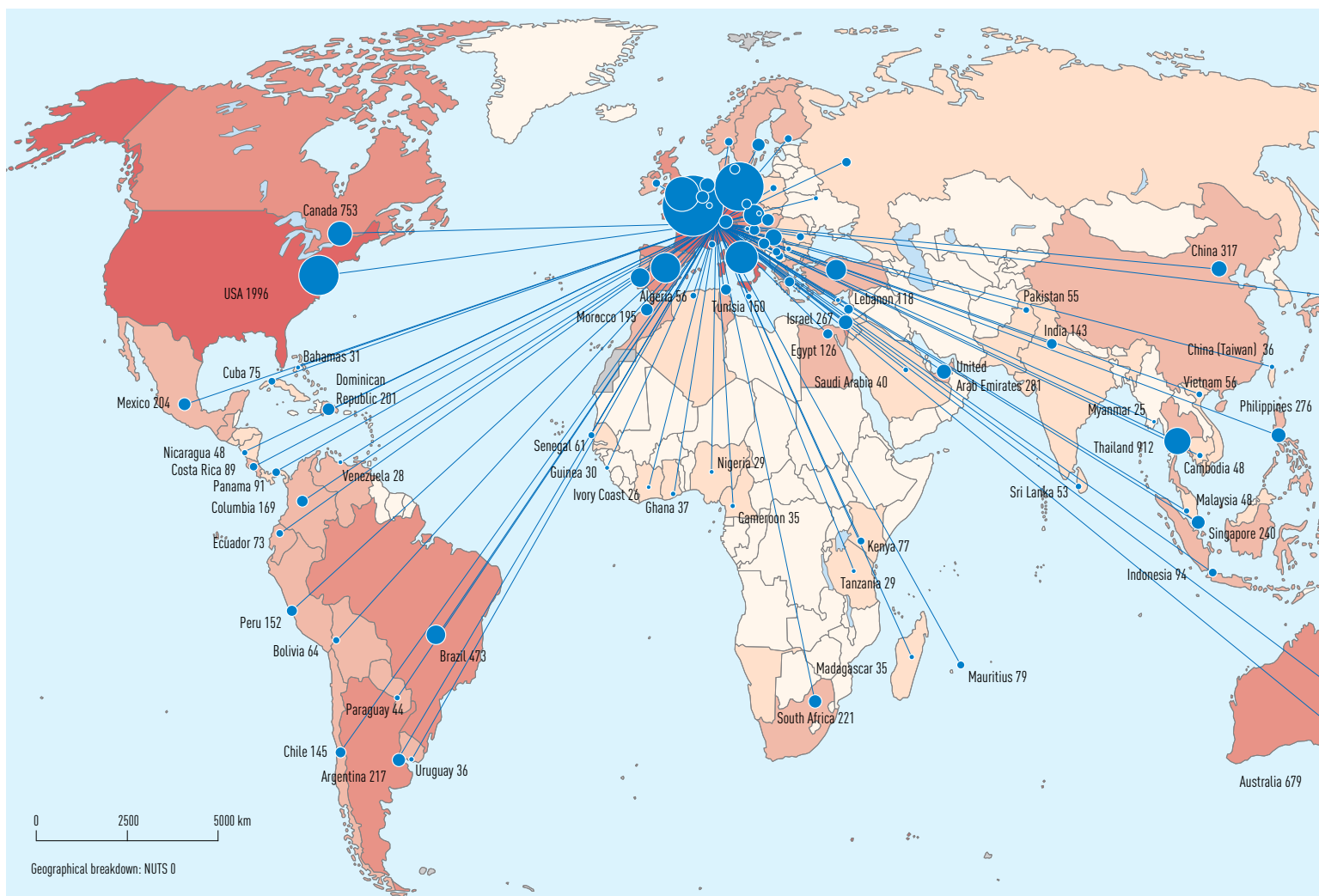
At the end of August 2017, the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) published the figures on Swiss emigration in 2016. These are part of the statistics on population movement, which cover immigration to and emigration from Switzerland.

