

Elections : "Revolutions ar not won at the ballot box"

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Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad**

Band (Jahr): **30 (2003)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **02.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-907387>

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The three most credible politicians are women

For the first time three women, of whom two are from French-speaking Switzerland, occupy the top three places in Switzerland's political credibility hit parade. This is the result of the election barometer which was published in May and conducted on behalf of SRG SSR idée suisse, "Le Temps" and "Tages-Anzeiger" by the GfS Research Institute, Berne, ahead of this year's parliamentary elections.

Christiane Brunner, President of the SP, member of parliament since 1991 and up for a third term of office in the Council of States, took first place with 56 percent (of 2015 respondents) – as in previous polls. In second place came Simonetta Sommaruga, head of the German-Swiss Foundation for Consumer Protection. Although the SP politician has sat on the National Council only since 1999, within the space of only one legislature period she has risen to become one of the most high-profile politicians in Switzerland.

The third most credible politician according to the GfS poll was Christiane Langenberger of Vaud, elected to the National Council in 1995, State Councillor since 1999 and FDP party president since the beginning of 2003. Her 43 percent share of the vote is due not least to the fact that she has succeeded in substantially raising her public profile and increasing her popularity in German-speaking Switzerland. In fourth place with 42 percent (9 percent less than in October 2002) came Christoph Blocher. Trix Heberlein, the runner-up for presidency of the FDP party, came sixth with 36 percent although she remains more popular than Christiane Langenberger in German-speaking Switzerland. *IE*

"Revolutions are not won at the ballot box"

*Bernese political scientist
Regula Stämpfli talks about
the possible outcome of the
federal elections to be held this
autumn.*

SWISS REVIEW: How will Switzerland's political landscape look after 19 October?

REGULA STÄMPFLI: Divided: split into four large political parties and a few small ones spread over 26 cantons with over 3000 communities. In Switzerland, revolutions are not won at the ballot box. There will be a few changes in the centre-right and left camps. But basically Switzerland will remain the same as always: stable, politically rather conservative but modern in terms of lifestyle.

Which parties will be among the winners and which among the losers?

Both ends of the political spectrum will win in these elections. Certainly the SVP and to a lesser extent the SPS, and the Greens could also gain more votes. At the centre the FDP and CVP will be happy if they can hold on to their present share of the vote and their good regional strength in the cantons.

Why does the SVP stand to increase its seats?


Unlike the other parties, the SVP mobilises on a broad front within and outside its own

ranks. It maps out themes and keeps its fingers on the public pulse. The result is a mix of polemic, closeness to grass-roots and a clear position which is also finds an echo in the media.

Which factors and issues will dominate political debate up to election day?

If the discussion on the future of the social state continues, the SPS and possibly the FDP will benefit. If the European issue and enlargement to the East is an issue, an SVP victory will be hard to avoid. At the same time, local events in the cantons play an important role, and the CVP and the Greens can take advantage of this.

What will be the proportion of women?

Gender is not a political issue. The proportion of women in parliament will rise or fall depending on the party-political makeup. If the Left win, then women will also win; if the right win, then women will lose. By the way, this phenomenon is not limited to Switzerland. *Interviewer: Rolf Ribi* 

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