

SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
June 2020



Stephan Eicher – the charismatic Swiss troubadour

**Trees to beat the summer heat –
how our cities are responding to climate change**

**Switzerland in the grip of COVID-19 –
how the coronavirus turned life upside down**



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Montreal (2020)



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The guide of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad offers you some valuable information on inheritance planning.



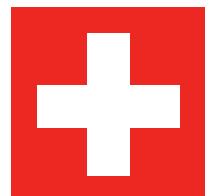
New text for the Swiss national anthem

White cross on a shining red, woven by a common thread: freedom, independence, equality. Open to the world in solidarity, Swiss are one in peace and diversity. Free are we who freely speak, strong as we protect the weak. White cross on a shining red, sign of Switzerland, the path we tread.



Schweizerische Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft
Société suisse d'utilité publique
Società svizzera di utilità pubblica
Societad svizra d'utilitad publica
Swiss Society for the Common Good

More than 200 artists took part in the creation of a new text of the Swiss national anthem. The new hymn text to the traditional melody is based on the Swiss core values expressed in the preamble of the Swiss Federal Constitution. As 500,000 Swiss abroad and residents in Switzerland are native English speakers, the new text has been translated not only into the four official Swiss languages but also into English. All Swiss clubs are invited to sing the new hymnal text at their federal celebrations on August 1. More information can be found at: www.sgg-ssup.ch/en/nationalhymne.html. As soon as the new hymn text is known enough, the Swiss electorate will be asked to determine it. The creation of the new text is an initiative of the Swiss Society for the Common Good that donated the Rütli meadow to the Swiss people and promotes social cohesion in Switzerland.



A country paralysed

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It is hard to know where to start. This is my umpteenth attempt to write something about the coronavirus outbreak in Switzerland. Every version so far has more or less been out of date as soon as I typed the last word. First, I described the spectre of COVID-19 in Italy. Second, the angst surrounding the first coronavirus cases in Ticino. I then tried to write something about the impact on sporting and cultural events. In my fourth

draft, I said the worst was probably yet to come. I also considered the implications: the government's emergency powers, the upending of democratic processes, the shutting of schools, the ban on gatherings, the closure of non-essential businesses. Even these aspects seemed to have been overtaken by events by the following day. Meanwhile, infections and deaths were rising fast. So was the number of people suddenly out of work.

This is anything but a new and difficult kind of normality. How can it be normal when we are constantly facing new, arduous and unprecedented challenges? Certainly, things will have changed again by the time you read this magazine. Perhaps my hope (while writing this at the end of March) that the crisis could be over by the end of May has turned out to be true. Or maybe I am completely wrong and Switzerland's shutdown has had even graver consequences.

We should not overlook the positive aspects: in Switzerland many people are showing kindness and consideration to others during this crisis. It starts with helping older people who are at risk. This is important to consider, because everyone's fortitude is being tested. The surreal fact of the matter is that, although we are all in this together, we are also alone. The poorest, the weakest and the most vulnerable members of society have never felt so isolated, and this at the very time when they need all the human love and warmth they can get. Essentially, we are all social beings. They as much as anyone else.

Yet there are still reasons to be cheerful. One of these is Stephan Eicher, who recently won the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Swiss Music Awards in recognition of his 40-year career in music. Reason enough for us to pay tribute to this magnificent musician and his body of work.

We are also looking forward to getting to know you, our readers, a little bit better: "Swiss Review" is conducting a reader survey, and we would love you to tell us what you think about our magazine – both good and bad. Your feedback is important to us.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF





Colourised electron microscopic image of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Photo: iStock

The coronavirus crisis in Switzerland

Swiss coronavirus curve on a sharp trajectory

Switzerland reported its first coronavirus case on 25 February 2020. The number of cases reached 10,000 on 25 March. Nought to 10,000 in the space of a month. The number of coronavirus fatalities within that time was 150. By 30 March, only five days later, over 300 people had died and more than 15,000 had become infected as the Swiss coronavirus curve continued rising steeply beyond the first month. There was real concern at the possibility of intensive care units in Swiss hospitals being overwhelmed. By the time the various language versions of this latest edition of “Swiss Review” had been translated and proofread one month later, the death toll had hit 1460, with 29,700 recorded infections (30 April 2020). (MUL)

The coronavirus crisis and the content of our magazine

Much of the content in the last edition of “Swiss Review” was produced before COVID-19 reached Switzerland. Some content in edition 2/2020 was overtaken by events. This includes information on important votes that have since been postponed. The complexity of publishing “Swiss Review” in four different languages and 13 different regional versions meant it was not possible to make further corrections. We thank you for your understanding. This, the latest issue of the magazine (editorial deadline of 26 March), was produced while the crisis in Switzerland was beginning to escalate, hence we are not completely satisfied with the end result. Please also note that most of the events listed under regional news will not take place as announced, if at all. MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

COVID-19 – what you need to know

Keep your distance, wash your hands, stay at home.

The vast majority of people have been following the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) guidelines on preventing the spread of infection very closely.

Further information: ogy.de/corona-bag

Stranded abroad?

Thanks to flights specially chartered by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), many Swiss who were stuck abroad have since been repatriated.

Further information: ogy.de/corona-eda

Most Swiss media outlets are currently providing in-depth and continually updated online coverage of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on Switzerland. This includes a dossier that swissinfo has specially compiled for members of the “Fifth Switzerland” (www.swissinfo.ch).

Further information: ogy.de/corona-swissinfo

Federal Council postpones votes scheduled for 17 May

On 18 March 2020, the Federal Council decided to postpone the federal votes scheduled for 17 May 2020. Two days later, the Federal Council passed an ordinance suspending the collection of signatures as well as subsequent campaigning in relation to all pending votes (popular initiatives and optional referendums). Furthermore, the Federal Council strongly urged cantons and municipalities to ban local council meetings in all but exceptional cases.

The background information that we provided in the last edition of “Swiss Review” about the Swiss Hunting Act and the SVP’s limitation initiative continues to apply. Only the voting date no longer applies and will be rescheduled. (MUL)

A challenge for Swiss pensioners

Every year, Swiss expatriates who receive pension benefits under the old-age and survivors’ insurance (OASI) or disability insurance (DI) must submit notarised proof of life confirmation to the Central Compensation Office (CCO) in Geneva. The coronavirus pandemic means that people in many countries are having difficulties contacting authorities, meeting deadlines and sending documents by post. We therefore advise pensioners to send their documents as well as any questions they may have by email to sedmaster@zas.admin.ch. Where possible, we urge people not to telephone the CCO directly, as the CCO hotline is currently experiencing an enormous volume of calls. For further up-to-date information, please visit www.zas.admin.ch. (MUL)

Further information: The first month of COVID-19 in Switzerland – see Renat Kuenzi’s timeline account on page 20.

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr on the future of e-voting



I am very disappointed that our government is unable to get e-voting up and running quickly and securely. My wife and I feel at a big disadvantage when exercising our democratic rights. We never know whether our voting papers will arrive in Switzerland in time. Not only is it a complete lottery, but it also costs money. It is a textbook example of how to lose interest in Swiss democracy.

PAUL JANN, NAGYPÁLI, HUNGARY

I am completely in favour of e-voting, because our postal service is too slow to get our voting papers back to Switzerland in time. It is a shame, but I feel I have no other option but to stop voting for the time being.

FRIEDEL LEOPOLD PAIERL, PHETCHABUN, THAILAND

We have given up, because our voting papers usually fail to arrive until shortly after the voting date. We live in South Africa, and it is a challenge even for letters to reach their destination. E-voting is the only way for us to vote at all.

PETER KLÄUSLI, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

In addition to the flawed Swiss Post platform, there was a second e-voting solution developed by the canton of Geneva. As far as I understand, Geneva also prioritised security over speed, but the project was ditched for financial reasons. If they could resurrect this idea, there would be no need to start from scratch. You could simply start where Geneva left off.

DAVID BERNHARD, UK

Voting is a right, not a privilege. Like many other Swiss Abroad, I am pretty certain that my vote in the federal elections never arrived in time. I love e-voting, but I can understand why security concerns might prevent it.

WILLIAM COMISH, USA

This is an unbelievable situation. I wish they would sort it out. How on earth is a high-tech country like Switzerland unable to make e-voting secure? If bank accounts were at stake, centre-right parties would leave no stone unturned to solve the problem. But Swiss expats tend to vote left-green, so why would a party like the SVP bother? The newly elected National Council and Council of States should seek to improve the electronic voting channel for all Swiss citizens who live abroad.

ALBERT MOSER, DETTIGHOFEN, GERMANY

Wolves return to the Alps

It seems that if one could increase the herds of deer and wild boar, the wolves would not go after so many sheep.

VIRGINIA LANGE WALTER, USA

I also think we need to keep the wolf and if we get some bears, be happy and proud. These wonderful animals have a right to live in the Swiss mountains. Give the farmers money for every killed sheep and they will be happy, too.

CHRISTINA HOFFMANN, SÖRUP, GERMANY

Wolves are very dangerous when hunting in packs. People in the 19th century knew that travelling on horseback through forests at night-time was a risky business, because there was always a chance of wolves attacking. Herewith ends my history lesson.

WERNER MEIER, PORTUGAL



I like wolves, bears, and wild animals per se. But we should be allowed to control their numbers to a certain extent. More wolves mean fewer deer to hunt. Some conflicts of interest defy logic and common sense. Nevertheless, I basically agree that wolves and bears both have a place in Switzerland.

MARKUS IMMER, PHILIPPINES

Pisa study: Fewer schoolchildren understand what they read

It is excellent to see some cantons adopting early intervention programmes during early childhood: this is when there will be the greatest effect. Enjoying literature is just like any other part of our culture or society we value, we can't afford to take it for granted and must continue to strive for a place and space for reading at home and in schools.

AJITA CANNINGS, LISMORE, NSW, AUSTRALIA

"Swiss Review" in general

I am very impressed by your understanding of what journalism means to democracy. Past injustices committed by the Swiss state need to be uncovered and reported. This includes difficult topics such as the Swiss children who were separated from their families and sent to correction facilities because they didn't fit in. Thank you for the varied way in which you report on Switzerland.

SYLVIA SCHILBACH, BAD ENDORF, GERMANY



Feeling the heat in Swiss cities

Heatwaves are becoming more common as a result of climate change. This is particularly true of cities, where summer is an increasingly sweltering affair. Vegetation, open-water areas and urban air corridors can all help to keep people cool.

THEODORA PETER

On hot summer days, the water display on Berne's Bundesplatz is popular among tourists and locals alike. In front of the imposing sandstone facades of the Federal Palace and the Swiss National Bank, children flit between the 26 fountains that symbolise Switzerland's cantons. They then lie face down, drying themselves on the sun-baked stone. From the restaurant verandas of the old town, to the ice cream vendors lining the banks of the River Aare – the vibe is distinctly Mediterranean. In Berne and other northern hemisphere cities, this is but a taste of things to come. According to

a study by ETH Zurich, which pairs the predicted climatic conditions of 520 major cities around the world in 2050 with their closest climatic likeness today, Berne will have a similar climate to that of present-day Milan in three decades' time. London will feel like Barcelona, Stockholm like Budapest, and Madrid like Marrakech.

The latest climate scenarios reveal a likely rise in Swiss summer temperatures of between 0.9°C and 2.5°C, meaning that the number of days the mercury hits 30°C will continue to increase. Cities will bear the brunt and turn into veritable heat islands. Shadeless streets and asphalted

By 2050, Berne will have much the same climate as Milan's today. Photo: Keystone

squares heat the air like a furnace. This air is slow to cool at night, with temperatures consequently unable to dip below 20°C.

