

THE SWISS CONFEDERATION A BRIEF GUIDE

2020



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Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Swiss Confederation

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Cover

The River Klön meanders its way down to the Klöntalersee. Where the water is shallow, it freezes and gives the delta a marble-like quality. The Klöntalersee in the canton of Glarus is one of the oldest reservoirs in Switzerland, and has been used to generate electricity since 1908.



‘Amendments to the Federal Constitution were planned from the very beginning.’

Dear Reader

The Federal Constitution of 1848 was written in just 51 days, albeit with great prudence. Much of what was set out in that document still exists today, for example the institutions of the Federal Council, the National Council and the Council of States. Back then, the Parliament Building had not yet been built (Parliament was first housed there in 1902), but those who penned the 1848 Constitution would today still recognise the Federal Council chamber in the west wing of the Federal Palace – known as the ‘Bundes-Rathaus’ when it was completed in 1857.

They would no doubt also be surprised by the many changes that have taken place since 1848. The federal government now has many more tasks. The Federal Administration has expanded enormously. The National Council is larger too, with 200 seats compared to 111 originally. In addition to the Federal Supreme Court, there are three further federal courts – the Federal Criminal Court, Federal Administrative Court and Federal Patent Court. Political rights have been extended considerably (referendum, popular initiative). A new canton has been created – and what is more by peaceful means. And although women only obtained the right to vote and be elected in 1971, they are now represented both in Parliament and in government. There are more political parties. And it no longer matters whether a member of the Federal Council is Catholic or Protestant.

From the outset, the system was designed to allow for change. It should be possible to amend the constitution, after all, circumstances change. The historian Edgar Bonjour rightly observed that the constitution’s authors were seeking to lay the foundations for future generations rather than preserve the land of their forefathers. Nonetheless, if they visited the Federal Palace today, they would no doubt be glad of this brochure to explain our current system to them. Just as you are, perhaps. Enjoy reading!

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr

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**Master program THE SWISS CONFEDERATION
– A BRIEF GUIDE**

Teaching material in English, German and French:
www.hep-verlag.ch/der-bund-kurz-erklaert

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A conversation with President Simonetta Sommaruga

THE PRESIDENT, THE FARMER AND THE SKI RACER

Switzerland is particularly affected by climate change. People such as ski racer Daniel Yule and farmer Valérie Piccand experience that first hand. President Simonetta Sommaruga discussed the issue with them. All three agree that higher temperatures, melting glaciers

and extreme weather events present very real challenges. However, if we take the right measures, they could even serve as an opportunity – for a climate-friendly and innovative economy, for science and tourism.



President Simonetta Sommaruga (PSS): You both spend most of your days outdoors. How is climate change affecting your work?

Valérie Piccand (VP): On our farm in the Bernese Jura, we can experience water shortages after just two weeks of hot weather. We are also seeing more extremes in terms of the cold and heavy rain. The tendency has increased in recent years. And that's why we're adapting the way we run the business to take account of climate change.

PSS: What does that involve exactly?

VP: We complement the grass in our meadows with plant varieties that are more resistant than the usual grasses, and

we keep breeds of cow that are capable of producing enough milk with a bit less feed.

Daniel Yule (DY): Weather fluctuations have become more common in the Alps too. One day we can be skiing in –10 degrees and the next day the sun is blazing down so much you can practically see the snow melting away. That makes training difficult.

PSS: Your experiences seem to confirm the scientific findings: Climate change is having a big impact on Switzerland.

DY: Yes, the glaciers are disappearing at a horrific rate. At some glaciers we train on it's not even possible to get back to the mountain station without having to take off our skis.

A few years ago that was never a problem at Zermatt, for example. The snowline has been rising in recent years too.

PSS: I'm impressed that young people such as yourselves are noticing these differences so markedly. That just goes to show how quickly climate change is progressing. What measures do you think politicians should be taking to protect our climate?

DY: It can't be right that a flight from Geneva to London is cheaper than taking the train from Martigny to Zurich. So I think it's only fair for a tax to be levied on plane tickets. In general the price of a product should cover the cost to the environment of making it.

'Change is possible.'

Simonetta Sommaruga

PSS: I totally agree. The impact of our behaviour on the environment has its price. And I'm certain that most people are willing to pay that price as they understand that you have to pay for the damage you cause.

VP: But it's not just transport. Agriculture too should do its part to protect the environment. It also produces greenhouse gases. I would like to see the state help us to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency on farms. There's a lot we could do: Land used for farming stores large amounts of CO₂. And if our cows eat grass from the meadow instead of imported soya

then that too is good for the environment. But it's also good for animal wellbeing, the quality of the food we produce and for farmers' incomes. Focusing on Swiss milk and locally produced meat: That's a huge opportunity for farmers!

PSS: Measures to protect the environment are an opportunity for the economy: for businesses that install solar panels, or for researchers that work on developing climate-friendly technologies. That creates jobs and provides a boost to the export industry.

DY: Climate change can also be an opportunity for tourism. Destinations that until now have been heavily focused on winter tourism are finding that the summer months are becoming more important – and that they don't need snow for those activities.

PSS: I like your examples. They show that although climate change presents us with challenges, we can turn it into something positive. The climate goals we have set are designed to make us less dependent on oil and gas. If we can replace these sources of fuel with home-grown solar and hydropower, we are investing in Switzerland instead of abroad and increasing the security of supply. After all, sun and water are more reliable than oil sourced in Libya or Kazakhstan.

VP: The farming industry can help with these clean sources of energy. Barn roofs have plenty of space for solar panels.

DY: The initial outlay for solar panels and heat pumps may seem expensive today, but in the long term it's worthwhile because you can save so much energy that way. I still want to be able to show my kids how much fun it is to ski.

PSS: As for the future, by 2050 Switzerland wants to be climate-neutral in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. You, Daniel, will be younger than I am now. We've got thirty years to adapt to life without fossil fuels. The two of you are wonderful ambassadors with the work you do. You give us hope and show that change is possible!

Valérie Piccand (born 1979) is an agricultural engineer. She runs a livestock farm in Les Reussilles (BE) and manages grazing land. She is co-president of 'Autrement', a cooperative in Tramelan, which runs a farm store selling locally produced organic products.

Daniel Yule (born 1993) is a member of the Swiss national ski team. The slalom specialist from Valais won a gold medal in the team event at the 2018 Winter Olympics and at the 2019 world championships. As the athletes' spokesperson at the International Ski Federation FIS, he often talks about the issue of climate change.

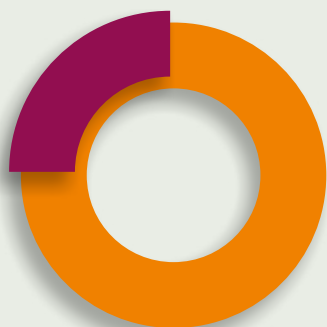


For information on the presidency and the president's activities go to www.admin.ch > Federal Presidency

Switzerland in figures

POPULATION

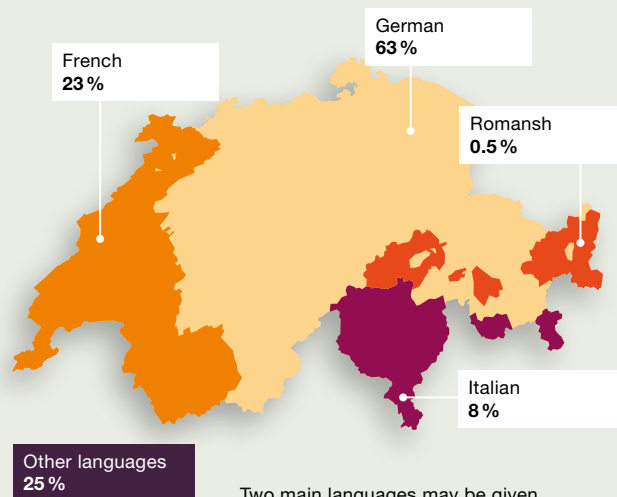
8.5 million people



- 8 544 500 inhabitants
- of which 2 148 300 do not have a Swiss passport

There are approximately 8.5 million people living in Switzerland, 25 per cent of whom are foreign nationals. More than half of the inhabitants who do not have a Swiss passport were either born in Switzerland or have been living here for at least ten years. The majority of foreign nationals come from an EU or EFTA country, predominantly from Italy (15%), Germany (14%) and Portugal (12%). 17 per cent come from non-European states.

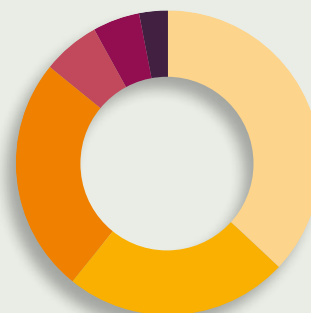
4 national languages



Switzerland is a multilingual country. There are four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. 63 per cent of the population primarily speak (Swiss-)German, 23 per cent French, 8 per cent Italian and 0.5 per cent Romansh. English, Portuguese, Albanian (3 to 5 per cent of the population) and various other languages are also spoken in Switzerland. Many people state that they have two main languages.

Christian majority

67 per cent of people living in Switzerland claim affiliation to the Christian faith. Catholics are the majority in 14 cantons; Protestants are the majority in 3. In the remaining cantons, there is no clear majority. 25 per cent of citizens are not members of any religion – this number has been on the rise for several years.

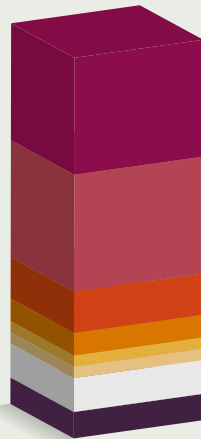
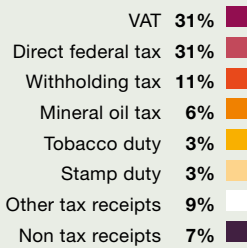


- 37% Roman Catholic
- 24% Protestant Reformed
- 25% No religious affiliation
- 6% Other Christian denominations
- 5% Islamic denominations
- 3% Other/not specified

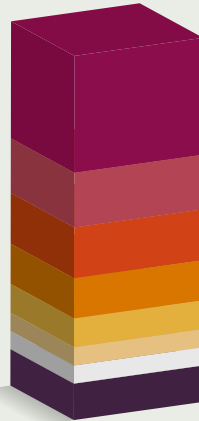
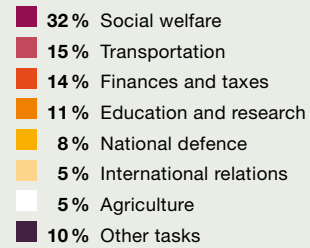
All figures are rounded. For more information about the population: www.statistics.admin.ch

FEDERAL FINANCES

Receipts of CHF 73.51 billion (2018)



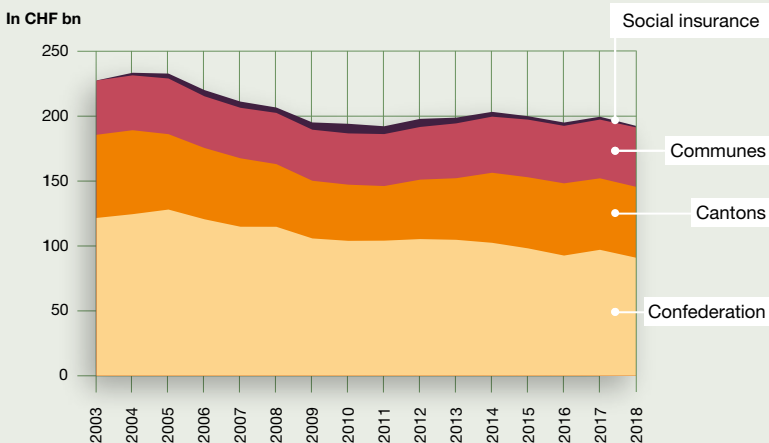
Expenditure of CHF 70.57 billion (2018)



Direct federal tax and VAT are the Confederation's main sources of receipts, and currently bring in a total of CHF 45 billion. Direct federal tax is raised on private individuals' income (progressively, maximum 11.5%), and on business profit (8.5%). VAT is 7.7% on most goods and services. The Federal Constitution sets out which taxes the Confederation is permitted to raise.

Around a third of federal expenditure – CHF 22 billion – goes towards social welfare. Half of that goes towards old age pension provision (OASI), and a sixth to invalidity insurance (II). Other major areas of expenditure are health insurance (premium reductions), migration and OASI supplementary benefits. Social welfare is one of the fastest growing areas of federal expenditure.

Debt brake



The Constitution requires the Confederation to balance its expenditure and receipts on a lasting basis. It is required to run a surplus when the economy is strong, and may spend more than it collects in receipts when the economy is weak. This 'debt brake' was applied for the first time in 2003. Since then, federal debt has been reduced by a quarter, from CHF 124 billion to CHF 99 billion. In this respect, Switzerland does well compared to other countries: the national debt is around 28% of gross domestic product (GDP).

From an alliance of states to a federal state

THE HISTORY OF SWITZERLAND

Switzerland developed over the centuries from a collection of different alliances to a confederation of states and finally to the federal state we know today. Its national borders and neutrality were established and recognised internationally

in 1815. Its political system dates back to the Federal Constitution of 1848. Since then the powers of the federal government, political rights and political diversity have increased significantly.

1291 | Old Confederation

ALLIANCES

Shifting alliances between cities and outlying areas served to maintain internal political order and external independence. In 1291 the original forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden entered into the first documented alliance. The term 'Eitgenozze' [Confederate] first appeared in 1315. In the following centuries, the Confederation continued to grow through alliances and territorial conquests.

1803–1814 | Mediation

LOOSE FOREIGN CONTROL

After civil wars broke out between federalists and supporters of the Helvetic Republic, Napoleon ordered a constitution based on the Act of Mediation, which restored some autonomy to the cantons and set most of the cantonal borders.

1847–1848 | Sonderbund War

LIBERALS AGAINST CONSERVATIVES

Diverging views on how the Confederation would be organised led to a civil war between liberal and Catholic conservative cantons. It was a war from which liberal forces emerged victorious.

1200

1800

1850

1798–1802 | Helvetic Republic

UNITARY STATE UNDER FOREIGN CONTROL

Following the French invasion in 1798, the Confederation was transformed into the Helvetic Republic: a unitary state ruled from Paris.

1815 | Federal Treaty

NEUTRALITY AND ALLIANCE OF STATES

With the defeat of Napoleon, the great European powers recognised Swiss neutrality and set Switzerland's borders as they are today. The Federal Treaty of 1815 brought together the various federal alliances into a single confederation of states with responsibility for security policy.

1848 | Federal Constitution

DEMOCRATIC FEDERAL STATE

The Federal Constitution provided most citizens (men) with various rights and freedoms, including the right to vote and be elected. The bicameral system, based on the American model, was introduced at federal level with the National Council and Council of States electing the Federal Council. Some powers were centralised. Switzerland developed into a unitary judicial and economic area.

1874, 1891 | Expanded democracy

INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM

The revised Federal Constitution transferred more tasks to the federal government and broadened democratic rights at federal level. The referendum was introduced in 1874 and the popular initiative in 1891. In 1891, Parliament elected the first Catholic Conservative (CVP today) to the government. For the first time since 1848, the Federal Council was no longer made up solely of Liberals.

1919, 1929 | Proportional representation

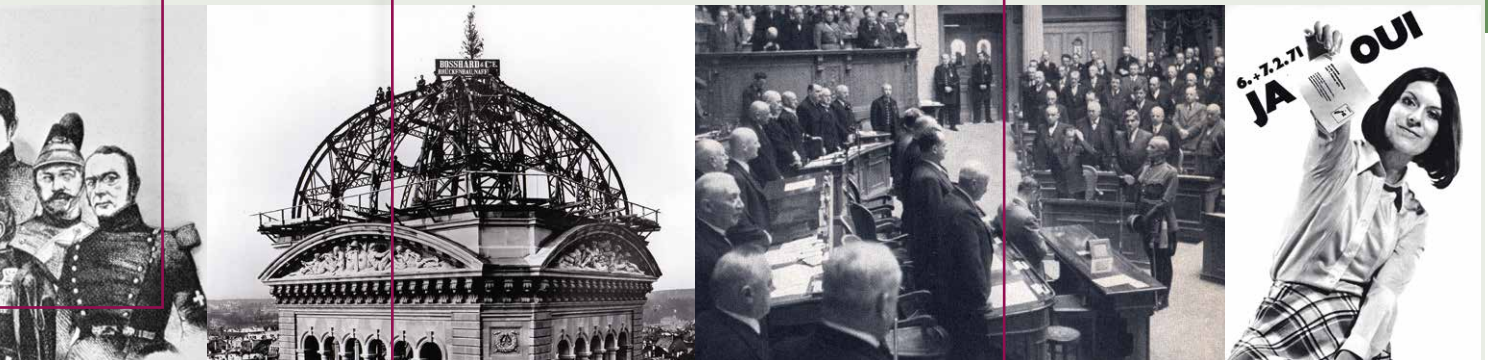
TOWARDS CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY

In 1919, the National Council was elected on a proportional basis and a second Catholic Conservative entered the Federal Council. A member of the Farmers', Trades' and Citizens' Party (SVP today) entered the Federal Council in 1929.

1971 | Equal opportunities

WOMEN'S FRANCHISE

In February 1971 66% of the electorate, then exclusively male, voted in favour of the women's franchise at federal level. Most cantons and communes also gave women the vote following this decision.



1900

1950

2000



1914–1918 | First World War, general strike
SOCIALIST IDEAS

Poverty and unemployment during the First World War and socialist ideas from the Russian Revolution culminated in a general strike in 1918.

