THE SWISS CONFEDERATION
A BRIEF GUIDE

2016

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Chancellery FCh

Cover
The cold, clear water of the River Maggia runs through the unusual rock formations near Ponte Brolla in the canton of Ticino. A few kilometres further south the river flows through the delta between Ascona and Locarno into Lake Maggiore.

"Much has come to be expected of 'the Confederation'"

Dear Reader

When the 'Bundesratshaus' – now known as the Federal Palace West Wing – was opened in 1857, it housed the Federal Council, Parliament and the central Federal Administration of about 80 employees. On the third floor there was even space for exhibitions. Today's Administration employs about 38,000 people in more than 260 communes all over Switzerland. Over the past 160 years much has come to be expected of 'the Confederation', and the number of administrative tasks and the people dealing with them has risen exponentially.

Even some members of parliament and federal employees are not necessarily aware of what, for example, the tasks of the FACO are (page 55), what exactly SFIVET does (page 67) or what the SAB's responsibilities are (page 63).

So it is all the more important to give the public an overview of the three state powers and the federal departments. This year 'The Swiss Confederation – A brief guide' has been redesigned with more visual content, and the departments now each provide a short description of their main tasks.

With this we hope to give you, the reader, an up-to-date view of Parliament, the government and the judiciary. And we hope to arouse an interest in politics among younger readers, without which our system of direct democracy cannot function.

I hope you enjoy reading this brochure.

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr

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Interview with President Johann N. Schneider-Ammann

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JOBS AND THE COUNTRY

At the reception in Langenthal for the newly elected president in December 2015, we gathered questions from the public. Here are his answers.

How can we set about achieving full employment and reducing unemployment?
Elmar Rolewage (44), Zofingen

My motto for this presidential year is 'Working together for jobs and the country'. I will therefore continue to do all I can to ensure that as many people in our country as possible have a job. We have to do all we can to maintain the high level of employment despite the strained economic situation and the strong value of the franc. Every person out of work is one too many. Every job that is cut is one too many. Our unemployment rate has been fluctuating between three and four per cent for a while now. Naturally I'd like to see that figure under three per cent. In part it is affected by the economic cycle, over which we have only limited influence. But we have to make further improvements to the broad conditions through our policies. Each of us can also contribute through education and further training. The range of courses and programmes available has been significantly expanded so that no-one is left behind.

There's a widespread tendency to lower taxes to stay competitive and attract investment. The upshot is that we have to cut back spending on education, measures to integrate foreign nationals, and even on care for the elderly. How is that going to work out in the long run?
Regula Z. (69), Langenthal

It's a question of finding the right balance: we need to have attractive levels of taxation so that businesses invest in the country and create jobs. That benefits everyone. If we aren't competitive, far less wealth is created and tax revenues are lower. And we need those revenues of course. I believe in a streamlined but strong state. In

the current round of spending cuts, by the way, expenditure on social assistance and health insurance reductions has not been cut. Spending on education is still rising at an above-average rate. That is vital because smart thinkers are our only 'natural resource'.

As a family we are feeling the effects of the current economic difficulties quite badly. It's barely possible to survive on one income – reduced due to the strong value of the franc. And what would happen if that were to disappear too? When can families expect to see better times?
Marina Didak (38), Langenthal

I deeply regret your situation and I can understand that you're concerned. The job worries that many people are experiencing, and the growing economic uncertainties, are the reason why the Federal Council, at its first meeting of the year, set out to optimise the possibilities for short-time work compensation. That way businesses that are struggling because of the strong value of the franc, for example, and making a loss, will have more scope to make adjustments without having to make staff redundant. This is an important although only temporary measure to cushion the impact of the strong franc. To safeguard jobs long term, I'm working on a package of swift and effective measures to cut down on unnecessary red tape for businesses. That would help to make our products more competitive so that pay cuts will hopefully no longer be needed. However, if the worst comes to the worst, we have a strong welfare system in place to ensure no-one falls by the wayside.

What can you take back to Bern with you for your presidential year from 'average-town' Langenthal?
Mirjam Tschumi (41), Burgdorf

I'm aware of Langenthal's reputation as 'average town', but I have to say that's not what I see. For me, Langenthal is a prime location between Bern, Zurich, Basel and Lucerne. It's also a town with a strong industrial spirit. I associate this industrial spirit with openness, a down-to-earth nature, a sense of responsibility and shared identity. I want to uphold these and other positive Langenthal traits in Bern, and not just during my year as president.

> "It's about having a vision for Switzerland."

What can the president do to switch off and relax?
Reto Weber (47), Langenthal

It's not always easy. During the week my diary is usually crammed full with meetings and official events. I use the weekends to read up and prepare for the week ahead. Nevertheless, whenever I have a day off I try to go for a long walk with the dogs in the area around Langenthal. That's when I can exercise, relax and really clear out the cobwebs. Those moments are extremely important because the task of governing involves far more than dealing with day-to-day business, it's about having a vision for Switzerland.

Five years ago you went from being the boss of a company in Langenthal to being a leading player in Bern. Do you still feel like the boss of a company? How have things changed in the last five years?
Regula Bremy (53), Roggwil

Once a company boss, always a company boss! That's not quite the case, but it's not altogether wrong either. As economic affairs and education minister, my many years of experience at the helm of a medium-sized business is useful: I know that it's not easy to safeguard jobs long term in our high-cost country, not just in terms of the general conditions, but also in terms of staff education and training. So I've not set aside my experience of running a company. On the other hand, you can't run a government department as you would a business. As a federal councillor I have to use a lot of political persuasion. My record isn't measured so much in terms of turnover, but on results in Parliament and popular votes instead.

Do you like animals? Do you have any pets yourself?
Olivia Weber (10), Langenthal

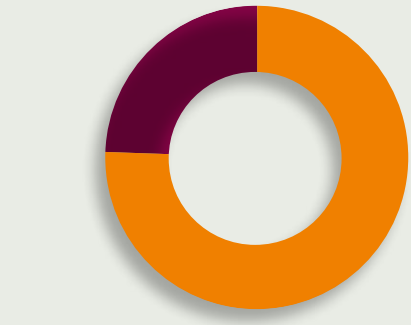
Yes, I have two Labradors. They aren't that young anymore, but they still need plenty of exercise. They're my faithful companions on my walks in the area around Langenthal and on holiday. I spend much of my time listening, speaking and in discussion, so it's nice to have a bit of quiet time with the dogs. My father was a vet, so I grew up with animals around and they are still important to me.

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

Switzerland in figures

POPULATION

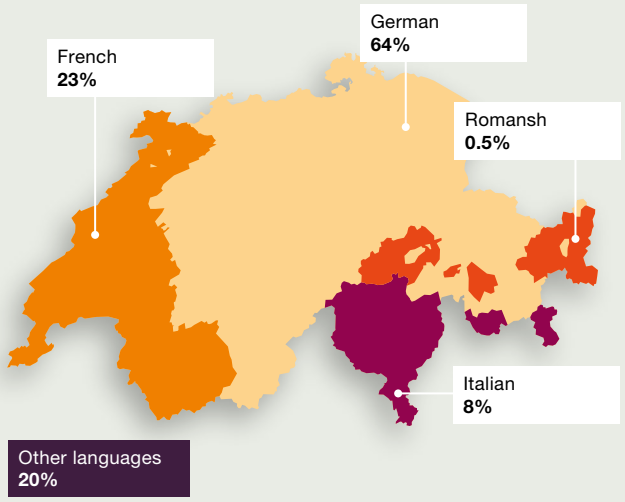
8.2 million people



8 238 000 inhabitants
of which **1 998 000** are foreign nationals

There are approximately 8.2 million people living in Switzerland, of which 24 per cent 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. 66 per cent of the foreign population come from the EU, predominantly from Italy (15% of foreigners), Germany (15%) and Portugal (13%). 15 per cent come from various non-European states.

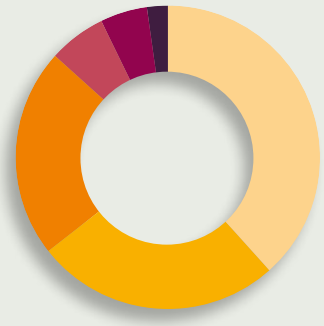
4 national languages



Switzerland is a multilingual country. There are four official national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. 64 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 (approximately 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

Christians make up 70 per cent of people living in Switzerland. Catholics are the majority in 14 cantons; Protestants are the majority in 3. In the remaining cantons, there is no clear majority. Regardless of whether they are Christian, Muslim or Jewish, religion does not play a central role in the everyday lives of most people. 22 per cent of people are not members of any religion – this number has been on the rise for several years.

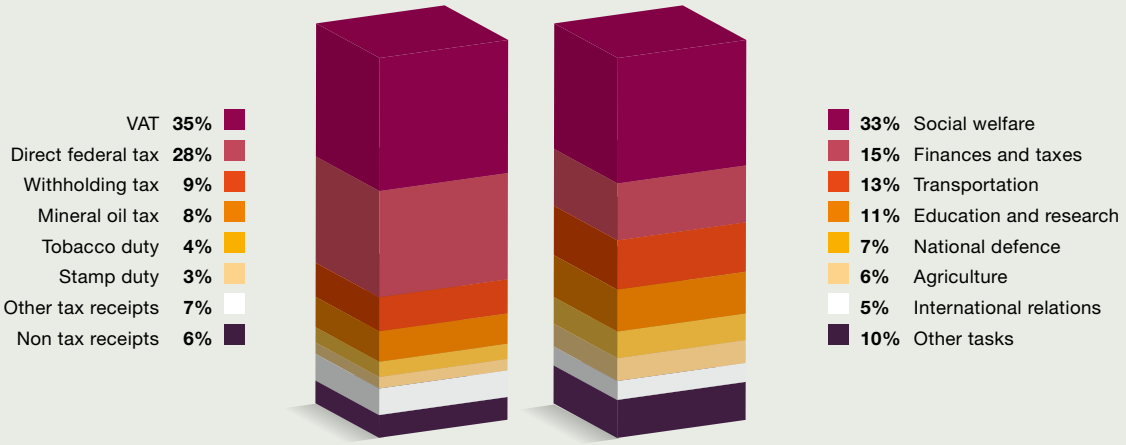


38% Roman Catholic
26% Protestant Reformed
22% No religious affiliation
6% Other Christian denominations
5% Islamic denominations
3% Other/not specified

For more information about population: www.statistics.admin.ch

FINANCES

Receipts of CHF 63 900 million (2014)

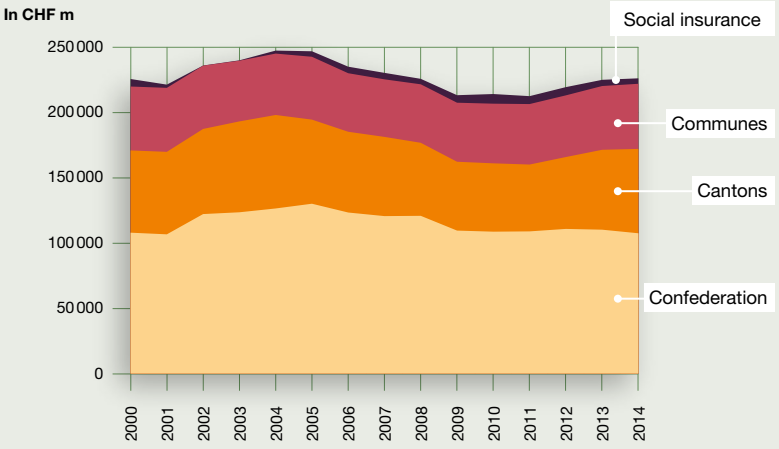


Direct federal tax and VAT are the Confederation's main sources of receipts. The power of the Confederation to levy these taxes applies for a limited period and must be renewed by the People and the cantons. The current financial system will remain valid until 2020. Direct federal tax is levied on the income of individuals (maximum of 11.5 per cent), and on the profits of companies (8.5 per cent). VAT of 8 per cent applies to most goods and services.

Expenditure of CHF 64 000 million (2014)

The federal budget is a transfer budget, since the Confederation passes around three quarters of its expenditure on to social insurance, to the cantons and to the recipients of subsidies. Half of the expenditure for social welfare is spent on old-age insurance, and a good quarter on invalidity insurance. Expenditure in this area has grown continuously in recent years, primarily as a result of the ageing of society and increasing health costs.

Trend of debt: The debt brake is proving effective



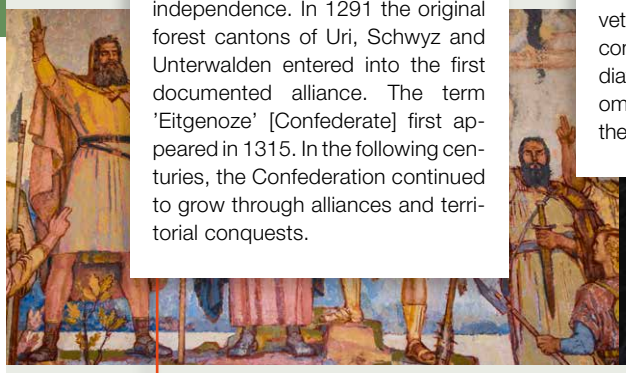
Since 2001, the Federal Constitution has stipulated that the Confederation must balance its expenditure and receipts on a lasting basis. It is required to run a surplus when the economy is strong, and may spend more than it collects in receipts when the economy is weak. The debt brake has made it possible to greatly reduce the federal debt, bringing it from CHF 130 billion to around CHF 110 billion. By international standards, Switzerland is doing very well, with the general government debt ratio amounting to 34.5 per cent of GDP in 2014.

For more information about the federal budget: www.efv.admin.ch

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

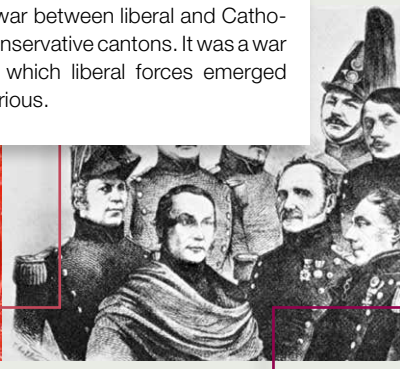
ALLIANCES

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 'Eitgenoze' [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

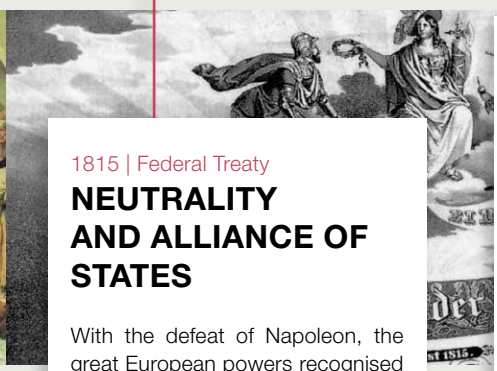
Diverging views on how the Confederation would be organised led to a civil war between liberal and Catholic conservative cantons. It was a war from which liberal forces emerged victorious.