Trees – the new air conditioners

As far as Switzerland is concerned, the impact of climate change is particularly evident in Sion. No other Swiss city has recorded a sharper increase in temperature over the last 20 years. For example, the number of days with temperatures reaching at least 30°C in the capital of Valais has risen from 45 to 70 since 1984. The city launched the government-funded pilot project



AcclimataSion six years ago in order to adapt urban development as well as building regulations more effectively to climate change. As city planner Lionel Tudisco puts it, the aim was “green and blue in place of grey”. This involved planting more trees in public spaces. “A tree has the same cooling effect as five air-conditioning units,” Tudisco explains. In the daytime, it can be up to seven degrees cooler where trees cast shade than in the immediate vicinity. Waterways, fountains, lakes and ditches are the ‘blue’ helping to irrigate the city. “These features create microclimates and reduce temperature fluctuations,” he says. The objective is not only to lessen the urban heat but also to mitigate the impact of floods. This is because climate change also leads to more frequent heavy rains in addition to higher temperatures – the violent thunderstorm that caused flash floods on Sion’s lower-lying roads in August 2018 being a case in point.

The landscaped Cours Roger Bonvin is the showcase feature of the AcclimataSion project. This 500-metre-long pedestrian promenade situated on the roof of a motorway tunnel used to be a rather uninviting concrete heat trap. Today, some 700 trees provide welcome shade in a public space dotted with islands of greenery. An artificial beach and generous seating and lounging areas create a holiday vibe as kids splash around in a specially constructed paddling pool.

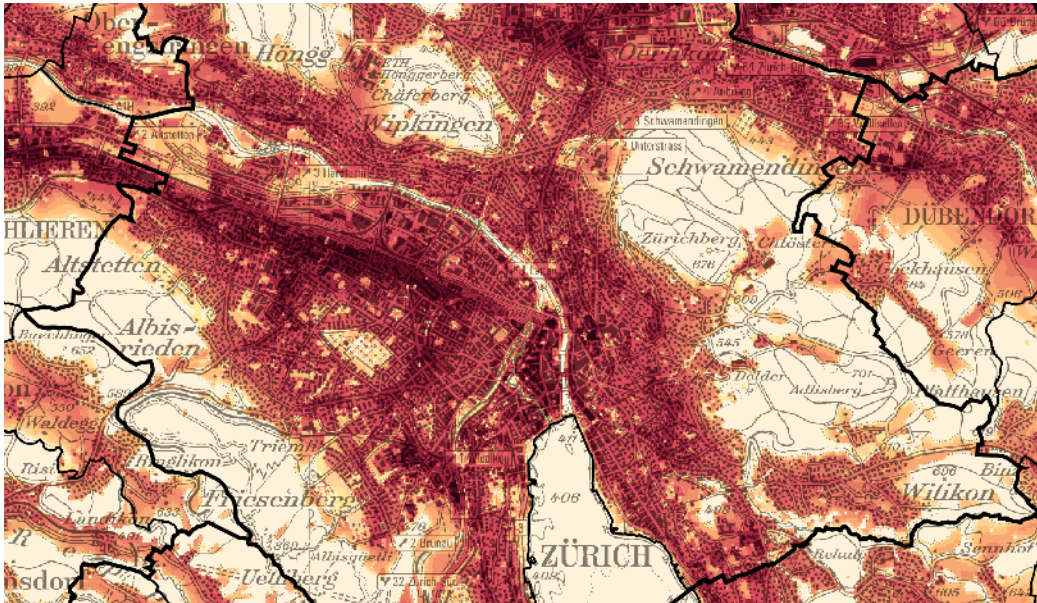


An artificial beach, a paddling pool and green islands dot the asphalt – AcclimataSion is a pioneering project in the Valais capital of Sion.
Photos: Flurin Bertschinger

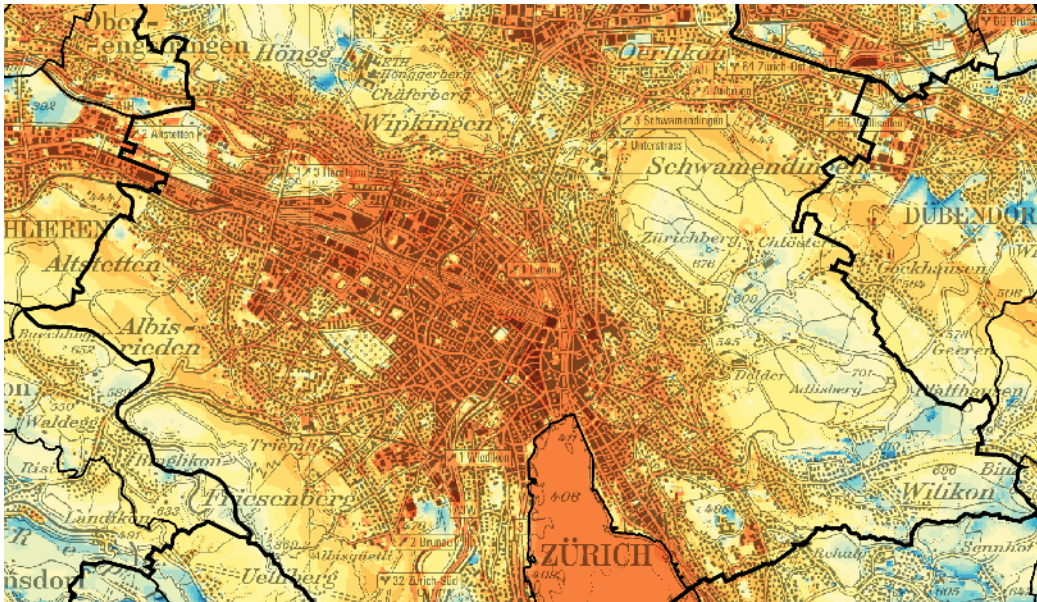


Mapping the urban climate

Larger urban areas in Switzerland are also having to contend with climate change. Officials in Zurich want to take action – they expect a twofold



Air temperature in and around Zurich at 4 a.m. <= 22° 22° 23° 24° 25° 26° 27° 28° 29° 30° 31° 32° >= 32°



Air temperature in and around Zurich at 2 p.m. <= 13° 13° 14° 15° 16° 17° 18° 19° 20° 21° >= 21°

These two images show temperatures that are now typical of calm high-pressure summer weather in Zurich. Source: canton of Zurich; Office of Waste, Water, Energy and Air: maps.zh.ch (GIS browser)

increase in the average number of 30°C days from 20 to 44. “We need to stop heat from smothering the entire city,” says the head of Zurich’s environmental and health protection department, Christine Bächtiger. Specifically, this means minimising asphalt and other forms of paving, because paved surfaces are liable to heat their surroundings from all the solar radiation that they absorb. The authorities also want to relieve parts of the city that are densely populated or

have a high proportion of older inhabitants who find it harder to cope in hot weather. Other options include expanding the network of paths and parks as well as enlarging less heat-prone areas of the city. Zurich has a favourable geography compared to other places, with three quarters of the city benefiting from the cool air that flows down at night-time from the wooded slopes of Zürichberg, Käferberg and Uetliberg. To preserve this natural ‘cold air system’, Zurich’s

urban planners intend to keep certain air corridors free and ensure that new builds do not exceed a certain height.

The authorities in Basel have also conducted an analysis that maps the city’s ‘heat islands’, ‘green lungs’ and prevailing air flows. Spatial planners and architects used these findings to build the Erlenmatt district from scratch, positioning the buildings in such a way as to ensure that fresh air continued to blow in from the Wiesental valley. Constructed according

Adapting urban development to climate change

Extreme summer heat is harmful to public health. The mortality risk increases markedly during heatwaves. Hundreds of people in Switzerland died from the extreme temperatures in 2003 and 2015, with the elderly in urban areas particularly affected. Such heatwaves will be longer, hotter and more frequent due to climate change. The challenge for urban developers is to ensure that towns and cities continue to offer a good quality of life in a warmer climate. The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) drew up guidelines for adapting urban development to climate change in a 2018 report that uses examples in Switzerland and abroad to illustrate how the urban heat island effect can be reduced. However, none of this will stop the rise in summer temperatures. Excessive CO2 emissions are the root cause of climate change. A massive reduction in greenhouse gases – as prescribed in the Paris climate agreement – is the only way to counter global warming. (TP)

Link to the FOEN report “Hitze in Städten” (in German): [ogy.de/stadthitze](https://www.ogy.de/stadthitze)



Europaallee in Zurich – shadeless urban canyons and concrete surfaces heat the city air like a furnace. Photo: Keystone

to sustainable principles, the new neighbourhood also has a spacious park and other notable areas of greenery.

Vegetation and water

Meanwhile, the focus in Geneva is on increasing local vegetation. Last summer, officials approved a strategy that underpins the planting of greenery as part of an urban master plan, while the Urbanature project has already seen Geneva's municipal gardeners plant around 1,200 trees and 1.7 million plants around the city. The Geneva government also believes that there has to be a fundamental shift away from the use of personal motorised transport. Residential courtyards that serve as car parks could then be transformed into green oases. Trees not only provide the city with fresh air, but their leaves also filter out particulate matter from the atmosphere.

The city of Berne is also applying a range of measures. For example, the authorities will only permit paved surfaces if these are necessary for traffic or disabled access. Rainwater begins to dry immediately when it lands

on asphalt, whereas it will seep into gravel and evaporate later. "We need to rethink our approach to water," says Christoph Schärer, director of parks and green space in Berne. Rain should no longer be drained directly into the sewers but remain where it falls, because evaporation has a cooling effect. It will also water the vegetation. "There is no benefit to covering everything in asphalt," he says. Berne's numerous fountains and watercourses also help to freshen the air. For example, the Stadtbach stream has been partially 'daylighted' along its route through the old town.

More 'exotic' trees are being planted in the Swiss capital. These can withstand climate change, whereas many native trees such as the large-leaved lime and the sycamore are particularly sensitive to heat and drought. The Turkey oak is one of the new tree species being used in Berne. Native to south-east Europe, this deciduous tree is resistant to cold winters and hot summers. It can also cope with the late spring frosts that have become a frequent occurrence in recent years. As far as Schärer is concerned, planting palm trees is certainly not the answer.

A summer like no other

"Down with the Alps – we want to see the sea!" The 1980s youth movement used this slogan to protest against Switzerland's so-called culture of narrow-mindedness. The country has certainly taken a peep over the mountains and



broadened its outlook since then. Now the Mediterranean is inching nearer to Switzerland, at least in climatological terms. Scorching hot days and balmy nights are no longer confined to southern

Europe. And, like our Mediterranean neighbours, we have lived our lives increasingly outdoors in recent summers. Cities have enhanced the al-fresco vibe by filling their public spaces with all manner of furniture. Entire streets have turned into open-air bars, parks into open-air cinemas, river- and lakesides into barbecue and hang-out areas. Thousands embrace the summery feel; others bemoan the noise and stink.

Things are very different this year. The coronavirus epidemic has confined people to their homes in recent months – a lockdown that puts everything into perspective. How will our experience of social distancing change the everyday life of towns and cities? Sociologists and cultural experts will surely study this question one day. At best, the emergency will soon be over with community togetherness stronger than ever. Urban areas will not only be more Mediterranean, they will also be more people-friendly. The climate crisis and the challenges facing overheating cities are, on the other hand, far from over.