1939–1945 | Second World War
INCLUSION OF THE LEFT

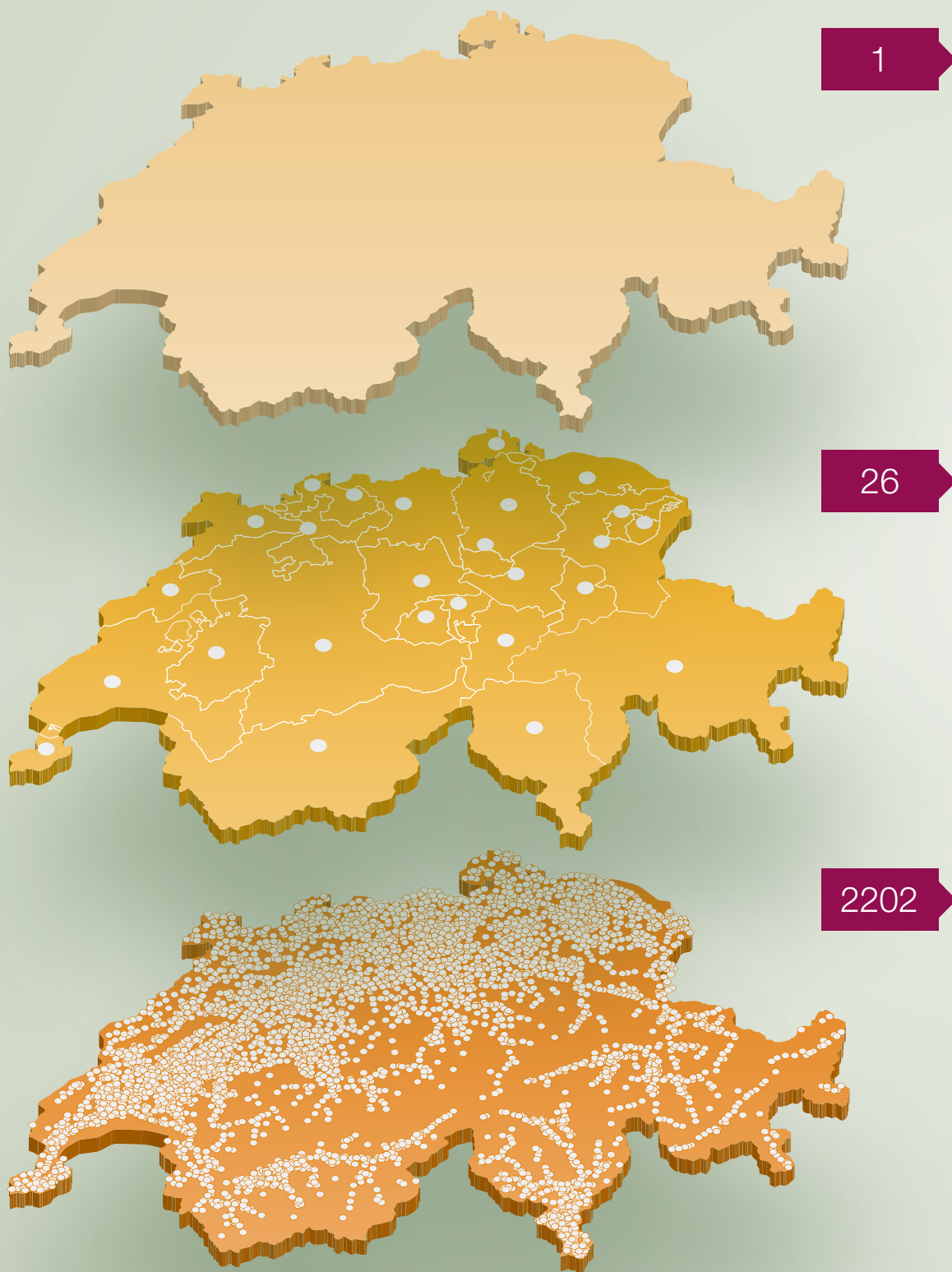
Against the backdrop of the Second World War, the political forces from left to right moved closer together. In 1943 Parliament elected a Social Democrat into government, and in 1951 the left-wing party gained a second seat on the Federal Council. Since 1959, the Federal Council has comprised members from four political parties (► 'magic formula' p. 43).

2000 | Third Federal Constitution
CONTINUITY AND OPENNESS

The totally revised Federal Constitution emphasised the partnership between the Confederation and the cantons, and regulated the division of tasks. In 2000, Swiss voters approved the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union. Two years later they voted in favour of joining the United Nations.

Confederation, cantons and communes

FEDERALISM



Switzerland is a federal state: state power is shared between the federal government, the cantons and the communes. The cantons and communes have broad scope in carrying out their responsibilities. Federalism makes

it possible for Switzerland to exist as one entity – in spite of four linguistic cultures and varying regional characteristics.

Confederation

Switzerland, which is also referred to as the Swiss Confederation, has been a federal state since 1848. The Federal Constitution defines the Confederation's tasks and responsibilities. These include Switzerland's relations with the outside world, defence, the national road network, and nuclear energy. Switzerland's parliament, the Federal Assembly, is made up of the National Council and the Council of States; the government comprises seven federal councilors, and the Federal Supreme Court is responsible for national jurisprudence. The Confederation is financed among other means through direct federal tax.

- 11 per cent of all Swiss citizens live outside Switzerland (the 'Swiss Abroad').
- 85 per cent of the domestic population lives in urban areas.
- Proceeds from direct federal taxation account for 31 per cent of the Confederation's total revenues.

Cantons

The Confederation is made up of 26 cantons, which are also known as 'states'. Each canton has its own parliament, government, courts and constitution. The cantonal constitutions may not contradict the Federal Constitution. The cantons implement the requirements of the Confederation, but structure their activities in accordance with their particular needs. They have broad scope in deciding how to meet their responsibilities, for example in the areas of education and healthcare, cultural affairs and police matters. The individual cantons levy a cantonal tax.

- Gross domestic product per capita in the canton of Basel-Stadt is more than three times higher than in the canton of Uri.
- In the national fiscal equalisation plan, the Confederation and 7 cantons are net contributors and 19 cantons are net beneficiaries.
- People's assemblies (Landsgemeinden) are still held in the cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden and Glarus.

Communes

The 26 cantons are divided into communes. Each canton determines itself the division of responsibilities between it and the communes. The responsibilities of the communes include local planning, running the schools, social welfare and the fire service. Larger communes and cities have their own parliaments, and organise their own referendums. In smaller communes, decisions are made by the citizens at communal assemblies. Each commune levies a communal tax.

- The smallest commune (Kammersrohr, SO) has a population of 29, the largest approximately 415 000 (City of Zurich).
- An average of approximately 30 communes merge every year, thereby reducing the total number of communes.
- In four out of five communes, eligible voters decide on political issues at communal assemblies.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY



Parliament Building in Bern: The Association of Small-Scale Farmers submits a petition on gene technology. A member of the Parliamentary Services receives the lists of petition signatures.

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Elections and votes _____ 18

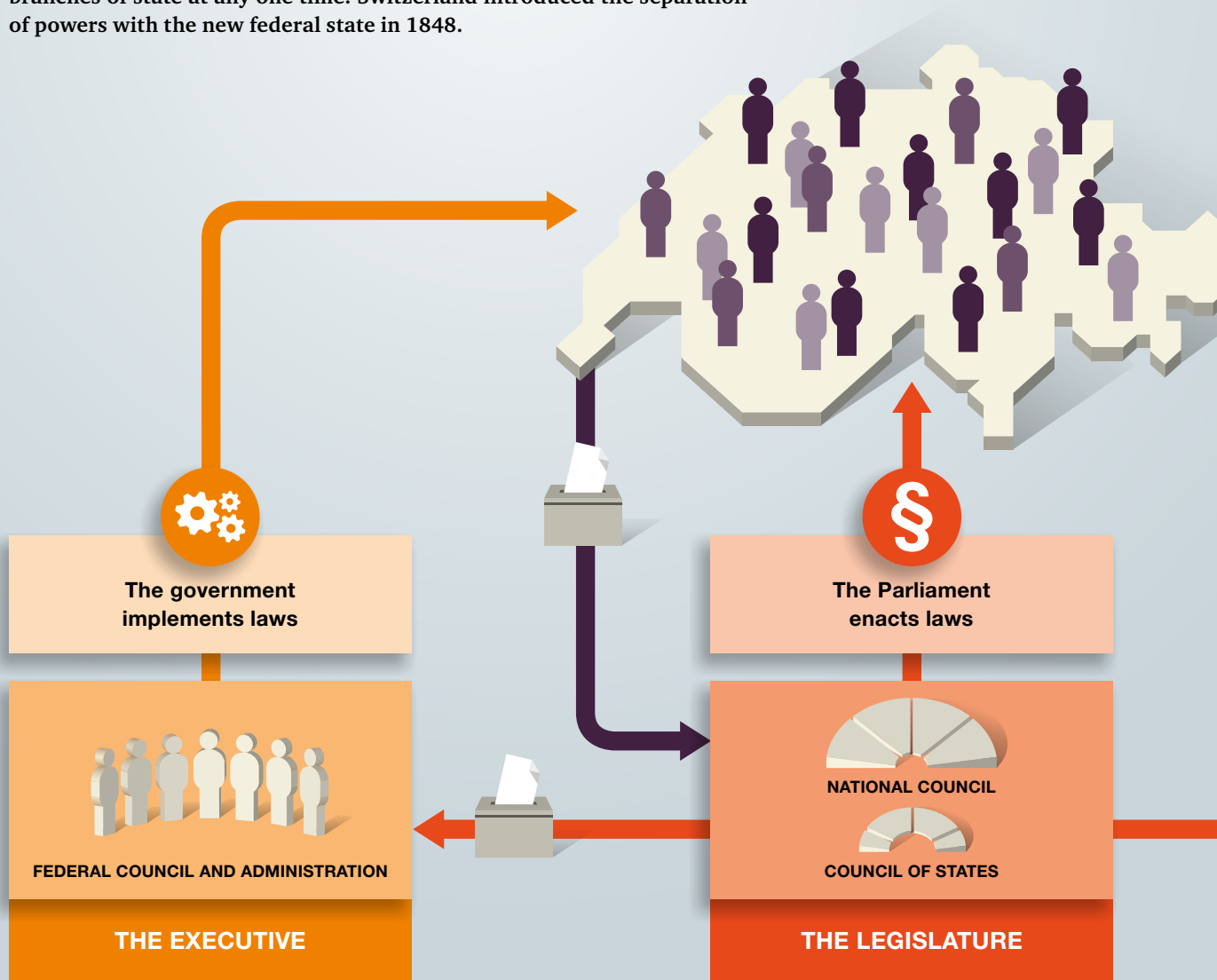
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A fundamental principle of democracy

SEPARATION OF POWERS

The separation of powers prevents a concentration of power in individual people or institutions and helps to stop any abuse of power. Power is divided between the three branches of state, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. No single person can belong to more than one of the three branches of state at any one time. Switzerland introduced the separation of powers with the new federal state in 1848.

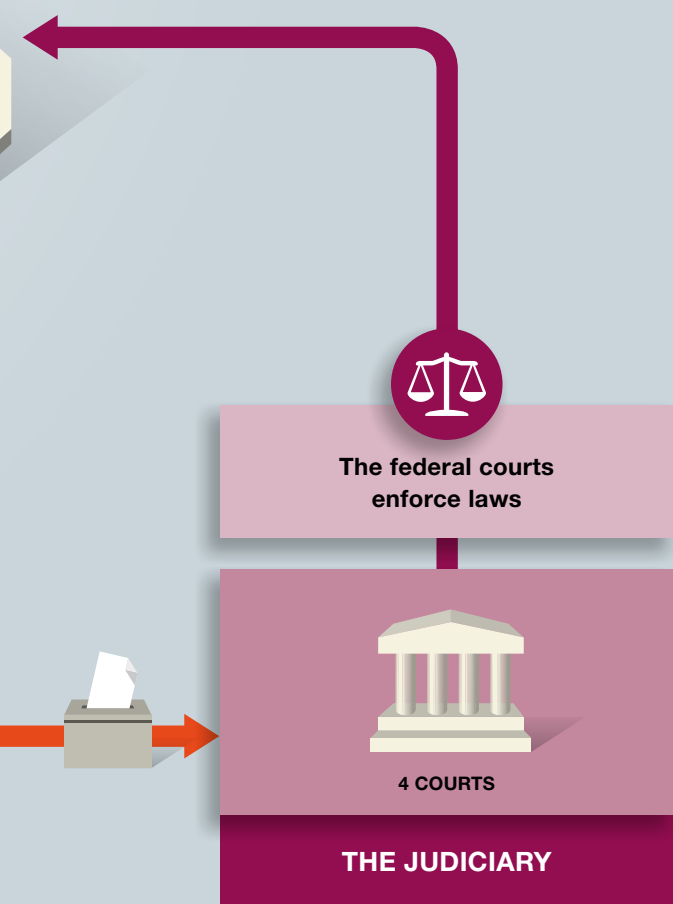


Implementing laws

The Federal Council is the Swiss government. It deals with the ongoing task of governing the country and implements the laws and other decisions adopted by Parliament. Each of the seven members of the Federal Council is head of one of the seven federal departments, which together with the Federal Chancellery make up the Federal Administration.

Passing laws

Parliament comprises the National Council and the Council of States. The two councils have equal powers; together they form the United Federal Assembly. Parliament enacts legislation and monitors the activities of the Federal Council and the Federal Supreme Court.



Interpreting laws

The Federal Supreme Court is Switzerland's highest court. Its task is to ensure the uniform application of the law and to uphold the rights of ordinary people. As the highest court of appeal, it also rules on disputes between individuals and the state or between the Confederation and the cantons.

Who elects whom?

In Switzerland, around 5.5 million men and women can vote in federal elections. Young people under the age of 18 and foreign nationals do not have the right to vote at federal level.

Swiss voters elect the parliament (the legislature). This makes the electorate Switzerland's supreme political body. The National Council represents the entire population, while the Council of States represents the 26 cantons. Federal elections are held every four years.

Parliament elects the members of various bodies:

- **the executive:** the seven members of the Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor. Their term of office is four years and they may be re-elected. (► p. 42)
- **the judiciary:** the President of the Federal Supreme Court and the judges of the Federal Supreme Court and the three federal courts of first instance. (► p. 80)
- **the Attorney General of Switzerland:** The Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland investigates and prosecutes federal offences, such as those involving explosives and espionage, as well as offences committed by federal employees in the course of their duties.

www.bundesanwaltschaft.ch

Who checks whom?

Parliament supervises the Federal Council and the Federal Administration, the federal courts and the Office of the Attorney General. The members of parliament are elected, and may be held to account, by the People.



Information platform democracy
www.ch.ch/democracy

Political rights

ELECTIONS AND VOTES

In Switzerland, the people have more say in how the country is run than in almost any other country in the world. All Swiss citizens who are 18 or over have the right to vote at national level. In addition to the parliamentary elections, which are held every four years, the electorate can express its views up to four times a year in popular votes on specific political issues. In most cases, there are several proposals to be voted on at each ballot.

The Constitution and laws

A vote must be held on any amendment to the Constitution (mandatory referendum). Amendments to the Constitution require the consent of a majority of the People and of the cantons (double majority). On the other hand, a vote is only held on a revised or new law if a referendum is demanded. The new law is accepted if a majority of the electorate vote in favour of it (simple majority).

Federal votes and elections 2020

In 2020, federal ballots will be held on the following Sundays:

9 February, 17 May, 27 September and 29 November.

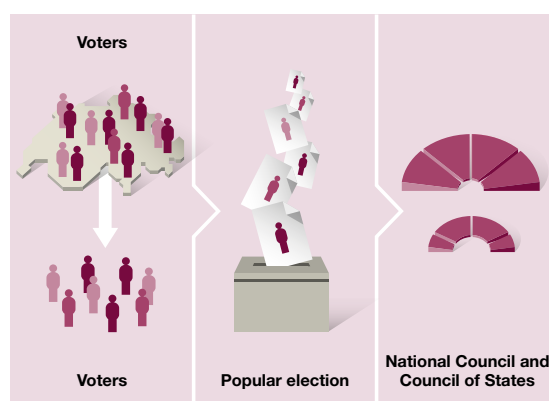
The Federal Council decides at least four months in advance which proposals will be voted on.

Federal elections are held every four years. The last elections took place on 20 October 2019.



Informations on the federal elections 2019:
www.ch.ch/en/elections2019

ELECTORAL RIGHTS



Electing and being elected

Anyone who is eligible to vote is not only entitled to vote in the elections to Parliament, but can also stand as a candidate in the elections. Swiss citizens living abroad are also eligible to vote in elections to the National Council and, in some cantons, the Council of States.

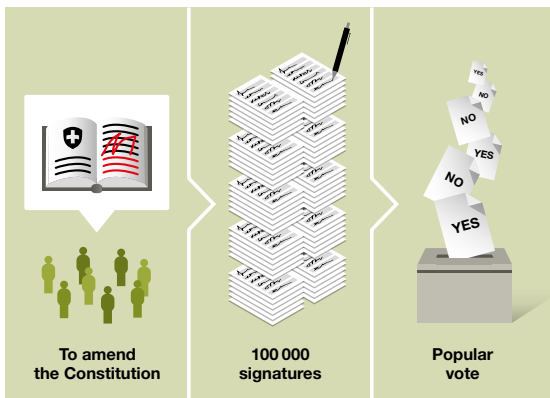
National Council and Council of States

The 200 members of the National Council and the 46 members of the Council of States are elected directly by the people. Elections are held every four years by secret ballot. The only exception is the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden, where the People's Assembly (Landsgemeinde) still chooses its representative in the Council of States by a show of hands.

- Turnout in the 2019 federal elections was 45% (2015: 48%).
- In 2019, 4645 women and men stood for election to the National Council (2015: 3788).
- At federal level, women have had the right to vote since 1971.

DIRECT DEMOCRATIC INSTRUMENTS

POPULAR INITIATIVE



Changing the Constitution

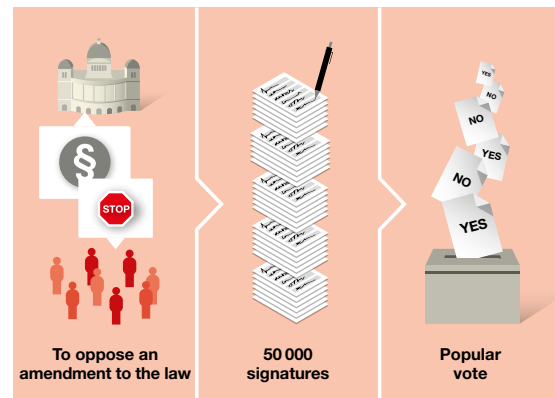
Citizens can launch a popular initiative to demand a change to the Constitution – but not to any other form of law. Any Swiss citizen who is eligible to vote can sign a popular initiative, and a group of at least seven citizens (the initiative committee) can launch their own popular initiative.

100,000 signatures

Before a vote is held on a popular initiative, the initiative committee must collect 100,000 valid signatures in favour of the proposal within a period of 18 months. The Federal Council and Parliament will recommend whether the proposal should be accepted or rejected. For the proposal to be accepted, a majority of both the People and the cantons is needed (a double majority). If it is accepted, new legislation or an amendment to existing legislation is normally required to implement the new constitutional provision.

- Popular initiatives were introduced at federal level in 1891.
- 216 popular initiatives have been voted on since then. Only 22 have been accepted.
- As of 31.12.2019, 16 initiatives were at the signature-gathering stage, 16 were pending before the Federal Council or Parliament, and 3 were ready to be put to the vote.

OPTIONAL REFERENDUM



Putting a stop to a new law

Parliament passes new legislation and amendments to existing legislation. Citizens can respond by calling for a referendum on new laws and against certain international treaties. The right to request a referendum is an important element in Swiss direct democracy.

50,000 signatures

Swiss citizens who are eligible to vote can sign a request for a referendum. For a referendum to be held, it must be demanded by eight cantons (referendum requested by the cantons) or 50,000 valid signatures must be collected within 100 days. The new law comes into force if a majority of those voting say yes (a simple majority). If the majority vote no, the current law continues to apply.