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 (for women from 1971). 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

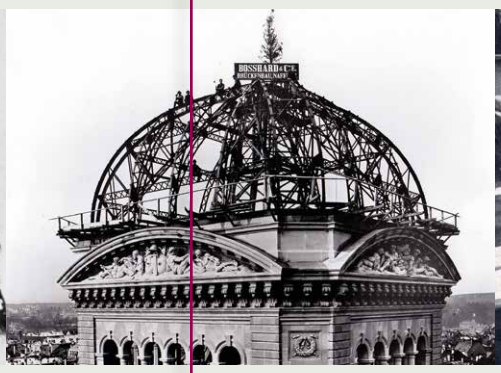
TOWARDS CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY

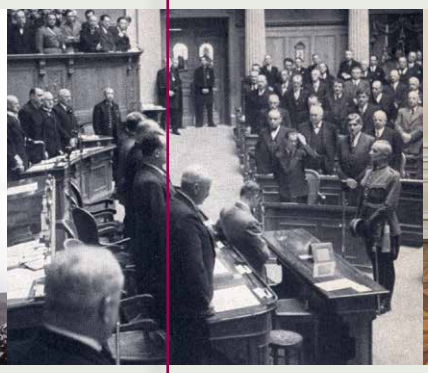
In 1919, the National Council was elected on a proportional basis and a second Catholic Conservative entered the Federal Council. A member of the Farmers', Trades' and Citizens' Party (SVP today) entered the Federal Council in 1929.

1959–2003 | Magic Formula

BRINGING DIVERSITY TO THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

The government was formed from representatives of the parties with the most votes: 2 FDP, 2 CVP, 2 SP, 1 SVP. This 'magic formula' remained in place until 2003. Since then the composition of the Federal Council has varied.





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

Under the perceived external threat, political forces from right to left closed ranks. In 1943, during the Second World War, Parliament elected a Social Democrat to the Federal Council.

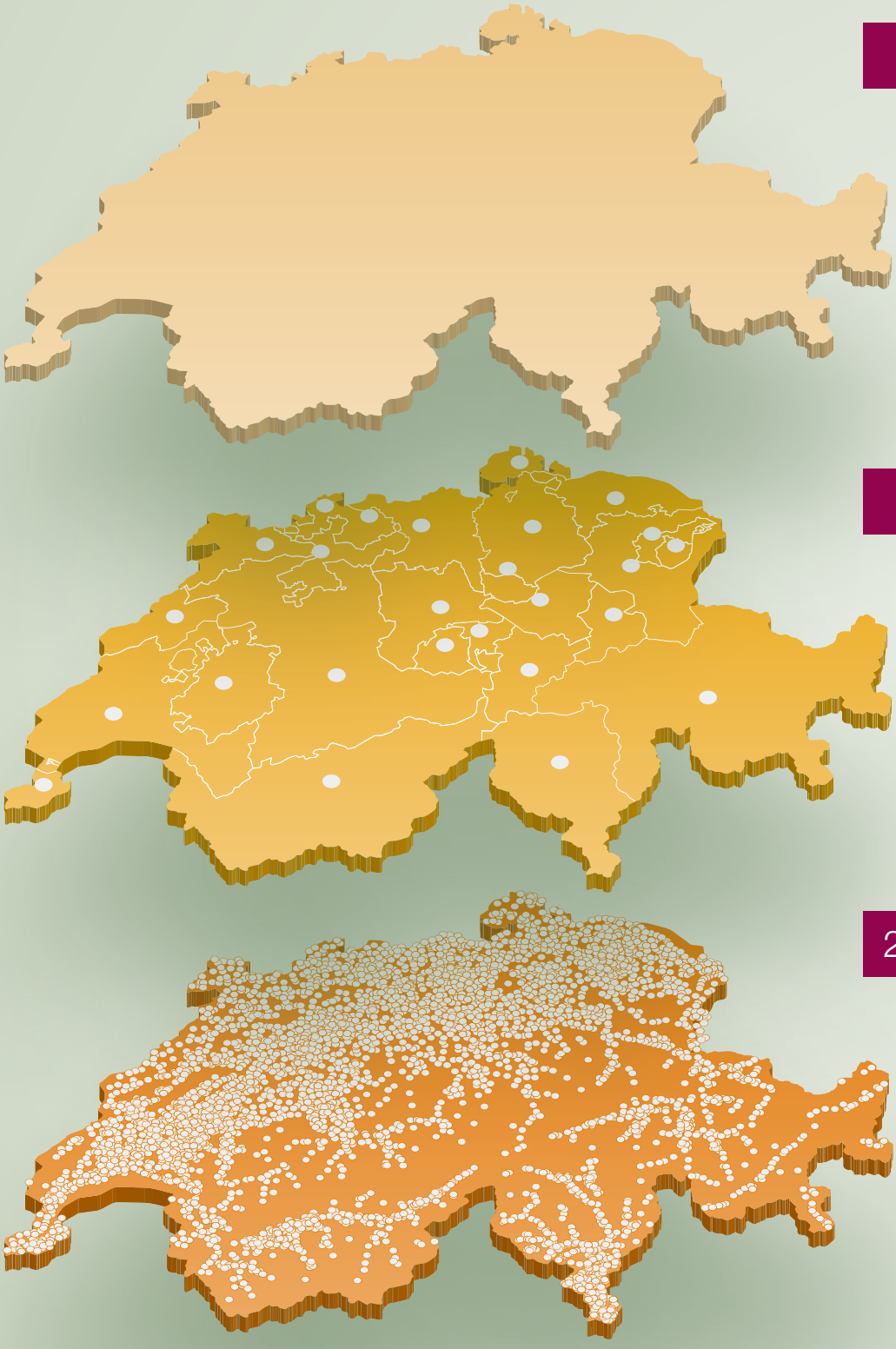
2000 | Third Federal Constitution

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 councillors, and the Federal Supreme Court is responsible for national jurisprudence. The Confederation is financed among other means through direct federal tax.

- Approximately 9 per cent of all Swiss citizens live outside Switzerland (the 'Swiss Abroad').
- Three quarters of the domestic population lives in urban areas.
- Proceeds from direct federal taxation account for approximately 28 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 constitution 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 Zug is approximately twice that in the canton of Lucerne.
- In the national fiscal equalisation plan, nine cantons are net contributors and 17 cantons are net beneficiaries.
- People's assemblies (Landsgemeinden) are still held in the cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden and Glarus.

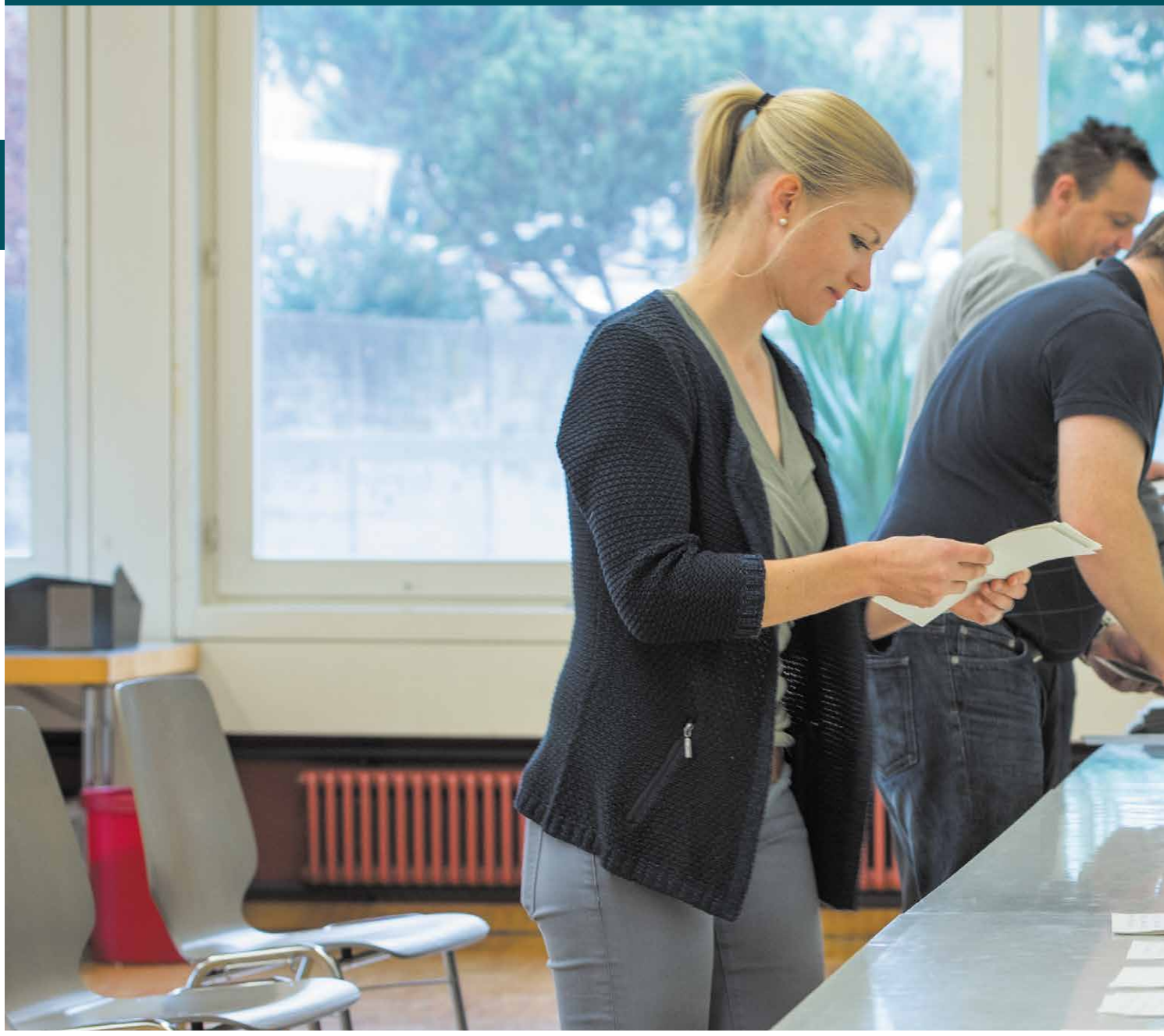
Communes

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 (Corippo, TI) has a population of 12, the largest approximately 385 000 (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.

Foundations

DIRECT DEMOCRACY



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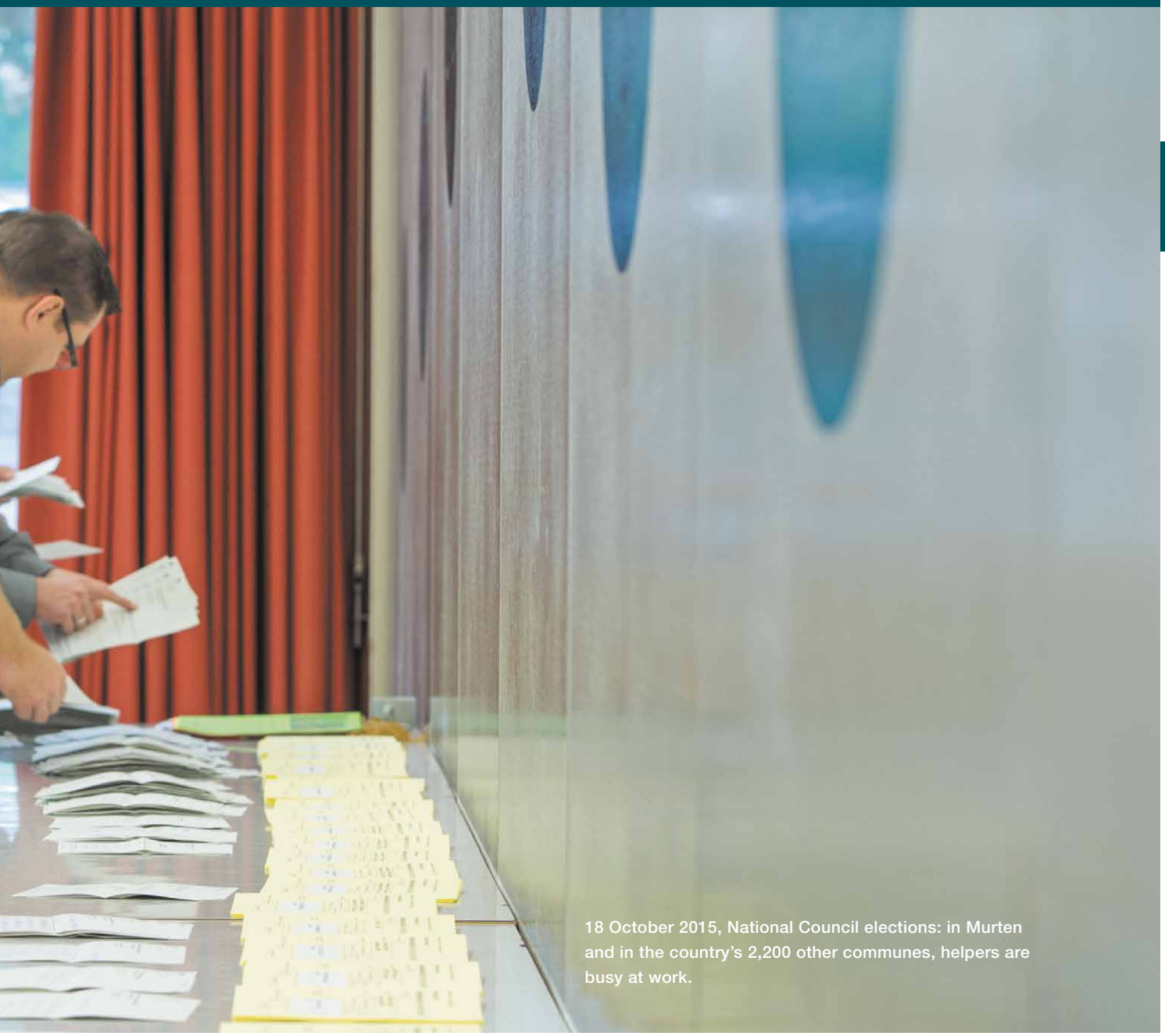
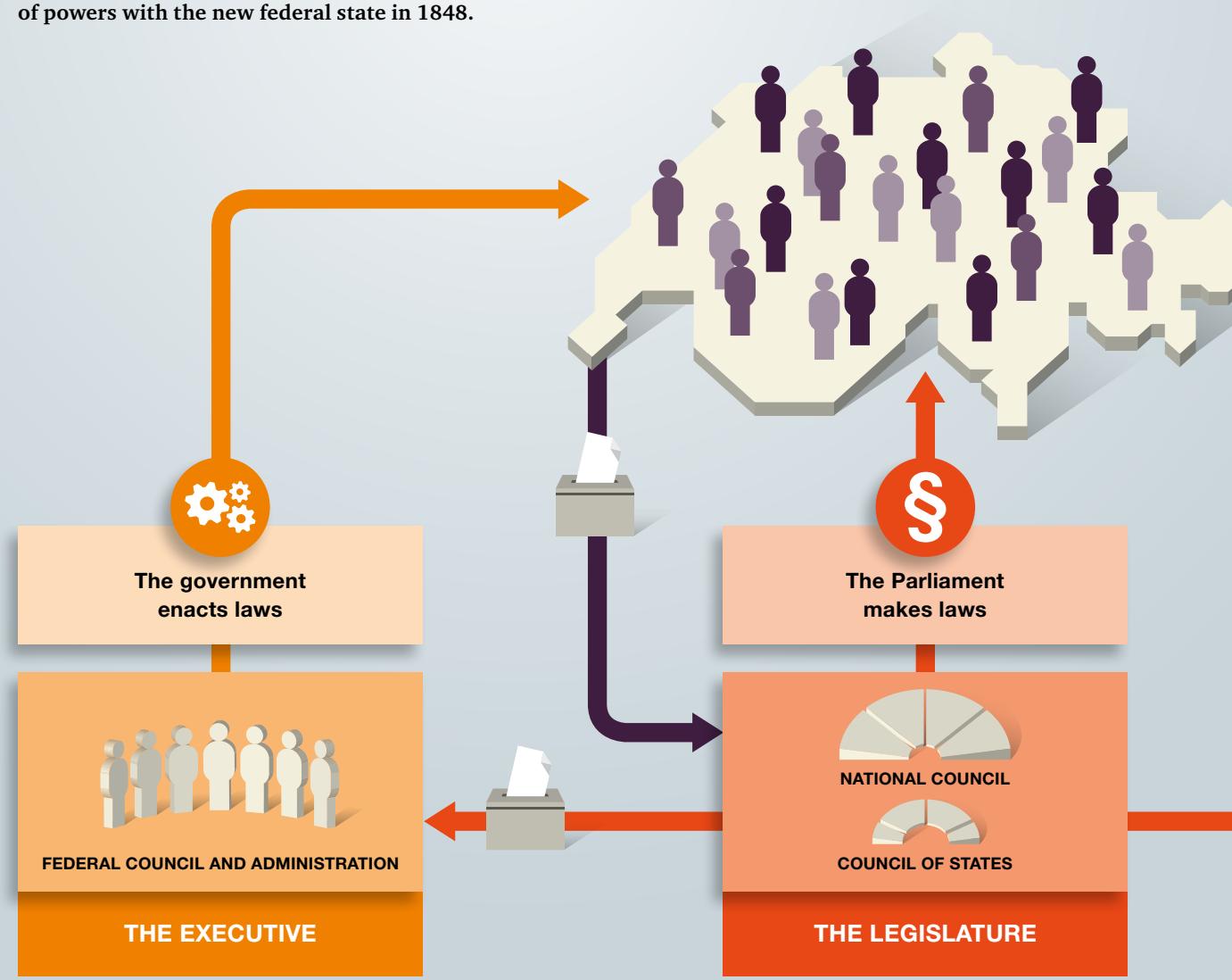