THEODORA PETER, EDITOR SWISS REVIEW

Stephan Eicher – the Swiss troubadour

The Bernese singer and composer received a prize for his life's work at the Swiss Music Awards in March. Eicher has come through a major dispute with his record company – and distilled these tensions into a heartfelt album.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

It is 8 p.m. in the famous Lucerne Culture and Convention Centre concert hall, and the audience are waiting for their hero. Stephan Eicher's fans have an average age of at least 50. Even rockers age, as the Swiss singer readily jokes. The evening sees Eicher enter the stage leaning on his signature walking stick, the cruel legacy of a car accident. Eicher talks to his audience in Swiss German, habitually flicking back his salt-and-pepper

mane. Rolling back the years, he has invited a raft of young artists to his gala performance, including KT Gorique, a female rapper from Valais, as well as young and trendy Jeans for Jesus and Dabu Fantastic from German-speaking Switzerland.

Eicher also pokes fun at this filmed appearance ahead of the 13th Swiss Music Awards on 28 February, the following day, when he is due to receive the Outstanding Achievement Award. The rocker with a string

of French hits to his name – including “Déjeûner en paix” – will celebrate another red-letter day on 17 August, when he turns 60.

Eicher – Bernese-born of Yenish and Alsatian stock – is a sensitive and rebellious soul. This complex make-up has helped him to stay on the scene despite a very bitter conflict with his record label Barclay. Hostilities began in 2012 between big player Universal and the free-spirited artist, casting a six-year long

Stephan Eicher at the Lucerne concert on 27 February 2020, accompanied by the Homeless Songs Band.

Photo: Marco Masiello



shadow over Eicher's career. As Eicher himself explained to the media, his initial reaction was one of anger. This culminated in him making an album for his record label featuring songs so short that the entire album was free to download. He went back to being an artist when the fury subsided, and was more interested in speaking to his fans than seeking revenge.

Two-album comeback in 2019

Eicher produced two contrasting albums on his return in 2019. "Hüh!" featured some old numbers with a supporting fanfare from the Bernois de Traktorkestar brass band. Eight months later, the singer-songwriter released an intimate, heartfelt album called "Homeless Songs". He showcased some of the songs from these two albums in Lucerne – a long evening that saw him content to play the role of conductor, leaving the microphone to artists from different genres, regions and generations. The maestro invited various friends on stage, starting with Sophie Hunger. The Swiss singer, sporting a sequin outfit, provided one of the highlights of the evening on piano. Next up was Tinu Heiniger, who displayed his talent for storytelling and evoked the attractive sounds of Swiss mountain names in his Bernese dialect.

Other luminaries present at the gala evening included Swiss writer Martin Suter and French fellow-writer Philippe Djian. This literary duo had written lyrics each in their own language that Eicher put to

music. Clad in a petroleum-blue suit, Suter read out one of his own texts, raising laughs from the audience with his account of a Monopoly evening with Eicher during which both had a little too much to drink. Djian, who has been writing lyrics for Eicher since 1989, talked about how his musician friend would call him in the middle of the night to play him a tune. Just like the philosopher Michel de Montaigne before him, Eicher holds the theme of friendship close to his heart. As a child, he discovered music in his father's cellar in the company of his two brothers Martin and Erich. Eicher believes that music can unite people. This is why every Sunday he invites the villagers of Aigues-Mortes, where he lives in France, to get together and sing. "People who love la blonde [far-right politician Marine le Pen, Ed.] and people who loathe her come together as one," he explains.

Eicher's family roots are revealed in "Unerhört Jenisch", a documentary dedicated to Yenish music of the type practised in the canton of Grisons. Eicher had a great-grandmother who was taken from her family and placed in an institution. Many children from Yenish families shared her fate – a tragic story that was kept hidden from the singer and his brothers. "We can only sing about such things. We don't talk about them," says Eicher, who does jamming sessions with two Yenish friends from Grisons at his Camargue home. Eicher certainly has gypsy blood but feels he lacks that 'inner music', unlike the Yenish in the documentary.

Five iconic Stephan Eicher tracks



"Eisbär" (1981):

With its repetitive lyrics and cold sound loops, this ultra-minimalist number sounds like a student prank. But "Eisbär" was a 1981 hit in Germany. Grauzone split up shortly after.



"Les chansons bleues" (1983/2019):

"Le monde entier est toujours là, demain de beau matin je fermerai ma porte, j'irai par les chemins" (The world outside is always there, tomorrow will be a beautiful morning, I'll shut my door and follow the paths). Eicher mumbles more than he sings, but the melody is exhilarating. The rocker rereleased the song as part of "Hüh!" in 2019. Bolstered by a brass section, the second version adds depth to the original.



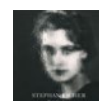
"Tu ne me dois rien" (1991):

A lone voice is accompanied by a fingerpicked guitar. Guitar chords follow. This exquisite song is taken from the album "Engelberg", of which most of the lyrics were written by Philippe Djian.



"Des hauts et des bas" (1993):

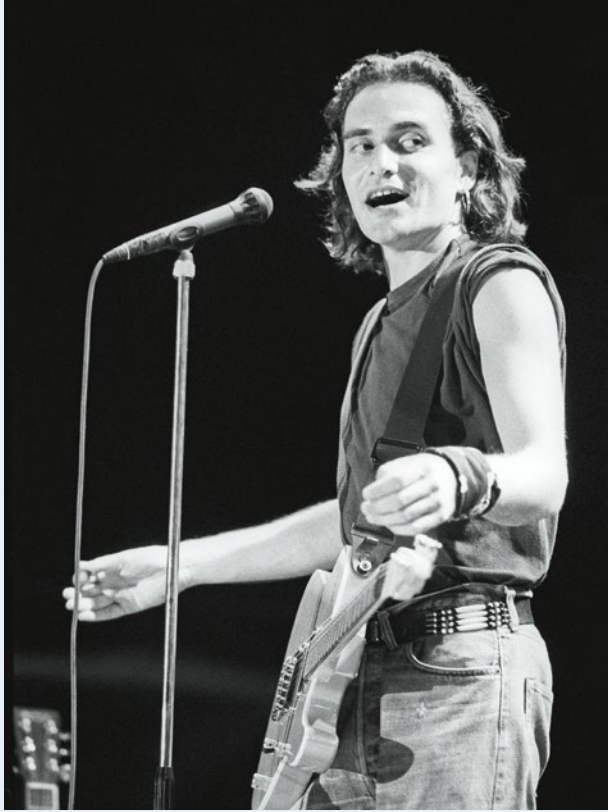
"La pluie venait du nord, le vent passait sous ma porte". (The rain came from the north, the wind blew beneath my door). So begins this famous song, accompanied by a distorted guitar. Eicher launches into one of his trademark refrains with the pounding guitars and drums that he has made his own.



"Gang nid eso" (2019):

"Wedo ga muesch so gang, aber gang nid eso, ds Läbe isch zchurz, für so zga ..." (If you must leave, then go but not like that, life's too short ...). Violins, piano and guitar are the simple backdrop to this beautiful ballad. Lyrics by Martin Suter.

A multilingual artist of many colours

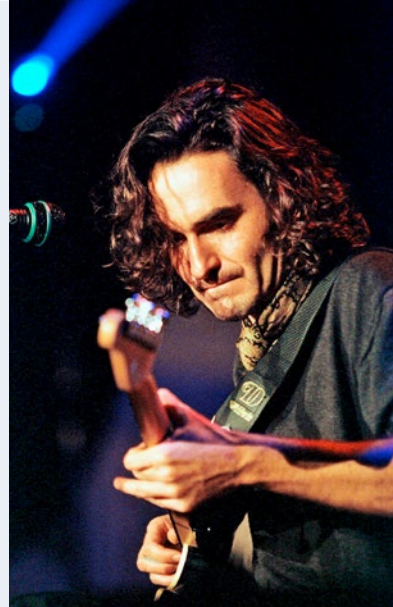


Martin Eicher, Stephan Eicher and Ingrid Berney formed post-punk band Grauzone in 1980.
Unknown photographer

Stephan Eicher at Grauzone's last-ever Zurich concert (1981)
Photo: Arnold Meyer, sams-collection.ch



A young Stephan Eicher at the 1988 Paléo Festival in Nyon
Photo: Keystone



The Matterhorn disguised as Africa – Eicher designed his own postage stamp in 2005.
Photo: Keystone

During his 40-year career, Stephan Eicher has crossed the linguistic divide with a number of hits in French, despite the language not being his own. Eicher also loves using his native Bernese dialect in francophone settings. In particular, his Paris street version of “Hemmige” during the “Fête de la Musique” – to which the crowd sang along – will live long in the memory. Eicher is the most popular Swiss singer in the French-speaking world.

In France, Eicher has worked with singer Miossec, whom he greatly admires, and with ‘le dandy du rock’ Alain Bashung – not to mention Serbian film composer and recording art-

ist Goran Bregović, who is a devotee of gypsy culture.

Eicher experimented with sound loops and synthesizers as part of Grauzone, the band he founded with brother Martin. In 2015, during his barren spell, the Swiss toured Europe with nothing but automatic musical instruments for company. In 2019, he played with a brass band. Eicher has also experimented with an array of instruments unusual for a rock singer. For example, he used a cimbalom, a hurdy-gurdy and bagpipes on his album “Carcassonne” – possibly a throwback to his father’s cellar, which overflowed with instruments. (SH)

Eicher performing in Interlaken during his “Backstage Concerto” tour in 1997
Photo: Keystone



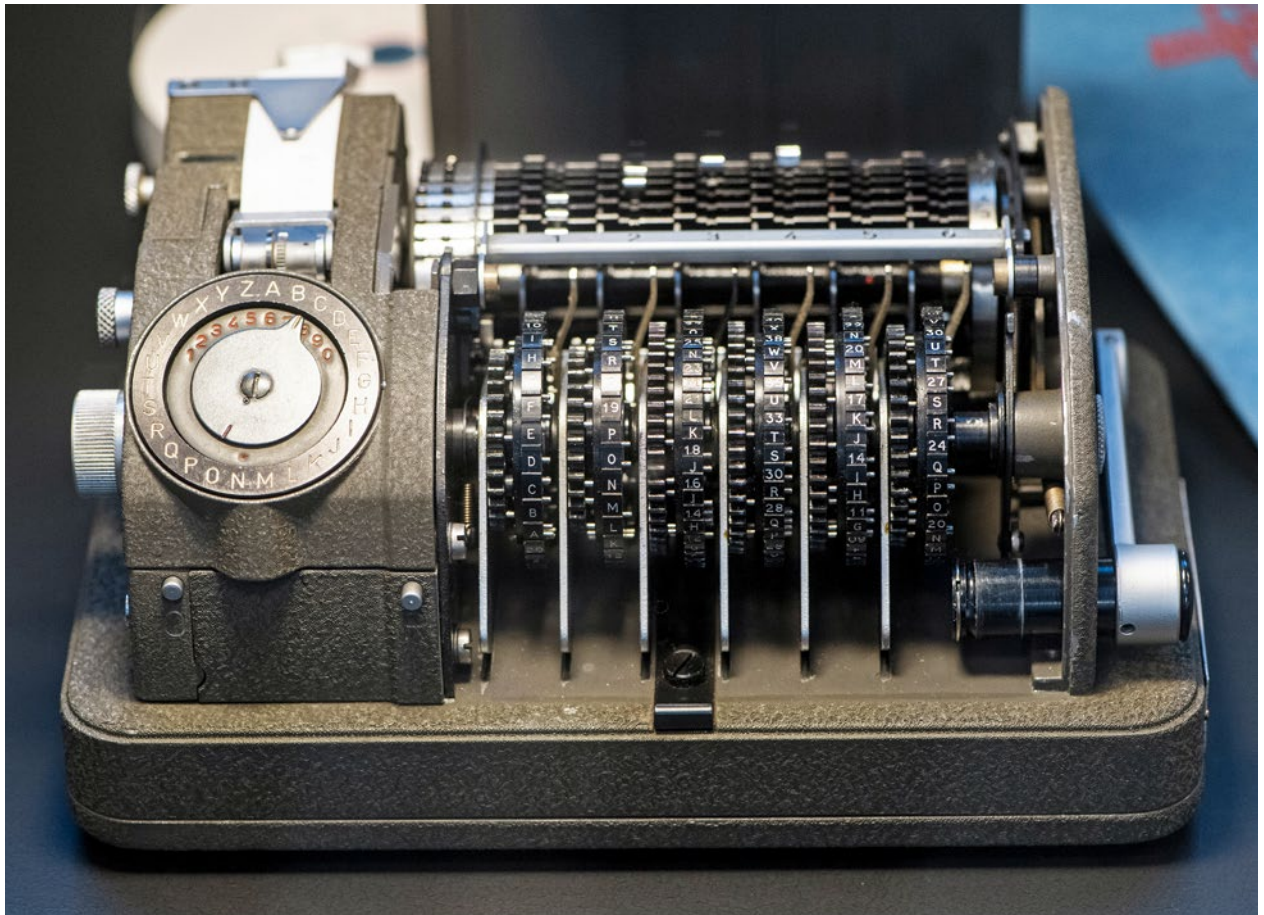
Eicher the maestro – Avo Session, Basel, 2011
Photo: Keystone

The CIA used a Swiss company to spy on over 100 countries

A spy scandal has rocked Switzerland. For decades, US and German intelligence surreptitiously harnessed Swiss technology to snoop on a multitude of countries. Did the Swiss government turn a blind eye?