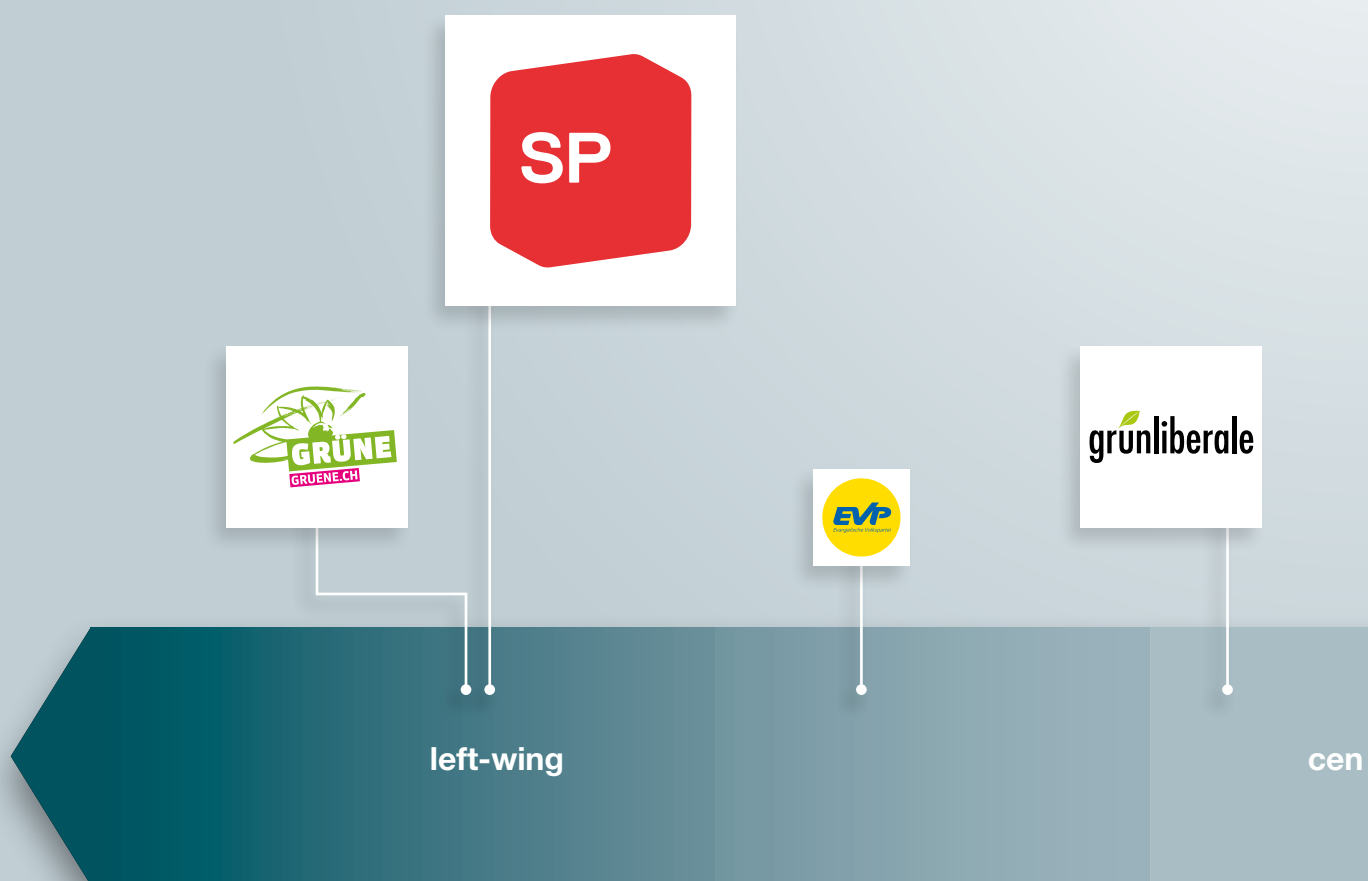
- The referendum was introduced in 1874.
- Since then, 190 optional referendums have been held; 80 of the proposals were rejected by voters.
- As of 31.12.2019, the referendum period was running for 21 federal acts and decrees. Signatures were being gathered for a vote on 6 of the proposals.

The link between the people and the state

PARTIES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

Political parties are indispensable if democracies are to work. They help to form political opinion, nominate candidates for public office and launch initiatives and referendums. Parties differ from one another in terms of their views of the role of the state, society and the economy.

Whereas left-wing parties tend to advocate a highly developed social state, right-of-centre parties advocate a liberal economic policy and personal responsibility. Certain political issues are neither distinctly left- nor right-wing, i.e. environmental protection, the question of how open Switzerland should be towards the EU and interna-



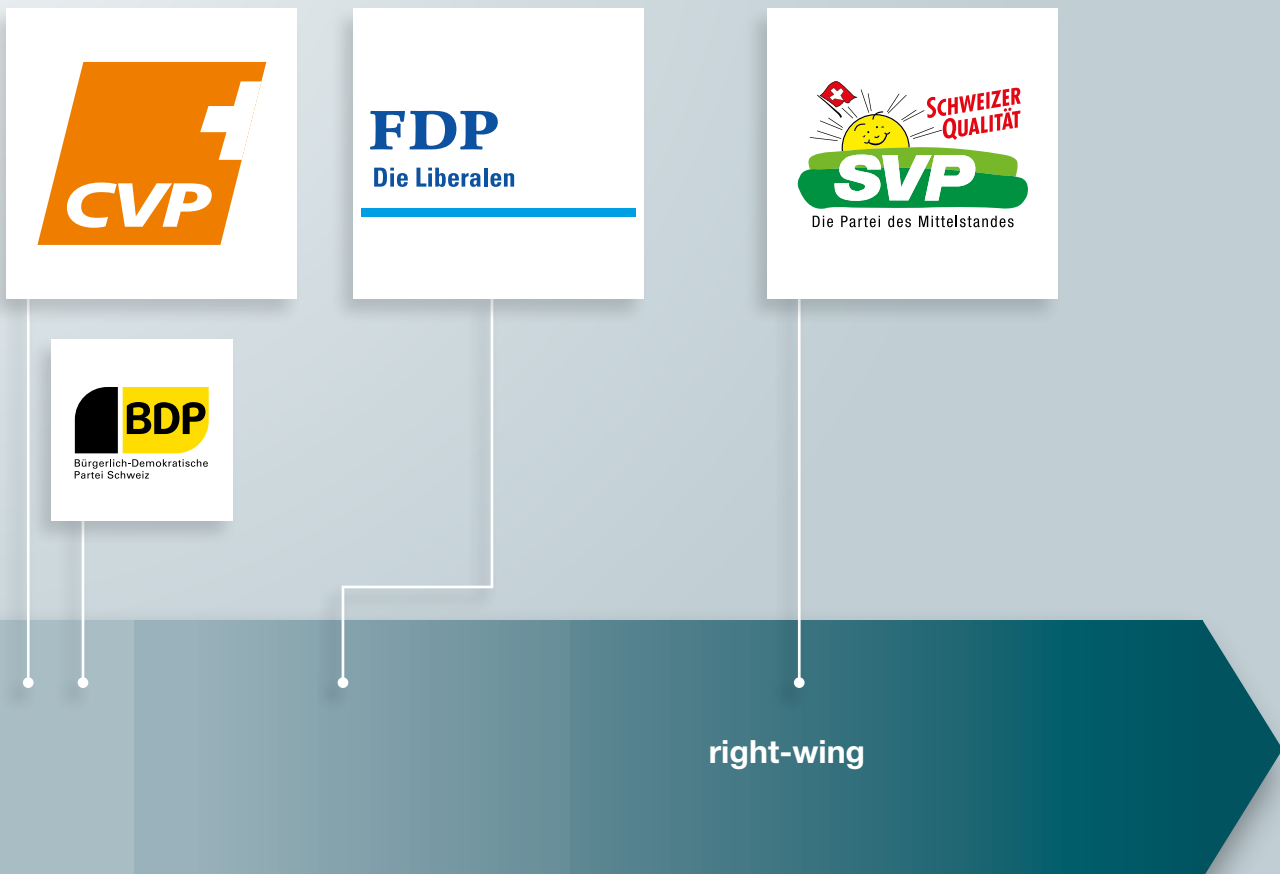
What does 'left-wing' mean?

- A strong social state that levels social disparities
- Emphasis on employees' interests
- Price controls, public services
- More peace policy, less military

tional organisations, and issues regarding liberal values (e.g. same-sex partnerships). Depending on the issue, centre parties will cooperate with either left- or right-wing parties.

Switzerland's political landscape comprises many different parties, of which none holds a majority at federal level.

There are five parties that each make up 10% or more of seats in the Federal Assembly (SVP: 24%, SP: 20%, FDP: 17%, CVP: 15%, Greens: 13%). These parties are all represented in the Federal Council, with the exception of the Green Party, which in the 2019 parliamentary elections gained over 10% of the votes for the first time.



What does 'right-wing' mean?

- Freedom and personal responsibility; the state intervenes only where absolutely necessary
- Emphasis on employers' interests
- Free enterprise, economic incentives
- Strong national defence


The twelve political parties at federal level

POLITICAL PARTIES IN BRIEF

In the current legislature period 2019–2023, twelve political parties are represented in the National Council. Five of those are also represented in the Council of States, four in the Federal Council. Brief outlines of the political parties represented at federal level are presented here. The order reflects the number of seats they hold in the Federal Assembly.


SVP Swiss People's Party



 Party President Albert Rösti (until March 2020) www.svp.ch		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1971 (BGB 1917)
		6 	53 	2 	


SP Swiss Social Democratic Party



 Party President Christian Levrat (until April 2020) www.sp.ch		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1888
		9 	39 	2 	


FDP FDP.The Liberals



 Party President Petra Gösli www.fdp.ch		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1894 (merged in 2009)
		12 	29 	2 	


CVP Christian Democratic People's Party



 Party President Gerhard Pfister www.cvp.ch		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1912
		13 	25 	1 	


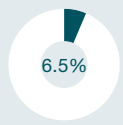

The Greens Swiss Green Party



 Party President Regula Rytz (until April 2020) www.gruene.ch		Council of States	National Council		Founded in 1983
		5 	28 		




glp Swiss Green Liberal Party

grunliberale

 <p>Party President Jürg Grossen www.grunliberale.ch</p>	 <p>6.5%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>16</p> 	<p>Founded in 2007</p>
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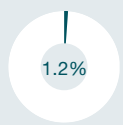

BDP Conservative Democratic Party

BDP
Bürgerlich-Demokratische
Partei Schweiz

 <p>Party President Martin Landolt www.bdp.info</p>	 <p>1.2%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>3</p> 	<p>Founded in 2008</p>
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EVP Swiss Evangelical People's Party

EVP

 <p>Party President Marianne Streiff-Feller www.evppev.ch</p>	 <p>1.2%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>3</p> 	<p>Founded in 1919</p>
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EDU Federal Democratic Union

EDU+UDF
Eidgenössisch-Demokratische Union
Union Démocratique Fédérale
Unione Democratiche Federate

 <p>Party President Hans Moser www.edu-schweiz.ch</p>	 <p>0.4%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>1</p> 	<p>Founded in 1975</p>
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LdT Lega dei Ticinesi



 <p>www.lega-dei-ticinesi.ch</p>	 <p>0.4%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>1</p> 	<p>Founded in 1991</p>
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PdA Swiss Workers' Party

PdA
Partito dei
Lavoratori
Partei der Arbeiter

 <p>Party President Gavriel Pinson www.pda.ch</p>	 <p>0.4%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>1</p> 	<p>Founded in 1944</p>
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solidarités

solidarités

 <p>Party President Jocelyne Haller www.solidarites.ch</p>	 <p>0.4%</p>	<p>National Council</p> <p>1</p> 	<p>Founded in 1992</p>
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The legislature

PARLIAMENT



PARLIAMENT

National Council and Council of States _____	26	Networking with the world _____	33
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How Parliament is organised _____	28	Distribution of committee seats _____	35
Parliamentary mechanisms _____	31	How new laws come about _____	36
Semi-professional parliament _____	32	The Parliament Building _____	38



The newly elected National Council was sworn in on 2 December 2019.

Two chambers – one parliament

NATIONAL COUNCIL AND COUNCIL OF STATES

Representing the People and the cantons

Switzerland's Parliament or legislature consists of two chambers, which although they have equal powers are very different in their own way: the people's representatives sit in the National Council, the large chamber, and the representatives of the cantons sit in the Council of States, the small chamber. When sitting together in joint session, they constitute the United Federal Assembly. The 246 members of Parliament represent the interests of the different language communities, political parties, world views and regions in Switzerland.

The **200 members of the National Council** represent the roughly 8 million people living in Switzerland – each member of the National Council represents around 42,000 people. The largest delegation, which is from the canton of Zurich, has 35 members. As the Constitution states that every canton is entitled to at least one seat in the National Council, even Appenzell Innerrhoden, which only has a population of 16,000, sends a people's representative to Bern.

The **46 members of the Council of States** represent the cantons, whereby each canton has two representatives, although here too there is an exception: as former half-cantons, the cantons of Obwalden, Nidwalden, Basel-Stadt, Basel-Landschaft, Appenzell Ausserrhoden and Appenzell Innerrhoden each have only one representative. The members of the Council of States are directly elected.

The National Council and the Council of States generally sit separately, but they also handle certain items of business in joint session as the United Federal Assembly, for instance when electing the members of the Federal Council and federal court judges. As such, the Federal Assembly is the highest authority in the Swiss Confederation, subject to the rights of the people and the cantons. This is an aspect peculiar to Switzerland: in contrast to other countries, Parliament elects the government and the federal judiciary. Parliament's decisions are not subject to review by any court.

United Federal Assembly

The United Federal Assembly sits in the National Council chamber. While the members of the National Council sit in their usual seats, the members of the Council of States take up seats allocated to their respective cantons around the back wall of the chamber. The sessions are chaired by the President of the National Council, which is why he or she is often referred to as the highest ranking person in the country.

Bicameral system

Not all countries have a bicameral parliamentary system; many have only one chamber. Where there are two chambers, generally the larger chamber – which normally represents the people – has more to say than the smaller chamber – which often represents the regions. In Switzerland the situation is different: each chamber has the same powers, and they deal with the same business in the same way. This even applies to budgetary issues. The chambers take turns to be the first to debate bills, and the two chambers must agree on all points for the bill to pass. The individual members of the Council of States and the National Council also have the same rights: they can all submit draft laws or other requests to the Federal Council.

However, because of differences in their political composition, the two chambers often do not reach the same decision. Here the size of the chamber also plays a role: the 46 members of the Council of States can speak spontaneously on any matter, whereas the 200 members of the National Council have to comply with complex rules on who speaks when, which is not conducive to spontaneous speeches. As a result it is easier to influence a vote with persuasive arguments in the Council of States than it is in the National Council.

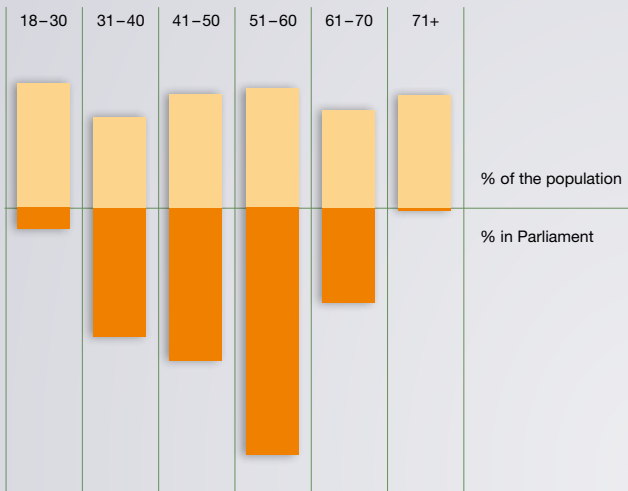
It often takes some time before a new law is agreed on exactly the same terms in both chambers. Yet once it has been agreed and has overcome the hurdle of a potential referendum, the new law will also have a certain permanence.

For more information about Parliament: www.parliament.ch

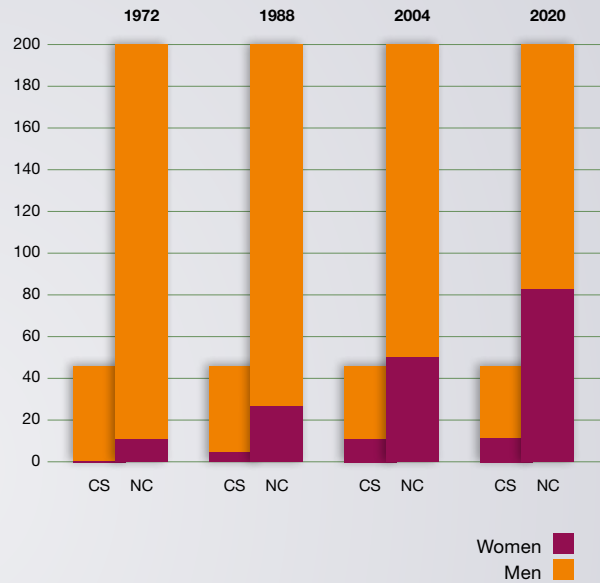
At a glance

PARLIAMENT IN FIGURES

Age groups in the Swiss population and in Parliament

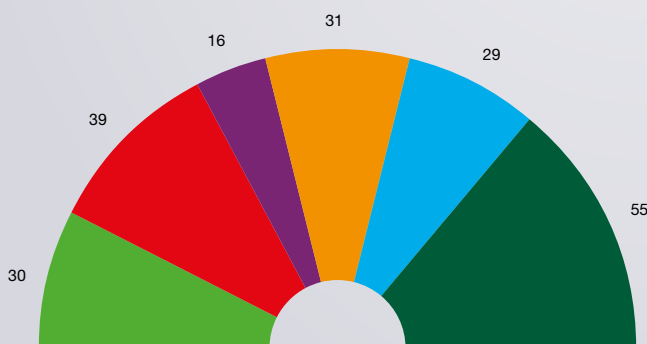


Women and men in Parliament

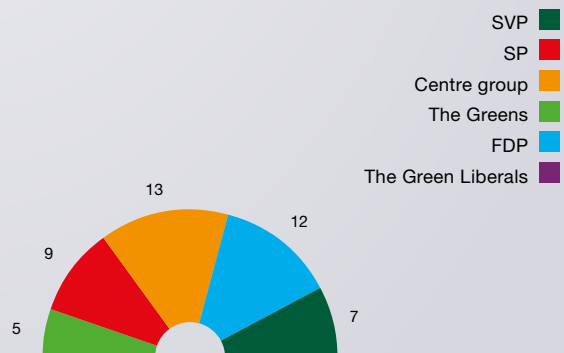


Strength of parliamentary groups

National Council



Council of States



Video 'Tell me about Parliament':
www.parliament.ch > About Parliament >
 How does the Swiss Parliament work? > Video

Elected – what now?

HOW PARLIAMENT IS ORGANISED

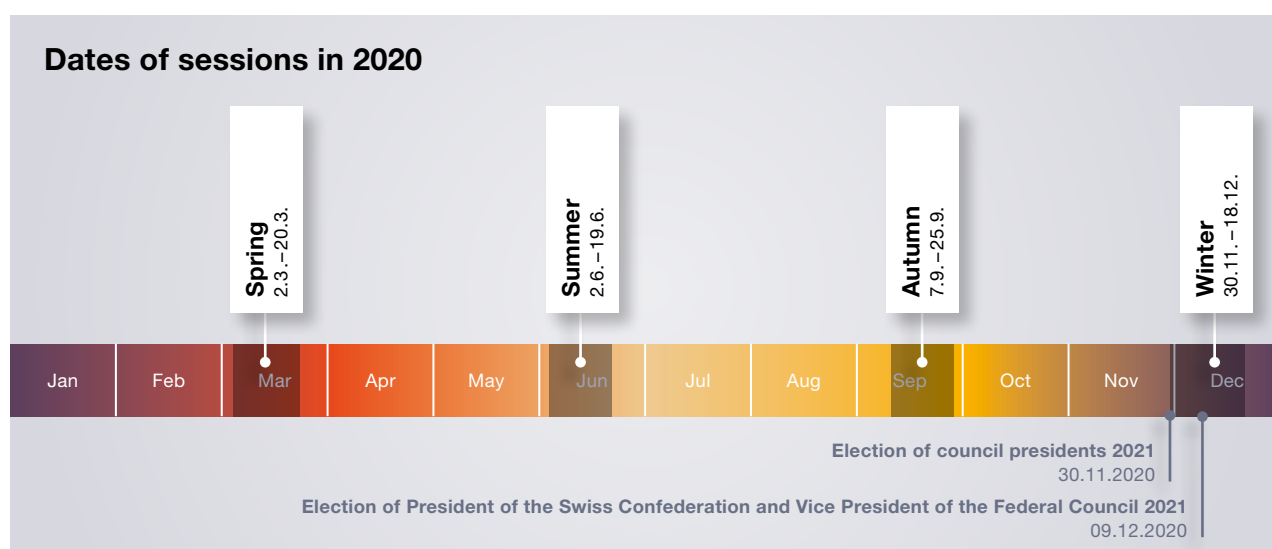
Parliamentary bodies

Any large group needs rules in order to function properly, and the same is true of the National Council and Council of States: each council member is allocated a seat in the chamber, with members of the same party usually grouped together. At the first session of the new legislature period, each chamber elects a **president** and the members of the **Council Office**. The president chairs the council meetings. He or she is supported by the council secretariat.

