

JULY 2022

Swiss Review

The magazine
for the Swiss Abroad



**Ukraine war turns Swiss
refugee policy on its head**

**Swiss lakes will soon heat and
cool thousands of homes**

**Lucerne's gigantic bunker –
a throwback to the Cold War**

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Cover photo: Street protest in Lausanne against the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
Photo: Jean-Christophe Bott, Keystone

Their meagre luggage belies a heavy burden



Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol – we have all seen the terrible images from Ukraine. They show the reality of war: fear and horror, death and destruction, atrocities and displacement. This war challenges everyone. It is even changing Switzerland. Having maintained a restrictive refugee policy for many years, the country is now opening its doors. Tens of thousands of refugees from Ukraine, who arrived laden with troubles but with few belongings, have been admitted into the country, no questions asked. The war is also making Switzerland question itself. How is a small country that calls itself neutral to behave? When does neutral non-involvement turn into indifference?

When the war started, the Federal Council initially decided neutral Switzerland would not impose sanctions on Russia, opting instead to ensure the country could not be used as a platform for circumventing sanctions. It was far from clear what that actually meant in practical terms.

Since then, Switzerland has been on something of a mission. Just a few days later, the country adopted all the EU sanctions, as neutrality could not mean not taking a position, said Ignazio Cassis, the president of the Confederation. Russia responded by placing Switzerland on its list of unfriendly countries. Meanwhile, Russia's dealings with Switzerland remain extensive and opaque. Some 80 per cent of Russia's commodity trading goes through Switzerland. Oligarchs with ties to the Kremlin have assets worth up to 200 billion Swiss francs stashed away in Switzerland.

Swiss asset hunters have only located and frozen a fraction of that amount. This has prompted the Helsinki Commission, an independent US government authority, to pull no punches, calling Switzerland a "leading enabler of Russian dictator Vladimir Putin". Switzerland may well have to conduct a detailed review of its anti-money laundering laws as a result.

But what about those who have no billions but their lives and future to worry about? We met some displaced Ukrainians currently living in a small village near Berne, and asked the question: how is Switzerland treating refugees from Ukraine?

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"Swiss Review", the information magazine for the "Fifth Switzerland", is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

**Swiss
Community**

Refugees welcome



Alexander Volkov, daughter-in-law Yulia and grandson Sergiy fled Donbas and ended up in Mittelhäusern. Most of Ukraine's refugees are mothers, children and elderly people like them.

Tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing the war have arrived in Switzerland. The unbureaucratic manner in which they have been admitted into the country bears testimony to a groundswell of solidarity, but also reveals the flaws in Switzerland's asylum system.

THEODORA PETER AND MARC LETTAU

“When I sleep at night, I dream of my dacha,” says Alexander Volkov. And of the vines that he should now be tending. The retired metallurgical engineer from Kramatorsk is currently residing 2,500 kilometres from his summer lodge in a small Bernese village that he never knew existed until recently: Mittelhäusern. Volkov is Ukrainian. Aside from the random destination, Volkov's journey here was little different to that of millions of other people from Ukraine. He and his daughter-in-law Yulia and grandson Sergiy fled the shelling and bombing of their home city in Donbas, leaving the death, destruction and suffering of war behind them. In Switzerland, the refugee authorities informed Volkov that he and his family had an “invitation to stay in Mittelhäusern”. This was a stroke of luck for them. “Our host family has been very kind to us.” Nevertheless, the situation in Donbas and specifically in Kramatorsk is constantly on Volkov's mind. “Every morning, we start the day by finding out what is happening and whether our house is still standing.” He wonders which outcome is better: a “good war” claiming many lives, or a “bad peace” leading to years of uncertainty and enmity.

There are others in Mittelhäusern who share the same thoughts. Whenever he takes a stroll with his walking cane, he is liable to bump into fellow refugee Anhelina Kharaman and her mother and daughter, who are also staying with hosts in the village. They come from Mariupol, the flattened city in southern Ukraine. Mykola Nahorny and Lilia Nahorna, a couple from Dnipro, are currently

staying in Mittelhäusern as well. They too have a garden back home, with fruit and vegetables that they would normally be preserving for winter.

Wave of solidarity

Around a dozen Ukrainian refugees currently live in Mittelhäusern – a dozen out of over 50,000 women, children and elderly people who fled to Switzerland during the first three months of the war. The Second World War was the last time so many people sought refuge in Switzerland in such a short period. The country has seen a wave of solidarity, as people donate aid, offer support and welcome Ukrainians into their homes – a response similar to other shows of generosity in the past. Switzerland welcomed refugees from Eastern Europe with open arms after Soviet



Anhelina Kharaman enjoying the spring blossom in Switzerland – her home city of Mariupol lies in ruins.

Photos: Danielle Liniger

Identity card with the coveted “S” – the Federal Council has activated “protection status S” for the first time, allowing Ukrainian refugees to integrate quickly into Swiss life.

troops marched into Hungary in 1956 and the former Czechoslovakia in 1968, for example.

In March, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, the Federal Council activated “protection status S” for Ukrainian refugees – a specific category that has existed on paper since the 1990s, when many people fled the Yugoslav wars. Switzerland had never triggered this specific protective status before, even when millions of people were displaced during the war in Syria.

Refugee organisations call for equal treatment

Protection status S affords Ukrainian refugees the priceless advantage of being able to register with the authorities without having to file an asylum application. They can look for work



Questions over Swiss neutrality

After initially hesitating, the Federal Council adopted all the EU sanctions against Russia. This has ignited a political debate about Swiss neutrality.

THEODORA PETER

Russia's attack on a sovereign European country is intolerable "under international law and on political and moral grounds", President of the Swiss Confederation Ignazio Cassis told the media four days after the invasion began at the end of February. "Playing into the hands of an aggressor is not neutral," he added, explaining why Switzerland was adopting the EU's full package of severe economic sanctions against Russia. This was a clear departure from the Federal Council's previous stance, which had been limited simply to preventing Russia from evading sanctions. The Swiss government had refused to apply EU sanctions directly following the annexation of Crimea back in 2014, referring to the country's neutral status.

This U-turn by Berne drew worldwide attention. The "New York Times" went so far as to declare that Switzerland was abandoning its tradition of neutrality, but the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) rejected this interpretation. "Switzerland continues to uphold its neutrality in the strict sense of the term," it wrote on its website, i.e. the law of neutrality and not favouring any warring party militarily. Codified in the 1907 Hague Convention, the law of neutrality obliges neutral states to refrain from engaging in war and to ensure equal treatment for belligerent states in terms of providing war material.

Neutrality versus political reality

However, Switzerland is not bound by international treaties with regard to how it applies its neutrality. All the Federal Constitution says is that the Federal Council and parliament should take measures to safeguard the neutrality of Switzerland. How they actually go about this depends on the individual circumstances and how these are interpreted. "Swiss neutrality has always been stretchable and kneadable like chewing gum," said historian Hans-Ulrich Jost in an interview with the "SonntagsZeitung".

Jost noted that Switzerland was practically integrated into Germany's armaments economy during the Second World War. Berne even gave the Nazis loans to buy ammunition and weapons in Switzerland. The Confederation's close economic and financial ties abroad meant that its mythical neutrality was often in-



Russia's attack on Ukraine brought tens of thousands of Swiss people on to the streets. Thousands of Ukrainian flags have also been hanging from Swiss balconies. Photo: Keystone

compatible with political reality. There is no ideal neutrality, Jost concluded.

SVP wants a popular initiative

The Ukraine war has reignited debate over the extent to which Swiss neutrality can be reconciled with real world events. By joining the economic sanctions against Russia, Switzerland has become a party to the war, laments the SVP. The right-wing party therefore plans to launch a popular initiative aimed at enshrining the concept of 'integral neutrality' in the Federal Constitution. However, the other political parties believe that Putin's 'attack on Western values' spells the end of traditional Swiss neutrality. Politicians from The Centre and the FDP even want to allow arms shipments to friendly nations, while alignment with the NATO defensive alliance no longer appears taboo for some. In other words, Switzerland is in the process of re-defining its neutrality.

Some six million people have fled Ukraine since the war began.

Switzerland expects to have accepted between 80,000 and 120,000 refugees by autumn.

immediately, reunite with their family members in Switzerland and travel freely within the Schengen Area. Refugees from other war zones are denied these benefits. If you come from Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia or Iraq for example, you have to go through the regular asylum procedure and are not permitted to work or travel until your application has been processed. This also applies to anyone who is only temporarily admitted to Switzerland because it is not possible, not permitted or not reasonable for them to return to their home country.

Refugee organisations welcome the government's generous, pragmatic response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. But all people fleeing armed conflict should be treated equally, they argue. "From a refugee's perspective, it is irrelevant whether the war from which they are fleeing is a war of aggression by another country or a civil war between two parties within their own country," says Seraina Nufer, who co-heads the protection department at the Swiss Refugee Council. Experts on immigration law think it is unacceptable that people escaping war zones in other countries are treated differently and, for example, have to wait three years before their family can join them in Switzerland. However, there is no groundswell among Swiss politicians to make the asylum process easier. The fear is that it would only encourage more immigration.

Increasingly on the breadline

But Switzerland is no paradise if you are a Ukrainian refugee either. First, you are worried sick about loved ones who remain in the war-torn country: husbands, fathers and sons who have been called up into the army. Then you have the problem of making ends meet. Most Ukrainian refugees lack the necessary language skills to quickly find a job in

Switzerland. If you are penniless, you can apply for asylum support. The benefits you receive are 30 to 40 per cent below what people in Switzerland would normally get, however. Basically, government money is barely enough for you to subsist. Consequently, more and more Ukrainians are also queuing up at food banks. Asylum organisations warn that refugees will become destitute. They say the financial assistance for these people is pathetic for a country as rich as Switzerland.

The generous Swiss families who have opened their doors to over 20,000 refugees are also taking a fi-



Lilia Nahorna and Mykola Nahorny are impatient to return home to Dnipro and tend to their garden as soon as possible.
Photo: Danielle Liniger

nancial hit. They receive nothing more than a symbolic payment depending on their respective canton, and often minimal support otherwise. "Many host families feel like they have been left to fend for themselves," says Christoph Reichenau, co-founder of Ukraine-Hilfe Bern, a charity set up to help Ukrainian refugees. Ukraine-Hilfe Bern operates as a contact point for refugees and host families from its base near Berne railway station. It organises language courses, and its website acts as an interface for the many volunteers wanting to help. There is still a huge amount of solidarity among ordinary people, according to Reichenau. But a clear vision and improved guidelines are needed to "ensure that the outpouring of assistance develops into something more sustained."

No speedy return to Ukraine

The authorities are working on the premise that the Ukrainian refugees will remain in Switzerland for longer than a year. It looks increasingly unlikely that many would want to return to Ukraine's bombed-out cities any time soon. The Russian invasion was still unfolding at the time of our editorial deadline in mid-May. With the number of refugees continuing to rise (the federal government expects the total figure to be between 80,000 to 120,000 by autumn), the authorities not only have to provide more accommodation but also work out how to integrate the refugees into Swiss life.

