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Developments in energy policy

In future, renewable energies like solar and wind power and new hydroelectric power plants won't be the only projects that will qualify for subsidies in Switzerland. Following a decision by the Council of States in its summer session, so too will existing major hydroelectric power plants. Hydroelectric power plants receive a "market premium" for any electricity that they must sell at below production cost. The National Council will reconsider the entire Energy Strategy 2050 in its autumn session. The electorate will then be asked to vote on the popular initiative "For an ordered withdrawal from nuclear power" on 27 November.

Cutting corporate taxes

After much debate, the National Council and the Council of States finally approved the Corporate Tax Reform III bill in their summer session. The reforms are designed to cut corporate taxes to ensure that Switzerland remains an attractive location for companies. The Social Democrats have already announced their intention to launch a referendum opposing the reforms. The people will therefore have the last word on this controversial issue. The previous bill, Corporate Tax Reform II, which was voted on in 2008, met with considerable public discontent. Announcing the referendum, then Federal Councillor and Finance Minister Hans-Rudolf Merz had failed to inform voters properly that the reforms would cut tax revenues by billions, an omission condemned by the Federal Supreme Court.

Fewer asylum applications than in 2015

The number of applications for asylum in Switzerland has risen for the first time in five months. A total of 1885 people sought asylum in May, 137 more than in April. Nevertheless, the rise is smaller than it was last May, when asylum applications leapt by 60 % to more than 2200.



Giulia Steingruber

The 22-year-old Swiss gymnast Giulia Steingruber dominated the women's European Artistic Gymnastics Championships, which were held in Berne in early June. She picked up no fewer than two gold medals; the first in her favourite event, the vault – which she had also won at the 2013 and 2014 European Championships – and then with a fabulous performance in the floor exercises.

"A triumph of art and science, a monument to work and diligence! The barrier which divided nations has fallen, the Swiss Alps have been breached. Countries have moved closer to each other, the world market is open."

SWISS PRESIDENT SIMEON BAVIER, SPEAKING AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE GOTTHARD RAILWAY TUNNEL IN 1882

"Today is an historic day for our country: the completion of the Gotthard Base Tunnel marks the end of a Herculean task."

SWISS PRESIDENT JOHANN SCHNEIDER-AMMANN AT THE OPENING OF THE GOTTHARD BASE TUNNEL ON 1 JUNE 2016

"The new tunnel is more than a transport route, more than a great engineering achievement. It is a symbol of openness and progress because we are connecting people from the North Sea to the Mediterranean."

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR DORIS LEUTHARD

"At a time when some people want to build walls, Switzerland has dug a tunnel that sends an important message."

MATTEO RENZI, ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER

"A marvel of technology." ANGELA MERKEL, GERMAN CHANCELLOR

"Such constructions are built by people who are willing to travel down a long and arduous road. Political affinities play no part in this."

FORMER FEDERAL COUNCILLOR ADOLF OGI OF THE SVP – BEFORE HUGGING FORMER FEDERAL COUNCILLOR MORITZ LEUENBERGER OF THE SP

"Here comes the national anthem. Now if only we knew the words!"

SWISS PRESIDENT JOHANN SCHNEIDER-AMMANN