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■ **What worries the Swiss** has changed significantly as a result of the Fukushima disaster. The environment has climbed from 6<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> position in the list of concerns. Over 90 % of voters surveyed in a poll conducted at the end of April thought that the most urgent political issues were environmental ones. The issue of immigration, which previously topped the list, was in 2<sup>nd</sup> position with 33 %. A majority of those surveyed supported a gradual abandonment of nuclear power.

■ Switzerland is becoming wealthier year by year. However, **wage inequality** is also constantly increasing. This is according to a study by the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions published at the end of April. It shows that salaries in the top income brackets are rising much more than those in the middle and lower income categories: 2 to 4 % for average salaries compared to 28 % for higher incomes. The study, which is based on data from the Federal Statistical Office, says that a massive bottom-up redistribution is currently taking place.

■ **The reform of corporate taxation**, approved by 50.53 % of Swiss people in 2008, has resulted in far greater tax revenue losses than indicated at the time by Federal Councillor Hans-Rudolf Merz. The tax revenue shortfalls amount to at least CHF 7 billion, whereas the figure given then was CHF 950 million. The cantonal government of Zurich is now calling on the Federal Council to repeal the referendum and to hold it again. National Councillor Margret Kiener Nellen has lodged an appeal against the referendum with the Federal Supreme Court. She too is calling for a new referendum to be held.

*"We have to learn to think in the timeframe of trees."*

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard on a forest visit as part of the UN Year of Forests

*"There is currently a state of hysteria over nuclear power."*

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer

*"Aesthetics are tremendously undervalued in politics. Sitting in your predecessor's office without rearranging the furniture is almost like sleeping in someone else's unmade bed."*

Former Federal Councillor Moritz Leuenberger, who is sharing an office with three designers after stepping down

*"I do not know Mr Grübel or his psychology."*

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Finance, on the much-criticised CEO of UBS

*"The CVP and FDP have a fundamental problem: a manifesto that no-one is familiar with or understands."*

Georg Lutz, political scientist at the University of Berne

*"Switzerland would have a problem without the CVP."*

Christophe Darbellay, President of the CVP

*"We will continue on our path."*

Fulvio Pelli, President of FDP.The Liberals

*"Immigration will be one of the major issues in the immediate future. It divides the nation, making conflict inevitable. The SP does not see, or does not want to see, the issue, which is a mistake."*

Wolf Linder, Professor Emeritus of Political Science and member of the SP

*"It's like going to war. You sit on your horse, give it the spurs and join the fray. You don't always question whether it would have been better if you hadn't had to go."*

Christoph Blocher on his candidature as National Councillor and member of the Council of States

*"The safety myth also went up in smoke in Fukushima."*

Ulrich Beck, sociologist, political scientist and philosopher



Former ski racer Paul Accola is a leading candidate for SVP International at the elections in October. When asked why he was standing for the National Council, Accola said: "No idea." He does, however, have an idea about what is wrong with Swiss television. "Swiss television is full of lefties and gays. No wonder there is a lack of balanced reporting", he believes.

■ **People live for longer in the canton of Zug**, where the average life expectancy is 81.4 years, than anywhere else in Switzerland. The life ex-

pectancy record is held by women in Ticino (85.8 years) followed by women in Geneva (85.2 years), according to federal government statistics.

The canton of Glarus is at the bottom end of the scale with an average life expectancy of 77.7 years for men and 82.5 for women. The Swiss average is 79.9 years for men and 84.4 for women.

■ **Too warm in winter and a dry spring** – Switzerland has not experienced such a dry start to the year as in 2011, with temperatures exceeding 30°C even in April, since 1993 and 1976. There was only 45 % of normal rainfall in the first third of the year. This has resulted in a high risk of forest fires and worryingly low water levels. Lake Biel reached a new low point, 10cm below the previous record of 1993.

■ According to a study by the Swiss National Science Foundation, the vast majority of Swiss people have a **distanced relationship with Christianity** and spirituality. The proportion of Christians has fallen in Switzerland in recent years.

32 % of Swiss people are members of the Swiss Reformed Church, 31 % are Catholic and 12 % belong to a non-Christian religion. The largest increase was among people with no religious beliefs: 25 % belong to this group. Four types of religiosity were defined in the study: distanced (64 %), institutional (17 %), secular (10 %) and alternative (9 %).

■ St. Moritz has officially submitted its candidacy for the **2017 Alpine Ski World Championships**. In addition to St. Moritz, the Italian ski resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo has already put itself forward. The decision on the venue will be made in 2012 in South Korea.

■ The Swiss eat more than a **kilogram of meat** per week. Record consumption of 53.6 kg per person was reached last year. Pork remains the most popular meat, followed by beef, then poultry and lamb.