Alexander Volkov, Anhelina Kharaman, Mykola Nahorny and Lilia Nahorna would return home immediately if they could. Back to their houses and gardens in Kramatorsk, Mariupol and Dnipro. In the meantime, Lilia Nahorna is growing seedlings in Swiss flower pots. She can easily take these back with her, to plant at home, in Ukraine.

Tanja Stadler



Tanja Stadler, Full Professor at the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering of ETH Zurich, was one of the key scientific figures in Switzerland during the pandemic. Within the Covid-19 Science Task Force set up to advise the authorities, Stadler led the panel of experts entrusted with calculating the all-important R number, which indicates whether the pandemic is growing or receding. The Swiss government used the R-number and other data to determine its anti-Covid strategy – a big responsibility for the mathematician, not least after she became chair of the task force in summer 2021. She was 40 at the time and one of the youngest on the committee. “This lady’s numbers determine our freedom” was the headline in one newspaper. Stadler herself is not one for hype. In the public crossfire, the multi-award-winning academic stuck soberly to facts and evidence. Nevertheless, like other scientists who appeared in public during the pandemic, she found herself the target of hatred and threats. However, she never fell into the trap of saying anything political. She always emphasised that she was just explaining the science, and it was up to the politicians to decide what to do. Any signals she may have given were subtle – for example when she appeared for a television interview still wearing a protective mask after the early lifting of restrictions in Switzerland. The task force disbanded at the end of March, but Tanja Stadler continues to study how viruses spread and change. Even as a child, she was interested in scientific phenomena. She has now become an inspiration for other young women aspiring to break into areas of science that used to be dominated by men.

SUSANNE WENGER

Star banker Pierin Vincenz goes to jail

In April, Zurich’s district court found former Raiffeisen CEO Pierin Vincenz guilty of forgery and disloyal management (see also “Swiss Review” 2/2022), sentencing him to three years and nine months in prison and fining him 560,000 Swiss francs. Experts in criminal law said that convicting the banking supremo, who had become entangled in various conflicts of interest, amounted to a landmark decision. Gregor Münch of the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”: “One or two chief executives may be looking over their shoulder now.”

(MUL)

Switzerland opens an embassy at the Vatican

The Pontifical Swiss Guard has always afforded our country a high profile at the Vatican. But it is only now that Switzerland has expressed its intention to open its own embassy there, with diplomat Denis Knobel set to become its first resident ambassador to the Holy See. The inauguration of an embassy sees Switzerland put to bed its historically fraught relationship with the Vatican. In 1873, the events of the ‘Kulturkampf’ between Catholics and Protestants in Switzerland led to the Federal Council severing diplomatic ties with the Holy See for several decades. It was not until 1991 that Switzerland appointed a diplomat for the Vatican again, and he is still based in Slovenia.

(MUL)

The EU wants clear answers from Switzerland

The relationship between Switzerland and the EU remains a confusing work in progress. Since abandoning talks on a framework agreement in May 2021, Switzerland has been searching for ways to re-engage in dialogue with the EU. However, for the European Commission it is not clear what solutions Switzerland intends to pursue. According to Swiss radio (SRF) sources, Brussels has now submitted a range of questions to Berne. Only when it gets clear written answers to these, it says, will it be in a position to judge whether the Swiss government can bring anything to the table that would form a reliable basis for further negotiations.

(MUL)

The 89-year-old “Heimat” now runs on green fuel

Scheduled boat services on Swiss lakes are a popular mode of public transport. Lake Greifensee now has its first-ever electric-powered ferry. The “Heimat”, built in 1933, will no longer run on diesel but use an electric engine instead. Switzerland’s big ferry companies are likely to follow suit. For example, Lake Constance will soon see its first electric passenger service.

(MUL)

Switzerland wants to spend more on defence

A clear majority in the National Council voted in May to increase military spending to 7 billion Swiss francs a year. Provided the Council of States ratifies the decision, Switzerland’s military budget will rise by 1.4 billion francs. The National Council vote took place against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine.

(MUL)

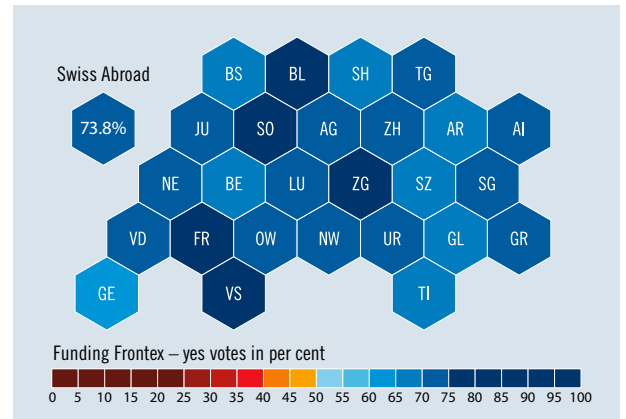


Voters back the Federal Council and parliament

On 15 May, Swiss voters endorsed all three proposals submitted to a vote. The biggest yes was for increasing Switzerland’s monetary contribution to the EU border agency Frontex. Voter turnout was below average at 39.5 per cent.

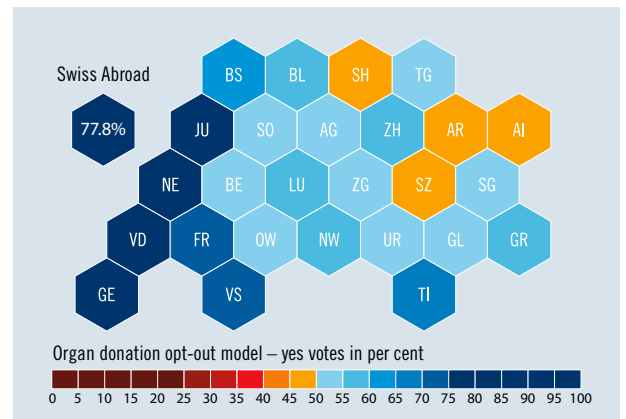
More funding for EU border protection

Switzerland is contributing financially to the expansion of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex. Its annual payment will rise from its current level of 24 million to 60 million Swiss francs by 2027. A clear 71.5 per cent of voters approved the proposal, which was opposed by the Migrant Solidarity Network and the left-wing and green political parties. Frontex has faced criticism for illegally turning away refugees at EU borders (Review 2/2022). The Federal Council promised to make a point of demanding the border agency comply with basic human rights. The European Commission welcomed this clear outcome, saying it showed how seriously Switzerland takes shared border control amid all the advantages of freedom of movement. (TP)



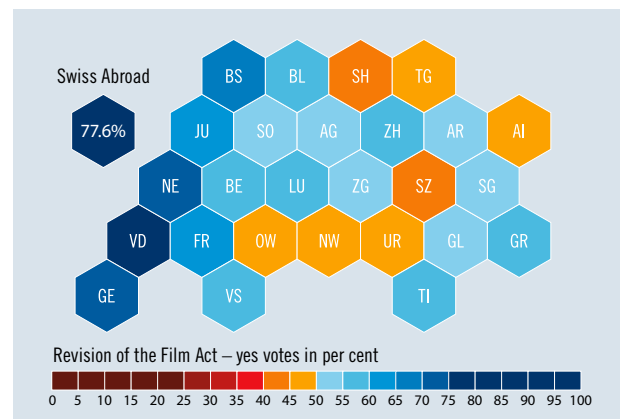
New rules on organ donation

Switzerland has done an about-turn on organ donation. At present, only people who have given their consent while still alive can become organ donors when they die. But it will be the other way round in future, i.e. anyone who does not wish to donate their own organs will have to make this known during their lifetime. A majority of 60.2 per cent approved a proposal that allows for a broader application of this opt-out model, whereby loved ones of the deceased must be consulted if nothing attests to the deceased having explicitly ruled out organ donation. This solution will only heap pressure on loved ones, say critics (see “Swiss Review” 2/2022). Support for the new rules was greater in French-speaking than in German-speaking Switzerland. The opt-out model already applies in several countries including France, Italy, Austria and Spain. (TP)



Millions for the Swiss film industry

Global streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney+ will in future be obliged to invest four per cent of their annual Swiss revenue in the Swiss film industry – or pay an exemption tax. This will provide domestic film-makers with around 20 million francs of extra funding every year. The revised Film Act attracted 58.4 per cent of votes, not least thanks to an emphatic yes from French and Italian-speaking Switzerland. German-speaking voters were more sceptical of this piece of state intervention on behalf of the movie industry. The price of streaming would also go up, opponents of the new law said. Switzerland is following the lead of other European countries in making Netflix and its competitors cough up. (TP)



My best friend, the forest

In Switzerland, more of us than ever regularly head into the woods. But other people more frequently dampen our enjoyment of the experience than they used to. Our relationship with the forest has become a little complicated.

JÜRIG STEINER

What do the Swiss typically do in their free time? Eat fondue? Go hiking? No, they venture into the forest. According to the results of a monitoring survey published in March 2022 by the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), 95 per cent of the Swiss – almost everyone, basically – regularly visit the woods. This is the highest proportion since academics began studying Switzerland's relationship with its forests in 1997.

However, “heading into the woods” in today's Switzerland is no longer quite the same as it was 25 years ago, when all you had was a Vitaparcours fitness trail. Both people and forests are changing. Forests are playing an increasingly important role in our lives because they provide a natural haven from urban sprawl. Our woods have also become more vulnerable due to climate change and extreme weather – and are arguably no longer the hallowed, tranquil places they once were.

Tree-felling controversy

Katrin Sedlmayer, a former local politician in the Köniz suburb of Berne, was indignant. “The forest needs our help!” she wrote half a year ago at the bottom of a protest letter signed by some 400 other angry people who were demanding an end to what they saw as the unecological felling of significant swathes of the popular recreational forest on the Könizberg hill overlooking the capital.

Könizbergwald, the forest situated on the municipal boundary between Berne and Köniz, is like a green island amid the rising urban



Learning and exploring at a 'forest kindergarten'. The woods surrounding Switzerland's towns and cities are also a popular playground for children.

Photo: Keystone

tide. In recent years a new housing development for 2,000 inhabitants has been constructed a stone's throw from the edge of Könizbergwald. The increase in the number of people seeking out the forest shows no sign of abating.

Berne council, Switzerland's third-largest forest owner, owns Könizbergwald. In response to criticism of its forestry policy, the council obtained the backing of the supervisory authority of the canton of Berne. It presented a report at the beginning of May, certifying that the tree felling was lawful in view of the challenges posed by climate change.

Winter storms, drought and the bark beetle were taking a toll on the forest, said the experts. Major intervention was therefore necessary, legitimate and even environmentally far-sighted. The advisable approach

was to plant new species of tree that could cope with rising temperatures better than spruce forests, which are prone to the heat.

Conflicts of interest

The controversy surrounding Könizbergwald is a local example of the growing pressure on all forests in Switzerland's densely populated Central Plateau region. Switzerland's national ban on deforestation, applicable since 1876 and probably the most radical and effective environmental law the country has ever seen, acts as a safeguard against dwindling forests. But not against conflicts of interest.

Berne council owns other recreational forests near the city, where it has made space for bike trails, wood chip trails, and child day-care facilities. However, it has also



closed off certain areas of forest, leaving dead wood on the ground to enhance biodiversity. The council says it feels compelled to step up its communication efforts and explain to people about the very different ways in which society relies on forested areas – this on top of the fact that the use of wood as a native building material and energy source is also gaining greater importance.