In contrast, the FDFA's statistics on the Swiss Abroad provide information on the number of Swiss citizens registered with Swiss representations abroad at the end of the year. Changes compared to the previous year in these population statistics are due to new registrations, de-registrations as well as births, deaths and naturalisations.

In cooperation with the FSO, both sets of statistics – emigration of Swiss citizens (see legend on right) and statistics on the Swiss Abroad (see colours of the countries on the map)

Swiss emigrants worldwide in 2016

Graphic based on FSO STATPOP 2016 statistics for destinations with more than 25 emigrants per year



FDFA: Statistics on Swiss Abroad 2016: Number of Swiss Abroad per country



Total number of Swiss citizens living abroad in 2016: 761,930. Total number of Swiss citizens living in Europe in 2016: 482 194.

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itineris

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



Plan well.
Travel well.

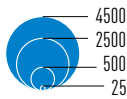
App available for free for iOS and Android

– have been visualised in the form of a graphic. A detailed map of Europe is shown on the FDFA's website under Living abroad – Publications and statistics.

Swiss people choose to emigrate for a wide variety of personal reasons. Some set off to study, for a job or for love, while others decide to spend their latter years in a warmer climate. Neither the statistics nor this graphic can provide information on these key life decisions.

FSO Statistics on the population and households

Number of Swiss emigrants per destination



Destinations in Europe		Destinations worldwide			
	number		number	number	
France	4 606	USA	1 996	Vietnam	56
Germany	3 012	Thailand	912	Pakistan	55
United Kingdom	1 486	Canada	753	Sri Lanka	53
Italy	1 331	Australia	679	Nicaragua	48
Spain	1 126	Brazil	473	Cambodia	48
Austria	558	China	317	Malaysia	48
Turkey	535	United Arab Emirates	281	Paraguay	44
Portugal	474	Philippines	276	Saudi Arabia	40
Serbia	357	Israel	267	Ghana	37
Netherlands	270	New Zealand	244	Uruguay	36
Sweden	215	Singapore	240	China (Taiwan)	36
Liechtenstein	208	South Africa	221	Cameroon	35
Belgium	194	Argentina	217	Madagascar	35
Hungary	193	Mexico	204	Bahamas	31
Bosnia and Herzegovina	158	Dominican Republic	201	Guinea	30
Croatia	142	Morocco	195	Nigeria	29
Greece	131	Columbia	169	Tanzania	29
Denmark	117	Peru	152	Venezuela	28
Czech Republic	110	Tunisia	150	Ivory Coast	26
Russia	110	Chile	145	Myanmar	25
Norway	91	India	143		
Macedonia	91	Japan	128		
Kosovo	89	Egypt	126		
Ireland	84	Lebanon	118		
Romania	81	Indonesia	94		
Finland	79	Panama	91		
Monaco	65	Costa Rica	89		
Poland	62	Mauritius	79		
Malta	51	Kenya	77		
Luxembourg	42	Cuba	75		
Bulgaria	39	Ecuador	73		
Ukraine	32	Bolivia	64		
Cyprus	31	Senegal	61		
Slovakia	28	Algeria	56		

Survey period: 1 January to 31 December 2016.

Total number of emigrants in 2016: 30,565 of whom 3443 could not be classified.

Please note: The depiction of borders and the use of names and titles on this map does not mean that Switzerland officially endorses or recognises them.

Sources: FSO – statistics on the population and households (STATPOP); FDFA, Relations with the Swiss Abroad
Map: FSO, ThemaKart

Federal referendums

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

Voting dates in 2018:

- 4 March
- 10 June
- 23 September
- 25 November

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

Popular initiatives

The following new federal popular initiatives had been launched at the time of going to press (signature collection deadline in brackets):

- “Yes to a ban on animal and human experiments – Yes to research that brings safety and progress” (03.04.2019)
- “Health insurance. Organisational freedom for the cantons” (03.04.2019)
- “Reduce tax on salaries, tax capital fairly” (03.04.2019)
- “For a parliament independent of the health insurance companies” (03.04.2019)

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

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Cuno Amiet:
"Richesse du soir"
(1899, oil on canvas).



