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■ Despite the strength of the franc, Switzerland experienced **strong growth** in 2010. Exports increased by 7.1% compared to 2009, while imports rose by 8.4%. No fewer than eight out of ten export sectors moved back into the black, including watch-making, metallurgy and the chemical-pharmaceutical industry.

■ Last year, **UBS** achieved a profit for the first time over a full financial year since 2006. The bank announced a net profit of CHF 7.16 billion compared to a net loss of CHF 2.74 billion in 2009. Credit Suisse posted a net profit of CHF 5.1 billion compared to CHF 6.72 billion in the previous year.

■ On 7 February, Switzerland celebrated the 40th anniversary of the **vote for women**. In 1971, men gave women the right to vote, making Switzerland the penultimate country in Europe to do so (ahead of Portugal). The first 11 women were elected to Federal Parliament in October 1971.

■ Switzerland has confirmed its participation in the **2015 World Expo in Milan**. It is the first country to officially announce its presence and hopes to reaffirm friendly relations with Italy in light of political tension over fiscal matters.

■ In February, Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey presented the **"Bilaterals III"** round of negotiations in Brussels. The EU 27 are far from enthusiastic about the new proposals as they wish to depart from the bilateral approach after the first two agreements of 1999 and 2004.

■ According to a study conducted in 2006 by the Berne University of Applied Sciences, 44% of the recipients of **welfare benefits** in Switzerland in 2006 were under the age of 25, amounting to almost 31,600 young people. That represents 4.5% of all 18 to 25-year-olds in

*"The wages paid by banks cannot be twice or three times as high as in the real economy. That's not tenable from a social policy perspective."*

Konrad Hummler, President of the Swiss Private Bankers Association

*"I try to do my best every day and get extremely annoyed at my own mistakes. I even yell sometimes."*

Oswald J. Grübel, CEO of UBS

*"As one of the world's richest cities, Zurich has not constructed a single building since the war that is worth photographing. There is nothing you wouldn't find elsewhere."*

Gottfried Honegger, Zurich artist

*"The better integrated foreigners are, the less they are perceived as a problem. We have neglected this in recent decades."*

Simonetta Sommaruga, Minister of Justice

*"We face an extremely challenging task; it is almost mission impossible."*

Federal Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Micheline Calmy-Rey, on negotiations with the EU over "Bilaterals III"

*"The Europeans know that Switzerland is their second-largest trading partner with a balance of trade surplus of CHF 20 billion. We are not a small player."*

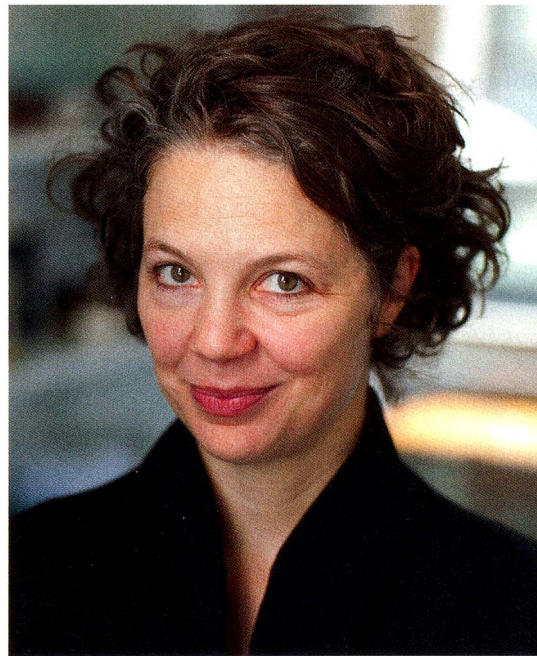
Johann Schneider-Ammann, Minister of Economic Affairs, on the EU

*"There are propaganda teams in the individual departments of the Federal Council that influence the media, even with untruths."*

Moritz Leuenberger, former Federal Councillor

*"Those who claim to be good tend not to be there long."*

Oswald J. Grübel, CEO of UBS



Swiss author Melinda Nadj Abonji has won the German Book Prize and shortly afterwards the Swiss Book Prize. Literary critics have been enthralled by "Falcons without Falconers" (original ti-

tle: "Tauben fliegen auf"), "Falcons without Falconers" she depicts the everyday life of an immigrant family masterfully and with great humour. Her former Yugoslavia, came to Switzerland with her family at the age of five, and in

contrast to a rate of 3.3% for the entire population.

■ At the Swiss Awards, Rolf Maibach, a doctor from

Grisons, and the Bernese nurse, Marianne Kaufmann, were voted the **"Swiss of the Year 2010"** for their work in

Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquakes in January 2010. Lucerne humorist Emil Steinberger received a lifetime achievement award.

■ Sarah Meier won the European figure skating title in Berne. Having picked up the silver medal in 2007 and 2008, the 28-year-old from Zurich had not taken part in any competitions this season and retired from competition after her achievement.

■ According to a survey by the Isopublic institute, Switzerland ranks as **the happiest country in Europe** with an average score of 8.29. It occupies first place along with Denmark and is ahead of Germany (7.1), Italy (6.7) and France (6.6). In Switzerland, 46% of those on low incomes fear losing their job in 2011 compared to 19% on high incomes. And in the event of being made unemployed, Swiss Germans expect to bounce back better than French-speaking Swiss.

■ In a consultative vote, the people of Berne accepted the proposal for the construction of a new **nuclear power station** in Mühleberg by a narrow majority. Having been in service since 1972, the current site is to be removed from the network in ten years' time.

■ The 41<sup>st</sup> **World Economic Forum** (WEF) welcomed 35 heads of state and government as well as 2,500 decision-makers from all over the world to Davos at the end of January. Debates concerned the slow growth of the developed economies, fears over the euro and national debt. Forum Chairman, Klaus Schwab, called for optimism and idealism despite the fact that we are close to a "global burnout".