Mechanical encryption machine dating back to 1952 – the year Crypto AG was established. Crypto remained a market leader during the digital era.

Photo: Keystone



MARC LETTAU

Ostensibly, Zug-based Crypto AG was a respectable Swiss company and technology leader. It had a very niche specialisation in encryption devices. These products were sold to countries whose armies and intelligence services wanted to hide confidential communications from prying eyes.

However, Crypto AG was anything but a normal Swiss company adhering to normal Swiss values. Its business – cryptic in the truest sense – was secretly owned by the CIA and its West German counterpart, the BND, from 1970 onwards. Both intelligence agencies were able to introduce back doors in the company’s supposedly uncrackable Swiss-made encryption systems.

Through their deliberate manipulations, the CIA and BND were able to eavesdrop on 148 countries – both friend and foe – for decades. All these countries invested millions in Crypto’s rigged devices, believing that they were getting

trustworthy technology from neutral Switzerland when in fact they were paying for the dubious pleasure of being spied on.

The revelations became public in mid-February of this year – the result of a joint investigation by Swiss television (SRF), German broadcaster ZDF, and the “Washington Post”, based firstly on leaked CIA documents and, secondly, on interviews with former Crypto AG employees and their families.

The “intelligence coup of the century” – as the CIA called it – evidently has far-reaching implications. It turns a spotlight on the tension-filled Cold War era, with the extent of the CIA/BND collusion casting new light on many historical events of the last 50 years. However, the extent to which recent world history needs rewriting will only become clear once the Crypto affair has been thoroughly digested. The question of whether Switzerland needs to redraft its



Crypto representative Hans Bühler, pictured here following his release from an Iranian prison in 1993, suspected his company of cooperating with foreign intelligence services. Photo: Keystone

own history is generating discussion. After all, what did the Swiss government know about what was going on? Was our country hosting foreign intelligence activities but keeping them deliberately secret?

“The programme exceeded our wildest expectations”

How successful were the CIA and BND in manipulating Crypto’s Swiss systems for their own intelligence purposes, and what impact did their actions have? The effectiveness of spying always mirrors the amount of damage caused to the party being spied on. It is all a question of perspective. According to leaked sources, the CIA saw it as the “most productive and longest-running intelligence project since the Second World War”. It allowed 80 to 90 per cent of Iran’s confidential communications to be intercepted. According to the CIA: “The programme exceeded our wildest expectations.”

Wiretapping enabled the USA in particular to influence the outcome of almost every major conflict in its favour. For example, decryption records now show that the CIA supported the 1973 military coup in Chile. The CIA and BND also monitored communications within the military junta and knew from the outset about the persecution and torture that cost 30,000 opponents of the regime their lives.

Some initial questions and answers

The Crypto AG revelations have caused quite a stir, although it is too early to predict the full fallout. The following key questions outline the implications for Switzerland:

Why did the CIA and BND use a Swiss company?

Swedish cryptologist Boris Hagelin established Crypto AG in 1952. Hagelin deliberately chose to base the business in Switzerland because, as the CIA source notes: “When one was engaged in a sensitive business like cryptography, better to seek the protection of a neutral country with fewer moral scruples.” Hagelin sold Crypto to a front company of the CIA and BND in 1970.

The CIA and BND were the ones who were spying. Why is this being viewed in Switzerland as a ‘Swiss’ scandal?

The issue for Switzerland centres on what the federal government knew about the motives, methods and extent of the spying, and whether it tolerated or even facilitated what the two intelligence agencies were doing.

Suspecting at the time that foreign powers had tampered with their prized technology, Crypto employees in Switzerland involved the authorities. What happened next?

It is documented that an employee of Crypto AG told the authorities in the mid-1970s that the products sold by his company had, according to a file entry in the Swiss Federal Archives dated 24 July 1977, been fitted with “manipulated key generators that allowed West Germany and the USA to decode messages”. Embarrassingly, part of this record has since disappeared.

Switzerland’s federal police looked into the allegations at the time but found no proof of wrongdoing. Witnesses of that era now lament the fact that police inquiries were merely pro forma in nature.

Isn’t the whole affair just a relic of the Cold War?

It was in the mid-1970s that doubts were first raised. Former Crypto employee Hans Bühler openly accused the company of cooperating

with foreign intelligence services (Bühler, who spent nine months in an Iranian jail on suspicion of spying, made the allegations in his 1994 book “Encrypted”). However, it is only now that we see the full implications after information from CIA sources recently came to light. The snooping also continued far beyond the Cold War until 2018, albeit without German involvement: the BND left the programme in 1993 as a result of German reunification.

To what extent was the Federal Council complicit in the affair, if at all?

This is a key question. How much the Federal Council knew about the conspiracy is still anyone’s guess. CIA documents mention former Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger (FDP) as one of those who were aware of what was going on. Villiger, now 79, has strenuously denied any knowledge.

Why does the issue of whether the Federal Council knew about the spying carry so much weight?

If it turns out that the Federal Council – or individual Federal Councillors – knew about the surveillance, then it begs some other serious questions. Did the Federal Council turn a blind eye to CIA spying, or did it try to cover it up? Did the Federal Council resign itself to foreign entities taking advantage of Swiss neutrality? And if Switzerland was indeed complicit, turned a blind eye or deliberately covered it up – how does spying against warring states square with Swiss neutrality?

How have the Federal Council and parliament reacted to the affair?

The President of the Swiss Confederation, Simonetta Sommaruga, has said from the outset that her government will look at all the facts and would welcome an investigation. Defence Minister Viola Amherd has also confirmed that her department possesses documents suggesting complicity on the part of predecessor Kaspar Villiger. The parliamentary control body will now examine the allegations

in order to find out what Switzerland knew about the espionage – and whether the Swiss intelligence service may even have benefited.

To what extent does the 'Crypto leaks' scandal jeopardise Switzerland's current role?

Switzerland mediates in many conflicts, offering its 'good offices' in some of the world's most geopolitically tense regions. For example, it is currently acting as an intermediary in the US-Iran crisis. Switzerland can only play this diplomatic role if its credibility as a neutral state is intact. This credibility is precisely what is at stake. It was the Iranians, incidentally, who were particularly spied on via the rigged Swiss devices sold to them by Crypto representative Hans Bühler.

The Americans and Germans spied. Why does this damage Switzerland's reputation?

It remains to be seen how much of a hit Switzerland's image abroad has taken, but how Switzerland sees itself has certainly been affected. The neutrality that so many Swiss hold dear has been damaged. The scandal could make a mockery of Swiss neutrality (see the opinion piece on page 15).

Credibility, trust and self-image are all soft factors. Will the revelations negatively affect any tangible economic interests?

Switzerland's technology sector is on the up. This, too, is reliant on the country having a credible image. Furthermore, Switzerland wants to position itself as a squeaky clean digital innovation hub and is pushing for an international initiative to promote ethical standards. The Crypto affair could not have come at a worse time.

Further information

Documentary on Swiss television (SRF): ogy.de/crypto

Hans Bühler / Res Strehle: "Encrypted – the case of Hans Bühler", Wird & Weber-Verlag, new edition 2020; ISBN 978-3-03922-044-1.

The sham of Swiss neutrality

OPINION PIECE BY PATRICK FEUZ*

A Zug-based company has been revealed as the hub of an audacious spying operation. From the early 1970s, the CIA and the then West German intelligence service, BND, used rigged Swiss encryption devices to snoop on over 100 different countries. The Americans may have continued using this technology to eavesdrop on governments and armies until very recently.

Germans and Americans wiretapped Argentina's generals during the Falklands War, not to mention the Iranian revolutionary guards during the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran. They claim that this surveillance, lasting half a century, helped to avert suffering – though their actions may also have had the opposite effect.



Either way, these revelations hurt. They show that Swiss neutrality, held up to this day as sacrosanct, is often a mere pretence. The US and German intelligence services benefited directly from our neutrality and our status as a technology leader. This was the main reason why so many encryption devices were purchased in Switzerland of all places.

Swiss functionaries – from intelligence to military, and from judiciary to politics – must have known or suspected that these machines had been manipulated. After all, Switzerland was aligned to the West in de facto terms during the Cold War. The Swiss intelligence service worked closely with the Americans and still relies on US assistance to this day.

Switzerland therefore turned and continues to turn a blind eye.

Put another way, neutrality was and is a myth to some extent. Strictly speaking, participation in military alliances is the only thing that neutrality has ever prohibited. Yet it has always been celebrated as a way of life. We will treat everyone equally and keep quiet. Politicians and the military peddle this lie, and we are only too happy to go along with the charade. Especially if it's good for business.

But now that this affair has blown up in our faces, we may now be paying the belated price for our amenability, both political and economic. If people begin to doubt Swiss impartiality, demand could wane for the good offices of our diplomats and the products of our technology companies.

* PATRICK FEUZ IS A JOURNALIST, HISTORIAN, AND AUTHOR OF SEVERAL NON-FICTION BOOKS. HE HAS BEEN THE CHIEF EDITOR OF BERNE-BASED DAILY NEWSPAPER "DER BUND" SINCE 2015.

His friends called him “Devil of the sea”

The novels of lawyer Heinrich Herm injected an expansive sense of adventure into the otherwise patriotism-fuelled literature of pre-war Switzerland.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

The French son of a shipowner falls head over heels for German literature and music before marrying a German girl. At the outbreak of the First World War, the young man looks on in horror as the cathedrals that symbolise Christian European culture are destroyed by the mutual hatred that has torn the continent asunder. Aiming to rescue France and save Germany from the hubris of the Prussian aristocracy, he volunteers to fight in the French trenches. After the war, however, our hero – now a shipowner himself – uses his métier to promote international reconciliation.

Seafarer, adventurer and rebel

This is the story of “Dome im Feuer” (Cathedrals on fire), a novel published by the Berlin publisher Grote in 1926 – and written in a style suggesting that the author originally grew up speaking French. The writer called himself Heinrich Herm and, according to the book sleeve, lived in Switzerland. After this inaugural publication came seven more novels, set in every imaginable location except Switzerland.