18 October 2015, National Council elections: in Murten and in the country's 2,200 other communes, helpers are busy at work.

A fundamental principle of democracy

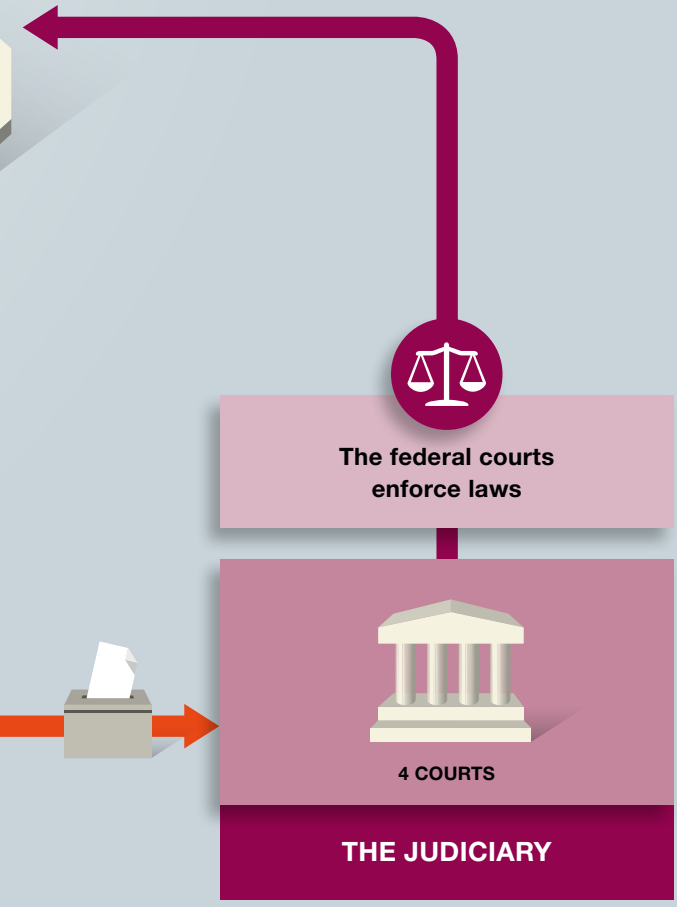
SEPARATION OF POWERS

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 5.3 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. 40)
- **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. 78)
- **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.

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

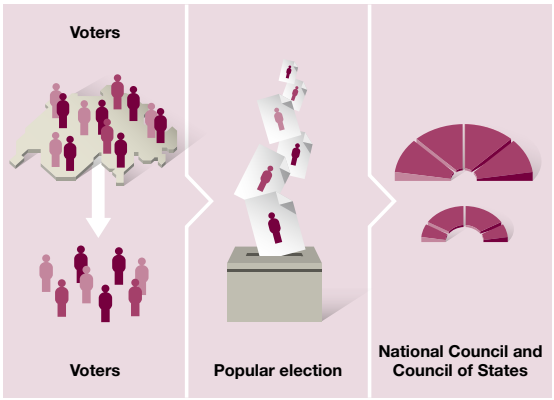
A vote must be held on any amendment to the Constitution (mandatory referendum). Amendments to the Constitution require the consent of a majority of the People and of the cantons (double majority). On the other hand, a vote is only held on a revised or new law if a referendum is demanded. The new law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

Polling calendar 2016

The Federal Council decides at least four months in advance which proposals will be voted on. The dates on which the ballots will be held are known long before then: currently all the dates have been fixed from now until 2034.

In 2016, federal ballots will be held on the following Sundays: 28 February, 5 June, 25 September and 27 November.

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.

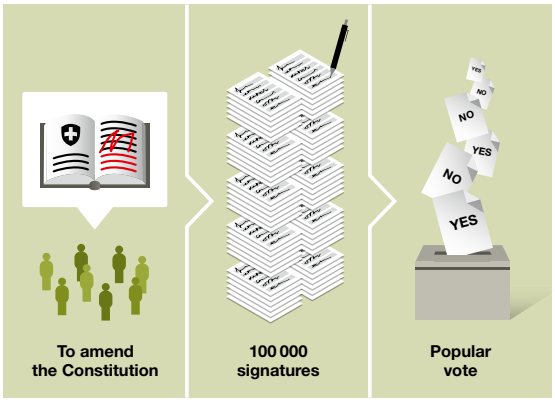
National Council and Council of States

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 2015 federal elections was 48%.
- In 2015, 1308 women and 2480 men stood for election to the National Council.
- At federal level, women have had the right to vote since 1971.

DIRECT DEMOCRATIC INSTRUMENTS

POPULAR INITIATIVE



Changing the Constitution

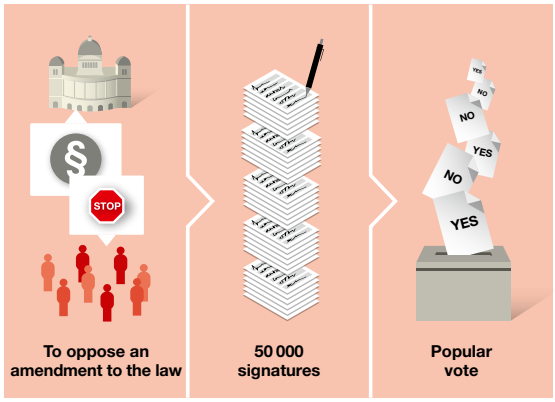
Citizens can launch a popular initiative to demand a change to the Constitution – but not to any other form of law. Any Swiss citizen who is eligible to vote can sign a popular initiative, and a group of at least seven citizens (the initiative committee) can launch their own popular initiative.

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.
- 200 popular initiatives have been voted on since then. Only 22 have been accepted.
- As of 31.12.2015, 9 popular initiatives were at the signature collection stage, while 9 were being considered by the Federal Council or Parliament, and 8 were ready to be voted on.

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.

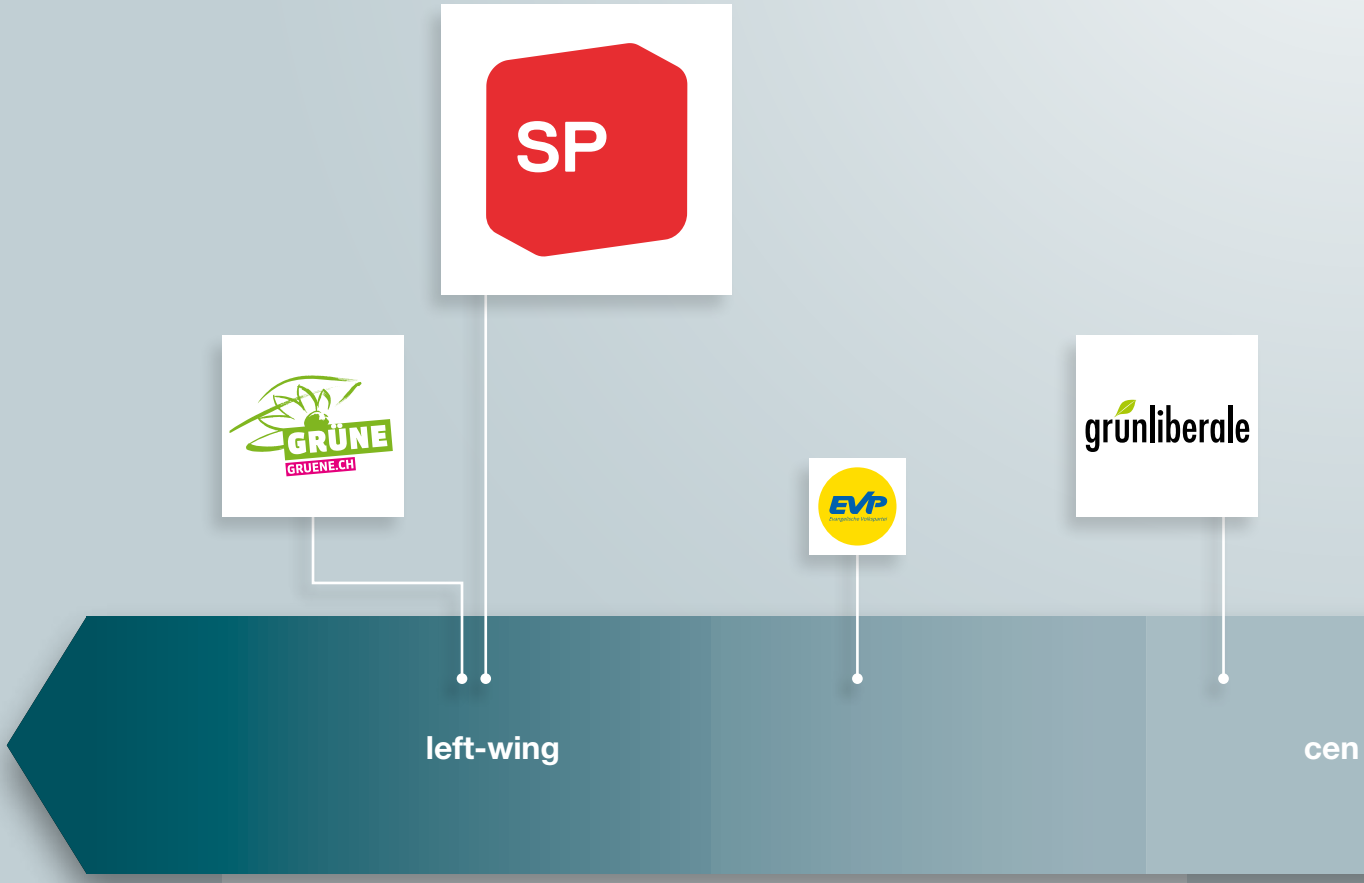
- The referendum was introduced in 1874.
- Since then, 180 optional referendums have been held, 78 of which were unsuccessful.
- As of 31.12.2015, signatures were being collected for 20 referendums, while two optional referendums were ready to be voted on.

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.

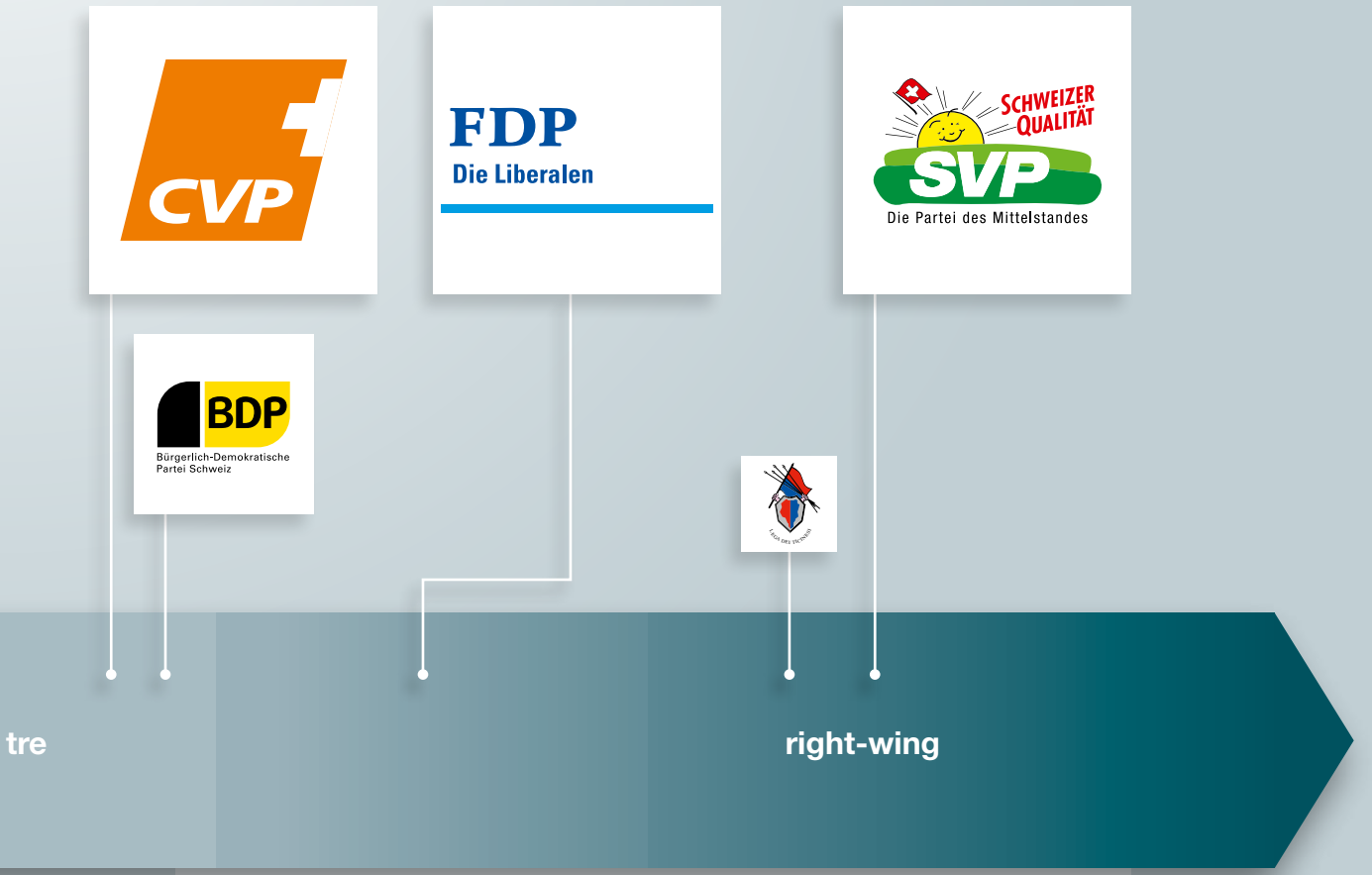
Whereas left-wing parties tend to advocate a highly developed social state, right-of-centre parties advocate a liberal economic policy and personal responsibility. Certain political issues are neither distinctly left- nor right-wing, i.e. environmental protection, the question of how open Switzerland 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 four parties that each make up ten per cent or more of seats in the National Council (SVP: 29%, SP: 19%, FDP: 16%, CVP: 12%). Most parties are represented in all language regions. However, a party's stance on individual issues can vary significantly depending on the language region and canton.