Inspired by traditional costume

Whether in Romanticism or Art Nouveau, in the yearning for rural life in the 1930s or in the modern video art of Pipilotti Rist, traditional costume has always held incredible fascination for Swiss artists as a motif. A colourful collection in Solothurn now features around 200 Swiss works of art on this theme.

"The splendour of traditional Swiss costume in the arts": Solothurn Art Museum, until 7 January 2018. www.kunstmuseum-so.ch

Photos: Solothurn Art Museum

Ernest Biéler:
 "Le petit cheval rouge"
 (1909, tempera on paper on canvas).



August Bösch:
 "Toggenburger Senn"
 (before 1884, marble).



Roman Signer:
 "Starker Wind (Agathe Nisple
 in Appenzeller Tracht)"
 (2017, video loop).



Albert Sebastian Oesch:
 "Bauernmusik"
 (1919, oil on canvas).



Max Buri:
 "Mädchen aus dem Haslital"
 (circa 1906, oil on canvas).

The art of failure



ANDREA FAZIOLI:
"L'arte del fallimento".
Ugo Guanda Editore, 2016,
288 pages, around € 18.

The private detective Elia Contini predominantly makes his living from finding pets and tracking down the culprits of minor thefts. Things become complicated when he is tasked with finding Mario, the co-owner of a furniture company, who has disappeared. Although the missing person soon returns to the family business, nothing can be done to prevent the company from falling into bankruptcy. A lunatic is on a murder spree in the company's environs. Both the Ticino police force and the private detective find themselves in the dark until the latter comes across the contentious issue of wage-

dumping – low wages paid to cross-border commuters – in the course of his investigations. Could this be the key to solving the murders?

In his new crime novel, the author Andrea Fazioli is not showing the most attractive side of Ticino, the sunniest part of Switzerland. The lugubrious mood is captivating and keeps readers gripped right to the end. The violent crimes are appalling but they are not described in bloody detail. The blossoming of a tender love story helps to brighten the mood somewhat. No tourists appear in the story. The main characters are local people in their working environment and cross-border commuters from nearby Italy. The petty crimes, which Contini resolves in-between with the help of his "eternal fiancée", are cleverly interwoven with the murder cases in an almost symbolic way.

Fazioli creates the existence-threatening scenario of professional and private failure with great subtlety and humour. The original title in Italian is "L'arte del fallimento" ("The art of failure"). Detecting this art is left up to the reader. Stylistically the author focuses on dialogue and a neutral narrative perspective. This novel is quick and easy to read but will nevertheless reverberate with readers. Like all of Fazioli's crime novels, in which Contini is the rather eccentric but likeable main character, this one too cannot be consumed purely as entertainment and then put away.

Andrea Fazioli was born in 1978 in Bellinzona where he also works today as a freelance writer. He studied French and Italian at the University of Zurich and worked as a journalist in radio and television. A number of his novels have been translated into German, French and other languages. This crime novel will be published in German in 2018 by the btb-Verlag publishing house in Munich.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Faith, love and hope



RACHEL HARNISCH:
Paul Hindemith,
"Marienleben", Naxos 2017.

It is not just when Rachel Harnisch sings that you hear lots of nuances. When the Swiss soprano talks about her life, she alludes to so much in so few words, revealing great highs and lows. "What I do has to sit right with me and my soul," she remarks. "At one time I was on the way to the very top but I struggled to cope with the pressure and superficiality of my profession and became ill." At that point, she wanted to give up singing.

The singer, born in Brig in 1973, had only just completed her studies in Freiburg im Breisgau when she became a member of the ensemble at the Vienna State Opera in 2000 in her mid-20s. Having only just arrived, she began receiving outside offers for major parts and soon left the famous opera house. After that, Alexander Pereira, the director of the Zurich Opera House at the time, asked her to join his ensemble. Harnisch declined the offer. She heard no more from him. Harnisch kept her composure as she had seen only too often how fine the line between glory and failure was at her level.

