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How the Swiss Abroad voted

There was also a shift to the right beyond Swiss borders. This is based on a survey by the Centre for Democracy Studies in Aarau, conducted with the help of the "Swiss Review".

THOMAS MILIC

Switzerland held its National Council elections on 18 October. At national, cantonal and local level all the election results are now known, with just those of the Swiss Abroad to come. However, the outcome of the election for the entire Swiss population abroad can be projected based on the results for the Swiss Abroad that have now been declared in 12 cantons. Not only is the election

not vote all that differently to their compatriots at home. Swiss voting preferences also shifted to the right outside Switzerland. The clear winner at the elections was the FDP with estimated gains of around three percentage points. The SVP also made ground but not to the same extent as amongst the electorate in Switzerland. The centre parties suffered losses, but none more so than the Green Party whose share of the vote amongst Swiss voters abroad fell from around 16 % to some 13 %. They are now on a similar level to the FDP. The SP, which held its share of the vote in Switzerland, gained votes amongst the diaspora and now has just under 23 % of the vote. It therefore remains the party with the most support from the Swiss Abroad despite the SVP's gains. However, the turnout fell. It stood at around 26 % this year, about 4 % lower than in 2011.

Immigration, asylum and Europe

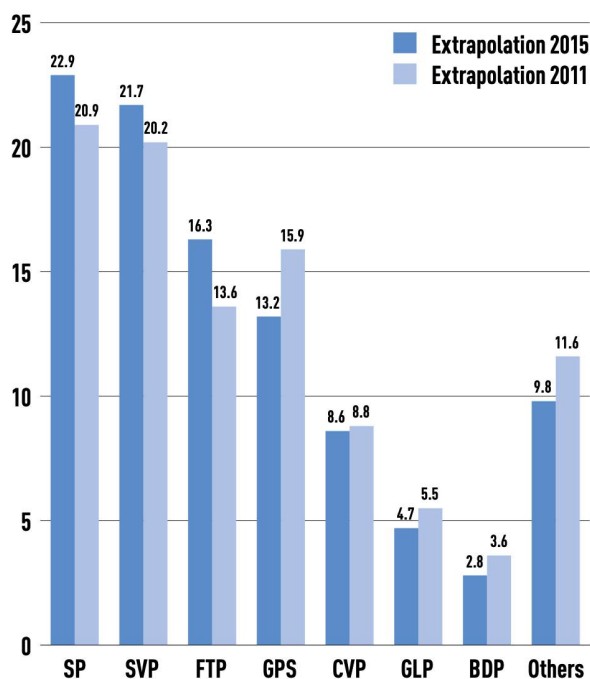
The issue that concerned the Swiss Abroad most prior to the elections was immigration. One in three problems indicated concerned issues relating to immigration or foreigners. In addition, there was the refugee crisis which was not such a big concern for the Swiss Abroad as it was for those in Switzerland.

The issue over which the Swiss Abroad and those at home differed most was that of Europe. Switzerland's relationship with Europe is a matter of much greater importance to the Swiss Abroad than to voters in Switzerland. The extent to which

people are affected clearly plays a major role here. Swiss Abroad living in the EU Member States of Germany (36 % of all references to the issue), Spain (29 %) and France (24 %) are much more concerned about relations between Switzerland and the EU than eligible Swiss voters in the USA (16 %) and Thailand (13 %).

The heterogeneous composition of the Swiss Abroad is also reflected in the varying degrees of importance attached to issues. It was noticeable that those who live abroad for business-related reasons often indicated that the most urgent issue facing Switzerland was the strong Swiss franc or the economic situation in general. Those citing personal reasons for leaving Switzerland put much more emphasis on culture and identity. A disproportionately high number of those studying abroad saw impending environmental problems as the most serious issue that Switzerland has to tackle.

Overall, the Swiss Abroad have a similar political outlook to their compatriots at home and perceive issues in a comparable way. This underlines the fact that the political debates and trends in Switzerland also reach the diaspora. This is probably primarily due to the internet which is the most frequently used source of information by the Swiss Abroad for finding out about Swiss politics.



Projections from last October indicate that the SVP won votes amongst the Swiss Abroad but the SP remains the strongest party.

result known, the reasons why the Swiss Abroad voted as they did are also available. The data is based on a survey by the Centre for Democracy Studies in Aarau conducted with the help of the "Swiss Review" among around 2,000 eligible Swiss voters residing abroad. Details of the survey, the projection method and weighting can be found at www.zda.ch.

Generally speaking, it can be concluded that the Swiss Abroad did

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