What does 'right-wing' mean?

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

The twelve political parties at federal level

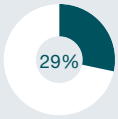
POLITICAL PARTIES IN BRIEF

In the current legislature period, twelve political parties are represented in the National Council. Six 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 (until April 2016)
Toni Brunner

www.svp.ch

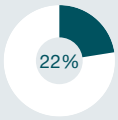


Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in
5	65 (11 ♀, 54 ♂)	2	**1971 (BGB 1917)**

SP Swiss Social Democratic Party

Party President
Christian Levrat

www.sp.ch

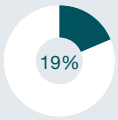


Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in
12 (4 ♀, 8 ♂)	43 (25 ♀, 18 ♂)	2 (1 ♀, 1 ♂)	**1888**

FDP FDP.The Liberals

Party President (until April 2016)
Philipp Müller

www.fdp.ch

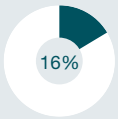


Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in
13 (1 ♀, 12 ♂)	33 (7 ♀, 26 ♂)	2	**1894 (merged in 2009)**

CVP Christian Democratic People's Party

Party President (until April 2016)
Christophe Darbellay

www.cvp.ch



Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in
13 (2 ♀, 11 ♂)	27 (9 ♀, 18 ♂)	1	**1912**

The Greens Swiss Green Party

Co-Presidents (until April 2016)
Adèle Thorens Goumaz
Regula Rytz

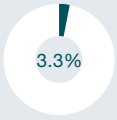
www.gruene.ch

Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in
1	11 (5 ♀, 6 ♂)		**1983**

BDP Conservative Democratic Party

Party President
Martin Landolt

www.bdp.info



Council of States: **1**

National Council: **7** (1 ♀, 6 ♂)

Founded in **2008**

glp Swiss Green Liberal Party

Party President
Martin Bäumle

www.grunliberale.ch

National Council: **7** (3 ♀, 4 ♂)

Founded in **2007**

EVP Swiss Evangelical People's Party

Party President
Marianne Streiff-Feller

www.evppev.ch

National Council: **2** (♀)

Founded in **1919**

LdT Lega dei Ticinesi

Coordinator
Attilio Bignasca

www.lega-dei-ticinesi.ch

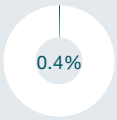
National Council: **2** (1 ♀, 1 ♂)

Founded in **1991**

CSP OW Christian Social Party Obwalden

Co-Presidents
Sepp Stalder
Christian Schäli

www.csp-ow.ch



National Council: **1** (♂)

Founded in **1956**

MCG Citizen's Movement of Geneva

Party President
Roger Golay

www.mcge.ch

National Council: **1** (♂)

Founded in **2005**

PdA Partei der Arbeit der Schweiz

Party President
Gavriel Pinson

www.pda.ch

National Council: **1** (♂)

Founded in **1944**

Share of seats in the Federal Assembly
(National Council and Council of States), rounded

The legislature

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30 November 2015: the swearing-in of the council members marks the end of election season.

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 40,000 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 around 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. Today, the members of the Council of States are directly elected. In the past, some were not elected by the People, but by a cantonal authority. This was the case in the canton of Bern, for example, where until 1979, members were elected by the cantonal parliament.

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 judiciary. Parliament's decisions are not subject to review by any court. Furthermore, Parliament cannot be dissolved before the end of a legislature period.

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.

The two ways to Parliament

Elections to the National Council take place in autumn every four years according to harmonised national rules under a system of proportional representation. Each canton forms a constituency and receives at least one seat. Elections to the Council of States are held according to cantonal law, which is why it is not strictly possible to speak of general elections, and are held under a majority or first-past-the-post system except in the cantons of Jura and Neuchâtel. They are held at the same time as the National Council elections in all cantons except Appenzell Innerrhoden, which elects its representative at a later date. There is therefore no full election for the Council of States and consequently no legislature period.
There are significant differences between the two chambers in terms of the party political make-up, due in part to the electoral system: in the National Council the SVP is currently by far the strongest party with 65 members, followed by the SP with 43, FDP.The Liberals with 33 and the CVP with 27 representatives. However, in the Council of States the CVP and the FDP have 13 seats each, the SP 12, and the SVP 5.

Majority system and proportional representation

Under **proportional representation** seats are allocated according to the number of votes received by the parties and then to the best-placed candidates in those parties. This system enables even small parties to enter Parliament. Under the **majority system** (first-past-the-post) the person elected is the one with the most votes. This method tends to favour large parties and well-known candidates.
In the Council of States the fact that the vote of each canton carries the same weight regardless of its size and population creates a certain equilibrium between large and small cantons.

Fresh elections every four years

Following the elections at the end of a legislature period around 30 per cent of seats go to new members. In the course of a legislature period, around 10 per cent of council members step down and are replaced.

HOW PARLIAMENT IS ORGANISED

Parliamentary bodies

Any large group needs rules in order to function properly, and the same is true of Parliament: 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 and may be represented by one of the vice presidents if necessary.
The **Office**, an important body behind the scenes, takes decisions on the session's agenda and therefore sets the timetable for debates. It appoints the members of the committees and delegations and also instructs them on which items of business are to be prepared between the sessions. The council offices comprise the president and vice presidents, the tellers and – in the case of the National Council – the leaders of the parliamentary groups.

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. The level of financial support that these groups receive for their political work depends on their size. 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 members of parliament 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. The Constitution states that 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.

Sessions

Four regular three-week sessions are held each year, generally in March, June, September and December. The number of days Parliament sits is still almost the same as it was when the Swiss Confederation was founded in 1848.
Often a special session is added between the spring and summer sessions to alleviate the workload. Each council can convene a special session with a simple-majority decision.

Competences

The tasks of Parliament and its procedural rules are set out in the Parliament Act. In addition, each chamber has its own standing orders. 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 of the federal courts and the Federal Chancellor;
- concluding international agreements for which the Federal Council is not responsible and
- fostering relations with foreign parliaments.

Training for the top job

Presiding over the chamber is a demanding job, but the term of office is limited to one year. Given that a first and second vice president is also elected, there is effectively a two-year training period in which the future office holder has time to learn the ropes as a member of the Council Office. So despite the frequent rotations a large degree of continuity is maintained. In the Council of States this training period can even last four or five years as the tellers and deputy tellers move up the ladder for the role of council president.

Women in Parliament

Women in Switzerland have only had the right to vote and be elected since 1971. Their share of seats in Parliament has risen from 5 per cent in 1971 to 32 per cent today. In comparison, on average roughly 22 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women; that figure is around 40 per cent in the Scandinavian countries. The country with the highest share of women in parliament is Ruanda at over 60 per cent.

Is Parliament getting younger?

Around twenty years ago, most council members were between 40 and 60 years old; in the 1920s, a fifth of representatives were under 40. Today, there is a relatively even spread of age groups. The youngest member is currently 27 and the oldest is 73.

Two equals

THE LARGE AND SMALL CHAMBERS

The two-chamber system creates a balance between the large and small cantons and gives more power to the various linguistic regions. A two-chamber system is not always the norm – in many countries, parliament has only one chamber. Where there are two chambers, generally speaking the larger chamber, which in most cases represents the electorate, has a greater say than the smaller chamber, which often represents the regions. In Switzerland, the situation is different: both chambers have **the same powers**, and deal with the same business in the same way. This also applies to budgetary matters. The two councils take turns to debate items of business first. Both councils must reach reconcilable decisions if the decisions are to be valid. Even the individual members of the Council of States and the National Council have the same rights: any member can submit a draft law or mandate to the Federal Council. Two chambers with **completely equal rights** are also found in the United States Congress, where the Senate and House of Representatives have identical powers. In Europe on the other hand, Switzerland is the only country that has this system. Even the cantons have only one chamber of parliament.

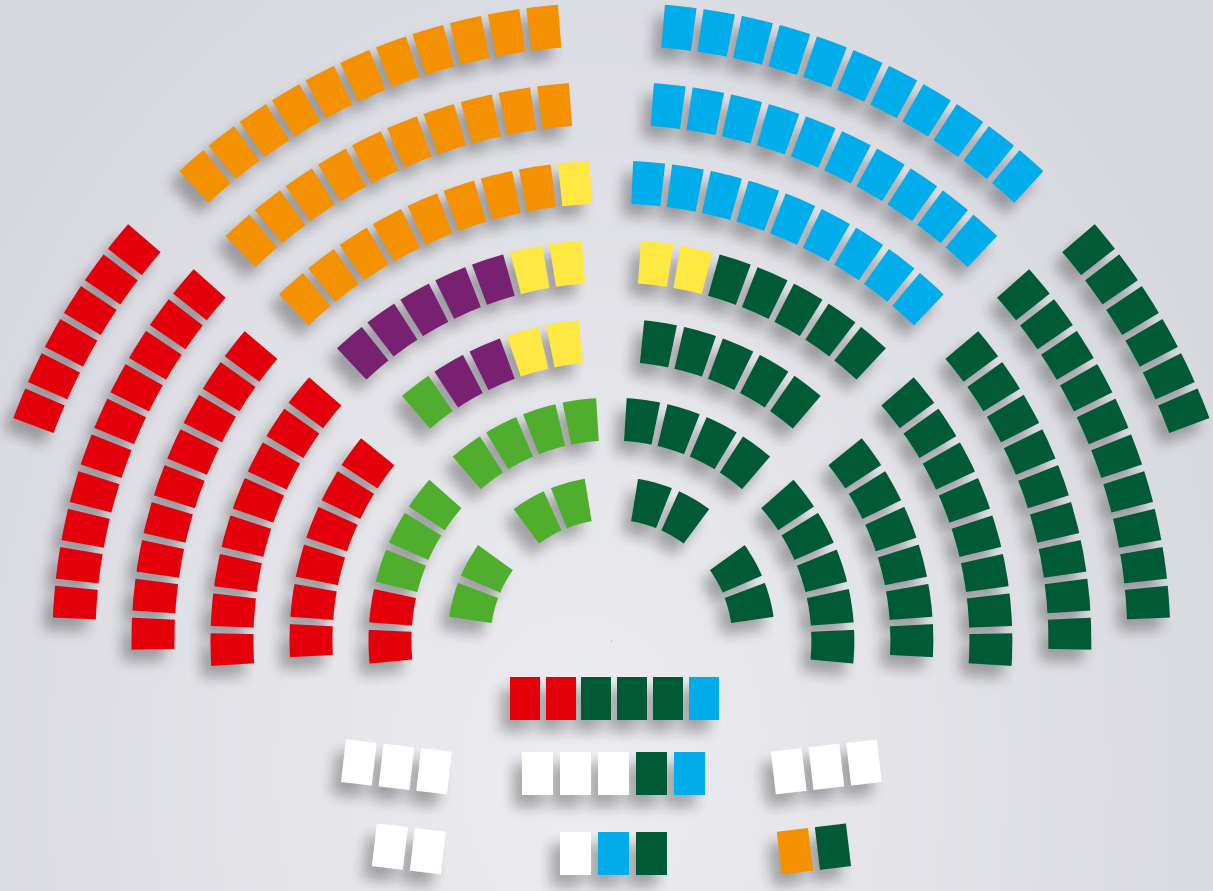
Draft laws are debated up to three times by each council so that identical decisions can ultimately be reached. Sometimes this can be difficult, but in most cases it can be achieved because each council is ready to make compromises and adjustments, even though neither chamber operates in quite the same way. Due to **differences in their political composition**, they often do not reach the same result when they vote. In addition, the Council of States is more representative of the cantons than the National Council. The size of the chambers also has an influence: the 46 members of the Council of States can speak out at any time on any matter, whereas complex rules apply on when the 200 members of the National Council are allowed to speak, which leads to less spontaneity in the voting. For this reason, it is easier to influence the result of a vote in the Council of States by presenting strong arguments than in the National Council.

It often takes quite some time before both chambers agree on identical wording for a new law. But when the decision has finally been taken and the hurdle of a potential referendum has been overcome, the new law has proper substance. The predictability and **stability of political decisions** is a key factor in Switzerland's success and prosperity.

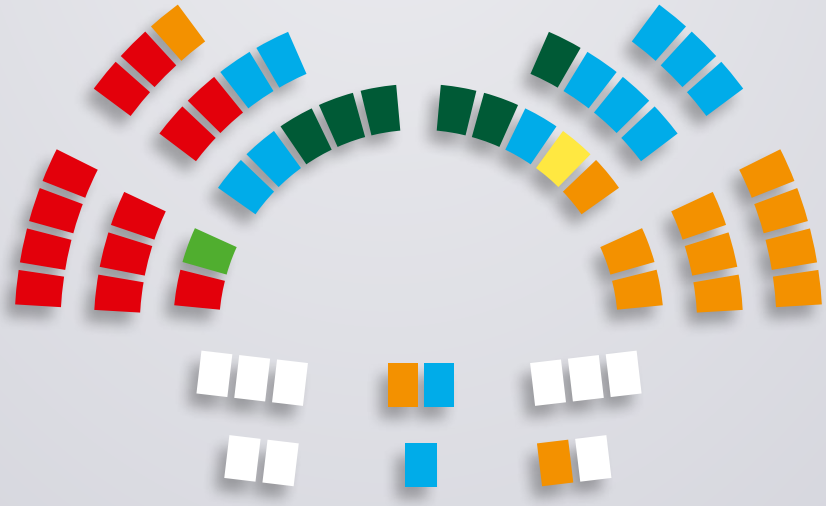
Alliances

No parliamentary group can get an item of business through Parliament alone; to achieve this they need to form alliances with other groups. In most cases where controversial issues are concerned Parliament tends to divide into a conservative and a left-leaning camp. Ultimately, whether a proposal is accepted or rejected is decided by the political centre depending on which camp it joins. Occasionally, an 'unholy alliance' emerges from the debate, i.e. one where the left (the SP and the Greens) and the right (SVP) coalesce to push through fundamental changes to a proposal or to overturn one – sometimes for completely opposing reasons.

