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Survey amongst the political parties

We asked the seven main parties represented in Parliament to provide us with brief responses to sometimes complex questions. They all obliged and provided some very insightful answers.



The Swiss Abroad are a constantly growing electoral group. What means does your party use to communicate with the Swiss Abroad?

The Conservative Democratic Party (BDP) is a recently established party and does not yet have an institutionalised relationship with the Swiss Abroad. Communication primarily takes place via our website, the video newsletter and email.

Member of the party executive responsible, international secretary at headquarters. OSA Congress, advertising in "Swiss Review", presentations at Swiss societies abroad, website, newsletters, social media and print magazine.

We only communicate electronically via a newsletter sent by email and information on our homepage. We are also present on Facebook and at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

We are very active on social media. The newsletter can be subscribed to online at www.gruene.ch in German or French. We also attend the Congress of the Swiss Abroad each year.

Our party communication is almost exclusively digital. This has the advantage of allowing us to reach the Swiss Abroad just as effectively as all other members. As a party, we also take part in the Congress of the Swiss Abroad on an annual basis.

SVP International, our section for the Swiss Abroad, engages in lively exchange with Swiss people all over the world. It also does so via www.svp-international.ch and the Facebook page www.facebook.com/svpinternational

The ambassadors of the SP are the members of the SP's international section. Members are active in SP satellite offices in Berlin, Paris, Rome and Israel. New ones are being set up in Brussels, Montreal, Buenos Aires and Cape Town.

If a compromise is not reached with the EU over implementation of the initiative on mass immigration (MEI), i.e. if the agreement on the free movement of persons and bilateral accords would have to be terminated, what would your party attach greater importance to: implementation to the letter, or maintaining the bilateral agreements?

Maintaining our bilateral accords has utmost priority and is a key issue for the BDP this election year. The BDP presented a proposal back in early 2014 for implementing the MEI. What is more, the BDP seeks to clarify these relations between Switzerland and the EU, and to anchor the bilateral agreements in the Swiss Federal Constitution. It is vital that the electorate's demand to reduce immigration be heard and met by promoting Swiss labour.

The treaties of the Bilateral packages must be upheld. Yet, the issue would not even arise if the Swiss Federal Council would accept our proposal to implement the initiative and negotiate a safeguard clause with the EU (with similar accords already in place in the EU). Immigration will be better controlled anyway without endangering the Bilateral packages of treaties by implementing flanking measures and promoting the Swiss domestic labour force.

Retaining the bilateral agreements has absolute priority for FDP International. Loss of the free movement of persons would have serious consequences for a major share of the 450,000 Swiss citizens living in the EU. Moreover, it is important to use all the room for manoeuvre we have for implementing immigration control while adhering as closely as possible to the treaty governing free movement of persons.

The bilateral agreements must be maintained. Our geographical location and economic and social ties render any thought of "going it alone" an illusion. The Greens therefore do not wish to see any rigid implementation of the initiative on mass immigration, but rather a non-discriminatory, EU-compatible solution that guarantees our bilateral treaties.

Our bilateral accords with the EU are crucially important to Switzerland as a business and research location. Because of that, maintaining and further advancing along the bilateral road repeatedly affirmed by the Swiss people clearly takes priority for the Green Liberal Party over any strict implementation of the initiative on mass immigration.

The Swiss people have confirmed that they are in favour of controlling and limiting immigration. The task now is to implement this mandate in a manner that best fulfils the nation's interests. The only treaty affected by this is our agreement with the EU on the free movement of persons, which now stands to be renegotiated. Yet, linked with this agreement are the other six treaties of the Bilateral I set of treaties - which are in the mutual interest of Switzerland and the EU. All told, Switzerland has over 150 bilateral agreements with the EU.

Without a doubt, ensuring the bilateral treaties takes priority for the SP. Whether in politics, the economy or cultural issues, Switzerland relies on maintaining good relations with its European neighbours. Under no circumstances do we want to lose our liberty to freely move throughout Europe. If terminating treaties of the Bilateral packages is indeed to become an option on the table, it is the Swiss people who must have the final say in the matter.

In the recent past, multiple grass-roots initiatives aimed at promoting family policy have failed. What does your party believe to be the single most important family policy measure that should be pushed through without fail in the near future?

The BDP seeks to improve the compatibility of family and career with an eye to better integrating women into the workforce, and thereby contribute to alleviating the shortage of skilled workers. This requires an entire bundle of measures for which the BDP has submitted motions to the Swiss Parliament, for example to expand and promote the availability of daycare centres and to introduce day schools and block times.

The next family initiative sponsored by the CVP will be presented to the people of Switzerland in 2016. We want to eliminate the tax burden of marrying or living in a partnership. After years of having been disadvantaged, married couples and registered life partners should finally be treated equally with other couples in matters of taxation, care and pension plans. Further legislative demands concerning paternity leave and exempting children from premiums called for by the CVP are currently pending in Parliament.

Families would best be helped by introducing individual-based taxation for couples. This is a fair solution, and one custom-tailored to each individual's personal income level and capacity. It would prevent what is termed tax "bracket creep", amounting to unfair fiscal drag. In addition, greater efforts must be made to enhance the compatibility of family and career, in work-life balance, for example, by increasing the tax deduction allowed for the costs of externally provided childcare.

It is our wish to support all families, whether headed by married couples, registered life partners, or single parents, etc. To this end we have brought a number of measures before Parliament, of which certainly one of the most important is to diminish their financial burden for example by taxing couples as individuals and enhancing their life-work balance with day schools.

We seek equal treatment of married couples and co-habiting life partners in the eyes of tax law and social insurance, and we support allowing the institution of marriage for same-sex couples. It should be possible for professionally active men and women to raise children together in a work-life balance. Hence, the infrastructural offerings for daily routines and part-time jobs must truly be available at all levels and for both genders as a matter of course.