More people than ever are heading to the woods – and want more from their forests than ever. Expectations, and satisfaction levels, are shifting. We want to move freely in the forest. We want to take a deep breath and switch off in the forest. We want to observe the animals in the forest. But we also want to play paintball, visit rope parks, go orienteering, grill sausages on an open fire, and sleep under the trees. Some people want peace and quiet. Others want to let off steam. Often in close vicinity.

A place to escape

In the WSL survey, which was conducted before the pandemic, the proportion of forest visitors who said they were never bothered by anything during their visits to the woods was much lower than it was ten years ago. Satisfaction with forest recreation remains high and people return from the experience feeling refreshed. Nevertheless, things like litter, speeding bikers, and outdoor partying are detracting from people's enjoyment.

Covid restrictions during the pandemic probably increased the potential for friction. People were suddenly frequenting parts of forests where you used to be able to feel alone in the world. Teenagers would seek out the remotest cor-

Switzerland's forests have never dwindled since the 1876 ban on deforestation – probably the most radical environmental law that the country has ever seen.

ners, set up their loudspeakers and make merry all night long. It was as if the forest were the only place for people to escape the crisis for a while. In an interview with the "Tagess-Anzeiger" shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, Swiss survival coach Gian Saluz summed it up perfectly, saying that he would retreat to the forest if the worst ever came to the worst, because this is where people can survive best in extreme situations.

Solitude

The forest is like a friend who is always there – someone you can rely on when the going gets tough, an

unflappable presence providing refuge from the pressures of life and work. Many people told the WSL survey that they visited the forest because they wanted to get away and spend time alone, close to nature. Far away from civilisation.

South of the capital Berne, there is one such place: a deep, woody ravine situated only 12 kilometres from the Federal Palace, running underneath the road that takes you to the village of Schwarzenburg. When the Rhône glacier retreated 20,000 years ago, the meltwater carved into the soft sandstone to create a winding gorge. This untamed waterway is called Schwarzwasser (black water) on account of the dark trees all around.

Further upstream, the valley's wooded flanks seem to close in on either side, rising up improbably steep banks. The sky above is a mere dot, while the terrain below is a twisting, turning law unto itself, constantly fluctuating from corner to corner. Patches of mud slither to the bottom after heavy rainfall, taking vegetation and everything else with them. Uprooted, decaying trees protrude in various directions, like macabre skeletons. Sometimes a fox or a few chamois or deer can be spotted stealing through the detritus. You very rarely see other people.

It is a wild and wonderful forest, as reliable as your best friend. The outside world is far away, yet also so near.

Whizzing past others who want peace and quiet. Forests have become popular recreational spaces, albeit not to universal approval.

Photo: Keystone

Federal Palace to be completed at last

Anyone who knows what a tympanum is can skip the following few lines. For those who don't know, it is a lavishly decorated semi-circular or triangular wall surface over an entrance, door or window. Tympanums originally adorned the triangular gables of ancient columned Greek temples. The Federal Palace in Berne also has a tympanum above its entrance, albeit a very plain-looking one.

Typical Swiss understatement, you may think. But this is not the case. After its opening in 1902, the Federal Palace was simply never completed. The omission is fairly inconspicuous; most people probably think the tympanum was left like this on purpose. In reality, the original Federal Palace design shown at the 1896 national exhibition in Geneva had a tympanum filled with all manner of protagonists and symbols celebrating the Swiss nation.

After well over a century, the gap will soon be filled in. Renée Levi, a Swiss artist who specialises in painting and installations, is masterminding the project. She plans to cover the tympanum in a mosaic of 246 triangular, quadrangular and pentagonal ceramic panels. Grooved and finely glazed, the panels will reflect the ever-changing natural and artificial light of its surroundings. For Levi, this dazzling work of art is meant as a tribute to Tilo Frey (1923–2008), one of the first 12 women – and the first black woman – to be elected to the National Council in 1971. The Federal Palace, built in an era when women's suffrage was still inconceivable, will now be getting the feminine touch after all.

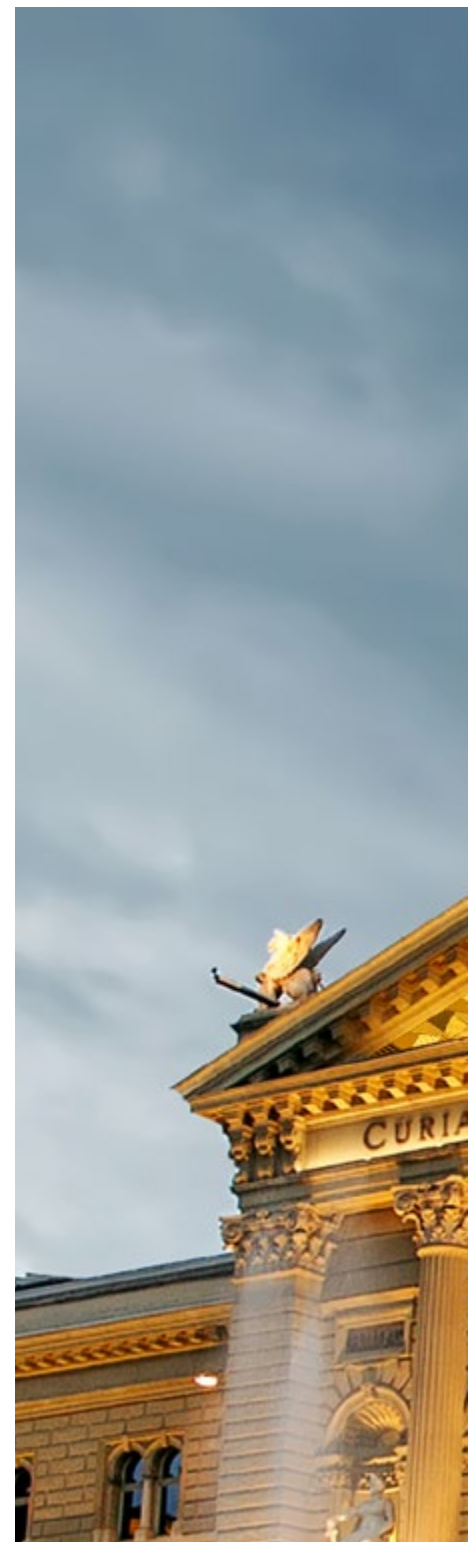
Levi's piece will be unveiled on 12 September 2023 – the 175th anniversary of the Federal Constitution. Curious to know why the mosaic consists of 246 ceramic panels? You can impress your friends on the big day by explaining that there are 246 members of parliament. All the panels are of a similar size, all have corners and edges, and all are clearly delineated. And although their inner grooves vary, the 246 panels form a seamless whole.

MARC LETTAU

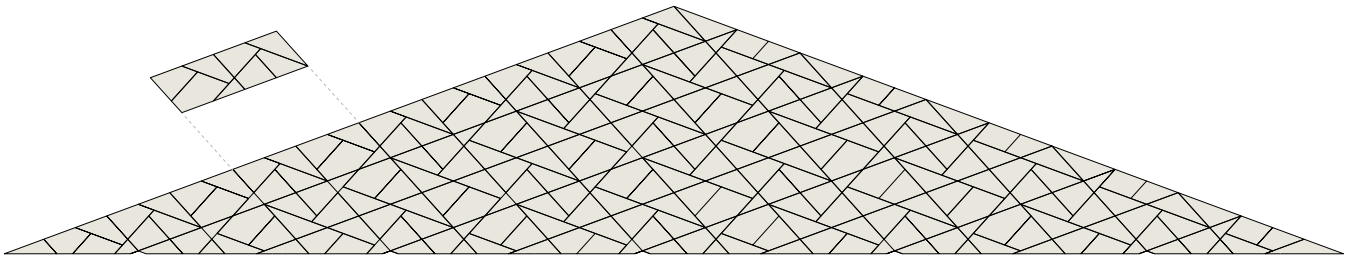


The Federal Palace tympanum currently consists of plain sandstone blocks. Its original design was a lavish piece of artwork celebrating the Swiss nation, but the plans were never executed.

This corrugated cardboard mock-up brings the artistic idea to life. With grooves pointing in different directions, the panels will reflect and disrupt the ever-changing light. This will turn the building's imposing static facade into something altogether more fluid.



The new Federal Palace tympanum will feature 246 finely glazed ceramic panels joined together – symbolising the 246 seats in the two parliamentary chambers.



Professor Renée Levi is an architect and artist who has been teaching fine art and painting at the Basel Academy of Art and Design since 2001. Levi is known for her large art installations, developing a work that focuses on the perception of space using colours that are often very bright. www.renelevi.ch



Lakes set to cool and heat an increasing proportion of our buildings

The climate emergency is speeding up the energy exploitation of our lakes. In Geneva, one of the largest hydrothermal facilities in the world is set to provide heating and cooling services for hundreds of buildings. There is great potential in the Swiss lakes. But their health presents a concern.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Heating engineer Fabrice Malla guides us 17 metres below the surface of Lake Geneva, in the area known as Vengeron. Here we are in a concrete cathedral, 70 metres long. In 2024, this sump will receive the equivalent of three Olympic swimming pools of cold water, collected two kilometres offshore, at a depth of 45 metres. From 2024, electric pumps will push this liquid towards two networks. The first, built in a closed loop, will serve the buildings spread around the airport. The second network will feed cold water directly into the buildings of the city centre. Heat pumps installed by Services industriels de Genève (SIG) in a planned total of 300 buildings will enable the extraction and amplification of heat from the water.

Welcome to the world of hydrothermal energy, a universe in which cold water can generate heat. Fabrice

Malla cites other similar large-scale projects, notably in Toronto and Honolulu. The facility in Vengeron, budgeted at 100 million Swiss francs, will be the starting point of one of the biggest hydrothermal networks in the world. “We are going to irrigate half the canton with hot and cold water,” says the SIG engineer. The operation will drastically reduce the amount of greenhouse gases generated. The electric energy used for running the network will be of hydraulic origin, according to spokesperson Véronique Tanerg Henneberg. But this is not necessarily the rule. “Heat pumps require electricity, but we don’t have enough. The progressive move away from nuclear energy will involve the development of solar and wind energy,” in the view of Martin Schmid, a researcher at the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag). Due to global warming, summer demand for cooling is inevi-

The huge pipes are indicative of how much water will be taken from Lake Geneva: 10,000 litres per second.

Photo: Keystone

tably set to increase. But demand for heating will drop, thanks to improved housing insulation.

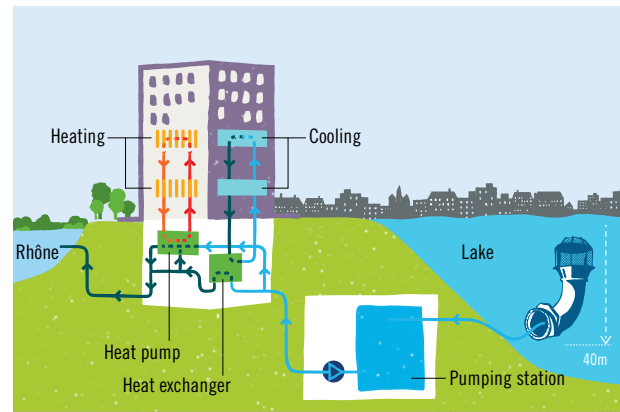
A multitude of small stations

In Switzerland, the development of hydrothermal energy dates back to the 1930s, when small stations were built to heat a few buildings. There are hundreds of them. Now, large-scale projects in urban areas bordering the lakes, notably in Zug and Zurich, are coming to the fore. Thanks to water collected at a depth of 45 metres in two stations, Lake Lucerne provides lake-based energy to 3,700 homes in the centre of Lucerne. In Horw, 6,800 homes will receive energy from the lake. In Biel, hydrothermal energy is set to be provided from autumn 2022. The town is planning for 185 connection points, leading to an 80 per cent drop in CO2 emissions.

The energy resources of the Swiss lakes seem to be a sort of blue gold. The figures are simply mind-boggling. According to an article written in 2018 by the Eawag institute, total energy consumption in Switzerland equates to 850 petajoules per year, or 236 terawatt-hours (with the nuclear plant in Gösgen producing 7.9 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2021). Half of this energy is used to heat buildings and in industrial processes and is derived from gas and heating oil. But Lake Geneva alone, used in accordance with legal standards regarding hydrothermal energy, could theoretically generate almost a third of all of the energy consumed in Switzerland each year! “The energy from our lakes will cover 30 per cent of our heating needs. Approximately one building in three located in a dense area, near to a lake, will benefit from urban heating connected to a sustainable resource, including hydrothermal energy,” estimates François Maréchal, professor at EPFL specialising in energy systems. The researcher describes hydrothermal energy as “a super-resource, but one that no one talks about”. But Switzerland is leading the field, comments Martin Schmid.

The question of water discharge into rivers

There remains the question of the impact of these procedures, as the water drawn is partially discharged back into water currents at a different temperature. During this cycle, water drawn at 6 °C in Lake Geneva, for example, will later be discharged at 3 °C in the Rhone, which itself is at 1.5 °C. In summer, water at 8 °C will be drawn from the bottom of the lake and discharged at 13 °C in river surface water reaching 20 °C. All of the studies point to the same conclusion: even if all of the Swiss energy demands for heating and cooling were covered



The Geneva hydrothermal project aims to provide a double benefit. In winter, energy is taken from the water by means of a heat pump in order to heat a building. In summer, a building can be cooled using cool water taken from the depths.

by the lakes, the discharge would have a low to non-existent impact, given the small differences in temperature between the pumped water and the discharged water. “To modify the temperature of Lake Geneva by one degree, there would need to be 100 stations like that in Vengeron,” explains Malla.

Switzerland does have rules that it follows. For example, the temperature of a water current cannot vary by more than 1.5 °C in an area with trout. “If the legal provisions are correctly taken into account, the exploitation of hydrothermal energy could really happen,” believes Nicolas Wüthrich from Pro Natura. There is also another problem: rising temperatures in the lakes. In Lake Geneva, mild winters have prevented the deep beds of the lake stirring for ten years; without oxygen, these areas risk biological death. This phenomenon hinders the production of cold energy via hydrothermal exploitation. Heating also tends to provoke the development of invasive species. One such species is the quagga mussel, the larvae of which penetrate the supply networks for drinking water and water destined for hydrothermal energy production, requiring the water to be treated with chlorine. Another subject of concern: if the water is discharged far from the point of extraction, there is a risk of displacement of nutrients and pollutants, notes Eawag.

Pro Natura worries that, in rivers and streams in particular, the raised temperature could be a threat to certain species. For example, the effects of shade virtually disappear at temperatures above 25 °C. “This makes the reintroduction of large quantities of heated cooling water over the year a delicate process.” Nevertheless, water currents with well-shaded riverbanks will help to keep temperatures lower, suggests Pro Natura. In winter, the discharge of colder water produced through hydrothermal heating systems could even theoretically have a positive effect. “But interfering with the natural balance is always a risky business” warns Nicolas Wüthrich.

A new look for “Swiss Review”

The print edition of “Swiss Review” now has a new look. We have revamped the layout. This demonstrates our commitment to the print edition, which a great many of you read around the world.

MARC LETTAU

Does the latest print edition of “Swiss Review” seem familiar and yet somewhat different? Then you will have noticed that we have revamped the layout. We have done a thorough spring clean. Countless people helped us: the many suggestions in our 2021 readership survey for improving the magazine’s design helped us in this regard.

Rearranged

In terms of the magazine structure, we have changed the article sequence. We have put content that we consider particularly important – the Focus article and the latest news – nearer the front. The reader comments now have pride of place in the SwissCommunity section. And rightly so, because our readers are the Swiss community in the proper sense.

Colour coding

When doing a spring clean, it is a good idea to arrange things in a way that makes it easy to see what goes where. In the magazine, you can now distinguish between the journalistic content (white pages), the Federal Administration content (beige pages), and where the Organisa-



The cover of the revamped print edition of “Swiss Review” has a new but familiar look. We redesigned the online edition a while ago, creating a site that also has something to offer for readers of the print edition. Visit www.revue.ch for additional pictures, videos, and in-depth content.

tion of the Swiss Abroad and its partner organisations have their say (blue pages). This colour coding also makes it easier to see whether the magazine includes a regional section.

Tidy

We do not plan to turn “Swiss Review” into a glossy magazine. It will remain simple, understated and not one gram too heavy, so that we can continue posting it around the world. However, we have given the magazine a good old tidy-up and allowed ourselves greater freedom in how we visually present the content. The Focus article in this edition is a good example, with the vibrant pictures afforded a little more emphasis. Hopefully, this will enhance the reading experience.

This spring clean also demonstrates our commitment to the print edition, which provides many Swiss Abroad with an important, valued and tangible connection to Switzerland. At present, 325,000 readers enjoy the print edition of “Swiss Review”.

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From free-range hens to freedom of the press

“Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 48th year of publication and is published six times a year in German, French, English and Spanish in 13 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 431,000, including 253,000 electronic copies.

“Swiss Review”'s regional news appears four times a year.

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22

There are no more Covid restrictions in Switzerland – for the time being. Consequently, tedious traffic jams are back with a vengeance. Stretching 22 kilometres, the tailback on the southbound A2 before Easter was the longest so far this year. Talk about ‘freedom to travel’.

1,100,000,000

And talking of Easter: Switzerland’s hens are pulling their weight, laying 1.1 billion eggs in 2021 – more than ever before. Our hens are also a little happier than they were, with the proportion of free-range eggs and organic eggs having increased by 185 per cent and 107 per cent respectively in the last ten years.



194

How about this for an ‘egg-uation’? All Swiss-produced eggs + all imported eggs ÷ the number of people in Switzerland = 194. That is the annual per capita consumption of eggs in Switzerland. Sounds like a lot, but egg consumption in other European countries is much higher. People in Singapore eat twice as many.

260

An eaten egg is a good egg. A discarded egg is not so good. Think of the waste! How much perfectly edible food does the average Swiss household throw away? A quarter of a tonne, or 260 kilos, every year. But the Swiss believe they are doing much better than they actually are, with two thirds saying that they are wasting a lot less food than this.

14

Are Easter traffic jams and Easter eggs too banal for you? Maybe some data revealing the behaviour – or misbehaviour – of Swiss banks will get your pulse racing instead. However, banking secrecy laws have recently resulted in journalists having to ‘censor’ themselves. Under Swiss law, bank-client confidentiality takes precedence over freedom of the press. This means that Switzerland has dropped out of the World Press Freedom Index top ten for the first time ever. It now languishes in 14th place.

Growing calls to ban Nazi symbols and salutes

Displaying a Nazi symbol or making a Nazi salute in public is not always to commit a crime in Switzerland. A number of parliamentary motions – and the Council of the Swiss Abroad – now want zero tolerance. Initially hesitant, the government is now looking into the matter.

SUSANNE WENGER

At a rally protesting against anti-Covid measures in September 2021, a demonstrator made a Nazi salute – right in the middle of Berne’s old town. The public prosecutor’s office consequently issued the demonstrator with a penalty order for improper behaviour. However, the man successfully contested the notice. There was no legal basis for a conviction, a local court ruled. A neo-Nazi who made the same salute in 2010 on Rütli Meadow in the canton of Uri also ended up being acquitted. The Federal Supreme Court ruled in 2013 that the man had been expressing his own convictions among like-minded people, and that this was not a criminal offence. Had he been making the salute to spread Nazi ideology on the other hand, he would have been punished under Swiss anti-racism laws.

These examples show that Switzerland has a certain tolerance threshold when it comes to making Nazi symbols and gestures. Nazi salutes, swastikas, etc. are only banned when used for propaganda purposes. Political efforts to scrap this distinction have been ongoing since 2003. Majorities in the Federal Council and parliament have so far judged freedom of expression to be more important, but the perception seems to be shifting now. Three motions on the issue have been submitted in parliament – one from the centre right and two from the left.

A spate of incidents during the pandemic

Aargau National Councillor for The Centre, Marianne Binder, set the ball rolling in winter. Binder wants a complete ban on Nazi gestures, flags and symbols, both in the real world and online. Explaining her motion, she said,



“Nazi symbols and salutes are unambiguous. They certainly do not come under freedom of expression.”

Marianne Binder, National Councillor for The Centre

“Anti-Semitic incidents have increased and took on a new dimension during the pandemic.” The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG) and the Foundation against Racism and Anti-Semitism (GRA) confirm this. According to their Report on Anti-Semitism, 2021 saw a proliferation of



“The Federal Council is well aware of the increase in anti-Semitic incidents in Switzerland.”

Karin Keller-Sutter, Justice Minister

anti-Semitic incidents in Switzerland. There were 806 reports of online anti-Semitic content including anti-Semitic conspiracy theories – a more than 60 per cent increase on the previous year.

There were 53 real-world anti-Semitic incidents, which included verbal abuse, public statements and offensive graffiti on synagogues. Anti-vaccine protesters wore stars of David inscribed with the word “unvaccinated”. And in a Zurich suburb, they graffitied “Impfen [vaccination] macht frei” – a play on words on the infamous gate at Auschwitz – next to a swastika. People argue that the protesters need not have had anti-Semitic motives, says Binder. “You can plead stupidity, but how blind to history can you be?” she asks, adding that it constitutes an intolerable trivialisation of the Holocaust.

“Hurtful and bewildering”

Binder deliberately restricted the motion to focusing on symbols and gestures related to Nazism and the Holocaust, whereas previous motions had targeted symbols and gestures encouraging racism and violence in general. Otherwise, it would have been difficult to list every single possible infraction. But Nazi symbols and salutes are unambiguous. “They certainly do not come under free-

dom of expression.” SP National Councillor for Aargau, Gabriela Suter, and SP National Councillor for Zurich, Angelo Barrile, doubled down with similar parliamentary initiatives. The SIG endorsed the motions in January 2022, the first time it has explicitly put its weight behind initiatives of this type. Far-right extremists at protest rallies and concerts were specifically taking advantage of Switzerland’s legal loophole, it said. “This is particularly hurtful and bewildering for the minorities affected.”