“Dämon Meer” (The demon sea), 1927, and “Moira”, 1932, are exciting seafaring stories. “Begegnung im Urwald” (Jungle encounter), 1934, takes the reader to a world far from civilisation, and “Die Trikolore” (The tricolore), 1937, a century and a half back to the French Revolution. The open seas make a comeback in “Die Dämonen des Djemaa el Fnaa” (The demons of Jemaa el-Fnaa), 1943, and “Kapitän Hagedorns Fahrt ins Licht” (Captain Hagedorn’s journey into the light), 1944. Whodunnit “Die Mitgift” (The Dowry), 1941, juxtaposes the author’s passion for seafaring with the criminologically adroit portrayal of a court case. This work is a relative outlier, but no coincidence: “Heinrich Herm” was the pseudonym for a university professor who taught Roman law and the history of law – something only insiders knew.

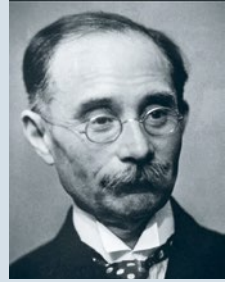
The professor who liked to travel

Heinrich Herm was none other than Henri Legras in real life. Born in 1882 in the French city of Rouen, Legras studied in Rennes, Caen and Paris before taking up the post of professor at the University of Fribourg in 1912. He married German national Gertrud Schlesinger and became a citizen of Portalban on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel.

Like the protagonist in his first novel, Legras loved German culture. He began writing in German, targeting a German-speaking audience. Legras would actually have become a sailor had a physical impediment not prevented him from doing so. However, he made the most of his protracted semester breaks by travelling as a passenger on the high seas instead. His first major voyage took him to Chile. Legras indulged his wanderlust so consistently thereafter that his companions nicknamed him “The devil of the sea”. These travels were to find eloquent expression in Legras’ novels. Their portrayals of the sea and seafaring are particularly impressive, while their white-knuckle narratives mirror the many journeys that the author experienced travelling alone on small cargo vessels.

Loss of German readership

Legras’ works had attracted an enthusiastic following in Germany by the mid-1930s. Following Hitler’s seizure of power, however, he lost both his prominent Berlin publisher and his readership. With him being married to a Jew, we can only guess how much Nazi Germany’s anti-Semitic and racist laws contributed to him forfeiting the support of his German publisher. By the time Henri Legras-Herm died on 1 November 1948 in Fribourg aged 66, he had already been largely forgotten as an author. He even failed to find a publisher for his final book “Als die Normandie noch ein Museum war” (When Normandy was still a museum), despite regarding this work as his literary legacy.



“Outside, a tall crane’s electric searchlights quivered to and fro in constant rhythm. An iron-ore steamer was loaded. As the dark cloak of the night gradually dissipated into grey ash, a black flue slowly glided past behind the bare trees. Pushed down to the water line, like a soul weighed down by worldly feats, the ship sailed through the canal guarding the harbour exit before heading out into the storms of the Nordic seas. Despite its weight amid the winter storm, it refused to sink.”
(Excerpt from “Die Mitgift” (The Dowry), Francke-Verlag, Berne, 1941; out of print)

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH



Higher, further, faster, more beautiful? In search of the somewhat different Swiss records. Today: The Swiss municipality with the biggest cow population.



The village where every cow has a name

No other place in Switzerland has more resident cows than Escholzmatt-Marbach. Farmers in this meat production stronghold believe they have nothing to fear from the growing market for meat alternatives.

MIREILLE GUGGENBÜHLER

It is a quiet day at Metzgerei Zihlmann here in the middle of Escholzmatt in the canton of Lucerne. Footfall is low, so the shop assistant is cleaning behind the counter. The copiously filled vitrine is brimming with meat: sausages and dried meat made by the butcher himself, not to mention diced meat, roasting meat and all sorts of schnitzels and skewered meat.

Patrick Zihlmann has had to improvise since the coronavirus outbreak. “Ninety per cent of our meat is produced in the region or in Switzerland,” he says. Zihlmann now offers a home delivery service for people in the vicinity who can no longer shop in the village because of the lockdown.

Luckily, the butcher is used to playing things by ear. From special bratwursts to other made-to-order

delicacies, he can fulfil almost every wish. This is because Zihlmann and a colleague from the neighbouring village of Marbach run their own slaughterhouse. The two of them also know all the cattle dealers personally. “Flexibility is our advantage over the big players,” says Zihlmann.

The number of butcher’s shops in Switzerland is in decline, so such an arrangement is unusual. There is a

shortage of young people to take over. Few want to become butchers these days.

More cattle than anywhere else

Nevertheless, it is no coincidence that two butchers and a small abattoir in Escholzmatt and Marbach are holding their own. Encompassing around 100 square kilometres in the heart of the Entlebuch UNESCO biosphere reserve, the municipality of Escholzmatt-Marbach boasts the largest cattle population in Switzerland. It is home to some 7,821 cud-chewing bovines, spread across the numerous farms of both villages whose combined human population totals 4,450.

One third of the municipality's inhabitants earn a living from agriculture. They include the Duss family, who live on a farm nestled on the edge of Escholzmatt between two distinctive hills. Cows graze effortlessly on

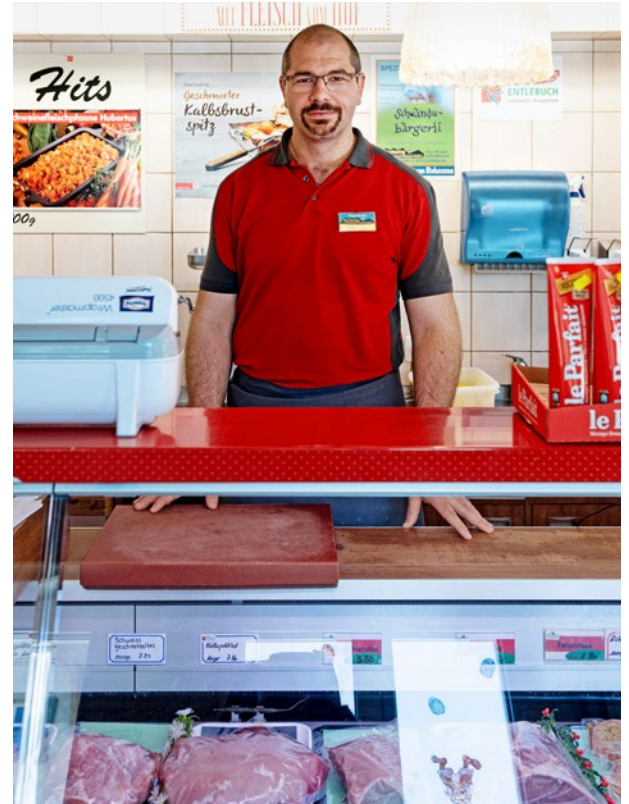
the steep surrounding slopes. Arable farming is nigh-on impossible.

Part-time farming the rule

Franziska Duss stands in front of the cow pen situated behind her family house. One of the cows pokes its head inquisitively over the perimeter fence. The animals still have names, not numbers. "This is Adèle, our oldest," says Duss. Forty-four cows and calves of the Brown Swiss breed belong on the farm.

Duss, a qualified agronomist, works as an agricultural consultant and a teacher. She also runs the farm that she took over from her father. "I am typical of many farmers in and around this area," she says. "Most of us run our farms as a secondary source of income."

The Duss family not only live from the proceeds of meat production, they also make money from dairy farming



Butcher Patrick Zihlmann knows all his cattle dealers personally. And farmer Franziska Duss, pictured here with cow Adèle, knows the name of each of her animals.

Photos: Danielle Liniger

– and strawberries, to which two huge polytunnels are testament. "I want to make the most of my farm, so diversification is vital," says Duss. She thinks that diversity of production makes sense for all farms. According to a government research report, farms specialising in just one area of agriculture are indeed a rarity in Switzerland.



Cultured meat and meat alternatives

Is versatility also important because one particular sector could potentially shrink, i.e. meat production? Yes, if you believe what global management consulting firm A.T. Kearney say in their study entitled "How will Cultured Meat and Meat Alternatives disrupt the Agricultural and Food Industry?" Conventional animal meat will only account for 40 per cent of global meat production by 2040, the study claims. Although the authors expect the global meat market as a whole to continue growing, they say that new products such as plant-based meat alternatives will increasingly disrupt the conventional meat industry in future.

However, Duss – along with organic farmers Beat Koch and Beat

Krummenacher, who have just arrived at her farm—see no threat in the growing market for meat alternatives. “Many consumers eat less meat than they did a few years ago,” says Duss. “But quality matters to them when they do eat meat.” Duss, Koch and Krummenacher see their biggest source of competition not in meat alternatives but in cheaply produced meat from other countries. “Many people are

replacement industry is experiencing massive growth, but we are talking significantly smaller volumes compared to the amount of money the meat sector makes.”

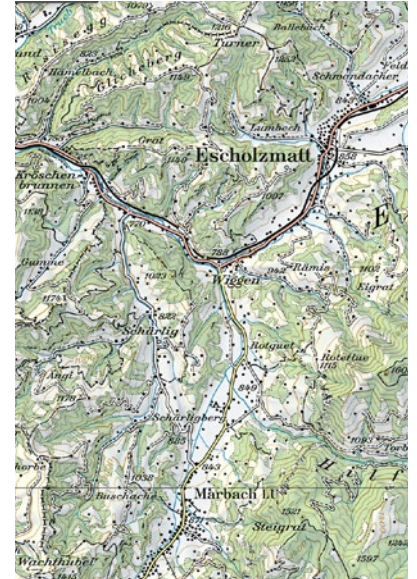
Around 14 per cent of the Swiss population are vegetarian or vegan—a figure that has risen sharply in recent years, according to a survey by the Swiss vegetarian and vegan association Swissveg. However, Heine be-

Meat alternatives lack this attribute in more ways than one, given that their plant-based ingredients are commonly sourced outside Switzerland. Heine believes that producing protein-rich, plant-based meat alternatives in Switzerland—and also growing the necessary ingredients in Switzerland—would theoretically be possible. But this prospect is a long way off. According to the Swiss centre



The undulating pastures in and around Escholzmatt (canton of Lucerne) are unsuitable for arable farming. But cows are at home on the steep terrain.

Photo: Danielle Liniger



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willing to pay more for meat produced locally or organically,” says Krummenacher. “But not everyone can afford to. Our biggest challenge therefore comes from imported meat, which costs significantly less.”

Vegetarians and vegans account for 14 per cent

Meat consumption levels in Switzerland are relatively stable. According to the Swiss meat industry association Proviande, the annual per capita figure is 51 kg. Meat replacement products will not supplant conventional meat, says Daniel Heine, professor at the School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences—part of the Berne University of Applied Sciences. “The meat

believes that the proportion of consumers who eat meat occasionally but selectively based on ethical and green criteria is growing at a much faster pace.

The importance of good food

The three farmers sit together at a long table outside in the yard. Franziska and family serve their guests tea, coffee and home-made cake.

“People generally are more careful about what they eat nowadays,” says Duss. This is becoming evident in what they buy. “Swissness” is an important criterion for many consumers, says Heine—the very ethos to which the butchers of Escholzmatt and Marbach subscribe.

of excellence for agricultural research, Agroscope, Swiss farmers currently produce less than one per cent of the country’s annual soybean requirement of 300,000 metric tons.

Be that as it may, the farmers of Escholzmatt-Marbach will not be growing soya or other protein-rich plants any time soon. “People will always want to eat meat—of that I am absolutely certain,” says Duss. Colleague Beat Koch: “There is a future for meat producers like us if we respect animal welfare and take our social responsibility seriously.”