The members of a party or parties with similar views form **parliamentary groups**. At least five members from one council are needed to form a parliamentary group. In the National Council, only members of a parliamentary group have the right to express their views on an item of business. Furthermore, membership of a parliamentary group is also a prerequisite to be granted a seat on a committee. It is therefore only really possible for members to play an active role if they belong to a parliamentary group. That is why parties with fewer than five council members are keen to join a group. They are also courted, because the more members a parliamentary group has, the more seats they are entitled to on committees and the greater influence they have on council business.

Given the volume of business they have to deal with, often on technical issues, it is difficult for council members to reach an informed opinion. Before an item of business comes before the council, it is therefore discussed within the parliamentary groups with the aim of agreeing on a common position which can be supported by the members of the group in the chamber and before the media and general public. However, when the matter is voted on in the chamber, members are not instructed how to vote. Council members may not vote on the instruction of another person; their vote may therefore deviate from the position of their parliamentary group or canton.

The **committees** provide an opportunity for matters to be discussed in greater detail, to clarify specific issues, hear experts from the administration or from the interest groups concerned, and address questions to federal councillors. They also serve as a testing ground to see whether a majority can be found for certain positions or ideas across party lines.



Competences

The main role of Parliament is to enact legislation. The spectrum is wide, ranging from the Swiss abroad to civilian service, environmental protection to motorway building, war material to peace promotion.

However, Parliament is also responsible for:

- releasing funding (budget) and approving the state accounts;
- overseeing the Federal Council, the Federal Administration and the federal courts;
- electing the members of the Federal Council and the federal courts and the Federal Chancellor;
- concluding international agreements for which the Federal Council is not responsible and
- fostering relations with foreign parliaments.

Alliances

No parliamentary group is strong enough on its own to secure the passage of a bill; to do this, it needs to form alliances. When contentious bills are debated, Parliament normally divides into two camps: one conservative and the other left-leaning. Ultimately the political centre decides whether the bill passes, depending on which side it favours. From time to time though, an ‘unholy’ alliance may be formed: the left wing – the SP and the Greens – will join with the right-wing SVP to bring fundamental changes to a bill or even to vote it down entirely, often for quite different reasons.

President of the National Council 2019/20



President of the Council of States 2019/20

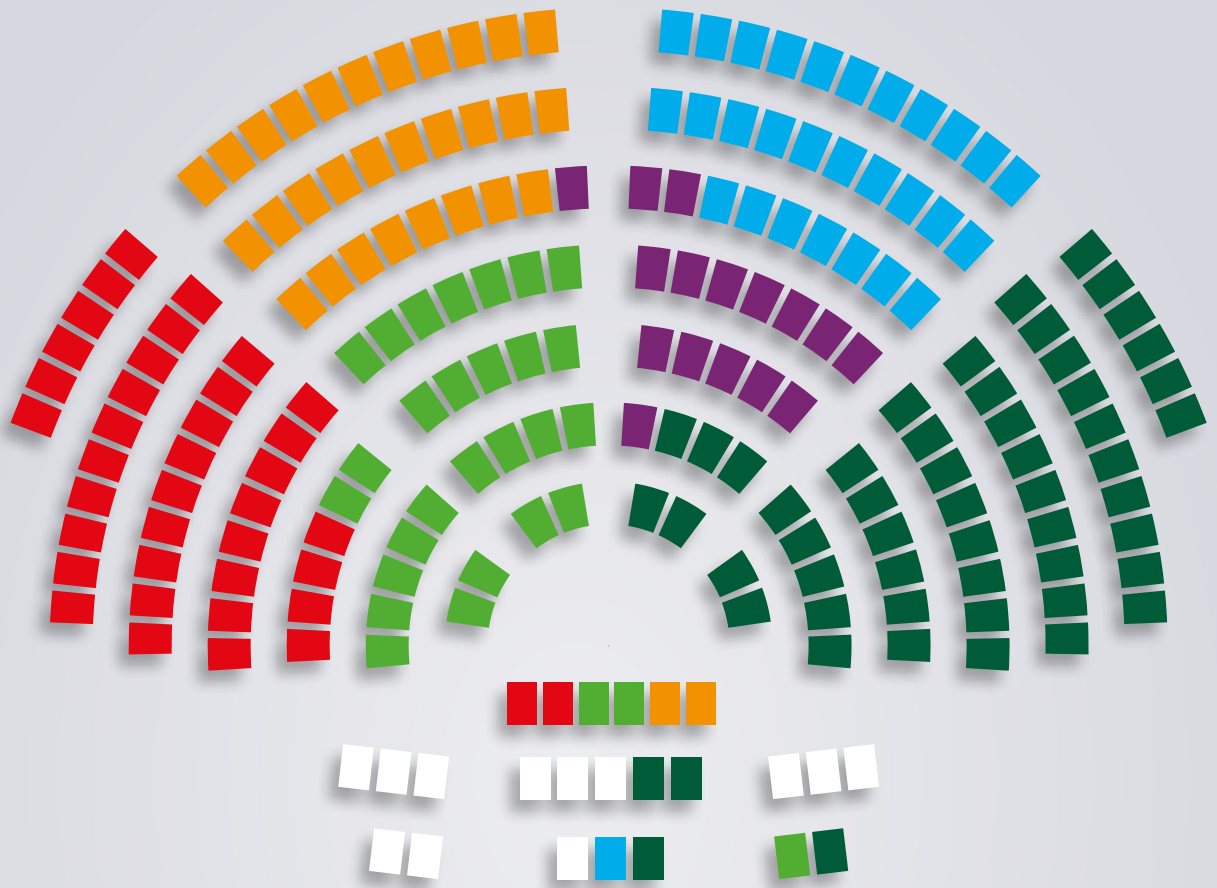


Informations on Isabelle Moret
President of the National Council:
www.parliament.ch > organs > National Council > President

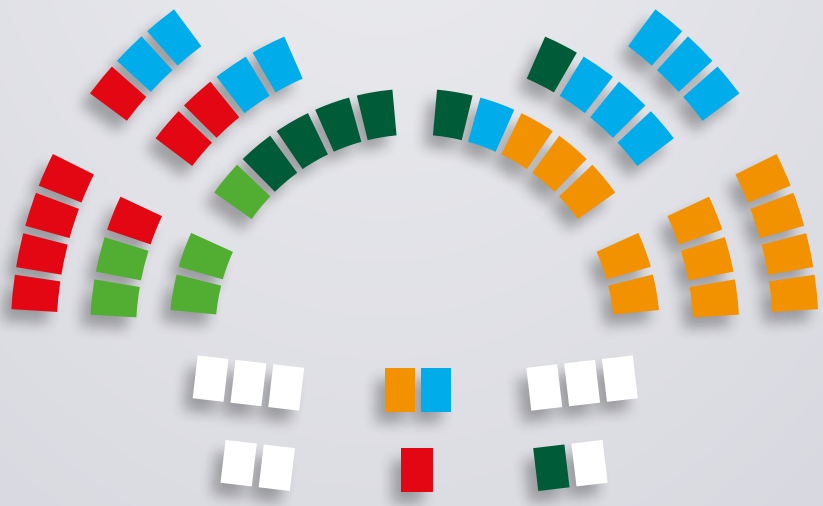


Informations on Hans Stöckli
President of the Council of States:
www.parliament.ch > organs > Council of States > President

ALLOCATION OF SEATS NATIONAL COUNCIL



Who sits where? Interactive diagram on www.parliament.ch > Organs > Groups in the chamber



ALLOCATION OF SEATS COUNCIL OF STATES

Parliamentary groups	
■ SVP	■ The Greens
■ SP	■ FDP
■ Centre group	■ GLP

Raising issues and making new laws

PARLIAMENTARY MECHANISMS

Parliamentary instruments

Any member of the National Council or the Council of States can submit a procedural request to introduce a new law, add a new provision to the Constitution, or have an existing law amended. They can also request the Federal Council or the Administration to provide a report or information.

In response to every procedural request, the Federal Council and the Administration have to conduct enquiries and issue an opinion before the matter can be discussed and decided on, first in the relevant committee and then in the council concerned.

Majority support is required to follow up on procedural requests: in the preliminary consultation committees, or in either or both councils. As procedural requests generally relate to politically controversial matters, however, there is no guarantee that a majority can be secured.

The members of parliament make good use of the parliamentary instruments at their disposal. In 1996, each member submitted an average of 3.6 procedural requests; in 2009 the number peaked at 9.4, falling slightly to 8 requests per member in 2011. In recent years the average has increased steadily; in 2019 a new maximum was reached, at 10.3 requests per member.

Council members can use a **parliamentary initiative** to propose that Parliament itself enact a law – either by formulating the idea or even drafting the law itself. Using a **motion**, council members can prompt the Federal Council into drafting legislation. A **postulate** is used to ask the Federal Council to examine whether a new law or decree should be drafted or measures taken, while an **interpellation** is a request to the Federal Council for information on federal government matters.

Committees

Many people may be surprised to find the chambers of the National Council and Council of States half empty. By the time any proposal is debated in the councils, most of the parliamentary work has already been done, and many preliminary decisions have been taken. This takes place in the committees, which is where initial discussions are held on most items of business.

There are nine specialist committees, whose main task is to make a preliminary examination of legislative proposals. They are each responsible for a specific topic, such as transport, legal affairs, foreign affairs and social policy. In addition, there are the finance committees and the control committees, which oversee the federal finances and the activities of the Federal Council and the Administration.

In specific cases, a parliamentary investigation committee can investigate certain procedures and areas.

In contrast to sessions of the National Council and Council of States, committee sessions are not open to the public: holding meetings in camera is thought to facilitate a more open discussion among members. However, after meetings, the committees inform the media of the outcome.

National Council committees comprise 25 members each, while those in the Council of States have 13 members. Their composition depends on the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups.

The committees in detail:
[www.parliament > Committees](http://www.parliament.ch/Committees)

SEMI-PROFESSIONAL PARLIAMENT

A part-time parliament

Switzerland's Parliament is a semi-professional body: its members dedicate a great deal of time to their parliamentary work, but most continue to pursue other professional activities. Due to the high workload – and the increasingly complex range of subject matter – voices can occasionally be heard questioning the present system and calling for a professional parliament. The counter argument is that part-time politicians are more grounded, accessible to the people and able to make a valuable contribution to debates due to their professional experience and expertise.

The members of the Federal Assembly spend a lot of time in Bern. In addition to their attendance during the sessions, council members also have to come to Bern for committee meetings. Members of the National Council sit on one to two committees, while their colleagues in the Council of States sit on three to four committees. This means that National Council members are in Bern for an additional 30 to 50 days a year, and those in the Council of States are in the capital for an extra 40 to 70 days a year.

Professional diversity

Although around 18 per cent of National Council members and 40 per cent of those in the Council of States are full-time politicians, most continue to pursue other professional activities, ranging from medicine or law to the trades, business to professional associations. Farmers, bankers and communal politicians can also be found among the parliamentarians in Bern.

Regular income

The council members' remuneration is regulated in law:

- An annual salary of CHF 26,000 is awarded for preparing for parliamentary work.
- There is a daily allowance of CHF 440 for attending council sessions and committee and parliamentary group meetings. Council members who head a committee receive double this amount. Members are paid CHF 220 for producing a report for a committee in their council.
- There is an annual allowance of CHF 33,000 for staff and material expenses.
- In addition, there are allowance for food, travel and accommodation.
- Council presidents and vice presidents receive an additional allowance.

In addition to this income and expenses, council members receive contributions to their pension fund. They pay tax on their salary and social insurance contributions are deducted from this; allowances and expenses are tax- and deduction-free, however.

www.parliament.ch > income and expenses

Parliamentary Foreign Policy

NETWORKING WITH THE WORLD

Although it is the Federal Council that represents Switzerland on foreign policy matters, negotiating and ratifying international agreements, it must still ensure that the Federal Assembly has its say on foreign policy and gives its approval to those agreements.

Recent decades have witnessed an intensification in international cooperation on economic affairs, which has resulted in a corresponding increase in international agreements. As these agreements normally have repercussions for domestic law, this trend has been accompanied by a desire on the part of Parliament, as the legislature, to become involved in the negotiation process at an early stage. Since the turn of the millennium, there has been far greater cooperation over foreign policy between the executive and the legislature.

The Federal Council thus now consults the foreign policy committees on a wide range of issues. At the same time, the Federal Assembly participates in international parliamentary associations and cultivates relations with other parliaments. Through parliamentary foreign policy, members of parliament, office holders (council presidents and vice presidents) and parliamentary bodies (committees, standing and ad hoc delegations) can gain foreign policy experience and first-hand access to information. Parliamentary foreign policy also allows members of parliament to shape and influence political work in interparliamentary organisations, to represent Swiss interests at international parliamentary meetings, to establish a channel of communication complementary to that at government level and to expand the network of parliamentary contacts.

The former National Council president welcoming the chairman of Mongolia's parliament to Switzerland.



Visit by the former president of the Council of States to Portugal



The hub of Parliament

THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

The Parliamentary Services support council members in fulfilling their duties. In terms of the separation of powers, they are answerable to Parliament and operate independently of the Federal Council and the Federal Administration.

The start of a new term of office for a newly elected member of the Federal Assembly is comparable with starting a new job: the new member has a host of questions, is inundated with information, is expected to hit the ground running, but first has to become acquainted with how Parliament works. The Parliamentary Services provide advice and assistance to the new members of parliament. At the start of a new legislature period, the Parliamentary Services with its 304 staff (222 full-time equivalents) have a great deal to do.

Diverse range of services

When Parliament is in session, all the various units of the Parliamentary Services are kept busy, in public and behind the scenes. For example, debates are transcribed and published in the Official Bulletin while the session is still in progress, so that individual statements and the results of the votes can be read online at www.parliament.ch within an hour.

Things are slightly calmer in between sessions, but even then there are often committee meetings. The preparations for these are usually made by the relevant committee secretariats with practical support provided by the team of ushers. Members are given all the necessary documentation so they can familiarise themselves with the varied subject matter, such as reports from federal offices, articles from the press or specialist literature and the minutes of earlier meetings. Council members can also request personalised documentation packs and advice to gain a more in-depth understanding of an issue.

The Parliamentary Services also draft press releases, arrange press conferences, and organise visits by Swiss delegations abroad and by foreign delegations to Bern.

Information online and in all official languages

A team of IT staff and web-specialists is responsible for running and maintaining the entire IT infrastructure for the Parliamentary Services and the secretariats of the parliamentary groups. The Parliament website also has to be kept up to date so that the public can find out about parliamentary business, council members and events. Debates are streamed live online during the sessions. Council members speak before Parliament and in the committees in their own language. During sessions in the National Council, interpreters provide simultaneous translation of statements in the three official languages, German, French and Italian. Most documents are also translated.

The public can follow what their representatives are doing not only through the media and online, but also in person from the gallery. Council members receive individual visitors or groups at the Parliament Building and visitors can also find out more about the building and proceedings by taking a guided tour.

A large number of people from different walks of life pass through the doors of the Federal Palace: parliamentarians, representatives of different interest groups and the media, civil servants and visitors. For an open building such as this, a certain number of security measures and staff have to be in place. The Federal Palace also has to be maintained and kept clean. The activities that take centre stage would not be possible without all the work done behind the scenes: things would soon grind to a halt if the wastepaper baskets were never emptied, if the heating did not work in winter or if there was nowhere to get a coffee ...



Parliamentary Services

Secretary General: **Philippe Schwab**
www.parliament.ch

Representation in all bodies

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMITTEE SEATS

A new legislative period does not begin when the new members of parliament are sworn in, but when the parliamentary committees are reconstituted. The council offices select the members of their committees in the first session of the new legislative period. The members have a four-year term of office, and can be re-elected to the committee.

There is a total of 427 committee seats for the two chambers of parliament. A sophisticated distribution ratio ensures that all parliamentary groups are represented in all committees in approximate proportion to their size. However, an apparently minor change in the size of a group – by just one or two seats – can mean that it ends up with disproportionately more or fewer committee seats. This is why the various parliamentary groups are keen to attract independent members of parliament to their ranks. Parties may also seek to join forces to form a larger group in order to have a strategic advantage to defend a common point of view.

The following example illustrates the impact that the election of a new member of parliament has on the composition of the committees. When FDP party member Karin Keller-Sutter was elected to the Federal Council in December 2018, the seat she left vacant in the Council of States had to be filled. Benedikt Würth, a member of the CVP, took up the seat in May 2019, making his party the strongest group in the chamber. This gave the CVP the right to an additional seat on no fewer than three committees, thus greatly increasing the party's influence on policy in the Council of States committees.

The election held on 20 October 2019 changed the composition of parliament considerably. Since the preliminary consultation committees shape the decisions later made by the Councils, these changes in the 51st legislative period may well result in significant policy changes.

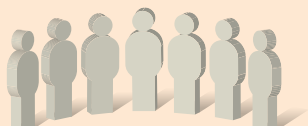
On 20 January 2020, the newly constituted National Council Transport and Telecommunications Committee held its first meeting in the new legislative period.



From idea to decision

HOW NEW LAWS COME ABOUT

FEDERAL COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATION



Postulate, consultations, dispatch to Parliament

In February 2009, the Transport and Telecommunications Committee of the National Council (TTC-N) submitted a **postulate** to the Federal Council, requesting it to draft a report in which various alternatives to the current method of levying radio and television reception fees would be proposed and evaluated. This request had been prompted by increasing problems with levying fees for radio and television connections. After the Federal Council submitted its report, the TTC-N requested the Federal Council to prepare a proposal on a new system for levying reception fees.

The **Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC)**, the federal department concerned, then drafted an amendment to the law and conducted a consultation process from 9 May to 29 August 2012. On 29 May 2013, the Federal Council approved the **dispatch on the revision of the Federal Act on Radio and Television**.

Preliminary examination, proposal (TTC)

The Presiding Colleges of the National Council and the Council of States assigned the item of business to the National Council as the first chamber to debate the issue. The **TTC-N** carried out the preliminary examination and invited interest groups to a hearing, which voted 16 to 6 in favour of considering the draft law. In the detailed discussion the committee broadly accepted the Federal Council's proposal. In particular on 21 October 2013, it rejected by 14 votes to 10 the possibility for households not in possession of a radio or TV to opt out. In the overall vote the proposal was accepted by 14 votes to 7 with 3 abstentions.

Committee

First consultation

The **National Council** dealt with the item on 12 March 2014 in a debate that lasted almost seven hours. The question as to whether households without reception capability could be exempted from the fee provoked a broad discussion. As a compromise, the council voted in favour of a TTC-N minority proposal, according to which households without reception capability could be exempted for a further five years after the new fee was introduced. The question of whether companies would have to pay a fee of any kind in the future remained disputed. The National Council rejected by a very narrow margin of 93 votes to 92 a proposal that demanded that fees be completely abolished for businesses.

Resolution of differences

In the **resolution of differences** the item of business was then presented again first to the TTC-N, which focused exclusively on the controversial provisions. By 14 votes to 9, it instructed the National Council to stick to the five-year opt-out possibility for households. On four further points, however, the TTC-N swung over to the line of the Council of States.

