

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 31 (2004)
Heft: 4

Rubrik: Official news

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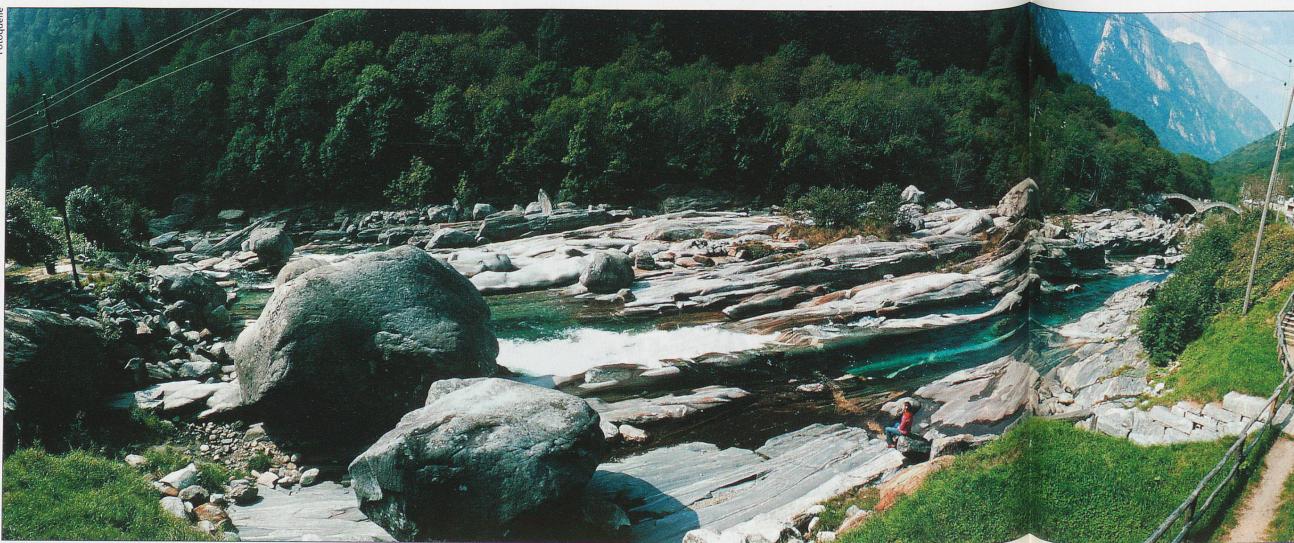
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Among the priorities that the Federal Council has set itself in its legislature plans is the protection of natural resources. Photo: The Verzasca valley near Lavertezzo. Imagopress/Patrick Lüthy

Federal Council approves 2003–2007 legislative planning

The Federal Council is aiming to address future challenges with three political objectives which are inter-related and aligned with the legislature's financial plan.

Firstly, the Federal Council aims to increase prosperity and sustainability in Switzerland. This calls for higher economic growth, more balanced geographical development, and the protection of natural resources. However this objective is predicated on sound public finances as well as a state that is open to action and reform.

Secondly, the Federal Council intends to address demographic challenges by introducing reforms in the old age pensions, health and invalidity insurance areas. Measures are also proposed to improve the social integration of

persons caring for young children and of older persons in employment.

The third objective is to consolidate Switzerland's position in the world. The main aim here is to clarify and intensify Switzerland's relationship with the EU. Additionally, Switzerland must exercise its responsibility in the international arena by implementing the priorities laid down in the 2000 report on foreign policy, and by maintaining Swiss export opportunities. And the instruments of Switzerland's security policy are to be comprehensively and flexibly harmonised.

The legislative financial plan defines future financial requirements for the legislative period based on these objectives. Priority is given to reforms which will cut back federal expenditures over the long term. The structural deficit of fed-

programme, 2005–2007 legislative financial plan (Order No. 104.624.1 d), can be ordered free of charge from:

Federal Office for Construction and Logistics (BBL), Publications, CH-3003 Berne
Fax: +41 031 325 50 58
Electronic ordering:
verkauf.zivil@bbl.admin.ch
Internet:
www.admin.ch/ch/d/cfrg/plan.html

Full freedom of movement for persons since 1 June 2004

Since 1 June 2004 the transition period during which EU states could give priority to their own workers over Swiss nationals, and exercise control over wage and working conditions, has also expired.

For Swiss nationals this means that they now have access to the foreign labour market and that Swiss working in European Union member states (as well as Norway and Iceland) are treated in the same way as citizens of these states. Moreover, they are also en-

(though there is an obligation to report).

Persons who are not gainfully employed in the respective signatory state (e.g. students and pensioners) as well as their relatives have been benefiting from free movement of persons since 1 June 2002, provided they are fully insured with a health insurance company and have sufficient funds to prevent them drawing social benefits in their host country during their stay. Swiss seeking a job abroad remain entitled to draw Swiss unemployment insurance benefits for three months.

Free movement of persons between Switzerland and the ten new EU member states is currently the subject of negotiations. The agreement on free movement of persons is to be extended to the new member states by means of a supplementary protocol. The negotiations commenced on 16 July 2003 and are likely to be completed in the near future. The supplementary protocol will then be submitted to parliament for approval, following which the decision will be subject to an optional referendum.

2004, whereby the fifteen pre-enlargement member states are entitled to restrict access to their labour market for up to seven years (i.e. until 30 April 2011).

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Electronic civil register

Since 1 July 2004 the "InfoStar" system has been in operation throughout Switzerland. In future, civil status data will be registered only in electronic form.

Since 1 July 2004 all Swiss civil registry offices have been connected to the "InfoStar" government-operated central database. The aim is to have full electronic registration in operation by the end of this year. This means that the four individual registers of births, marriages, recognition of paternity, and death, as well as the family

register, which have hitherto been kept in paper form by Swiss civil registry offices, can be closed.

Special civil registry offices are now being created, among other things to record foreign decisions on civil status and documents on cantonal affiliation. In future, inter-cantonal collaboration between civil registry offices and cantonal supervisory authorities will also be possible.

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Additional details:
www.eazw.admin.ch
www.infostar.admin.ch

"The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2004"

The brochure entitled "The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2004", published in spring 2004 by the Federal Chancellery in the four national languages as well as in English, is available free of charge.

National and State Councils. Legislative procedures are explained in simple terms. Additionally, the tasks of the Federal Council, departments and federal offices, parliamentary services, the federal chancellery, federal court and insurance court are described. BDK

New initiatives

The following new people's initiatives have been launched and are open for signature:

"For unrestricted access to nutritional supplements (Vitamin Initiative)" (until 27 October 2005)
Verein PGS ProGesundheit Schweiz, Dr. Men Rauch, Solicitor, dR Rohner Rechtsanwälte, Seestrasse 131, 8027 Zürich

"Save the Swiss Forest" (until 27 October 2005)
Helvetia Nostra, Case postale, 1820 Montreux 1

"Against fighter-jet noise in tourist regions" (until 4 November 2005)
Helvetia Nostra, Case postale, 1820 Montreux

"For democratic naturalisation" (until 18 November 2005)
Swiss People's Party SVP, Dr. Aliko Panayides, dep. General Secretary, Brückfeldstrasse 18, PO Box, 3000 Berne 26

Signature forms for pending initiatives can be downloaded from www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vi10.html. BDK

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