The farmers get up to leave. It is almost evening, and they need to check on their cattle.

The virus that paralysed Switzerland

We were all looking forward to spring. Then COVID-19 arrived. Switzerland's cities turned into ghost towns. Schools were closed. The streets fell quiet. Parks were declared off limits. This is the story of the first month of the outbreak.

RENAT KUENZI*

COVID-19 has taken hold in Switzerland. Sars-CoV-2 – the virus that causes it – is indiscriminate. Anyone can catch it. Suddenly, the people who make decisions on behalf of Switzerland's population of 8.5 million no longer have any reliable answers. From politicians to business leaders. The seven-member Federal Council is governing the country in crisis mode after having declared an 'extraordinary situation' allowing it to introduce measures that were last seen in the Second World War. It gives the government far-reaching powers.

When it comes to distilling and explaining these momentous decisions to the Swiss public, one man has been a constant presence for weeks: Daniel Koch, a Bernese doctor and head of the Communicable Diseases Division of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). Apart from the virus, Koch and his team of staff have initially had two other adversaries to contend with. Firstly, some Swiss were slow to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Secondly, certain border cantons broke ranks to take much more drastic measures than those sanctioned by the Federal Council.

Familiar faces from the sporting, cultural, showbiz, political and economic spheres have taken a back step. In their place, 'Mr Coronavirus' Daniel Koch has been cutting to the chase on our television screens in his calm, considered manner – his sudden celebrity another indication of how our world has turned upside down since the beginning of the outbreak.

Coronavirus timeline

January 2020: Skiers Beat Feuz and Daniel Yule send the nation into raptures with their respective victories in the legendary Wengen downhill and the slalom at Adelboden. The flagship event for the Swiss film industry, the Solothurn Film Festival, takes place. US president Trump talks up the successes of the US economy so much at the WEF in Davos that some delegates leave the auditorium. There are reports of a viral outbreak in faraway China. Memes about Corona beer follow on social media.

24 February: COVID-19 is becoming a real worry in Italy. Swiss Health Minister Alain Berset consequently puts Switzerland in a 'state of readiness'.

25 February: The virus has reached Switzerland. A 70-year-old man tests positive in the canton of Ticino. This marks the beginning of a raft of official directives and measures to combat the virus. The number of coronavirus cases and deaths begins to rise inexorably. This has all the hallmarks of an epidemic.

26 February: Ticino takes matters into its own hands and bans all public events – carnival parades included. The canton's two premier ice hockey teams have to play their next two home fixtures behind closed doors.

27 February: Social distancing sets in. The Federal Office of Public Health launches the Protect yourself and others campaign, providing the public with continually updated information. Here are some of its recommendations: Wash your hands thoroughly. Sneeze into the crook of your arm. Stay at home if you display flu-like symptoms. Keep your distance. Always call ahead before going to the doctor's or the emergency department. Eventually, the overriding instruction will be 'Stay at home'.

On the same day, organisers of the Engadine Ski Marathon cancel this year's event scheduled to take place on 8 March. Almost 15,000 athletes were due to take part. The Swiss sporting world starts to shut down.

28 February: At its first major Friday press conference on the matter, the Federal Council categorises the situation in Switzerland as 'special' in terms of the Epidemics Act (EpidA). Events with more than 1,000 people are now banned. The EpidA allows the Federal Council to draw up emergency plans. The Confederation also unveils a bailout scheme for businesses, whereby companies can request compensation for reducing their employees' working hours.

Switzerland's professional football and ice hockey leagues are put on hold. Some of the most sacred events in the Swiss cultural calendar are either postponed or cancelled altogether. These include the annual carnival festivities in Basel, Berne, Lucerne and other cities, the Geneva International Motor Show, the Baselworld watch and jewellery show, and countless other events.

5 March: The first fatality. A 74-year-old woman in Lausanne dies of the COVID-19 respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Beginning of March: Not everyone has got the message. Young people in numerous towns and cities continue to

party, flouting government guidance. However, many other people have started doing their bit to help others – particularly for the elderly who are especially at risk. Kindnesses include grocery shopping, having a friendly chat, and picking up medicine.

11 March: With the virus spreading rapidly in northern Italy, Switzerland introduces border controls in Ticino. Around 70,000 cross-border workers are allowed to continue commuting into Ticino from Italy.

12 March: Ticino is the first canton to declare an ‘extraordinary situation’, shutting all its schools and both of its universities in the process. The federal government offers an emergency package worth ten billion Swiss francs to soften the blow for Swiss companies.

16 March: The Federal Council declares an ‘extraordinary situation’. All shops, restaurants, bars and entertainment and leisure facilities will remain closed throughout Switzerland until at least 19 April. This also applies to schools. Only health and other essential facilities such as food stores and pharmacies will remain open. The Federal Council also authorises the deployment of up to 8,000 members of the armed forces to assist with healthcare, logistics and security.

19 March: Uri oversteps the mark, imposing a curfew on the over-65s. The Alpine canton is forced to reverse this measure two days later following an intervention by the federal government.

20 March: The Federal Council makes use of its emergency powers and bans gatherings of more than five people. It urges the population to stay at home, stating that people should only go out if they need to buy food or if they have a doctor’s appointment. The advice applies especially to those over 65 years of age, who are particularly at risk. This ban on gatherings relies on individual responsibility and is in contrast to the tougher confinement measures seen in countries like Italy, France, Spain and Argentina.

The measure is intended, firstly, to prevent Swiss hospitals from being overwhelmed, and, secondly, to stop cantons introducing their own measures unilaterally. In addition, the Federal Council increases its emergency funding for the Swiss economy to 42 billion francs. SMEs with liquidity shortfalls can apply their banks for unbureaucratic access to a zero-interest bridging loan of up to 500,000 francs.

A number of cities shut their public parks. Police patrols ensure that the rules on gatherings and social distancing are being applied.

21 March: The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) launches a repatriation action for 630 Swiss nation-

als stranded in Latin America. A chartered plane flies the first batch of tourists back to Switzerland three days later. Meanwhile, Ticino goes it alone after its cantonal government decides to shut building sites and non-essential manufacturing activities. This measure amounts to a de facto shutting of the Swiss border to the many Italian cross-border commuters who work in the canton.

22 March: The director of the Federal Office of Justice (FOJ) and supreme federal authority on all legislative matters, Martin Dumermuth, calls Ticino to order, saying that all cantons must adhere to the federal government’s emergency measures. Exceptions are not possible. By breaking ranks, Ticino has set a dangerous precedent and must be overruled, he adds.

25 March: The FOPH announces that the number of recorded coronavirus cases in Switzerland stands at 10,000, with 150 deaths.

One month later

Switzerland’s national standstill continues. Life has changed for us all. People are in isolation. Around 80 per cent of those who work are doing so from home. All schools are shut. Parents (and children) are acquainting themselves with the joys of homeschooling. Switzerland’s flagship tourist industry is currently in hibernation. People in the restaurant and catering sector risk losing their jobs. Medical, nursing and care professionals, on the other hand, are working around the clock to their absolute limit. Farm crops are beginning to sprout, but the closure of international borders means no foreign fruit-and-vegetable pickers.

End of March: the federal government has received around 600,000 applications from over 40,000 businesses seeking compensation after reducing their employees’ working hours. Any trains or buses still running are practically empty. Public transport schedules have been completely scaled back. Reports are emerging of people who have died alone because their families were unable to visit.

* is a member of the swissinfo editorial team. swissinfo is providing in-depth coverage of the coronavirus epidemic in Switzerland.

Visit www.swissinfo.ch/eng/in-depth/coronavirus.

For additional coronavirus-related news and information, see page 4.



Keep your distance.



Wash your hands thoroughly.



Don't shake hands.



Cough and sneeze into a paper tissue/handkerchief or the crook of your arm.



Stay at home from now on.



Always call ahead before going to the doctor's or the emergency department.

Hygiene rules and how to behave – pictographs from the current Federal Office of Public Health prevention campaign.



Good news for print subscribers

You won't miss anything – the next "Swiss Review" will also be available in print.

"Swiss Review" announced at the beginning of November 2019 that, as an exception, there would be just five printed editions of the magazine in 2020, and that a sixth edition would only be published online. Now the good news for all those who read the printed version of "Swiss Review": at a meeting on 12 March 2020, the Executive Board reviewed its original decision and concluded that this one-off omission of the printed edition will not go ahead after all. This is because "Swiss Review" ended 2019 in a much better financial position than expected back in August 2019. Sufficient funds are now available, meaning that we can continue providing our readers with what they want without any interruption.

Given that visitor traffic for the online edition is low, we remain focused on modernising the OSA's online presence. Through the planned merger of the current www.revue.ch, www.aso.ch and www.swisscommunity.org websites, we also aim to improve our magazine's reader-friendliness and visual appeal.

In developing our strategy for "Swiss Review", we must be conscious of the fact that our print and online readers have increasingly diverging reading habits. However, having our own online editorial team is currently

Voluntary subscriptions to bolster printed edition

Readers who particularly appreciate receiving the printed edition are able to support it with a voluntary subscription fee. Your support expressed in this way will help us to offer the "Review" on paper in the same quality for many years to come. The bank details for the transfer of voluntary subscriptions are as follows (please note: cheques cannot be cashed):

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Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Fao Mr A. Kiskery
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Reference: Support Swiss Review

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not an option – which is why I am all the more grateful to our current "Swiss Review" editorial team for their creative and dedicated work.

I hope that our readers continue to enjoy "Swiss Review" – our most important key information resource.

REMO GYSIN, OSA PRESIDENT

Parliament of the "Fifth Switzerland" unable to sit due to the coronavirus

The Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA), referred to as the Parliament of the "Fifth Switzerland", was scheduled to sit at Berne's city hall on 14 March 2020. Unfortunately, the meeting, which had been planned in detail, had to be cancelled at short notice owing to the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) outbreak. After Switzerland saw its first confirmed cases of the virus in February, the Federal Council banned all major events with more than 1,000 people.

Several cantons (including the canton of Berne, where the CSA was due to sit) then introduced tougher restrictions, only authorising events with fewer than 1,000 participants subject to certain conditions being met. The Executive Board and management of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) therefore saw no other option but to cancel the CSA. In their joint message to CSA delegates at the end of February, the OSA President and Director also cited their "institutional responsibility towards delegates and the public" as a reason for taking this decision.

Another decision was taken allowing CSA delegates to vote on some of the forthcoming agenda items by email. The results of this voting procedure were still outstanding at the time of going to press (MUL)

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

The big readership survey

Now the ball is in your court. We would like you to tell us what you think of “Swiss Review”. Your answers will help us to deliver a magazine that meets your expectations.

What content does “Swiss Review” need to offer to ensure that it is as relevant to readers in Switzerland’s neighbouring countries as it is to those Swiss who live thousands of miles away? What topics interest the extremely diverse “Fifth Switzerland”? What should tomorrow’s “Swiss Review” look like?

Questions such as these come to the fore whenever our editorial team discuss the shape and content of the magazine. Our readers are the best people to answer them. As the publisher of “Swiss Review”, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is therefore conducting a comprehensive readership survey in which it hopes many people will participate. The Research Institute for the Public Sphere and Society (FÖG) – the University of Zurich’s independent body specialised in media research – has been entrusted with coordinating the survey.

Do the survey online

You can complete the readership survey conveniently online. Say what you think of the magazine in its current form, provide us with information about your own reading habits, tell us what you would like to see in future, and feel free to submit any general feedback that you may have. You can



What do our readers want? The “Swiss Review” editorial team – seen here at their latest planning session – continually ask themselves that question.