Committee

Preliminary examination, proposal (TTC)

At its meeting on 1 April 2014, the **TTC of the Council of States** called unanimously for the draft law to be examined. Concerning the five-year opt-out inserted in the draft law by the National Council, the committee instructed that the provision be deleted by 12 votes to 1, thus accepting the Federal Council's draft. In the overall vote the proposal was accepted by 10 votes to 1 with 1 abstention.

Committee

First consultation

On 19 June 2014, the **Council of States** voted unanimously in favour of examining the proposal. In the course of a four-hour debate, the majority of the council followed the National Council's decision, but added some changes, whereupon the Council of States followed its advisory committee without opposition and rejected the proposed exceptions to the obligation to pay fees for households. In addition, the Council of States demanded greater scope for private broadcasters to share in fee revenues. It accepted, by 28 votes to 14, a minority proposal of the committee and set the share of the total revenues from radio and TV fees at 4 to 6 per cent.

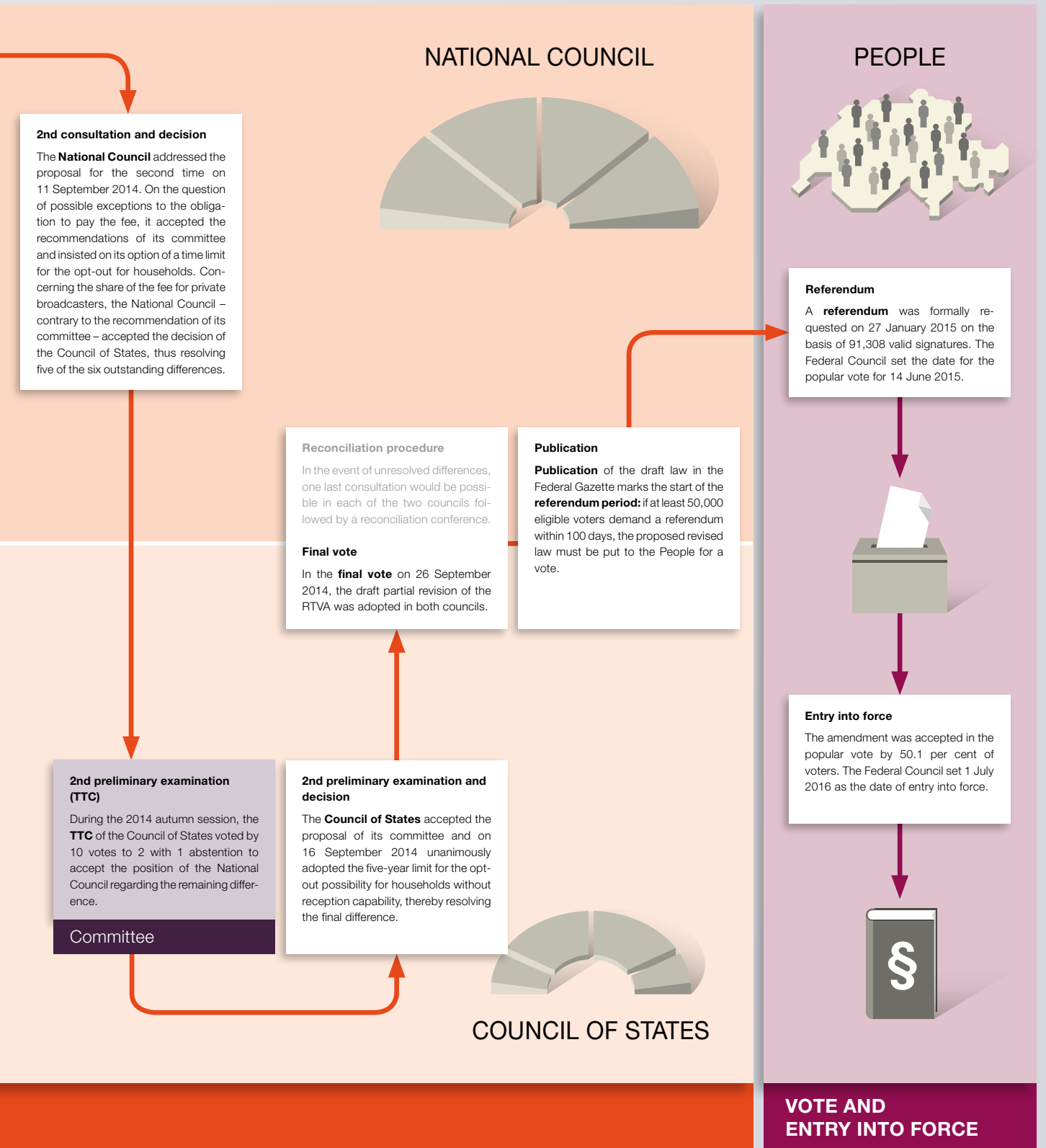
INITIAL PHASE

PARLIAMENTARY PHASE

Introducing new legislation is a complex and at times protracted business. The process takes at least twelve months, and has been known to take as long as ten years or more.

The following example shows the partial revision of the **Federal Act on Radio and Television (RTVA)**.

The process began in 2009 and ended with the law's entry into force on 1 July 2016.



An open house

THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING

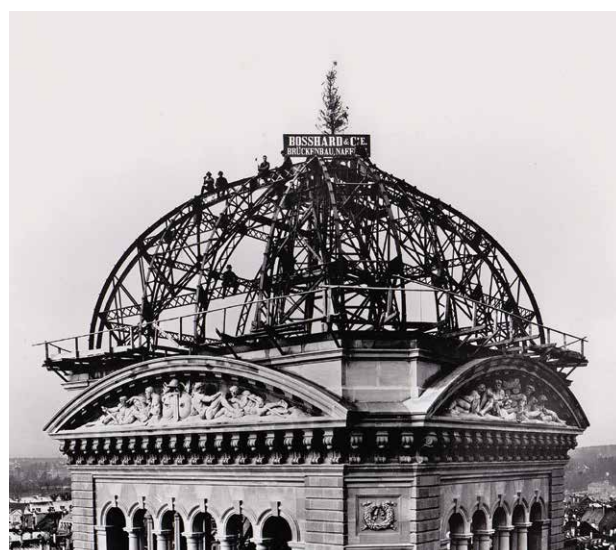
Construction in stages

The Federal Palace, the seat of the Swiss parliament and government, is regarded as one of the most historically important buildings in Switzerland. It comprises three elements which are linked by raised covered walkways: the West Wing, the Parliament Building and the East Wing. In contrast to most other countries with a bicameral system, both chambers are housed under the same roof.

On 28 November 1848, the Federal Assembly, in a first round of voting, chose Bern to be the capital city and therefore the seat of the federal authorities. As there were no suitable existing buildings in Bern to house the government, Parliament and the Federal Administration, provisional solutions at first had to be found. The Erlacherhof on Junkerngasse was made available to the Federal Council, the National Council met in the 'Casino' music hall, built in 1821, and occasionally in Bern's city hall, while the Council of States met in the town hall 'zum Äusseren Stand' on Zeughausgasse. The Federal Supreme Court and the various branches of the Administration took up residence in various buildings in the old town.

In February 1849, the city authorities were commissioned with the task of finding an appropriate location for a central building with sufficient space to house both chambers of Parliament, rooms for the Federal Council, 96 offices and an apartment for the Federal Chancellor. The site chosen by the Federal Council from a number of proposals was that of the town's timber works next to the casino. On 8 April 1850, the city council launched a tender for designs for the 'Bundes-Rathaus' on the southern side of the old town on the edge of the escarpment above the River Aare.

Work on the construction of what is now the West Wing began in 1852 and was to house both chambers of parliament. The official inauguration took place a little over five years later on 5 June 1857. It was later joined by the mirror image East Wing in 1884.



Dome under construction in 1900, inauguration of the new Federal Palace on 1 April 1902

The central Parliament Building, built according to plans drawn up by architect Hans Wilhelm Auer between 1894 and 1902, completed the interconnected three-part complex that we see today.

The Parliament Building is a monumental work in the neo-renaissance style with porticos and a prominent dome. The rich artistry and construction materials from all regions of the country underline the character of the building as a national monument and as a 'Federal palace'.

The architect's intention in designing the Parliament Building was to replicate, figuratively, the whole of Switzerland. He drew up a plan of pictures and symbolic images covering three broad themes: the nation's history based on founding myths, the constitutional foundations and general virtues of the state, and Switzerland's cultural, political, geographic and economic diversity.

Who goes in and out of the Federal Palace

Even in an age of chat rooms, Skype and social media, there is still a need for a place where members of parliament can gather to hold meetings and discussions, as well as have informal chats.

The Federal Palace is above all the nation's meeting place: in addition to the parliamentary sessions held in the two largest chambers, around 2000 meetings a year are held in the many other conference rooms. The Parliament Building also has an important ceremonial and not least a social function: given its architecture it lends itself as a stage for the nation's political proceedings. Council sessions are public and attract a great deal of public interest. Politicians meet with groups of visitors from their home cantons, and foreign delegations are received in the richly decorated rooms. The lobby and restaurant provide a setting for more informal discussions, and there are also places where council members can sit down to work.

Media

Wherever there are political goings-on, the media are never far behind. For a number of years now there has been a large, modern media centre on Bundesgasse, but camera teams can still be found in the Federal Palace itself most days, looking for politicians to interview.

Lobbyists

Lobbyists representing the interests of associations, businesses or other organisations in Parliament also come and go: each member of parliament is entitled to name two people who may enter the Parliament Building as guests.



Parliamentary lobby: meeting place for last-minute consultations



The domed hall: a place of great symbolism

The executive

THE GOVERNMENT



GOVERNMENT

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The seven members of the Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor are elected by Parliament every four years. The most recent election was held on 11 December 2019.

A governing college

THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

Simonetta Sommaruga



President of the Swiss Confederation

Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications
Member of the Federal Council since 2010

Party affiliation:



Guy Parmelin



Vice President of the Federal Council

Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research
Member of the Federal Council since 2016

Party affiliation:



Ueli Maurer



Head of the Federal Department of Finance

Member of the Federal Council since 2009

Party affiliation:



Alain Berset



Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs

Member of the Federal Council since 2012

Party affiliation:



Ignazio Cassis



Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Member of the Federal Council since 2017

Party affiliation:



Viola Amherd



Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

Member of the Federal Council since 2019

Party affiliation:



Karin Keller-Sutter



Head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police

Member of the Federal Council since 2019

Party affiliation:



Walter Thurnherr



Federal Chancellor since 2016

Party affiliation:



Seven equal members

The Federal Council is Switzerland's government. Its members are elected by Parliament for a four-year term of office. The most recent election of all its members was held on 11 December 2019, following the parliamentary elections on 20 October.

The position of president is held by a different member each year. The President of the Swiss Confederation in 2020 is Simonetta Sommaruga. She is equal to the other members, but chairs cabinet meetings and represents the government. The Federal Chancellor is the Federal Council's chief of staff. He too is elected by Parliament.

Government and head of the administration

The Federal Council has the task of governing the country. Each member of the Federal Council heads a government department.

The Federal Council holds a meeting every week. Particularly complex matters are addressed at special meetings. It takes decisions on more than 2000 items of business every year. The seven departments and the Federal Chancellery help to prepare the meetings.

The Federal Council sets strategies and goals and then draws up the relevant draft legislation. The views of broad sections of the population and industry are gathered in a consultation process. The Federal Council then submits the proposal to Parliament, which debates and reaches a decision on it.

The Federal Council manages the Confederation's finances through the budget and the state accounts. The final decisions on these matters also rest with Parliament.

Consensus and collegiality

As in Parliament, a concentration of power is avoided in the government; the members of the Federal Council are currently drawn from four political parties. Four members come from the German-speaking part of the country, two from the French-speaking part and one from the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland.

The Federal Council takes decisions as a collegial body: the members seek consensus to win majority support for their policies. They are also expected to defend the position of the Federal Council, even if it is contrary to their personal view or that of their party (principle of collegiality).

In contrast to systems in other countries, there is no clear distinction between government and opposition.

Duty to inform the public

The Federal Council is required to inform the Federal Assembly, cantons and the public not only about its decisions, but also about its situation analyses, planning and the measures it takes. It is supported in this by the Federal Chancellery and the Federal Council spokesperson, Vice Chancellor André Simonazzi.



President Simonetta Sommaruga and André Simonazzi at a media conference

www.admin.ch/tv (media conferences)

www.admin.ch/en-news (media releases)

From a one-party to a four-party government

- 1848 The Federal Council was composed of seven members of the Free Democratic Party (today FDP. The Liberals). The party governed alone for 43 years.
- 1891 The first member of the Catholic Conservatives (today CVP) joined the government; the second joined in 1919.
- 1929 The United Federal Assembly elected a member of the Farmers', Trades' and Citizens' Party (today SVP) to the Federal Council.
- 1943 The first Social Democrat (SP) entered the government; the second followed in 1951.
- 1959 The four strongest parties agreed to form a government by applying the 'magic formula': 2 FDP, 2 CVP, 2 SP, 1 SVP. The formula remained unchanged for 44 years.
- 2003 During the Federal Council elections, the SVP won a seat at the expense of the CVP.
- 2008 The two representatives of the SVP joined the newly founded Conservative Democratic Party (BDP).
- 2009 A member of the SVP was elected in place of a retiring BDP representative. The constellation was now 2 FDP, 2 SP, 1 SVP, 1 BDP, 1 CVP.
- 2015 The BDP representative stepped down. The United Federal Assembly elected an SVP representative in her place. The Federal Council members now represent four different parties: 2 FDP, 2 SP, 2 SVP, 1 CVP.



Film "The Federal Council – A Brief Guide"
www.youtube.com > "Der Schweizerische Bundesrat"

Organisation

FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION





The organisations with a white background are largely independent.

#Tech4Good
Switzerland, where innovation

Swiss innovation at the World Economic Forum in Davos: a solar power box that can be used for humanitarian aid if power supplies fail after a natural disaster.





The head of the FDFA is Ignazio Cassis. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2017.

From our Swiss chalets to the global arena

Switzerland is best known for its cosy chalets, model democracy, beautiful landscapes with enticing lakes, strong economy, progressive education, technology and research, and as a reliable negotiating partner. That's also how we are mostly seen in other countries.

Promoting the image of Switzerland abroad falls under the remit of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The FDFA employs around 5,500 people. Its areas of activity are as varied as the qualifications of its individual staff members. In order to represent Switzerland's interests and values at the international level, a whole spectrum of skills are required. The FDFA has its head office in Bern, comprising eight directorates (see next page), and is present around the globe with more than 170 embassies and consulates.

Communication: integral to foreign policy.

A commitment to the Constitution

The Swiss Constitution states that Switzerland shall "assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and [...] the peaceful co-existence of peoples". Strong international ties play a decisive role in this, played out by all of the FDFA's staff who represent Switzerland in their host countries. ▶

But in today's digitalised world, this is not enough to reach foreign policy goals. New technologies and means of communication are also needed to advance foreign policy, maintain secure international market access and consolidate the bilateral approach with our partners in Europe. To this end, purposeful and targeted communication helps to convey and elucidate our country and its achievements – both abroad and at home.

By maintaining a positive image, Switzerland is in a position to influence decisions taken abroad in our favour. In this way, the FDFA contributes to ensuring that the solid reputation of the Swiss 'chalet' can be built upon worldwide, and that the international community understands and appreciates Switzerland's interests and values.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

The FDFA formulates and coordinates foreign policy on behalf of the Federal Council, safeguards Switzerland's interests, and promotes its values abroad. It acts on the basis of the rule of law, universality and neutrality and in a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility. It operates a network of about 170 representations and roughly 200 honorary representations.

Expenses 2018 **CHF 2.95 billion**

Staff (full-time positions) 2018 **5499**

www.fdfa.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-FDFA

www.fdfa.admin.ch

The General Secretariat (GS) is the driving force behind the department's operations and its strategic orientation. The Secretary General supports and advises the head of the FDFA and coordinates Federal Council and parliamentary business. The GS is also responsible for promoting equal opportunities at the FDFA and for contract administration. It coordinates the FDFA's risk management and provides internal and external communication. The GS also includes Internal Audit and Presence Switzerland.

State Secretariat

The State Secretariat assists the head of department in developing and planning foreign policy. The State Secretary is responsible for Switzerland's relations with other countries and the international organisations, as well as for policy on security, peace, human rights and humanitarian policy. The StS also includes Protocol, which is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Confederation's rules on protocol, and the Crisis Management Centre, which publishes advice on travelling in foreign countries (www.fdfa.admin.ch/reisehinweise) and coordinates measures to protect Swiss nationals who find themselves in situations of conflict or social unrest, or who experience accidents, natural disasters, attacks or are kidnapped while abroad.

Directorate of Political Affairs PD

The Directorate of Political Affairs observes and analyses the world political situation and is responsible for safeguarding Switzerland's interests abroad. The nine political affairs divisions and the representations abroad all report to the State Secretary.

The geographical divisions are responsible for Switzerland's bilateral relations with other countries; the United Nations and International Organisations Division is responsible for Switzerland's policy in these organisations; the Human Security Division determines Switzerland's activities in the fields of civilian peacebuilding, human rights, and foreign policy on migration and humanitarian policy; the Sectoral Foreign Policies Division coordinates foreign policy with regard to economic issues, finance, education, science, transport, space, sustainability, environmental issues, energy and health and the Security Policy Division addresses international security matters.

Directorate of European Affairs DEA

www.fdfa.admin.ch/dea

The Directorate of European Affairs is the Swiss government's centre of expertise for all issues relating to Europe. It leads the negotiations with the EU in collaboration with the relevant specialised offices, coordinates Swiss policy on Europe, prepares decisions for the Federal Council, observes developments in the EU and European law, and analyses them and their consequences for Switzerland. In addition, the DEA is responsible for keeping the public informed about Switzerland's policy on Europe and European integration in general.

Directorate of International Law DIL

The Directorate of International Law safeguards Switzerland's rights and interests that derive from international law. It participates in the conclusion of international treaties and deals with the legal aspects of Swiss neutrality, human rights and the Geneva Conventions. The Swiss Maritime Navigation Office is part of the DIL.

Consular Directorate CD

As the central point of contact for Swiss nationals abroad, the Consular Directorate, together with the representations abroad, ensures the provision of efficient and friendly consular services worldwide. Within the Federal Administration it is the central coordination point for matters concerning Swiss citizens abroad. The CD coordinates the support the Confederation provides Swiss citizens abroad who need assistance. The FDFA Helpline (+41 800 24 7 365) is available 24/7, 365 days a year to answer enquiries. The CD also organises the issuance of visas together with the representations abroad.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

SDC

www.fdfa.admin.ch/sdc

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is responsible for the overall coordination of the Confederation's international development cooperation, cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS, and humanitarian assistance. It is active in the fight against poverty in the countries of the Global South and East, supports victims of crises and conflicts and, together with the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, provides emergency and reconstruction aid following natural disasters and armed conflicts.

Directorate for Resources DR

The Directorate for Resources manages and ensures the efficient use of the FDFA's human, financial and IT resources. As the department's centre of expertise for all matters relating to resources, the DR provides logistical services to both the FDFA's head office in Bern and to Switzerland's worldwide network of representations, which it maintains and runs. The Swiss Government Travel Centre, which is the centre of expertise for business travel matters for the entire Federal Administration, is part of the DR.





The FDHA seeks to assist those caring for family members so that they are better able to combine their careers and their role as carers.



The head of the FDHA is Alain Berset. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2012.

The Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) deals with a wide range of matters that directly affect people in Switzerland in their daily lives, e.g. health, pensions and culture. Society faces huge challenges in these areas.