ALLOCATION OF SEATS NATIONAL COUNCIL



ALLOCATION OF SEATS COUNCIL OF STATES



Parliamentary groups

- SVP
- SP
- FDP
- CVP
- The Greens
- BDP
- 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 into the Constitution, or have an existing law amended. They can also request the Federal Council or the Administration to provide a report or information.
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 to provide information on significant domestic or international events.

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.

Enthusiastic use is made of parliamentary instruments: in 1995 each council member filed an average of 3.9 procedural requests every year. By 2009, the high water mark (so far), this number had risen to 9.4. It then fell a little to 8 procedural requests per year and member in 2011. In 2015, a total of 1816 procedural requests were dealt with.

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. Many long hours of work must therefore be put in before a procedural request is either accepted or rejected.

Committees

Many people may be surprised to find the chambers of the National Council and Council of States half empty and wonder if anyone is doing any work there. By the time any proposal is debated in the councils, most of the parliamentary work has already been done, and many preliminary decisions have already been taken. This is the committees' job, as they conduct initial discussions on all items of business.

There are nine legislative 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, etc. 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 be given special powers to 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. Between parliamentary sessions, the committees meet once or twice for a day or two. Committee members can submit proposals on any of the legislative texts they are discussing, either relating to the text in its entirety or to individual points. If a proposal is rejected, it can be submitted again when the matter is discussed in the relevant council.

From the workplace to the Federal Palace

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.

Honour also carries responsibilities: 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 or two committees, while their colleagues in the Council of States sit on three or 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.

How much a member of parliament earns

In line with the relevant regulations, parliamentarians are entitled to the following remuneration:

- Annual salary to prepare for parliamentary work: CHF 26 000
- Daily allowance for council and committee attendance: CHF 440
- Annual allowance for staff and material expenses: CHF 33 000

On top of that there are allowances for food, travel and accommodation, pension fund as well as additional expense allowances for council and committee presidents and vice presidents. A portion of those allowances are tax free.
Depending on the number of attendance days and the council member's functions, the salary and allowances can amount to between CHF 130 000 and CHF 150 000 a year.

Opinions are formed

THE LOBBY

A long, curved, ornately decorated room with large windows adjoins the National Council chamber on the south side: the lobby, with its commanding view over the River Aare, the Marzili district below and the Gurten beyond. Since 1902, the lobby has been used for receptions and various ceremonial events, which is why it is adorned with art works, an ornate moulded ceiling and decorative ledges, columns and door surrounds made from stone found in different regions of Switzerland.
It was completely restored in 2015 for the beginning of the 50th legislature period. While conserving as much as possible of the original furnishings and decor, this much-used room has been furnished to meet current needs with new seating arrangements and technical installations.

During the sessions, and especially during the Federal Council elections, the lobby has the highest concentration of journalists in the country. But throughout the year it is a place where lobbyists and parliamentarians meet. A lot of work is done here, with speeches and argumentations given their final touches, and alliances clinched with a firm handshake.

When Parliament is in session, the lobby is a hive of activity.

The hub of Parliament

THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

From IT support to preparing and following up on committee meetings – the Parliamentary Services supports council members in fulfilling their duties. In terms of the separation of powers it is answerable to Parliament and operates 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 deputy has a host of questions, is inundated with information, expected to hit the ground running, but first has to become acquainted with how Parliament works. At the start of a new legislature period, the Parliamentary Services with its 311 staff (213 full-time equivalents) has a great deal to do.

When Parliament is in session, all the various units of the Parliamentary Services are kept busy: from the front desk to the desks of the council presidents, from council members' workstations to the restaurant, from the smallest to the largest meeting rooms – behind the scenes and in full public view.
The debates are written up while the session is still in progress and published in the Official Bulletin, so that individual statements and the results of the votes can be read online at www.parlament.ch around an hour later.

Diverse range of services

Things are slightly calmer in between sessions, but even then there are often committee meetings. These are usually prepared by the relevant committee secretariats with practical support provided by the team of ushers. In order to prepare for the committee meetings, members are provided with 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 request personalised documentation packs and advice for more in-depth information, or to help prepare for visits at home or abroad.

The work of the Parliamentary Services also includes drafting press releases, arranging press conferences, organising visits by Swiss delegations abroad and receiving foreign delegations in Bern. Here too the Parliamentary Services assist council members in word and deed.

Information online and in all official languages

Council members can find most of the information they need on the intranet. Each council member receives a laptop if they wish, or at least the necessary codes to log in to Parliament's IT network. 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. During the sessions debates are streamed live online.
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. It also has to be looked after. The activities that take centre stage would not be possible without all the work done behind the scenes: work would soon grind to a halt if the wastepaper baskets were never emptied, if there was no heating in winter or if there was nowhere to get a coffee…

Parliamentary Services

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

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.

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.

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.

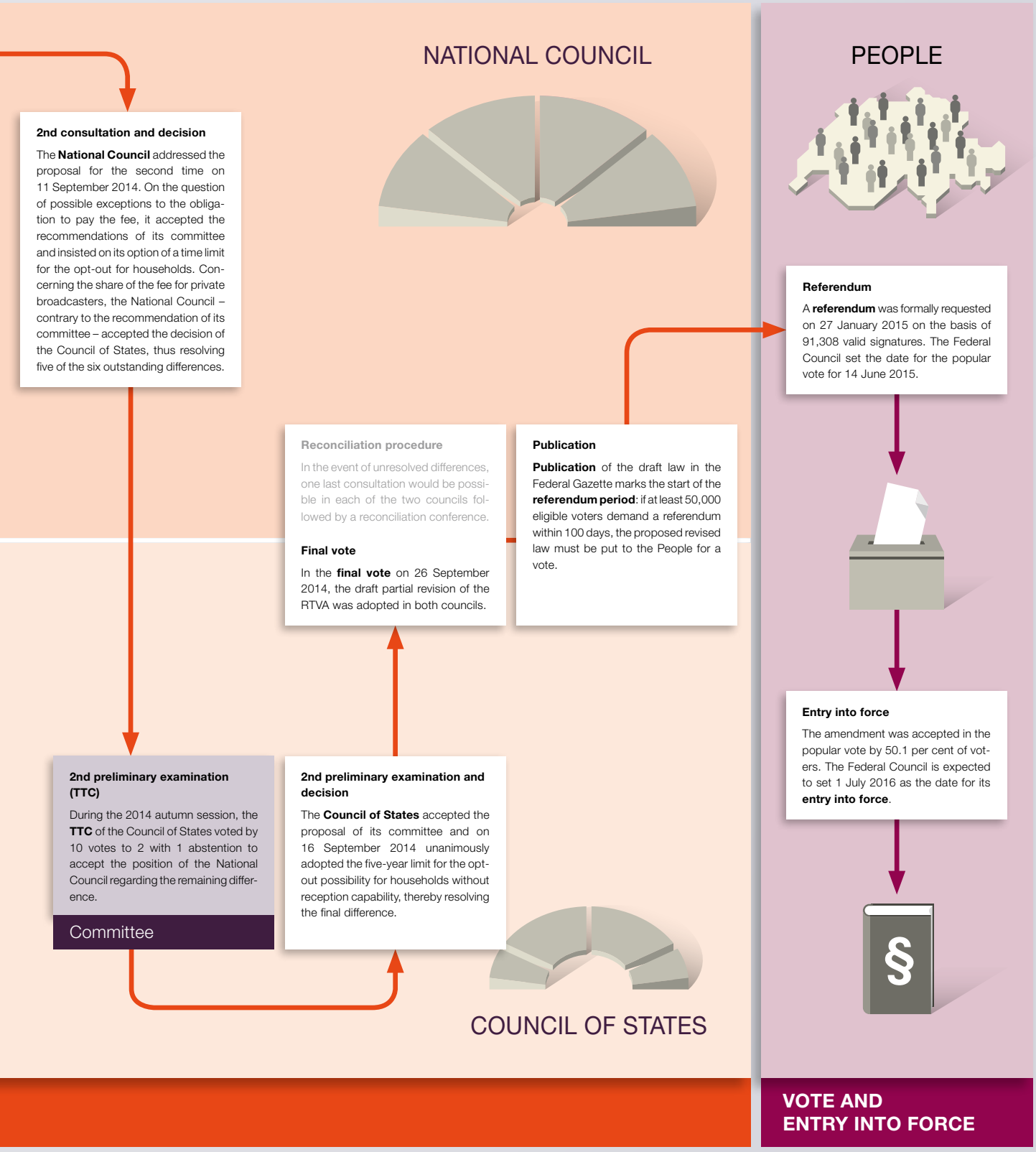
Committee

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 will be completed with entry into force of the revised law, which is expected in mid-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. The central Parliament Building, built according to plans drawn up by architect Hans Wilhelm Auer between 1894 and 1902, completed the inter-connected 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 as well as Switzerland's cultural, political, geographic and economic diversity.

Who goes in and out of the Federal Palace

Bern has been the home of Switzerland's political activities since 1848. The councils have held their meetings in the Parliament Building since 1902. The building was originally intended to serve not only as the seat of parliament, but of the whole Federal Administration.

Even in an age of chatrooms, 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.

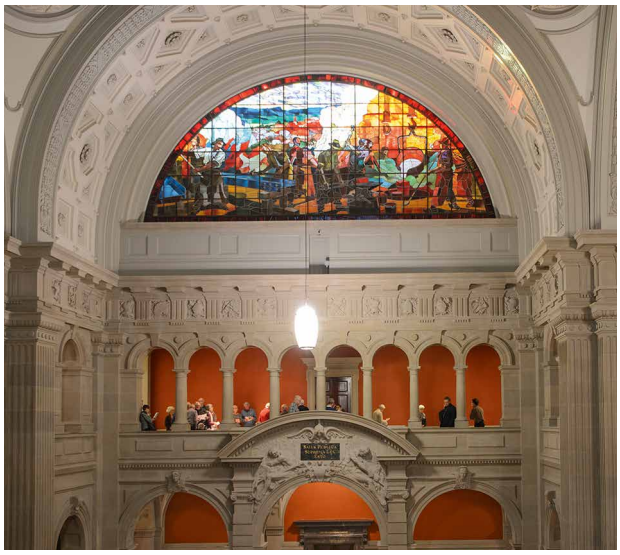
Media

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.

The Council of States chamber



The Parliament Building attracts lots of visitors: in 2015, 100 000 people passed through its doors.

The executive

THE GOVERNMENT

The Federal Council 40

Federal Administration 42

Departments 44

Federal Chancellery 72

1 January 2016: the latest official portrait of the Federal Council.

A governing college

THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

Johann N. Schneider-Ammann

President of the Swiss Confederation
Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research
Federal Councillor since 2010

Party affiliation:
FDP

Doris Leuthard

Vice President of the Federal Council
Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications
Federal Councillor since 2006

Party affiliation:
CVP

Ueli Maurer

Head of the Federal Department of Finance
Federal Councillor since 2009

Party affiliation:
SVP

Didier Burkhalter

Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Federal Councillor since 2009

Party affiliation:
FDP

Simonetta Sommaruga

Head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police
Federal Councillor since 2010

Party affiliation:
SP

Alain Berset

Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs
Federal Councillor since 2012

Party affiliation:
SP

Guy Parmelin

Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport
Federal Councillor since 2016

Party affiliation:
SVP

Walter Thurnherr

Federal Chancellor since 2016

Seven equal members

The Federal Council is Switzerland's government. On 9 December 2015 the United Federal Assembly (joint session of National Council and Council of States) elected 5 men and 2 women to the Federal Council for a four-year term of office. Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann was elected President of the Swiss Confederation. He is equal to the other members, but chairs cabinet meetings and represents the government. The newly elected Federal Chancellor is the Federal Council's chief of staff.

Managing government business

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

The Federal Council generally holds a regular meeting every week. Particularly complex matters are addressed at special meetings. It takes decisions on 2000 to 2500 items of business every year. The seven departments and the Federal Chancellery help to prepare the meetings.
The Federal Council plans and coordinates government activities based on its 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 for consideration. During the parliamentary deliberations, the federal councillors argue for the proposals put forward by their departments. If necessary, the Federal Council implements Parliament's decisions in the form of ordinances.
The Federal Council manages the Confederation's finances through the budget and the state accounts. The final decisions on those matters rest with Parliament.

Consensus and collegiality

The members of the Federal Council come from different cantons and are currently drawn from four political parties. Four members come from the German-speaking part of the country and three from the French-speaking part. The Italian-speaking region of Switzerland was last represented in the Federal Council between 1986 and 1999.
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.

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 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.

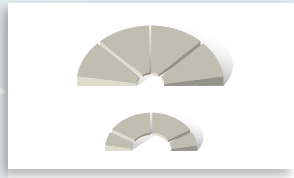
2015 The BDP representative stepped down. The United Federal Assembly elected an SVP representative in her place. The current constellation is: 2 FDP, 2 SP, 2 SVP, 1 CVP.