The tax burdens of families should be reduced. To this end, for example, what is termed in German the "Heiratstrafe" - the financial tax disadvantage of being married - should be finally eliminated. Married couples are taxed at higher rates today than unmarried couples. The goal of the SVP is to lower taxes for everyone.

The SP would like to replace tax deductions for children with child tax credits aimed at easing the tax burden on families with low and moderate incomes. Tax credits, which can be deducted from the tax bill based on the principle of "one credit for every child", are more socially just than deductions, from which high-income families in particular benefit most.

In 2011 the Swiss Federal Council and Parliament decided to begin a stage-wise phase-out of nuclear power. In its Energy Strategy 2050, the Swiss Federal Council proposes a successive restructuring of Switzerland's energy systems, to be completed by 2050. Does your party support this strategy?

"For the energy transition" is one of the three core topics of the BDP's election campaign. The BDP was the first major political party in Switzerland to call for an organised, orderly exit from nuclear power. We embrace Switzerland's Energy Strategy 2050 and a market-oriented energy management system. Environmental responsibility is a duty we have to future generations, and thanks to innovation potential it actually offers us major economic opportunities.

The CVP has been helping to drive Swiss energy transition from the very start. We call for an incremental phase-out of nuclear power and support the Energy Strategy 2050 of our Federal Council. Power generation from renewable energy sources strengthens the regional economy and creates jobs, while energy consumption drops, CO2 emissions are reduced, and our dependency on foreign energy sources falls. Switzerland is on its way to becoming a frontrunner in the energy sector.

The Swiss economy, its business and industry will hardly be able to cope with the energy strategy proposed by the Federal Council, and the strategy is incompatible with Switzerland's societal structures and needs. It creates new barriers for Switzerland as a business location and will cause jobs to be relocated abroad. The FDP International wants a clearly defined and sustainably reliable enabling environment instead of new taxes and subsidies, which distort the market.

The Greens support the Energy Strategy 2050 as an important step in our energy transition. However, we are still lacking stipulated maximum service lifetimes for Switzerland's existing nuclear power plants, as called for in our nuclear phase-out initiative. Without clearly specified deadlines for the nuclear phase-out, there is no planning certainty for investment in energy efficiency and expanded use of renewable energy.

Yes - we want to pursue the energy transition and achieve turnaround, but with liberal incentive systems. Environmental emissions today are not being squarely attributed and billed to the actual causers, and the nuclear industry benefits from hidden subsidisation. We want to see cost transparency and steering taxes, i.e. environmental incentive taxes, move us away from CO2-generating technologies and nuclear energy towards renewable energy sources.

The Federal Council's Energy Strategy 2050 is an expensive utopian dream that puts at risk the safe and reliable energy supply that a growing Switzerland needs. The SVP rejects this concept plan, which is based on forcing compliance at high prices. Hardest hit by this strategy would be the people of Switzerland, as well as our small and medium-sized enterprises and the many jobs those businesses provide. It would make much more sense to improve the framework conditions enabling optimum exploitation of every available energy source. Banning certain technologies does nothing to help us move forward.

The energy transition, i.e. the phase-out of nuclear power and the promoting of renewable energy sources, is one of the major successes of the last legislative period. The SP has played a decisive role in shaping Switzerland's energy turnaround efforts, and will continue to support the coming second phase. The transition to clean energy is a huge opportunity for Switzerland, both environmentally and economically.



What sort of line-up in the Federal Council is your party looking to achieve after the elections? A purely arithmetical magical formula, such as two seats for each of the three parties that garner the strongest voter support, and one seat for the fourth strongest? Or rather complete cross-sectional concordance in which, as today, even the smallest party can be represented on the Federal Council?

The BDP would like to see the cross-sectional concordance of the solution-focused forces in the government. The BDP would reject a conservative-right government led by an SVP-FDP coalition majority as, in the Swiss concordance system, a balanced representation of the constructive forces is to be weighted more highly than a government compiled along purely arithmetic lines.

We will not let our position on the Federal Council elections be known until after the parliamentary elections.

Parliament is free to put together the Federal Council as it sees fit. Yet, the government must have broad support within Parliament in order to push through projects. This used to succeed in the past with the 2-2-2-1 formula. Yet, in the two most recent legislative periods the Federal Council has often failed in its role.

The Greens are in favour of a "concordance based on reason". The Greens believe that the SVP, a party bent on dismantling the just rule of law of our Swiss state and one that endangers international cooperation, is not fit to form part of our national government despite its size.

The Green Liberals stand firmly behind the concordance system. However, the 2:2:2:1 rule no longer reflects the reality of our political party landscape. We would welcome a clear rule defined by the parties prior to the elections. Yet, we have two minimum demands concerning the make-up of the overall Federal Council: We want to safeguard the energy transition, and to preserve our liberal economic system.

The SVP has always embraced the concordance system in which the four major political parties are integrated into the Federal Council according to their electoral strengths. This system creates political stability and should be re-established after the coming elections. The SVP is also prepared, as called upon time and time again, to assume greater responsibility in the government.

Concordance means that all important responsible political forces should be represented in the government provided they present electable candidacies. On the other hand, a set allocation formula as in the decades of the traditionally applied magical formula no longer makes sense today. And indeed, the SP has always stated that it will not vote out any Federal Councillor currently in office who is doing a good job.

The Swiss Abroad have little chance of being elected because the votes of those eligible to vote abroad are distributed among all cantons. Having their own constituency would significantly improve their chances of election. Would your party support a separate "constituency for the Swiss Abroad"?

No Yes, in principle. No position adopted yet. That would be great! No position. No Yes



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