

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 39 (2012)  
**Heft:** 1

**Vorwort:** The struggle over concordance  
**Autor:** Engel, Barbara

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 22.08.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## The struggle over concordance

**A** freshly elected Parliament, a new Federal Council, new faces and new political forces – so does this also mean a new beginning? In the six weeks between the parliamentary elections on 23 October 2011 and the Federal Council election, endless discussions took place on various bodies about the right composition of the Swiss government. The notion of concordance was at the heart of all these talks. The debate became so intense that it seemed as though the future of Switzerland depended solely on the system of concordance, also known as the magic formula. This principle of power distribution among the four strongest parties in the Federal Council according to their number of seats in Parliament, which the FDP, The Liberals and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) wanted to uphold, was ultimately rejected by the Federal Assembly (report on page 14).

However, the magic formula's power distribution principle is certainly no guarantee of concordance or successful government. The word "concordance" contains the Latin terms *con* (with) and *cor* (heart). *Concordare* means "to reach agreement". A body committed to concordance in this sense of the word requires people who act together in heart and mind as far as possible, and who are willing and able to cooperate with their political adversaries in the interests of the common good. The search for widespread majority support and the involvement of minorities in the decision-making process are fundamental to the success of this form of government.

The vast majority of Swiss people clearly favour this type of government. A Federal Council at loggerheads and dominated by mistrust and machinations, as we have seen in the past, would be disastrous in light of the financial and economic crises and the challenges that lie ahead in global politics over the coming years.



In view of this situation, it is questionable whether it was a wise decision to deny the Swiss People's Party (SVP), which still has the largest number of votes, the second seat on the Federal Council that it is entitled to under the magic formula or mathematically under the concordance system. Only time will tell. The SVP clearly contributed to Parliament's refusal to grant it a second Federal Council seat with its unsuccessful candidate selection and

its approach to the Federal Council election on 14 December, which was driven by anger and vengeance. If the SVP, which has been humiliated for a second time, following the de-selection of Christoph Blocher in 2007, now focuses on a policy of opposition and obstruction, government will become a difficult task. This will certainly not be in the best interests of the nation, and the new beginning will be destined to fail.

Besides politics in Berne, the second major issue this edition of "Swiss Review" focuses on is "intangible cultural heritage". This awkward and not immediately transparent term has been coined by UNESCO. It refers to traditions practised worldwide, such as Mongolian folk songs with circular breathing, yodelling, fondue and Malian wisdom rites. The article on well-known and less familiar Swiss traditions on page 8 contains plenty of surprises.

Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek NB  
Bibliothèque nationale suisse BN  
Biblioteca nazionale Svizzera BN  
Biblioteca nazionale svizra BN

BARBARA ENGEL

**IMPRINT:** "Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 39th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 395 000, including 135 000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year.

The ordering parties are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. These contents do not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher.

■ **EDITORS:** Barbara Engel (BE), Editor-in-Chief; René Lenzin (RL); Alain Wey (AW); Marc Lettau (MUL); Manuel Gnos (MAG); Jean-François Lichtenstern (JFL), responsible for "Notes from Parliament", Service for the Swiss Abroad, FDFA, CH-3003 Berne Translation: CLS Communication AG ■ **LAYOUT:** Herzog Design, Zurich ■ **POSTAL ADDRESS:** Publisher, editorial office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Tel.: +41 31 356 61 10, Fax: +41 31 356 61 01, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. ■ **E-MAIL:** revue@aso.ch ■ **PRINT:** Swissprinters St. Gallen AG, CH-9001 St. Gallen. ■ **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to Berne. ■ All Swiss abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Berne. ■ **INTERNET:** www.revue.ch

Copy deadline for this edition: 15.12.2011

5

Mailbag

5

Books: Switzerland – a military service provider

7

Images: Parisian surrealists in Basel

8

Traditions from all over the world: Switzerland's contribution to the UNESCO list

13

The Swiss people will vote on five proposals at the referendum on 11 March

14

The new Swiss government with Didier Burkhalter as Minister of Foreign Affairs

16

The voting behaviour of the Swiss abroad – an analysis after the first e-elections

### Regional news

18

An interview with Michael Reiterer, the outgoing EU ambassador in Berne

20

His programmes enjoy cult status: Andreas Moser's "Netz Natur" on Swiss TV

22

Iouri Podladtchikov: the Swiss snowboarding star with the Russian soul

24

OSA news

27

Notes from Parliament

30

Little gems

31

Echo

Cover photo: As she herself says, Christine Lauterburg's roots are in alpine folk music. The 56-year-old from Berne is also called a "techno yodeller". Her unconventional interpretations constantly meet with disapproval from traditionalists. Photo: donated