The Council of the Swiss Abroad, which represents the interests of the “Fifth Switzerland” vis-à-vis the authorities and the general public, also expressed support in March for criminalising all use of Nazi symbols and gestures in public. On behalf of the delegation from Israel,



“After debating the issue for almost 20 years, Switzerland now needs to act and follow the examples of other countries.”

Ralph Steigrad, member of the Council of the Swiss Abroad

Ralph Steigrad noted that Switzerland had been debating the issue for almost 20 years: “It now needs to act and follow the examples of other countries.” This did not mean stopping symbols from being shown in teaching material for purely educational purposes, he stressed. However, the Federal Council initially wanted to leave things as they were for the time being and rejected Marianne Binder’s motion. Even though Nazi symbols and salutes were “shocking”, they had to be tolerated as an exercise of freedom of expression, it wrote in reply. Educating people was better than enacting a ban.

Experts are divided

Legal and extremism experts are divided over the issue. Some say that far-right extremists might even feel vindicated if criminal proceedings were brought against them, and that a sweeping ban potentially moves us to a kind of penal law focused on punishing offenders’ attitudes or belief systems instead of the act itself. Others argue that Nazi symbols pose a threat to peaceful, democratic soci-

Official Holocaust memorial to be built

Switzerland is set to have its own official memorial commemorating the victims of National Socialism. During the spring session of parliament, both chambers unanimously approved motions, which had been submitted by Alfred Heer (SVP/canton of Zurich) in the National Council and Daniel Jositsch (SP/canton of Zurich) in the Council of States. We need to ensure that the terrible crimes of the Nazis remain rooted in our collective memory, said Jositsch. The memorial grew out of an initiative by five organisations, including the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). Its purpose is to remember Swiss whom the Nazi regime persecuted, disenfranchised and murdered for being Jews or political opponents. At least 450 people with Swiss citizenship ended up in Hitler’s concentration

camps. If you also include people who were born or lived in Switzerland, then you have well over 1,000 victims with Swiss connections. The monument will also honour the men and women who resisted the Nazis or offered protection or help to those who were persecuted. And it will be dedicated to people whom the Swiss authorities refused to rescue. Now parliament has given the green light, the Federal Council must flesh out the project. It is still unclear where the memorial site will be. The organisations that submitted the project to the federal government last year have proposed the city of Berne. In addition to an aesthetic public memorial, the aim is to include an additional space for exhibitions and events, and set up a virtual interface with other existing, private memorials. (SWE)



Gino Pezzani’s prisoner number at Sachsenhausen concentration camp. “Sch.” stands for Swiss.

ety and are unacceptable in any country governed by the rule of law. And lo and behold, the Federal Council appears to have overcome its initial hesitancy amid reports that Justice Minister Karin Keller-Sutter is looking into the matter after all. The FDP Federal Councillor said her ministry would now see what legal options are available.

Keller-Sutter also wrote a reply to the OSA (via which the Council of the Swiss Abroad had expressed its concerns to the Federal Council), assuring it that the government was well aware of the increase in anti-Semitic incidents in Switzerland. By all means you can prevent anti-Semitism and ban Nazi symbols at the same time, says Binder. It is necessary to do both. Building a Holocaust memorial (see box) while continuing to allow Nazi symbols and salutes defeats the object. Parliament is set to debate Binder’s motion in its summer session, after the editorial deadline for this edition of “Swiss Review”.

Giving Swiss literature a chance

The Federal Office of Culture honoured Charles Linsmayer in 2017 for his services to literature. A recently published book impressively illustrates why Linsmayer received this accolade in the first place.

BEAT MAZENAUER

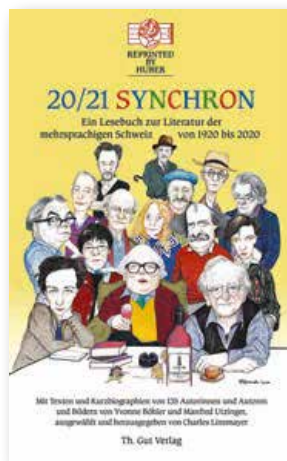
Charles Linsmayer is the custodian of Swiss 20th-century literature, diligently reviving the memory of literary works that have long since disappeared from print. “Giving books a second chance” was the title of a 1999 exhibition showcasing his editorial work. During a 40-year career as a literary publicist and publisher, Linsmayer has indeed given countless forgotten authors a second chance to be discovered.

But archival work is just one string to his bow. As literary editor of the Berne newspaper “Der Bund” (1992–2002), and then on a freelance basis, Linsmayer has been writing book reviews and profiling authors for many years, demonstrating the profound erudition with which many readers of “Swiss Review” will be familiar. What he possibly loves doing even more than both of these activities is interacting and engaging with authors directly. In 2011, he hosted a series of talks at Restaurant Europa in Zurich entitled “Bei Charles Linsmayer zu Gast im Europa”, while the following year saw him inaugurating the “Hottinger Literaturgespräche”, a series of dialogues with Swiss authors. As he himself puts it: “After decades spent reviewing contemporary Swiss literature in a somewhat detached manner, I finally had the pleasure of meeting the authors in person. Many of them became personal friends.”

Linsmayer has now conceived and published “20/21 Synchron” – an extensive book that bears testimony to his deep knowledge of Swiss literature. In the epilogue, Linsmayer underscores how enriching his relationship with literature has been, both as a reader and a critic. This 570-page tome bridges the gap be-



“Cécile Ines Loos, Cilette Ofaire and Orlando Spreng have no lobby. I see myself as their advocate or posthumous brother.”



Charles Linsmayer (publisher):
20/21 Synchron. Lesebuch zur Schweizer Literatur der
mehrsprachigen Schweiz von 1920 bis 2020. Th. Gut Verlag,
Zurich 2022. 574 pages, CHF 39.

tween the old and the new, documenting and showcasing the best that Swiss literature has to offer. Essentially, “20/21 Synchron” is a roll call of the Swiss literary scene of the past 100 years. Linsmayer presents 135 different authors, profiling them briefly and publishing original excerpts of their work. The line-up includes Melinda Nadj Abonji, Matthias Zschokke, Meinrad Inglin, Meral Kureyshi, Dorothee Elmiger, Alberto Nessi and Neuchâtel native Cilette Ofaire, who spent many years in the South of France. The latter two names are important to mention. Linsmayer has always tried to engage with the literature of French, Italian and Romansh-speaking Switzerland, highlighting such hidden pearls as Luisa Famos and Orlando Spreng. “Synchron 20/21” pays due respect to authors from all of Switzerland’s language regions.

Charles Linsmayer is a passionate literary advocate with an acute awareness of his readers. Academic aloofness has never been his style. He is a careful reader and an insightful scholar – the last thing he wants is to come across as a sniping critic or know-it-all. His anthologies, profiles, book reviews, and book talks are all meant to serve the purpose of making people read and appreciate literature. This is why “20/21 Synchron” is the epitome of literature lover and patron Charles Linsmayer.

“Swiss Review” is giving away three copies of the book. Enter our draw for a chance to win one of them. Simply send an email to revue@swisscommunity.org, quoting “Synchron” in the subject line. No correspondence will be entered into regarding the draw.

What really happened



URSULA HASLER
"Die schiere Wahrheit.
Gläser und Simenon
schreiben einen
Kriminalroman."
Limmat Verlag 2021

Ursula Hasler's "Die schiere Wahrheit" (What really happened) is a crime novel with two intertwined narratives. It is June 1937. Friedrich Gläser meets his literary idol Georges Simenon at the seaside resort of Saint-Jean-de-Monts on the French Atlantic coast. The two of them use their chance encounter to share some literary wisdom. This prompts them to venture an experiment and write a whodunnit together in which Gläser's Sergeant Studer teams up with Simenon's Amélie Morel (Simenon has recently put Commissaire Maigret out to pasture.)

This fictional meeting between the two crime writers marks the beginning of a cleverly woven story based on their literary kinship. Both Gläser and Simenon believed that a good crime story is more than just about putting the world to rights by solving

a puzzle. Gläser: "It is also about deciphering and understanding the culprit as a person." Hence Gläser quickly found his role model in Simenon. In Ursula Hasler's novel, the two of them partake in a game to prove that they are kindred spirits.

Nurse Amélie Morel discovers a man dead on the beach. Is it an accident or murder? Because the deceased is a Swiss-American dual citizen with good connections, Sergeant Studer is brought in from Switzerland to help in the case. Under pressure from his superiors, the French investigator Inspector Picot is in a hurry to treat the death as an accident. But both Studer and Morel believe a crime has been committed. They try to find out what really happened.

Hasler has carefully read through Gläser and Simenon to lend a flavour of their crime writing to her novel. The investigation unfolds in an amusing plot with both Simenonian and Gläseresque traits. Hasler's double narrative switches between the murder case itself and dialogues in which Gläser and Simenon excitedly discuss their literary style as well as issues like justice and fairness. Their imaginary encounter develops into a delightful to and fro. It is an enjoyable, stimulating exchange, shining a light on the current boom in crime fiction and examining what readers expect from the genre.

BEAT MAZENAUER

A rainbow world



HECHT:
"Hecht for Life"
Gadget, 2022

Forever young, with loud colours everywhere and cheerful music to match. Eye and ear-catching band Hecht rule the Swiss German dialect scene at the moment. Four years on from their successful and most recent album "Oh Boy", the Lucerne combo are now back with a chart-topping record that mainly appeals to young listeners. The quintet will round off their current tour with a performance at Zurich Hallenstadion in November.

"Hecht for Life" is a colourful LP in many ways. This includes the album cover – a light-hearted picture of the brightly dressed band members on a beach, framed by a rainbow and a row of equally technicolour flowers. The music is also light-hearted: fluffy, danceable wide-screen pop with airy, expansive, soaring effects. Hecht wear their heart on their sleeve, but wear it lightly.

They put a spring in your step. The boys accurately refer to their music as 'euphoria pop', but also as thoughtful pop. Rare moments of introspection prove this point now and again.

Frontman Stefan Buck likes to tell interviewers that their music is about life, death and love – the core of human existence, no less. Be that as it may, "Hecht for Life" is essentially a party album full of streamlined earworms. Some may find it shallow, but the music certainly isn't annoying. Anyone ready to lose themselves in the positive energy and pastel universe of Hecht is set for an aural endorphin shot.

The aptly named single "Prosecco" is a case in point, featuring a singing, dancing, smiling Stefan Buck. "Me trinkt so viel Prosecco / Sie schtiigt us de Stiletto / Ah, sie isch perfetto" (We drink so much Prosecco / She takes off her stilettos / Ah, she's perfetto). The song is about enjoying life and the positive vibes that come with it, say the band. Sounds banal. But it works. And it sounds authentic. "Prosecco" is rose-tinted summer holiday music – nothing more, nothing less.

