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“Swiss Review” has a contented readership

THE READERS OF “SWISS REVIEW” are happy with our efforts and read our news from home eagerly and with great interest. That is the conclusion drawn by the survey we conducted together with Switzerland Tourism on our homepage www.revue.ch

80% of the Swiss abroad who took part in the online survey said they read every issue of “Swiss Review” from cover to cover. 70% felt the information contained in “Swiss Review” prepared them “well” to “very well” for elections and referenda. The same number indicated that the image of Switzerland conveyed by “Swiss Review” was completely in line with their own perceptions, and they felt that reading our magazine enabled them to form their own opinions about Switzerland. The outcome was similar with regard to the diversity of topics covered by “Swiss Review”. Over two thirds of those surveyed said that no area was given too little attention. However, everyone said they would like to see more of everything... more sport, more culture, more politics and more business news. “Swiss Review” is regarded as the most important service provided by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and the most important source of information for Swiss people abroad. 70% of those surveyed said they were enrolled on an electoral register and regularly took part in referenda and elections.

The survey also provided information on the travel habits of the Swiss abroad, which is of interest to our partner organisation, Switzerland Tourism. The vast majority of Swiss abroad mainly visit their old homeland at warmer times of the year and combine their stay with a family visit. The main draws for tourists are the natural countryside and cultural events. Visitors seek peace, relaxation and reinvigoration.

Despite the positive feedback from our readers, only four issues of “Swiss Review” will be published again this year for cost reasons.

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Heinz Eckert

The main article in this issue of “Swiss Review” concerns spatial planning. Editor Rolf Ribi discovered some astonishing figures during his research. Unrestrained development is continuing in Switzerland despite the economic downturn. Switzerland loses 1 square metre of countryside every second. That amounts to 7.4 hectares a day, which equates to an area the size of the Rütli meadow. The projections are even higher in the Federal Council’s 2005 Spatial Planning Report: 32,700 hectares of land in Switzerland will be lost to urban development over the next 12 years, which corresponds to an area larger than the Canton of Schaffhausen.

The Federal Statistical Office estimates that the population of Switzerland will reach 8.4 million by 2030 if the level of immigration remains as high as it has been since the introduction of the free movement of persons. If we exclude the mountains, forests and lakes, this leaves a settlement area of 280,000 hectares, or 7% of the country’s surface area, in which to live. From Lake Geneva to Lake Constance, Switzerland is becoming a densely populated metropolis. Switzerland’s Central Plateau is already one of the most densely populated areas in Europe.

These figures make unpleasant reading and can hardly be seen as good news. This is a thought-provoking problem, and experts fear it may be almost impossible to resolve.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Switzerland – a winter wonderland

Cover photo: Ski racer Carlo Janka is already being compared to Pirmin Zurbriggen and Jean-Claude Killy, and is a big medal hope for the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Photo: Keystone