Organisation

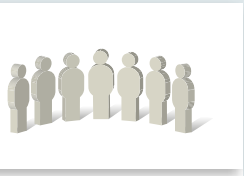
FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION

FDFA Federal Department of Foreign Affairs **Didier Burkhalter** Head of Department	FDHA Federal Department of Home Affairs **Alain Berset** Head of Department	FDJP Federal Department of Justice and Police **Simonetta Sommaruga** Head of Department	DDPS Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport **Guy Parmelin** Head of Department
General Secretariat GS-FDFA	**General Secretariat** GS-FDHA	**General Secretariat** GS-FDJP	**General Secretariat** GS-DDPS
State Secretariat	**Federal Office for Gender Equality** FOGE	**State Secretariat for Migration** SEM	**Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General**
Directorate of Political Affairs PD	**Federal Office of Culture** FOC	**Federal Office of Justice** FOJ	**Federal Intelligence Service** FIS
Directorate of European Affairs DEA	**Swiss National Library** NL	**Federal Office of Police** fedpol	**Defence sector**
Directorate of International Law DIL	**Swiss Federal Archives** SFA	**Federal Institute of Intellectual Property** IIP	**Federal Office for Defence Procurement** armasuisse
Consular Directorate CD	**Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology** MeteoSwiss	**Federal Institute of Metrology** METAS	**Federal Office of Topography** swisstopo
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC	**Federal Office of Public Health** FOPH	**Swiss Institute for Comparative Law** SICL	**Federal Office for Civil Protection** FOCP
Directorate for Resources DR	**Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office** FSVO	**Federal Audit Oversight Authority** FAOA	**Federal Office of Sport** FOSPO
	Federal Statistical Office FSO	**Federal Gaming Board** FGB	
	Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO	**Federal Commission on Migration** FCM	
	Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products Swissmedic	**Federal Arbitration Commission for the Exploitation of Copyrights and Related Rights** FACO	
	Swiss National Museum SNM	**National Commission for the Prevention of Torture** NCPT	
	Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia	**Independent Expert Commission tasked with Conducting a Scientific Review of Administrative Detention**	

PEOPLE



NATIONAL COUNCIL AND COUNCIL OF STATES



FEDERAL COUNCIL

FDF
Federal Department of Finance

Ueli Maurer
Head of Department

- **General Secretariat** GS-FDF
- **State Secretariat for International Financial Matters** SIF
- **Federal Finance Administration** FFA
- **Federal Office of Personnel** FOPER
- **Federal Tax Administration** FTA
- **Federal Customs Administration** FCA
- **Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunications** FOITT
- **Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics** FOBL
- **Federal IT Steering Unit** FITSU
- **Swiss Alcohol Board** SAB
- **Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority** FINMA
- **Swiss Federal Audit Office** SFAO
- **Federal Pension Fund** PUBLICA

EAER
Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research

Johann N. Schneider-Ammann
Head of Department

- **General Secretariat** GS-EAER
- **State Secretariat for Economic Affairs** SECO
- **State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation** SERI
- **Federal Office for Agriculture** FOAG
- **Federal Office for National Economic Supply** FONES
- **Federal Office for Housing** FOH
- **Office of the Price Supervisor**
- **Competition Commission** COMCO
- **Federal Institutes of Technology Group** ETH Domain
- **Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training** SFIVET
- **Commission for Technology and Innovation** CTI

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

Doris Leuthard
Head of Department

- **General Secretariat** GS-DETEC
- **Federal Office of Transport** FOT
- **Federal Office of Civil Aviation** FOCA
- **Swiss Federal Office of Energy** SFOE
- **Federal Roads Office** FEDRO
- **Federal Office of Communications** OFCOM
- **Federal Office for the Environment** FOEN
- **Federal Office for Spatial Development** ARE
- **Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate** ENSI

FCh
Federal Chancellery

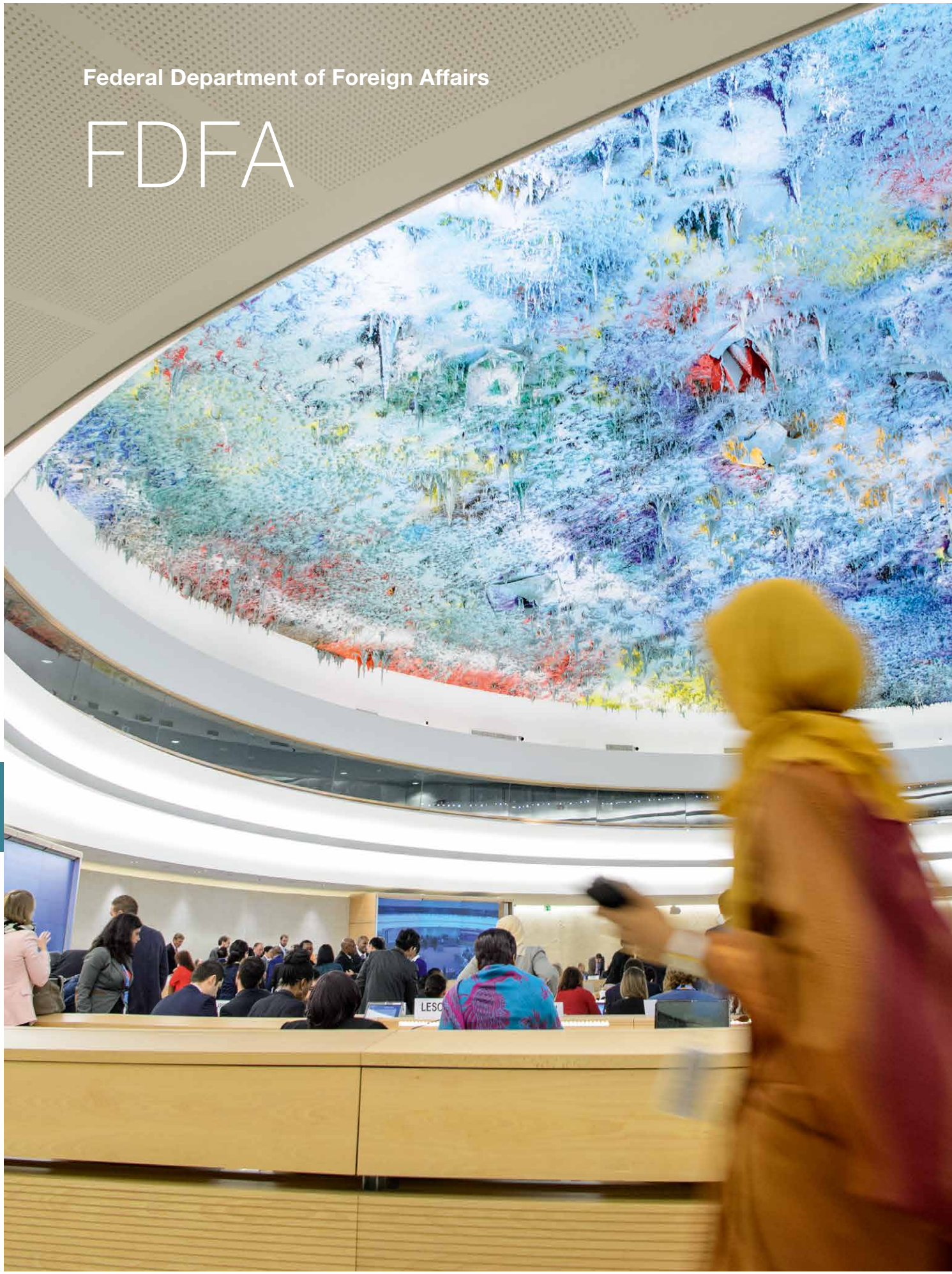
Walter Thurnherr
Federal Chancellor

- **Office of the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner** FDPIC

The organisations with a white background are largely independent.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

FDFA



The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

The head of the FDFA is Didier Burkhalter. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2009. He began as head of the FDHA before moving to the FDFA in 2012.

Neighbouring states and the European Union
Fostering and developing relations with our neighbours and with the EU is a top priority of Swiss foreign policy. In 2016, the main thrust is to advance implementation of the new constitutional provisions on immigration and to find a solution with the EU to the question of the free movement of persons. At the same time, the bilateral approach with the EU needs to be renewed and further developed. With these aims in mind the Federal Council is seeking to negotiate a comprehensive solution with the EU.

The death penalty does not make society safer.

Security, peace, development
Promoting security, peace and democracy abroad, poverty reduction and sustainable development are major pillars of Swiss bilateral and multilateral foreign and development policy. In addition to development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the new strategy on international cooperation for 2017–2020 includes human security for the first time. The main aim is to exploit synergies. The Federal Council will submit its dispatch on this theme to Parliament in 2016. In view of current world political uncertainty, the FDFA will also strengthen its security policy commitment.

International Geneva and human rights
Geneva, as a host city of the United Nations and many other international organisations, is important for Switzerland and its foreign policy. On 19 June, the Human Rights Coun-

cil – the principal UN forum for promoting and protecting human rights – celebrates its 10th anniversary. Switzerland made a decisive contribution to its creation and takes a very active part in the council. For instance, it succeeded in placing important issues such as capital punishment, transitional justice and the protection of human rights in the context of peaceful demonstrations on the council's agenda. In October 2015, the UN General Assembly elected Switzerland to the council for a third three-year term from 2016 to 2018.

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 204 honorary representations.

Expenses 2014	**CHF 3016m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**5667**

www.fdfa.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-FDFA

Secretary General: **Benno Bättig**
www.fdfa.admin.ch

The General Secretariat coordinates parliamentary and Federal Council business and is responsible for the FDFA's auditing, internal and external communications, overseeing the management of the representations abroad, and promoting equal opportunities. Presence Switzerland and the FDFA History Unit are also part of the General Secretariat.

State Secretariat

State Secretary: **Yves Rossier**

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, the EU 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

Director: **State Secretary Yves Rossier**

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 represents Switzerland in multilateral forums; 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 and environmental issues, transport, energy, health, education and science; and the Security Policy Division develops policy on international security.

Directorate of European Affairs DEA

Director: **Henri Gétaz**
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

Director: **Valentin Zellweger**

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

Director: **Jürg Burri**

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

Director: **Manuel Sager**
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

Director: **Jacques Pitteloud**

The Directorate for Resources manages and ensures the efficient use of the FDFA's human, financial and IT resources. In addition, it provides logistical services for both the FDFA's head office in Bern and its worldwide network of representations. 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.

Federal Department of Home Affairs

FDHA

House facades on the Piazza Grande during the 2015 Locarno International Film Festival.

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 many everyday issues affecting people in Switzerland, such as retirement provision, healthcare and cultural matters. Swiss society is facing major challenges in these areas.

Retirement provision 2020

In a few years' time, the baby-boom generation will reach retirement age, but in the occupational pension funds returns on investments have been too low for years. For this reason, the Federal Council decided to launch the 'Retirement provision 2020' reform project, which provides for a comprehensive and transparent solution: the first and second pillars of the social insurance system are to be reformed jointly with the overriding objective of maintaining the current level of pensions. The retirement age will be set for all at 65, with a flexible transition to retirement between the ages of 62 and 70.

The aim is to continue to raise the quality of the healthcare system.

Health 2020

The number of chronic illnesses is continually increasing, but the health system is strongly oriented towards the treatment of acute illnesses. In addition to ensuring a sharper focus on these new developments, transparency and controllability are to be improved. In responding to

this situation, the Federal Council has adopted the 'Health 2020' strategy with the aim of raising the quality of provision, keeping costs under control and guaranteeing adequate access to healthcare for all. People and their well-being are the top priority of this strategy.

Dispatch on culture 2016 – 2020
Culture and cultural life are facing radical changes including globalisation, digitalisation and individualisation. In this context the new Federal Council dispatch on culture sets three priorities for the period to 2020 with the aim of raising the active and passive participation of as many people as possible in cultural life, strengthening social cohesion in Switzerland's linguistic and culturally diverse society, and promoting 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 2014	**CHF 16 626m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**2229**

www.edi.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-FDHA

Secretary General: **Lukas Bruhin**
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

Director: **Sylvie Durrer**
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 the prevention of and fight against domestic violence. The secretariat of the Federal Commission for Women's Issues is affiliated to this office.

Federal Office of Culture FOC

Director: **Isabelle Chassot**
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.

Swiss National Library NL

Director: **Marie-Christine Doffey**
www.nb.admin.ch

As a memory institution the National Library collects texts, images and sounds about Switzerland in both analogue and digital form. It stores them, catalogues and makes them accessible worldwide. In addition to the library in Bern, the Swiss Literature Archive, the Swiss National Sound Archives in Lugano and the Dürrenmatt Centre in Neuchâtel are also part of the Swiss National Library.

Swiss Federal Archives SFA

Director: **Andreas Kellerhals**
www.bar.admin.ch

The SFA evaluates, safeguards, catalogues and raises public awareness of Confederation documents with archival value. The full inventory contains original documents such as the Federal Constitution, deeds, photographs, films, recordings and databases.

Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology MeteoSwiss

Director: **Peter Binder**
www.meteoswiss.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

Director: **Pascal Strupler**
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 programmes to promote healthy living. It works on behalf of the Federal Council and with partners to implement the 'Health 2020' strategy in order to adapt the Swiss healthcare system optimally to future challenges.

Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO

Director: **Hans Wyss**
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 to protect 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

Director: **Georges-Simon Ulrich**
www.statistics.admin.ch

By providing reliable statistical information, the FSO helps to establish a common basis for public debate. It records developments in the population, economy, society, education, research, spatial planning and the environment, and ensures international and historical comparability.

Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO

Director: **Jürg Brechbühl**
www.bsv.admin.ch

The FSIO is responsible for old age and survivors' insurance, invalidity insurance, supplementary benefits, occupational pension funds, compensation for loss of earnings for people on military or civilian service and women on maternity leave, and family allowances. In addition, it is also concerned with issues relating to family, children, youth and old-age, generational relationships and general socio-political issues.

Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products Swissmedic

Director: **Jürg H. Schnetzer**
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

Director: **Andreas Spillmann**
www.nationalmuseum.ch

Three museums – the National Museum in Zurich, the Château de Prangins and the Forum of Swiss History in Schwyz, as well as the collections centre in Affoltern am Albis – are united under the umbrella of the Swiss National Museum (SNM). With more than 840,000 items, the SNM has the largest collection of culturally historic items and craftwork in Switzerland.

Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

Director: **Andrew Holland**
www.prohelvetia.ch

Pro Helvetia promotes artistic activity in Switzerland and Swiss art and culture abroad. It encourages cultural exchange, helps make the arts more accessible to the public, and complements support for the arts at cantonal and local level.

Federal Department of Justice and Police

FDJP

A civil wedding – an important moment in many people's lives, but not all couples are able or want to formalise their relationship in this way.

The head of the FDJP is Simonetta Sommaruga. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2010.

Immigration and asylum
One of the FDJP's current focuses is on implementing the constitutional article on immigration adopted by voters in February 2014. The article stipulates that immigration is to be limited through annual quantitative limits and quotas, and requires Switzerland to start negotiations with the EU to amend the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. Another of the FDJP's priorities is to reorganise the asylum system with the aim of speeding up proceedings under fair conditions.

Family law needs to be updated if it is to reflect today's freer concept of love and family.

Further development of family law
The FDJP is also in the process of making further changes to family law, for instance by supporting the work of the National Council Legal Affairs Committee on a parliamentary initiative aimed at enabling same-sex couples to marry.

Contract children and other victims of compulsory social measures
The historical reappraisal of compulsory social measures taken in the past is another important topic. Over the course of several decades, the contracting of children,

forced removal of children from their homes, forced adoption, forced sterilisation and castration, and administrative detentions were the cause of great suffering for many. Following the Federal Council's apology in April 2013, Parliament is now debating a corresponding federal act – an indirect counter-proposal to the Reparation Initiative.

Fighting organised crime

Fighting terrorist activity and organised crime such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling continues to be high on the political agenda. In this area, the FDJP cooperates closely with national and international partners.

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 gaming supervision.

Expenses 2014	**CHF 2030m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**2400**

www.ejpd.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-FDJP

Secretary General: **Matthias Ramsauer**
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. Administratively, the Post and Telecommunications Surveillance Service (PTSS) is also part of the ISC.

State Secretariat for Migration SEM

State Secretary: **Mario Gattiker**
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 national level.

Federal Office of Justice FOJ

Director: **Martin Dumermuth**
www.bj.admin.ch

The FOJ drafts legislation on enactments for civil, criminal, constitutional and administrative law. In addition, the FOJ advises the Federal Administration in all legislative matters. The FOJ is responsible for oversight in several areas, it manages the register of criminal convictions and the civil register and cooperates with foreign authorities in mutual assistance matters.

Federal Office of Police fedpol

Director: **Nicoletta della Valle**
www.fedpol.admin.ch

Fedpol is the Confederation's police force. It conducts investigations and analyses, coordinates tasks and protects the population. Fedpol fights terrorism, organised crime and money laundering and is also active in several other fields. In all of its tasks, the office cooperates closely with its partners in Switzerland, Europe and beyond.