A well-functioning health system

Switzerland has a well-functioning, high-quality health system. However, this system faces many challenges: rising costs due to advances in medicine and the ageing population, a growing number of patients suffering from chronic illnesses, and a lack of transparency. The government will work to improve the quality of the health system and to keep costs at a manageable level, with people's well-being at the centre of the equation.

Old-age pensions: Reform is needed to maintain pension levels.

Reform of the first and second pillars

As people live longer and the baby boomers (the generation born in the 1950s and 1960s) reach retirement age, the pension system is beginning to creak at the seams. Reform of the state and occupational pension systems is urgently needed to guarantee their long-term funding and to preserve current pension levels.

Enabling cultural participation

Culture and cultural activities are also facing major upheavals brought about by globalisation, digitalisation and greater individualisation in society. In this context, cultural policy aims to encourage participation in cultural activities, strengthen social cohesion in our linguistically and culturally diverse society and foster creativity and innovation.

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA

The FDHA is at the heart of everyday life in Switzerland. The FDHA is responsible for old age and survivors' insurance and the second pillar of the social insurance system, health, accident and invalidity insurance, drug and food safety, and animal health. Cultural affairs, family policy, equal opportunities for men and women and for people with disabilities, the fight against racism, statistics and even weather forecasting are further areas that fall under the FDHA's remit.

Expenses 2018	CHF 17.84 billion
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Staff (full-time positions) 2018	2448
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www.edi.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-FDHA

www.edi.admin.ch

As the hub between the head of department and the federal offices, the General Secretariat carries out planning, coordination, advisory and control functions. The Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations, the secretariat of the Federal Commission against Racism, the Service for Combating Racism and the Bureau for the Equality of People with Disabilities are also part of the General Secretariat.

Federal Office for Gender Equality FOGE

www.ebg.admin.ch

The FOGE is responsible for ensuring both de jure and de facto gender equality in Switzerland. It is particularly active in the areas of equal pay, work-life balance, and in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The FOGE provides funding for projects that promote gender equality. The secretariat of the Federal Commission for Women's Issues is affiliated to this office.

Federal Office of Culture FOC

www.bak.admin.ch

The FOC formulates the federal government's cultural policy. It supports artistic activities and cultural organisations, ensures the preservation of Switzerland's cultural heritage, historic property, monuments and archaeological sites, and promotes Switzerland's different linguistic and cultural communities. The FOC is the contact point for enquiries regarding looted art and the transfer of cultural property, and it manages a number of museums as well as the Confederation's art collection. The Swiss National Library, which includes the Swiss Literature Archive, the Swiss National Sound Archives in Lugano and the Dürrenmatt Centre in Neuchâtel, is also part of the FOC.

Swiss Federal Archives SFA

www.bar.admin.ch

The SFA stores documents belonging to the Confederation and makes them available to readers. The Archive contains original historical documents such as the Federal Constitution, all editions of the newsreel 'Filmwochenschau', and the minutes of Federal Council meetings. Documents can be consulted online or in the SFA reading room.

Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology MeteoSwiss

www.meteoswiss.admin.ch

As the national weather and climate service, MeteoSwiss is responsible for providing weather and climate information. Surface observation systems, weather radars, satellites, radio sounding and other instruments monitor the weather. MeteoSwiss warns the authorities and the public about approaching severe weather conditions and supplies basic data about climate change.

Federal Office of Public Health FOPH

www.foph.admin.ch

The FOPH and the cantons are jointly responsible for public health and for developing a national health policy. This includes the upkeep and development of social health and accident insurance and its supervision. The FOPH carries out prevention campaigns and runs programmes to promote healthy living. It works on behalf of the Federal Council and with partners to implement the Health 2030 strategy in order to adapt the Swiss healthcare system optimally to future challenges.

Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO

www.fsvo.admin.ch

The FSVO is responsible for food safety, nutrition, animal health and animal welfare, and supports the implementation in the cantons. It supervises imports of animals and animal products, and acts as the enforcement authority for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The FSVO is in charge of protecting the Swiss population from foodstuffs and utility articles which could pose risks to health or mislead consumers. The Institute of Virology and Immunology (IVI) is affiliated to the FSVO.

Federal Statistical Office FSO

www.statistics.admin.ch

The FSO is the federal office responsible for public statistics. It compiles statistical information on the current position and trends in demographics, the economy, society, education, research, land use and the environment. The information helps to shape public opinion and is used as an instrument for planning and control in key policy areas.

Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO

www.bsv.admin.ch

The FSIO ensures the smooth functioning of the social security system, constantly adapting it to the new challenges which arise. It is responsible for old-age and survivors' insurance (OASI), invalidity insurance, supplementary benefits, occupational benefits (pension funds), loss of earnings compensation for military and civilian service personnel, maternity payments and family allowances. It is also responsible at federal level for family, children's, youth and old age issues, generational relations and general socio-political issues.

Swiss Agency for Therapeutic

Products Swissmedic

www.swissmedic.ch

Swissmedic is the national authorisation and supervisory authority for drugs and medical products. The agency ensures that only high-quality, safe and effective medical products are available in Switzerland, thus making an important contribution to the protection of human and animal health.

Swiss National Museum SNM

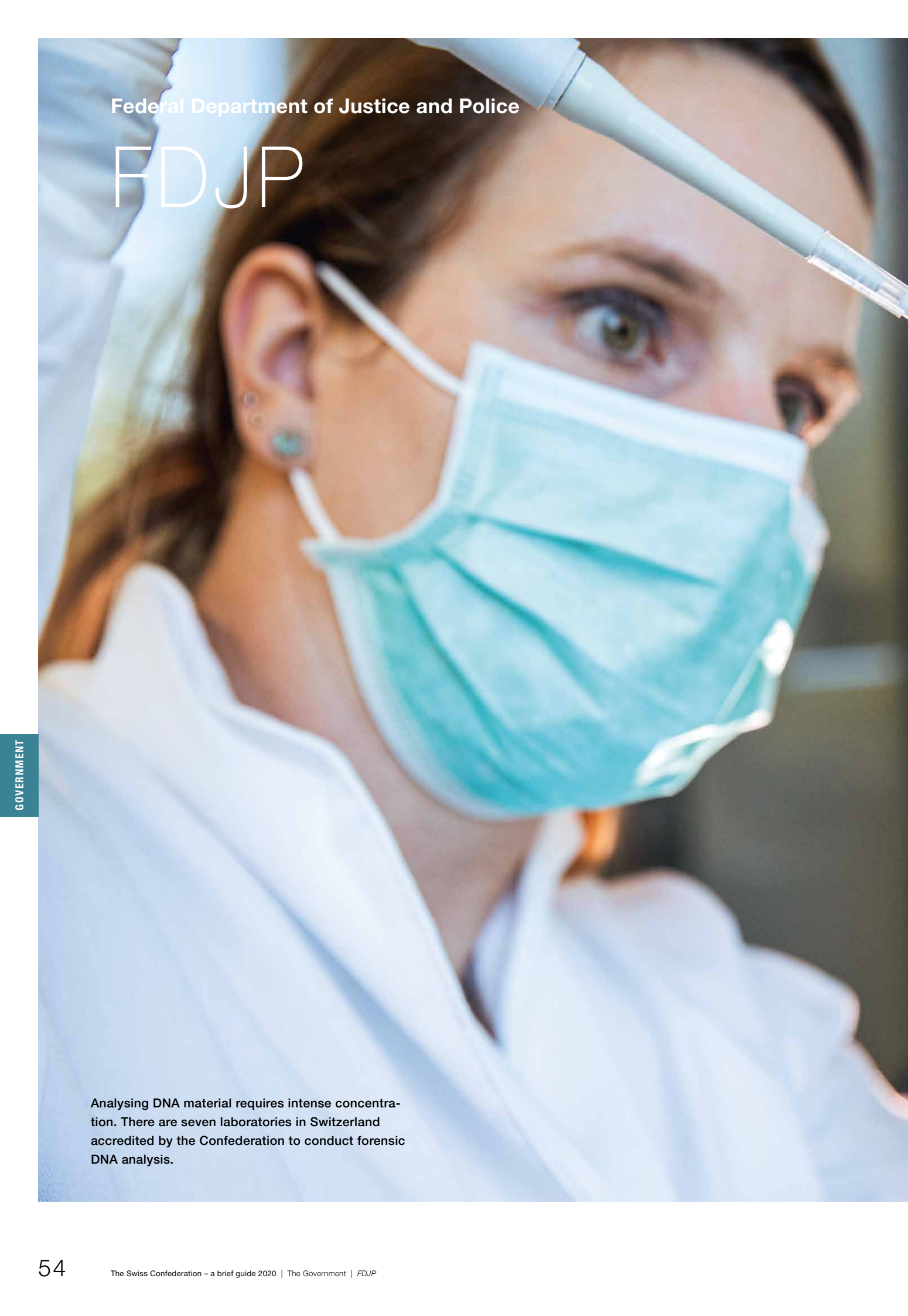
www.nationalmuseum.ch

The Swiss National Museum in Zurich is the most popular museum of historical culture in Switzerland. Along with the Château de Prangins and the Forum Schweizer Geschichte Schwyz, it is part of the Swiss National Museum (SNM). The Collection Centre in Affoltern am Albis completes the group of museums; here the largest collection of cultural objects in the country is researched, conserved and stored.

Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

www.prohelvetia.ch

Pro Helvetia supports artistic creativity in Switzerland, promotes Swiss art and culture in Switzerland and abroad, encourages international exchange between cultures and promotes artists and their art. As an autonomous public foundation, it supports the cultural promotion activities of the cantons and communes.



Federal Department of Justice and Police

FDJP

GOVERNMENT

Analysing DNA material requires intense concentration. There are seven laboratories in Switzerland accredited by the Confederation to conduct forensic DNA analysis.



The head of the FDJP is Karin Keller-Sutter. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2019.

Boosting labour potential in Switzerland

The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), which is part of the FDJP, sets out the criteria for entering Switzerland and living and working here. It also decides who can obtain asylum from persecution in this country. The admission of foreign workers is regulated to a large extent by the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the European Union, which ensures that Swiss companies can easily recruit from EU member states the workers they urgently require, with a minimum of red tape. At the same time, it is the EJPD's job to ensure that immigration to Switzerland is no higher than required. It therefore boosts the labour potential already available in Switzerland, for example by promoting measures to help refugees and temporarily admitted persons find work.

New legal instruments for Switzerland's security

Ensuring security

The FDJP is responsible for ensuring that the security services in Switzerland have all the legal instruments necessary to protect the civilian population. It is currently working on a new law under which potential terrorists may be put under house arrest. It is also drawing up changes to an existing law that will allow the prosecution services and police to use new DNA analysis methods in their investigations. Using these methods, external characteristics such

as hair colour, eye colour and skin colour can also be established. This helps investigations, as the number of possible suspects can be narrowed down and the innocent can be excluded more rapidly.

Modern services

More and more business processes are being carried out digitally. For several years now, the FDJP has offered online services such as obtaining an excerpt from the criminal records or ordering a passport. Its e-DEBA project has revolutionised the debt collection and bankruptcy system. The Federal Act on Electronic Identification Services (E-ID Act) also heralds a major new step. The new law will establish clear rules on providing identification online and so ensure that people using the internet can do so even more easily and enjoy even greater security.

Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP

The remit of the FDJP covers a wide range of matters. It deals with socio-political issues such as the coexistence of Swiss and foreign nationals, asylum issues or the fight against crime. Other areas of responsibility include the civil register and gambling supervision.

Expenses 2018	CHF 2.88 billion
Staff (full-time positions) 2018	2529

www.ejpd.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-FDJP

www.ejpd.admin.ch

The General Secretariat supports and advises the head of department in her daily work, ensures that the different sections of the department cooperate smoothly and manages human resources and finances. It also includes the IT Service Centre (ISC-FDJP), which develops and maintains IT applications for justice, police and migration authorities in Switzerland.

Post and Telecommunications

Surveillance Service PTSS

www.li.admin.ch

The PTSS monitors postal and telecommunications services on the instructions of the law enforcement authorities or of the intelligence service and with authorisation from the courts. It also ensures that surveillance measures are applied in conformity with the law.

State Secretariat for Migration SEM

www.sem.admin.ch

SEM decides the conditions under which a person can enter Switzerland and live and work in the country. It also decides who is granted protection from persecution. In conjunction with the cantons, it organises accommodation for asylum seekers and the repatriation of those who do not need Switzerland's protection. SEM also coordinates integration efforts and is responsible for naturalisation at federal level. It is involved in international efforts to control migration flows.

Federal Office of Justice FOJ

www.bj.admin.ch

The FOJ drafts legislation on enactments for civil, criminal, constitutional and administrative law. In addition, it advises the Federal Administration in all legislative matters and is responsible for oversight in several areas. The FOJ manages the register of criminal convictions and cooperates with foreign authorities in mutual assistance matters. At international level, it represents Switzerland in the Strasbourg human rights bodies and several other organisations. The FOJ also decides on the compensation paid to victims of compulsory social measures.

Federal Office of Police fedpol

www.fedpol.admin.ch

fedpol directs Switzerland's national and international police cooperation activities and conducts federal investigations into serious crimes. It protects individuals and institutions for which the Confederation is responsible and runs national information systems and centres of expertise. Key areas of activity include fighting terrorism, combating organised crime and exposing money laundering. In its role as the federal police force, the office cooperates closely with its partners in Switzerland, in Europe and beyond.

Federal Institute of Intellectual Property IIP

www.ige.ch

The IIP is the national competence centre for all questions regarding trademarks, patents, and indications of source, design protection or copyright. The IIP drafts legislation and represents Switzerland in this field abroad and in international organisations. Individuals and companies can protect their inventions and creations against counterfeit by registering them with the IIP.

Federal Institute of Metrology METAS

www.metas.ch

The services offered by METAS ensure that measuring and testing can be performed in Switzerland to the degree of accuracy required by industry, research and administration. Furthermore, METAS ensures that measurements taken to safeguard the public and the environment are correct and comply with the law.

Swiss Institute for Comparative Law SICL

www.sicl.ch

The SICL is an autonomous federal agency. Its main task is to provide objective information and opinions on foreign and international law to the courts and administrative bodies, and to not-for-profit and international organisations. The Institute also carries out comparative law research on selected current topics, including international law.

Federal Audit Oversight Authority FAOA

www.rab-asr.ch

The FAOA is an autonomous federal authority responsible for issuing licences to individuals and companies for the provision of statutory auditing services, and for supervising auditors that provide auditing services in the public sector. The FAOA's activities contribute to the reliability of financial reporting.

Federal Gaming Board FGB

www.esbk.admin.ch

The FGB handles licence applications for gambling institutions (physical and online) in Switzerland. It ensures that gambling laws are respected, in particular as regards safety and transparency, and also that anti-money laundering laws are adhered to. The FGB also ensures that casinos implement the gambling safety and social code, investigates illegal gambling activities in Switzerland and levies the gaming tax.

Federal Commission on Migration FCM

www.ekm.admin.ch

The FCM is an extra-parliamentary commission. It advises the Federal Council and the Federal Administration on migration issues, promotes social cohesion by supporting projects and publishes studies and recommendations regarding migration policy.

Federal Arbitration Commission for the Exploitation of Copyrights and Related Rights FACO

www.eschk.admin.ch

Authors receive royalties on their musical, literary and audiovisual works according to certain rates, when these are transmitted, publicly performed or published. The Arbitration Commission examines and approves these rates.

National Commission for the Prevention of Torture NCPT

www.nkvf.admin.ch

The NCPT checks compliance with minimum guarantees under its statutory control mandate and regularly visits all detention centres in Switzerland, ensuring that torture and inhuman or degrading treatment are prevented.

Federal Department of Defence,
Civil Protection and Sport

DDPS



A new generation of fighter aircraft will protect the population from aerial attack following the F/A-18 era (pictured here in the skies above Lucerne). They will be financed through the regular armed forces budget.



The head of the DDPS is Viola Amherd. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2019.

Switzerland needs strong armed forces

The armed forces are by far the largest organisation responsible for Switzerland's safety and security. Their duties are not simply limited to times of war; they have a wide variety of daily tasks, such as identifying unknown aircraft or assisting the civilian authorities in clearing up operations after flooding. In addition, they have to deal with threats from cyber space.

For the military to be able to carry out these tasks, it must constantly adapt to new threats. This is also the aim of the Armed Forces Development Programme, the implementation of which will be completed by the end of 2022. With this reform, the armed forces will be able to deploy more quickly, will be better trained, and will consolidate their regional presence.

The DDPS keeps Switzerland safe and fit.

New fighter aircraft: highest priority

The Air2030 programme, the renewal of airspace protection, is a top priority this year. The current fighter aircraft will be obsolete by 2030. The new, modern combat aircraft must be capable of protecting Switzerland's people from air attacks for the next 30 years. Funding has been secured: the regular military budget will cover the fighter jets' purchase. This means the procurement will not affect other areas of the federal budget.

The Federal Council and Parliament want to involve the population in the decision. Voters will decide in a referendum on the fundamental question whether new fighter aircraft should be purchased at a price of up to CHF 6 billion, and the Federal Council and Parliament will decide on the specific procurement.

Protecting the environment and promoting sport

The responsibilities of the armed forces are significant, and they also take environmental protection seriously, with the DDPS striving to become a model department. In the future, for example, military buildings will systematically be equipped with solar panels.

One thing is clear: protecting the people remains our main task. The DDPS protects Switzerland, and, through the Federal Office of Sport, it also keeps Switzerland on the move. The Federal Council wants to expand its sports promotion activities. Here too, ground-breaking work is underway this year, including the development of new sport facilities and additional contributions to school sport camps.

Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

Responsibility for Switzerland's security lies with the DDPS. The Swiss Armed Forces defend the country and its people, support the civilian authorities, and promote peace in international forums, while the Federal Office for Civil Protection helps to protect against disasters. The DDPS also provides the Armed Forces and third parties with systems, vehicles, materials and buildings, ensures the Confederation's civilian intelligence service, promotes sport and its values, and carries out modern topographical surveys.

Expenses 2018	CHF 7.06 billion
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Staff (full-time positions) 2018	11 596
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www.vbs.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-DDPS

www.gs-vbs.admin.ch

The General Secretariat supports the head of the DDPS in his capacity as a member of the Federal Council and in managing the department. It implements the strategic objectives of the Federal Council and head of department, drafts the corresponding policy guidelines, and coordinates their implementation by the DDPS groups and offices. The General Secretariat manages, coordinates and monitors the use of the department's budget, and is also responsible for the DDPS Damage Compensation Centre, the department's integral security, and its cyber defence strategy. Assigned to the General Secretariat for administrative purposes are the Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General, the independent supervisory authority that monitors the Federal Intelligence Service and the Swiss Security Network Delegate's Office.

Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General

www.aa.admin.ch

The Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General ensures that the military criminal justice authorities can fulfil their task independently of Armed Forces command and of the Administration. It initiates and monitors criminal proceedings in the military justice system, and fulfils all other procedural obligations and duties assigned to it by the legislature.

Federal Intelligence Service FIS

www.fis.admin.ch

The Federal Intelligence Service FIS combats terrorism, violent extremism, espionage, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. It monitors strategic developments, evaluates the threat situation in support of the political decision-makers, and issues alerts in the event of impending crises or unusual changes. The service is supervised by various bodies of the Administration and by Parliament.

Defence sector

www.army.ch

The Defence sector is headed by the chief of the Swiss Armed Forces, who holds the rank of lieutenant general. The Armed Forces Staff is responsible for the development, planning, resource allocation and steering in the Armed Forces. Operations Command plans and ensures the required level of readiness of the forces and operations for a wide range of missions including security for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, peace promotion or disaster relief in the case of avalanches, flooding or forest fires in Switzerland or abroad. The head of Joint Training Command bears overall responsibility for training the Land Forces and the Air Force. Joint Training Command is also responsible for training conscript officers and professional soldiers. Support Command is responsible for logistics and command support. The Logistics Organisation ensures the supply and return of weapons, equipment and food, maintenance and infrastructure, medical services and the transport troops. The Command Support Organisation provides all the necessary electronic support services.

