

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 31 (2004)  
**Heft:** 6

## **Inhaltsverzeichnis**

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 22.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Storm in a teacup over a "national crisis"

It is not the case that Switzerland has no problems. The economy has yet to recover, and the country's geographical advantages appear to be disappearing according to an international survey, where Switzerland has slipped to eighth on the international growth competitiveness index. The national debt is rising, healthcare costs are soaring, and the future of the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance (AHV) remains gloomy.

Yet if one were to believe the media, Switzerland has been facing only one major problem since the last national elections a year ago: SVP Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher. Tabloid headlines in recent days have talked of a "national crisis", citing the danger posed to Switzerland's democratic system. Leading political observers have questioned whether Minister of Justice Blocher would succeed in breaking the system of concordance, and many political journalists have wondered whether he would ever manage to set aside his role as leader of the opposition and, in time, behave like a "proper" member of the Federal Council. In this issue, my colleague Rolf Ribi reports in "Focus" on the difference of opinion between Federal Councillors Couchepin and Blocher and summarises the discussion on the future of direct democracy and Swiss concordance, and political scientist and National Councillor Andreas Gross answers questions on the importance of the electorate in Switzerland's political system.

The media campaigns against Federal Councillor Blocher verged at times on the hysterical, even though there was absolutely no sign of any national crisis. Of course it is unusual for one Federal Councillor to be publicly criticised by another; but it is hardly likely to cause any lasting cracks in the political foundations of Switzerland. If quarrels at the highest level lead to fundamental political rethinking and encourage debate throughout the country, then this can only be good.

All those neo-liberals who repeatedly complain that direct democracy poses an obstacle to political and economic reform should take note of Social Democrat Andreas Gross's assertion that Switzerland has seen the introduction of more, and further-reaching, reforms in recent years than its neighbours. The German word "Reformstau" ("reform gridlock") is not a Swiss



Heinz Eckert

### The German word "Reformstau" ("reform gridlock") is not a Swiss invention.

invention. It first appeared in German newspapers in the early 1990s, and was named "word of the year" in 1997, ahead of "Bildungsmisere" ("education calamity"), by the Society for the German Language in Frankfurt.

The interview with Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher marks the last assignment of Gabrielle Keller as editor-in-chief of the "Swiss Review". I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her work over the past few years. Gabrielle Keller has returned to news journalism and has taken over as editor of the Neue Zuger Zeitung. We wish her every success and satisfaction in her new position.

As new editor-in-chief of the "Swiss Review", I look forward to carrying on the work of my colleague and, every two months, sending out a varied and interesting "Swiss Review" which will provide you with as diverse, differentiated and representative as possible a picture of current Swiss affairs. *Heinz Eckert*

Translated from German.



#### FOCUS

War of words over democracy **4**

#### INTERVIEW

Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher **8**

#### POLITICS

Referenda on 28 November **10**

#### OFFICIAL NEWS

Changes in citizenship rights **12**

**CHRISTMAS STORY 16**

**MAILBAG 18**

**NEWS IN BRIEF 19**



Things are becoming more and more ridiculous. This year the first Christmas decorations began to appear in shop windows at the end of October. In a few years' time, if the trend continues, the first Easter eggs will be on display in January. The photo shows the traditional Christmas tree in front of Basle's town hall: always a particularly fine specimen.

COVER: Peter Schnetz

**SWISS REVIEW**  
www.revue.ch

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 31<sup>st</sup> year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 25 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 360 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

Heinz Eckert (EC), Editor-in-Chief; Rolf Ribi (RR), Charly Veuthey (CV), Gabriela Brodbeck (BDK), responsible for the Official News, Swiss Abroad Service EDA, CH-3003 Berne. René Lenzin (RL), reporting from parliament. Translation: Nicolette Chisholm (English), Helga Blöchliger (Spanish), Jacques Lasserre (French) and Georges Manouk.

**Publisher, Editorial Office, Advertising:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 6, Tel. +41 31 356 6110, Fax +41 31 356 6101, Postal Account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9.

**Printed by:** Zollikofer AG, CH-9001 St.Gallen.

**Change of address:** Please advise your local Embassy or Consulate – do not write to Berne.

Single copy CHF 5.–

Internet: <http://www.revue.ch> E-mail: [revue@aso.ch](mailto:revue@aso.ch)