MARKO LEHTINEN



The bunker's kitchen looks huge, but hot meals would have been reserved solely for senior personnel in an emergency. Photo: Keystone

Sonnenberg bunker is drawing attention due to the war in Ukraine

For a long time, Sonnenberg nuclear fallout shelter, inaugurated in 1976 in Lucerne and with a capacity of 20,000, was the largest facility of its kind in the world. A visit to this reminder of the Cold War takes on new significance with the return of war in Europe. Report.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Before us is a children's playground, on a little hill, with a sandpit and swings, surrounded by little houses. In the distance, there is a concrete gate. Welcome to Sonnenberg bunker, the largest nuclear fallout shelter ever built in Switzerland. We are one kilometre west of Lucerne train station as the crow flies, in the Bruchmatt district.

Our guide, Zora Schelbert, arrives by bike. A teacher by training, she has been taking visitors on tours of the site since 2006. It is a part-time

job, "where every visit is different". The guide from Lucerne doesn't live far away, but as it turns out, she would have to go elsewhere if there were an attack. Where exactly? "I asked about this on a website dedicated to these questions, but I never got a reply," she laughs. We follow a 200-metre-long sloping tunnel. On the walls, there are orange marks, 20,000 of them. The idea came from the Unterirdisch-überleben association, which organises the visits. Each mark represents a human being, who would have been allocated one

square metre of living space. This crowd would have been spread between the two motorway tunnels, protected on either side by reinforced doors. This calculation forms the basis for the Sonnenberg shelter, inaugurated in 1976.

Electricity for two weeks

At the end of the corridor, we access the top of a seven-storey underground building. The building is set above the A5 motorway, on the north-south axis, where 65,000 vehicles



Higher, further, faster, more beautiful? In search of the somewhat different Swiss records.

This edition: Switzerland's biggest nuclear bunker

pass each day. This is the cavern. In the event of war or a catastrophe, this concrete cylinder would have served as the headquarters and workspace for 700 members of the civil defence. Each floor has its own role. The seventh floor is dedicated to energy and ventilation, with biological, chemical and nuclear filters. The cavern has three diesel motors, including one emergency one, with enough fuel to produce electricity for two weeks. This floor also has electric winches installed vertically over the motorway. These would have allowed survival equipment – beds and toilets – to be lowered into the two tunnels. A third of the city’s population could have sought refuge here.

In Kyiv and Kharkiv, deep metro tunnels are being used as protection from bombings. In Lucerne, this 1.5-kilometre section of motorway would have served the same purpose. In 1987, the Fourmi operation revealed the inadequacies of the project, if it were to be used in reality. The aim was to lay out 10,000 bunks in one week along one of the two tunnels. But the trolleys intended for use in this situation got stuck in the corridors. More serious still, one of the four concrete doors blocking the motorway would not close properly. The decision was taken in 2002 to downsize the facility and to lower its capacity to 2,000 people, who could now be

housed in 24 hours. That was the end of the motorway shelter.

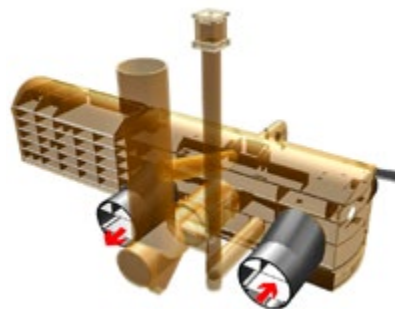
Protestors locked underground

Since its inauguration in 1976, the Sonnenberg bunker has been used only once: in December 2007, when a protest was led against the closure of an alternative site. The police, who still possess a floor in Sonnenberg, locked dozens of protestors in cells adapted for this purpose. “It was as though they wanted to test the place out,” comments our guide. Four years ago, 200 new bunks were also set up on one of the floors of the cavern for refugees. The project was later abandoned.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, many people have called the association for information about the bunker, something which hasn’t happened since 2006. People are making plans and want to know where they can shelter. But the question more familiar to the association that organises tours, including a descent into the bunker, is that posed by visitors from abroad: why should there be such fear of an attack in a country considered neutral? Others marvel that Switzerland would take such extensive measures to protect its citizens. But the older generation in Switzerland admit that they felt reassured by this project. As for the young visitors, the extent of the facility teaches them about the perception of the nuclear threat that reigned at the time of the Cold War. Zora Schelbert, who will mark her 1,000th visit this year, has a nuanced view of the shelter: “I don’t want to laugh at this place. Its aim was to help people, even if I have my doubts about its use,” explains the teacher.

Inhuman human density

In Sonnenberg, every visitor imagines life underground. The human



A seven-storey cavern forms the centrepiece of the Sonnenberg nuclear bunker.



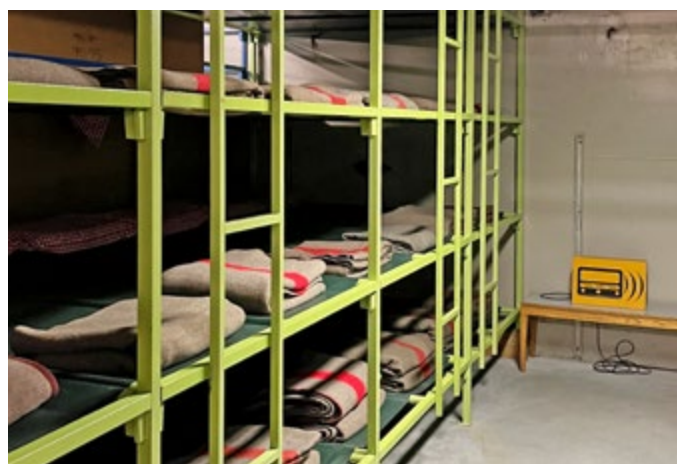
A children’s play area on the right, the inconspicuous entrance to Sonnenberg on the left. Photo: Stéphane Herzog



The 20,000 marks on the unending tunnel wall indicate how many people the facility was built for. Photo: Stéphane Herzog



The bunker even has detention cells.





“Ameise” (or ant in English) was the name of an extensive emergency simulation that took place in the bunker in 1987. Photo: Keystone



Guided tours now give an insight into this underground world born of the Cold War. They include visits to the bunker’s emergency hospital. Photo: Stéphane Herzog



density would have essentially confined each person to their bunk. They would have had to queue to access the dry toilets and the taps in their survival unit, each of which has 64 places. Each individual would have had to bring their own food. Water would have been rationed. No resources were planned for heating the food, with the only kitchens in the shelter reserved for the staff and the underground hospital, which also included a few showers – the only ones in the building. The visit passes by an operating theatre, a meeting room

and a radio studio. The association has been able to preserve the atmosphere of the Cold War years, maintaining surgical materials, telephone landlines and powdered survival rations. The blocks in the cavern run one after another, each identical. The walls are mainly painted in green and yellow, colours intended to have a calming effect. A delivery room for childbirth is painted a salmon shade. The cramped space immediately makes you want to escape.

There is no chapel in Sonnenberg, but there are prison cells: enough to

hold 16 individuals. In the event of an attack, tensions underground would no doubt have come to a head. In fact, it is quite possible that this was a reason for the shelter’s ‘downsizing’. At the end of the hole, we can see the traffic on the A5. “Financial support from the Confederation for the creation of this facility enabled Lucerne to build this motorway at low cost,” our guide reminds us. If so required, the inhabitants of Lucerne assigned a place in Sonnenberg would have crossed the playground and headed up the service tunnel.

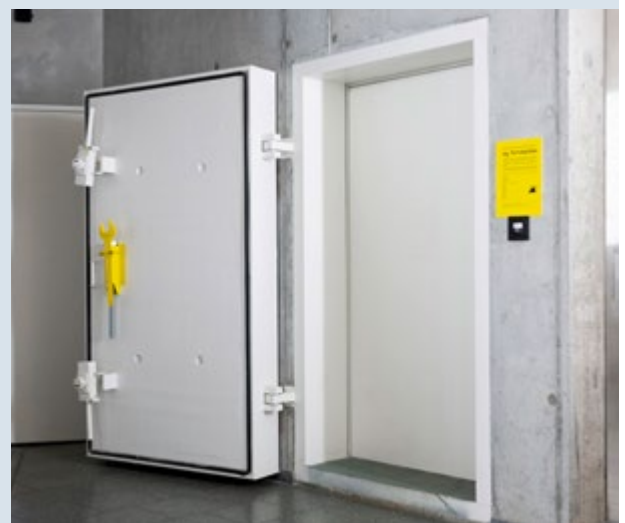
Switzerland has more than one shelter space per person

Sonnenberg bunker is part of a global system, based on a law passed in 1959. The law guarantees a shelter space for each inhabitant, accessible in 30 minutes by foot. The country has around 365,000 private and public shelters, providing approximately 9 million places. This covers more than the entire population. In recent years, approximately 50,000 places were created each year, estimates the Swiss Federal Office for Civil Protection. The owners of each new house built are supposed to create their own shelter, which they must furnish and maintain. If a house does not have a shelter, a contribution for a replacement needs to be paid. Where there are shortfalls, the municipi-

palities have to build, furnish and maintain public shelters. Built from reinforced concrete, the Swiss bunkers are meant to resist the pressure of a bomb and reduce radiation intensity by a factor of 500.

The Swiss generally use the shelters as storage spaces or even for meeting rooms and for lodging asylum seekers or people with no fixed address. But these spaces must be made operational in five days.

On 3 March, a week after the breakout of war in Ukraine, the Confederation gave notice that in light of the security situation, the cantons would have to “review the plans for allocation of shelter and adapt as necessary”. (SH)



Reinforced concrete doors have been a familiar sight under Swiss homes for decades. Photo: Keystone

Sprinter Mujinga Kambundji is aiming high

Mujinga Kambundji from Berne is the new women's world indoor champion over 60 metres. A whole string of Swiss female sprinters now want to emulate her history-making performance.

MIREILLE GUGGENBÜHLER

After crossing the finishing line, Mujinga Kambundji raised her arms briefly before putting her hands behind her head and looking into the camera. She seemed slightly perplexed. The 29-year-old from Berne had just beaten the world's best over 60 metres, her time of 6.96 seconds enough to win gold at the 2022 World Athletics Indoor Championships in Belgrade. Kambundji made Swiss sporting history in doing so. Only two other Swiss athletes have won a world indoor title: shot-putter Werner Günthör and sprint hurdler Julie Baumann.

Fierce competition

Her victory at the World Indoors was the best performance of Kambundji's career to date in what is a fiercely competitive sport. Kambundji, who is currently refusing media requests, told Swiss television (SRF): "Athletics is extremely competitive, especially in the sprint events. Anyone can run. All you need is a pair of shoes and a track." This is why winning her first-ever world title fills her with pride.

Nevertheless, a pair of shoes and a track are not the only things you need to make your mark as a sprinter on the international stage. You also need mental and physical stamina as well as an appreciation and talent for the technical side of sprinting. Kambundji already had this when starting out in track and field as a girl at Stadtturnverein Bern. Back then, she lived with her parents and three sisters in the Berne suburb of Köniz and went to upper secondary school. Despite only training in her free time, she became quicker and quicker. She has now won four international med-



als as an elite athlete. "The better I became, the higher I set my targets," said Kambundji after winning the world indoor title.

"She has a lot of determination"

Her success is certainly not down to talent alone. "She has a lot of determination and always picks herself up after setbacks," says Maja Neuenchwander, the Women and Elite Sport project director at Swiss Olympic.

