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E-voting currently on hold – testing process to be reoriented

Electronic voting has proved popular so far, particularly among Swiss Abroad. Unfortunately, it is currently out of operation.

Until the beginning of this year, e-voting was possible in ten cantons – courtesy of two platforms developed by Swiss Post and the canton of Geneva. Now both these systems are out of operation. Why is this the case?

The canton of Geneva had already intimated last year that it would no longer continue developing its e-voting platform – before announcing in June 2019 that the system would no longer be available with immediate effect.

Swiss Post wanted to roll out its new and fully verifiable e-voting system in 2019. In February of this year, it disclosed the source code and put the system through resilience testing (also known as a ‘public intrusion test’). Although the trial was a success, test participants discovered serious flaws in the source code affecting both the existing and new system. Swiss Post therefore decided to pull the existing system and focus on making improvements to the new one, which it intends to offer to the cantons for piloting from 2020.

The Federal Chancellery announced a review after news of the flaws in the Swiss Post system came to light in March 2019. Shortcomings requiring analysis also include weaknesses in relation to the licensing and certification procedures. However, the Federal Chancellery has no indication that the identified flaws have resulted in votes being manipulated in previous ballots.

In light of these developments, Switzerland currently offers no e-voting.

E-voting not yet a regular voting channel

In 2017, the Federal Council initiated efforts to establish e-voting as the third regular voting channel – alongside ballot-box voting and postal voting. The plan was to push through a partial revision of the Political Rights Act in order to simplify the licensing procedures and regulate the most important requirements in law, namely the verifiability of votes cast and how the result is reached, the transparency of the systems, and accessibility.

But there is now a delay. Consultations have revealed that a clear majority of cantons and political parties welcome the introduction of e-voting in principle. The Conference of Cantonal Governments as well as 19 cantons support e-voting being introduced into regular operation. However, most of the political parties in particular believe that now is not the right time to take this step. Consequently, the Federal Council announced in June that e-voting would remain in its pilot phase and that the testing process would be reoriented by the end of 2020 in consultation with the cantons.

E-voting continues to be regarded as an important service for voters. The aim is to establish stable operations using the latest generation of systems. Other measures include extending independent audits, increasing transparency and trust, and encouraging greater academic input. Requirements and processes are currently being reviewed and redefined for this purpose.

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Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date. National Council elections take place on 20 October 2019.

For information about the National Council elections, visit www.ch.ch/en/elections2019. Everything you need to know about voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's VoteInfo app.

The Federal Council has decided not to hold a federal popular vote on 24 November 2019. The next voting date is 9 February 2020.

Popular initiatives

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

- "Yes to giving the public more say in health and accident insurance" (02.01.2021)

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



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COMMUNITY FOR THE SWISS ABROAD



Giving people a second chance

Lucerne-born Matthias Oppliger (45) offers a new start to victims of human trafficking by employing them at his sewing business in Tel Aviv – a project that the Israeli government has got to know about.

Idea: It all began on a family holiday in Tel Aviv. During their time there, the Oppligers came up with the idea of creating jobs for former sex workers and other victims of human trafficking. Israel proved to be the perfect place to grow their new business.

Project: kite.pride makes bags and rucksacks out of used kite-surfing sails, parachutes, yacht sails, and wetsuits. In doing so, the company wants to give former victims of human trafficking a new start – by offering fair wages for fair work in a secure, exploitation-free environment.

Location: CEO and founder Matthias Oppliger chose a strategic location in southern Tel Aviv – in a neighbourhood plagued by the impact of human trafficking, where many former refugees now live. Many women from the former Soviet states end up here and are forced into prostitution.

Success story: Oppliger has a team of 15 employees and eight volunteers from all around the world. Not all of his workers have had a traumatic past. There are also volunteers, including from Switzerland, who come regularly to help – young people who want to do something worthwhile on holiday and use their time in Israel productively. "You get out what you put in," says Oppliger. "That's a wage worth working for."

A full-length article about the project has been published (in German, French and Italian) at swissinfo.ch – the ten-language online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. Do you also live abroad? Upload your Instagram pictures with the hashtag **#WeAreSwissAbroad**.