Photo: Danielle Liniger

access the survey directly via the following link:

survey2020.foeg.ch

Participation in the survey is voluntary but certainly worth a few minutes of your time. Not only will your feedback help us to improve “Swiss Review”, but you also have the chance to win a fantastic prize (see box).

We intend to publish the key findings of the survey in edition 1/2021 of “Swiss Review”.

ARIANE RUSTICHELLI, OSA DIRECTOR
MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Do you want to know who plans, writes and produces our bimonthly magazine? Find out about our editorial team at: revue.ch/redaktion

Typically Swiss prizes



At least 60 typically Swiss prizes are up for grabs in a free draw for all those who take part in our reader survey. These include exclusive Swiss-made items such as a genuine handcrafted cowbell from Glockengießerei Berger, a Bär-au-based bell foundry that has been operating since 1730, as well as a number of Appenzeller belts (“Chüeligurt”) produced by Daniel Fuchs, a craftsman known locally as a Sennensattler, and a Swiss silk scarf from leFoulard (lefoulard.shop), printed in the canton of Glarus. Other typically Swiss prizes

include knives and pocket knives from Victorinox as well as leisure products from Swiss mountain sports brand Mammut, not to mention some exceptional cookbooks from Betty Bossy and the AT-Verlag publishing house. The total value of the prizes at the time of going to press was 3,000 Swiss francs.

We have published a list of all the prizes at www.revue.ch. (MUL)

IMPRINT: “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 46th year of publication and is published in German, French, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 418,000, including 235,000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year. The ordering parties

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



“Choosing a profession or course of study is always a lengthy process.”

Educatiosuisse speaks to Francesca Kirchhofer, a vocational and career counsellor in Berne.

Francesca Kirchhofer, you work at the Career Guidance Centre (BIZ) Berne. What do you enjoy about your work?

Having the opportunity to inform, advise and support people in a wide range of life situations is very exciting. It begins with students who are contemplating what to do when they leave school. Then we have young adults who have completed an apprenticeship or upper-secondary-level school and intend to work, study or divert from their original chosen path. We also offer career guidance to adults who are thinking of doing continuing education or changing profession.

What is the biggest challenge that you face?

Firstly, the wide range of education, training and continuing education opportunities that are currently available in Switzerland. The educational landscape is continually changing. Keeping track is easier said than done. Secondly, the sheer variety of personal situations with which we are confronted. It requires a lot of empathy. Unfortunately we cannot satisfy everyone.

When is the right time to seek advice?

As soon as you feel ready to weigh up the available options. Young Swiss Abroad often complete their first school qualification in the country in which they live. If they are intending to study or train in Switzerland thereafter, we would advise them to work out in good time what they want to do and the prerequisites that they need to fulfil. One or preferably two years beforehand is a good time to start planning.



Francesca Kirchhofer,
a vocational and career counsellor in Berne.

And how many young Swiss Abroad come to you for advice?

Almost 20 were referred to us last year by educatiosuisse – a relatively small number for our staff of more than 70 here at the Career Guidance Centre in Berne.

Do you have any tips on how young people can make the right choice?

On the one hand, they should think about their own interests, strengths, motives and aspirations. On the other, they need information about what is available and routes to get there. Choosing a profession or course of study is always a lengthy process. You need to invest time in it. Gathering experience is the way to get this process moving. Experiences can be information events, conversations with professionals, or taster courses.

Do you have any particular tips for Swiss Abroad?

Thank goodness for the Internet! Our website, www.berufsberatung.ch, includes information about the Swiss education system, preparatory and integration courses, vocational education and training opportunities, fields of study, continuing education, and job-hunting. Our “Berufe-Explorer” tool and “Studenten-Interessen-Check SIC” check are two platforms that can help you work out which professions or higher education courses appeal to you the most. Our website contains photos and video clips about vocational education and training that provide an insight into the world of work.

How important are skills in the relevant language?

They are vital. At the very least, you need to have reached level B1/B2 to do vocational education and training, and level C1 for universities studies. You should try and shore up these skills in good time.

Educatiosuisse arranges personal consultations with the Career Guidance Centre BIZ-Berne. In a personal dialogue, a qualified expert will answer all individual questions.

Consultations are available in English, German, French, Italian or Spanish, and may be conducted via Skype or face-to-face in Berne (or in Biel for French speakers). One consultation costs CHF 130 (duration: approx. 60 minutes). You can enrol for a consultation via [educatiosuisse](http://educatiosuisse.ch). (RG)

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The experiences of Swiss retirees abroad in the focus of research

Do you spend a part of your retirement in Morocco or Spain? Then Livia Tomás, researcher at the University of Neuchâtel, is interested in hearing from you.

Longer life expectancy, better and cheaper means of transportation, and enhanced communication technologies create new retirement options. Thanks to these developments, retirees may decide to travel more or to move to another country.

This phenomenon is at the centre of a research project at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. The aim of this research project is to study the international mobility of retired persons. In particular, researchers want to understand what this mobility brings to retirees, which factors influence it, and what difficulties may arise.

The researcher Livia Tomás is currently looking for retired people who would like to share their experience in an individual interview. More specifically: "I am looking for retirees who have spent most of their adult life in Switzerland and who are now living for at least three months per year in Morocco or Spain. If your profile fits this description and you are interested in such an interview, I would be delighted to hear your story!" You can find the contact details of Livia Tomás at the end of this article. There is also a flyer available, which can be shared and forwarded to potentially interested people. You can download it here: ogy.de/flyer-en

Later this year, Swiss Abroad aged over 55 will also be surveyed all over the world as part of the same research project. The – voluntary – participation in this survey is central for the research project, says Tomás: "We would be delighted to receive many reactions and answers."

This research project is conducted by the University of Neuchâtel and the School of Social Work of Geneva within the framework of the nccr – on the move, a National Centre of Competence in Research devoted to studying questions of migration and mobility. It



Livia Tomás, a researcher at the University of Neuchâtel

is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Further information can be found online: ogy.de/nccr

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Back in Switzerland – and well insured

Question: Can I take out Swiss health insurance if I move back to Switzerland for good, and, if so, are pre-existing medical conditions covered?

Answer: Yes, you can take out basic insurance as soon as your place of domicile is situated in Switzerland again. Health insurance is mandatory for everyone living in Switzerland. Health insurers are therefore also obliged to provide basic insurance to anyone who resides in Switzerland, regardless of age or state of health. Furthermore, you are free to choose your health insurer (from the list of authorised insurers). The law governs which services are covered by basic insurance.

Health insurers cannot, therefore, refuse basic insurance to Swiss who have returned to Switzerland after living abroad, nor are they permitted to impose any restrictions (e.g. due to pre-existing medical conditions). You must take out health insurance within three months of taking up residence in Switzerland. Cover will then apply retroactively from the date you arrived in the country.

Certain people are exempt from the obligation to take out insurance in Switzerland. These include retired persons who draw a pension from an EU country and do not receive a Swiss pension, as well as anyone who is in Switzerland for education or training purposes and has insurance cover equivalent to basic Swiss cover.

Health insurance is taken out individually for each family member (adults and children). All insured persons pay a premium which can vary depending on the health insurance scheme, but the basic insurance services are the same for everyone. It is therefore worth comparing premiums. The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) provides a comparison of premiums online: www.priminfo.ch.

OSA LEGAL SERVICE

The OSA's Legal Service provides general legal information on Swiss law, particularly in areas which concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law or intervene in disputes between private parties.



Winter camps for children and teenagers

We will not be offering any winter camps for children and teenagers over the next two winter seasons (2020–21 and 2021–22). This is mainly down to the current leap year and consequently shorter holiday season for our volunteer camp leaders as well as our decision not to offer any camps of a duration of less than ten days. We intend to start hosting winter camps again in the 2022–23 winter season.

YOUTH SERVICE OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD (OSA)
FOUNDATION FOR YOUNG SWISS ABROAD (FYSA)

JUSKILA 2021 is taking place

Even though the Youth Service and the FYSA have put their own winter camps temporarily on hold, our co-operation with the popular JUSKILA Swiss Ski youth ski camp continues. The next JUSKILA is scheduled for 2 to 8 January 2021 in Lenk in the Bernese Oberland. Some 600 teenagers aged 13 to 14 will take part, including 25 teenagers from the “Fifth Switzerland”.

Those wishing to attend JUSKILA must be able to speak at least one of Switzerland’s three national languages – German, French or Italian. Lots will be drawn to allocate places at the prices shown below, which cover winter sports coaching, food and accommodation. Parents are responsible for organising and paying for their children’s outward and re-

turn journey. Children born in 2006 and 2007 are eligible to take part in the draw. We will announce who has won a place on the camp at the end of September.

Costs

Train tickets for travel within Switzerland; food; accommodation; ski pass; winter sports coaching **CHF 120.–**

Hire of winter sports gear, skis, poles and ski boots **CHF 50.–**

Or: Hire of snowboard and snowboard boots **CHF 150.–**

Information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA),
Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01,
Email: info@sjas.ch, www.sjas.ch

Registration form for the draw – JUSKILA Lenk (2 to 8 January 2021)

Please fill it out in legible block letters.

Girl Boy

First name: _____

Surname: _____

Street: _____

Postcode, City: _____

Country: _____

Date of birth: _____

Child’s language: German French Italian

Type of sport Alpine skiing Snowboarding

Just tick one box! After the draw, it will no longer be possible to change sport.

Legal guardian’s name: _____

Municipality of origin in Switzerland (See passport/ID): _____

Parents’ email: _____

Parents’ telephone number: _____

Guardian’s signature: _____

Child’s signature: _____

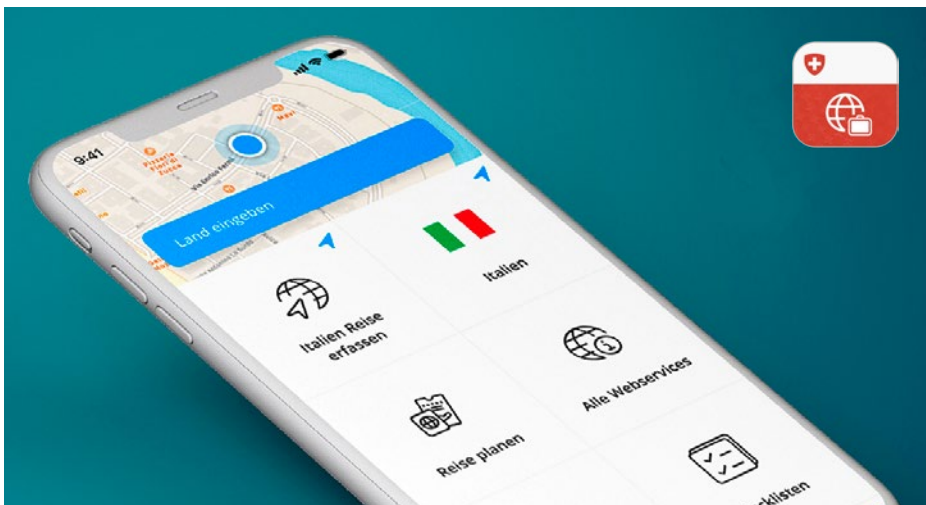
Please send in the registration form with a copy of the Swiss passport of one parent or of the child by 15 September 2020 (date of receipt) to: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, SWITZERLAND

Travel Admin app

An unforgettable trip starts with being well prepared. Travel Admin is the app developed by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to replace the itineris app. The Travel Admin app meets your needs with a simple layout and a fresh, appealing design. In addition to the integrated trip registration, you can update your current location at the touch of a button, so the FDFA can contact you more easily if there is an emergency situation at your destination. The app allows you to search and display on a map all Swiss representations abroad that provide services to Swiss citizens. You can create and manage your own

travel checklists and consult the FDFA's Travel Advice.