Federal Office for Defence

Procurement [armasuisse](http://armasuisse.ch)

www.armasuisse.ch

armasuisse is the DDPS competence centre for procurement, technology and real estate. It ensures that the Armed Forces and third parties are supplied with the systems, land vehicles, aeroplanes and helicopters, equipment and buildings they require. It manages approximately 7,500 properties, sites and 24,000 hectares of land belonging to the DDPS. As armasuisse is responsible for weapons, equipment and real estate during their entire life cycle, it is also responsible for their liquidation at the end of their useful life.

Federal Office of Topography [swisstopo](http://swisstopo.ch)

www.swisstopo.ch

Geospatial information in the form of maps, images and data, above or below the surface of the Earth, are a key element in the infrastructure of any country. Transparent and sensible decisions, not only on political and social issues but also in our own private lives, are inconceivable without a sound awareness of our surroundings. The Federal Office of Topography swisstopo ensures that our landscape and what is beneath it are reliably and sustainably documented. It coordinates the provision of geoinformation at federal level and with the cantons, oversees the official cadastral survey, runs the Institute for Military Geography and operates the federal geoportal with the map viewer map.geo.admin.ch.

Federal Office for Civil Protection FOCP

www.civilprotection.ch

In the event of disasters and emergencies, the Office ensures cooperation with the five partner organisations: the police, fire and health services, technical operations and civil defence. Responsibility for civil protection lies mainly with the cantons. The FOCP takes care of the general planning and coordination of protection in the areas of early warning and alert systems, training and protective infrastructure. All relevant information on events in Switzerland is published on the Alertswiss website and app. The National Emergency Operations Centre and the Spiez Laboratory are also part of the Office. In the event of incidents involving elevated levels of radioactivity, the National Emergency Operations Centre warns the general public and, if necessary, orders implementation of protection measures. The Spiez Laboratory is Switzerland's institute for nuclear, biological and chemical protection. Its services are increasingly in international demand.

Federal Office of Sport FOSPO

www.baspo.ch

The Federal Office of Sport promotes sport and physical activity for all. It manages the Confederation's most important sport-promotion programme, Youth+Sport, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Sports Magglingen (Bern), a renowned education, training and research facility. The sports centres in Magglingen and Tenero (Ticino) provide state-of-the-art education and training facilities for clubs, schools and associations.





Protecting against cyberrisk is a matter for the boss: Florian Schütz, the Federal Cyber Security Delegate, reports directly to the head of the FDF.



The head of the FDF is Ueli Maurer. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2009.

Putting a stop to the cybercriminals

Hacker attacks on IT infrastructures are unfortunately part of everyday life today. In order to avoid the annoyance and costs that are inevitably associated with such attacks, all companies and private users are required to assume their own responsibility. But the state also wants to become more involved in this area in order to support the population and businesses in protecting against cyberrisks. In the future, the federal government will have a National Cyber Security Centre, where all aspects will converge. This will be led by a Federal Cyber Security Delegate who will report directly to the Head of the FDF. The National Cyber Security Centre bundles the existing expertise and is the contact point for private individuals, the business community and universities.

Cybersecurity – a challenge for private individuals and the state

Implementing international rules on tax transparency

In autumn 2018, Switzerland began exchanging tax information with various partner states. The so-called automatic exchange of information (AEOI) is intended to improve tax transparency and thus prevent cross-border tax evasion. Currently, more than 100 countries – including all

major financial centres – have committed themselves to implementing the AEOI. The Federal Council regularly checks whether the partner states comply with the requirements of the international AEOI standard. This ensures that Switzerland does not transmit any data to countries that do not meet or violate the internationally agreed requirements with respect to confidentiality and security of the data exchanged.

Paying due attention to finances

The federal budget, now with a volume of CHF 75 billion, is currently on a sound basis. It was possible to use the surpluses achieved in recent years for debt reduction. Since its peak in 2005, the debt burden has been reduced from CHF 130 billion to CHF 99 billion and considerable amounts could be saved on interest expenditure. But above all, fiscal policy must look to the future: in view of the large number of major projects, it remains a challenge to ensure that the budget stays balanced. The Federal Council and Parliament continue to be called upon to maintain spending discipline.

Federal Department of Finance FDF

The FDF collects taxes and duties, and checks the movement of persons and goods at the border. It also provides services for the entire Federal Administration, ranging from IT to human resources and infrastructure support. The FDF fine-tunes its tax and fiscal policies to ensure the efficiency of the Confederation and Switzerland as a business location.

Expenses 2018	CHF 15.45 billion
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Staff (full-time positions) 2018	8701
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www.efd.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-FDF

www.efd.admin.ch

The General Secretariat acts as the intermediary between the head of department and the federal offices, and between the cantons, journalists and communication officers. It plans and coordinates the department's items of business for Parliament and the Federal Council. It provides information to the public about all Federal Council and FDF business.

State Secretariat for International Finance SIF

www.sif.admin.ch

SIF represents Switzerland's interests in financial, monetary and tax matters in partner countries and in international bodies. It is committed to maintaining good framework conditions to ensure that Switzerland can be a secure, competitive and globally recognised financial centre and location for business. SIF is also responsible for implementing the Federal Council's financial market policy.

Federal Finance Administration FFA

www.efv.admin.ch

The FFA is the guardian of the public purse and ensures that the federal government can meet its payment obligations. It prepares the federal government's budget, plan and financial statements. The debt brake, a critical look at the departments' financial conduct and consideration of the economic situation are the bedrock for a sound fiscal policy.

Federal Office of Personnel FOPER

www.epa.admin.ch

As an employer, the federal government is facing stiff competition from other companies. FOPER is responsible for the federal government's personnel and pension policy. FOPER ensures that the Federal Administration remains a competitive employer.

Federal Tax Administration FTA

www.estv.admin.ch

The FTA raises a major part of the Confederation's receipts and so ensures that the Confederation can perform its public duties. It therefore collects VAT, direct federal tax, withholding tax, stamp duty and military service exemption tax. The FTA also provides international administrative assistance in tax matters.

Federal Customs Administration FCA

www.customs.admin.ch

The FCA makes sure the cross-border movement of goods and persons is as smooth as possible. Customs officers are responsible for overseeing the movement of goods. The Border Guard is the uniformed and armed section of the FCA. It handles security, customs and migration tasks. The FCA also collects VAT, mineral oil tax and tobacco duty. At the beginning of 2018, the Swiss Alcohol Board was incorporated into the FCA, where it now oversees the implementation of alcohol legislation as the Alcohol and Tobacco Division.

Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunications FOITT

www.bit.admin.ch

As the federal competence centre for IT, the FOITT provides support for business processes in the Federal Administration and ensures the proper functioning of telecommunications between all federal offices in Switzerland and abroad. The FOITT plays a key role in providing an electronic link between the Confederation and the public.

Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics FOBL

www.bbl.admin.ch

The FOBL builds, maintains and manages the federal government's civilian properties, which include the Federal Palace, administrative buildings and the Swiss embassies around the world. As the central procurement office, it buys IT resources, office equipment and publications for the entire Federal Administration.

Federal IT Steering Unit FITSU

www.fitsu.admin.ch

The FITSU is responsible for implementing the information and communication technologies strategy in the Federal Administration. It also works with the Confederation, cantons and communes to coordinate the implementation of the eGovernment Strategy Switzerland and manages the Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance (MELANI).

Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority

FINMA

www.finma.ch

FINMA provides the effective, competent and independent oversight which is necessary for the supervision of the financial sector. It is committed to protecting creditors, investors and insured persons, and monitors the financial markets' ability to function. FINMA supervises banks, insurance companies, stock exchanges and funds requiring authorisation.

Swiss Federal Audit Office SFAO

www.efk.admin.ch

The SFAO is the Confederation's supreme audit institution. It is an independent institution and audits the financial conduct of the Federal Administration, the courts and the numerous semi-state organisations. It inspects the Confederation's state financial statements annually. It aims to ensure that tax revenue is used economically and effectively.

Federal Pension Fund PUBLICA

www.publica.ch

As a non-profit collective occupational pension fund, PUBLICA manages assets totalling around CHF 38 billion. With 64,000 insured persons and 42,000 pension recipients, PUBLICA is one of the largest pension funds in Switzerland.

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research

EAER

A young man doing civilian service and an employee of the WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF carrying out maintenance on an automatic measuring station in Davos.



The head of the EAER is Guy Parmelin. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2016.

Fit for the digital world

Data networking is leading to the creation of totally new products, services and business models. This digital transformation has an impact not only on technical processes: people are also affected. Companies are having to reorganise and often to restructure. Working methods and forms of cooperation are changing for workers, who must support the process of transformation if it is to be successful. This means they need to be involved in it. They need training to prepare them for the challenges of the future. Many job profiles are changing, and new ones are emerging. The cantons, Confederation and private sector are jointly involved in defining and applying the new profiles.

A trained workforce fit to face the challenges of the future

Vocation or occupation?

Digitalisation is transforming the world of work. Until recently, people tended to train for a trade or profession and stay in it for their entire career. This is no longer the case today. People frequently learn a second profession just a few years after qualifying in their first, and do not find out what they really want to do until much later on in life. Internships and work experience give young people a taste of professions that they might wish to pursue. The opportunities in part-time training are being constantly expanded, and this will ensure that the workforce is

equipped with the skills required by the labour market of the future.

Competition as the basis of free trade

A skilled workforce is the backbone of our economy, boosting the innovative strength and competitiveness of the private sector. Export-oriented businesses need to be especially competitive. And they need to be able to access foreign markets with as much freedom and as little discrimination as possible.

Free trade agreements (FTAs) are important instruments in achieving these aims. Switzerland already has 30 FTAs with 40 different countries, as well as with the EU and EFTA states. The Federal Council seeks to sign agreements with all of Switzerland's major trading partners. Last year saw successful negotiations with Indonesia and the Mercosur states, and Switzerland is currently engaged in discussions on FTAs with several other countries.

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER

The EAER sets the framework conditions for the economy and the labour market, with the aim of sustainable growth and prosperity for the whole country. The department is also responsible for policy on education and research. With this remit alone almost everyone living in Switzerland is directly affected by the work of the EAER, but other important aspects of everyday life play an important role too, such as agriculture and the food we eat, housing and the roof over our heads, and provision with essential supplies in the event of a crisis.

Expenses 2018	CHF 12.24 billion
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Staff (full-time positions) 2018	2081
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www.wbf.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-EAER

www.wbf.admin.ch

The General Secretariat is the staff and coordination office of the head of department. It manages the department's needs in terms of human and financial resources, prepares parliamentary and Federal Council business and is responsible for keeping the general public informed about the EAER's activities. The Federal Consumer Affairs Bureau FCAB reports to the General Secretariat for administrative matters. Among other things the FCAB is responsible for granting financial assistance to consumer organisations, ensuring the declaration of origin of wood and wood products, and together with SECO runs a product safety information and reporting office.

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

www.seco.admin.ch

SECO deals with the key issues concerning economic policy. It aims to promote sustainable economic growth, high employment and fair working conditions. To achieve this it creates the necessary regulatory, economic and foreign economic policy conditions. The range of issues that SECO deals with includes labour market policy, employee protection, the dismantling of trade barriers, access to foreign markets, and economic development and cooperation.

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI

www.seri.admin.ch

Education, research and innovation (ERI) are of fundamental importance for Switzerland, whose success depends on the generation, dissemination and exploitation of expertise and knowledge. SERI is mandated to strengthen and further develop the quality of the ERI system in collaboration with the cantons, business, higher education institutions and bodies active in promoting research and innovation.

Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

www.foag.admin.ch

Switzerland is shaped to a large extent by its agriculture. To ensure that this remains so, the FOAG seeks to ensure a thriving agricultural and food sector capable of achieving market success through its high-quality products, sustainable production methods and the measures it implements to preserve resources. The FOAG is committed to establishing conditions conducive to promoting entrepreneurial capacity in agriculture. The research institute, Agroscope, provides the scientific basis to achieve this.

Federal Office for National Economic Supply

FONES

www.fones.admin.ch

In its capacity as a centre of expertise in matters regarding security of supply, the FONES, in close cooperation with the private sector, partner authorities and the cantons, ensures that serious short-term supply shortages of important goods and services do not result in significant disruption for the Swiss population and economy.

Federal Office for Housing FOH

www.bwo.admin.ch

Housing is a basic need and an important economic asset. The FOH promotes a housing market that is attractive for investors and supplies enough residential space in all price categories. The FOH provides targeted financial support for the construction of non-profit residential buildings. It seeks to reconcile the interests of landlords and tenants in tenancy legislation.

Federal Office for Civilian Service CIVI

www.zivi.admin.ch

The CIVI is responsible for all aspects of civilian service. Civilian service is a compulsory service for young men who object to doing military service on grounds of conscience; it provides services to the community where resources are scarce and assumes civilian responsibilities in security policy.

Office of the Price Supervisor

www.preisueberwacher.admin.ch

The price supervisor intervenes in situations where prices increase excessively owing to a lack of free market competition. The price supervisor is primarily active in the health and infrastructure sectors.

Competition Commission COMCO

www.weko.admin.ch

COMCO's task is to ensure open markets. It intervenes in cases of cartel formation, abuse of market power, mergers that threaten open markets, and state obstacles to competition. In its capacity as 'advocate of competition' it provides information and advice to companies and government authorities.

Federal Institutes of Technology

Group ETH Domain

www.ethrat.ch

The ETH Domain consists of the two federal institutes of technology, ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne, and the four research institutes, the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), the Swiss Federal Laboratory for Materials Testing and Research (Empa) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag). The ETH Board is the strategic management and supervisory body of the ETH Domain. It supervises development plans, carries out control activities and ensures good coordination among its partners.

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET

www.sfivet.swiss

SFIVET is Switzerland's expert organisation for vocational education and training. It offers basic and continuing training to VET professionals, conducts VET research, contributes to the development of occupations and supports international cooperation in vocational and professional education and training. It has regional campuses in Zollikofen near Bern (main campus), Lausanne and Lugano, as well as off-campus space in Olten and Zurich.

Swiss Innovation Agency Innosuisse

www.innosuisse.ch

Innosuisse funds innovation projects run jointly by companies and higher education institutions, helps start-ups to launch their business ideas and promotes the transfer of knowledge and technology between academia and industry.

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport,
Energy and Communications

DETEC

Moorland regeneration at Les Ponts-de-Martel (NE)
improves the network of valuable habitats.



The head of DETEC is Simonetta Sommaruga. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2010. She is President of the Swiss Confederation in 2020.

Nature needs space to thrive. But humans are taking up more and more of the space available – building houses, roads and railways which carve up the countryside. Valuable pastureland and moorland is disappearing. Transport, industry and agriculture contaminate lakes and rivers and pollute the air with harmful substances. This has drastic consequences for biodiversity, with the numbers of many animal and plant species in decline. In Switzerland, eighty per cent of reptile species and 40 per cent of bird species are now endangered. Some species have already disappeared completely, for example the crested lark and the osprey.

DETEC works to preserve the diversity of flora and fauna.

No fruit without bees

These changes usually go unnoticed, even though the natural resources upon which we depend are being destroyed. The decline in insect populations has a direct effect on our food supply: if there are no longer any bees to pollinate plants, then no fruit can develop. Biodiversity is also the basis for clean drinking water and good quality air.

The decline in biodiversity also affects some areas of the economy, such as the pharmaceutical industry. A range of different organisms provide the basis for the production of certain drugs, such as antibiotics. And aspirin, for example, was once extracted from willow bark.

The need to act quickly

For all these reasons, the Federal Council wants to ramp up efforts to prevent habitat loss and the decline in animal and plant species. It has adopted an action plan of measures designed to take rapid effect, to be implemented by DETEC along with the cantons, the farming community and nature conservationists. DETEC is working to ensure that particularly valuable habitats for animals and plants are preserved and interconnected – e.g. via continuous hedges, naturally flowing streams and rivers, forest edges rich in natural diversity and open spaces in built-up areas. It also aims to reduce pollutants in the soil, water and air and to limit soil loss.

Furthermore, DETEC promotes environmental education activities to boost knowledge about the importance of biodiversity – with projects at all levels, from primary schools to vocational schools – based on the premise that well-informed citizens take care of the environment.

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

DETEC is Switzerland's 'ministry of infrastructure'. Roads, railways, power lines: all the things that hold our country together fall within DETEC's remit. The department is also responsible for Switzerland's soil, water, air, flora, fauna and the countryside. These natural resources are the bases of life, but are under pressure due to human activity. Maintaining these resources is one of DETEC's principal responsibilities.

Expenses 2018	CHF 12.58 billion
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Staff (full-time positions) 2018	2242
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www.uvek.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-DETEC

www.uvek.admin.ch

The overlapping nature of many items of business requires extensive coordination with DETEC's specialised offices and other departments. The General Secretariat takes on this task. It prepares items of business for the Federal Council, supports political planning, acts as an intermediary between DETEC and Parliament and is responsible for the department's external communication. In addition, it also acts as owner of Swiss Post, SBB, Swisscom and Skyguide and supervises the implementation of the strategic aims set out by the Federal Council.

Federal Office of Transport FOT

www.fot.admin.ch

The Federal Office of Transport FOT manages the progressive expansion and financing of rail infrastructure. It carries out the tasks set by the Federal Council and Parliament, monitors compliance in terms of cost and deadlines, and is also responsible for safety supervision in public transport.

Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA

www.foca.admin.ch

The FOCA ensures the high safety standards in Swiss civil aviation, which are primarily based on internationally agreed standards. In addition to its supervisory activity, it is responsible for the preparation and implementation of decision-making on civil aviation policy. The office is actively involved in international aviation organisations to ensure that Switzerland's interests are taken into account.

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE

www.sfoe.admin.ch

The Federal Council's energy policy is oriented towards improving energy efficiency, promoting renewable energy sources, particularly hydropower, developing the electricity grid, and increasing energy research and international cooperation. It puts these energy policy principles into practice and draws up, for example, regulations on the energy consumption of household appliances, consumer electronics, light bulbs and electric motors. The aim is to ensure that Switzerland will still have sufficient, safe, affordable and environmentally friendly energy supplies in the future.

Federal Roads Office FEDRO

www.astra.admin.ch

FEDRO is mandated by the Federal Council and Parliament to take responsibility for expanding and maintaining the national road network. In addition, it is also responsible for the implementation of the 'Via sicura' road safety programme, the aim of which is to further reduce the number of people killed or injured in road accidents. Only well-trained drivers with safe vehicles should be driving on safe roads.

Federal Office of Communications BAKOM

www.bakom.admin.ch

Making calls, sending emails or text messages, surfing on the internet – all this requires a powerful communications infrastructure. OFCOM helps to ensure that this is the case throughout Switzerland. It distributes the revenues from television and radio licence fees to the regional broadcasters and to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, and ensures that print media benefit from reduced postage rates. It also oversees the provision of payment services by Swiss Post.

Federal Office for the Environment FOEN

www.foen.admin.ch

Natural resources such as water, soil and air are under pressure because they are frequently being overexploited. Switzerland's environmental policy aims to ensure that the country's natural resources remain intact for future generations. One of the FOEN's key tasks is to conserve ecosystems with their flora and fauna as the basis of life. The FOEN also concerns itself with the causes of climate change and its consequences. It supports cantons and communes to prepare for flooding, rockslides and avalanches by keeping protective forests intact or by renaturalising rivers to protect roads and residential areas.

Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE

www.are.admin.ch

Coping with a growing population, increasing mobility and greater demand for living space – as well as protecting the countryside: these are the parameters within which ARE operates. To protect land that is becoming ever more scarce, it promotes and oversees legislation on residential development. ARE contributes to improving coordination between transport infrastructure and urban development. The spatial concept drawn up jointly by the Confederation, the cantons, cities and communes under ARE's lead sets out the guidelines for future spatial development.

Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI

www.ensi.ch

The Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of nuclear installations in Switzerland. ENSI therefore supervises Switzerland's five nuclear power stations, the interim storage sites for radioactive waste and the nuclear research units at the Paul Scherrer Institute, Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and the University of Basel.

Federal Chancellery

FCh



The Federal Chancellor and the two vice chancellors are always present at Federal Council meetings.



The Federal Chancellery is headed by Walter Thurnherr. He has been the Federal Chancellor since 2016.

Staff office of the Federal Council

The Federal Chancellery was established in 1803 and as such is the oldest federal institution. It serves as a hub between the federal government, the Administration, Parliament and the People.

The Federal Chancellor is elected by Parliament for four years in the same way as the members of the Federal Council. As the Federal Council's chief of staff, he ensures the proper functioning of the government. Together with the two vice chancellors, he attends the meetings of the Federal Council. The Federal Chancellor can submit proposals on all Federal Council business, but has no voting rights.

Federal Chancellery FCh

The Federal Chancellery is the staff office of the Federal Council. It prepares the meetings of the Federal Council and informs Parliament and the public of the decisions taken. It verifies the legality of initiatives and referendums and makes sure that national elections and votes are conducted properly. It publishes official texts in several languages.

Expenses 2018	CHF 79 million
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Staff (full-time positions) 2018	204
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www.bk.admin.ch



Planning for the Federal Council

The policy of the Federal Council is incorporated into a planning process. The Federal Chancellery prepares the planning instruments in close cooperation with the departments to produce a four-year legislature plan, which serves as a basis for the annual objectives. In its annual report, the Federal Council reports on whether it has achieved those objectives.

Preparing Federal Council meetings

The Federal Council generally meets once a week. The Federal Chancellery manages the agenda. Before the Federal Council considers the items of business, the departments and federal offices can submit their views and make proposals. The Federal Chancellery coordinates this joint reporting procedure and reviews the items of business from a formal and legal point of view.

Communicating Federal Council decisions

After every Federal Council meeting, the Federal Council Spokesperson goes before the press to announce the Federal Council's decisions. He is often accompanied by one or more members of the Federal Council and experts from the Federal Administration, who are available to answer questions from journalists.

www.admin.ch/tv (media conferences)

www.admin.ch/en-news (media releases)

Following the meetings of the Federal Council, the Federal Chancellery also informs all seven departments about the decisions taken. The Federal Chancellery publishes the Federal Council decisions and reports in the Federal Gazette in the three official languages. It publishes new or amended acts and ordinances in the Official Compilation of Federal Legislation.

www.admin.ch/federallaw

Publishing information through a range of channels

Before a popular vote is held, the country's nearly five million eligible voters receive a pamphlet about the proposals submitted to a popular vote. The Federal Chancellery works with the departments to prepare the pamphlet. Before the federal elections, the Federal Chancellery distributes a guide on how to go about voting. The Federal Chancellery provides information about the activities and characteristics of the federal government and the federal authorities in publications such as 'The Swiss Confederation, a brief guide' and on two websites.

www.admin.ch (Government and administration)

www.ch.ch (Confederation and cantons)

www.youtube.com > «Der Schweizerische Bundesrat»

www.twitter.com/BR_Sprecher (Federal Council Spokesperson)

Translating into several languages

The official languages of Switzerland are German, French and Italian. The texts of acts, ordinances and treaties, as well as voting and election material must be made available in at least these three languages, a task for which the Federal Chancellery Language Services are responsible. They also provide translations in Romansh and English when required.

Overseeing democratic rights

Swiss citizens are called on to vote three to four times a year in national referendums and popular initiatives, and every four years to elect a new parliament. The Federal Chancellery ensures that the electoral process runs smoothly. It provides the necessary information on the proper procedures to anyone interested in launching a popular initiative or a referendum. It also checks to make sure that requests for popular initiatives and referendums meet the formal requirements.

Managing the 'Vote électronique' project

The Confederation and cantons have over 15 years' experience of e-voting in federal elections and popular votes. The Federal Chancellery runs the 'Vote électronique' project, whose objective is to bring the voting system into the digital age, with barrier-free, mobile and transparent voting for the whole of the electorate.

www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > E-Voting

Supporting the President of the Swiss Confederation

During their year as Swiss president, federal councillors have additional tasks. The Presidential Services Unit of the Federal Chancellery assists with communications and diplomatic affairs.

Managing the Federal Council's residences

The Federal Council has two residences in which it receives its guests from Switzerland and abroad, the von Wattenwyl House and the Landsitz Lohn. In the von Wattenwyl House it also regularly holds discussions with the political parties in government; these are known as the 'von Wattenwyl talks'.

Office of the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner FDPIC

www.edoeb.admin.ch

The Office of the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner is an independent body which monitors compliance with the Data Protection Act to protect the privacy of citizens, and advises citizens in matters relating to data protection. The FDPIC also ensures implementation of the principle of freedom of information, which affords access to the official documents of the Federal Administration. If an authority denies a person access to such information, the FDPIC can be called upon to mediate.

The judiciary

THE COURTS



COURTS

If the members of a Supreme Court Division are not in agreement about a case, a public hearing is held. In this case, it is the Supreme Court Judges of the First Social Law Division that convene.

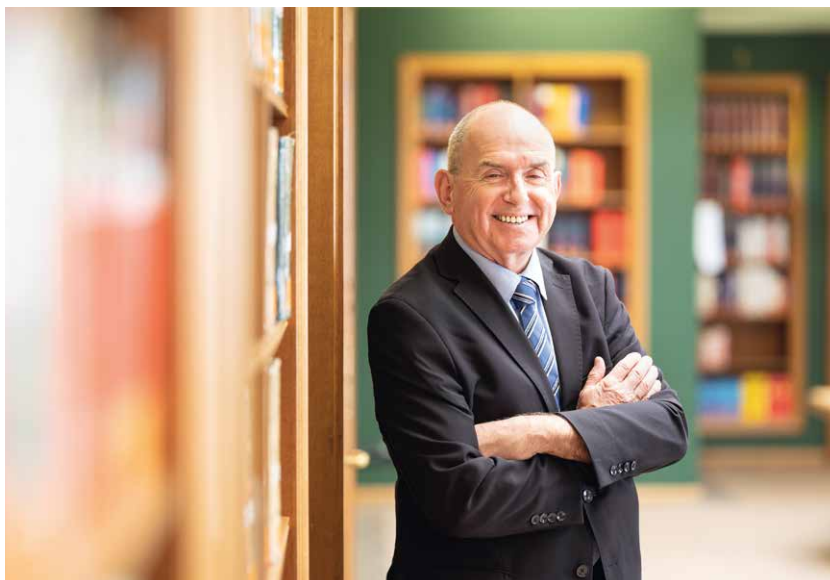
The judiciary 78

The Federal Supreme Court
and the federal courts of first instance 80



The third state power

THE JUDICIARY



Interview with Ulrich Meyer, President of the Federal Supreme Court

Mr Meyer, are the Federal Supreme Court's decisions always just?

The Federal Supreme Court cannot adjudicate based simply on the individual judges' personal views of how justice should be done. The court is bound by the applicable law. So, can a lawful judgment be unjust? Theoretically it can't be. Nevertheless, the proposed solution would certainly have to be reconsidered if one's sense of justice were to be troubled. Personally, I have never had to go against my own sense of justice, not even in cases in which I was in the minority.

What constitutes a good Supreme Court judge?

The first requirement is a love for the law, that is to say a sense of joy in our profession. Of course, a Supreme Court judge must also have an excellent legal mind as well as experience. Furthermore, a judge should be willing to listen and to consider other points of view, and

also be prepared to question his or her own position.

What happens if Supreme Court judges do not agree on the solution to a case?

Then a public hearing is held: the judges concerned meet in the courtroom and discuss the various proposals. At the end, a decision is taken in the presence of the public. There is no secrecy in hearings. This reflects the democratic principle of transparency, which is characteristic of Switzerland, even in Supreme Court decision-making.

How does the Federal Supreme Court deal with criticism of its judgments?

Very serenely. Judgments are the subject of public debate. It is in the nature of things that Federal Supreme Court decisions please some people, and displease others. You have to be able to deal with this.

Has the work of Supreme Court judges changed over time?

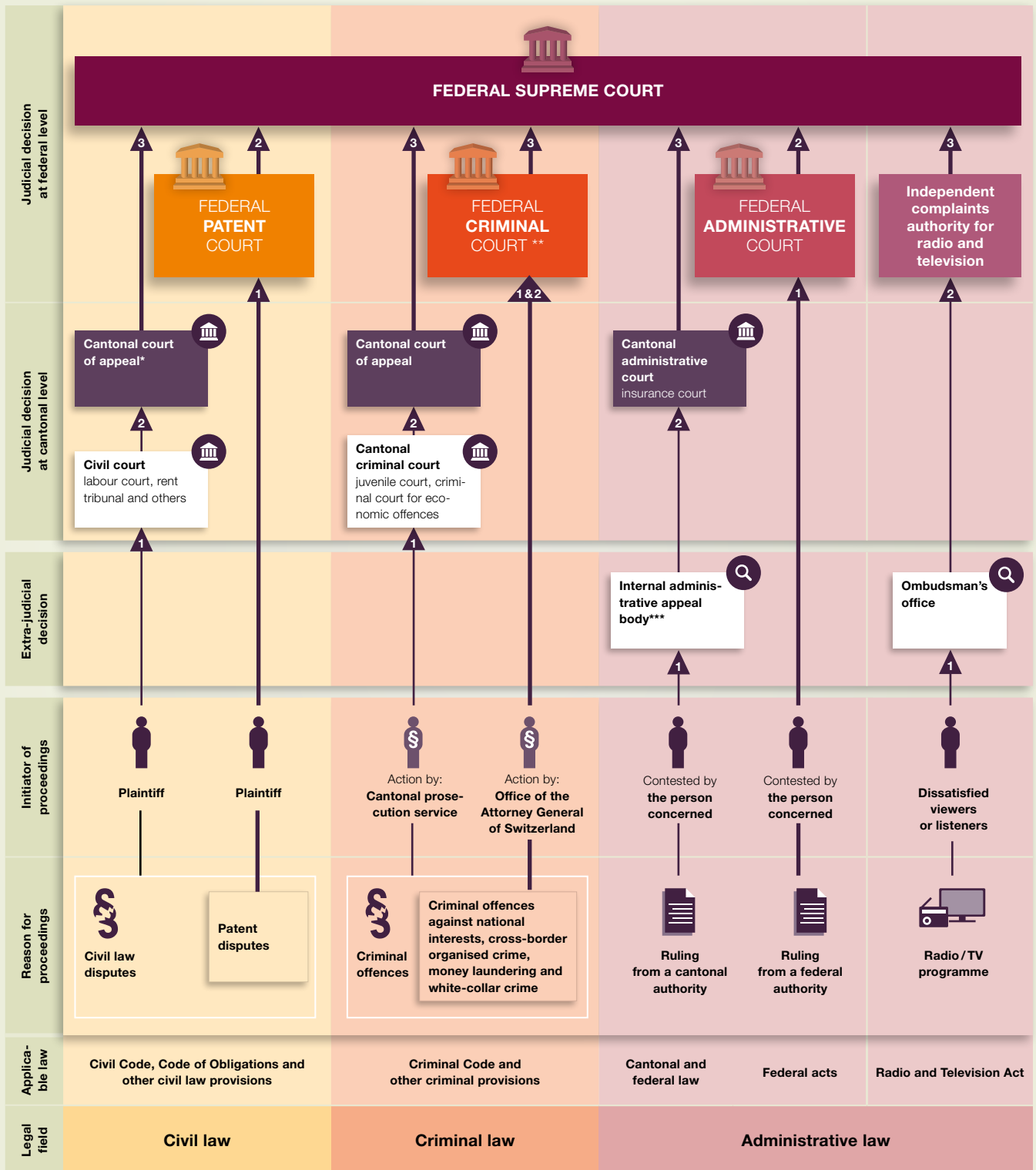
Judicial activity, as such, has not changed: reading, deliberating and writing are the means and forms of judicial decision-making. Having said that, IT has greatly influenced the way we actually do our work. Today, we do most of our legal work at the computer.

'It is in the nature of things that Federal Supreme Court decisions please some people and displease others.'

Can I also send an appeal to the Federal Supreme Court by email?

It's not possible to just send a normal email or fax. However, electronic transmission is possible, provided that the appeal bears a recognised electronic signature and is filed within the prescribed deadline via a delivery platform that is accepted by the Federal Supreme Court. In collaboration with the cantons, the Federal Supreme Court is working intensively on implementing the electronic transmission of legal documents throughout Switzerland.

STANDARD PROCEDURES IN THE SWISS LEGAL SYSTEM



* In the cantons of Zurich, Bern, St. Gallen and Aargau there is also a commercial court, which is the only cantonal court dealing with commercial disputes.
 ** The Criminal Chamber of the Federal Criminal Court rules in the first instance, its Higher Appeals Chamber in the second instance. The Lower Appeals Chamber of the Federal Criminal Court also deals with cases relating to orders issued by the federal prosecution authorities, administrative law cases, cases on mutual assistance in criminal matters and on conflicts of jurisdiction.
 *** Depending on the canton/subject matter, the cantonal administrative court may have direct jurisdiction.



The courts at federal level

THE FEDERAL SUPREME COURT AND THE FEDERAL COURTS OF FIRST INSTANCE

The Federal Supreme Court



President:
Ulrich Meyer



Vice-President:
Martha Niquille

The Federal Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority in Switzerland. It rules in the final instance on all appeals against decisions of the highest cantonal courts, the Federal Criminal Court, the Federal Administrative Court and the Federal Patent Court. The court ensures that Swiss federal law is correctly applied in individual cases and that the rights of citizens enshrined in the constitution are protected.

As the court of final instance, the Federal Supreme Court rules on cases from almost all areas of law. When an appeal is filed, it examines whether the law was correctly applied in the contested decision and thus ensures the uniform application of federal law throughout the country. Its decisions contribute to the development of the law and to its adaptation to new circumstances. The other courts and the administrative authorities use the decisions of the Federal Supreme Court as a reference and adopt their principles. Procedures before the Federal Supreme Court take place in writing. There are no court hearings with plaintiffs and defendants giving testimony and lawyers pleading their cases. The Federal Supreme Court bases its decisions on facts as they are established by the lower instances and described in the records of the previous proceedings. If the Federal Supreme Court concludes that a lower court has decided incorrectly, it overturns the contested decision and if necessary sends it back to the previous instance for a new decision. In addition to its work as the highest judicial authority, the Federal Supreme Court exercises administrative supervision over the Federal Criminal Court, the Federal Administrative Court and the Federal Patent Court.

The Federal Supreme Court is based in Lausanne and is divided into seven divisions, each with responsibility for

decisions in their specific area of law: two public law divisions, two civil law divisions, one criminal law division and two social law divisions. The latter two are based in Lucerne. The General Secretariat is responsible for the court's administrative duties.

The 38 Federal Supreme Court judges are elected by the United Federal Assembly (National Council and Council of States) on the recommendation of the parliamentary Judiciary Committee. The recommendations are based on considerations of professional experience, language, region and political party affiliation. Federal Supreme Court judges are elected for a six-year term of office with no restriction on how many times they may be re-elected. There is, however, an upper age limit of 68. The United Federal Assembly appoints one of the serving judges as president and one as vice-president of the Federal Supreme Court. In addition, there are 19 Federal Supreme Court substitute judges and a further 280 positions for court clerks and other court employees.

Seat: Lausanne
www.bger.ch
www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch

The Federal Criminal Court



President:
Sylvia Frei

The Federal Criminal Court hears criminal cases which, due to their subject matter or importance, are subject to federal jurisdiction. In addition, the Court rules on appeals against decisions made by federal prosecution authorities, in mutual assistance cases and in disputes over jurisdiction.

Most criminal cases are decided in the first instance by cantonal courts. By law, only certain categories of offences fall under federal jurisdiction and are decided by the Federal Criminal Court. These include offences against federal interests, explosives offences, international cases of white-collar crime, cases relating to organised crime, corruption and money laundering, and offences related to civil aviation or war material. In response to appeals, the Federal Criminal Court also reviews orders made by federal prosecution authorities, and decisions made under administrative criminal law and in cases of mutual assistance in criminal matters. In addition, it rules on conflicts of jurisdiction involving prosecution authorities. Most decisions can be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court.

The Federal Criminal Court was accepted in 2004 and since then, is located in Bellinzona. It is currently divided into a Penal Chamber, a Lower Appeals Chamber and a Higher Appeals Chamber. The judges are elected by the Federal Parliament for renewable six-year terms.

The Court counts 21 judges (18,4 full-time positions) and 12 deputy judges. They are assisted by ca. 60 staff members (52.5 full-time positions).

Seat: Bellinzona
www.bstger.ch
www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch

The Federal Administrative Court



President:
Marianne Ryter

The Federal Administrative Court handles complaints against decisions made by administrative authorities of the Federal Administration. Each year, Switzerland's largest federal court rules in around 7,500 cases relating to a very broad range of areas.

The Federal Administrative Court handles a very broad range of areas including the environment, transport, energy, taxation, education, economics, competition, social insurance, health, naturalisation as well as legislation on foreign nationals and asylum seekers. The issues are often far-reaching from a social standpoint. Examples include decisions of principle in asylum-related cases or in major transport and infrastructure projects. In addition to rulings of federal administrative authorities, in certain areas, the Federal Administrative Court may also examine complaints against decisions made by cantonal authorities.

The Federal Administrative Court is composed of six divisions, each responsible for a specific area of legislation. The judges of the Federal Administrative Court are elected by the United Federal Assembly for a six-year term.

Created back in 2007, the Federal Administrative Court has been based in St. Gallen. Each year, the court rules in around 7,500 cases. With 69 full-time positions covered by the judges and a further 303 by the court staff, the Federal Administrative Court is Switzerland's largest federal court.

Seat: St. Gallen
www.bvger.ch
www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch

The Federal Patent Court



President:
Mark Schweizer

The Federal Patent Court handles patent disputes, mainly patent infringement cases and nullity actions. The involvement of judges with technical expertise enables cases to be processed swiftly and cost-effectively.

Technical inventions, which often come at considerable expense, are afforded valuable legal protection in the form of patents. In a dispute, the Federal Patent Court decides whether a patent for a technical innovation is legally valid and whether granted patent rights are infringed by a product or process. The Federal Patent Court may also handle other patent-related claims, such as cases where there is dispute over who holds a given patent, or how a patent may be used within the framework of a licence. Decisions of the Federal Patent Court may be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court.

The judges of the Federal Patent Court are elected by the Federal Assembly for a six-year term. The involvement of judges with technical expertise enables cases submitted to the Federal Patent Court to be processed swiftly and cost-effectively since there is no need for external technical expert opinions, which tend to be costly and time-consuming. A high percentage of cases are settled by compromise between the parties to the dispute.

Created in January 2012, the Federal Patent Court is based in St. Gallen. A particular feature of the Federal Patent Court is that English may be used for submissions and at hearings instead of a national language of Switzerland (German, French, Italian or Romansh) if both parties in the dispute give their consent.

Seat: St. Gallen
www.bpatger.ch
www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch

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