In 2013, shortly after Pereira left Zurich, Harnisch joined the opera house ensemble, which entailed a move to Zurich. This good fortune in her career did not last long, though. Her contract was not extended after just three years. However, a completely different type of happiness had now arrived in her life – her two children. They threw her career into splendid chaos – and helped to get it back on track. Harnisch sang the lead role in a major opera premiere in Berlin by the composer Aribert Reimann and was magnificent in a Janacek opera a year ago in Antwerp.

She has also suddenly started to release albums again, including the soprano solo in Mahler's 4th symphony and, most notably, Paul Hindemith's song cycle "Marienleben" ("The Life of Mary"). The idea for the recording goes back to 2012 when "Faith" was the theme of the Lucerne Festival where Harnisch fittingly performed Hindemith's work. In 2014, the magical sacred mood of Lucerne was then perfectly captured in the radio studio in Zurich. Harnisch powerfully interpreted the verses of Rainer Maria Rilke set to music and sang the songs with a virtuous and wonderfully tremulous voice – it can now be heard on her new CD.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS

Carla Juri



It's the 77th minute. The distant, stoic but also extremely human memory engineer Ana Stelline is standing behind a window in a sterile laboratory. She recalls memories which for a moment become visible and real thanks to a device hanging around her neck. These memories of past occurrences from everyday life are to be implanted in replicants – artificial people – to enable them to call upon as many real memories as possible, such as birthday celebrations and walks in the forest.

This poignant scene featuring Carla Juri is from the science fiction movie “Blade Runner 2049”. The Ticino-born actress appears in the film for less than a quarter of an hour, but this moment sticks in the mind. And the 150-million-dollar “Blade Runner 2049” is not a run-of-the-mill Hollywood movie. It is the highly acclaimed and equally successful continuation of the cult 1982 film of the same name with Harrison Ford in the lead role. A stand-out performance in a film like this can lead to the big time.

Swiss actors have frequently appeared in Hollywood movies. However, the nation has been waiting for a Swiss actress to become a genuine movie star since the days of Ursula Andress. All the more reason why all eyes are on Carla Juri at the moment. The 32-year-old has received rave reviews all over the world for her role in this futuristic blockbuster. It would come as no surprise if her big break in Hollywood came soon. This name and face are worth noting.

MARKO LEHTINEN

Irregularities in Moutier?

At a referendum in the summer Moutier decided to switch canton from Berne to Jura with 51.7% of voters in favour. However, the matter is not over yet. There were allegedly voting irregularities on 18 June despite the tight monitoring. Some ballot papers may have contained the names of people who are deceased. The Federal Chancellery has recorded 12 complaints. They concern the balance of the campaign, but also the checking of identity cards and possible falsification of ballot papers. The investigations of the office of the Bernese public prosecutor into the suspected irregularities may be a lengthy process. It is nevertheless unlikely that the outcome will result in another referendum.

New leader for the Green Liberals

The Swiss Green Liberal Party (GLP) has appointed a new president. The Bernese National Councillor and businessman Jürg Grossen was elected as Martin Bäumle's successor by a clear margin at the party's delegates' conference. Bäumle announced his retirement in May. The 48-year-old Grossen, who takes over from the charismatic Bäumle, has never really pushed himself into the limelight before and is regarded as a rather reserved figure. Grossen has been a National Councillor since 2011 and Vice-President of the GLP since 2016. He has also been Vice-President of the GLP parliamentary group at the Federal Assembly since 2015. He has a strong interest in the issues of energy and transport policy.

New stars for Swiss restaurants

Switzerland has the most restaurant stars per capita in Europe. In the latest edition of the restaurant and hotel guide, the “Michelin Guide to Switzerland 2018”, 118 restaurants have one or more stars. Two new two-star and 14 new one-star restaurants have been added since the last edition, one of them in Liechtenstein. The restaurants “B. Violier – Restaurant de l’Hôtel de Ville” in Crissier (Vaud), “Schauenstein” in Fürstenu (Grisons) and “Cheval Blanc by Peter Knogl” in Basel have retained their three-star rating. Two restaurants in eastern Switzerland have been elevated to the two-star league – the “Einstein Gourmet” in St. Gallen and the “Taverne zum Schäfli” in Wigoltingen (Thurgau).



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