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New rules for popular initiatives

The think-tank Avenir Suisse is calling for stricter rules to be applied to federal popular initiatives in future. Popular initiatives are increasingly frequently being used as a means of political campaigning contrary to their intended purpose. Avenir Suisse proposes increasing the number of signatures required to 211,000, which equates to 4 % of the electorate. The annulment criteria would also be applied more strictly in the preliminary examination.

More guests than expected

Switzerland's hotel industry has posted good figures despite all the forecasts. In February 2015, there were 3.1 million overnight stays overall, according to the Federal Statistical Office, which represents a 6 % increase (+176,000 overnight stays) compared to February 2014. Swiss guests accounted for just under half, which is an 8.4 % rise compared to the previous year. There was a 3.8 % climb in foreign guests.

New committee to save the bilateral agreements

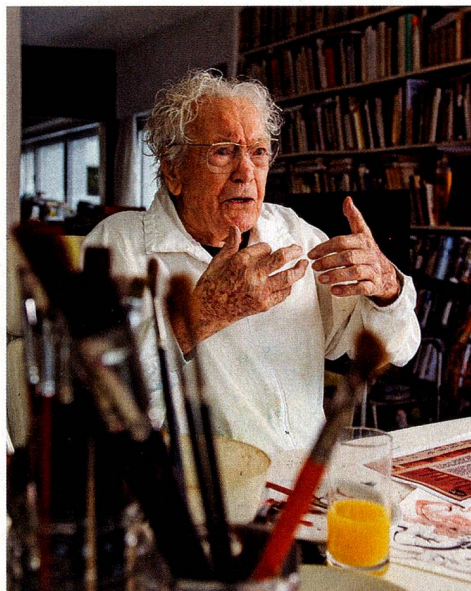
"Vorteil Schweiz" (Advantage Switzerland) is the name of a new committee campaigning against the "EU-NO" association of former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher and the attack by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) on the bilateral agreements and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The founding members include the SP Council of States member Pascale Bruderer, the National Councillors Ruedi Noser (FDP), Hans Grunder (BDP), Filippo Lombardi (CVP) and Raphaël Comte (FDP) as well as the business leaders Jobst Wagner and Hansjörg Wyss. The two latter figures are apparently willing to contribute two million Swiss francs for start-up funding. Media reports indicate that they will provide a further five million if a referendum on the bilateral agreements takes place.

Correction

The editorial in the April issue of "Swiss Review" said that the Socialist Party's election manifesto contained "no mention" of Switzerland's relationship with the EU. The SP does not agree with this description. In actual fact, while none of the 10 projects of the election manifesto mentions Europe, the word "Europe" appears five times in the publication's foreword.

Hans Erni

The painter, illustrator and sculptor Hans Erni died on 21 March, a month after his 106th birthday. Erni began painting in the 1920s and became famous with a mural for the 1939 national exhibition which was five metres high and a hundred metres long. Erni designed many posters which reflected his commitment to a more just world. He campaigned for the introduction of old-age and survivors' insurance (AHV) and women's suffrage as well as against nuclear weapons.



"We cannot allow people to perish."

Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga
on the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean

"Those swimming in money impertinently
hold onto a life belt."

Ernst R. Hauschka (1926 – 2012), German lyricist and aphorist

"Switzerland is gradually being destroyed."

Toni Brunner, President of the Swiss People's Party (SVP),
on the supposed centre-left alliance in Parliament

"Switzerland has already disappeared.
The Switzerland you and I grew up in that is. But
it emerges anew every day. More diverse.
More world-encompassing. More surprising.
Play a part and delight in it!"

Franz Hohler, Swiss author and cabaret artist

"The Radical Free Democratic Party (FDP) used
to table solutions and then immediately put forward a
dissertation to justify them. Those days are gone."

Philippe Müller, FDP President,
on his party's new style and self-perception

"Status is like honour. Both only exist
in the eyes of others."

Katja Gentinetta, Swiss political philosopher

"Levity is a convivial way of gaining
experience."

Art van Rheyn (1939 – 2005),
German poet and aphorist

"Democracy is a device
that ensures we shall be governed
no better than we deserve."

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950),
Irish dramatist and politician