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Election year and farewell

2011

IS AN ELECTION YEAR, so it heralds a day of reckoning for Swiss parliamentarians. The National Council and Council of States will be re-elected on 23 October. Some parties are already gearing up for the election campaign. The Social Democrats (SPS) plan to move more to the left and attempt to overcome capitalism, as was decided at the delegates' conference. The Free Democrats (FDP) want to ward off the European Union, and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) is also focusing on the issue of EU accession as well as on education and immigration. This suggests that a long and uncompromising electoral campaign awaits us. Come what may, the SVP wants a member of its own choice on the Federal Council instead of Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf. As you will recall, Widmer-Schlumpf was elected to national government in 2007 in place of Christoph Blocher and was punished with expulsion from the party. She now belongs to the Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland (BDP), which broke away from the SVP after Widmer-Schlumpf's expulsion and today has five National Councillors and one member of the Council of States. "Swiss Review" will provide in-depth coverage of the federal elections and will present the parties standing for election together with their manifestos in a special edition in September.

When the right to a postal vote was introduced for the Swiss residing abroad in 1992, 13,000 people initially cast a vote. At the 2007 federal elections, 111,250 Swiss abroad were entered on an electoral roll, and this figure reached 130,017 by the end of 2009. The numbers should be even higher as the votes of the Swiss abroad are important and much sought after. We have therefore enclosed an electoral roll flyer with this edition for anyone who has not yet registered. Take advantage of this opportunity, send the form to your representation and play an active part in Swiss political life. You will give more weight to the valid concerns of the Swiss abroad and will help ensure they are resolved successfully.

After six years and 32 editions of "Swiss Review", I would like to say farewell to you in this editorial as I am now of an age when it is time to open a new chapter in my life with new challenges. Since November 2004, I, together with my editorial team, have kept you up to date with political, economic and social developments in Switzerland and have attempted to produce a magazine worth reading. Judging by the incredibly positive response we have received from all over the world, I can only assume that you have found our work of interest. Whether by letter, e-mail or telephone, dialogue with you has always been positive and constructive. I would like to thank you most sincerely for your great interest, for the goodwill you have shown towards our work and for your many valuable suggestions.

I wish my successor, the experienced Bernese journalist Barbara Engel, every success and satisfaction as the new editor-in-chief. And I wish you, dear readers of "Swiss Review", good fortune and happiness in the New Year.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Cover photo: How would the Swiss football team fare without second-generation immigrants? Xherdan Shaqiri, who has Kosovan origins, plays for FC Basel and Switzerland. Photo: Swiss Football Association