But Kambundji is not the only high-flyer in Swiss athletics. Switzerland currently has an array of other

Joy for sprinter Mujinga Kambundji at the 2022 World Athletics Indoor Championships in Belgrade. It took a few moments for her to realise that she had won.

Photo: Keystone

very quick female sprinters who can hold their own at international level. The women's 4x100 metres relay team reached the Olympic final in 2021.

Apart from preparing themselves in the optimal way, what is the reason for the success of Switzerland's female sprinters? Neuenchwander: "First, I think mentality has a lot to do with it. Mujinga Kambundji has shown that you can be Swiss and quick. She is an inspiration to other athletes."

More about the Women and Elite Sport project: [revue.link/topsport](https://www.revue.link/topsport)

Aid associations for the Swiss Abroad

Did you know that Swiss solidarity functions through approximately 60 aid organisations around the world? The Société Helvétique de Bienfaisance in France celebrated its bicentenary in 2021. This humanitarian tradition can also be seen further afield, for example in the Philippines, where Switzerland supports the Swiss Benevolent Foundation.

According to the Swiss Federal Constitution, the Confederation must contribute to strengthening relationships uniting the Swiss Abroad amongst themselves and with Switzerland, and it must support institutions that act with this aim. The same goes for the federal law concerning Swiss people and institutions abroad, better known under the name of the “Swiss Abroad Act” (LSEtr). The relevant ordinance, which takes up this principle, states that the Confederation can support institutions which allocate aid to the Swiss Abroad in specific domains, which are active throughout the entire world and which provide assistance to the Swiss Abroad.

To this end, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) receives an annual federal grant for which Swiss aid organisations can apply. This funding is augmented by contributions from certain cantons wishing to support their citizens living abroad who are registered with their relevant Swiss representation abroad. This financial aid is allocated primarily to Swiss associations and institutions, which provide support to the Swiss Abroad who find themselves in difficult social situations due to illness, age or solitude.

This type of aid is intended to cover living or accommodation costs or to make a contribution towards household expenses, or the costs of medical care and equipment, for example. In addition, aid services can be allocated in the form of training projects, like study grants, the partial payment of school fees or a contribution to homes for elderly or indigent individuals. Those who are unable to provide for themselves and who already benefit from social service assistance from the Confederation do not have this right.

The request for financial assistance is sent by the aid association directly to the relevant representation, where the request is considered and the requirements are

evaluated based on the explanation provided and the financial documentation. The Consular Directorate of the FDFA then examines all of the files.

The decisions will take into account the available resources. Our general consulates and embassies, which have established direct local collaboration relationships with these institutions, ensure the provision of the aid services potentially available to the Swiss Abroad. Although the number of

cases of this kind of support remains low, this tool enables support to be provided to our fellow citizens who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

¹ Art. 40, para. 1 Cst (RS 101)

² Arts. 34, 38 and 58, let. C LSEtr (RS 195. 1); Arts. 40 and 46 OSEtr (RS 195.11)



A historical document from a turbulent era: the Federal Council expresses its thanks to the Société Helvétique de Bienfaisance de Paris (SHB) in 1936 for underwriting a bond to fund Switzerland's national defence, assuring it of "the country's gratitude for this patriotic gesture".

Photo: SHB archive, Paris

The example of the Société Helvétique de Bienfaisance



The Société Helvétique de Bienfaisance (SHB) has just celebrated its bicentenary. It was created in 1821 by four young Swiss citizens, newly arrived in Paris. Its goal, then and now, was to help underprivileged Swiss citizens living in France.

The first few years were tumultuous: in just 50 years, the young organisation was faced with the Revolution of 1830, followed by cholera, the insurrection of 1848, and finally the war of 1870 and the siege of Paris. The organisation was able to survive these events thanks to federal assistance and the exemplary dedication and generosity of the Swiss in Paris. The organisation was no more spared by the following centuries, which saw two world wars, the Spanish flu and the current pandemic. Through all these painful periods, the SHB has proven its efficiency and continues to act as a vital support for Swiss in difficulty in France.

On a daily basis, an assistant manages the aid requests that arrive at the embassy or on its website, whilst a dozen volunteers visit elderly and isolated individuals. The Swiss who receive this assistance suffer from all kinds of difficulties: trouble making ends meet, unpaid bills, a need for medical or dental care, and administrative or psychological support.

The SHB analyses each case, takes action and pays the bills. Twice per year, it provides financial support for the most underprivileged individuals. The organisation also supports young people and allocates two study grants per year to Swiss students at the Cité Universitaire and three grants for trainees participating in apprenticeships at the École Suisse de Paris.

The organisation is today able to manage all of these costs thanks to the generosity of a Swiss foundation, with the help of a federal subsidy and the legacies and donations of its members. It also organises charity concerts and a tombola during our General Assembly.

A huge thank you to everyone!

But maintaining this support is a challenge and the SHB hopes to have convinced readers to join them. SHB

Swiss Benevolent Foundation in Manila



In 1925, members of the Swiss Club Philippines set up the Swiss Benevolent Foundation (SBF). The objective was to relieve the urgent needs of deserving Swiss citizens.

The SBF is managed by a board of trustees composed of members of the Swiss Club Philippines. It mainly relies on voluntary donations from members of the Swiss Club. The board of trustees decides which Swiss citizens and other people with close con-

nections to Switzerland are deserving of help. SBF services include one-off financial support, loans, donations, and assistance in the event of illness or loss of livelihood. Giving Christmas donations to destitute and imprisoned Swiss citizens, covering medical and hospital expenses, and subsidising school fees for the orphaned dependants of Swiss citizens are just some of the successful projects supported by the SBF since its inception.

SWISS EMBASSY, MANILA

revue.link/manila



Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date.

Everything you need to know about voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's Votelfo app.



Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiatives have already been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Federal Popular Initiative 'For good and affordable supplementary childcare services for all' (08.09.2023)
- Federal Popular Initiative 'For regulated financial support in the event of epidemics' (Financial Support Initiative) (29.09.2023)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in German, French and Italian at www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



Travel Admin – the FDFA travel app

Travel Admin – the travel app of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) – helps you to plan trips abroad and provides you with useful functions and information while you are travelling. Create a profile and register your trip abroad.



Travel Admin

The Travel Admin app is for free in the iOS and in the Android App Shop.

FDFA Helpline – your central contact point

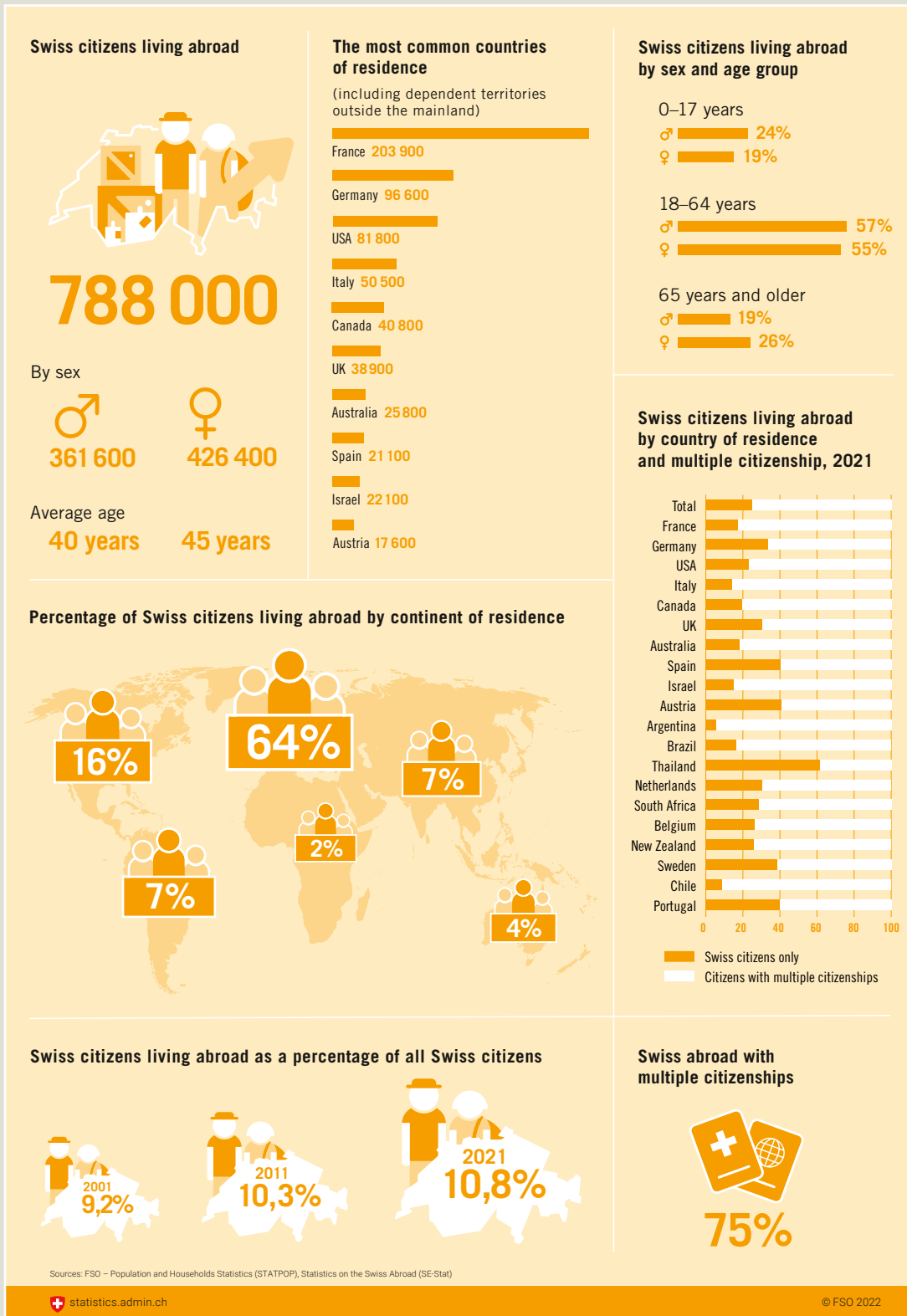
The Helpline of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is your central contact point for all matters relating to consular services. The FDFA Helpline is also ready to assist you in emergencies. Worldwide, 365 days a year, around the clock – by phone, email or Skype.

HELPLINE FDFA

Switzerland: +41 800 24 7 365
Abroad: +41 58 465 33 33
helpline@eda.admin.ch
Skype: helpline-eda

The diversity of the Swiss Abroad

Switzerland's diverse population extends beyond the country's borders. More than one tenth of Swiss were living abroad at the end of 2021, 75 per cent of whom are citizens of at least one other country. The proportion of Swiss Abroad with dual or multiple citizenship is particularly high in South America.



In 2021, 788,000 Swiss Abroad were registered with a responsible Swiss representation abroad – 1.5 per cent more than in the previous year. As far as the last two years are concerned, the Covid-19 pandemic seemed to have no significant impact on numbers in 2021, but the exceptional circumstances resulted in lower fluctuation in 2020.

Dual and multiple citizenship is common

Three quarters of Swiss Abroad, or 590,500 people, are citizens of one or more countries other than Switzerland. This proportion has remained the same since 2017.