Federal Institute of Intellectual Property IIP

Director: **Catherine Chammartin**
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 by registering them with the IIP.

Federal Institute of Metrology METAS

Director (until 31/3/2016): **Christian Bock**
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

Director: **Christina Schmid**
www.sicl.ch

The SICL is an independent institute of the Confederation. Its main purpose is to objectively allow courts, administrative bodies, attorneys, notaries and private citizens to access foreign and international law. In addition, the institute supports universities in comparative law issues and, to a limited extent, conducts research on comparative law.

Federal Audit Oversight Authority FAOA

Director: **Frank Schneider**
www.revisionsaufsichtsbehoerde.ch

The FAOA is an autonomous and independent supervisory authority. Its main purpose is to issue licences for the provision of auditing services to individuals and companies, and to supervise auditors that provide auditing services to public companies.

Federal Gaming Board FGB

Director: **Jean-Marie Jordan**
www.esbk.admin.ch

The FGB is the supervisory authority for the 21 casinos in Switzerland. It ensures that the games they offer are safe and transparent. The FGB also ensures that casinos fulfil their duty to prevent compulsive gambling, investigates illegal gambling activities in Switzerland and levies the gaming tax.

Federal Commission on Migration FCM

President: **Walter Leimgruber**
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

President: **Armin Knecht**
www.eschk.admin.ch

Authors receive royalties for the use of their musical, literary and audiovisual works according to certain rates. These rates are examined and approved by the Arbitration Commission.

National Commission for the Prevention of Torture NCPT

President: **Alberto Achermann**
www.nkvf.admin.ch

By making regular visits to penal institutions, the NCPT helps prevent the practise of torture and inhumane or humiliating treatment. It also ensures that the fundamental rights of persons who are forcibly repatriated by air are observed.

Independent Expert Commission tasked with Conducting a Scientific Review of Administrative Detention

President: **Markus Notter**
www.uek-administrative-versorgungen.ch

The commission was established by the Federal Council at the end of 2014 to methodically review the administrative detentions that took place in Switzerland before 1981. It investigates the history of these detentions including their links to other compulsory social measures and forced removals of children from their homes.

Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

DDPS

The Swiss Armed Forces needs to develop on a permanent basis. To achieve this requires up-to-date equipment and appropriate training for its members.

The head of the DDPS is Guy Parmelin. Parliament elected him to the Federal Council in December 2015.

For peace and security

Switzerland today is a safe place. Unfortunately, the world is not. Even in Europe, war is once again being used to pursue political ends by other means. It is in this context that the DDPS contributes to the defence of the country, the people and critical infrastructure.

Modern and powerful

The aim of the Swiss Armed Forces is to prevent war, defend the country, support the civilian authorities, and promote peace at the international level. Thanks to constant development the armed forces are well equipped to meet current threats. An important part of this is, and remains, adequate funding for thorough training and proper equipment. After all, it is Swiss citizens in uniform who serve in the armed forces and who would be risking their lives if it came to it.

The DDPS helps, protects and fights, when needed, for Switzerland's security.

To govern is to foresee

The DDPS contributes to Switzerland's security and liberty in a preventive capacity. To this end, the Federal Intelligence Service gathers relevant information about the situation abroad and takes appropriate measures to ensure

internal security. Procurement budgets continually have to be adapted to the current threat level while maintaining the balance between security and liberty. The DDPS also takes a preventive approach to protecting the population. The Federal Office for Civil Protection identifies threats and dangers to the population and its environment and cultural property, and helps to protect it.

Come on Switzerland!
The Federal Office of Sport promotes sport and physical activity for the whole population, especially children and young people. In addition, it supports the country's best young and elite athletes, as well as the organisation of international sporting events.

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 2014	**CHF 4782m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**11 598**

www.vbs.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-DDPS

Secretary General: **Nathalie Falcone-Goumaz**
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 communications, the Library Am Guisanplatz, the translation services and the DDPS Damage Compensation Centre.

Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General

Armed Forces Attorney General: **Stefan Flachsmann**
www.oa.admin.ch

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

Federal Intelligence Service FIS

Director: **Markus Seiler**
www.fis.admin.ch

The Federal Intelligence Service follows strategic developments and threats to Switzerland, evaluates the situation and issues alerts and warnings in the event of impending crises or unusual developments with the aim of providing a situation analysis suitable for decision-makers at all levels. The FIS deals with the areas of terrorism, proliferation, violent extremism and illicit intelligence gathering. The service is supervised by various bodies of the Administration and by Parliament.

Defence sector

Chief of the Armed Forces:
Lieutenant General André Blattmann
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. The Armed Forces Joint Staff 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 commanders of the Land Forces and the Air Force bear overall responsibility for training the Land Forces and the Air Force and for preparing ground and air units for action. The militia officers and professional soldiers are trained at the Armed Forces College. 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 necessary electronic support services.

Federal Office for Defence Procurement armasuisse

Chief of Defence Procurement: **Martin Sonderegger**
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, vehicles, equipment and buildings they require. It manages approximately 13,500 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

Director: **Fridolin Wicki**
www.swisstopo.ch

swisstopo is Switzerland's geoinformation centre. It is responsible for 'measuring' Switzerland and conducts surveys of the country and documents the landscape both above and below ground. Its products include maps, topographical and landscape models, aerial photos, orthoimages, geological data as well as online maps and applications for computers, tablets and smartphones, in particular the federal government's map viewer, map.geo.admin.ch. swisstopo coordinates geoinformation and geology activities at federal and cantonal level and runs the Institute for Military Geography. It is also the supervisory body for official cadastral surveying and the cadastre of public law restrictions on land ownership.

Federal Office for Civil Protection FOCP

Director: **Benno Bühlmann**
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. 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

Director: **Matthias Remund**
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.

Federal Department of Finance

FDF

Border guards and dogs are on the job 24/7 cracking down on organised smuggling, criminal organisations and traffickers.

The head of the FDF is Ueli Maurer. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2009. He began as head of the DDPS before moving to the FDF in 2016.

Coordinated supervision of border areas
People and goods cross national borders every day, although not always legally. Traffickers in weapons, drugs and human beings take advantage of Europe's open borders. Various federal authorities are working in even closer cooperation with cantonal authorities and with their international counterparts on integrated border management to step up the fight against cross-border crime.

Corporate taxation influences growth and jobs.

Corporate tax reform III (CTR III)
At present, holding companies and other special forms of company pay lower cantonal taxes on their foreign profits than companies that earn their profits in Switzerland. The CTR III intends to eliminate these tax privileges. New and internationally accepted tax relief instruments and additional measures should prevent the companies concerned from moving abroad.

The future of Switzerland's financial centre
Switzerland's financial market policy objectives are quality, stability and integrity. Switzerland wishes to maintain a strong and internationally competitive financial market into the future. This should be able to weather even the worst shocks on global financial markets. Efforts are to be made to crack down on money laundering and tax abuses, and to boost trust in the country's financial centre.

IT security in cyberspace
The development of the internet has increased the diversity of cyber threats. The Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance MELANI was set up in 2004 to protect our information and communication infrastructure. The national strategy for the protection of Switzerland against cyber risks (NCS) adopted in 2012 is to be implemented by the end of 2017.

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 2014	**CHF 15 779m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**8539**

www.efd.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-FDF

Secretary General: **Jörg Gasser**
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 Financial Matters SIF

State Secretary: **Jacques de Watteville**
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

Director: **Serge Gaillard**
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, finance 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

Director: **Barbara Schaerer**
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

Director: **Adrian Hug**
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

Director (from 01/04/2016): **Christian Bock**
www.ezv.admin.ch

The FCA makes sure the cross-border movement of goods and persons is as smooth as possible. Civil 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.

Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunications FOITT

Director: **Giovanni Conti**
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

Director: **Gustave E. Marchand**
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

Delegate: **Peter Fischer**
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 e-Government Strategy Switzerland and manages the Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance (MELANI).

Swiss Alcohol Board SAB

Interim head: **Stefan Schmidt**
www.eav.admin.ch

The SAB is entrusted with the practical implementation of alcohol legislation. It regulates the spirits market by means of taxes and restrictions on trading and advertising. Following a partial revision of the Alcohol Act, the SAB is to be transferred to the Federal Customs Administration.

Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA

Director: **Mark Branson**
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

Director: **Michel Huissoud**
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.

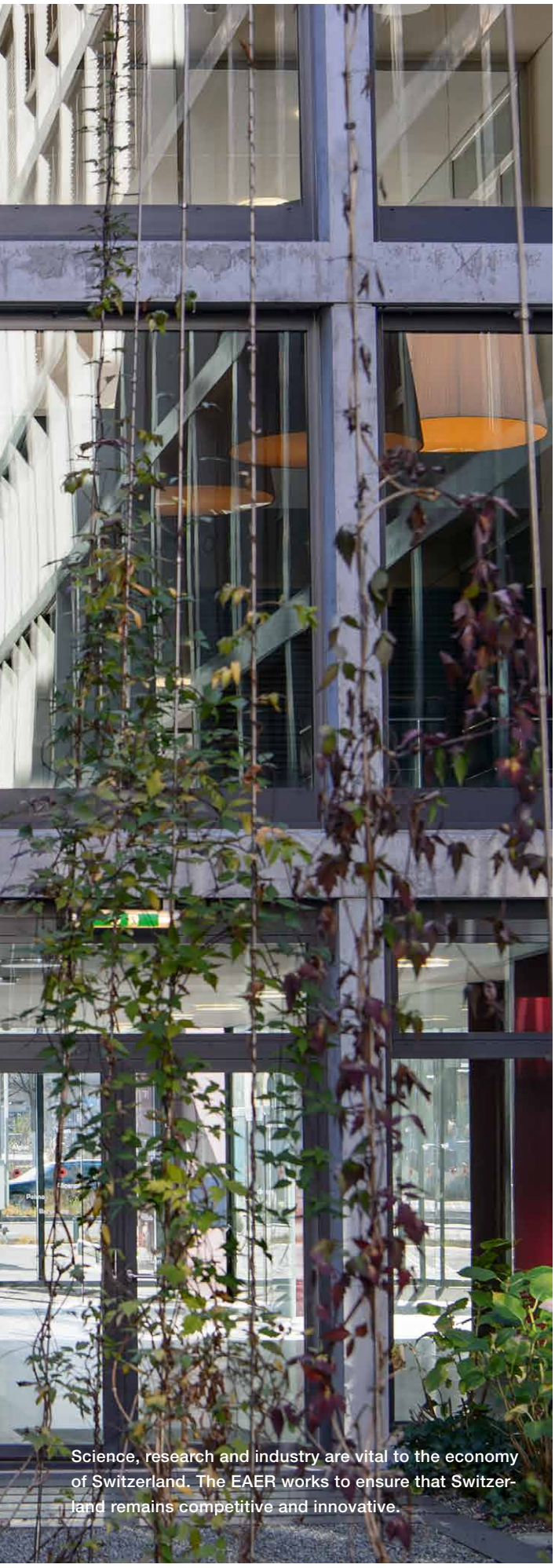
Federal Pension Fund PUBLICA

Director: **Dieter Stohler**
www.publica.ch

As a non-profit collective occupational pension fund, PUBLICA manages assets totalling around CHF 37 billion. With 63,000 insured persons and 43,000 pension recipients, PUBLICA is one of the largest pension funds in Switzerland.

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research

EAER



Science, research and industry are vital to the economy of Switzerland. The EAER works to ensure that Switzerland remains competitive and innovative.

The head of the EAER is Johann N. Schneider-Ammann. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2010 and is President of the Swiss Confederation in 2016.

Prospects for all

The rapid pace of technological change and globalisation are the shaping forces of our times. They also present the Swiss economy and its labour market with major challenges. The EAER aims to create the necessary conditions to enable the economy and the labour market to meet these challenges successfully so that as many people as possible in this country are able to find a job that corresponds with their abilities. Jobs give people a sense of purpose, provide security and open up prospects.

Education as an investment

Investment in education and training is essential if employees and businesses are to stay in shape. Investing in education is especially important in times of major technological change. This applies in equal measure to vocational and professional education and training, general and higher education. By providing training programmes adapted to future requirements, we are able to enhance the innovative capacity and competitiveness of our economy.

Investing in education means securing jobs.

Innovation boosts attractiveness

Switzerland regularly takes top places in international innovation rankings. The EAER prepares the groundwork in this respect. Universities, universities of applied sciences and research institutes train the specialists that the country needs, and the Commission for Technology and Inno-

vation helps businesses and researchers to form links. Switzerland is recognised worldwide as a highly innovative country and as such is an attractive location for international companies.

Central location for companies

To ensure that companies that create jobs not only stay here but that more come, we need to create business-friendly conditions. We can then build on our central location in Europe. Administrative obstacles need to be removed and red tape cut wherever possible. The liberal labour market together with the partnership that has been created between labour and management are the core of Switzerland's model for success.

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER

The EAER shapes the conditions for ensuring job creation, growth and prosperity in Switzerland. 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 2014	**CHF 11 377m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**2122**

www.wbf.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-EAER

Secretary General: **Stefan Brupbacher**
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 and the Central Office for Civilian Service ZIVI report 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. For the last 20 years, ZIVI has been preparing Swiss men who for reasons of conscience choose not to perform military service for community-based service and arranges their placements. Around 1.5 million civilian service days are performed each year.

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

State Secretary: **Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch**
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

State Secretary: **Mauro Dell'Ambrogio**
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

Director: **Bernard Lehmann**
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

Delegate: **Werner Meier**
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

Director: **Ernst Hauri**
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.

Office of the Price Supervisor

Price Supervisor: **Stefan Meierhans**
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

Director: **Rafael Corazza**
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

President of the ETH Board: **Fritz Schiesser**
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

Director: **Cornelia Oertle**
www.svivet-switzerland.ch

SFIVET, which has offices in Lausanne, Lugano, Zollikofen und Zurich, is the federal centre of expertise for initial and continuing education training of VET trainers and for development and research in this field.

Commission for Technology and Innovation CTI

Director: **Annalise Eggimann**
www.kti.admin.ch

The CTI supports the transfer of knowledge and technology among higher education institutions and industry, promotes entrepreneurship through courses and coaching, and funds R&D projects between companies and higher education institutions.

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications

DETEC

Housing, work and transport: even when these elements exist in close proximity, such as here in Dietikon ZH, they should be better interconnected. The federal government is making efforts in that regard.

The head of DETEC is Doris Leuthard. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2006. She began as head of the FDEA (now EAER) before moving to DETEC in 2010.

Economic strength and quality of life – both depend on a well-integrated national infrastructure network. Rail, air and road connections, a reliable energy supply and modern telecommunications services are essential for the country's cohesion. The Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications is responsible for maintaining and developing Switzerland's infrastructure. In the coming years the department will be required to meet challenges in two key areas:

Better exploitation of transport infrastructure

The mobility of people and goods will continue to increase – by road, rail and air. Budgetary and spatial constraints, however, mean that there are limits as to much current capacity can be expanded. Apart from additional investment, ways have to be found to ensure the optimal use of existing infrastructure. Flexible working and school hours, driverless vehicles and intelligent transport management could help.

Roads and railways should be equally utilised.

