

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 19 (1992)
Heft: 2

Vorwort: Editorial
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CONTENTS

Forum

Does Swiss democracy need reform? **4**



Official News

Vote by correspondence: how to set about it **9**

Politics

The EEA treaty **11**

Youth

Rock around the Swiss clock **18**

Cover:

Nowhere is direct democracy more obvious to the eye than in the "Lands-gemeinde" – now everywhere open to women citizens (Photo: KeyColor).

I M P R E S S U M

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 19th year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 286 000.

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Publisher, Editorial Office, Advertising: Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16; Tel: 41 31 44 66 25, Fax: 41 31 44 21 58; Postal Cheque Account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. Printed by: Buri Druck AG, CH-3001 Berne.

 Well, here we are again. The good old Swiss Review, in your hands once more. But, as you see, it's a completely new Review. Take a look for yourself.

After a good five years without change, we thought our Review ought to move with the times and put on a new coat. But it is not only the look of the Review which has changed. The contents too. And in future it will be appearing twice as often as previously.

The new Review intends to be more varied, more informative and much more colourful than it was before. Alongside the main focal subjects of our little world, each issue will reflect a much wider range of different topics than in the past. But the main things which you must on no account miss reading – in your own interest – will still be gathered together in the fully comprehensive Official News, previously Official Communications.

We will be laying a stronger accent than in the past on information about political events here in Switzerland. And we have a very good reason for this. The main stimulus for the new concept of our magazine has come from the introduction of the right to vote by correspondence for the Swiss Abroad.

From the middle of this year all Swiss citizens domiciled in foreign countries will be able to take part in federal referendums and elections by post. The only thing they have to do in order to be eligible is to register with their responsible embassy or consulate. You can read all about it further on in this issue.

This substantial extension of the opportunity of becoming involved marks an important gesture as well as an outstretched hand by the federal government to Swiss citizens living abroad. It is also the outward sign of a substantial measure of political success by the "Fifth Switzerland" and

its lobby here at home. With the introduction of the vote by correspondence, one of the oldest demands – and the one maintained with the greatest persistence over very many years – of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad has been finally achieved.

The next thing is for optimal use to be made of this new and very valuable right. We are well aware that it is no simple matter to reach a well-founded opinion on the key subjects of Swiss politics from a distance which may be very far away indeed from the frontiers of your country. But it is also true that it is sometimes easier to pick out the essential from a distance – where one is not too deeply involved in the turbulence of everyday political life.

There is no doubt that this extension of political rights requires the provision of more information. The Swiss Review – proud of its new mantle – is here to bring you its contribution. We are not of course alone in this. Swiss Radio International is beamed to you – on short wave and by satellite – in your own language with current information on many subjects direct from Switzerland.

But whether you decide to use your vote or not – the Swiss Review, published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad with the highly valued support of the federal government – will continue on tap to supplement your existing links with Switzerland and to provide you with more comprehensive information more frequently than before. We hope that you will make maximum use of what we would like you to think of as your "hot line" to your old homeland.



Rudolf Wyder
Director of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad