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More and more old people

SWITZERLAND'S LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL WELFARE INSTITUTION is increasingly faced with financial problems. This issue of "Swiss Review" turns the spotlight on the old-age and survivors' insurance system (AHV). The introduction of the AHV system was backed by an overwhelming majority of Swiss voters 60 years ago. It was preceded by a fierce, decade-long political battle between the Social Democrats and the Free Democrats, such that each side continues to lay claim to the title of creator of AHV. However, it is impossible to distinguish one single creator. Both political groups contributed in equal measure to this social achievement, which is the envy of many countries abroad.

Two million people currently draw an AHV pension. While there are four people in employment to one pensioner today, the ratio will be just two to one in forty years' time. The future financing of AHV has therefore long been a concern for politicians and social insurance experts, who wonder whether today's younger generation will still have any prospects of a pension when they reach old age. The age pyramid is becoming broader at the top and narrower at the bottom. The number of 80-year-olds in Switzerland will more than double by 2040, increasing from 290,000 today to 680,000, according to the Federal Statistical Office. While people are getting older, the birth rate is falling.

We can only hope that the birth rate in Switzerland starts to rise again and having babies comes back into fashion. One thing is for sure, and that is that former Federal Councillor and AHV system architect Hans-Peter Tschudi was right when he said that solutions can be found as long as the political will exists to provide fathers and mothers with a retirement.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) wants to save CHF 500,000 with "Swiss Review". Seventy percent of the CHF 1.8 million spent annually by the FDFA on



Heinz Eckert

"Swiss Review" goes on distribution. The FDFA has therefore come straight out with the proposal that the paper version of "Swiss Review" only be sent to those Swiss abroad who expressly request it. Anyone with an Internet connection is to start receiving the magazine by e-mail. This move towards e-information, in parallel with e-voting and e-government, is to be welcomed in the sense that it represents a modern service. However, it is necessary that we ensure that all Swiss people abroad can continue to be informed about their rights and duties, about political life in Switzerland and, in particular, about all ballot proposals.

We therefore hope that Parliament will put a stop to this rash reduction in funding. Otherwise, we will find ourselves obliged to no longer send "Swiss Review" to everyone or, alternatively, to produce fewer issues. We are in any case planning a new electronic Internet version of "Swiss Review", in collaboration with the FDFA, which will allow us to provide more information and hopefully to reduce delivery costs over time.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

IMPRINT: "Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 35th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 400 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

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Federal Councillor Leuenberger and OSA President Jacques-Simon Eggly at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Fribourg.

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Cover photo: On the issue of AHV
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