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Five Noes

Voters reject all proposals.

This signals the end of a project for an ecological tax reform, at least for the time being. The Swiss electorate proved equally unwilling to approve radical measures to reduce the foreign population and extend voting rights in the form of a constructive referendum.

The solar initiative was rejected by 68.1 percent of voters and all cantons, while 53.4 percent voted against the government's counter-proposal. Despite the failure of both these proposals, the majority vote turned in by four cantons and one half-canton in favour of a tax to promote renewable energies should not be ignored. Some of these cantons were also in favour of the environmental energy tax, though this ecological tax reform was rejected by the majority of cantons and over 55 percent of voters.

The results of the referendum on the popular initiative "for immigration control" leave no room for doubt: 63.7 percent of voters as well as all the cantons voted against the proposal to limit the foreign population

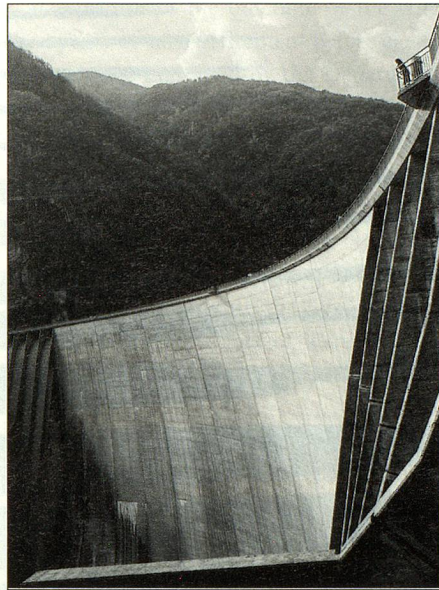



Foto: Dieter Seeger

Hydroelectricity accounts for 60 percent of our electricity.

in Switzerland to 18 percent. As expected, the initiative achieved the best results (over 40%) in German-speaking Switzerland and Ticino, and was massively rejected in French-speaking Switzerland and the large

urban German-speaking cantons (ZH, BE, BS). Finally, the popular initiative for a constructive referendum was rejected by all cantons as well as almost two-thirds of voters. The turnout was 44 percent. PAT 

COMMENTARY

It is time for Berne to rethink its environmental and energy policy mechanisms. The electorate proved neither in favour of renewable energies nor for an environmental tax. This is a setback for Swiss environmental policy.

However, the triple thumbs-down given by voters to the energy proposals does not mean that Berne has chosen the wrong path. It does not cast doubt on the strategic decisions made by the Federal Council and parliament – neither on the international obligations which Switzerland has entered into to reduce environmental pollution and the greenhouse effect, nor on the efforts to combat energy mismanagement. What voters did not want was energy taxes. Now the government must find new ways and means of achieving their energy and environmental goals. A new consensus is needed. This task is all the more difficult since the results of the vote on 24 September indicate no clear direction. Moreover, the massive rise in oil prices did little to warm Swiss voters to the new energy taxes – particularly since a reduction in fuel taxes is being called for and granted in other countries. This puts a different perspective on the electorate's rejection of incentive and environmental taxes, which nevertheless managed to win 46.6 and 44.6 percent of the vote respectively.

Voting habits need to be analysed in more detail in conjunction with the new procedure in cases where simultaneous voting is required on a popular initiative and a counter-proposal. The discrepancy between the results of the solar initiative and the government's counter-proposal leads one to suspect that not all voters were fully cognisant of their new decision options.

Pierre-André Tschanz

Results of the Federal Referendums

Canton	Solar initiative		Renewable energy		Energy incentive tax		Immigration control		Constructive referendum		Turnout in %
	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	YES%	NO%	
ZH	38.3	61.7	51.6	48.4	51.8	48.2	35.1	64.9	34.4	65.6	49.5
BE	34.0	66.0	50.2	49.8	49.0	51.0	36.8	63.2	32.7	67.3	44.0
LU	28.4	71.6	43.7	56.3	42.6	57.4	42.2	57.8	32.2	67.8	49.0
UR	26.3	73.7	39.8	60.2	35.6	64.4	39.7	60.3	29.6	70.4	41.6
SZ	23.3	76.7	37.9	62.1	36.8	63.2	48.4	51.6	32.1	67.9	46.4
OW	25.2	74.8	41.3	58.7	38.5	61.5	38.3	61.7	28.0	72.0	45.0
NW	24.5	75.5	37.5	62.5	34.8	65.2	40.5	59.5	34.2	65.8	47.7
GL	26.8	73.2	39.6	60.4	37.2	62.8	44.5	55.5	31.7	68.3	42.0
ZG	28.2	71.8	44.7	55.3	44.1	55.9	35.3	64.7	27.5	72.5	49.5
FR	20.9	79.1	40.8	59.2	34.2	65.8	30.8	69.2	32.5	67.5	46.9
SO	27.3	72.7	38.2	61.8	39.3	60.7	44.5	55.5	36.2	63.8	47.9
BS	42.4	57.6	56.0	44.0	57.0	43.0	36.4	63.6	37.5	62.5	52.3
BL	34.8	65.2	46.9	53.1	46.5	53.5	37.5	62.5	34.1	65.9	46.5
SH	31.4	68.6	38.6	61.4	39.9	60.1	37.0	63.0	33.8	66.2	63.4
AR	29.7	70.3	43.1	56.9	41.2	58.8	38.4	61.6	30.8	69.2	49.0
AI	24.8	76.2	38.7	61.3	35.1	64.9	40.3	59.7	23.9	76.1	38.5
SG	28.5	71.5	45.7	54.3	44.9	55.1	41.4	58.6	32.5	67.5	46.6
GR	36.9	63.1	56.4	43.6	54.7	45.3	31.1	68.9	33.4	66.6	36.5
AG	25.3	74.7	39.2	60.8	38.8	61.2	47.5	52.5	33.2	66.8	41.9
TG	28.0	72.0	40.6	59.4	41.9	58.1	44.1	55.9	31.2	68.8	43.7
TI	30.8	69.2	45.9	54.1	42.9	57.1	40.6	59.4	42.6	57.4	35.7
VD	30.2	69.8	46.6	53.4	38.7	61.3	24.3	75.7	35.4	64.6	38.9
VS	27.4	72.6	43.1	56.9	34.1	65.9	27.6	72.4	30.9	69.1	36.1
NE	30.5	69.5	40.7	59.3	34.1	65.9	25.6	74.4	41.1	58.9	41.3
GE	35.9	64.1	52.6	47.4	44.4	55.6	23.9	76.1	40.8	59.2	50.0
JU	26.6	73.4	41.1	58.9	34.6	65.4	25.6	74.4	35.7	64.3	38.1
Total	31.9	68.1	46.6	53.4	44.6	55.4	36.3	63.7	34.2	65.8	44.3