The FDFA's comprehensive travel app also features information from private-sector partners. Travel Admin app is available for download from the Apple and Google app stores. Bon voyage! (EDA)



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 VoteInfo app.

Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiatives have already been launched at the time of going to press:

- Federal Popular Initiative "Micro-tax on cashless payment transactions"
- Federal Popular Initiative "For a better life in retirement (Initiative for a 13th month's pension)"

Please see the Federal Chancellery's information on pending popular initiatives: www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen

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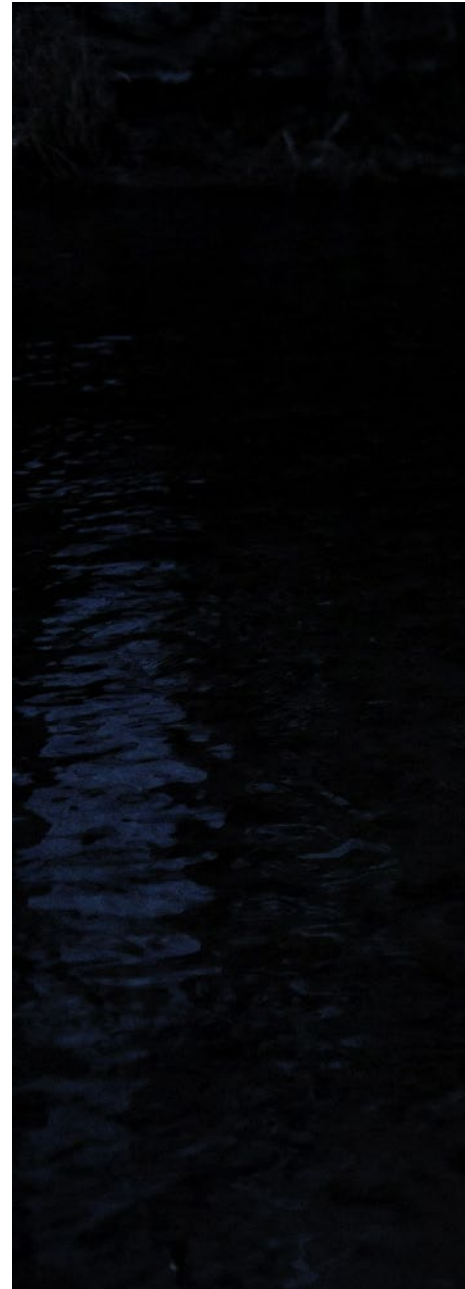
Die kostenlose App für iOS und Android



Chalandamarz: Every 1 March, the children of Guarda ring bells around the village to chase away the winter. Children's book "A Bell for Ursli" brought this Engadine custom to the world's attention.



Holy dodgems: Blessing the 'congregation' at Basel's autumn fair – a traditional if unconventional Sunday service for travelling fairground operators



Lichterschwimmen: Every 6 March, the children of Ermensee turn the village stream into a flotilla of lights.

A journey through Swiss customs and traditions

"A wild array of customs and traditions are condensed into our small country," note folklorist Sibylle Gerber and photographer Dominique Rosenmund. Along with two journalists, Gerber and Rosenmund have traced at first hand and then documented some of these diverse rituals in a new book. With 21 written commentaries and over 100 images, the book draws the reader directly into the events as they occur – from the intense heat of the Chienbäse fire procession in Liestal, to the Lichterschwimmen (floating lights) of the Seetal valley; and from the weeping women of Romont to the annual fish festival on the shores of Lake Maggiore. Besides popular traditions, the book delves into some less well-known local customs. This attractive, handily sized publication is ostensibly a travel guide, but is also interesting as a book in its own right. The authors avoid the usual tourist clichés and flag-waving. As such, they manage to convey the fascination and community value of these rituals all the more authentically. (SWE)

Dancing Pines. By Dominique Rosenmund, Sibylle Gerber, Karin Britsch and Stephanie Hess. Verlag Benteli 2020, available in English and German. www.benteli.ch



Sbrinz Route: Men and women in traditional dress follow this route all the way to Domodossola in Italy every August, commemorating the traders who used to export the iconic Sbrinz cheese.



Sagra del Pesce: Fish is the glue that binds everyone together in Ticino at the beginning of spring. The fish festival in Muralto is a mystical, tranquil occasion early in the morning – before turning lively and raucous later in the day.

From dilapidated to progressive



JOSEPH JUNG:
"Das Laboratorium des Fortschritts. Die Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert" (The laboratory of progress. Switzerland in the 19th century), NZZ Libro, Zurich 2019, 676 pages, CHF 49

Switzerland was quite a precarious, dangerous, volatile, backward place in the first half of the 19th century. The country was in the mire and sinking fast. As historian Joseph Jung writes in his latest book, Switzerland was like a "half-dilapidated barn that would have collapsed sooner or later amid the piecemeal repairs".

But then everything suddenly changed. Within a short space of time, a basket case had turned into a "laboratory of progress" (see book title). Joseph Jung, who is honorary professor at the University of Fribourg and longstanding chief historian of large bank Credit Suisse, refers to the triumphant turnaround in Switzerland's fortunes in the second half of the 19th century as the "Swiss miracle". A small, nearly impassable country

became synonymous with tourism, watchmaking and textiles "almost overnight". The Swiss mechanical engineering, electrical, chemical and pharmaceutical industries conquered the world.

Why this dramatic change? Firstly, the constitution of 1848 – at the time the most advanced in Europe – was a "stroke of genius", signalling the birth of the modern federal Swiss state. A small-minded, cumbersome, crisis-prone confederation of cantons gave way to a new political structure that would drive the process of modernisation. Major infrastructure projects – railway construction in particular – played a key role. These were private-sector, not government-run. Significantly, they prioritised the connection of industrial hubs such as Oerlikon, Baden and Kemptthal over the important political centres – another master stroke. This connectivity was "crucial" to Switzerland's economic development.

Jung also highlights the role of driven men, especially that of the politician, magnate and railway entrepreneur Alfred Escher. According to Jung, "hoteliers, businessmen, manufacturers, merchants and major capitalists" shaped and led Switzerland to success after 1848. Prominent historians have downplayed Escher's significance in the context of what happened, but Jung sings a veritable paean to the man and his influence.

Even though Jung prefers to draw less attention to the conflicts and problems that riddled what was a tempestuous and economically liberal era, his work is an outstanding, assiduously illustrated and gripping panorama of an important chapter in Swiss history.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Accomplished and enthusiastic



GOTTHARD:
«#13»,
Nuclear Blast, 2020

Who can forget the ballad "Heaven"? It was simply inescapable 20 years ago. It played on all the radio stations – and stayed in our heads for months, whether we liked it or not. The catchy number became Gotthard's biggest-ever hit, reaching number one in the Swiss charts.

But the evergreen Gotthard are anything but one-hit wonders. Since the early 1990s, the Ticino band's studio records have been a recurrent fixture at the top of the album charts. Gotthard have also made a name for themselves outside Switzerland and have sold three million albums in total.

With "#13", the band have now carried on where they left off. This is the name of their new album, which was showcased live in March via studio cam due to the coronavirus outbreak. As expected, it is a typical Gotthard album featuring 13 new and predominantly classic hard-rock songs. Its best moments are reminiscent of Deep Purple, while the more mainstream tracks are peak Bon Jovi or Nickelback. "#13" also includes dashes of indie and Southern rock. From opener "Bad News" to uptempo number "Missteria", the lyrics and sound almost descend into cliché but are enjoyable nonetheless.

This is down to the excellent songwriting of guitarist and band leader Leo Leoni, Gotthard's consummate musicianship, and the impeccable hard-rock vocals of Nic Maeder, who succeeded the late Steve Lee almost ten years ago. With their affectionately unironic Abba cover "S.O.S.", the band also reveal considerable eclectic flair.

Amid the accomplished riffs, it is Gotthard's unwavering enthusiasm that shines most brightly, making this, the band's 13th studio album, sound remarkably fresh and unfettered, if not particularly innovative. Anyone who got into Gotthard after listening to "Heaven" will also get their money's worth, with the band pulling off another wonderfully kitschy rock ballad in "Marry You".

MARKO LEHTINEN

Tidjane Thiam



Could the prodigy of a wealthy African family cut it in the hush-hush world of a Swiss big bank? Ultimately, the answer was no. On 14 February, Credit Suisse CEO Tidjane Thiam was forced to resign from his post following a number of leaks related in particular to a spying operation ordered by the bank. Thiam was apparently unaware of what was going on – practices described in certain quarters as par for the course at Credit Suisse.

Having already tendered his resignation, Thiam presented the Credit Suisse annual results, announcing a 70 per cent increase in net profit in 2019. Clearly, results were not the problem. The issue was more to do with Thiam's backstory, which reads like a novel. Born into privilege, Thiam made the most of his intelligence and drive to study at France's prestigious *École Polytechnique*, before becoming a government minister in Côte d'Ivoire, then 'king' of London's financial district. His address book includes names such as Barack Obama, David Cameron and François Hollande. Thiam's flamboyant background was never going to sit easily in the dour environment of a Swiss big bank. "When a person moves to a new country," Thiam told the "Le Monde" newspaper in 2015, "I believe that the onus is on them to understand the culture in that country."

Although Credit Suisse is more international than Swiss, the bank needed someone more 'grounded'. The solution came in the form of Thomas Gottstein, who was previously chief of Credit Suisse's Swiss operations. This was the home-grown manager whom the Board of Directors presented as Thiam's successor.

STEPHANE HERZOG

SBB breaks record – then passenger numbers plummet

Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) transported 1.32 million passengers per day last year – more people than ever. However, this record figure already seems like a relic from a different era. Due to the coronavirus crisis, passenger numbers have plummeted since the beginning of March. Schedules have been completely scaled back. International services have been suspended.

(MUL)

Warmest winter since 1755

The observatory in Binningen (canton of Basel-Landschaft) is Switzerland's oldest meteorological station, having recorded climate data since 1755. According to its latest data, the winter of 2019–20 was 3.1 degrees warmer than the average from 1981 to 2010. It was the warmest winter in Switzerland since records began. Readings from other more recently established meteorological stations tell the same story. February 2020 saw temperatures in Binningen of up to 20°C.

(MUL)

Swiss farmers hit by vole plague

Voles love warm winters because they can find more food and breed more prolifically. This spring, their numbers in some Swiss regions rose to 250 voles and water voles per hectare of farmland. Arable crops will be completely decimated if this figure exceeds 300, say experts. Entlebuch in the canton of Lucerne has been particularly affected.

(MUL)

Curdin Orlik "free at last"

Successful Swiss wrestler Curdin Orlik (27) has come out as gay. He is the first-ever elite Swiss athlete to have done so while still active. This is of particular note, given that the world of Swiss wrestling is known to be very traditional and conservative. Orlik said that he had suppressed who he really was for too long. He wanted to be "free at last". Telling the truth to his son was another reason for coming out, he added.

(MUL)

Burgeoning arms exports

Countries around the world are exporting more arms. Switzerland is no exception. In 2019, the government allowed Swiss companies to sell military equipment worth 728 million francs to over 70 nations. This figure is 43 per cent up on the previous year. There is growing parliamentary opposition to the government's approval of arms exports. Complaints are likely to continue, because Swiss weapons are increasingly bound for warring countries, according to a report in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". Further information: ogy.de/exports

(MUL)



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Lugano, MASI LAC Lugano, © Oliver Baer

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