The proportion of Swiss Abroad who are nationals of at least one other country is particularly high in the Americas (80 per cent) and in South America the proportion is as high as 87.3 per cent. Here, Argentina and Chile top the charts on 94.2 and 91.3 per cent respectively.

The majority of Swiss Abroad overall (68.3 per cent) were born abroad. Out of those with dual or multiple citizenship, 82.8 per cent were born abroad. Argentina and Chile also lead the way in this category, at 98.1 and 96.4 per cent respectively.

(BFS)

For further information, visit www.bfs.admin.ch:
Federal Statistical Office >
Look for statistics > Population >
and integration > Swiss citizens living abroad



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

Let's go to JUSKILA!

Children from around Switzerland aged 13 and 14 will attend a week-long snow sports camp in Lenk in the Bernese Oberland from 2 to 8 January 2023. Lots will be drawn to allocate 600 places on the camp, including 25 spots for Swiss Abroad.



Crossing the 'Peak Walk' – the famous suspension bridge connecting two mountain peaks. One of many unique holiday camp memories. Archive photo: photo provided

A further chapter in the history of JUSKILA will begin on 2 January 2023 when several hundred boys and girls aged 13 and 14 travel from all over Switzerland by special train to Lenk im Simmental. This time, it is the turn of children born in 2008 and 2009.


Those wishing to take part in the winter camp for young people (JUSKILA) must be able to communicate in at least one of Switzerland's three national languages (German, French or Italian). A draw will be held for the camp spots. The prize includes participation in the camp as well as snow sports coaching, ski pass, food, accommodation, and train tickets for travel within Switzerland. Participants must only contribute 120 Swiss francs each to the cost of this extensive package. The additional costs of hiring winter sports equipment are as follows: 50 francs for skis, poles and ski boots; 150 francs for a snowboard and snowboard boots.

Parents are responsible for organising and paying for their children's outward and return journey. The winners of the 25 places for Swiss Abroad will be announced at the end of September.

Participation in the draw is only possible via our website at sjas.ch/en/winter-camp. The deadline for entries is 15 September 2022. In addition to registering for the draw, an email containing a copy of the Swiss passport or identity card of the child or of one of their parents must be sent to kappeler@sjas.ch by 15 September 2022. This email is a prerequisite for participating in the JUSKILA draw.

Please note: If you participate in the draw, this does not guarantee that you will take part in the camp. You will learn whether you have won one of the 25 spots at JUSKILA when emails are sent at the end of September 2022 to all those who entered the draw.

SIBYLLE KAPPELE


 Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
 Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
 The foundation for young swiss abroad
 Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)
 Alpenstrasse 24, 3006 Berne, Switzerland
 Tel.: +41 31 356 61 16
 E-Mail: kappeler@sjas.ch / www.sjas.ch



Winter holiday camps for children aged 8 to 14

Whether they are skiers or snowboarders, beginners or advanced, young Swiss Abroad between the ages of 8 and 14 will have a great time at our winter holiday camp, which will take place this year in Valbella (canton of Grisons).

Date:

Wednesday, 28 December 2022 to Friday, 6 January 2023

Number of participants:

42

Cost:

CHF 900

(contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire:


approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline:

30 September 2022

Full details of the winter holiday camp, including the registration form, will be available from Tuesday, 6 September 2022 at sjas.ch/en/winter-camp.

We offer price reductions whenever these are justified. The relevant fee reduction application form is available to download from our website.


 Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
 Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
 The foundation for young swiss abroad
 Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero

Information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)
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 3006 Berne, Switzerland
 Tel.: +41 31 356 61 16
 Email: info@sjas.ch
www.sjas.ch



How do we negotiate tomorrow's challenges and opportunities?

The annual Congress of the Swiss Abroad can finally take place again. Delegates will gather in sunny Lugano from 19 to 21 August 2022 to look at a range of important issues. In particular, they will discuss the challenges and opportunities facing our democracy.

The world is changing at unprecedented speed. Covid-19 has amplified existing challenges and opportunities for our democracy. These include digitalisation, immigration, data protection, new communication technology, upholding democracy in an increasingly globalised

world, and exercising political rights. How is Switzerland's democratic system responding to these challenges? What do we need to reform? How do we protect Switzerland's democratic principles amid globalisation and the rise of autocracies? Must political rights in

Switzerland be extended to foreign nationals and to 16- and 17-year-olds? Speakers and delegates will examine and try to answer these and many other pressing issues. The congress will also feature theme-based workshops allowing direct interaction with experts. In the beautiful, summery surroundings of Lugano, congress participants can look forward to taking part in outstanding discussions and gaining greater insight in relation to forthcoming challenges.

DÉSIRÉE KÜFFER



Sunset over the lake – Lugano is an attractive venue. Photo: Milo Zanechia

Register now to secure your participation at the 98th Congress of the Swiss Abroad from 19 to 21 August 2022 in the unique city of Lugano: swisscommunity.link/congress.



As a member of the Swiss expatriate community, you can join in the conversation with other Swiss Abroad and share your own perspectives and ideas: members.swisscommunity.org.



Youth camps – what it takes to organise them

The Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad hosts several youth camps every year. Look behind the scenes and you will see that our camps involve a great deal of planning and rely on the amazing commitment and initiative of our well-trained camp leaders.

For the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), every camp begins with the challenge of appointing camp leaders. It is not only about recruiting enough leaders, but also about finding people who are well-trained. One leader is needed for every 12 participants, and every leader has to have done the Y+S instructor course in camp sports and trekking. Y+S stands for Youth and Sport, the federal government scheme to promote sport. Those assigned overall responsibility for a camp must be even more qualified. They need to have com-

pleted training as a Y+S camp leader. All OSA youth camps meet clearly defined requirements and can therefore be registered with the Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO), which is responsible for the Y+S scheme to promote sport. FOSPO-registered camps enjoy considerable benefits. For example, they can provide all camp participants with Swiss Air-Rescue (Rega) insurance cover.

Practical planning for the summer camps begins every year at the end of February. The initial planning stage takes all Y+S-related requirements into ac-

count while drawing up a programme of activities that is as balanced as possible.

Work on the detailed plans can start once these broad outlines are in place. The camp leadership teams meet at their summer camp locations in May to discuss the programme of activities in detail. The programme for a two-week camp can result in up to 200 pages of guidelines! Depending on the activities in question, planning not only covers procedures and schedule but also addresses any issues relating to safety. For example, camp leaders will complete all the planned hikes and explore the actual localities themselves before the camp. This helps them to decide which activities are viable and what the scope of these activities should be. Every camp should provide participants with the op-

portunity to go on hikes, play ball games, go swimming, go on trips to nearby cities, experience the Swiss countryside – and share their own experiences of life as a Swiss expatriate. Detailed plans for this year's camps have almost been finalised, and the Youth Service of the OSA is looking forward to welcoming and meeting over 100 young people from around the world.

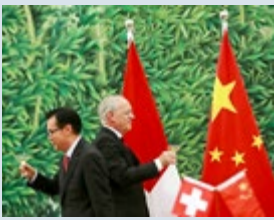
FABIENNE STOCKER



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Discussion

Relations between little Switzerland and big China are multi-faceted. In the previous edition of “Swiss Review”, we shone a light on this complex, complicated dynamic. Recent geopolitical events now beg another awkward question: what is Switzerland’s stance on resource-rich Russia now that Ukraine has been invaded? A small country on the one hand, superpowers on the other. Our readers had plenty to say.



Switzerland and China – it’s complicated

HERMANN LISCHER, JAKARTA, INDONESIA

A neutral Switzerland should treat all countries in the same way. You cannot make an exception for China. You can be neutral but still be critical and say what you think. Switzerland has yet to learn this. It needs to accept that neutrality comes at a price.

HANS J. ROTH, BANGKOK

There are some missing links to your otherwise comprehensive article on Swiss-Chinese relations. For example: the fact that human rights have been viewed solely through a Western lens until now, where the focus is on individual rights and freedoms. The duties that arise from the family and group dynamic were brushed under the table in the 1940s after the demise of nationalism and fascism. We are paying the price for this. The societies around the world that have gained in influence are those that believe people have to fulfil their duties as citizens before they can have rights. We in the West need to take this into account if we want to navigate the 21st century successfully. China, for its part, will need to engage with the Western approach to rights and freedoms – the same rights and freedoms that are set to play an increasing role for China’s growing middle classes. In Western societies, the concept of duty-bound citizenship

will always be afforded much less weight than it is in collective societies like China. But denying the concept altogether means we lack the bigger picture.

EDITH PRESCOTT, OTTAWA, CANADA

Swiss neutrality is an illusory concept because it depends on the war in question. The Federal Council pleads ‘neutrality’ on weapons deliveries to Ukraine, but the same government has no hesitation in exporting arms to Saudi Arabia, a country currently waging war in Yemen. Artillery for the Saudi oil sheikhs, but no protective vests for the Ukrainians. It seems that Switzerland is happy to apply double standards when doing so is conducive to its economic interests.

JING LI, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

I doubt Switzerland can play the role of bridge between China and the West, unless Switzerland’s politicians can adopt a more objective view on China. Swiss politicians need to know that Western values are not universal. Traditional Chinese values have great influence on the Chinese people and the political thinking of the Chinese government. They carry much greater wisdom than Western values.

ARYE-ISAAC OPHIR, ISRAEL

Essentially, state neutrality means to refrain from intervening in other countries’ problems. But neutrality does not mean simply looking on while other countries commit horrible crimes.

GUIDO ZIEGLER, PATTAYA, THAILAND

The Ukraine war shows that Switzerland is no longer neutral. Berne is well within its rights to respond in the way it has. But then it has to face the consequences and possibly take the economic hit. Switzerland treats

China and Russia differently to how it treats the US. Why? The world is now divided into two diametrically opposed economic systems. I think the system favoured by Russia and China will end up in the ascendancy. But Switzerland has already made its decision! And it will have to live with its choice.

LUTZ BRUGGER, RHEINFELDEN, GERMANY

Europe’s naivety continues. China wants to become a global power, and Beijing couldn’t care less about what the Europeans think. The Russians are working to the same template but also being played by China. Ultimately, we will all depend on China.

Visit the online edition of “Swiss Review” at www.revue.ch. Read the latest comments on our articles and join the conversation yourself.

You can also share your opinions on the community discussion forum of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). Popular discussion topics at the moment:

- > Health insurance for retired Swiss Abroad
- > The current situation in Ukraine
- > Specific administrative issues such as the Swiss pension system (AHV) and taxes

Link to the SwissCommunity discussion forum: members.swisscommunity.org/forum



CORRECTION

In the previous edition of “Swiss Review”, we said that the Aabach was a small river in the canton of Lucerne that flowed into Lake Greifensee. However, the Aabach only runs through the canton of Zurich. Two attentive readers – one from Vuokatti in Finland, the other from Jestetten in Germany – pointed this out to us. We can allay their fears and confirm that the tectonic plates have not swapped Zurich for Lucerne. (MUL)

We need sisterhood.



Switzerland.

100%
Women.



Bishorn, Oberems, Valais, © Nicole Schafar

We need Switzerland.

Find out more: [MySwitzerland.com/women](https://www.myswitzerland.com/women)



Switzerland.
by train, bus and boat.