Ensuring our long-term energy supply

The aim of the Energy Strategy 2050 is not only to reduce energy consumption as a whole, but also the high share of fossil fuels in favour of renewable sources such as water, sun, wind, biomass and wood, as well as Switzerland's de-

pendence on imports. The construction of facilities for generating renewable energy and power lines often meets with resistance. It is therefore necessary to find a balance between protecting and exploiting nature.

DETEC addresses these challenges using an interdisciplinary approach. In collaboration with the cantons, housing development is to be more precisely coordinated with transport infrastructure. Research and technology will help to boost efficiency regarding the consumption of energy and other resources. Good connections with high-speed broadband pave the way for new solutions and applications in line with Switzerland 4.0.

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 2014	**CHF 9900m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**2185**

www.uvek.admin.ch

General Secretariat GS-DETEC

Secretary General: **Toni Eder**
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

Director: **Peter Füglistaler**
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. The FOT is currently preparing the opening of the Gotthard base tunnel scheduled for 1 June 2016, which is part of the New Rail Link through the Alps and which will be the world's longest railway tunnel.

Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA

Director: **Christian Hegner**
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

Director: **Walter Steinmann**
www.sfoe.admin.ch

The Federal Council's energy policy is oriented towards improving energy efficiency, promoting renewable energy sources, particularly hydropower, the further development of the electricity grid, and on 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

Director: **Jürg Röthlisberger**
www.astra.admin.ch

FEDRO is mandated by the Federal Council and Parliament to take responsibility for extending and maintaining the national roads 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 OFCOM

Director: **Philipp Metzger**
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

Director (a.i.): **Christine Hofmann**
www.foen.admin.ch

Natural resources such as water, soil and air are under pressure because they are frequently being over-exploited. 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

Director: **Maria Lezzi**
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

Director: **Hans Wanner**
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. Parliament elected him as the new Federal Chancellor in December 2015.

Staff office of the Federal Council

The Federal Chancellery is the oldest federal institution and was established in 1803. It is the staff office of the Federal Council and 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 2014	**CHF 46m**
Staff (full-time positions) 2014	**216**

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 to discuss and decide on the nearly 2500 items of government business it handles every year. 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, **Vice Chancellor André Simonazzi**, 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 all available to answer questions from journalists at the press conferences.

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

Following the meetings of the Federal Council, the Federal Chancellery also informs all seven departments about the decisions taken. Responsibility for that task falls to **Vice Chancellor Thomas Helbling**. 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 where the applicable law is available for the public at all times.

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)

Translating into several languages

The official languages of multilingual 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. The Language Services at the Federal Chancellery are responsible for ensuring the high linguistic quality of official documents and publications, and also provide translations into 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 Federal Chancellery works with the cantons to provide all eligible voters with the option of voting online. The introduction of e-voting reflects current social developments and aims to bring democratic instruments up to speed for the 21st century.

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.

Providing a platform for politics in the Käfigturm

The Federal Chancellery and Parliamentary Services jointly run the Political Forum of the Confederation. Exhibitions, lectures, panel discussions and films addressing political issues provide interested citizens with an opportunity for discussion.

www.kaefigturm.ch

Office of the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner FDPIC

Commissioner a.i.: **Jean-Philippe Walter**
www.edoeb.admin.ch

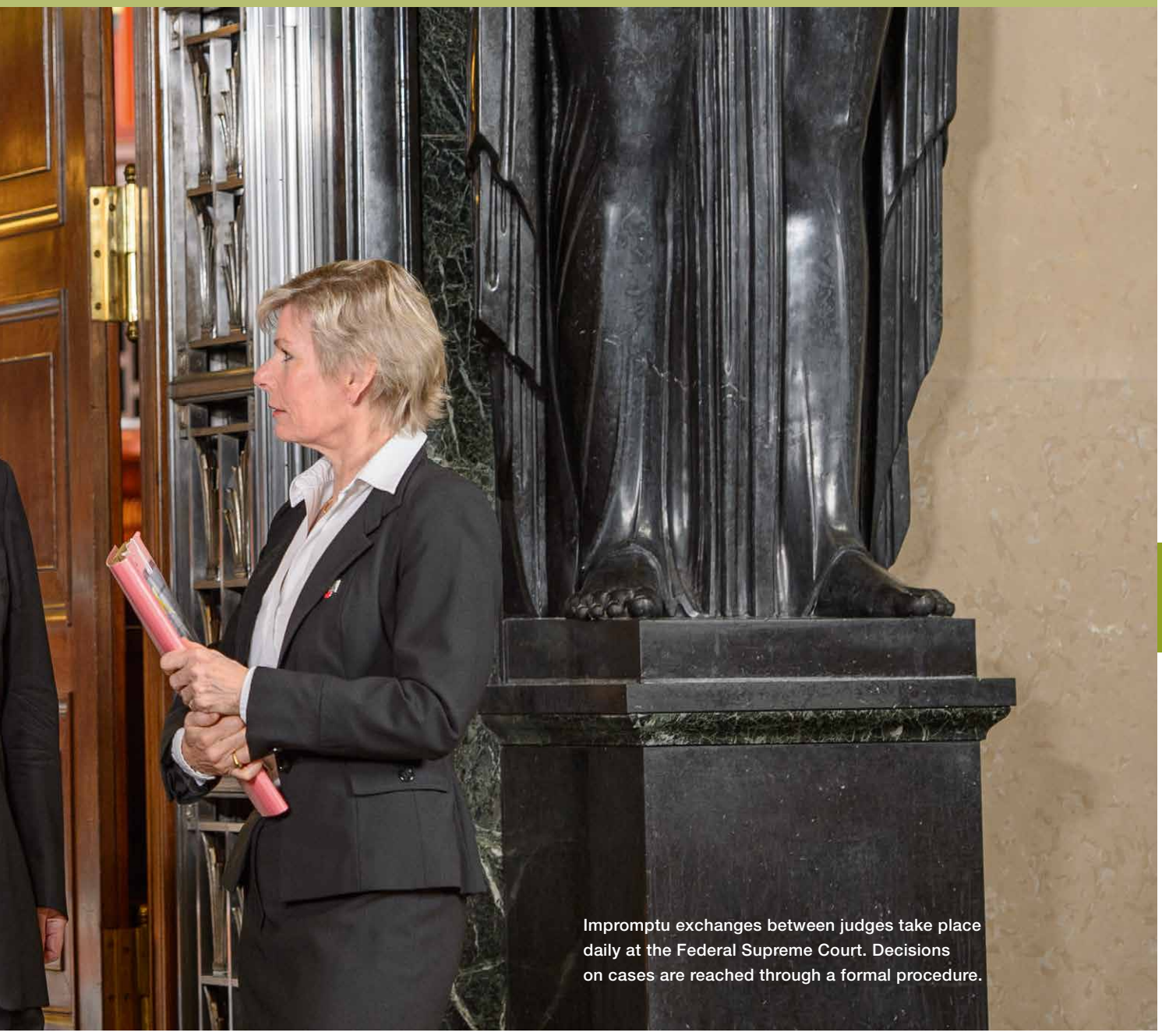
The Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner monitors compliance with the Data Protection Act to protect the privacy of citizens, and advises citizens in matters relating to data protection. The FDPIC also ensures implementation of the principle of freedom of information, which affords access 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

The judiciary ____ 76

The Federal Supreme Court
and the federal courts of first instance ____ 78



Impromptu exchanges between judges take place daily at the Federal Supreme Court. Decisions on cases are reached through a formal procedure.

The third state power

THE JUDICIARY

Interview with Gilbert Kolly, President of the Federal Supreme Court

Mr Kolly, how many cases does the Federal Supreme Court handle each year?

The Federal Supreme Court rules on between 7,500 and 8,000 appeals every year. Of these, roughly one in seven is partially or wholly upheld.

What important decisions has the Federal Supreme Court made in the last few years?

The Federal Supreme Court regularly rules on legal questions of major social and economic importance. The court's decisions are frequently the subject of heated public debate. Recent examples include the decisions on the limits to the Swiss recognition of the intended parents of a child born to a surrogate mother abroad. Sometimes, questions of a quite anecdotal nature attract public interest, such as whether naked hiking is a criminal offence.

How does the court deal with the different national languages?

Appellants and their lawyers are free to use any of the four official languages – German, French, Italian or Romansh – in cases before the Federal Supreme Court. This means that judges have to understand the first three of these languages; in the very rare cases where Romansh is the chosen language, documents are translated. Currently, twenty-three judges are German-speaking, twelve are French-speaking and three are Italian-speaking. The decisions of the Federal Supreme Court are generally drafted in the same language as the contested judgment.

How are decisions reached at the Federal Supreme Court?

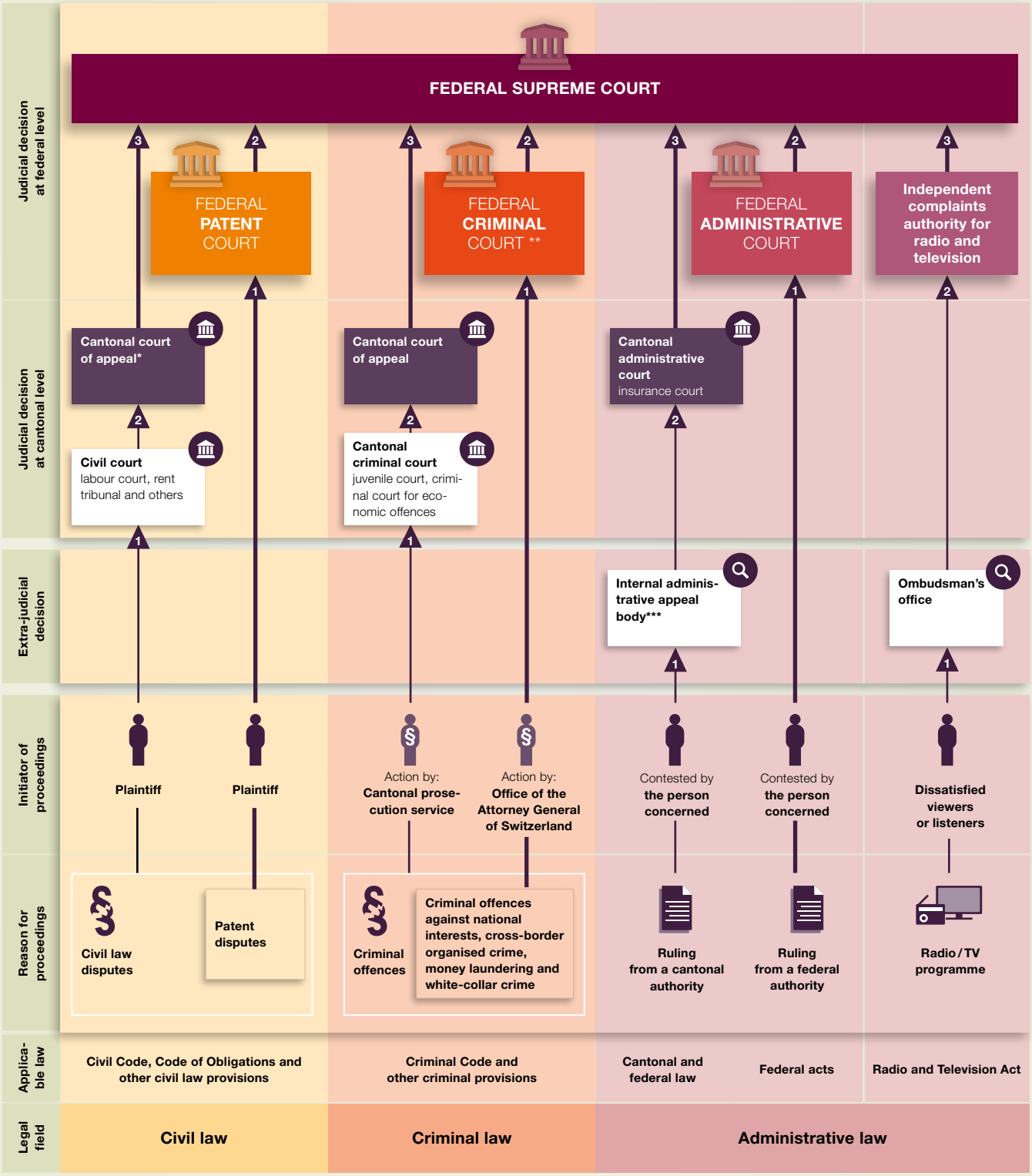
After an appeal is filed, the case is assigned to a judge who, either alone or with a court clerk, prepares a draft decision. This draft is then circulated to the other judges of the competent division. If all the judges agree, the case is settled in accordance with the draft ruling. If not, a public hearing is scheduled. In this case, the five judges present their individual opinions verbally and a vote is taken by a show of hands. The decision is reached based on the majority opinion. The dates of these public hearings are published on the website of the Federal Supreme Court, so anyone can visit the court and follow the cases being discussed.

> The Federal Supreme Court rules on legal questions of social importance.

What does the Federal Supreme Court wish with regard to the future?

The Federal Supreme Court has made proposals to strengthen its constitutional position as the highest court; these would expand its competences as an appeal body so that actionable cases from all legal fields could be submitted to it. To compensate for this, the opportunity to appeal would be limited in certain objectively less important cases.

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 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:
Gilbert Kolly

Vice-President:
Ulrich Meyer

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 profession, 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 deputy Federal Supreme Court 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:
Daniel Kipfer

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 taken by the Federal Criminal Courts can be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court.

Due to the tasks that it has, the court comprises a criminal chamber and an appeals chamber. The current 18 judges of the Federal Criminal Court are appointed by the Federal Assembly for a term of office of six years.

The Federal Criminal Court has been in existence since 2004 and is based in Bellinzona. In 2013, its 65 members of staff moved into the new purpose-built court building.

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

The Federal Administrative Court

President:
Jean-Luc Baechler

The Federal Administrative Court handles complaints against decisions made by 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. Some of the issues may be controversial from both a social and political standpoint. Examples include decisions of principle in asylum-related cases or in major transport and infrastructure projects. In certain areas, the Federal Administrative Court may also examine complaints against decisions made by cantonal authorities. Generally speaking, the judgments of the Federal Administrative Court may be appealed before the Federal Supreme Court. In certain areas (e.g. asylum), the Federal Administrative Court is the court of last instance.

The Federal Administrative Court is comprised of five 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 since 2012. Each year, the court rules in around 7,500 cases. With around 72 judges and 320 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:
Dieter Brändle

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 before 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 before 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 in 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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1st row (from left to right): Rütlischwur by Charles L'Eplattenier: DDPS; State seal 1815: Federal Chancellery; Sonderbund War 1847: Illustrierte Geschichte der Schweiz, Zürich 1961; Parliament Building dome 1901: Parliamentary Services; General Guisan 1939: DDPS; Federal Council 2003. Federal Chancellery
2nd row (from left to right): Albert Anker, Länderkinder 1876: Musée d'art et d'histoire, Neuchâtel; Federal Treaty 1815: Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte. Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 1998; Federal Constitution 1848: Schweizer Geschichtsbuch 2, Berlin 2010; Troops parading through Bern (First world war): Swiss Federal Archives; Parliament Building: Parliamentary Services

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